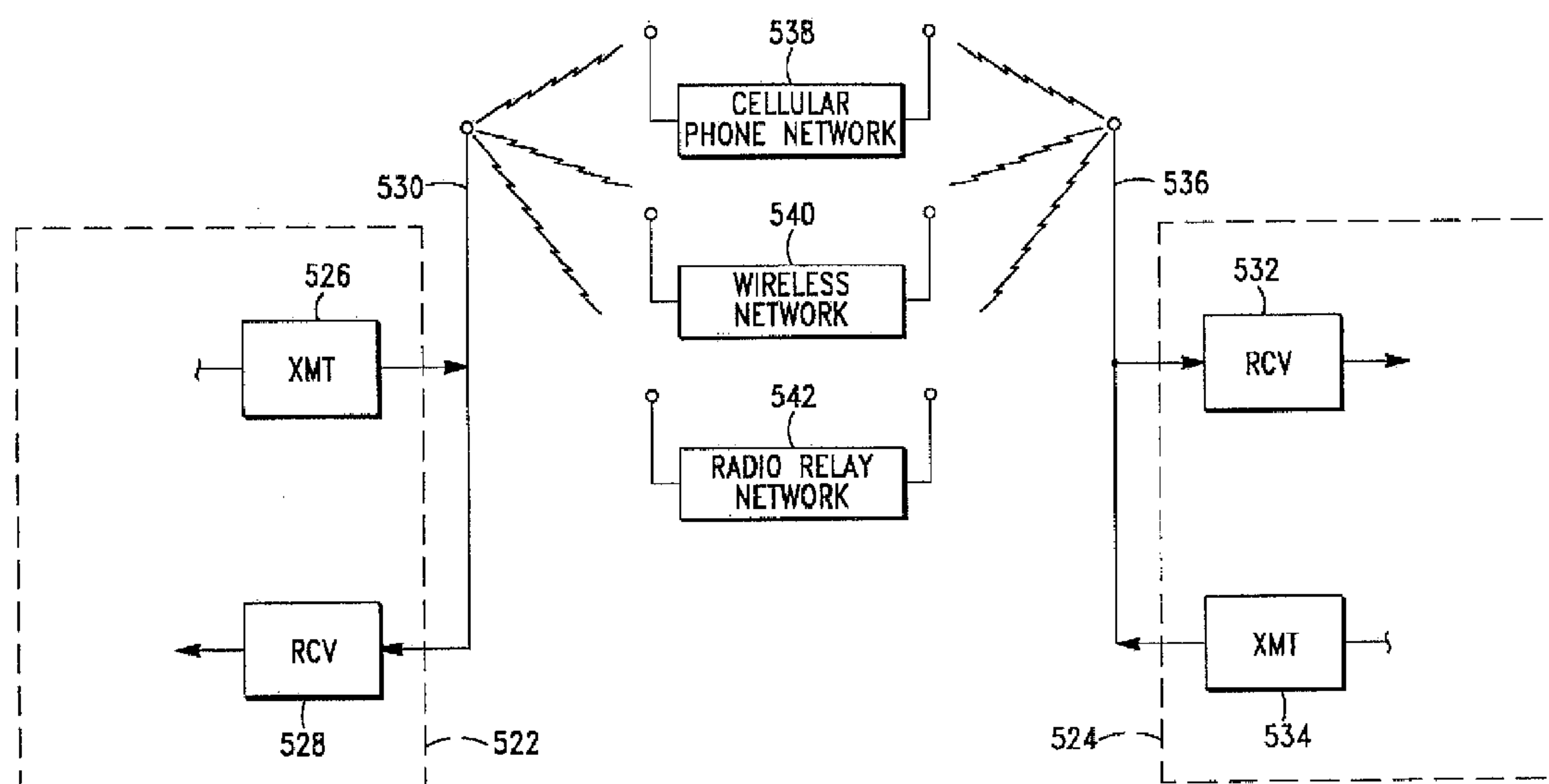


US 20080311882A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Schlager et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2008/0311882 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Dec. 18, 2008**(54) **MULTI-HAZARD ALARM SYSTEM USING
SELECTABLE POWER-LEVEL
TRANSMISSION AND LOCALIZATION**on Oct. 28, 1996, which is a continuation-in-part of
application No. 08/330,901, filed on Oct. 27, 1994,
now Pat. No. 5,461,365.(75) Inventors: **Dan Schlager**, Tiburon, CA (US);
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BOSTON, MA 02210-2206 (US)(73) Assignee: **Zoltar Satellite Alarm Systems**,
Tiburon, CA (US)(21) Appl. No.: **12/200,110**(22) Filed: **Aug. 28, 2008****Related U.S. Application Data**(63) Continuation of application No. 11/493,935, filed on
Jul. 25, 2006, which is a continuation of application
No. 10/695,560, filed on Oct. 27, 2003, now aban-
doned, which is a continuation-in-part of application
No. 10/216,033, filed on Aug. 10, 2002, now aban-
doned, which is a continuation-in-part of application
No. 10/010,971, filed on Dec. 4, 2001, now aban-
doned, which is a continuation-in-part of application
No. 09/728,167, filed on Dec. 1, 2000, now Pat. No.
6,518,889, which is a continuation-in-part of applica-
tion No. 09/325,030, filed on Jun. 3, 1999, now Pat.
No. 6,198,390, which is a continuation of application
No. 08/849,998, filed on Jul. 6, 1998, now Pat. No.
5,963,130, filed as application No. PCT/US96/17473**Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04M 11/04 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.** **455/404.2; 455/404.1; 340/539.11**(57) **ABSTRACT**

A personal alarm system includes a monitoring base station and one or more remote sensing units in two-way radio communication. An electronic handshake between the base station and each remote unit is used to assure system reliability. The remote units transmit at selectable power levels. In the absence of an emergency, a remote unit transmits at a power-conserving low power level. Received field strength is measured to determine whether a remote unit has moved beyond a predetermined distance from the base station. If the distance is exceeded, the remote unit transmits at a higher power level. The remote unit includes sensors for common hazards including water emersion, smoke, excessive heat, excessive carbon monoxide concentration, and electrical shock. The base station periodically polls the remote units and displays the status of the environmental sensors. The system is useful in child monitoring, for use with invalids, and with employees involved in activities which expose them to environmental risk. Alternative embodiments include a panic button on the remote unit for summoning help, and an audible beacon on the remote unit which can be activated from the base station and useful for locating strayed children. In another embodiment, the remote unit includes a Global Positioning System receiver providing location information for display by the base station.



520

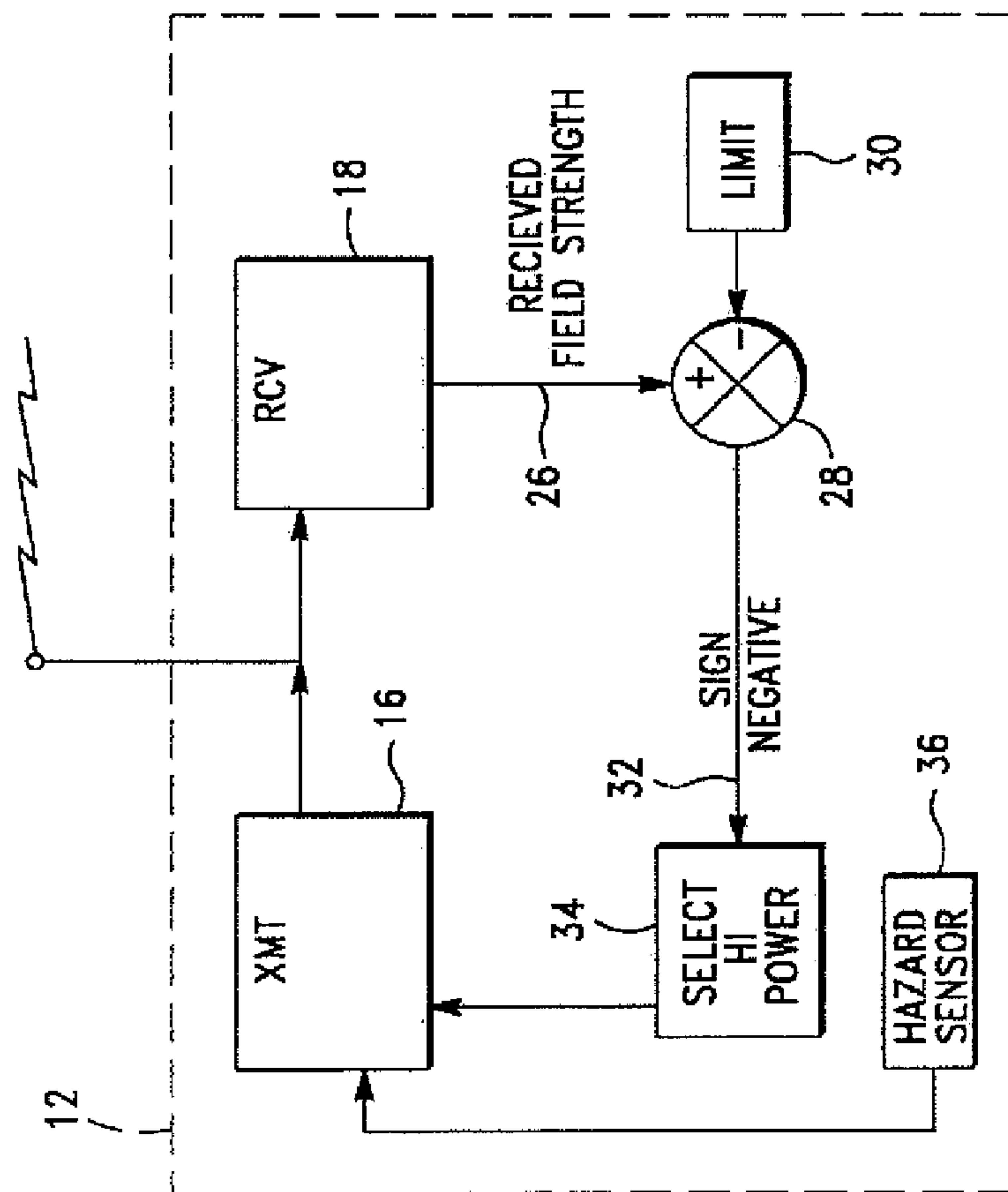
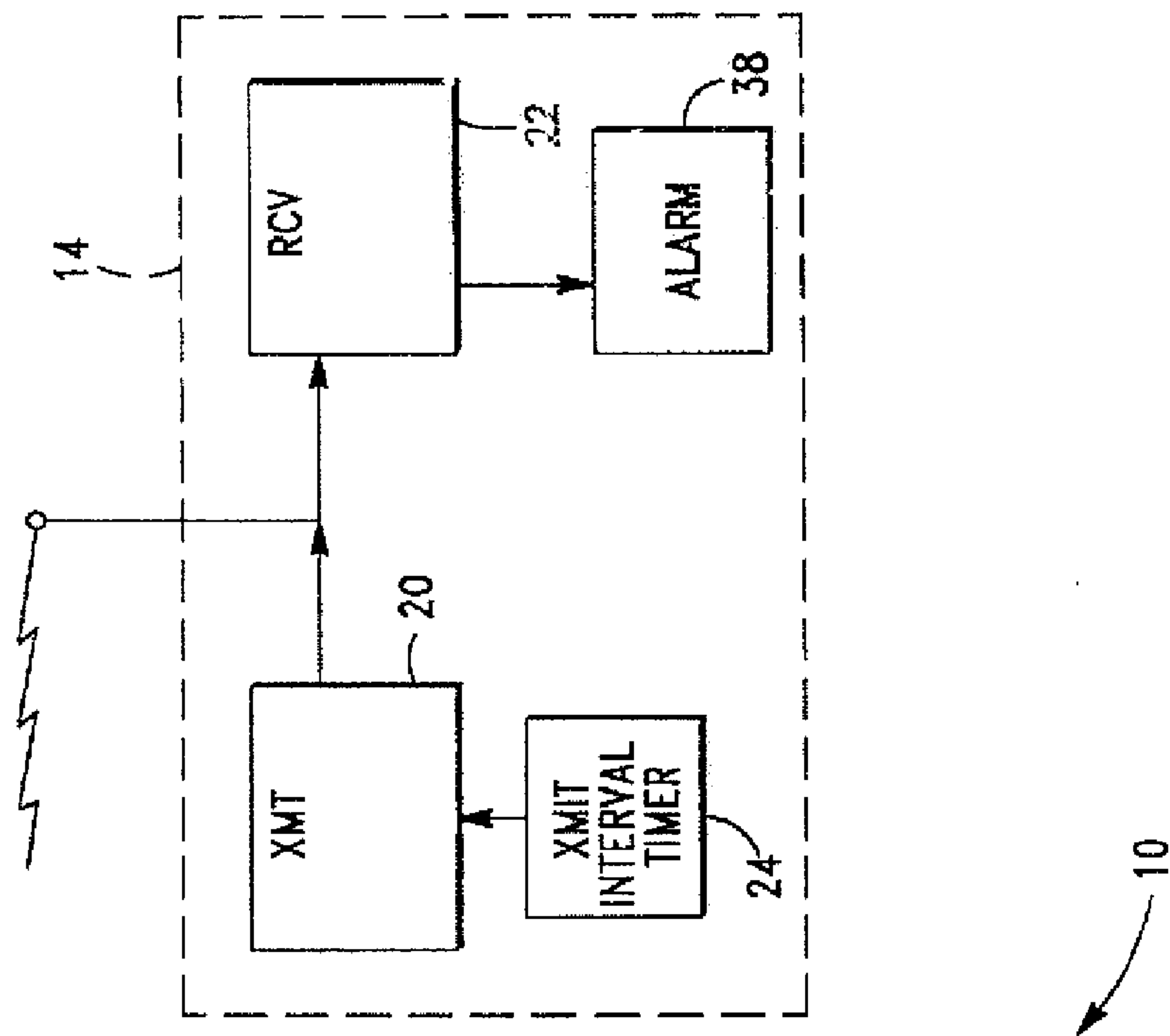


FIG. - 1

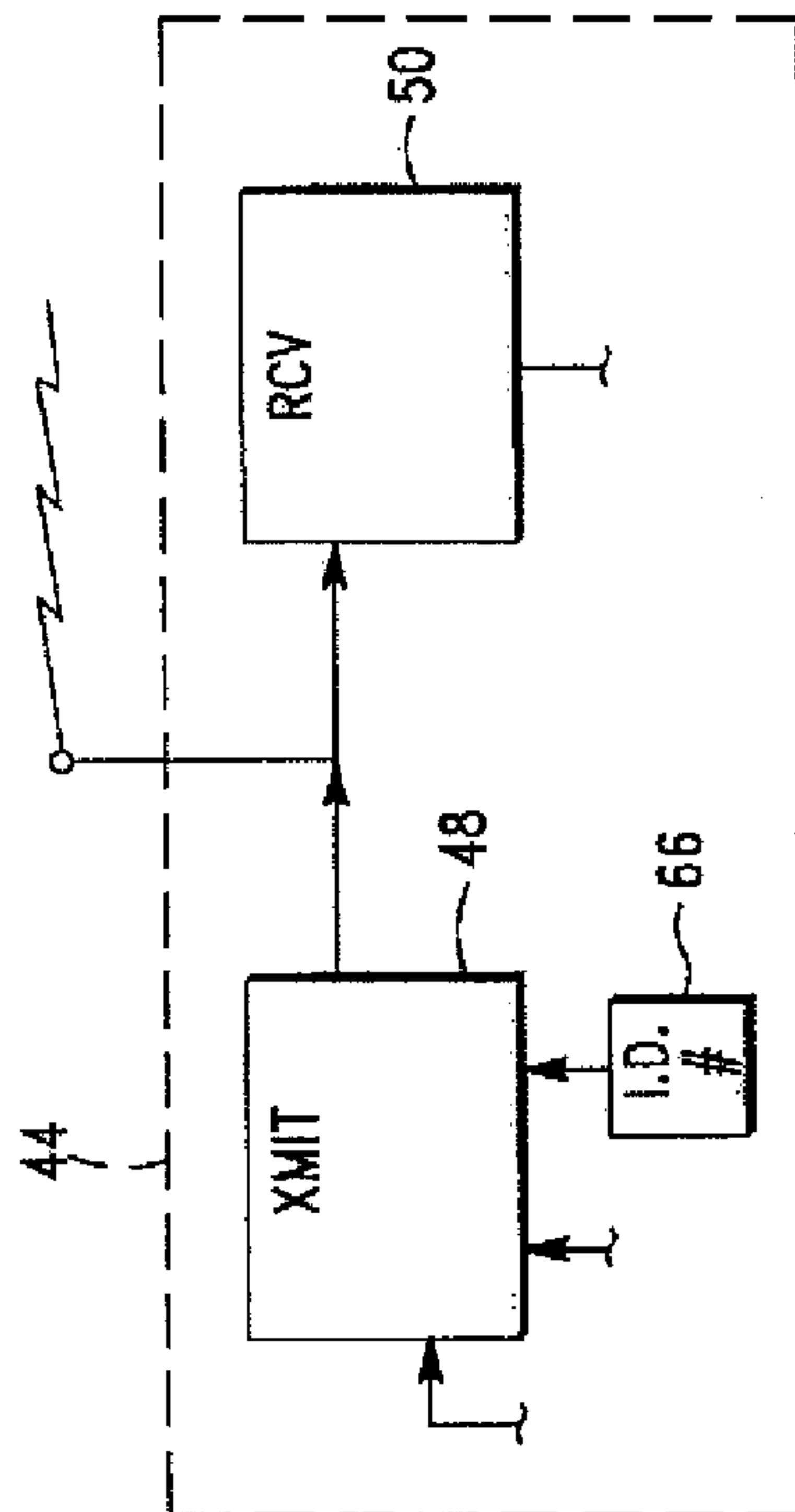
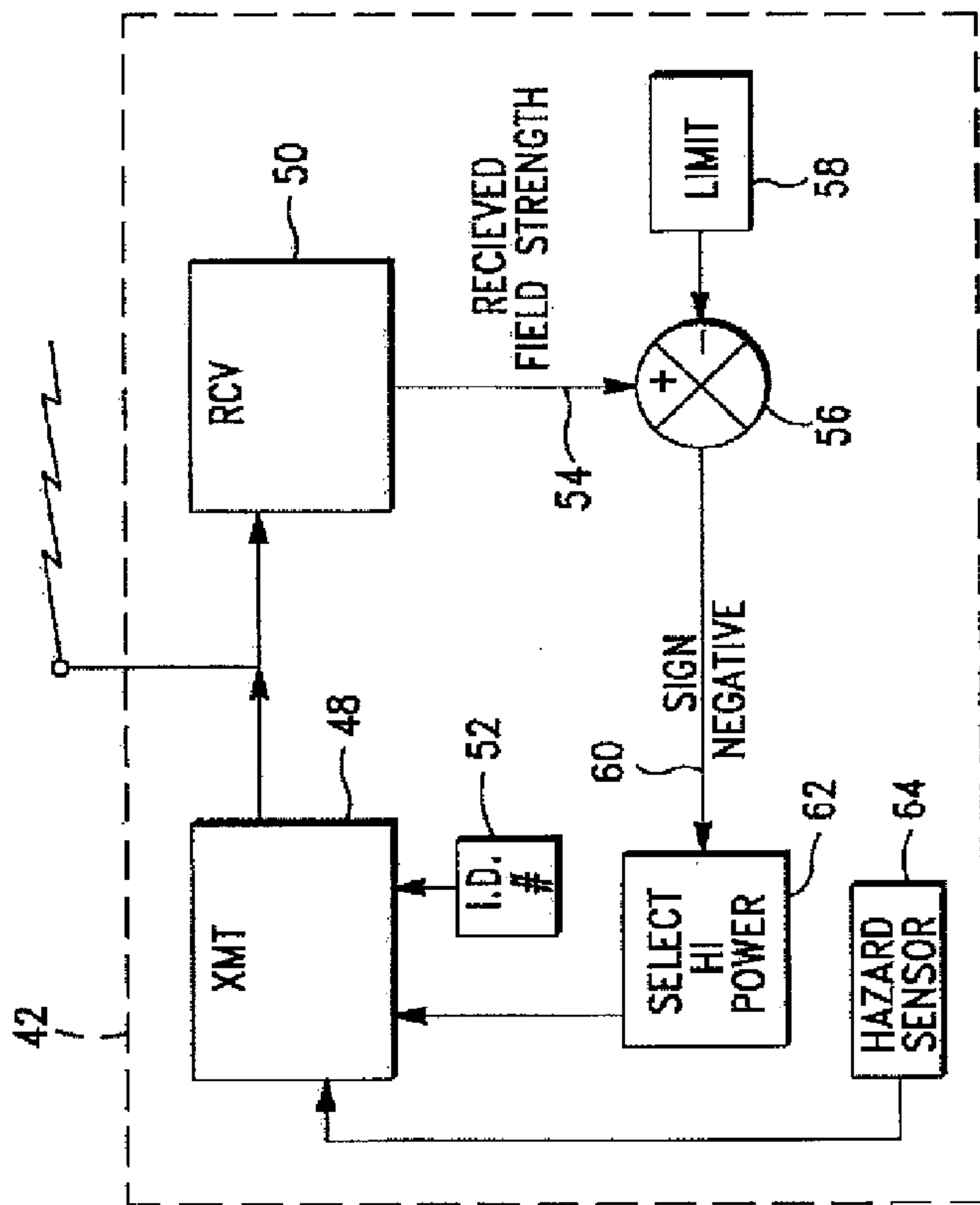
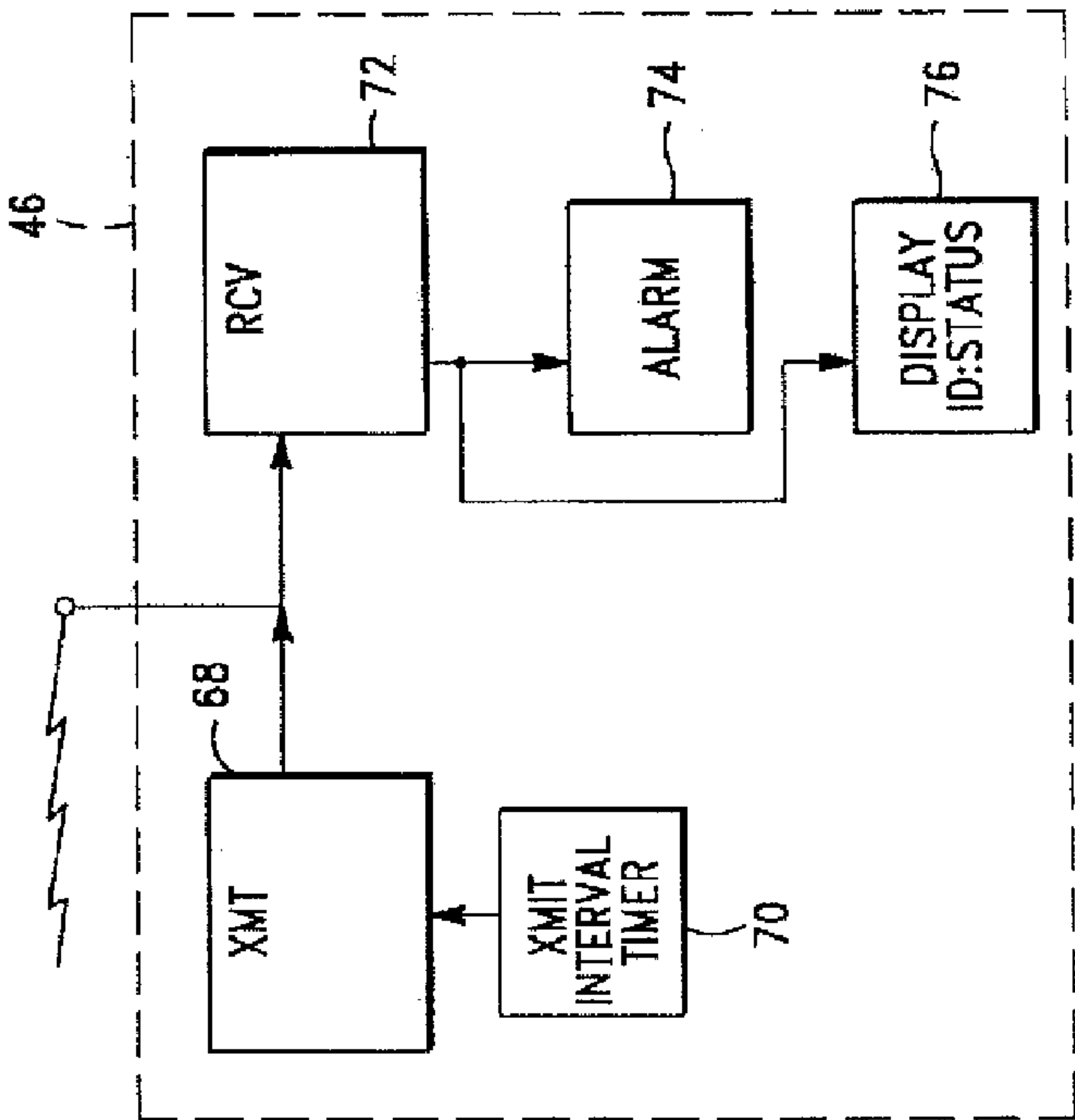


FIG. -2

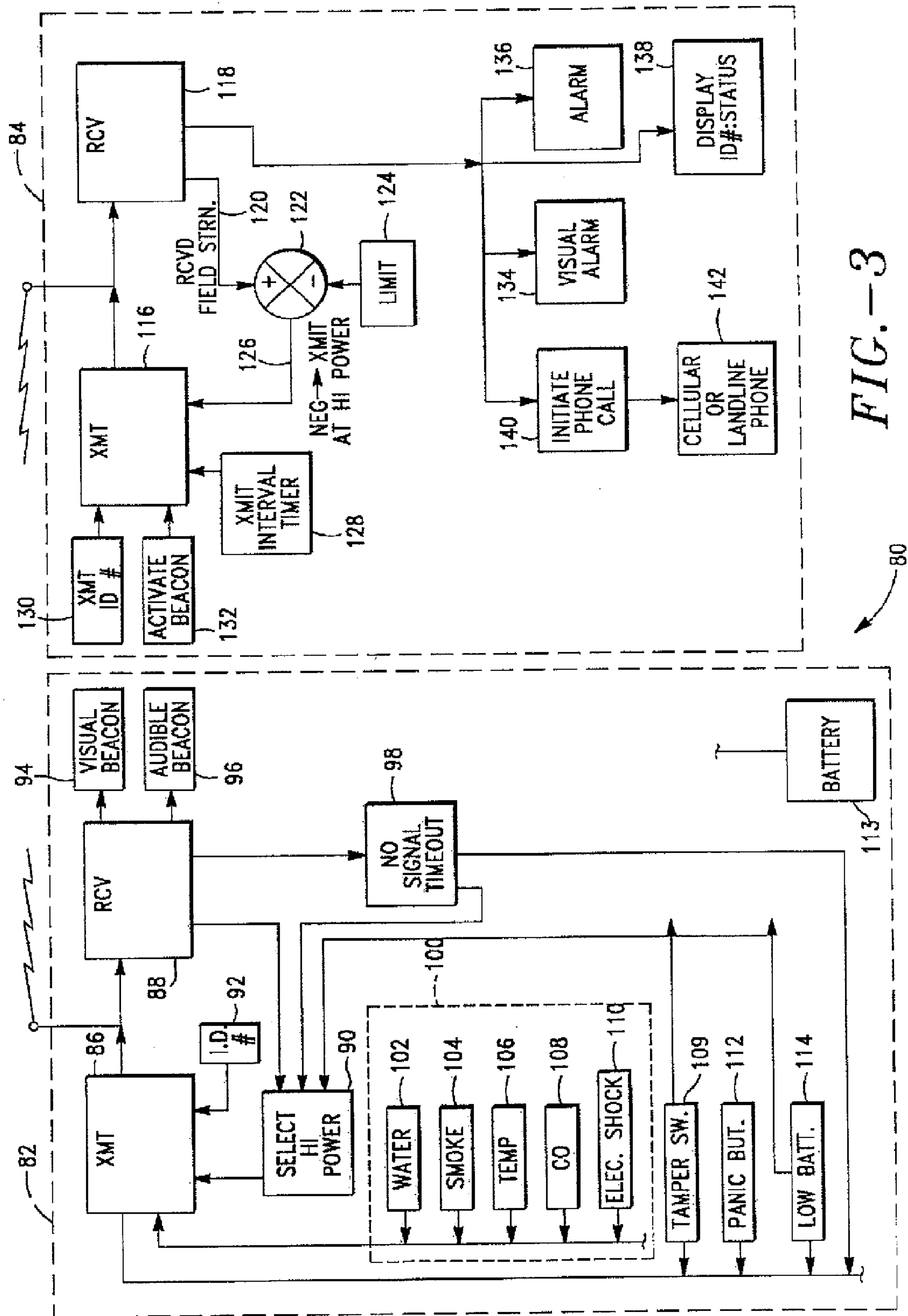
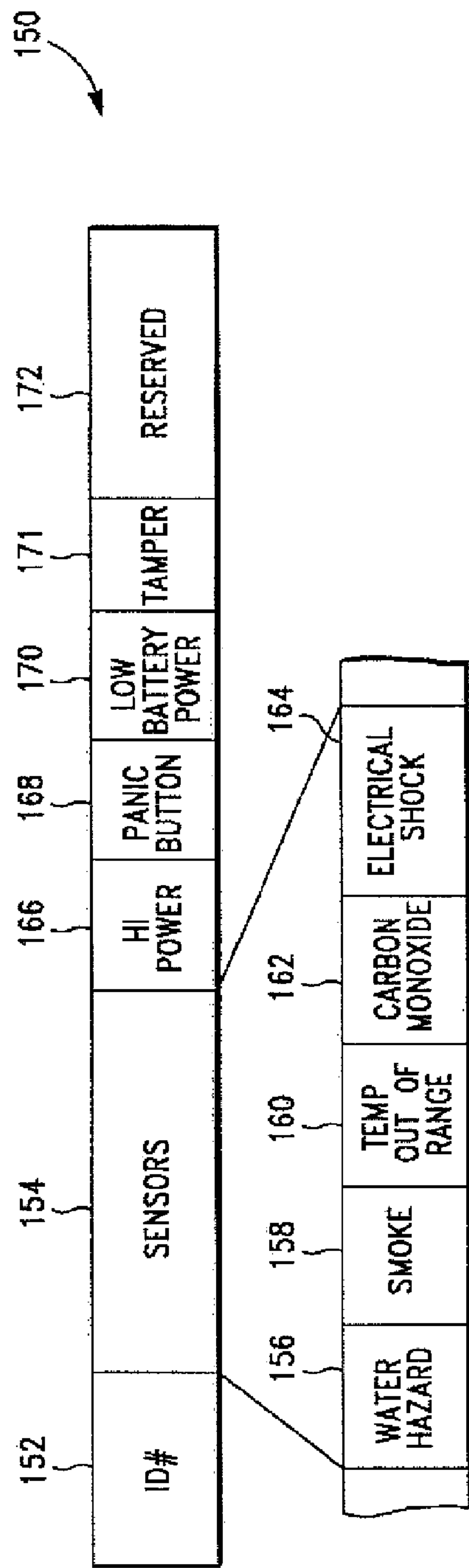
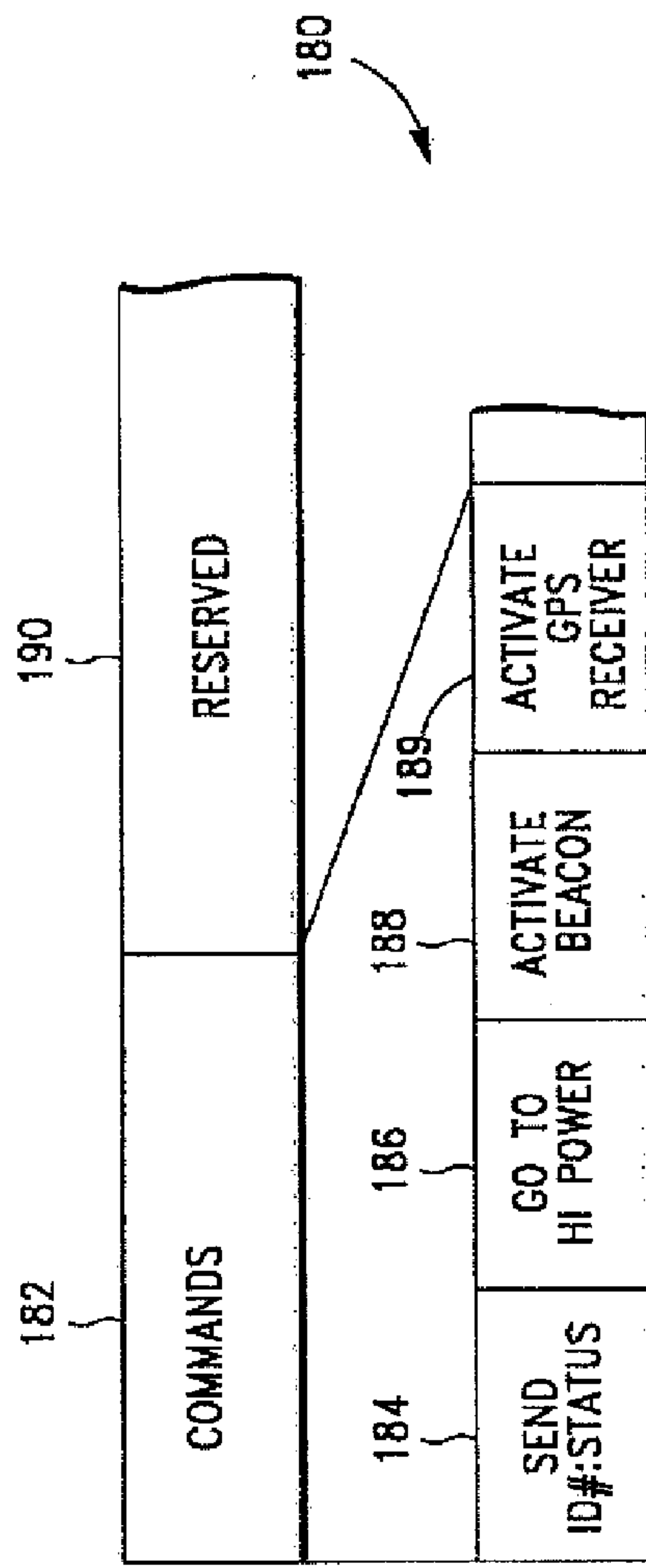


FIG.-3



MESSAGE FORMAT: REMOTE TO BASE

FIG. -4



MESSAGE FORMAT: BASE TO REMOTE

FIG. -5

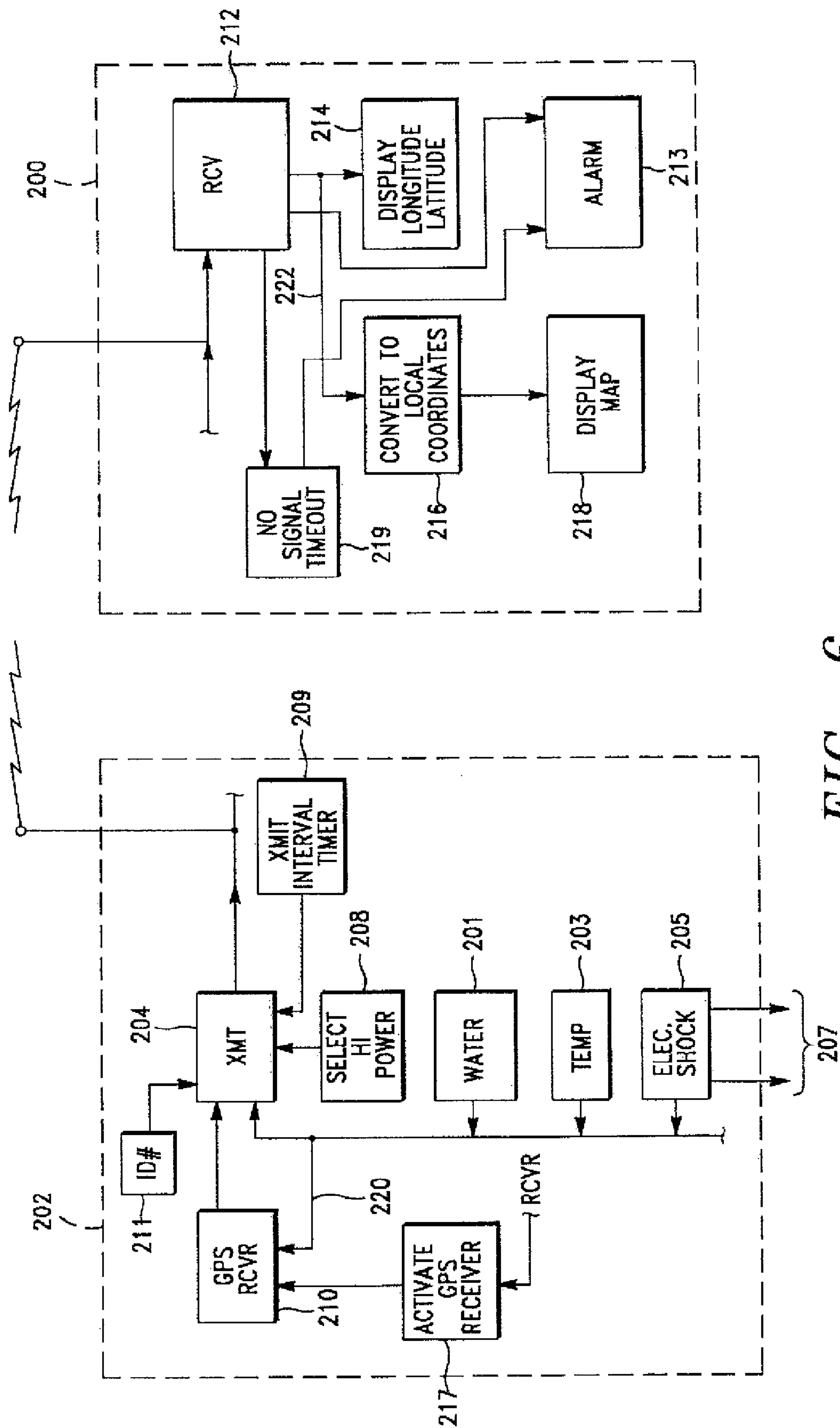


FIG.—6

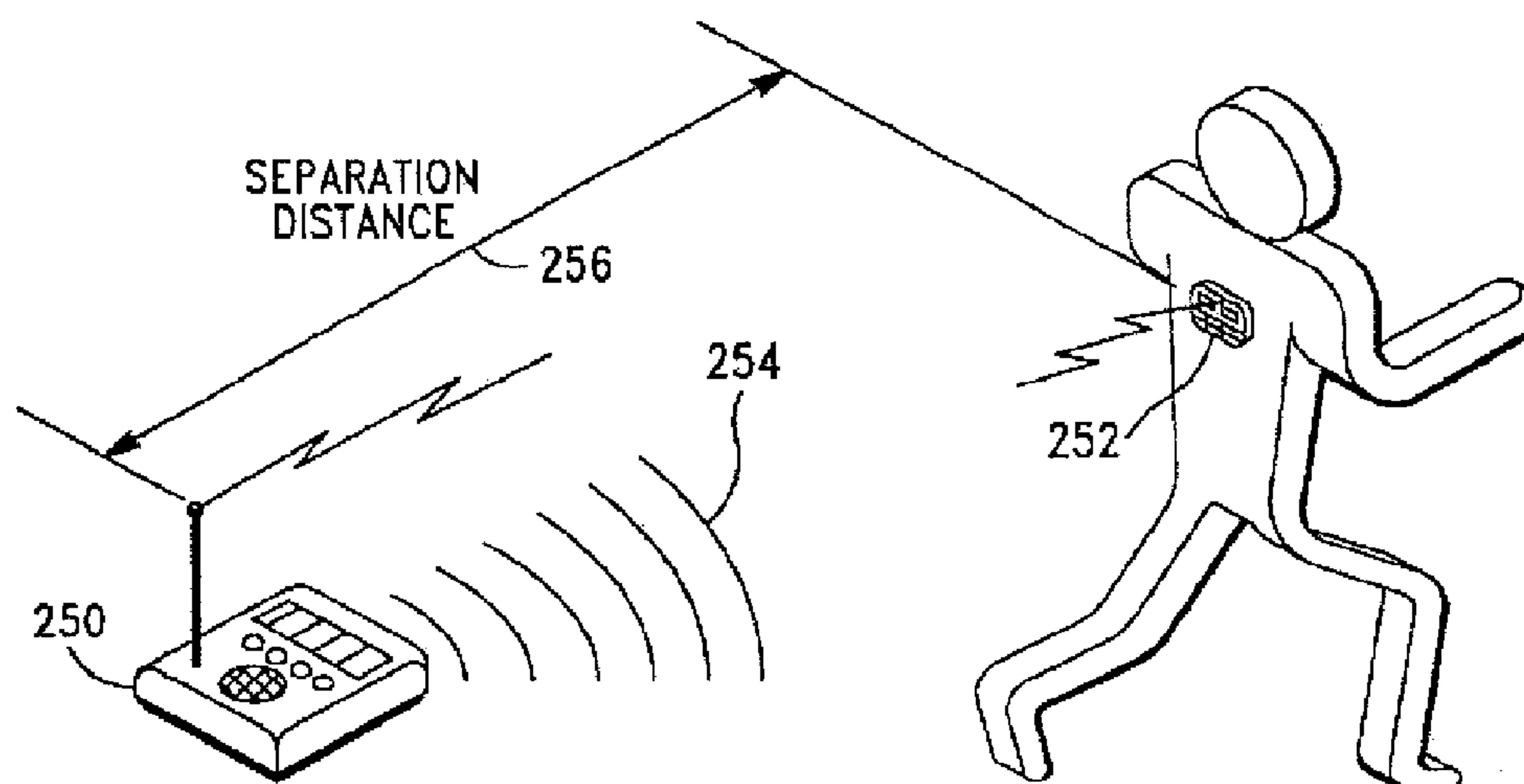


FIG. -7

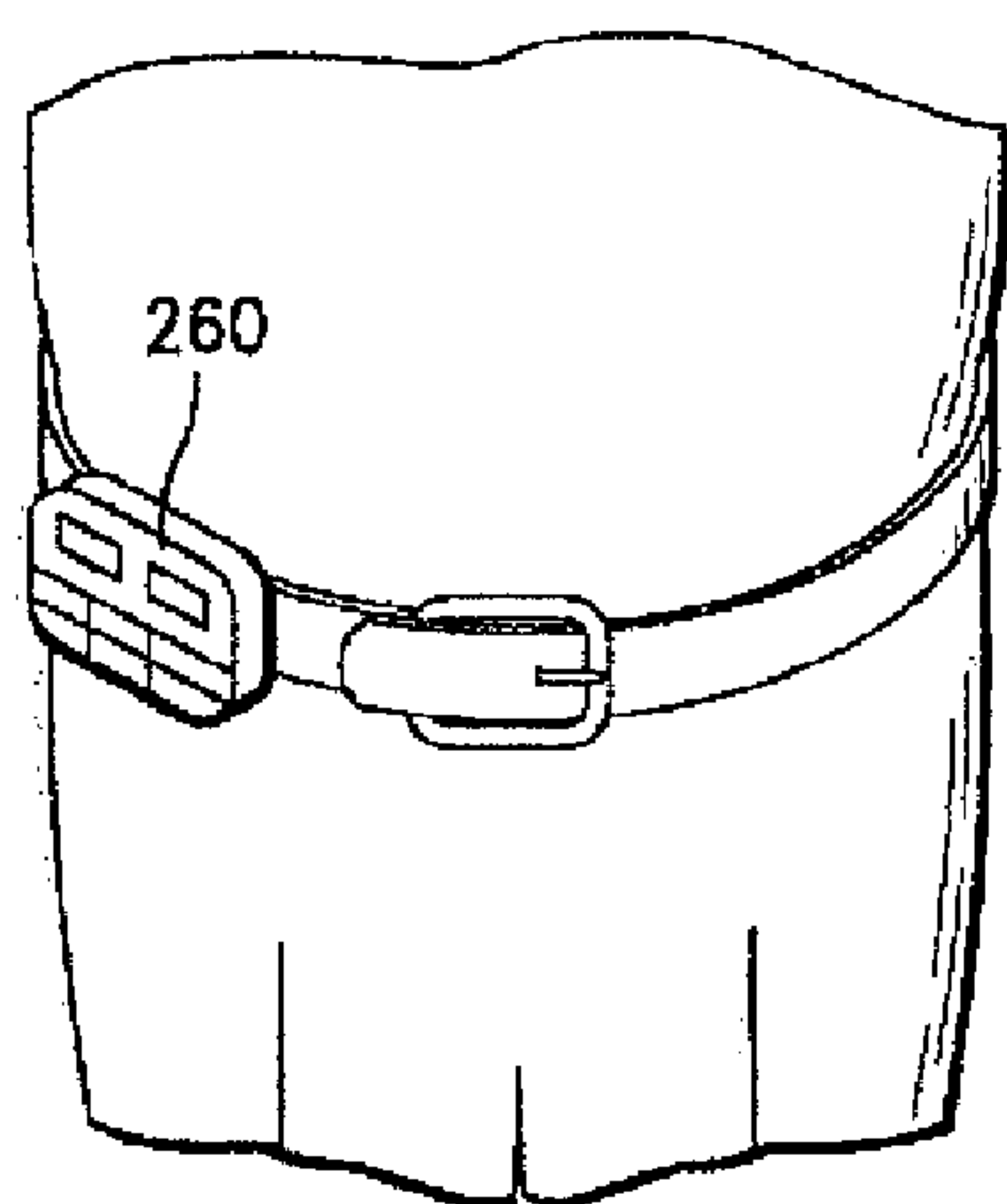


FIG. -8

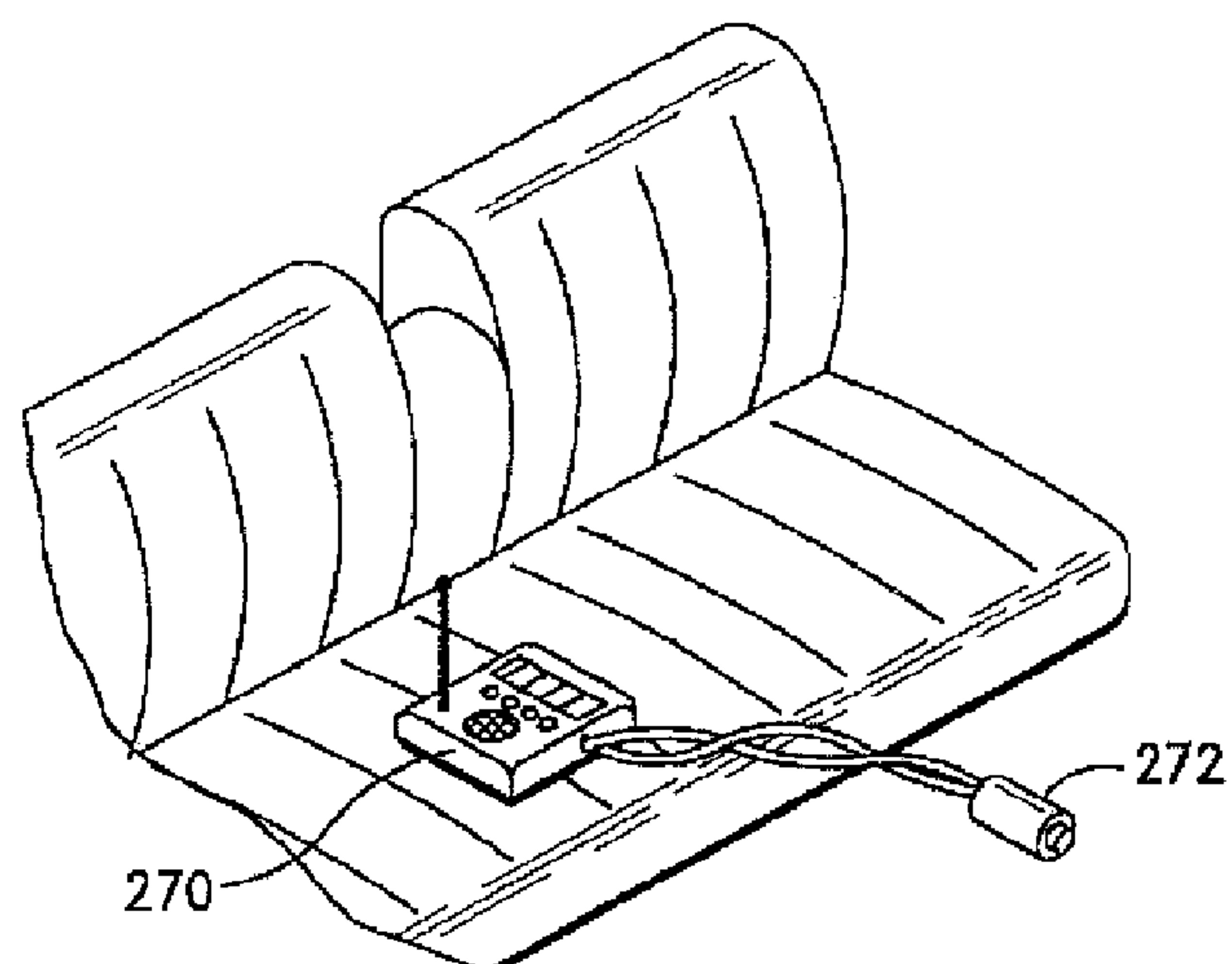


FIG. -9

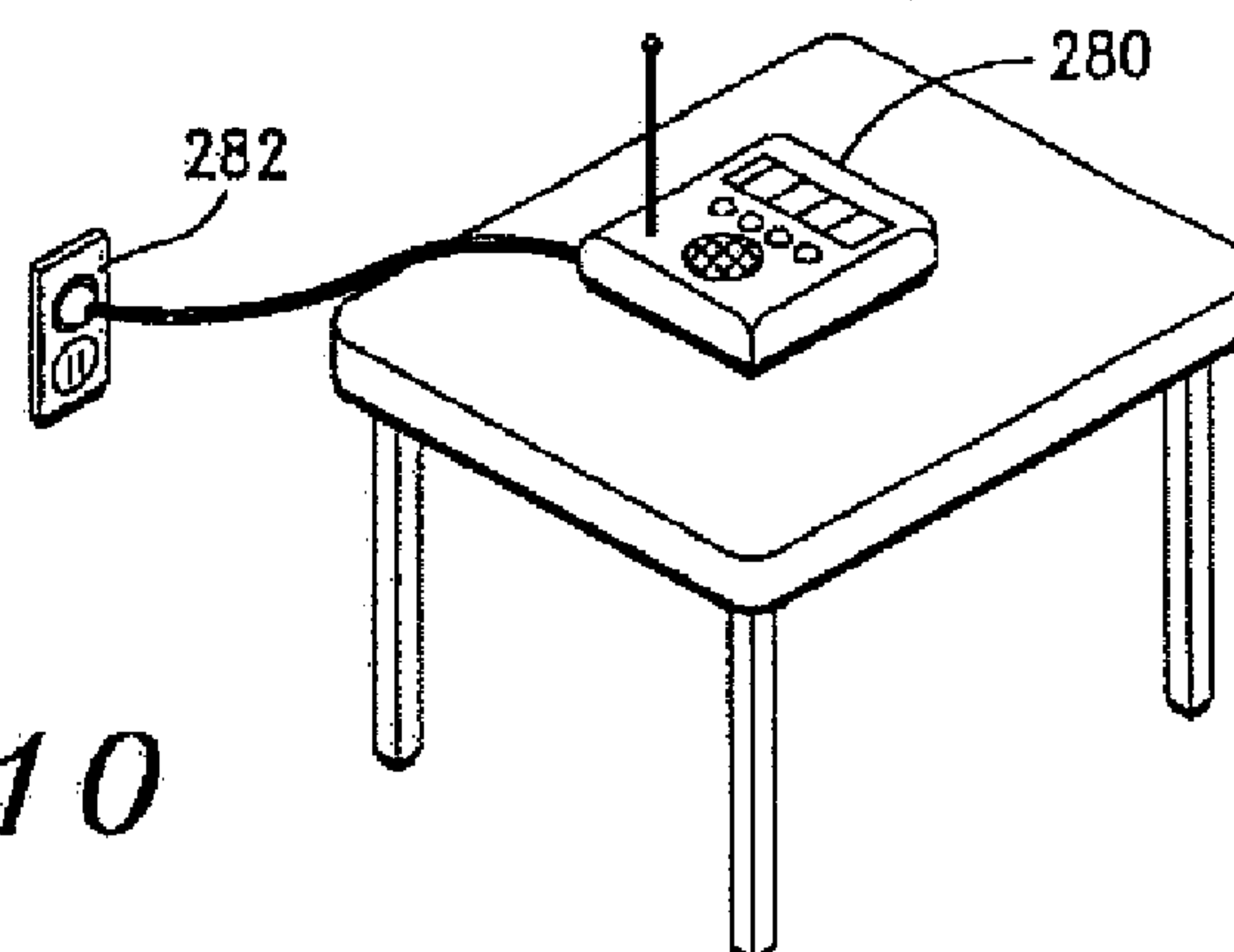


FIG. -10

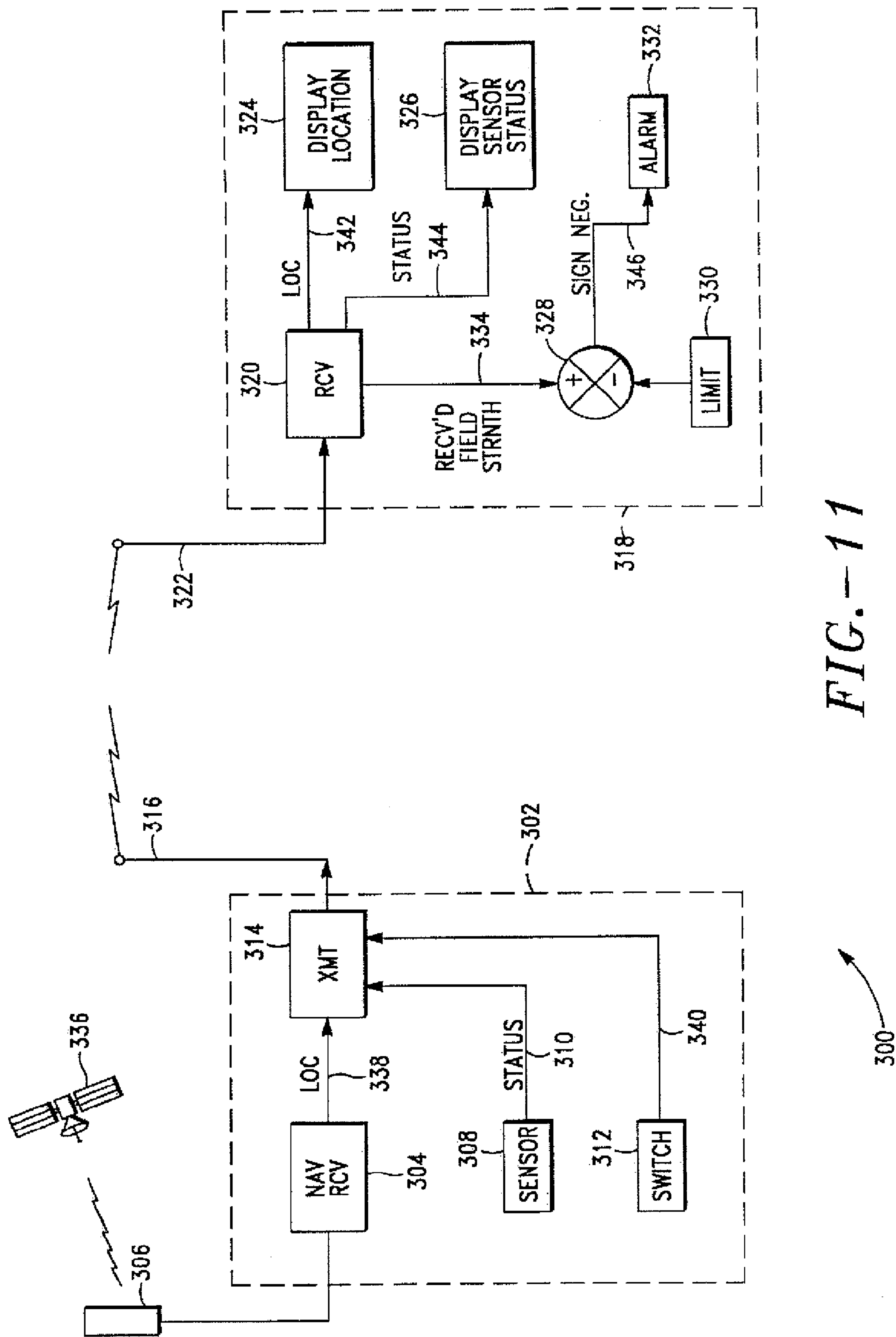


FIG.-11

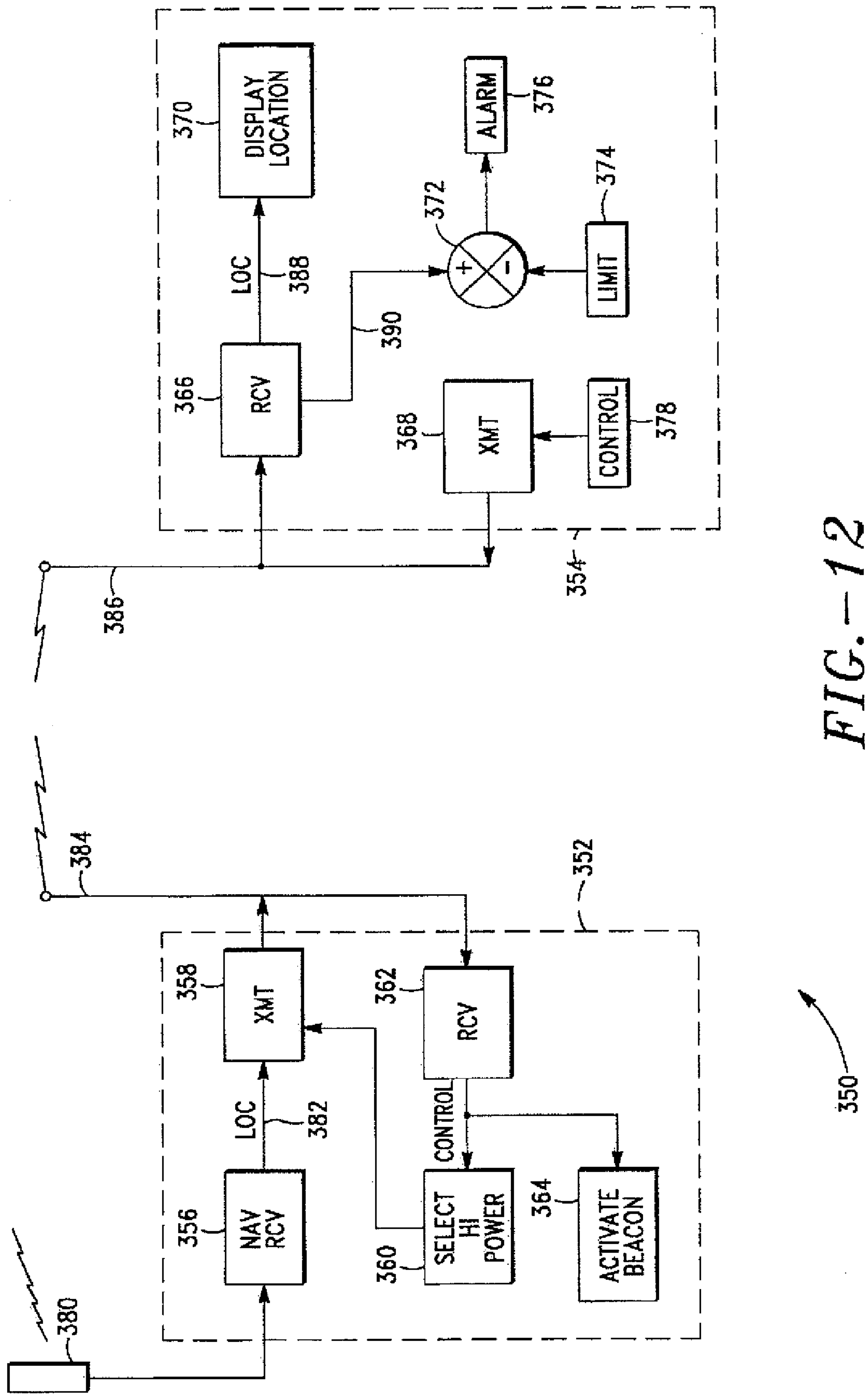
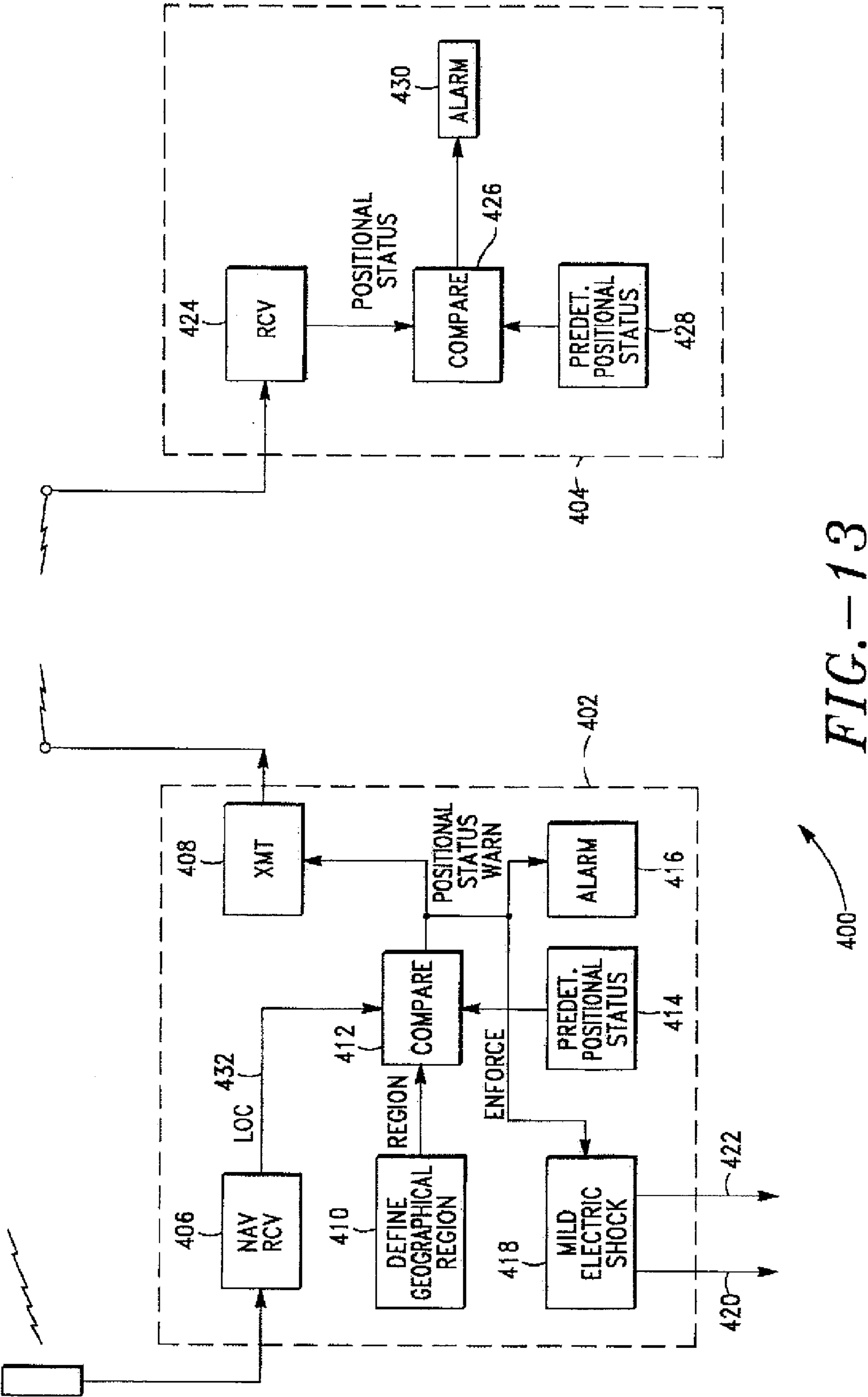


FIG.-12



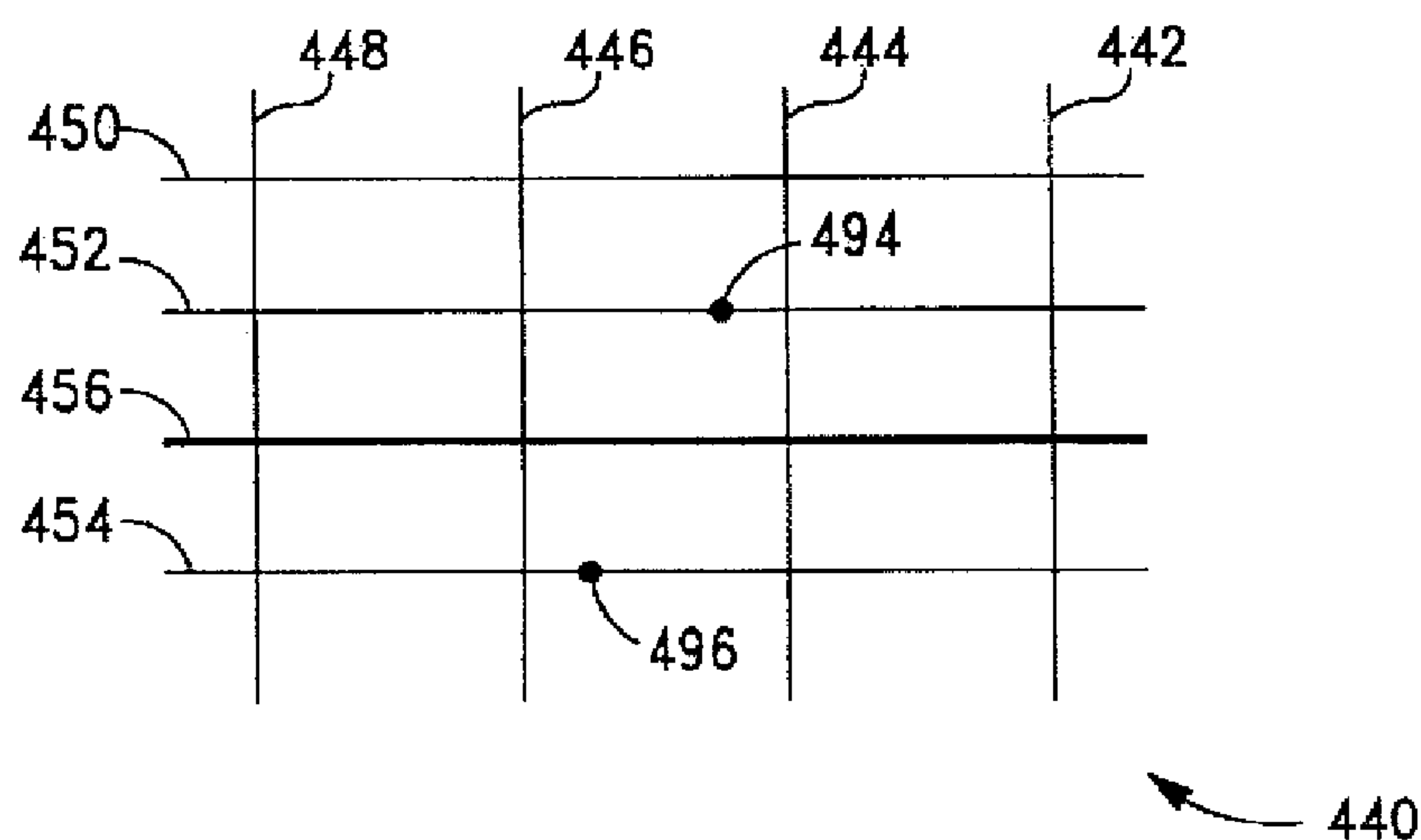


FIG.-14

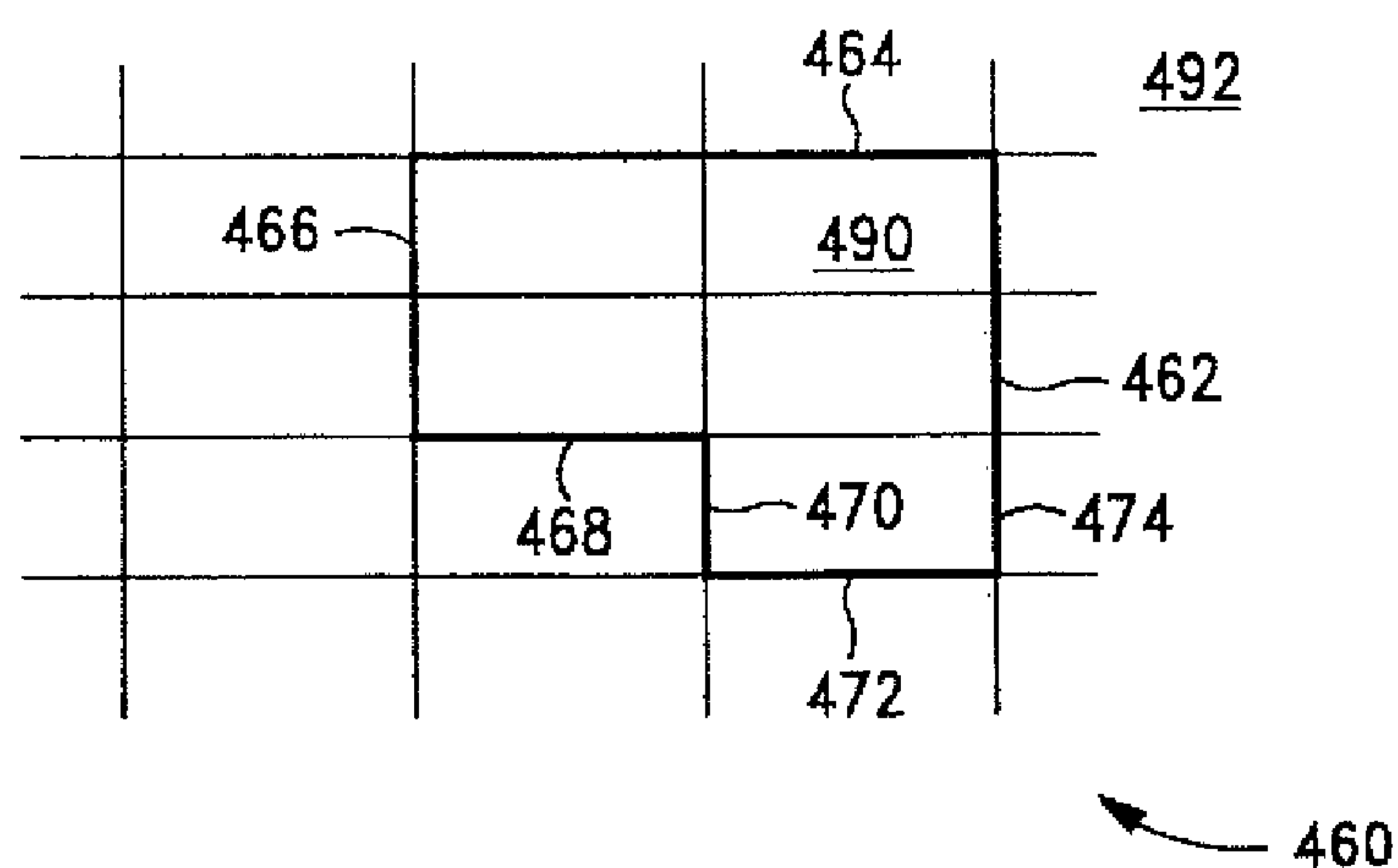


FIG.-15

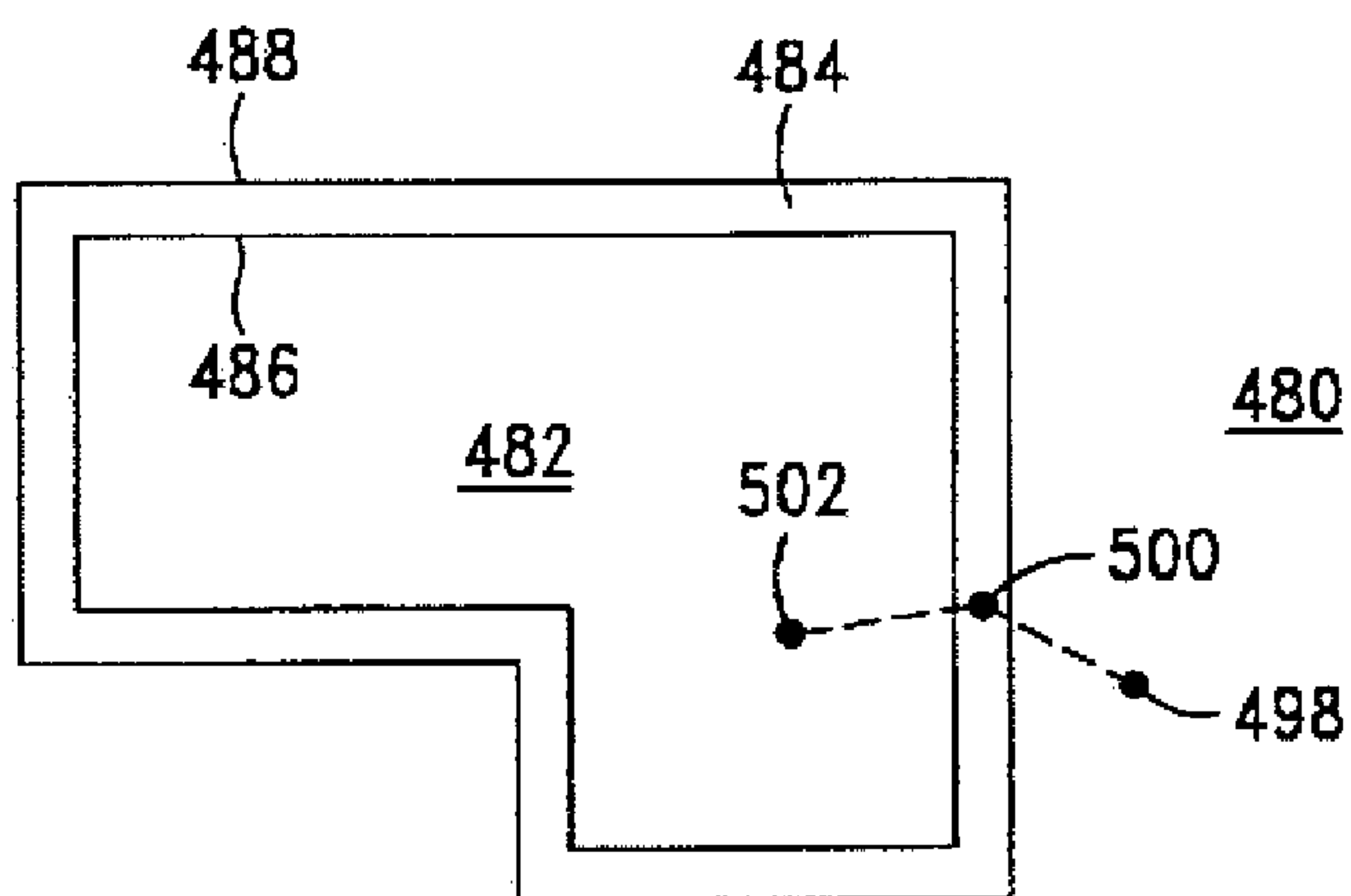


FIG.-16

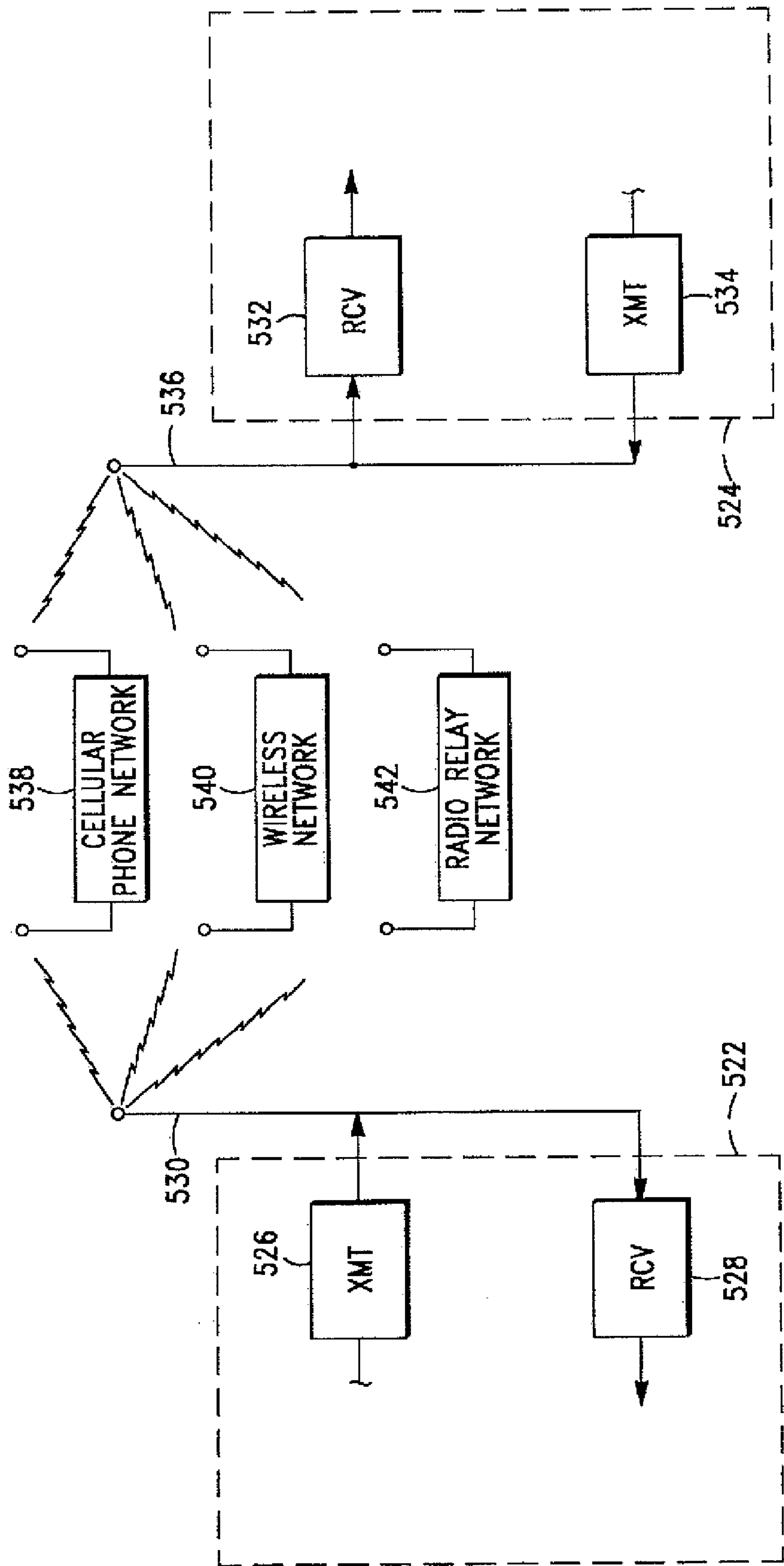


FIG.-17

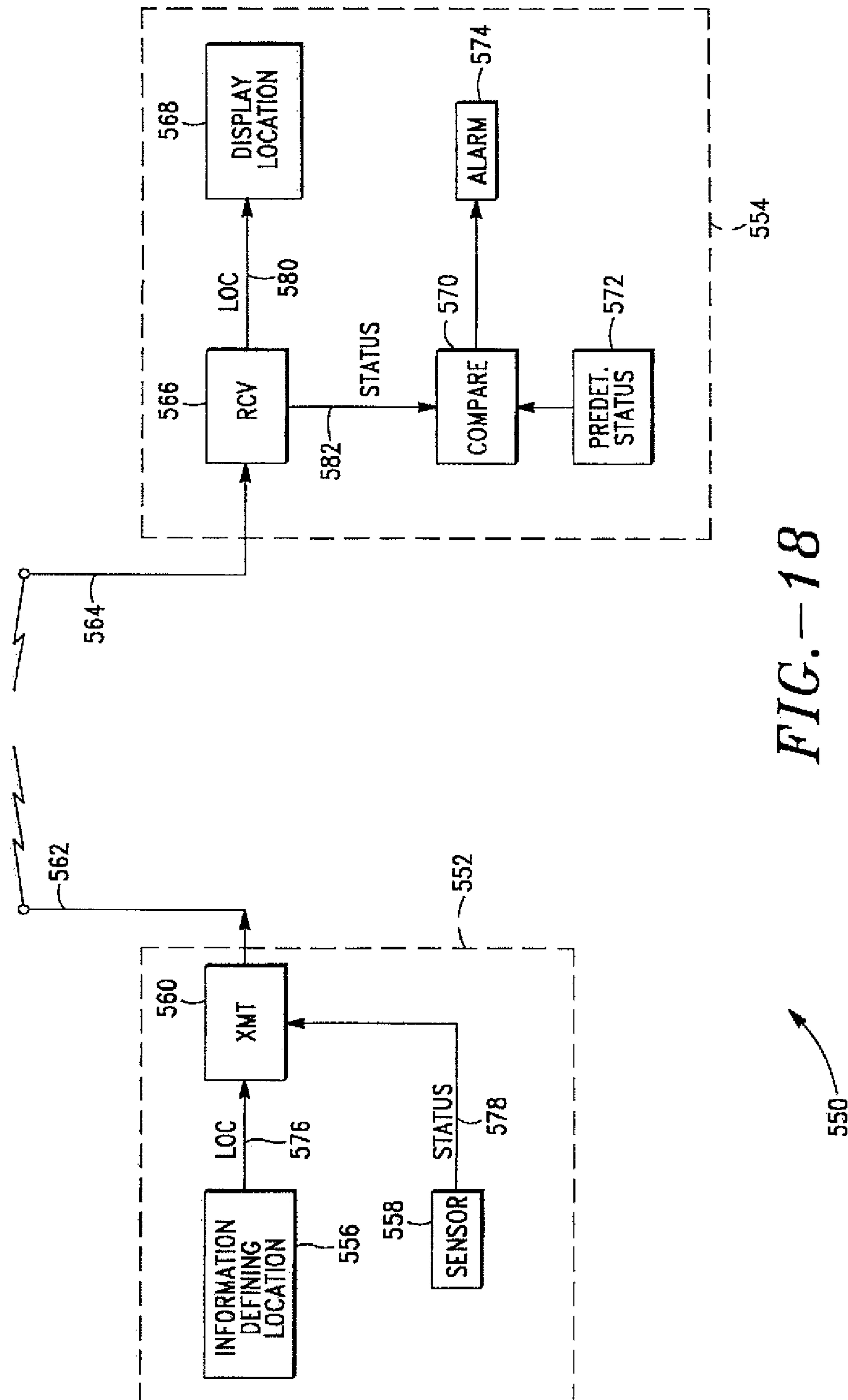


FIG. - 18

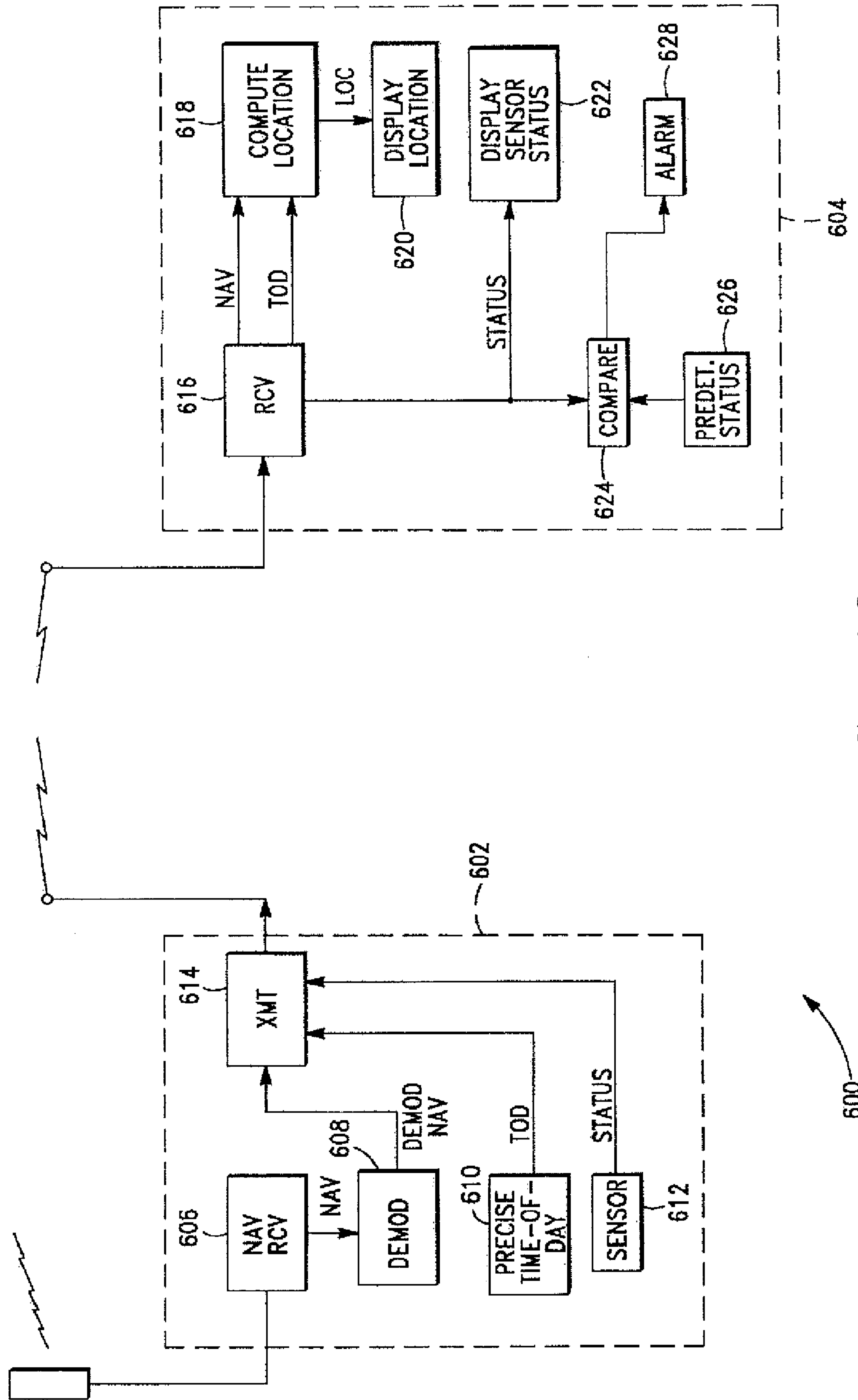


FIG. - 19

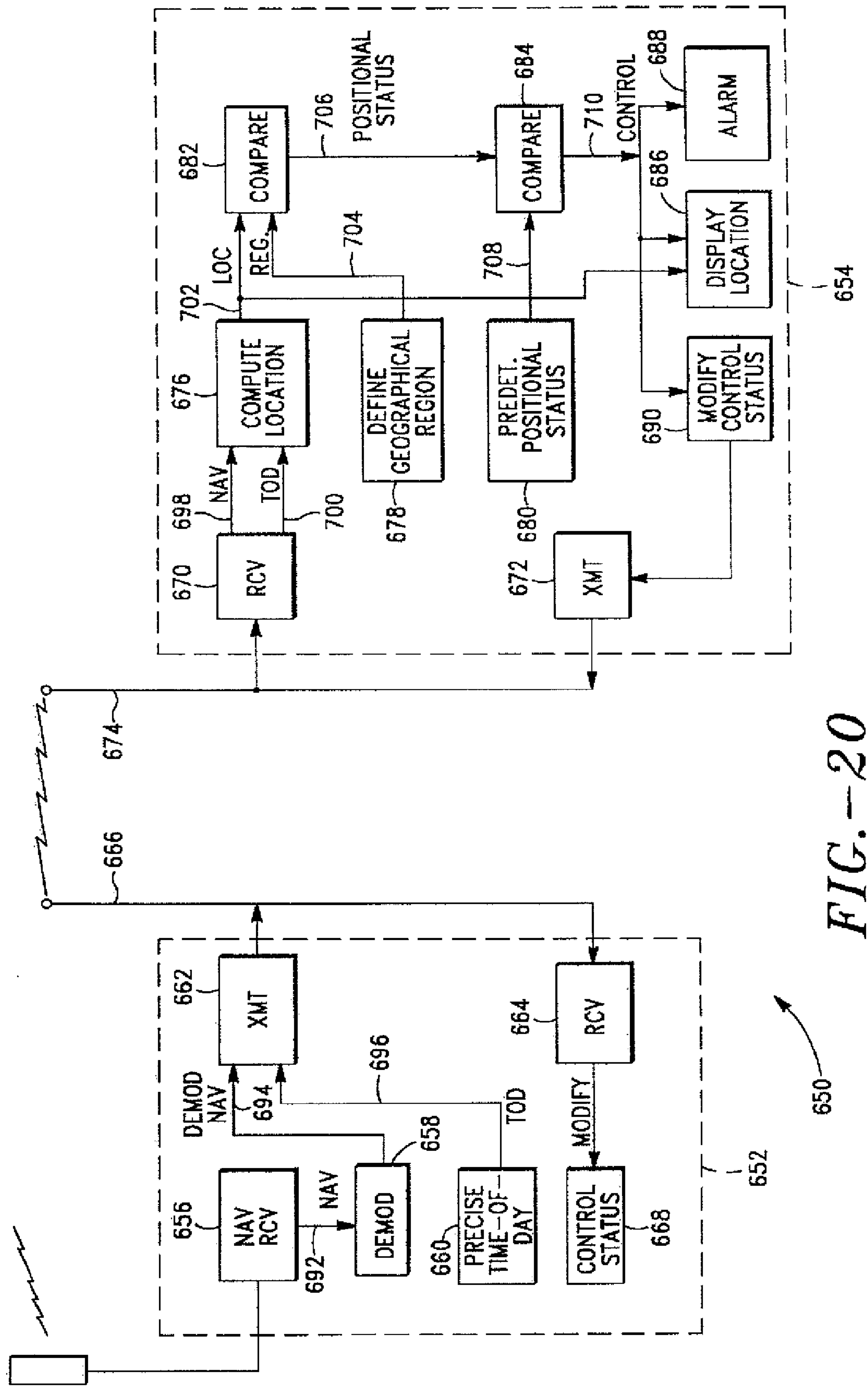


FIG.-20

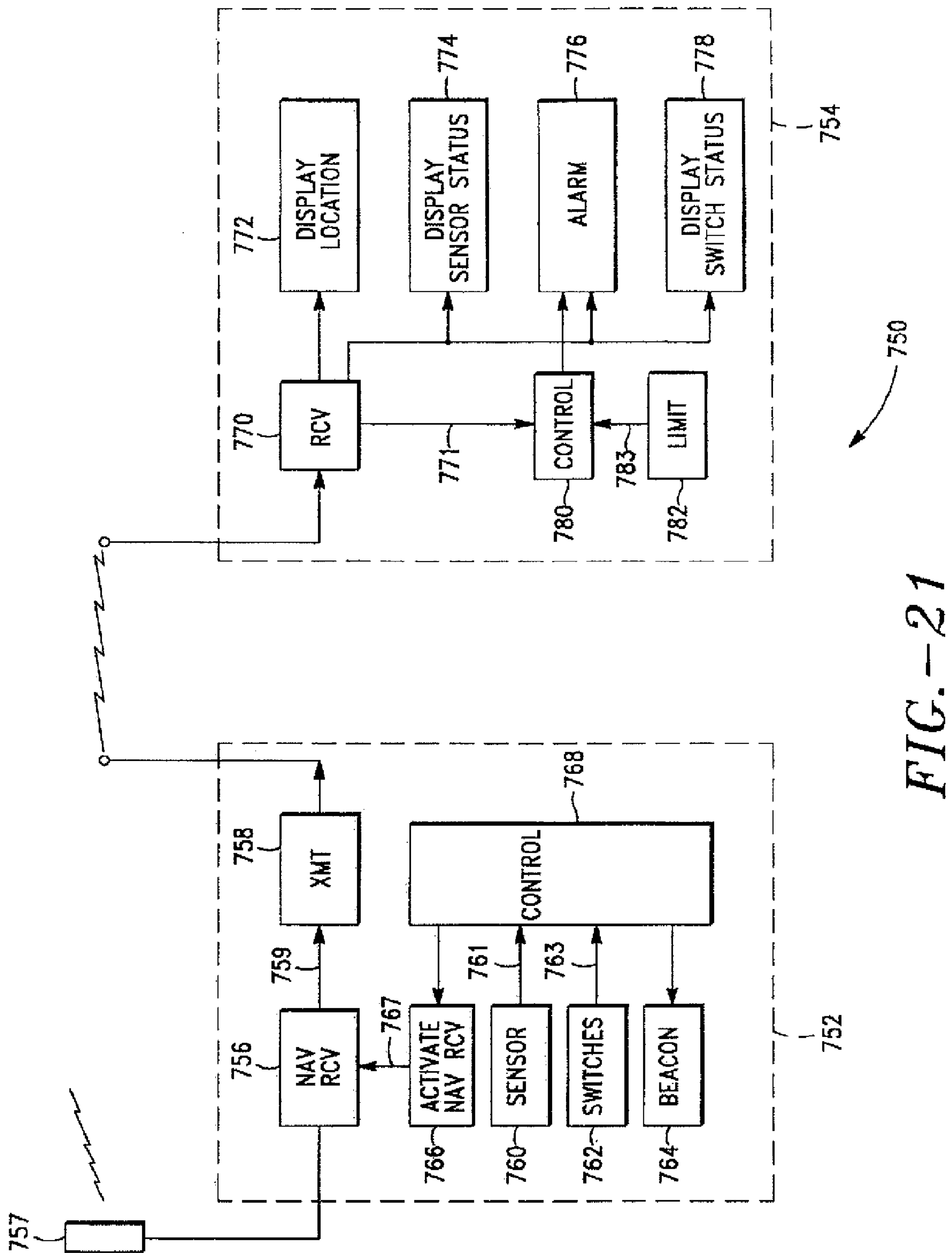
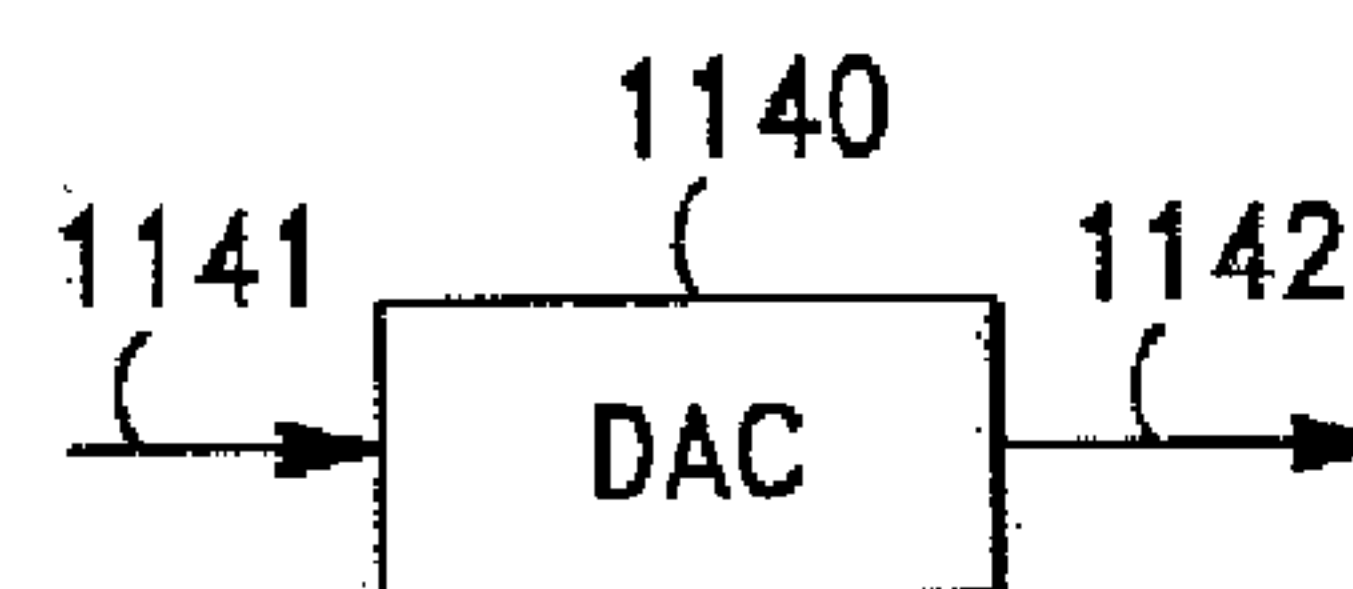
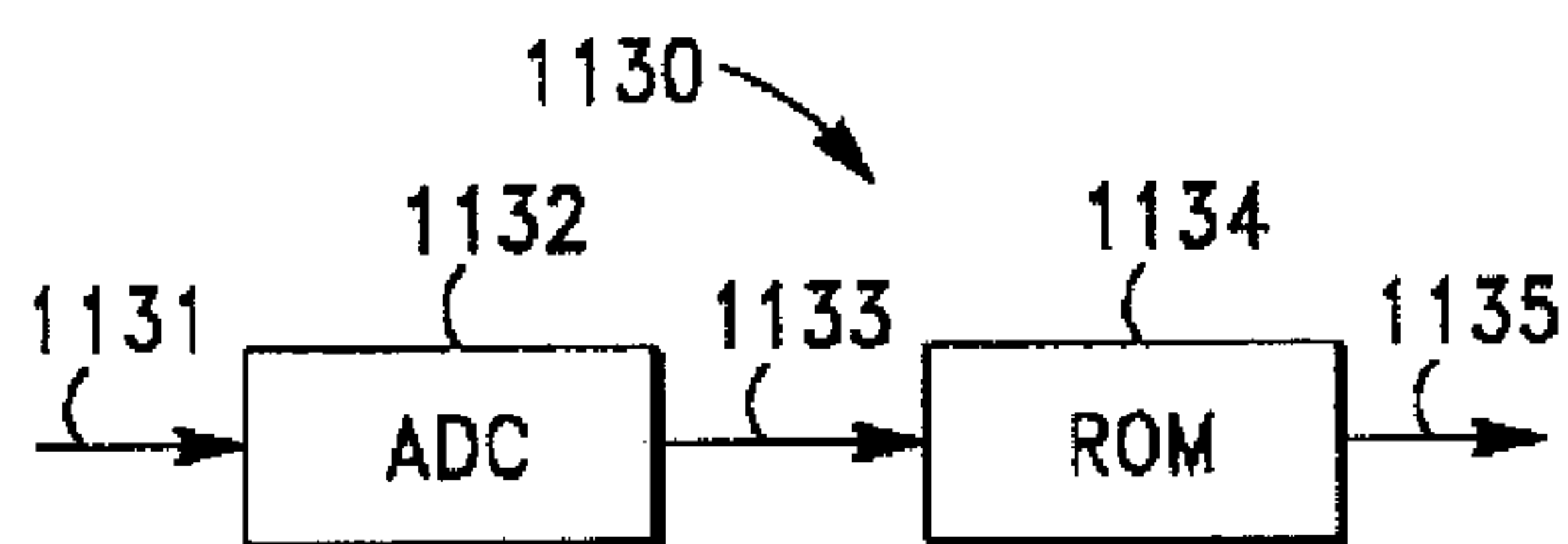
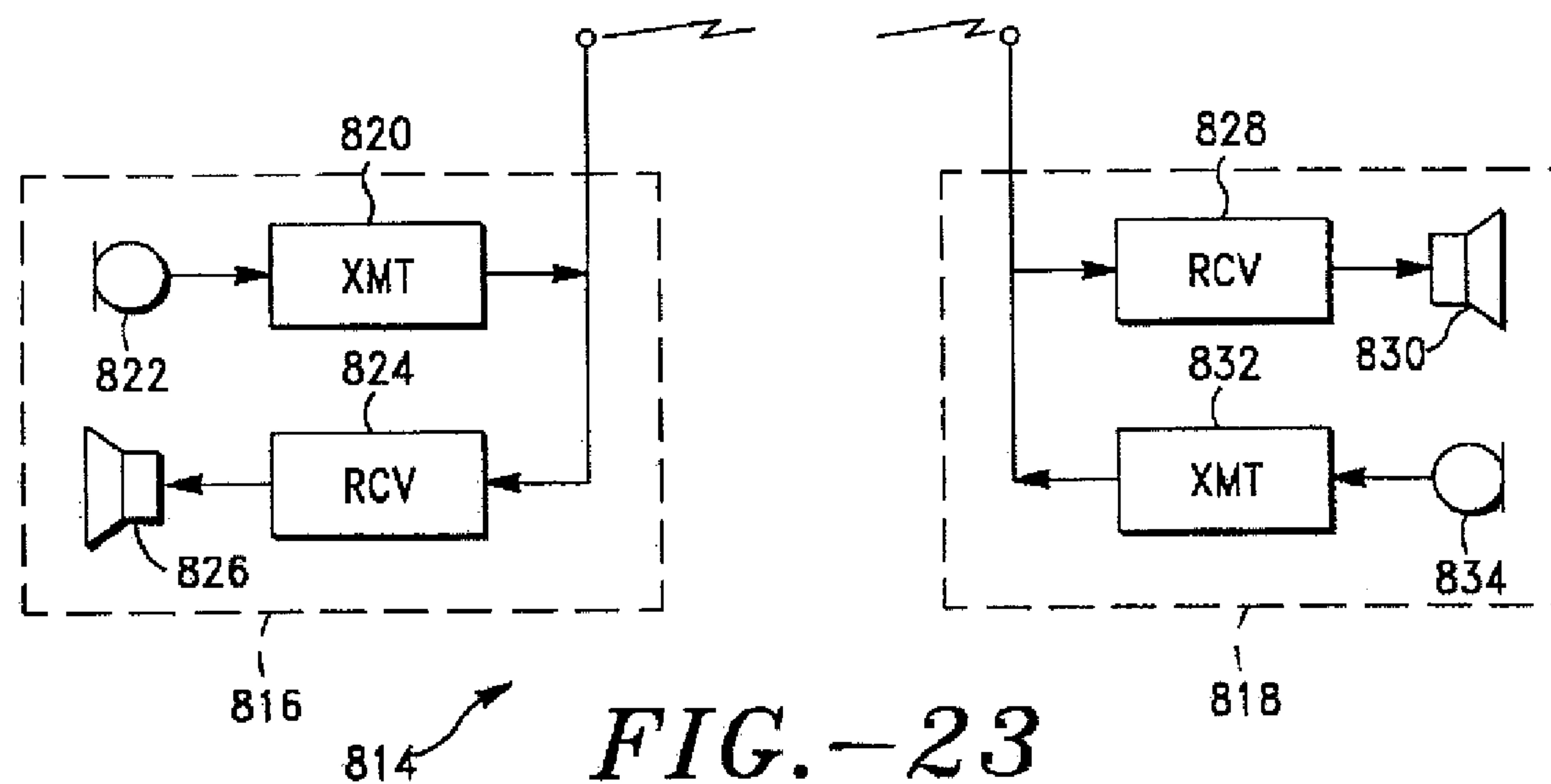
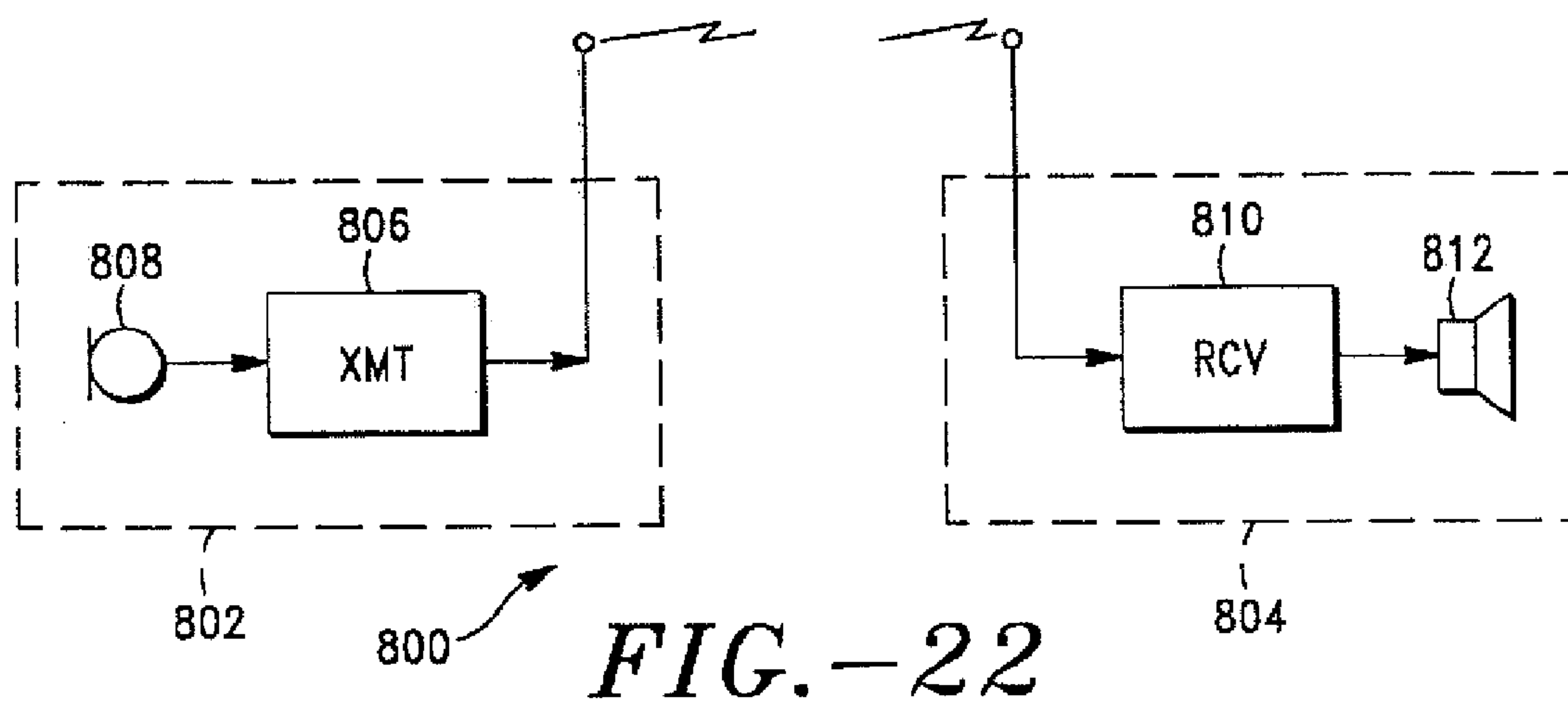


FIG.-21



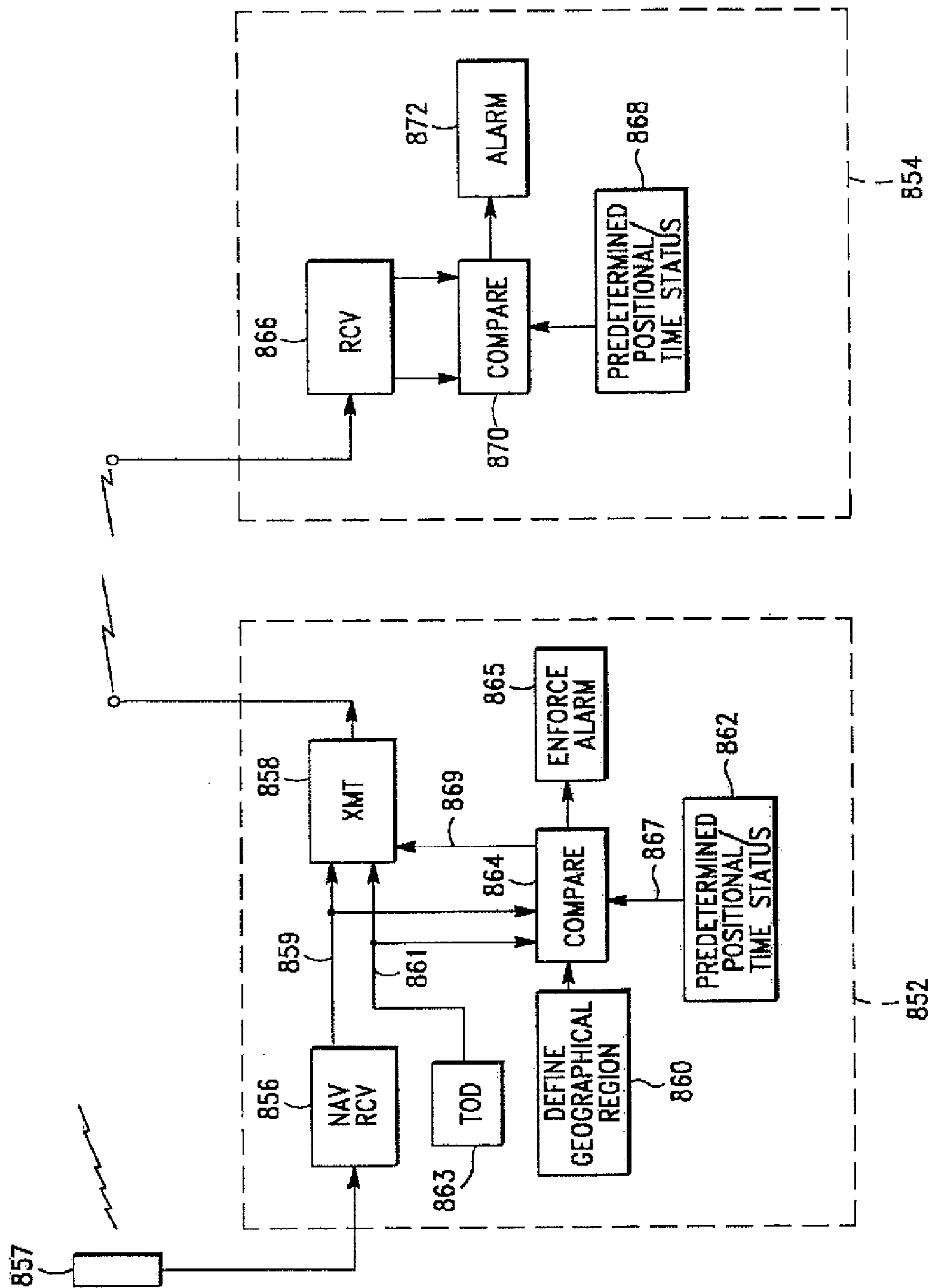


FIG.-24

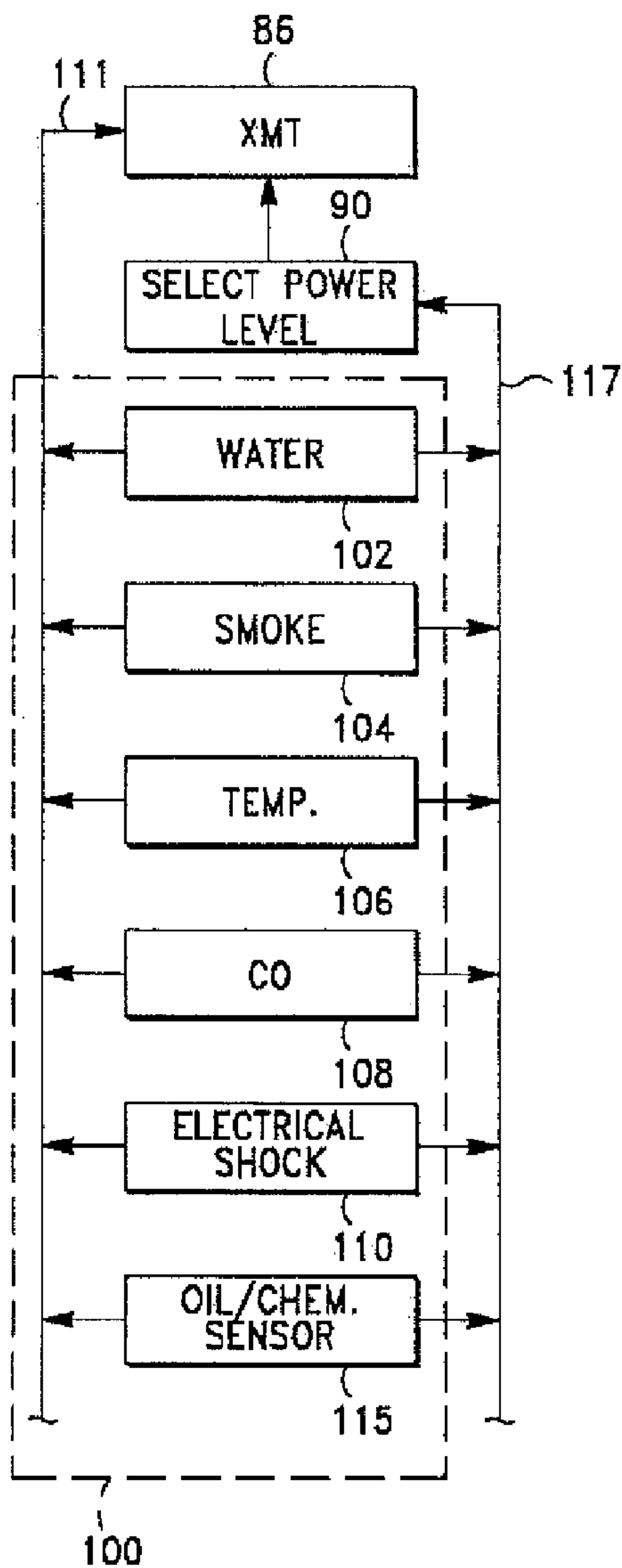


FIG.-29

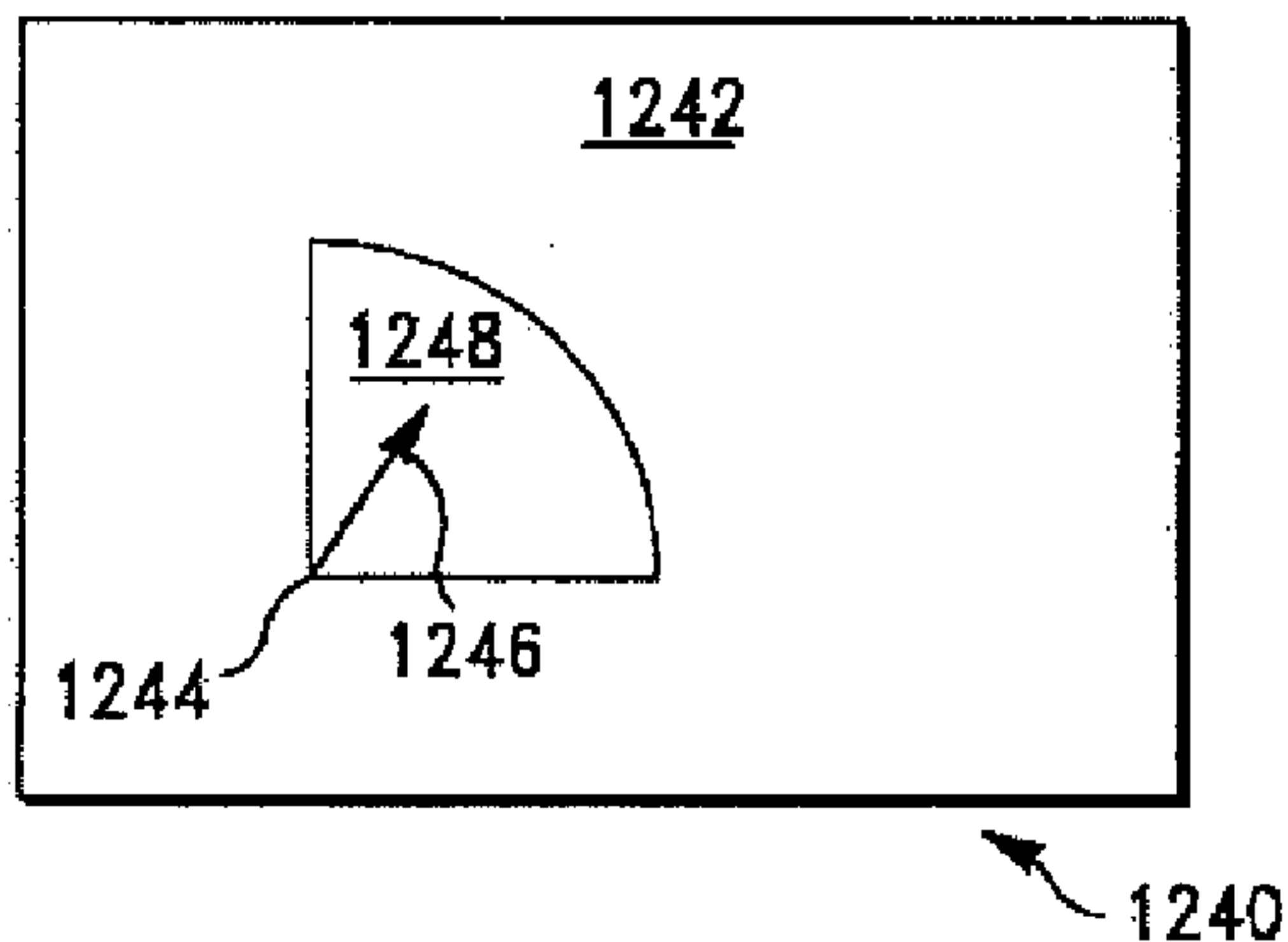


FIG.-36

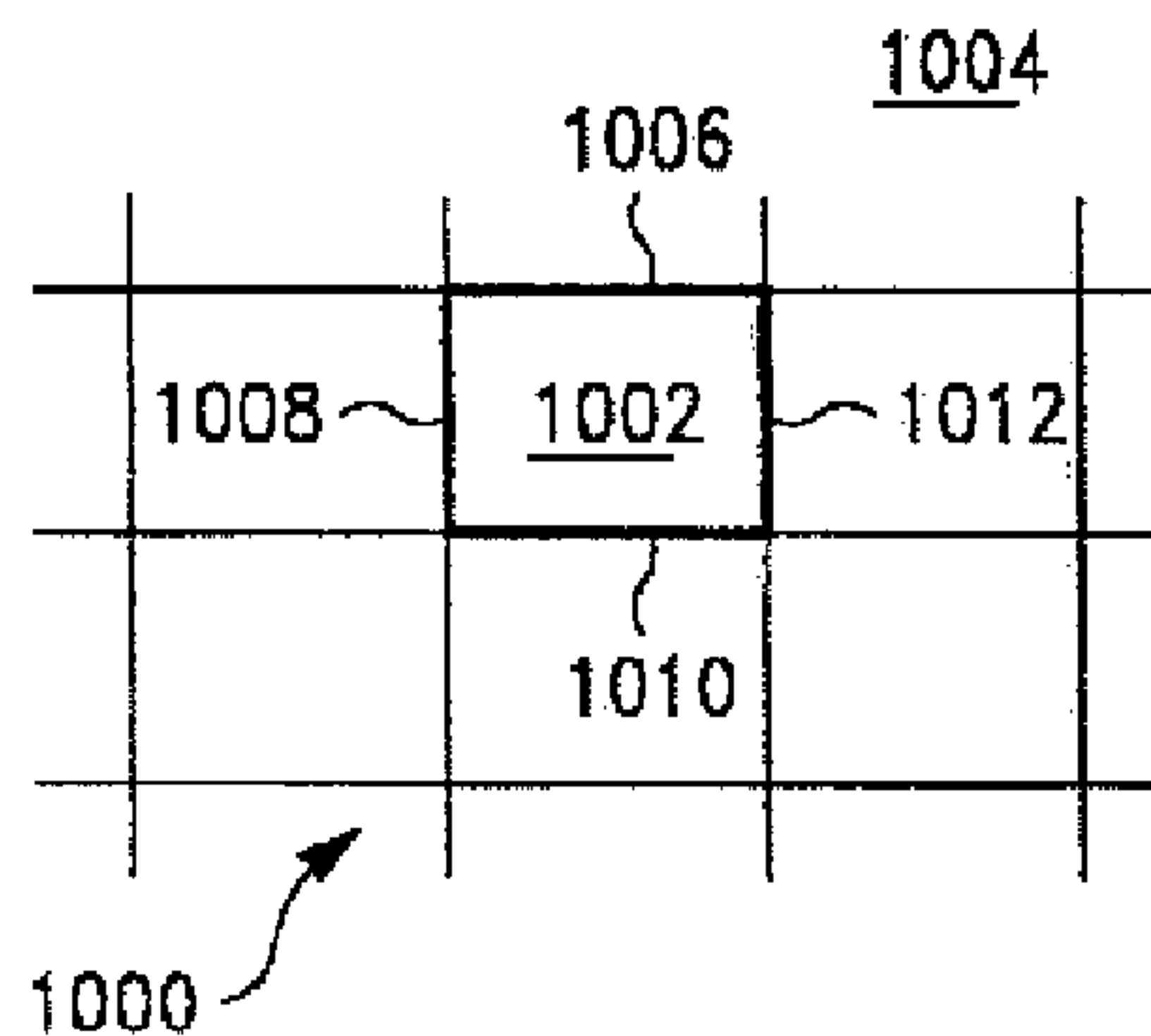


FIG.-25

LOCATION	TIME	
	8PM-7PM	7PM-8PM
HOME	OK	OK
NOT-HOME	ALARM	OK

FIG.-26

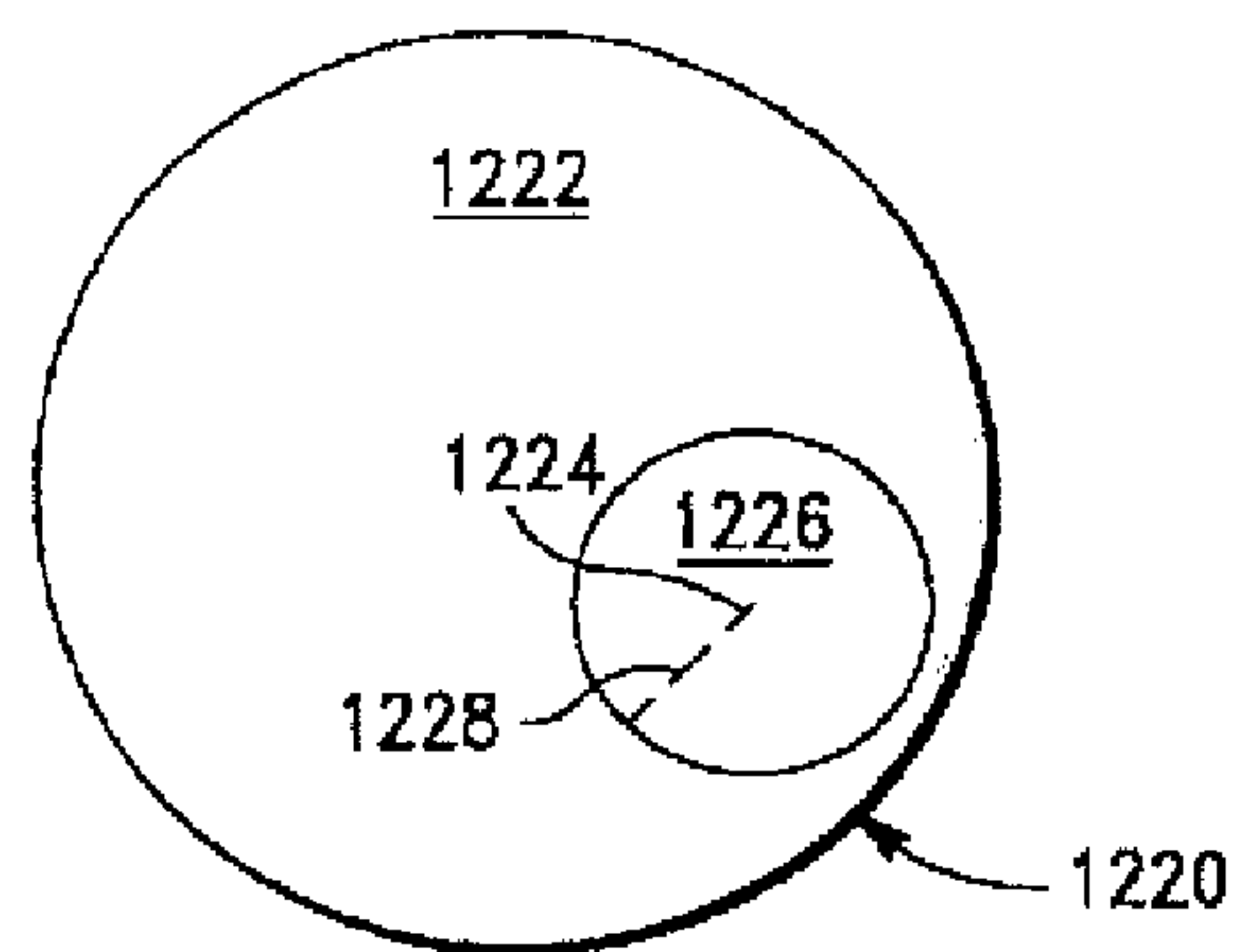


FIG.-35

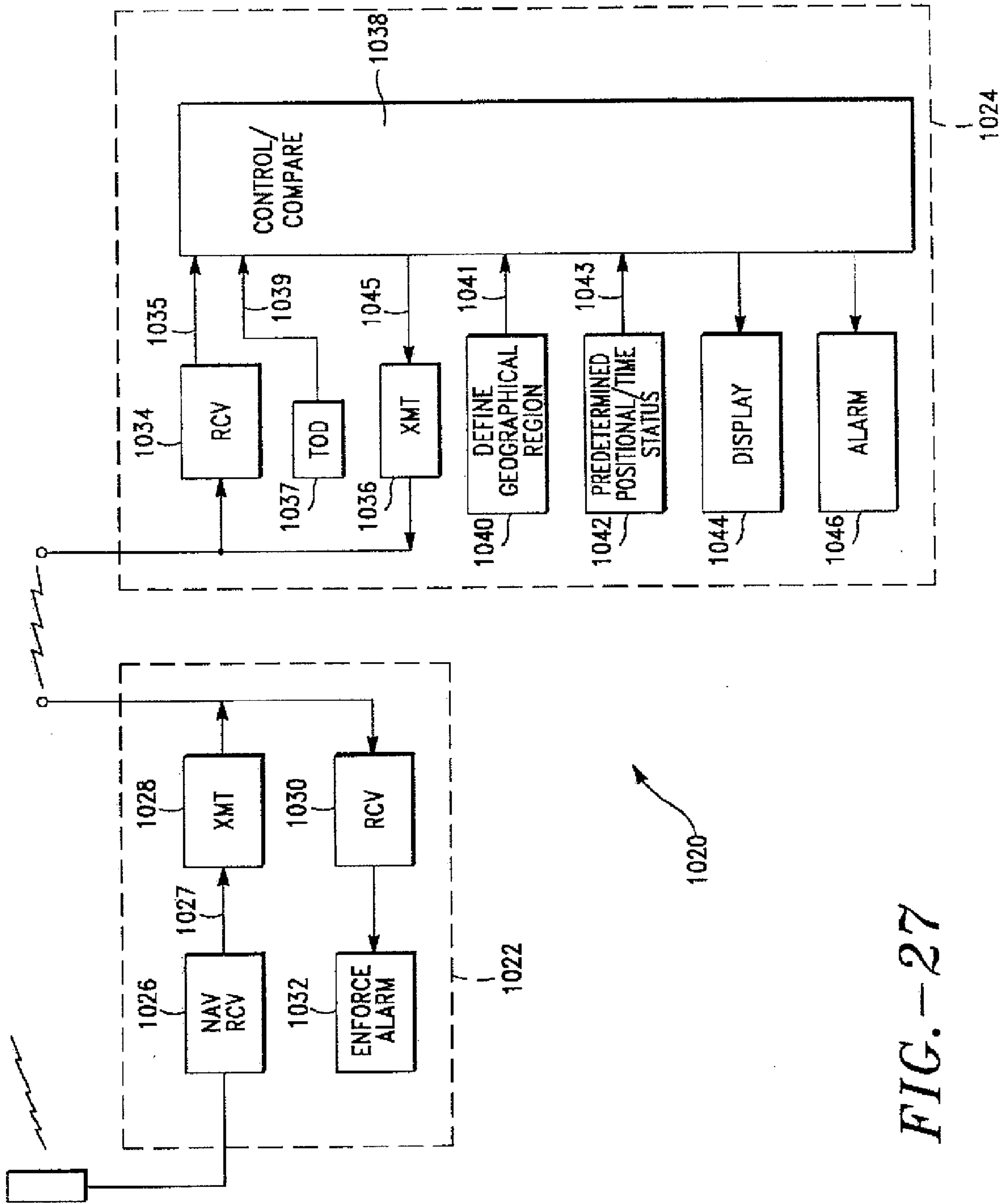
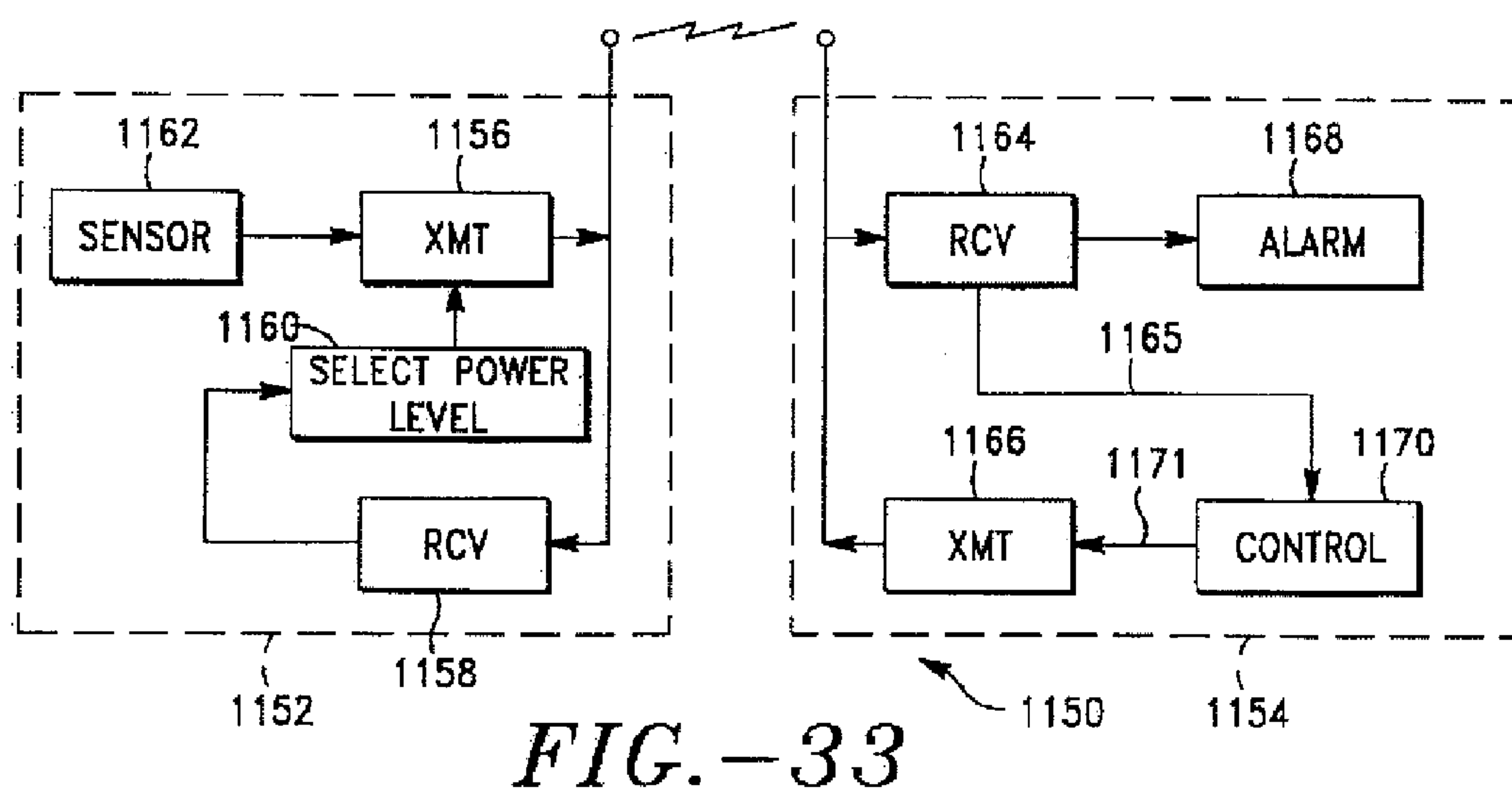
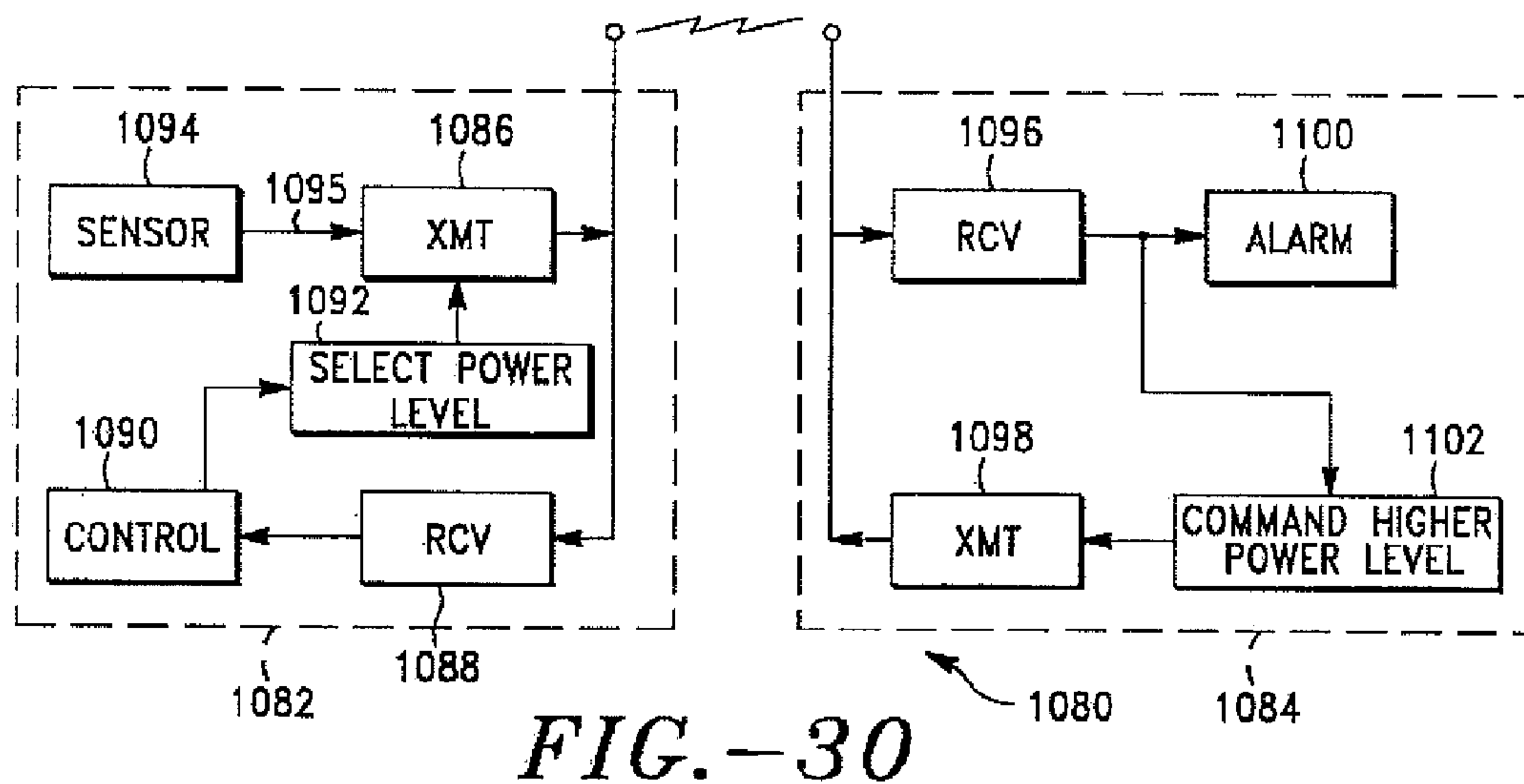
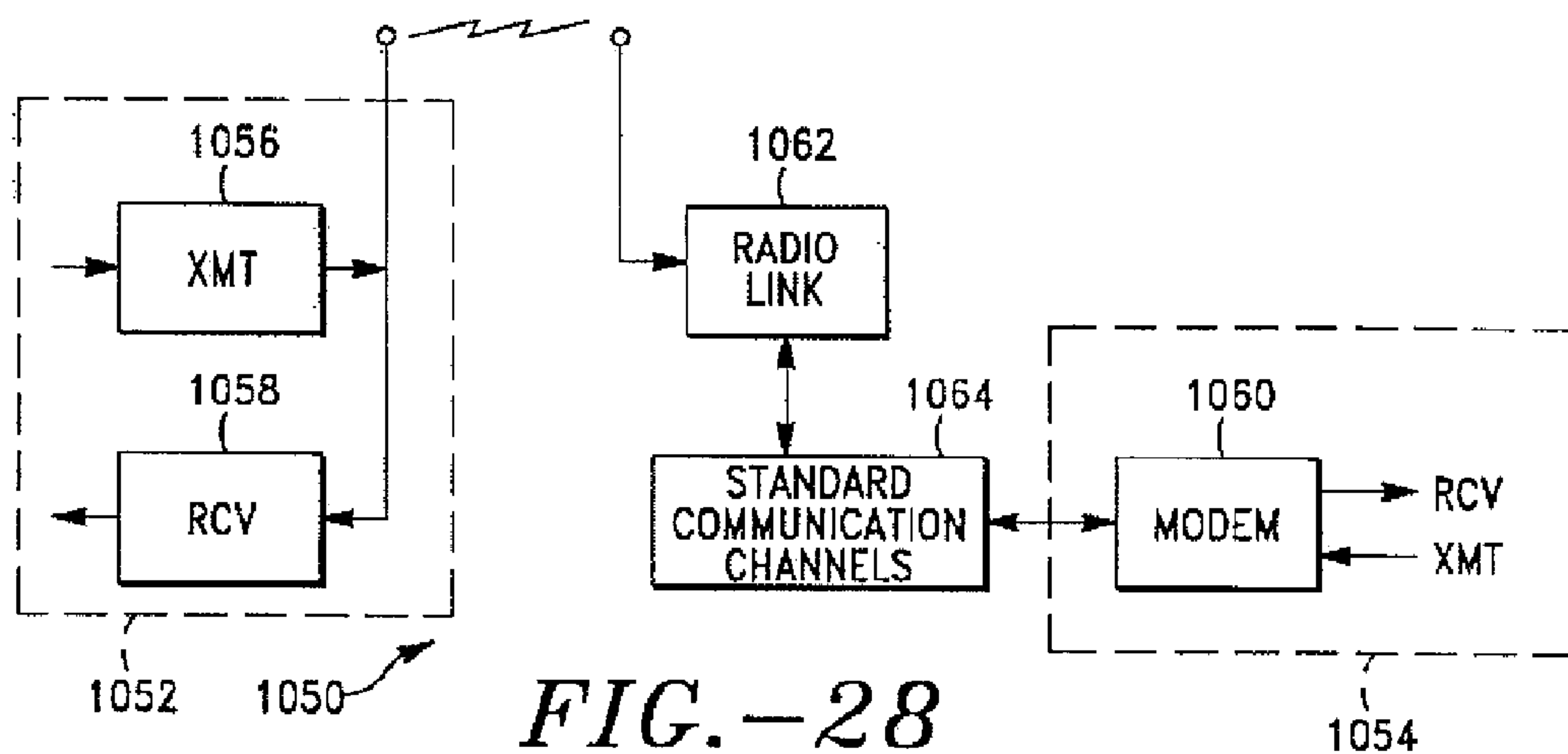


FIG.-27



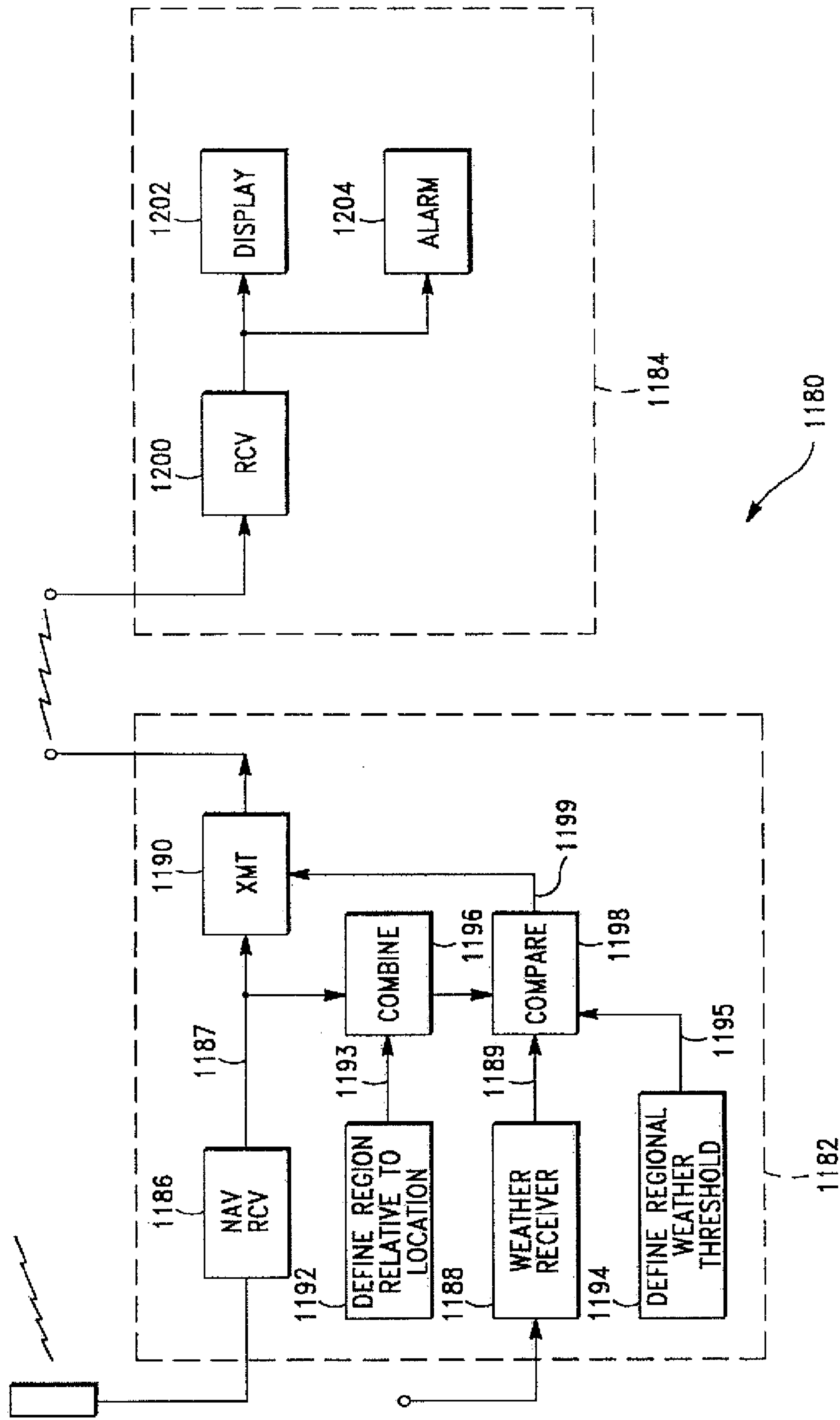


FIG.-34

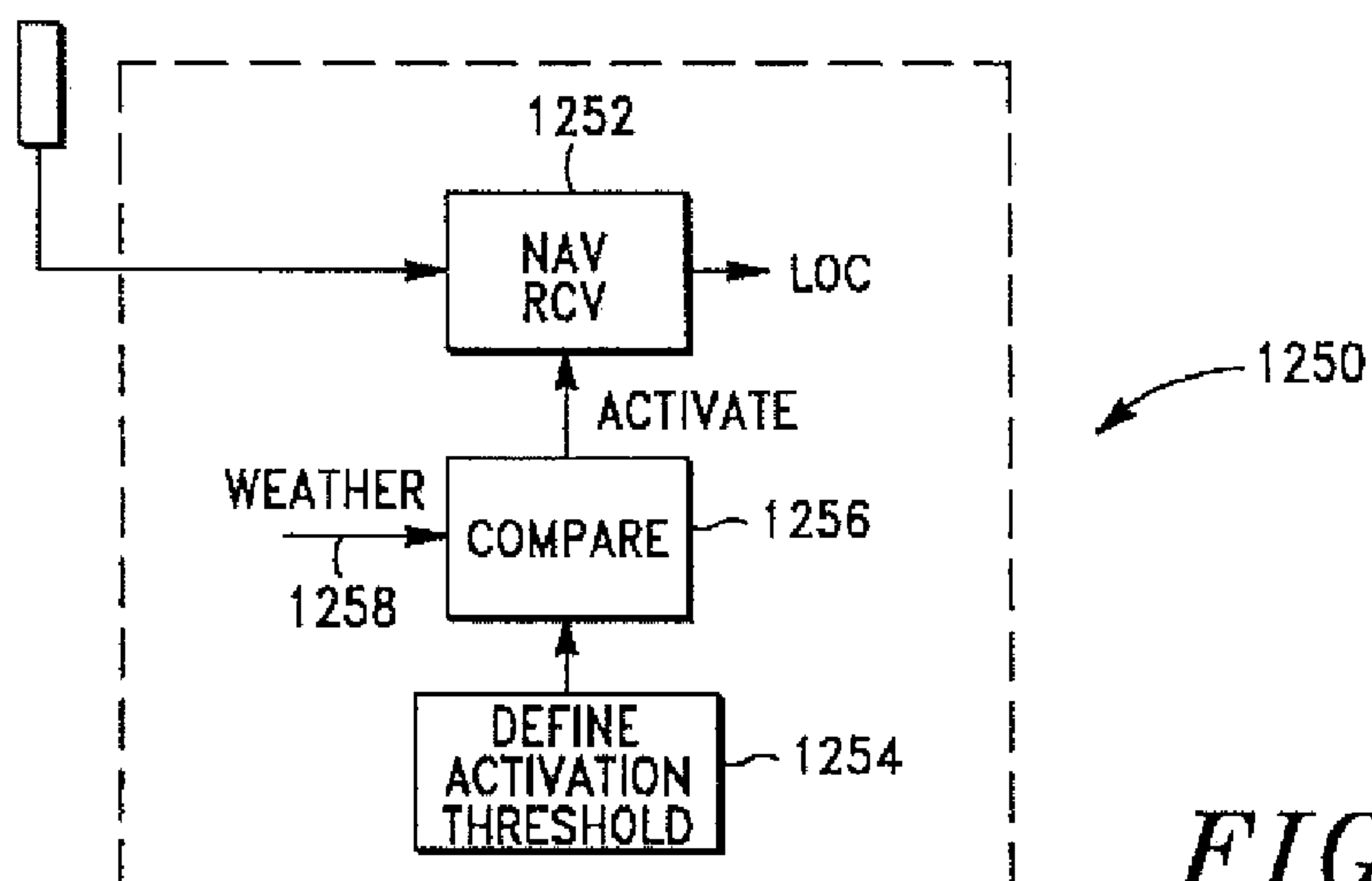


FIG. -37

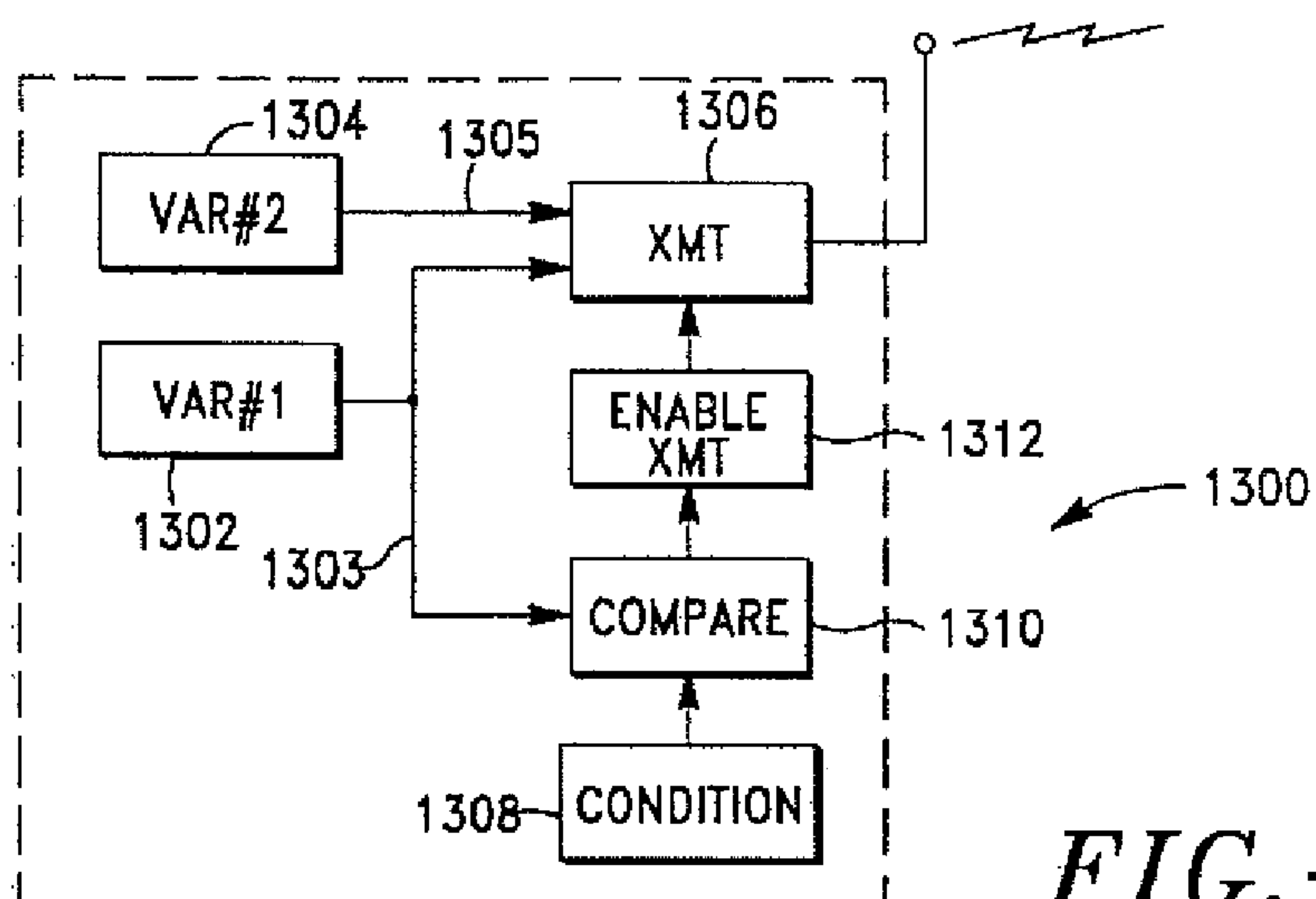


FIG. -39

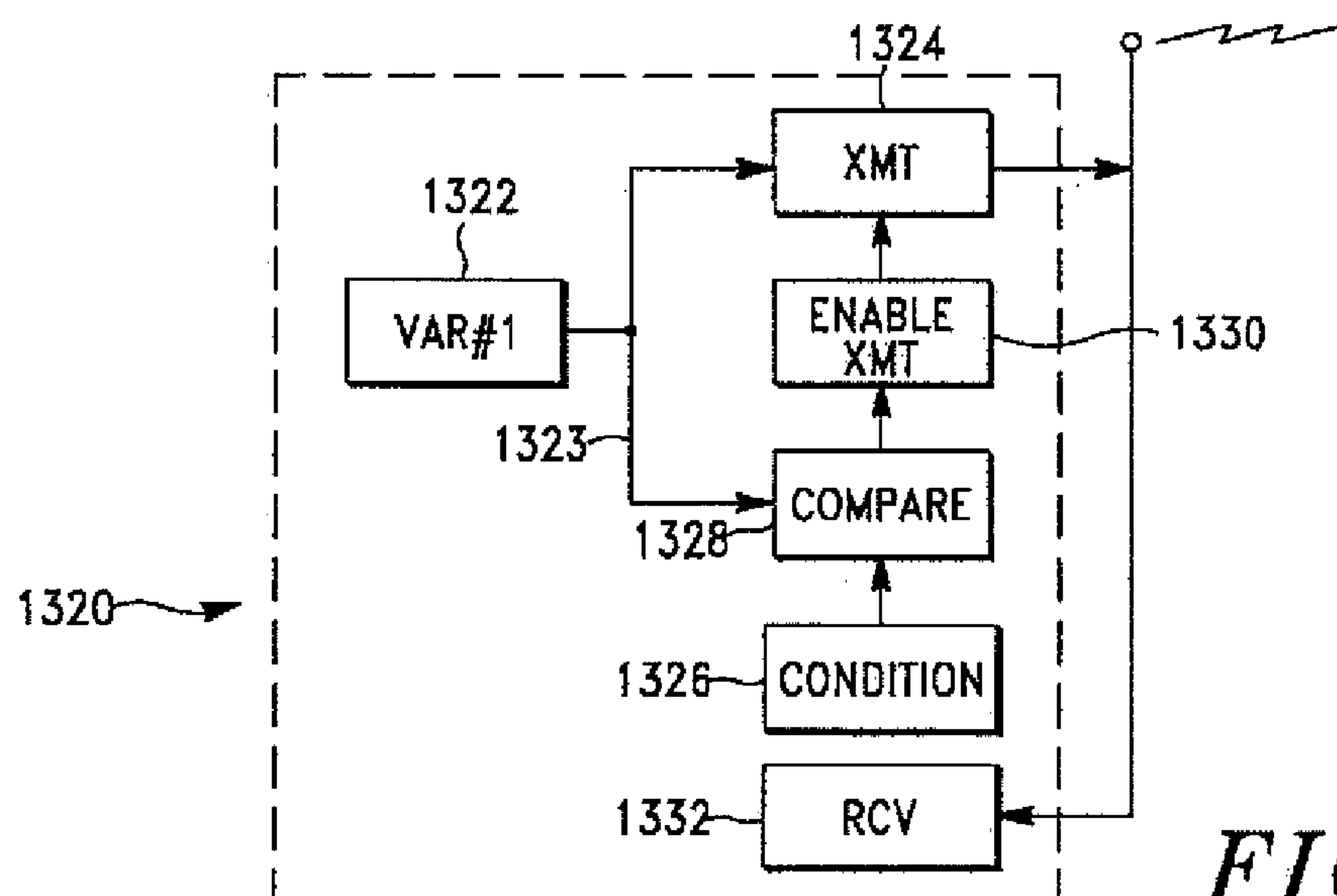


FIG. -40

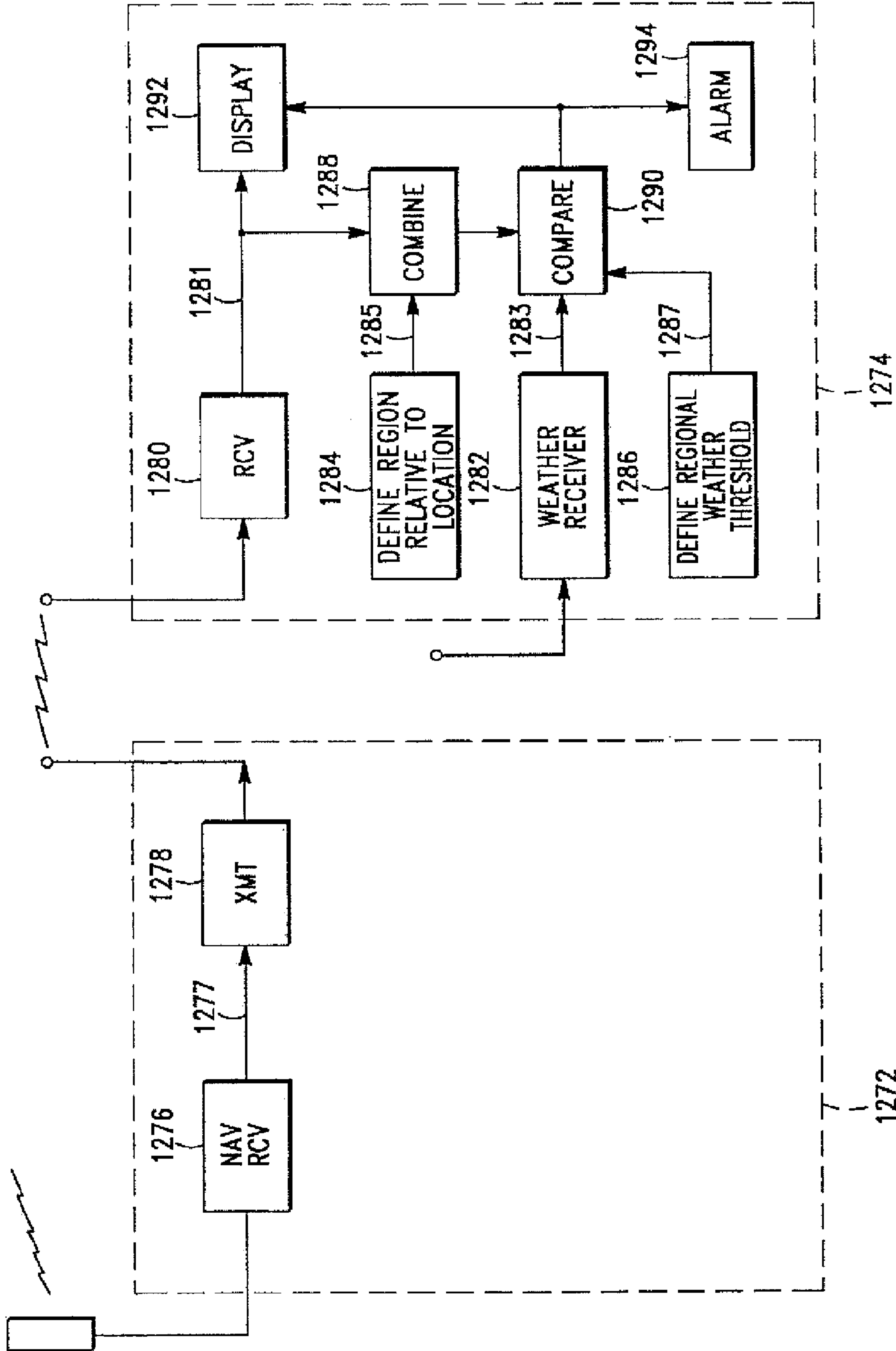


FIG.-38

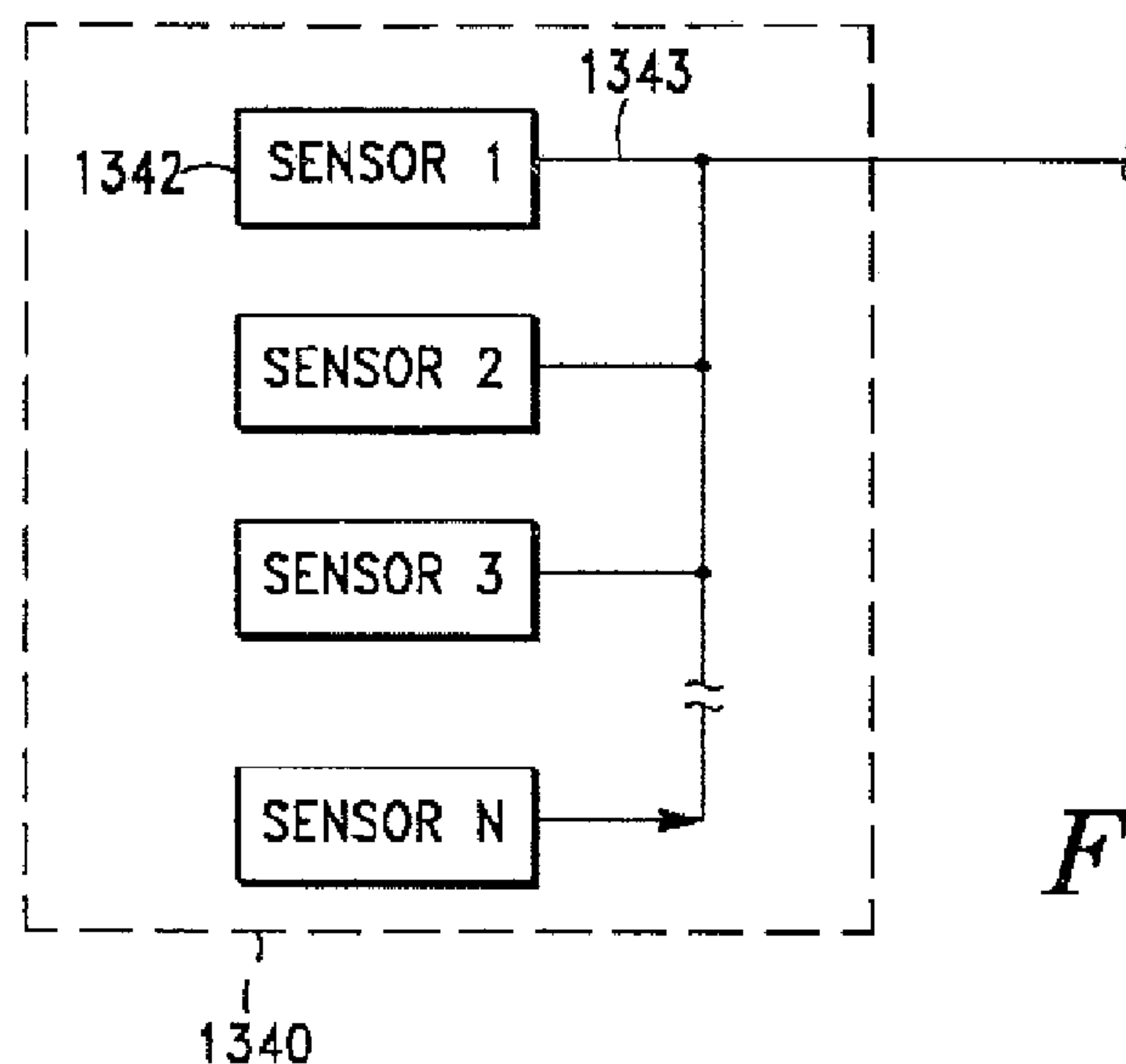


FIG. -41

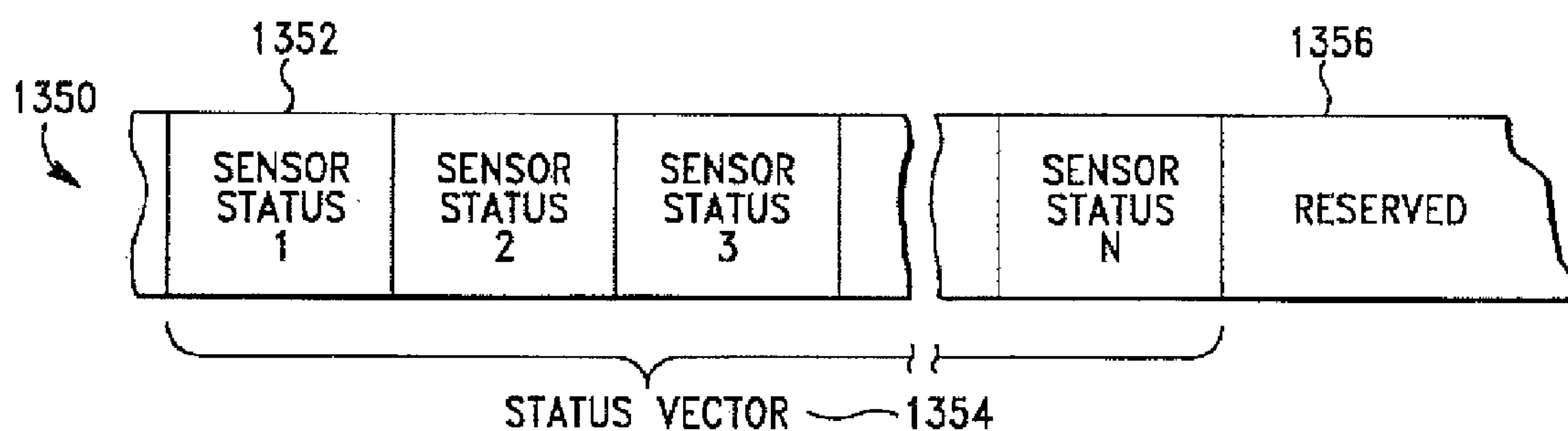


FIG. -42

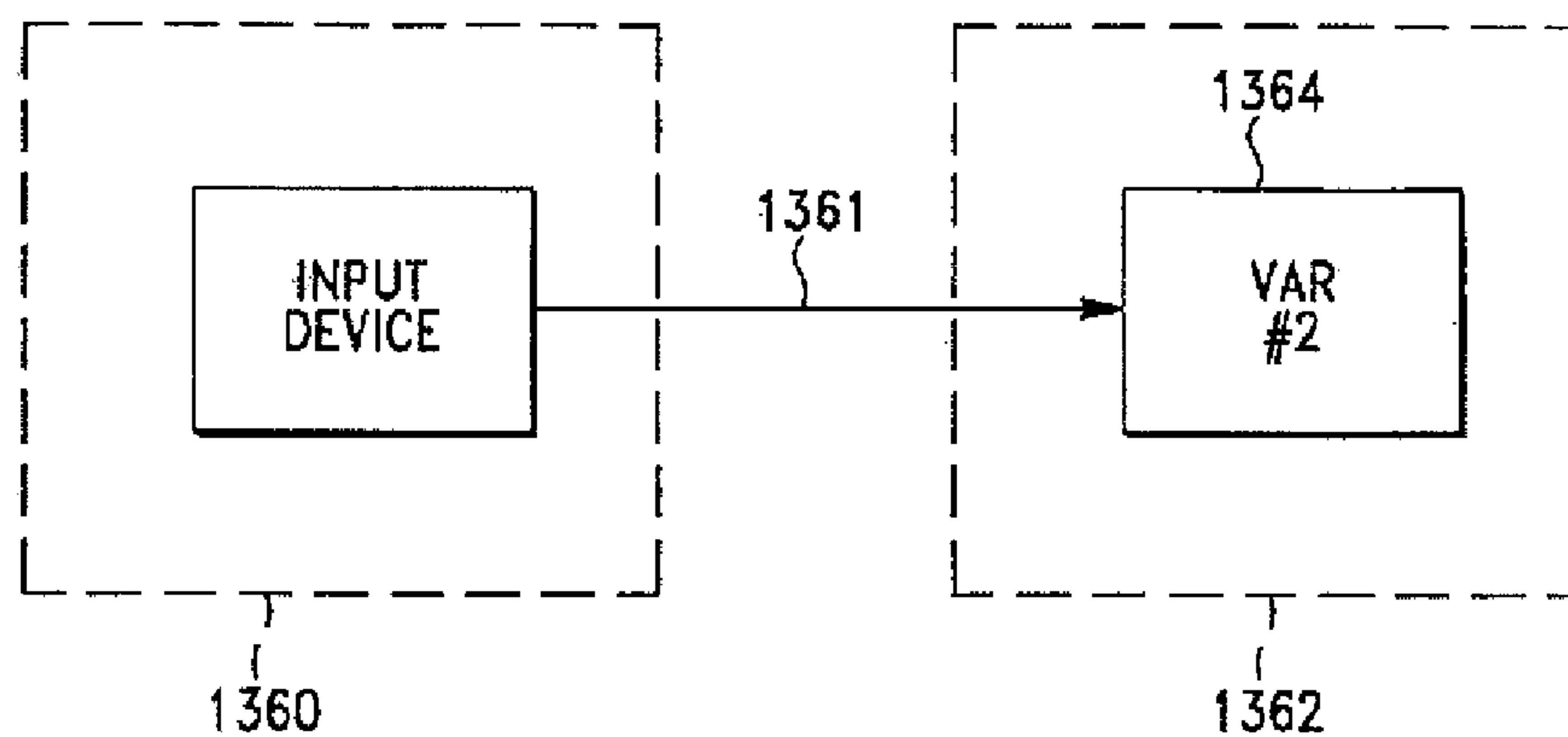


FIG. -43

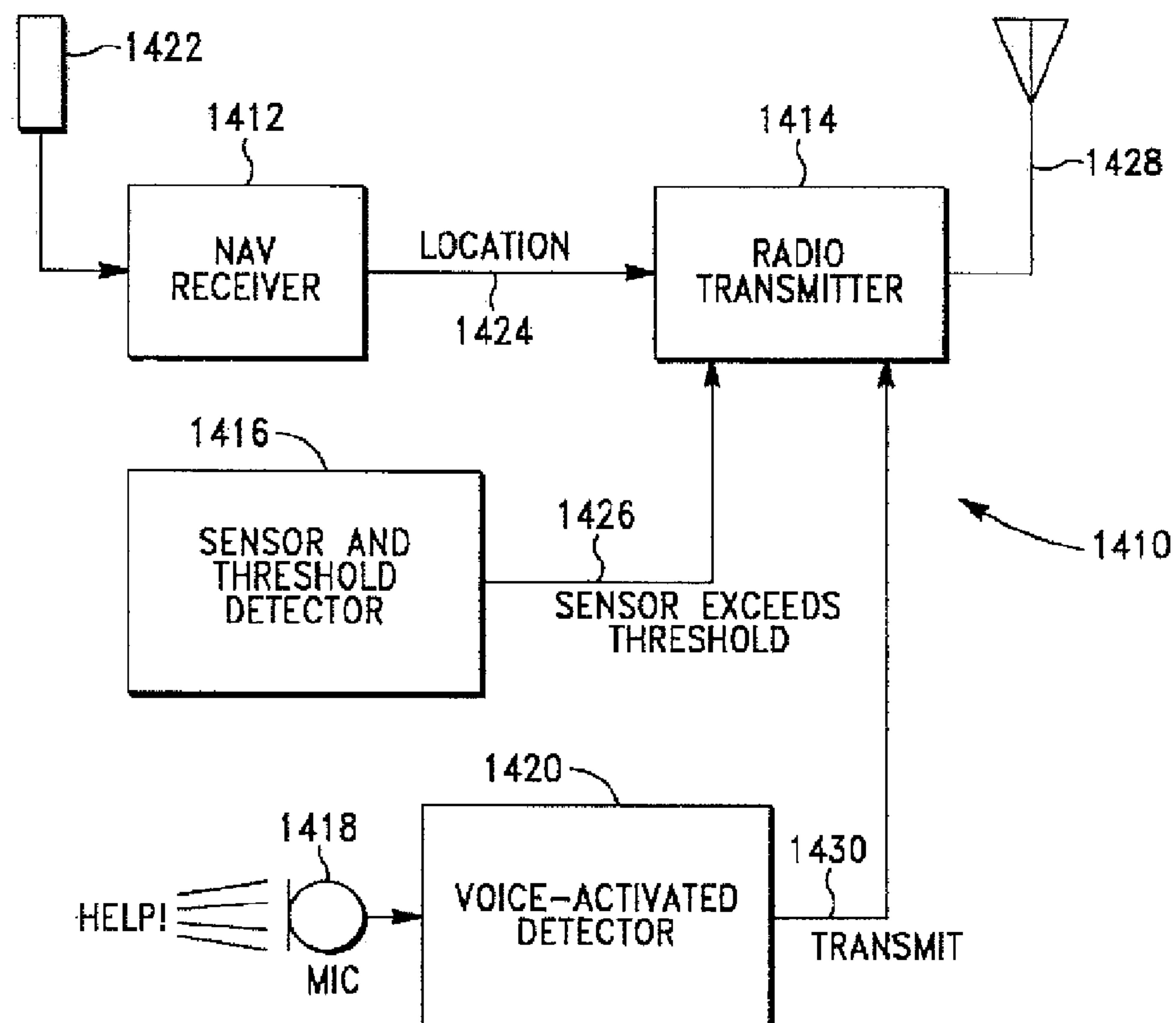


FIG.-44

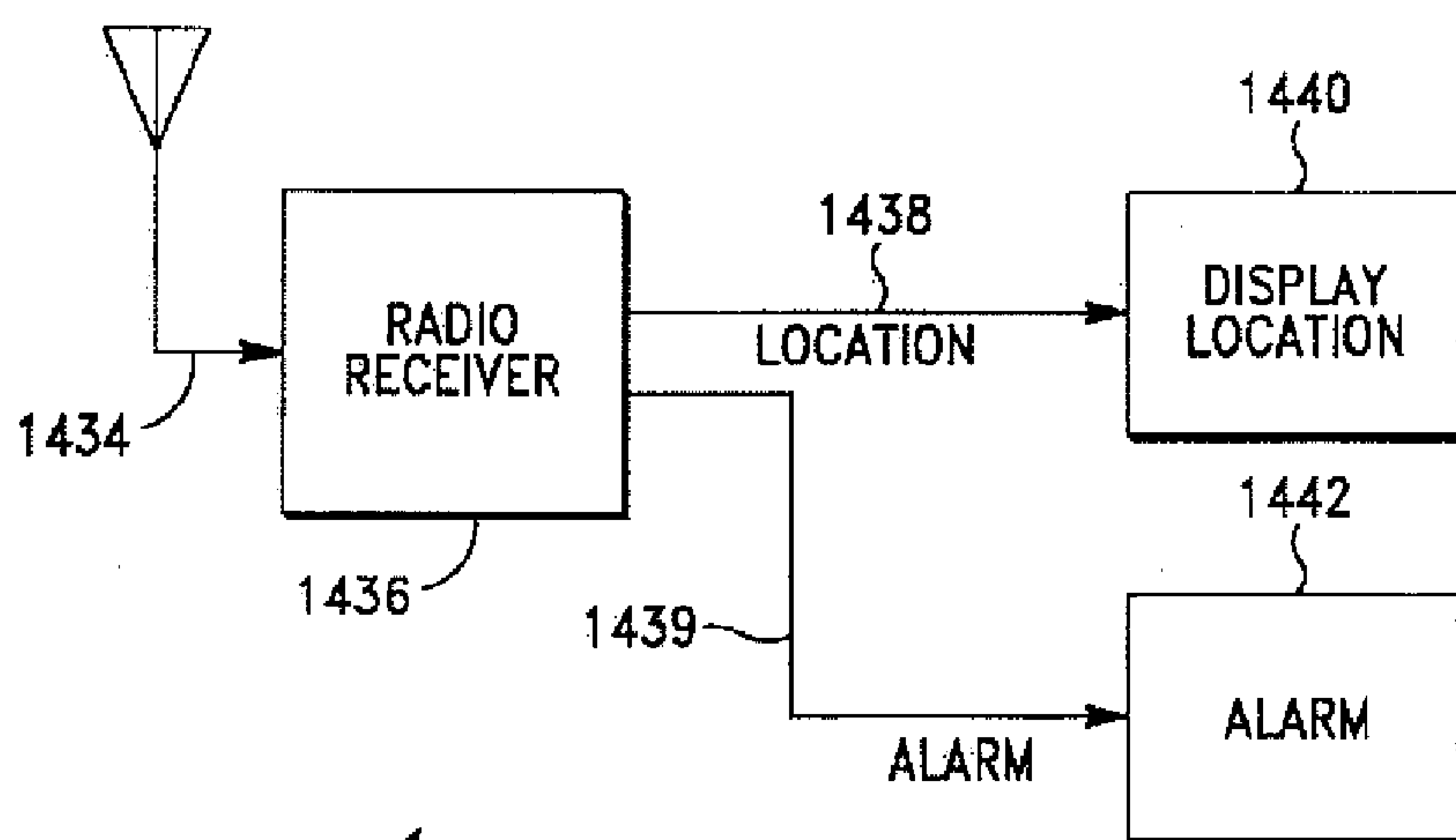


FIG.-45

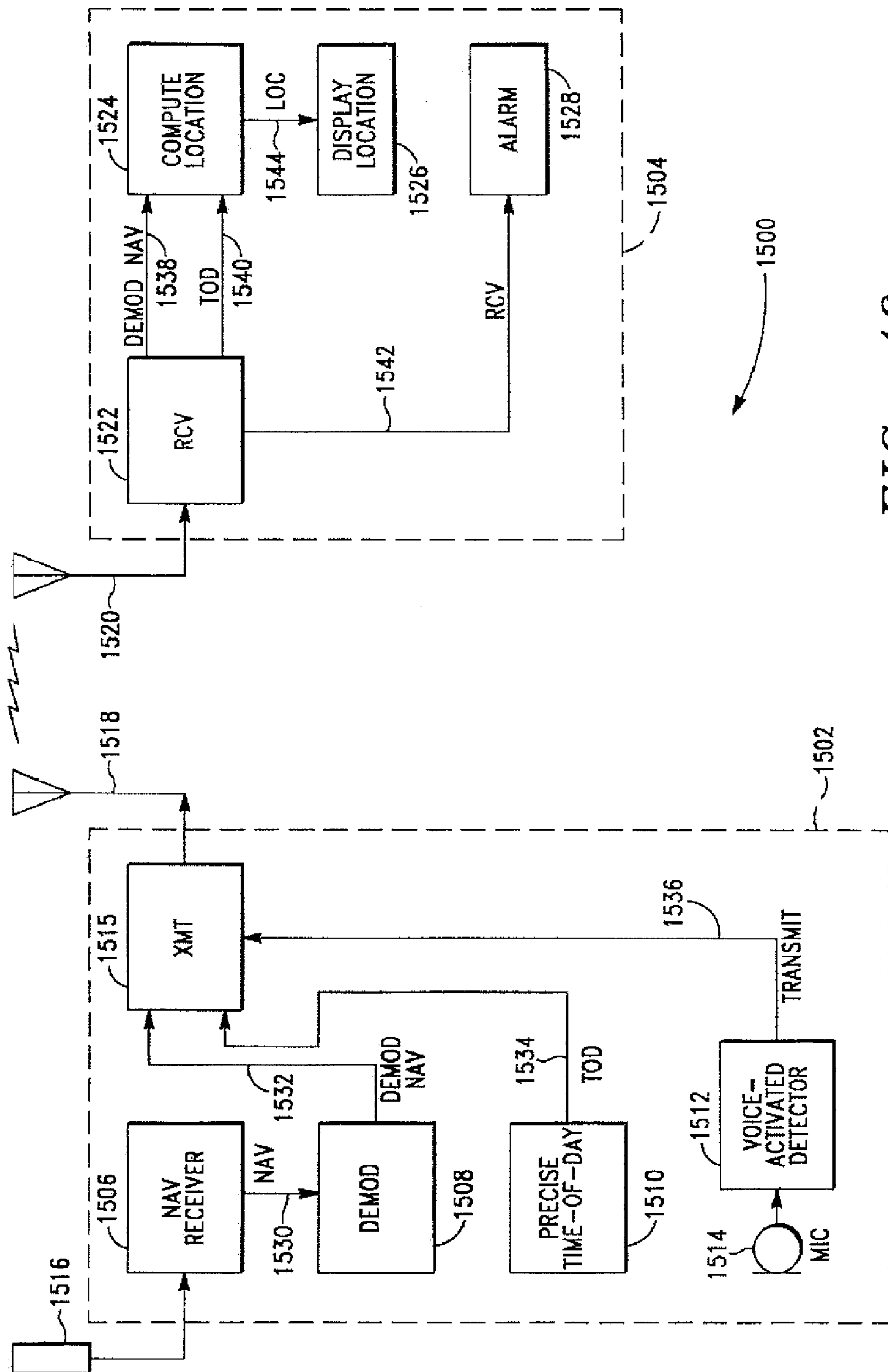


FIG. -46

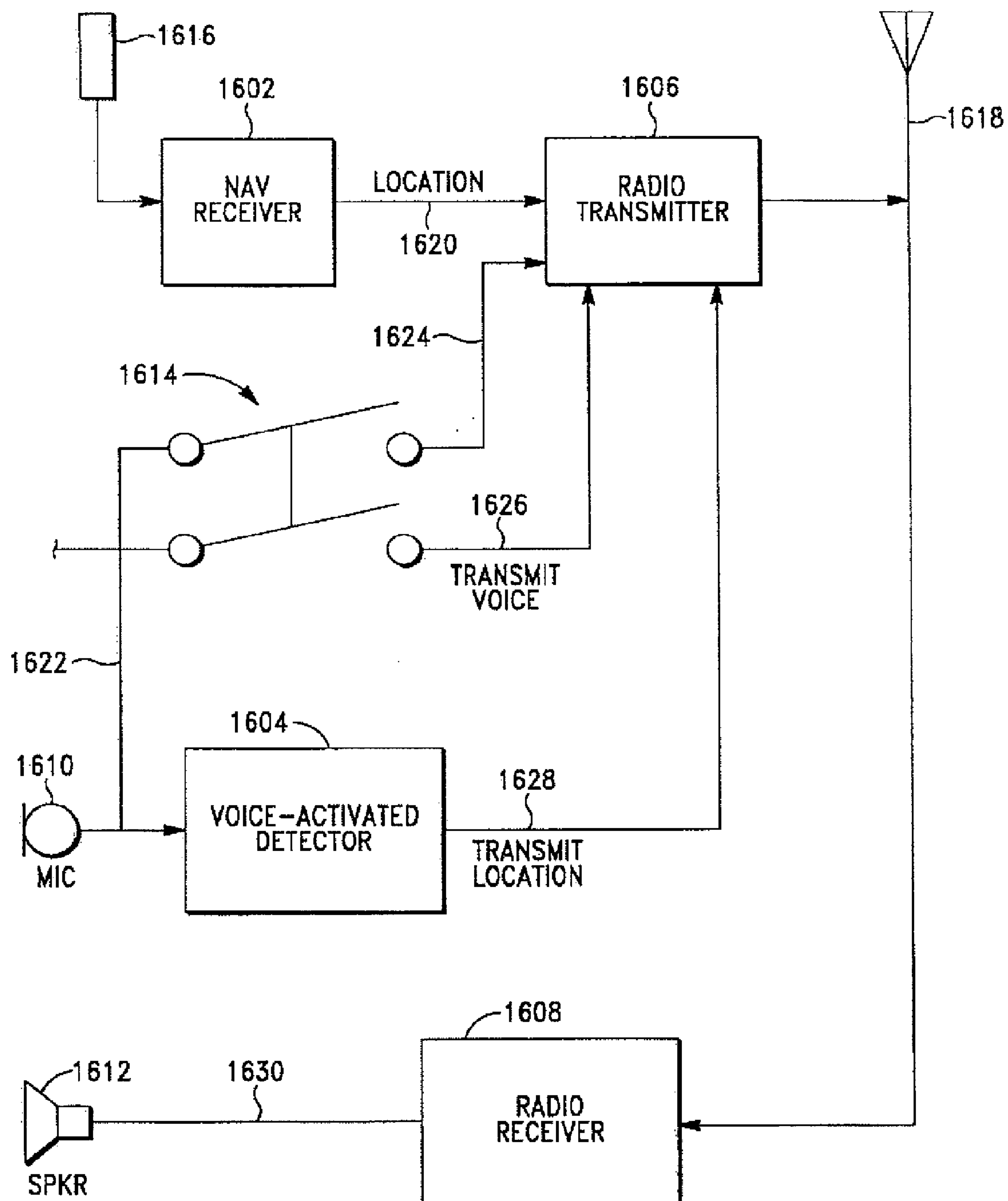


FIG.-47

1600

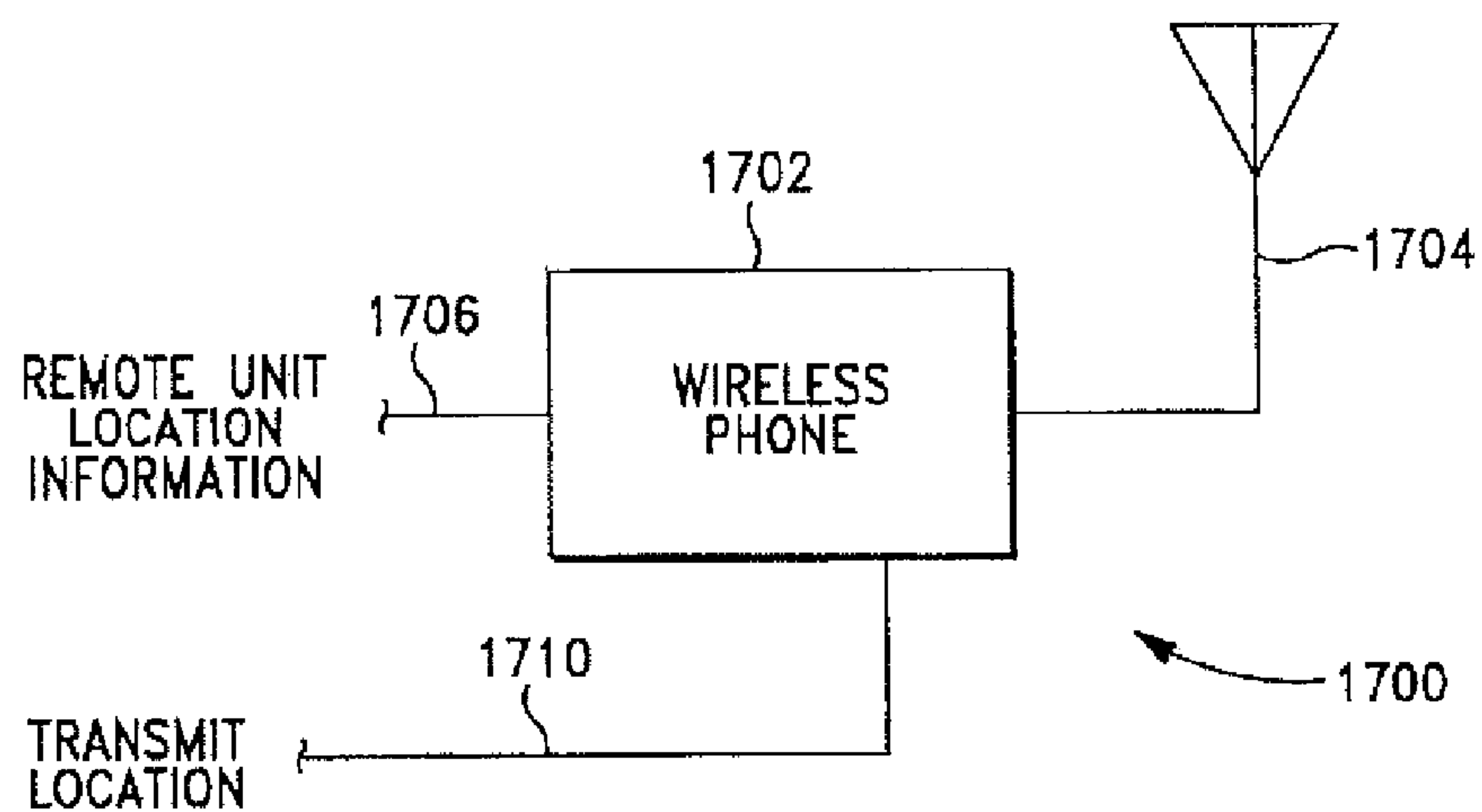


FIG. -48

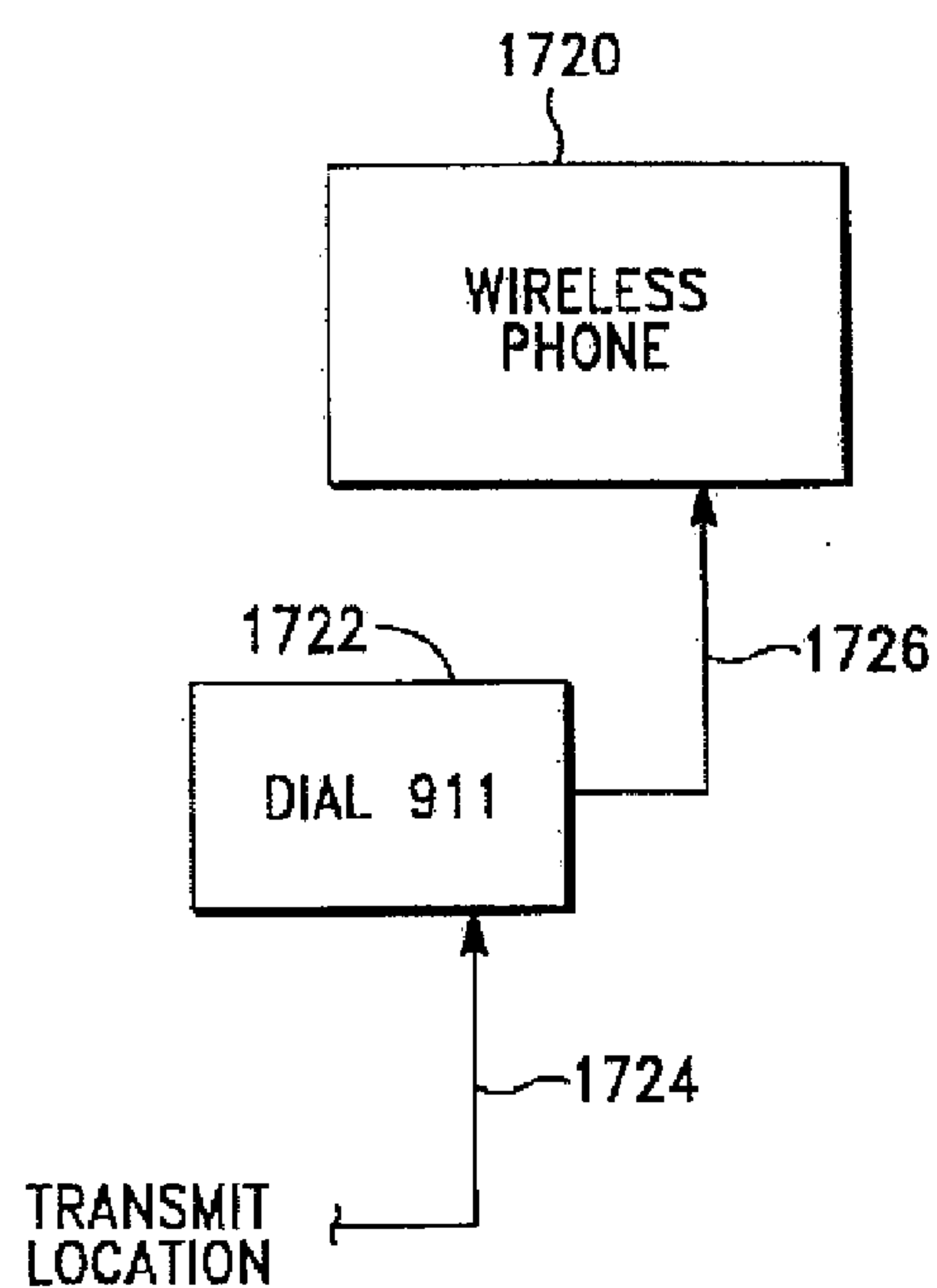


FIG. -49

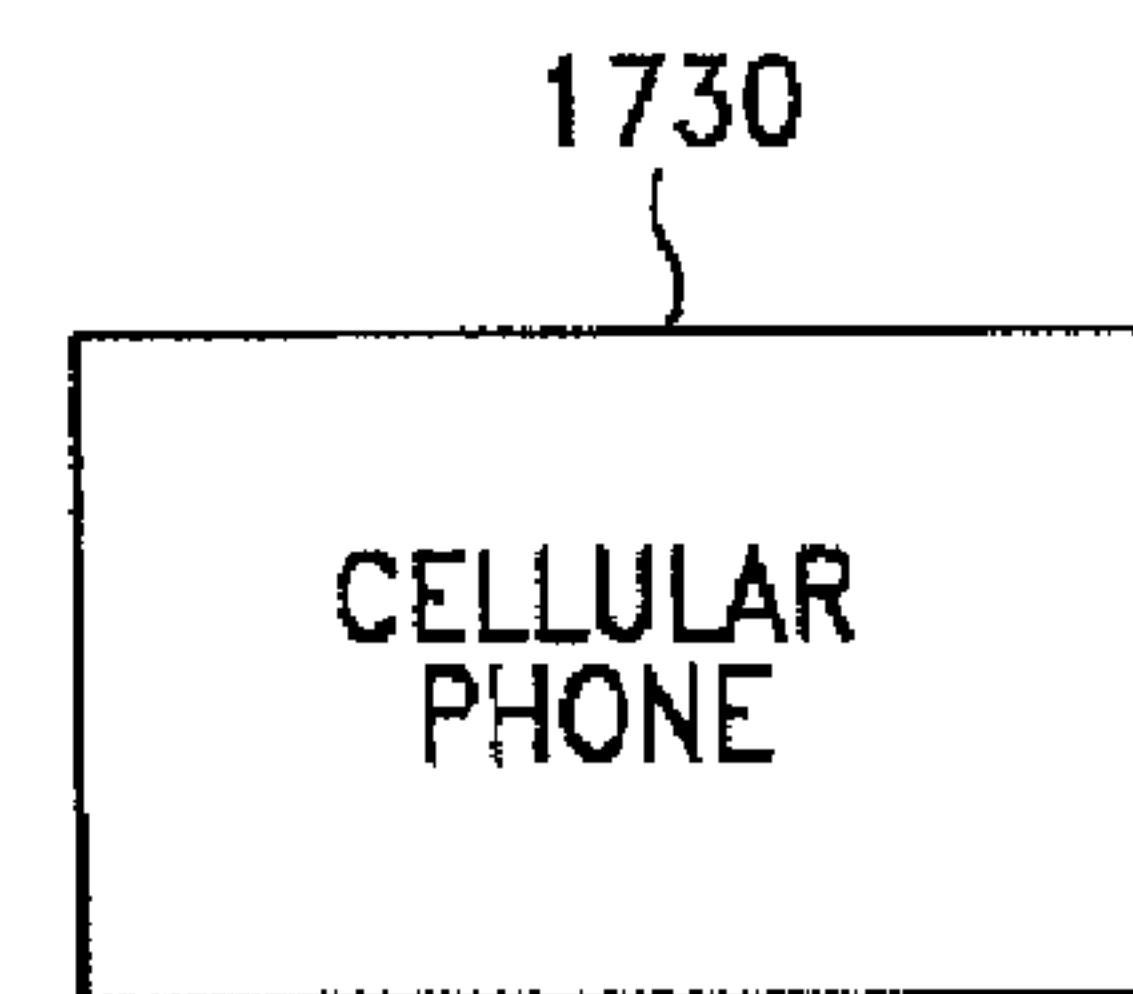


FIG. -50

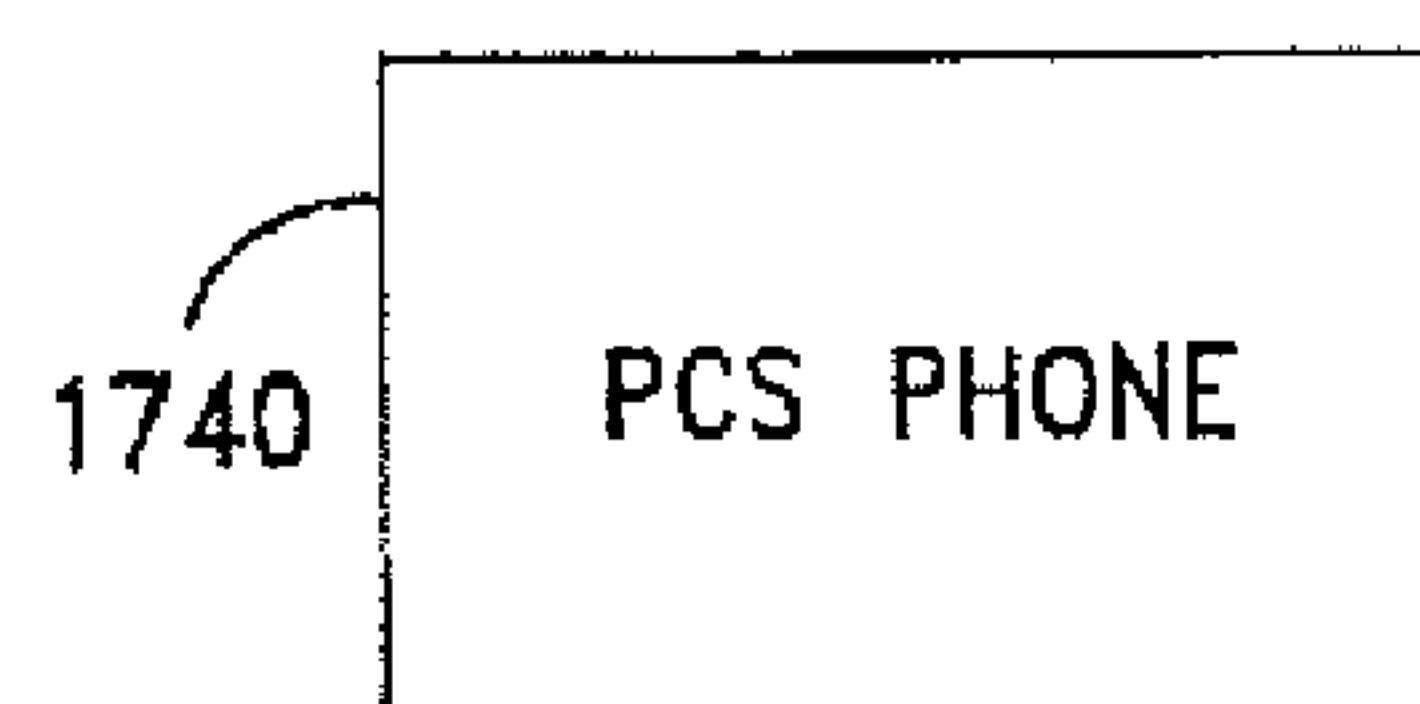


FIG. -51

MULTI-HAZARD ALARM SYSTEM USING SELECTABLE POWER-LEVEL TRANSMISSION AND LOCALIZATION

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation application that claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 120 of U.S. application Ser. No. 11/493,935 entitled “MULTI-HAZARD ALARM SYSTEM USING SELECTABLE POWER-LEVEL TRANSMISSION AND LOCALIZATION,” filed on Jul. 25, 2006, which is a continuation application that claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 120 of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/695,560, entitled “SELF-LOCATING ALARM SYSTEM EQUIPPED PARACHUTE,” filed on Oct. 27, 2003, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/216,033, entitled “PORTABLE, SELF-LOCATING SMART DEFIBILLATOR SYSTEM,” filed on Aug. 10, 2002, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/010,971, entitled “SELF-LOCATING ALARM SYSTEM EQUIPPED PARACHUTE,” filed on Dec. 4, 2001, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/728,167, entitled “VOICE-ACTIVATED PERSONAL ALARM,” filed on Dec. 1, 2000, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/325,030, entitled “SELF-LOCATING REMOTE MONITORING SYSTEMS,” filed on Jun. 3, 1999, which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 08/849,998, entitled “SELF-LOCATING REMOTE MONITORING SYSTEMS,” filed on Jul. 6, 1998, which is a U.S. National stage entry of PCT/US96/17473, filed on Oct. 28, 1996, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 08/330,901, entitled “MULTI-HAZARD ALARM SYSTEM USING SELECTABLE POWER-LEVEL TRANSMISSION AND LOCALIZATION,” filed on Oct. 27, 1994, of which U.S. application Ser. No. 08/547,026, entitled “SELF-LOCATING REMOTE MONITORING SYSTEMS,” filed on Oct. 23, 1995, is a continuation-in-part. Each of these above-referenced patent applications are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of Invention

[0003] This invention relates to personal alarm systems and in particular to such systems transmitting at a higher power level during emergencies.

[0004] 2. Discussion of Related Art

[0005] Personal alarm systems are well known in the art (see for example U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,777,478, 5,025,247, 5,115,223, 4,952,928, 4,819,860, 4,899,135, 5,047,750, 4,785,291, 5,043,702, and 5,086,391). These systems are used to maintain surveillance of children. They are used to monitor the safety of employees involved in dangerous work at remote locations. They are even used to find lost or stolen vehicles and strayed pets.

[0006] These systems use radio technology to link a remote transmitting unit with a base receiving and monitoring station. The remote unit is usually equipped with one or more hazard sensors and is worn or attached to the person or thing to be monitored. When a hazard is detected, the remote unit transmits to the receiving base station where an operator can take appropriate action in responding to the hazard.

[0007] The use of personal alarm systems to monitor the activities of children has become increasingly popular. A caretaker attaches a small remote unit, no larger than a per-

sonal pager, to an outer garment of a small child. If the child wanders off or is confronted with a detectable hazard, the caretaker is immediately notified and can come to the child's aid. In at least one interesting application, a remote unit includes a receiver and an audible alarm which can be activated by a small hand-held transmitter. The alarm is attached to a small child. If the child wanders away in a large crowd, such as in a department store, the caretaker activates the audible alarm which then emits a sequence of “beeps” useful in locating the child in the same way one finds a car at a parking lot through the use of an auto alarm system.

[0008] A number of novel features have been included in personal alarm systems. Hirsh et al., U.S. Pat. No. 4,777,478, provide for a panic button to be activated by the child, or an alarm to be given if someone attempts to remove the remote unit from the child's clothing. Banks, U.S. Pat. No. 5,025,247, teaches a base station which latches an alarm condition so that failure of the remote unit, once having given the alarm, will not cause the alarm to turn off before help is summoned. Moody, U.S. Pat. No. 5,115,223, teaches use of orbiting satellites and triangulation to limit the area of a search for a remote unit which has initiated an alarm. In U.S. Pat. No. 4,952,928 to Carroll et al., and in U.S. Pat. No. 4,819,860 to Hargrove et al., the apparatus provides for the remote monitoring of the vital signs of persons who are not confined to fixed locations.

[0009] Ghahariiran, U.S. Pat. No. 4,899,135, teaches a child monitoring device using radio or ultra-sonic frequency to give alarm if a child wanders out of range or falls into water. Hawthorne, U.S. Pat. No. 4,785,291, teaches a distance monitor for child surveillance in which a unit worn by the child includes a radio transmitter. As the child moves out of range, the received field strength, of a signal transmitted by the child's unit, falls below a limit and an alarm is given.

[0010] Clinical experience in the emergency rooms of our hospitals has taught that a limited number of common hazards account for a majority of the preventable injuries and deaths among our toddler age children. These hazards include the child's wandering away from a safe or supervised area, water emersion, fire, smoke inhalation, carbon monoxide poisoning and electrical shock. Child monitoring devices, such as those described above, have been effective in reducing the number of injuries and deaths related to these common preventable hazards.

[0011] However, considering the importance of our children's safety, there remains room for improvement of these systems. One such area for improvement relates to increasing the useful life of a battery used to power the remote unit of these toddler telemetry systems, as they have come to be called.

[0012] The remote unit is typically battery operated and, in the event of an emergency, continued and reliable transmission for use in status reporting and direction finding is of paramount importance. In other words, once the hazard is detected and the alarm given, it is essential that the remote unit continue to transmit so that direction finding devices can be used to locate the child.

[0013] The remote unit of most child monitoring systems is typically quite small and the available space for a battery is therefore quite limited. Despite recent advances in battery technology, the useful life of a battery is typically related to the battery size. For example, the larger “D” cell lasting considerably longer than the much smaller and lighter “AAA” cell. Though the use of very low power electronic circuits has

made possible the use of smaller batteries, a battery's useful life is still very much a factor of its physical size, which, as stated above, is limited because of the small size of a typical remote unit. Therefore, additional efforts to reduce battery drain are important.

[0014] Given that much reliance is placed on the reliability of any child monitoring system, it would be desirable for the remote unit to transmit at a low power or not at all when no danger exists. In this way battery life is increased and system reliability is improved overall, since the hazards are usually the exception rather than the rule.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0015] It is an object of the present invention to provide a personal alarm system in which the battery operated remote unit normally transmits at low power and switches to a higher power when the distance between the remote unit and base station exceeds a predetermined limit.

[0016] It is also an object of the present invention to provide such a system which includes sensors for the hazardous conditions typically confronting young children.

[0017] It is a further object of the present invention to provide such a personal alarm system which includes a periodic handshake exchange between the remote unit and base station to demonstrate that the system continues to be operational.

[0018] In accordance with the above objects and those that will become apparent below, a so personal alarm system is provided, comprising:

[0019] a remote unit including radio transmitting means and radio receiving means;

[0020] the remote unit transmitting means being able to transmit at more than one power level and defining a higher power level;

[0021] a base station including radio transmitting means and radio receiving means;

[0022] the remote unit and the base station being in radio communication and defining a separation distance between the remote unit and the base station;

[0023] measuring means for determining whether the separation distance exceeds a predetermined limit;

[0024] means responsive to the measuring means for causing the remote unit transmitting means to transmit at the higher power level when the separation distance exceeds the limit; and

[0025] alarm means for indicating when the separation distance exceeds the limit.

[0026] In one embodiment of the invention, the base station transmits a periodic polling signal and the remote unit monitors the field strength of the received polling signal. If the received field strength falls below a limit, corresponding to some maximum distance between the two devices, the remote unit transmits at high power. The signal transmitted at high power includes an indication that transmission is at high power. When this signal is received by the base station, an alarm is given. The remote unit also is equipped to detect one or more hazards.

[0027] In another embodiment of the invention, there are multiple remote units each able to identify itself by including a unit identification number in its transmitted signal. The remote unit is equipped to detect one or more hazards and to identify detected hazards in its transmission. The base station is able to display the transmitting unit identification number and the type of any detected hazard.

[0028] In another embodiment, the base station, rather than the remote unit, measures the field strength of the received remote unit transmission and instructs the remote unit to transmit at high power when the received field strength falls below a preset limit.

[0029] In another embodiment, the remote unit includes both visual and audible beacons which can be activated by the base station for use in locating the child.

[0030] In another embodiment, the remote unit includes a panic button which the child or concerned person can use to summon help.

[0031] In another embodiment, the base station includes the ability to initiate a phone call via the public telephone system, for example by initiating a pager message to alert an absent caretaker.

[0032] In another embodiment, the remote unit includes a global positioning system ("GPS") receiver which is activated if a hazard is detected or if the child wanders too far from the base station. The remote unit then transmits global positioning coordinates from the GPS receiver. These coordinates are received by the base station and used in locating the child. In an alternative embodiment, the remote unit is attached to a child, pet or vehicle and the GPS receiver is activated by command from the base station. The global positioning coordinates are then used by the base station operator to locate the remote unit.

[0033] In another embodiment, the remote unit is worn by an employee doing dangerous work at a remote location such as an electrical power lineman repairing a high voltage power line. The remote unit is equipped with a GPS receiver and an electrical shock hazard sensor and the remote unit will instantly transmit the workman's location in the event of electrical shock. The device will permit an emergency medical crew to rapidly find and give aid to the injured workman and possibly save a life.

[0034] It is an advantage of the present invention to periodically test system integrity by exchanging an electronic handshake and giving an alarm in the event of failure.

[0035] It is also an advantage of the present invention to prolong the remote unit battery life by transmission at low power in the absence of a defined emergency.

[0036] It is also an advantage of the present invention that the system is able to detect and give alarm for a number of common and dangerous hazards.

[0037] It is a further advantage of the present invention to permit rapid and precise location of the remote unit which is equipped with a GPS receiver.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0038] For a further understanding of the objects, features and advantages of the present invention, reference should be had to the following description of the preferred embodiment, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawing, in which like parts are given like reference numerals and wherein:

[0039] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a personal alarm system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention and transmitting at selectable power levels.

[0040] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of another embodiment of the personal alarm system illustrated in FIG. 1 including multiple remote units.

[0041] FIG. 3 is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of the personal alarm system in accordance with the present invention.

[0042] FIG. 4 is a pictorial diagram illustrating a preferred message format used by the personal alarm system illustrated in FIG. 2.

[0043] FIG. 5 is a pictorial diagram illustrating another preferred message format used by the personal alarm system illustrated in FIG. 2.

[0044] FIG. 6 is a block diagram illustrating an embodiment of the personal alarm system of the present invention using the Global Positioning System to improve remote unit location finding.

[0045] FIG. 7 is a pictorial diagram illustrating a base station and remote unit of the personal alarm system of FIG. 1, in a typical child monitoring application.

[0046] FIG. 8 is a pictorial diagram illustrating a remote unit in accordance with the present invention being worn at the waist.

[0047] FIG. 9 is a pictorial diagram illustrating a mobile base station in accordance with the present invention for operation from a vehicle electrical system.

[0048] FIG. 10 is a pictorial diagram illustrating a base station in accordance with the present invention being operated from ordinary household power.

[0049] FIG. 11 is a block diagram illustrating a man-over-board alarm system in accordance with one aspect of the present invention.

[0050] FIG. 12 is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of the man-over-board alarm system.

[0051] FIG. 13 is a block diagram illustrating an invisible fence monitoring system according to another aspect of the present invention.

[0052] FIG. 14 is a pictorial diagram illustrating a boundary defining a geographical region for use with the invisible fence system of FIG. 13.

[0053] FIG. 15 is another pictorial diagram illustrating a defined region having a closed boundary.

[0054] FIG. 16 is another pictorial diagram illustrating a defined region including defined subdivisions.

[0055] FIG. 17 is a block diagram illustrating another aspect of the invisible fence system.

[0056] FIG. 18 is a block diagram showing a fixed-location environmental sensing system according to another aspect of the present invention.

[0057] FIG. 19 is a block diagram of a personal alarm system including navigational location in which the geometric dilution of precision calculations are done at the base station.

[0058] FIG. 20 is a block diagram showing an invisible fence alarm system in which the fence is stored and compared at the base station.

[0059] FIG. 21 is a block diagram illustrating a man-over-board alarm system.

[0060] FIG. 22 is a partial block diagram illustrating a one-way voice channel on a man-over-board alarm system.

[0061] FIG. 23 is a partial block diagram illustrating a two-way voice channel on a man-over-board alarm system.

[0062] FIG. 24 is a block diagram illustrating an invisible fence system.

[0063] FIG. 25 is a pictorial diagram illustrating geographical regions for an invisible fence system.

[0064] FIG. 26 is a table defining a curfew for an invisible fence system.

[0065] FIG. 27 is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of an invisible fence system.

[0066] FIG. 28 is a partial block diagram illustrating a base station connected to a communication channel via a modem.

[0067] FIG. 29 is a partial block diagram illustrating an alarm system including an oil/chemical sensor, and all sensors activating transmission at a higher power level.

[0068] FIG. 30 is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of a personal alarm system.

[0069] FIG. 31 is a partial block diagram illustrating specific circuits used to select a transmission power level.

[0070] FIG. 32 is a partial block diagram illustrating other specific circuits used to select a transmission power level.

[0071] FIG. 33 is a block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a personal alarm system.

[0072] FIG. 34 is a block diagram illustrating a weather alarm system.

[0073] FIG. 35 is a pictorial diagram representing a specific embodiment of a weather region.

[0074] FIG. 36 is a pictorial diagram illustrating another specific embodiment of a weather region.

[0075] FIG. 37 is a partial block diagram illustrating a conditional activation of a navigational receiver for a weather alarm system.

[0076] FIG. 38 is a block diagram illustrating another specific embodiment of a weather alarm system.

[0077] FIG. 39 is a block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a remote monitoring unit.

[0078] FIG. 40 is a block diagram illustrating another specific embodiment of a remote monitoring unit.

[0079] FIG. 41 is a partial block diagram illustrating a plurality of sensors in a specific embodiment of a remote monitoring unit.

[0080] FIG. 42 is a partial pictorial diagram illustrating a typical status vector.

[0081] FIG. 43 is a partial block diagram illustrating an input device connected for providing the value of a second variable in a specific embodiment of the invention.

[0082] FIG. 44 is a block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a personal alarm system remote unit.

[0083] FIG. 45 is a block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a base station for use with a remote unit such as shown in FIG. 44.

[0084] FIG. 46 is a block diagram of a personal alarm system according to one aspect of the present invention.

[0085] FIG. 47 is a block diagram that illustrates another embodiment of a personal alarm system remote unit.

[0086] FIG. 48 is a partial block diagram that illustrates the use of a wireless phone within a personal alarm system remote unit according to a specific embodiment of the present invention.

[0087] FIG. 49 is a partial block diagram illustrating the wireless phone of FIG. 48 and including a circuit that automatically dials "911" for transmitting the remote unit location.

[0088] FIG. 50 is a partial block diagram that illustrates the use of a cellular telephone for transmitting the remote unit location and for two-way radio communication.

[0089] FIG. 51 is a partial block diagram that illustrates the use of a PCS telephone for transmitting the remote unit location and for two-way radio communication.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0090] With reference to FIG. 1, there is shown a block diagram of a personal alarm system according to one embodiment of the present invention and depicted generally by the

numeral 10. The personal alarm system 10 includes a remote unit 12 and a base station 14. The remote unit 12 has a radio transmitter 16 and a receiver 18, and the base station 14 has a radio transmitter 20 and a receiver 22. The transmitters 16, 20 and receivers 18, 22 are compatible for two-way radio communication between the remote unit 12 and the base station 14.

[0091] In a preferred embodiment, the base station 14 includes an interval timer 24 which causes the transmitter 20 to transmit at predetermined intervals. The receiver 18 of the remote unit 12 receives the signal transmitted by the base station 14 and causes the transmitter 16 to transmit a response to complete an electronic handshake.

[0092] The remote unit transmitter 16 is capable of transmitting at an energy conserving low-power level or at an emergency high-power level. When the distance between the remote unit 12 and the base station 14 exceeds a predetermined limit, the remote unit responds at the higher power level.

[0093] To accomplish the shift to the higher power level, the remote unit receiver 18 generates a signal 26 which is proportional to the field strength of the received signal, transmitted by the base station 14. The remote unit 12 includes a comparator 28 which compares the magnitude of the field strength signal 26 with a predetermined limit value 30 and generates a control signal 32.

[0094] The remote unit transmitter 16 is responsive to a circuit 34 for selecting transmission at either the low-power level or at the high-power level. The circuit 34 is connected to the control signal 32 and selects transmission at the low-power level when the received field strength equals or exceeds the limit value 30, and at the higher power level when the received field strength is less than the limit value 30. Alternatively, the remote unit transmitter 16 transmits at one of a selectable plurality of transmission power levels. In another alternative embodiment, transmission is selectable within a continuous range of transmission power levels.

[0095] Within an operating range of the personal alarm system 10, the field strength of the base station 14 transmitted signal when received at the remote unit 12 is inversely proportional to the fourth power (approximately) of the distance between the two units. This distance defines a 'separation distance,' and the predetermined limit value 30 is selected to cause transmission at the higher power level at a desired separation distance within the operating range.

[0096] In another embodiment, the remote unit 12 includes a hazard sensor 36 which is connected to the transmitter 16. The hazard sensor 36 is selected to detect one of the following common hazards, water immersion, fire, smoke, excessive carbon monoxide concentration, and electrical shock. In one embodiment, a detected hazard causes the remote unit 12 to transmit a signal reporting the existence of the hazardous condition at the moment the condition is detected. In another embodiment, the hazardous condition is reported when the response to the periodic electronic handshake occurs.

[0097] In one embodiment, the base station 14 includes an audible alarm 38 which is activated by the receiver 22. If the remote unit fails to complete the electronic handshake or reports a detected hazard or indicates it is out of range by sending an appropriate code, the base station alarm 38 is activated to alert the operator.

[0098] FIG. 2 is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of the personal alarm system of the present invention. The alarm system is indicated generally by the

numeral 40 and includes a first remote unit 42, a second remote unit 44 and a base station 46. The first remote unit 42 includes a transmitter 48, a receiver 50, an identification number 52, a received field strength signal 54, a comparator 56, a predetermined limit value 58, a control signal 60, a power level select circuit 62 and a hazard sensor 64.

[0099] The second remote unit 44 includes a separate identification number 66, but is otherwise identical to the first remote unit 42.

[0100] The base station 46 includes a transmitter 68, an interval timer 70, a receiver 72, an alarm 74 and an ID-Status display 76.

[0101] In one embodiment of the invention illustrated in FIG. 2, the radio transmission between the first remote unit 42 and the base station 46 includes the identification number 52. The transmission between the second remote unit 44 and the base station 46 includes the identification number 66. It will be understood by those skilled in the art that the system may include one or more remote units, each having a different identification number 52.

[0102] It will also be understood that each remote unit 42 may have a different predetermined limit value 58. The limit value 58 defines a distance between the remote unit 42 and the base station 46 beyond which the remote unit will transmit at its higher power level. If a number of remote units are being used to monitor a group of children, in a school playground for example, the limit values of each remote unit may be set to a value which will cause high power transmission if the child wanders outside the playground area. In other applications, the limit value 58 of each remote unit 42 may be set to a different value corresponding to different distances at which the individual remote units will switch to high power transmission.

[0103] In one embodiment, the base station 46 will provide an alarm 74 whenever a remote unit transmits at high power or reports the detection of a hazard. The identification number of the reporting remote unit and an indication of the type of hazard is displayed by the base station on the ID-Status display 76. This information can be used by the operator, for example a day-care provider, to decide what response is appropriate and whether immediate caretaker notification is required. If a child has merely wandered out of range, the provider may simply send an associate out to get the child and return her to the play area. On the other hand, a water immersion hazard indication should prompt immediate notification of caretakers and emergency personnel and immediate action by the day-care employees.

[0104] In another embodiment, the remote unit receiver 50 determines that the separation distance between the remote unit 42 and the base station 46 exceeds the predetermined threshold. The remote unit transmitter 48 transmits a code or status bit to indicate that fact.

[0105] In an embodiment illustrated in FIG. 1, the polling message transmitted periodically by the base station 14 is an RF carrier. The carrier frequency is transmitted until a response from the remote unit 12 is received or until a watchdog timer (not illustrated) times out, resulting in an alarm. The information contained in the remote unit response must include whether transmission is at low power or at high power, and whether a hazard has been detected, since the base station provides an alarm in either of these instances.

[0106] In an embodiment illustrated in FIG. 2, however, additional information must be reported and the advantages

of a digitally formatted remote unit response will be apparent to those possessing an ordinary level of skill in the art.

[0107] FIG. 3 is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of the personal alarm system in accordance with the present invention and generally indicated by the numeral 80. Personal alarm system 80 includes a remote unit 82 and a base station 84.

[0108] The remote unit 82 includes a transmitter 86, a receiver 88, a power level select circuit 90, an ID number 92, a visual beacon 94, an audible beacon 96, a watchdog timer 98, a plurality of hazard sensors 100 including a water immersion sensor 102, a smoke sensor 104, a heat sensor 106, a carbon monoxide sensor 108, a tamper switch 109, and an electrical shock sensor 110, an emergency switch (“panic button”) 112, a battery 113, and a ‘low battery power’ sensor 114.

[0109] The base station 84 includes a transmitter 116, a receiver 118 which produces a received field strength signal 120, a comparator 122, a predetermined limit value 124, a comparator output signal 126, an interval timer 128, control signals 130 and 132, a visual alarm 134, an audible alarm 136, an ID and Status display 138, a circuit 140 for initiating a phone call and a connection 142 to the public telephone system.

[0110] The base station 84 and a plurality of the remote units 82 illustrated in the embodiment of FIG. 3 communicate using a digitally formatted message. One message format is used by the base station 84 to command a specific remote unit 82, and a second message format is used by a commanded remote unit 82 to respond to the base station 84. These message formats are illustrated in FIGS. 5 and 4, respectively.

[0111] With reference to FIG. 4 there is shown a pictorial diagram of a preferred digital format for a response from a remote unit in a personal alarm system in accordance with the present invention, indicated generally by the numeral 150. The digital response format 150 includes a remote unit ID number 152, a plurality of hazard sensor status bits 154 including a water immersion status bit 156, a smoke sensor status bit 158, a heat sensor status bit 160, an excessive carbon monoxide concentration status bit 162, and an electrical shock status bit 164. The response 150 also includes a high power status bit, 166, a panic button status bit 168, a low battery power detector status bit 170, a tamper switch status bit 171, and bits reserved for future applications 172.

[0112] FIG. 5 is a pictorial diagram of a preferred digital format for a base station to remote unit transmission, generally indicated by the numeral 180. The digital message format 180 includes a command field 182 and a plurality of unassigned bits 190 reserved for a future application. The command field 182 includes a coded field of bits 184 used to command a specific remote unit to transmit its response message (using the format 150). The command field 182 also includes a single bit 186 used to command a remote unit, such as the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 3, to transmit at high power. The command field 182 includes command bit 188 used to command a remote unit to activate a beacon, such as the visual beacon 94 and the audible beacon 96 illustrated in FIG. 3. The command field 182 also includes command bit 189, used to command a remote unit to activate a GPS receiver, such as illustrated in FIG. 6.

[0113] In an alternative embodiment, the remote unit transmitter is adapted to transmit at one of a plurality of transmission power levels and the single command bit 186 is replaced with a multi-bit command sub-field for selection of a power

level. In another embodiment, the remote unit transmitter is adapted to transmit at a power level selected from a continuum of power levels and a multi-bit command sub-field is provided for the power level selection.

[0114] Again with respect to FIG. 3, the Base station 84 periodically polls each remote unit 82 by transmitting a command 180 requiring the remote unit 82 to respond with message format 150. The polling is initiated by the interval timer 128 which causes the base station transmitter 116 to transmit the outgoing message 180. The numerals 150 and 180 are used to designate both the format of a message and the transmitted message. A specific reference to the format or the transmitted message will be used when necessary for clarity. As is common in the communications industry, the message will sometimes be referred to as a ‘signal,’ at other times as a ‘transmission,’ and as a ‘message;’ a distinction between these will be made when necessary for clarity.

[0115] The message 180 is received by all remote units and the remote unit to which the message is directed (by the coded field 184) responds by transmitting its identification number 152 and current status, bits 154-170. The remote unit identification number 92 is connected to the transmitter 86 for this purpose.

[0116] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 3, the function of measuring received field strength to determine whether a predetermined separation distance is exceeded is performed in the base station 84. The base station receiver 118 provides a received field strength signal 120 which is connected to the comparator 122. The predetermined limit value 124 is also connected to the comparator 122 which provides a comparator output signal 126. If the received field strength 120 is less than the limit value 124, the comparator output signal 126 is connected to assert the “go-to-high-power” command bit 186 in the base unit 84 outgoing message 180. The limit value 124 is selected to establish the predetermined separation distance beyond which transmission at high power is commanded.

[0117] In one embodiment, the selection of the limit value 124 is accomplished by the manufacturer by entering the value into a read-only memory device. In another embodiment, the manufacturer uses manually operated switches to select the predetermined limit value 124. In another embodiment, the manufacturer installs jumper wires to select the predetermined limit value 124. In yet another embodiment, the user selects a predetermined limit value 124 using manually operated switches.

[0118] The remote unit transmitter 86 is capable of transmitting at a power-conserving lower power level and also at an emergency higher power level. Upon receiving a message 180 including the remote unit identification number 184, the remote unit receiver passes the “go-to-high-power” command bit 186 to the power level select circuit 90 which is connected to command the remote unit transmitter 86 to transmit a response 150 at the higher power level. The response 150 includes status bit 166 used by the remote unit 82 to indicate that it is transmitting at high power.

[0119] In one embodiment, the remote unit includes the watchdog timer 98 (designated a ‘No Signal Timeout’) which is reset by the receiver 88 each time the remote unit 82 is polled. If no polling message 180 is received within the timeout period of the watchdog timer 98, the remote unit transmitter 86 is commanded to transmit a non-polled message 150.

[0120] In one embodiment of the invention, the remote unit 82 includes a manually operated switch (“panic button”) 112

which is connected to the transmitter **86** to command the transmission of a non-potted message **150**. The panic button status bit **168** is set in the outgoing message **150** to indicate to the base station **84** that the panic button has been depressed. Such a button can be used by a child or invalid or other concerned person to bring help.

[0121] In another embodiment, the remote unit includes a tamper switch **109** which is activated if the remote unit is removed from the child, or is otherwise tampered with. The activation of the tamper switch **109** causes the remote unit to transmit a code or status bit to the base unit to identify the cause of the change of status ('Tamper' status bit **171** illustrated in FIG. 4). In one related alternative, the remote unit transmits at the higher power level when the switch is activated by removal of the remote unit from the child's person.

[0122] In another embodiment, the remote unit **82** includes a circuit **114** which monitors battery power. The circuit **114** is connected to initiate a non-potted message **150** if the circuit determines that battery power has fallen below a predetermined power threshold. The message **150** will include the "low-battery-power" status bit **170**. In an alternative embodiment, a low battery power level will initiate a remote unit transmission at the higher power level (see FIG. 3).

[0123] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 3, the remote unit **82** includes several hazard sensors **100**. These sensors are connected to report the detection of common hazards and correspond to the sensor status bits **154** in the remote unit response message **150**.

[0124] In another embodiment of the present invention, the base station receiver **118** is connected to a visual alarm **134** and an audible alarm **136** and will give an alarm when a message **150** is received which includes any hazard sensor report **154** or any of the status bits **166-170**.

[0125] The base station **84** also includes the status and ID display **138** used to display the status of all remote units in the personal alarm system **80**.

[0126] In another embodiment of the personal alarm system **80**, the base station **84** includes a circuit **140** for initiating a telephone call when an emergency occurs. The circuit **140** includes the telephone numbers of persons to be notified in the event of an emergency. A connection **142** is provided to a public landline or cellular telephone system. The circuit **140** can place calls to personal paging devices, or alternatively place prerecorded telephone messages to emergency personnel, such as the standard "911" number.

[0127] FIG. 6 is a partial block diagram illustrating an embodiment of the invention having a base station **200** and at least one remote unit **202**. The partially illustrated remote unit **202** includes a transmitter **204**, hazard sensors **201, 203, 205**, a circuit **208** for causing the transmitter to transmit at a higher power level, a transmit interval timer **209**, and a Global Positioning System ('GPS') receiver **210**. The partially illustrated base station **200** includes a receiver **212**, an alarm **213**, a display **214** for displaying global positioning coordinates of longitude and latitude, a circuit **216** for converting the global positioning coordinates into predefined local coordinates, a map display **218** for displaying a map in the local coordinates and indicating the location of the remote unit **202**, and a watchdog timer **219**.

[0128] In a preferred embodiment of the alarm system, the remote unit transmitter **204** is connected to receive the global positioning coordinates from the GPS receiver **210** for transmission to the base station **200**.

[0129] The GPS receiver **210** determines its position and provides that position in global positioning coordinates to the transmitter **204**. The global position coordinates of the remote unit **202** are transmitted to the base station **200**. The base station receiver **212** provides the received global positioning coordinates on line **222** to display **214** and to coordinate converter **216**. The display **214** displays the global coordinates in a world-wide coordinate system such as longitude and latitude.

[0130] In one embodiment of the alarm system, the coordinate converter **216** receives the global positioning coordinates from line **222** and converts these into a preferred local coordinate system. A display **218** receives the converted coordinates and displays the location of the remote unit **202** as a map for easy location of the transmitting remote unit **202**.

[0131] In another embodiment of the alarm system the GPS receiver **210** includes a low power standby mode and a normal operating mode. The GPS receiver **210** remains in the standby mode until a hazard is detected and then switches to the normal operating mode.

[0132] In another embodiment of the alarm system, the GPS receiver **210** remains in the standby mode until commanded by the base station **200** to enter the normal operating mode (see command bit **189** illustrated in FIG. 5).

[0133] In another embodiment of the alarm system, the remote unit transmitter **204** is connected to the hazard sensors **201-205** for transmission of detected hazards. The base station receiver **212** is connected to activate the alarm **213** upon detection of a hazard.

[0134] In one embodiment, a conventional electrical shock sensor **205** includes a pair of electrical contacts **207** which are attached to the skin of a user for detection of electrical shock.

[0135] In another embodiment, the remote unit **202** includes a transmit interval timer **209** and an ID number **211**. The timer **209** is connected to cause the remote unit to transmit the ID number at predetermined intervals. The base station **200** includes a watchdog timer **219** adapted to activate the alarm **213** if the remote unit fails to transmit within the prescribed interval.

[0136] In another embodiment of the alarm system, the remote unit **202** includes a carbon monoxide concentration sensor (see **108** of FIG. 3) having an output signal connected to activate a sensor status bit (see **162** of FIG. 4) for transmission to the base station **200**.

[0137] FIGS. 7-10 are pictorial illustrations of alternative embodiments of the personal alarm system of the present invention. FIG. 7 illustrates a base station **250** in two-way radio communication with a remote unit **252** worn by a child. The child is running away from the base station **250** such that the separation distance **256** has exceeded the preset threshold. The base station has determined that an alarm should be given, and an audible alarm **254** is being sounded to alert a responsible caretaker. FIG. 8 illustrates a remote unit worn at the waist of a workman whose location and safety are being monitored. FIG. 9 illustrates a mobile base station **270** equipped with a cigarette lighter adapter **272** for operation in a vehicle. FIG. 10 illustrates a base station **280** adapted for operation from ordinary household current **282**.

[0138] FIG. 11 is a block diagram which illustrates a man-over-board system in accordance with one aspect of the present invention, and designated generally by the numeral **300**.

[0139] The man-over-board system **300** includes a remote unit **302**, having a navigational receiver **304** and antenna **306**

for receiving navigational information, a sensor **308**, having an output signal **310**, a manually operated switch **312**, a radio transmitter **314** having an antenna **316**. The man-over-board system **300** also includes a base station **318** having a radio receiver **320** connected to an antenna **322** for receiving radio transmissions from the remote unit **302**. The base station **318** also includes a display **324** for displaying the navigational location of the remote unit **302**, a display **326** for displaying the status of the sensor **308**, a circuit **328** for comparing the field strength of the received radio transmission with a predetermined limit **330**, and an alarm **332** which is activated when the received field strength **334** falls below the value of the limit **330**.

[0140] In use, the remote unit **302** is worn by a user and an alarm will be given if the user falls over board and drifts too far from the boat. The navigational receiver **304** receives navigational information, as for example from global positioning satellites **336**. The navigational receiver **304** converts the navigational information into a location of the remote unit **302** and outputs the location **338** to the radio transmitter **314** for transmission to the base station **318**.

[0141] The sensor **308** provides an output signal **310** and defines a sensor status. The output signal **310** is connected to the radio transmitter **314** for transmitting the sensor status to the base station **318**.

[0142] The manually operated switch **312** includes an output **340** which is connected to the radio transmitter **314** and permits the user to signal the base station **318** by operating the switch **312**. In a preferred embodiment, the manually operated switch **312** defines a panic button.

[0143] The radio receiver **320** provides three outputs, the received location **342** of the remote unit **302**, the received sensor status **344**, and an output signal **334** proportional to the field strength of the received radio transmission. As described above with respect to FIGS. 1-3, the remote unit **302** and the base station **318** define a separation distance which is inversely proportional to the received field strength. The comparator circuit **328** compares the received field strength **334** with a predetermined limit **330** and produces an output signal **346** if the sign of the comparison is negative, indicating that the field strength of the received signal is less than the limit **330**. If the user drifts beyond a separation distance from the boat defined by the limit **330**, the alarm **332** is activated to alert the user's companions, who can then take appropriate action.

[0144] In heavy seas or poor visibility, the base station **318** displays the current location of the remote unit **302** on a suitable display **324**. This is done in some appropriate coordinate system, such as standard longitude and latitude. This feature permits the base station to maintain contact with the man-over-board despite failure to maintain direct eye contact.

[0145] FIG. 12 is a block diagram which illustrates a man-over-board system including a two-way radio communication link and designated generally by the numeral **350**. The man-over-board system **350** includes a remote unit **352** and a base station **354**.

[0146] The remote unit **352** includes a navigational receiver **356**, a radio transmitter **358**, a circuit **360** for causing the radio transmitter **358** to transmit at a high power level, a radio receiver **362**, and circuits **364** for activating a beacon.

[0147] The base station **354** includes a radio receiver **366**, a radio transmitter **368**, a display **370** for displaying the location of the remote unit **352**, a comparator circuit **372**, a pre-

terminated limit **374**, an alarm **376**, and control circuits **378** for activating the radio transmitter **368**.

[0148] The navigational receiver **356** is connected to an antenna **380** for receiving navigational information, such as from global positioning system satellites (not shown). The receiver provides the location **382** of the remote unit **352** for radio transmission to the base station **354**.

[0149] The remote unit radio transmitter **358** and radio receiver **362** are connected to an antenna **384** for communication with the base station **354**. The base station radio receiver **366** and radio transmitter **378** are connected to an antenna **386** for communication with the remote unit **352**.

[0150] The base station radio receiver **366** provides two outputs, the location **388** of the remote unit for display by the location display **370**, and a signal **390** whose value is inversely proportional to the field strength of the signal received by the radio receiver **366**.

[0151] The received field strength signal **390** and the predetermined limit **374** are compared by the comparator circuit **372** to determine whether the remote unit **352** is separated from the base station **354** by a distance greater than the predetermined limit **374**. An alarm **376** is given when the separation distance exceeds the limit.

[0152] The control circuits **378** are used to cause the radio transmitter **368** to send a control signal to the remote unit **352** for selecting high-power remote unit radio transmission, or activating a visual or audible beacon for use in locating the user in heavy seas or bad visibility.

[0153] FIG. 13 is a block diagram which illustrates an invisible fence for monitoring a movable subject and designated generally by the numeral **400**. The invisible fence **400** includes a remote unit **402** and a base station **404** in one-way radio communication.

[0154] The remote unit **402** includes a navigational receiver **406**, a radio transmitter **408**, storage circuits **410** for storing information defining a geographical region, a comparator **412**, second storage circuits **414** for storing information defining a predetermined positional status, an alarm **416**, and a circuit **418** and having a pair of electrical contacts **420**, **422** for providing a mild electrical shock.

[0155] The base station **404** includes a radio receiver **424**, a comparator **426**, storage circuits **428** for storing information defining a predetermined positional status, and an alarm **430**.

[0156] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 13, the invisible fence **400** defines a geographical region, for example the outer perimeter of a nursing home in which elderly persons are cared for. If a particular patient tends to wander away from the facility, creating an unusual burden upon the staff the remote unit **402** is attached to the patient's clothing. If the patient wanders outside the defined perimeter, the base station **404** alerts the staff before the patient has time to wander too far from the nursing home.

[0157] Other applications are keeping a pet inside the yard, and applying a mild electrical shock to the pet if it wanders too close to a defined perimeter. Attaching the remote unit **402** to a child and alerting the caregiver in the event the child strays from a permitted area. Placing the remote unit around the ankle of a person on parole or probation and giving an alarm if the parolee strays from a permitted area. The invisible fence can also be used to monitor movement of inanimate objects whose locations may change as the result of theft.

[0158] The remote unit navigational receiver **406** provides the location **432** of the remote unit. In a preferred embodiment, the storage circuits **410** are implemented using ROM or

RAM, as for example within an embedded microprocessor. Consideration of FIGS. 14-16 is useful to an understanding of how the invisible fence operates.

[0159] FIGS. 14, 15 and 16 are pictorial diagrams illustrating boundaries used to define geographical regions such as those used in a preferred embodiment of the invisible fence 400.

[0160] FIG. 14 shows a portion 440 of a city, including cross streets 442-454 and a defining boundary 456. The boundary 456 divides the map 440 into two portions, one portion above boundary 456, the other portion below.

[0161] FIG. 15 shows a portion 460 of a city, including cross streets (not numbered) and a closed boundary 462 made up of intersecting line segments 464, 466, 468, 470, 472 and 474. The boundary 462 divides the city map 460 into two subregions, one subregion defining an area 490 wholly within the boundary 462, and the other subregion defining an area 492 outside the boundary 462.

[0162] FIG. 16 shows a geographical region 480 which includes subregions 482 and 484. Subregion 482 is entirely surrounded by subregion 484, while subregion 484 is enclosed within a pair of concentric closed boundaries 486 and 488.

[0163] The information which defines these geographical regions and boundaries is stored in the storage circuits 410, and serve as one input to the comparator 412 (FIG. 13). The comparator 412 also receives the location output 432 from the navigational receiver 406. The comparator 412 compares the location of the remote unit 402 with the defined geographical region and defines a relationship between the location and the defined region which is expressed as a positional status. The comparator 412 also receives an input from the second storage circuits 414. These circuits store information defining a predetermined positional status.

[0164] Some examples will be useful in explaining how the positional status is used. Referring to FIG. 14, remote unit locations 494 and 496 are illustrated as dots, one location 494 being above the boundary 456, the other location 496 being below the boundary.

[0165] For the first example, assume that the location 494 is "within a defined geographical region," and that the location 496 is "outside the defined geographical region." Assume also that the predetermined positional status is that "locations within the defined region are acceptable." Next assume that the navigational receiver 406 reports the location 494 for the remote unit. Then the comparator 412 will define a positional status that "the location of the remote unit relative to the defined region is acceptable." This positional status will be transmitted to the base station 404 and will not result in activation of the alarm 430.

[0166] For the next example, assume that the navigational receiver 406 reports the location of the remote unit to be the location 496, and that the other assumptions remain the same. Then the comparator 412 will define a positional status that "the location of the remote unit relative to the defined region is not acceptable." This positional status will be transmitted to the base station 404 and will result in activation of the alarm 430.

[0167] For the next example refer to FIG. 16 which includes three successive locations 498, 500 and 502, shown linked by a broken line, as for example by movement of the remote unit 402 from location 498 to location 500 to location 502. Assume that the area outside the boundary 488 defines an "acceptable" subregion. Assume further that the area between

the boundaries 488 and 486 defines a "warning" subregion. Also assume that the area 482 inside the boundary 486 defines a "prohibited" subregion. Finally, assume that the navigational receiver 406 provides three successive locations 498, 500 and 502.

[0168] In a preferred embodiment, and given these assumptions in the preceding paragraph, the comparator 412 will determine that the location 498 is acceptable and will take no further action. The comparator 412 will determine that the location 500 is within the warning subregion 484 and will activate the remote unit alarm 416 to warn the person whose movements are being monitored that he has entered a warning zone. When the remote unit 402 arrives at the location 502, the comparator 412 will determine that the remote unit has entered a prohibited zone and will activate the mild electric shock circuit 418 which makes contact with the skin of the monitored person through the electrical contacts 420, 422. The positional status reported by the remote unit 402 for the successive locations 498, 500 and 502 is "acceptable," "warning given," and "enforcement necessary," respectively.

[0169] In another embodiment, no enforcement or warning are given by the remote unit 402. Instead, as when used to monitor the movements of children or elderly patients, the positional status is transmitted to the base station 404. There it is compared with a stored predetermined positional status and used to set an alarm 430 if the positional status is not acceptable. The predetermined positional status is stored in storage circuits 428 and the comparison is made by the comparator 426.

[0170] The preferred embodiment for the storage and comparison circuits is the use of an embedded microprocessor.

[0171] FIG. 17 is a block diagram illustrating a personal alarm system such as the invisible fence of FIG. 13, and designated generally by the numeral 520. Personal alarm system 520 includes a remote unit 522 and a base station 524.

[0172] The remote unit 522 includes a radio transmitter 526 and a radio receiver 528 connected to a shared antenna 530. The base station 524 includes a radio receiver 532 and a radio transmitter 534 connected to a shared antenna 536 and defining a two-way communication link with the remote unit 522.

[0173] In one preferred embodiment, the communication link is direct between the respective transmitters 526, 534 and the corresponding receivers 528, 532. Other embodiments include access to existing commercial and private communications networks for completing the communication link between the remote unit 522 and the base station 524. Typical networks include a cellular telephone network 538, a wireless communications network 540, and a radio relay network 542.

[0174] FIG. 18 is a block diagram showing an environmental monitoring system for use in fixed locations, designated generally by the numeral 550. The environmental monitoring system 550 includes a remote unit 552 and a base station 554.

[0175] The remote unit 552 includes storage circuits 556 for storing information defining the location of the remote unit 552, at least one sensor 558, a radio transmitter 560, and an antenna 562.

[0176] The base station 554 includes an antenna 564, a radio receiver 566, a display 568 for displaying the location of the remote unit 552, a comparator 570, storage circuits 572 for storing information defining a predetermined sensor status, and an alarm 574.

[0177] The environmental monitoring system 550 is useful for applications in which the remote unit 552 remains in a fixed location which can be loaded into the storage circuits

556 when the remote unit **552** is activated. Such applications would include use in forests for fire perimeter monitoring in which the sensor **558** was a heat sensor, or in monitoring for oil spills when attached to a fixed buoy and the sensor **558** detecting oil. Other useful applications include any application in which the location is known at the time of activation and in which some physical parameter is to be measured or detected, such as smoke, motion, and mechanical stress. The environmental monitoring system **550** offers an alternative to pre-assigned remote unit ID numbers, such as those used in the systems illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3.

[0178] The storage circuits **556** provide an output **576** defining the location of the remote unit **552**. This output is connected to the radio transmitter **560** for communication with the base station **554**. The sensor **558** provides an output signal **578** defining a sensor status. The output signal is connected to the radio transmitter **560** for communication of the sensor status to the base station **554**.

[0179] The communications are received by the base stations radio receiver **566** which provides outputs representing both the location **580** of the remote unit **552** and the sensor status **582**. The location **580** is connected to the display **568** so that the location of the remote unit **552** can be displayed. The comparator **570** receives the sensor status **582** and the information defining the predetermined sensor status which is stored in the storage circuits **572**. If the comparator **570** determines that the sensor status indicates an alarm situation, it activates the alarm **574** to alert a base station operator.

[0180] FIG. 19 is a block diagram which illustrates an alternative embodiment of a personal alarm system in which the remote unit transmits demodulated navigational and precise time-of-day information to the base station, and the base station uses that information to compute the location of the remote unit. This alternative embodiment is designated generally by the numeral **600** and includes a remote unit **602** and a base station **604**.

[0181] The remote unit **602** includes a navigational receiver **606**, a demodulator circuit **608**, a precise time-of-day circuit **610**, a sensor **612**, and a radio transmitter **614**.

[0182] The base station **604** includes a radio receiver **616**, computational circuits **618** for computing the location of the remote unit **602**, a display **620** for displaying the computed location, a second display (can be part of the first display) **622** for displaying a sensor status, a comparator **624**, storage circuits **626** for storing information defining a predetermined sensor status, and an alarm **628**.

[0183] In a preferred embodiment, the navigational receiver **606** receives navigational information from global positioning system satellites (not shown). In this embodiment, the raw navigational information is demodulated by the demodulator circuit **608** and the output of the demodulator **608** is connected to the radio transmitter **614** for communication to the base station **604**.

[0184] The precise time-of-day circuits **610** provide the time-of-day information needed to compute the actual location of the remote unit based upon the demodulated navigational information. In the case of GPS navigational information, geometric dilution of precision computations are done at the base station **604** to derive the actual location of the remote unit **602**.

[0185] The sensor **612** provides an output signal defining a sensor status. The demodulated navigational information, the

precise time-of-day information and the sensor status are all connected to the radio transmitter **614** for communication to the base station **604**.

[0186] At the base station **604**, the radio receiver **616** provides the navigational and precise time-of-day information to the computation circuits **618** for determining the actual location. In a preferred embodiment, the computation is made using an embedded microprocessor. The computed location is displayed using the display **620**.

[0187] The radio receiver **616** also provides the received sensor status which forms one input to the comparator **624**. Stored information defining a predetermined sensor status is provided by the storage circuits **626** as a second input to the comparator **624**. If the received sensor status and the stored sensor status do not agree, the comparator **624** activates the alarm **628** to alert the base station operator.

[0188] FIG. 20 is a block diagram which illustrates an alternative embodiment of the invisible fence system in which the base station computes the location of the remote unit, and in which the fence definitions are stored at the base station rather than in the remote unit. The alternative system is designated generally by the numeral **650** and includes a remote unit **652** and a base station **654**.

[0189] The remote unit **652** includes a navigational receiver **656**, a demodulator circuit **658**, a precise time-of-day circuit **660**, a radio transmitter **662**, a radio receiver **664**, a shared antenna **666**, and control status circuits **668**.

[0190] The base station **654** includes a radio receiver **670**, a radio transmitter **672**, a shared antenna **674**, computation circuits **676**, storage circuits **678**, second storage circuits **680**, a first comparator **682**, a second comparator **684**, a display **686**, an alarm **688**, and control circuits **690**.

[0191] The navigational receiver **656** provides raw navigational information **692** to the demodulator circuit **658**. The demodulator circuit **658** demodulates the raw navigational information and provides demodulated navigational information **694** to the radio transmitter **662** for communication to the base station **654**. The precise time-of-day circuit **660** provides time-of-day information **696** to the radio transmitter **662** for communication to the base station **654**.

[0192] The base station radio receiver **670** provides received navigational information **698** and received time-of-day information **700** to the computation circuits **676** for conversion to an actual location **702** of the remote unit **652**. The storage circuits **678** store information defining a geographical region.

[0193] The first comparator **682** receives the location **702** and the region defining information **704** and provides a positional status **706**, as described above with respect to FIGS. 13-16.

[0194] The second storage circuits **680** store information **708** defining a predetermined positional status. The second comparator **684** receives the positional status **706** and the predetermined positional status **708** and provides control output signals **710** based upon the results of the positional status comparison. When the location **702** is within a defined "warning" or "restricted" zone, the second comparator **684** activates the alarm **688** and causes the location **702** to be displayed by the display **686**.

[0195] In one preferred embodiment, the remote unit includes circuits **668** which provide a means by which the base station **654** can warn the remote unit user or enforce a restriction, as for example, by applying the mild electric shock of the embodiment shown in FIG. 13. The second

comparator **684** uses a control signal **710** to activate the control circuits **690** to send a command via the radio transmitter **672** to the remote unit **652** for modifying the remote unit control status. For example, if the remote unit location is within a restricted zone, the base station **654** will command the remote unit **652** to provide an electric shock to enforce the restriction.

[0196] FIG. **21** is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of a man-over-board alarm system, designated generally by the numeral **750**. The man-over-board alarm system **750** includes a remote unit **752** and a base station **754**.

[0197] The remote unit **752** includes a navigational receiver **756**, a radio transmitter **758**, an environmental sensor **760**, at least one manually operated switch **762**, a beacon **764**, a circuit **766** for activating the navigational receiver **756**, and a control circuit **768**.

[0198] The base station **754** includes a radio receiver **770**, a remote-unit location display **772**, a sensor status display **774**, an alarm **776**, a switch status display **778**, a control circuit **780**, and storage **782** for a predetermined limit value.

[0199] The navigational receiver **756** receives navigational information via an antenna **757** and provides a location **759** of the remote unit to the radio transmitter **758** for transmitting the remote unit location **759**. The navigational receiver **756** has a normal operational mode and a low-power standby mode. In a preferred embodiment, the navigational receiver **756** is normally in the low-power standby mode, thereby conserving operating power which is normally supplied by batteries.

[0200] The circuit **766** is responsive to the control circuit **768** for selecting the operational mode and thereby activating the navigational receiver. In a specific embodiment, the control circuit **768** is responsive to a hazard sensor **760**, such as a water-immersion sensor, for controlling the circuit **766** to activate the navigational receiver **756**. In another embodiment, the control circuit **768** is responsive to a manually operated switch **762**, such as a manually operated panic button, for activating the navigational receiver **756**.

[0201] In a specific embodiment, the sensor **760** provides an output signal **761**, and defines a sensor status. The manually operated switch **762** provides an output signal **763**, and defines a switch status. The control circuit **768** receives the sensor output signal **761** and the switch output signal **763**, and connects each to the radio transmitter **758** for communication of the sensor status and the switch status to the base station **754**.

[0202] In another specific embodiment, the control circuit **768** is connected for activating the remote unit beacon **764** in response to a change in the sensor status **761**. In another embodiment, the control circuit **768** activates the beacon **764** in response to a change in the switch status **763**. In one embodiment, the beacon **764** is a visual beacon, such as a flashing light. In another embodiment, the beacon **764** is an audible beacon which emits a periodic sound. The beacon **764** aids searchers in locating a man-over-board.

[0203] In a specific embodiment, the control circuit **768** is implemented using a programmed micro-processor. In another specific embodiment, the control circuit **768** is implemented using an imbedded, programmed micro-processor. In another embodiment the control circuit **768** is implemented using a programmed micro-controller.

[0204] The base-station radio receiver **770** receives the remote unit location **759**, the sensor status, and the switch status. The radio receiver **770** is connected to the display **772**

for displaying the received remote unit location, is connected to the display **774** for displaying the received sensor status, and is connected to the display **778** for displaying the switch status. In a specific embodiment, the radio receiver **770** is connected to the alarm **776** which is activated by a change in the sensor status, such as the detection of immersion in water. In another specific embodiment, the alarm is activated by a change in the switch status, such as a manual operation of the panic button.

[0205] The radio receiver **770** provides a signal **771** corresponding to a field strength of a received radio communication. The control circuit **780** compares the received field strength **771** with a predetermined limit value **783** provided by circuit **782**. The control circuit **780** is connected to activate the alarm **776** when the received field strength is less than the predetermined limit value **783**. The received field strength **771**, the control circuit **780**, and the predetermined limit value **783** define a separation distance between the remote unit **752** and the base station **754**, as discussed above with respect to other embodiments of the invention.

[0206] In a specific embodiment, the control circuit **780** and the circuit **782** for providing the predetermined limit value **783** are implemented using a programmed micro-controller. In another specific embodiment, the circuit **780** and the circuit **782** are implemented using an embedded, programmed micro-controller. The functions performed by the circuits **780** and **782** are performed in different embodiments alternatively by discrete integrated circuits, by a programmed micro-controller, by an embedded, programmed micro-controller, by a programmed micro-processor, and by an embedded, programmed micro-processor.

[0207] In a specific embodiment of the man-over-board alarm system illustrated in FIG. **21**, the sensor **760** includes a plurality of environmental, physiological and hazard sensors providing output signals and defining a sensor status vector. In another specific embodiment, the sensor **760** provides a plurality of output signals **761** defining another status vector. In another specific embodiment, the sensor **760** provides an analog output signal **761**, and the control circuit **768** converts the analog signal **761** for radio transmission as a sensor status vector. The base station **754** displays the sensor status vector using the display **774**.

[0208] In another specific embodiment of the man-over-board alarm system illustrated in FIG. **21**, the manually operated switch **762** includes a plurality of manually operated switches providing multiple output signals **763**. The multiple output signals **763** define a switch status vector which is connected to the control circuit **768** for radio transmission to the base station **754**. The base station **754** displays the switch status vector using the display **778**. In a specific embodiment, the remote unit manually operated switches **762** define a numeric keypad, and the base station **754** displays a manual entry made using the numeric keypad. In another specific embodiment, the manually operated switches **762** define an alpha numeric keypad, and the base station **754** displays manually entered alpha numeric information.

[0209] FIG. **22** is a partial block diagram of the man-over-board alarm system illustrated in FIG. **21**, and designated generally by the numeral **800**. The alarm system **800** includes a remote unit **802** and a base station **804**. The remote unit **802** includes a radio transmitter **806** and a microphone **808**. The base station **804** includes a radio receiver **810** and a speaker **812**. In this embodiment of the alarm system **800**, the microphone **808** is connected to the transmitter **806** for defining a

one-way voice radio communication channel with the base station receiver **810** and speaker **812**. In a specific embodiment, the radio transmitter **806** is also used to transmit the remote unit location, the sensor status vector, and the switch status vector as discussed above with respect to FIG. **21**. In another specific embodiment, the radio receiver **810** is also used to receive the remote unit location, the sensor status vector, the switch status vector, and to provide the received signal strength signal.

[0210] FIG. **23** is also a partial block diagram of the man-over-board alarm system shown in FIG. **21**. The alarm system is designated generally by the numeral **814**. The alarm system **814** includes a remote unit **816** and a base station **818**. The remote unit **816** includes a radio transmitter **820**, a microphone **822**, a radio receiver **824** and a speaker **826**. The base station **818** includes a radio receiver **828**, a speaker **830**, a radio transmitter **832** and a microphone **834**. These elements are configured to provide a two-way voice communication channel between the remote unit **816** and the base station **818**. In a specific embodiment, the radio transmitter **820** and radio receiver **828** are also used to communicate the remote unit location, the sensor status vector, and the switch status vector. In another specific embodiment, the radio receiver **828** also provides a received signal strength signal.

[0211] FIG. **24** is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of an invisible fence system, designated generally by the numeral **850**. The invisible fence system **850** includes a remote unit **852** and a base station **854**.

[0212] The remote unit **852** includes a navigational receiver **856**, a radio transmitter **858**, a memory **860** for storing information defining a geographic region, a memory **862** for storing information defining a predetermined positional and time status, a circuit **863** for providing time-of-day information, a comparison circuit **864**, and an enforcement and alarm circuit **865**.

[0213] The base station **854** includes a radio receiver **866**, a memory **868** for storing a predetermined positional and time status, a comparison circuit **870** and an alarm **872**.

[0214] The invisible fence system illustrated in FIG. **24** differs from the embodiment of FIG. **13** by providing an alarm and enforcement based upon both time and location. The embodiment of FIG. **24** allows the defining of zones of inclusion, and alternatively zones of exclusion, which are defined in terms of location and time-of-day. For example, a parolee equipped with the remote unit **852** may be confined to, and alternatively excluded from, a defined region between the hours of 6 PM and 6 AM. If the parolee leaves the region of confinement, or enters the region of exclusion, between those two time limits, a radio transmission activates the alarm **872** at the base station **854**, and simultaneously activates an alarm and enforcement process **865** at the remote unit **852**. In a specific embodiment, the parolee is first warned that he has left a region of confinement at an unallowed time. If the violation continues, the parolee is given a mild electrical shock. If the violation continues, the intensity of the electrical shock is increased. The authorities are put on notice by the base station alarm **872** that the parolee has violated his defined restrictions.

[0215] FIG. **25** is a pictorial diagram illustrating boundaries used to define geographical regions such as those used in a preferred embodiment of the invisible fence system **850**. FIG. **25** shows a portion **1000** of a city, including cross streets (not numbered) and a closed boundary made up of intersecting line segments **1006**, **1008**, **1010** and **1012**. The boundary

divides the city map **1000** into two subregions, one subregion defining an area **1002** wholly within the boundary, and the other subregion defining an area **1004** outside the boundary.

[0216] In a specific embodiment of an invisible fence system, such as that illustrated in FIG. **24**, a memory **860** stores information defining a geographical region, for example the region **1002**. In an example of the operation of the specific embodiment, assume the region **1002** represents a specific city block, surrounded by the city streets **1006**, **1008**, **1010** and **1012**. Further assume that a parolee is wearing the remote unit **852**, and that the parolee is required by the terms of his parole to remain within the city block **1002** between the hours of 8 PM and 7 AM, and that at all other times the parolee is permitted to be outside the region **1002**.

[0217] FIG. **26** is a table defining a relationship between the location of the remote unit **852** (FIG. **24**) and the time-of-day for use in understanding a curfew feature of a specific embodiment of the invisible fence system **850**. Each row of the table represents a different location, and each column of the table represents a subdivision of the time-of-day. The relationship defined by the table represents an example of a curfew requiring the parolee (in the preceding example) to remain at home, i.e., within the city block **1002**, between 8 PM and 7 AM. If the parolee leaves home during the interval from 8 PM to 7 AM, an alarm **872** is activated at the base station **854**. The information represented by the table is stored in a memory **862** in the remote unit **852**, and is referred to as a predetermined positional and time status.

[0218] With respect to the specific embodiment illustrated in FIG. **24**, the memory **860** stores information defining the geographical region **1002** (FIG. **25**). The comparison circuit **864** receives the remote unit location **859**, the time-of-day **861**, the information defining the geographical region **1002**, and the curfew defining information **867**. The comparison circuit **864** compares the named items of information and provides a positional and time status **869** to the radio transmitter **858** for communication to the base station **854**. In another embodiment of the invisible fence system **850**, the transmitter **858** periodically transmits the remote unit location **859** and time-of-day **861**. This information is received at the base station **854** where the predetermined positional and time status is stored in a memory **868**. The base station **854** makes an independent determination of whether or not the curfew is violated. The positional and time status is compared by circuit **870** with the received location and time-of-day information. An alarm **872** is given if the remote unit violates the established curfew.

[0219] FIG. **27** is a block diagram illustrating another embodiment of an invisible fence system, designated generally by the numeral **1020**. The invisible fence system **1020** includes a remote unit **1022** and a base station **1024**. The remote unit **1022** includes a navigational receiver **1026**, a radio transmitter **1028**, a radio receiver **1030** and an enforcement and alarm circuit **1032**. The base station **1024** includes a radio receiver **1034**, a radio transmitter **1036**, a memory **1040** for storing information defining a geographical region, a memory **1042** for storing information defining a predetermined positional and time status, a display **1044** and an alarm **1046**.

[0220] The navigational receiver **1026** provides information **1027** defining a location of the remote unit **1022**, and is connected to the remote unit radio transmitter **1028** for communicating the remote unit location to the base station **1024**. The transmitted remote unit location is received by the base

station radio receiver **1034** and provided on line **1035** to the control/compare circuit **1038**. The base station includes a circuit **1037** for providing time-of-day information **1039** to the control/compare circuit **1038**.

[0221] In a specific embodiment, the control/compare circuit **1038** is implemented as part of a programmed, imbedded micro-processor/micro-controller. A memory of the imbedded micro-processor provides the memory **1040** for storage of information **1041** defining a geographical region, and the memory **1042** for storage of information **1043** defining a predetermined positional and time status. The imbedded micro-processor implementation of the control/compare circuit **1038** receives the remote unit location **1035**, the time-of-day **1039**, the information **1041** defining a geographical region, and the information **1043** defining a predetermined positional and time status.

[0222] In the previous example, the defined geographical region corresponded to the region **1002** (FIG. 25), and the predetermined positional and time status corresponded to the relationship defined by the table in FIG. 26. The parolee was required to be within the region **1002** between the hours of 8 PM and 7 AM. The compare/control circuit **1038** compares the received information described above and determines whether the parolee is in violation of the defined curfew. The parolee is in violation of the curfew defined by the table in FIG. 26 when he is outside his home between the hours of 8 PM and 7 AM. In this example, the region **1002** (FIG. 25) corresponds to the parolee's home. Locations outside region **1002** are therefore outside his home. In this example, if the parolee is in violation of the curfew, the control/compare circuit **1038** generates a signal **1045**, connected to the base station radio transmitter **1036** for activating an alarm/enforcement device **1032** at the remote unit **1022**. Such a device and an alarm/enforcement protocol have been described above with respect to FIGS. 13 and 16.

[0223] In a specific embodiment of the invisible fence system shown in FIG. 27, the location of the remote unit is displayed **1044** at the base station **1024**. In one embodiment, the control/compare circuit **1038** continuously displays the remote unit location. In another embodiment, the control/compare circuit **1038** provides an alarm **1046** and displays the remote unit location when the parolee has violated the curfew.

[0224] In a specific embodiment of the invisible fence system of FIG. 27, the time-of-day circuit **1037** is implemented as part of the imbedded micro-processor. When several remote units are transmitting their locations from different time zones, the base station time-of-day is adjusted at the base station to use the correct time-of-day for each transmitting remote unit. For a curfew type process, it is not necessary generally to use a precise time-of-day. However, when a precise time-of-day is required, the remote unit transmitter is connected to receive both a location and a precise time-of-day from the navigational receiver, or other precise time-of-day circuit, for transmission to the base station. Such arrangements are illustrated in FIGS. 19, 20, 34 and 36.

[0225] FIG. 28 is a partial block diagram illustrating an alarm system, designated generally by the numeral **1050**. The alarm system **1050** includes a remote unit **1052** and a base station **1054** and is intended to be representative of many of the alarm systems in accordance with aspects of this invention. The remote unit **1052** includes a radio transmitter **1056** and a radio receiver **1058**. The base station **1054** includes a modem **1060**. Through its modem **1060**, the base station **1054**

is connected to a standard communications channel, designated **1064** and a two-way radio link **1062**, permitting a two-way communication between the base station **1054** and the remote unit **1052**.

[0226] Such an arrangement provides a radio link for communicating with the remote unit **1052** while not requiring the base station **1054** to include the necessary radio receiver and radio transmitter. In such a case, the base station includes a communications receiver and a communications transmitter which in one embodiment includes a radio communications facility and in another embodiment provides the modem capability. The modem **1060** permits the base station to be connected via standard land line communications, such as a commercial telephone network. Thus the standard communication channel **1064** includes a standard telephone network, communications satellites, relay type radio links and other common carrier technologies such as cellular telephone, wireless communications, and personal communications systems ("PCS").

[0227] FIG. 29 is a partial block diagram illustrating an alternative embodiment of the personal alarm system **80** as depicted in FIG. 3. Parts shown in FIG. 29 which correspond to parts shown in FIG. 3 have the same identification numerals.

[0228] FIG. 29 illustrates a radio transmitter **86**, a circuit **90** for selecting a transmission power level for the transmitter **86**. An oil/chemical sensor **113** is added to the hazard sensors **100**. Each sensor provides an output signal defining a sensor status. The sensor status of all sensors is connected via a line **111** to the transmitter **86** for transmission of the sensor status. The output of each sensor **100** is connected via line **117** to the selection circuit **90** for selecting a transmission power level. The transmitter **86** normally operates at a reduced power level to conserve battery power. When a hazard sensor **100** detects a hazardous condition, the line **117** communicates that fact to the circuit **90** which causes the transmitter **86** to transmit at a higher power level.

[0229] FIG. 30 is a block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a personal alarm system, designated generally by the numeral **1080**, and including a remote unit **1082** and a base station **1084**. The remote unit **1082** includes a radio transmitter **1086**, a radio receiver **1088**, a control circuit **1090**, a transmission power level selection circuit **1092** and a sensor **1094**. The base station **1084** includes a radio receiver **1096**, a radio transmitter **1098**, an alarm **1100** and a higher power level command circuit **1102**.

[0230] FIG. 30 illustrates a system in which a sensor status **1095** is transmitted to the base station **1084** and generates an alarm **1100**. The command circuit **1102** is responsive to the received sensor status and causes the base station transmitter **1098** to transmit a command to the remote unit **1082** causing the remote unit to transmit at a higher power level. The command is received by the remote unit receiver **1088** and is interpreted by the control circuit **1090** to select a higher power transmission level **1092**.

[0231] FIG. 31 is a partial block diagram illustrating a circuit **1130** including an analog-to-digital converter **1132** and a read-only memory **1134**. The analog-to-digital converter **1132** receives an analog input signal **1131** and provides digital output signals **1133**. The digital output signals **1133** are connected to address input lines of the read-only-memory **1134**. The read-only-memory provides digital output signals of stored information from an addressed memory location on output lines **1135**.

[0232] The circuit shown in FIG. 31 is used to convert a received field strength signal such as signal 771 in the base station 754 of FIG. 21, to a predetermined digital output vector on lines 1135.

[0233] FIG. 32 is a partial block diagram illustrating a digital-to-analog converter 1140. The digital-to-analog converter 1140 receives digital input signals on lines 1141 and provides an analog output signal on line 1142.

[0234] FIG. 33 is a block diagram illustrating an embodiment of a personal alarm system designated generally by the numeral 1150, and including a remote unit 1152 and a base station 1154. The remote unit 1152 includes a radio transmitter 1156, a radio receiver 1158, a circuit 1160 for selecting transmission power level and a sensor 1162. The base station 1154 includes a radio receiver 1164, a radio transmitter 1166, an alarm 1168 and a command control circuit 1170. The digital-to-analog converter illustrated in FIG. 32 is used in a specific embodiment of the circuit 1160 of FIG. 33 for selecting one of a plurality of transmission power levels, as commanded by the base station. The base station receiver 1164 provides a signal 1165 proportional to a received field strength. In a specific embodiment, the signal 1165 is an analog signal and is converted to a digital form using the conversion circuit 1130 of FIG. 31. The digital output signals 1135 are used by the command control circuit 1170 to generate a power-level command 1171 for transmission to the remote unit 1152. In one embodiment of the remote unit select power level circuit 1160, the received digital power-level command is used directly to control the power level of the remote unit transmitter 1156. In another embodiment, the received power-level command is converted to an analog signal which is used to control the power level of the remote unit transmitter 1156. In this manner, the alarm system is able to compensate for an increase in separation distance, low remote unit battery power or other conditions which cause the received signal strength 1165 to be reduced. The circuits are also able to command a reduction of the remote unit transmitting power level to conserve remote unit battery power.

[0235] FIG. 34 is a block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a weather alarm system, designated generally by the numeral 1180. The weather alarm system 1180 includes a remote unit 1182 and a base station 1184.

[0236] The remote unit 1182 includes a navigational receiver 1186, a weather receiver 1188, a radio transmitter 1190, region defining circuits 1192, weather threshold defining circuits 1194, information combining circuits 1196, and information comparison circuits 1198.

[0237] The base station 1184 includes a radio receiver 1200, a display circuit 1202, and an alarm 1204.

[0238] The weather alarm system 1180 operates generally as follows, the remote unit 1182 is deployed in the field, such as in a small, private aircraft and is used to monitor the weather within a zone surrounding the aircraft. As the aircraft moves, the zone surrounding the aircraft moves also. A navigational receiver 1186 is used to determine the location of the aircraft at any point in time. A weather receiver 1188 receives weather parameters broadcast by a Weather Surveillance Radar System of the US Weather Service, providing up-to-date weather information for the United States. The remote unit is programmed to monitor specific weather parameters within the zone surrounding the aircraft and to compare those parameters with programmed limits. In the event that one or more of the monitored parameters exceeds the programmed limit, the remote unit transmitter 1190 is activated and trans-

mits the location 1187 of the aircraft. In some embodiments, specific weather parameters are also transmitted. The base station 1184 receives the transmission, displays 1202 the location and any transmitted weather parameters, and, if appropriate, gives an alarm 1204.

[0239] FIG. 35 is a pictorial diagram illustrating an example of a weather region useful in understanding the operation of the weather alarm system 1180 and similar embodiments. The weather region is designated generally by the numeral 1220 and 1220 includes a region 1222 in which weather parameters are received from a weather surveillance radar system. Within the region 1222 is a weather alarm system remote unit at a moving location 1224 and surrounded by a moving zone 1226 having a constant radius 1228. It is perhaps more relevant to state that at any point in the contiguous 48 states of the lower continental United States the weather receiver 1188 receives weather parameters relevant to the current location 1224 of the weather alarm system remote unit 1182 (the aircraft, in our example above). The aircraft is surrounded by a moving zone 1226 and the remote unit is monitoring specified weather parameters within the moving zone, notifying the base station 1184 when any monitored parameter exceeds its programmed limit.

[0240] FIG. 36 is a pictorial diagram illustrating an example of another weather region, designated generally by the numeral 1240. In this example, the weather region 1240 includes an area of weather reporting 1242. The aircraft is located at point 1244 and is moving in a direction and at a velocity shown by a vector 1246. In this example, the defined zone of weather parameter monitoring is 1248.

[0241] With respect once again to FIG. 34, the remote unit circuits 1192 are used to define the zone (1226 in FIG. 35, and 1248 in FIG. 26) which is moving relative to the aircraft. In a specific embodiment, the circuits 1192 are a memory portion of a programmed micro-controller, and the zone is defined by information stored in the memory portion. The defined zone is designated by the numeral 1193.

[0242] The remote unit circuits 1194 define specific weather parameters to be monitored and also define specific threshold values, limits and ranges for use in monitoring the weather parameters. The defined values are designated generally by the numeral 1195 and in a specific embodiment are stored in a memory portion of a programmed micro-controller.

[0243] As the aircraft proceeds on its flight, the navigational receiver 1186 continues to provide a current location 1187, while the weather receiver 1188 continues to provide current weather information 1189. The location 1187 and the surrounding zone defining information 1193 are combined by circuits 1196 and define a zone relative to the weather reporting region (1222 in the example of FIG. 35, and 1242 in the example of FIG. 36). This relative zone is compared by circuits 1198 with the received weather parameters 1189 and the selected weather parameters and limit values 1195 to determine whether or not any monitored parameter within the moving zone exceeds its limit. The line 1199 is used to activate the remote unit transmitter 1190 for transmitting the current location 1187 and the result 1199 of the comparison.

[0244] FIG. 37 is a partial block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a remote unit for a weather alarm system. The portion of the remote unit is designated generally by the numeral 1250, and includes a navigational receiver 1252, a circuit 1254 for defining an activation threshold, and a comparison circuit 1256. In the embodiment illustrated

here, received weather parameters **1258** are compared with limit values, threshold values and ranges stored in the circuit **1254**. If any specified weather parameter exceeds its individual limit value, the comparison circuit **1256** activates the navigational receiver **11252** which has been operating in a standby mode. Since current location is not available until the navigational receiver is activated, the received weather parameters **1258** are not limited to a moving zone around the aircraft, but apply to the entire weather reporting region (**1222** in the example of FIG. **35**, and **1242** in the example of FIG. **36**). In a specific embodiment, the circuits **1254** and **1256** are part of a programmed micro-controller.

[0245] FIG. **38** is a block diagram of another specific embodiment of a weather alarm system, designated generally by the numeral **1270**. The weather alarm system **1270** includes a remote unit **1272** and a base station **1274**.

[0246] The remote unit **1272** includes only a navigational receiver **1276**, providing a current location to a radio transmitter **1278** for transmission to a base station.

[0247] The base station **1274** includes a radio receiver **1280** for receiving the current location **1281**, a weather receiver **1282** for receiving weather parameters, a region defining circuit **1284** for defining a zone relative to the current remote unit location, a weather threshold defining circuit **1286** for selecting specific weather parameters and for defining limits, thresholds, and ranges for the each selected weather parameter, an information combining circuit **1288** for combining the current location and the zone defining information, a comparison circuit **1290** for selecting the specified parameters within the zone relative to the current location, comparing the selected parameters within the zone with their individual limits, and activating an alarm **1294** and displaying **1292** the current location and comparison results when a monitored weather parameter within the defined distance of the remote unit exceeds its limit, falls below its defined threshold, and falls inside/outside of a defined range.

[0248] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **38** all the intelligence is placed into the base station **1274**, including the weather receiver **1282**. In a specific embodiment, the circuits **1284**, **1286**, **1288** and **1290** are part of a programmed micro-controller.

[0249] FIG. **39** is a block diagram illustrating a self-locating remote alarm unit designated generally by the numeral **1300**. The remote unit **1300** includes a circuit **1302** defining a first variable and providing a value **1303** for the first variable, a circuit **1304** defining a second variable and providing a value **1305** for the second variable, a communications transmitter **1306**, a circuit **1308** defining a condition and providing a value for the condition, a circuit **1310** for comparing the value of the first variable with the value of the condition, and a circuit **1312** responsive to the comparison for enabling the communications transmitter **1306** to transmit the value of the second variable and to transmit a function of the value of the first variable.

[0250] Though the description of FIG. **39** is very abstract, the figure represents the essence of the major embodiments of the present invention, as the following examples will illustrate.

[0251] In a simple man-over-board monitor as illustrated in FIG. **11**, the value **310** of the first variable is provided by a sensor **308**, the value **338** of the second variable is provided by a navigation receiver **304**. When the sensor status **310** changes, a transmitter **314** transmits the remote unit location **338** and the sensor status **310**.

[0252] In the same man-over-board monitor, when a panic button **312** is depressed, the transmitter **314** transmits the remote unit location **338** and the switch status **340**.

[0253] In an environmental monitor illustrated in FIG. **18**, the value of the first variable is a sensor status **578** for a monitored environmental parameter, while the value of the second variable is a location **576** of the remote unit stored in a memory. When the sensor **558** detects a predetermined change in the monitored environmental parameter, the transmitter **560** transmits the stored location of the remote unit and the sensor status **578**. Alternatively, the remote unit **552** defines a patient monitor, and the value of the second variable is stored information **556** which identifies the patient, such as name, room and bed number, patient identification code. The value of the first variable is the output of a sensor **558** which monitors a physiological parameter, and defines a sensor status **578**. When a predetermined change in the monitored physiological parameter occurs, the transmitter **560** is activated and transmits the patient identification information **576** as the value of the second variable and transmits the sensor status **578** as the function of the first variable.

[0254] The circuits **1308**, **1310** and **1312** of FIG. **39** find their equivalents in the man-over-board monitor, the patient monitor and in the environmental monitor in that a change in a sensor or switch status activates a transmission of the value of the second variable—dynamic location, patient ID, and static location, respectively—and a transmission of an appropriate function of the value of the first variable—sensor status.

[0255] In a man-over-board monitor **752** illustrated in FIG. **21**, the value of the second variable is provided by a dynamic location determining device, in this case the navigational receiver **756**. Alternative embodiments use the World-wide LORAN navigation system, a satellite navigational system such as the GPS system, and other alternative global and regional navigational systems for providing a value of the second variable which is the location of the remote unit **752**.

[0256] Another example of a remote unit represented by the block diagram in FIG. **39** is a remote weather alarm **1182** illustrated in FIG. **34** in which the value of the second variable is a remote unit location **1187**, and in which the function of the first variable is defined by a circuit **1198** to be the result **1199** of a comparison of a monitored weather parameter, within the defined zone relative to the weather alarm location **1187**, with a defined weather threshold **1195**.

[0257] Another example of the remote unit represented by FIG. **39** is an invisible fence monitor **852** as illustrated in FIG. **24**. The value of the second variable is a location **859** provided by a navigational receiver **856**, while the transmitted function of the first variable is a positional and time status **869**, the result of a comparison by a circuit **864** of the location **859**, a time-of-day **861** and a defined curfew **860**, **862**.

[0258] When a microphone **808** is connected to the remote unit transmitter **806**, as shown in FIG. **22**, the remote unit of FIG. **39** includes a one-way voice channel.

[0259] FIG. **40** is a block diagram illustrating a remote alarm unit designated generally by the numeral **1320**. The remote unit **1320** includes a circuit **1322** defining a first variable and providing a value **1323** for the first variable, a communications transmitter **1324**, a circuit **1326** defining a condition and providing a value for the condition, a circuit **1328** for comparing the value of the first variable with the value of the condition, and a circuit **1330** responsive to the comparison for enabling the communications transmitter **1324** to transmit

a function of the value **1323** of the first variable. The remote unit **1320** also includes a communications receiver **1332** for defining a two-way communications link.

[0260] When the remote unit shown in FIG. 39 includes a communications receiver, such as the receiver **1332** of FIG. 40, the communications channel is alternatively one of direct radio contact such as illustrated in a variety of the figures, wireless, cellular, radio telephone, radio relay, to name a few representative communications channels as shown in FIGS. 17 and 28.

[0261] An example of a monitoring system such as illustrated in FIG. 40 is shown in FIGS. 3, 30 and 33. In each instance, one or more sensors and switches provide the value for the first variable and the transmitted function of the value of the first variable is alternatively the sensor value and the sensor/switch status. The circuits **1326**, **1328** and **1330** find their equivalents in an activation of the transmitter upon a change of the sensor/switch status. The remote monitoring system illustrated in FIG. 3 includes both a remote unit **82** of the class shown in FIG. 40 and a compatible base station **84**.

[0262] FIG. 41 is a partial block diagram which illustrates a plurality of sensor/switches designated by the numeral **1340**. Each sensor/switch **1342** provides an output signal **1343** defining a sensor/switch status. A typical transmission format for a sensor/switch status and defining a sensor/switch vector is shown in the partial pictorial diagram of FIG. 42. The transmitted format is designated generally by the numeral **1350** and includes a plurality of sensor/switch status bits **1352** defining a status vector **1354**. A portion **1356** of the transmitted format **1350** is unused and marked reserved.

[0263] Finally, FIG. 43 is a partial block diagram illustrating the temporary connection of an input device to a remote monitor of the type providing a stored value for the second variable. The figure includes the removable input device **1350** temporarily connected to the remote monitor **1362**. The remote monitor **1362** includes a circuit **1364** for storing a value for the second variable. The input device **1350** is connected to the remote monitor **1362** and supplies a value **1361** for storage in the circuit **1364**. Once the value **1361** has been stored, the input device **1360** is disconnected from the remote monitor **1362**, and the remote monitor uses the value stored by the circuit **1364** as the value of the second variable. The remote monitor **1362** corresponds to the self-locating remote alarm unit **1300** of FIG. 39, and the storage circuit **1364** of FIG. 43 corresponds to the circuit **1304** of FIG. 39.

[0264] The two examples that are provided above for a self-locating remote alarm unit which provides a stored value for the second variable are the environmental monitor of FIG. 18 and its other embodiment, the patient monitor. Both embodiments require that a value be provided for the second variable. A method for doing so is to connect an input device **1360** to the remote monitor **1362**, to use the input device to load a value for the second variable into the storage circuit **1364** (**1304** of FIG. 39, and **556** of FIG. 18), then to disconnect the input device and to monitor the specified environmental/physiological parameters. In one embodiment, the input device is a keypad of manually operated switches. The keypad is used to input an environmental monitor location, or, alternatively, a patient's ID information. In one embodiment of the procedure, a navigational receiver is used to provide a user with the environmental monitor location, which the user then enters by hand using the keypad input device **1360** attached to the environmental monitor **1362** (**552** of FIG. 18). In another embodiment, the temporarily connected input

device **1360** is a navigational receiver and the location **1361** is stored in the storage circuit **1364** (**556** of FIG. 13, **1304** of FIG. 39). After the location has been stored in the storage circuit, the navigational receiver **1360** is disconnected and the environmental monitor left to do its job.

[0265] While the foregoing detailed description has described several embodiments of the personal alarm system in accordance with this invention, it is to be understood that the above description is illustrative only and not limiting of the disclosed invention. Thus, the invention is to be limited only by the claims as set forth below.

[0266] FIG. 44 is a block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a personal alarm system remote unit. The remote unit is designated generally by the reference numeral **1410**, and includes a satellite global positioning receiver (navigational receiver) **1412**, a radio transmitter **1414**, a sensor and threshold detector **1416**, a microphone **1418**, and a voice-activated detector **1420**.

[0267] The navigational receiver **1412** receives positioning information from geo-synchronous satellites via antenna **1422**, and provides a global location **1424** of the remote unit for transmission by the radio transmitter **1414**. The location **1424** is represented in appropriate coordinates.

[0268] The sensor and threshold detector **1416** provides an output signal **1426** that is activated when the sensor detects a condition that exceeds a predetermined threshold level. A variety of specific sensors is contemplated, including but not limited to the following: a glucose sensor for monitoring the blood-glucose level of a patient; an oxygen sensor for monitoring the oxygen level of the ambient air; a motion sensor for detecting movement in excess of a predetermined threshold; a light sensor for detecting ambient light in excess of a predetermined threshold; a liquid immersion sensor, a heat sensor for detecting temperature in excess of a predetermined threshold; a carbon-monoxide sensor; and a smoke detector.

[0269] The microphone **1418** and the voice-activated detector **1420** provide an output signal **1430** that becomes active when the voice-activated detector **1420** detects a predetermined spoken distress phrase such as "HELP!"

[0270] In a specific embodiment of the personal alarm system remote unit **1410**, no sensor and threshold detector are included. In this embodiment, the radio transmitter **1414** is connected to transmit the remote unit location **1424** when the voice-activated detector output signal **1430** is active. This specific embodiment of the invention permits the remote unit to be worn or carried by a person and the person's global location will be transmitted via antenna **1428** when a predetermined distress phrase is detected.

[0271] In another specific embodiment of the personal alarm system remote unit **1410**, the sensor and threshold detector **1416** are included and the threshold detector portion is disabled. The radio transmitter is connected to transmit the sensor output signal (sensor status) **1426** when the remote unit location is transmitted. In yet another embodiment of the personal alarm system remote unit **1410**, the threshold detector is enabled and the radio transmitter is connected for transmitting a sensor status **1426** and a remote unit location **1424** when either of the sensor and threshold detector output signal **1426** and the voice-activated detector output signal **1430** is active.

[0272] In various specific embodiments, the navigational receiver is compatible with one of a geo-synchronous satellite global navigation system, the infrastructure-based TDOA and RSSI systems, the SATNAV system, and the LORAN

system. The preferred embodiment is that the navigational receiver **1412** is compatible with the U.S. GPS system.

[0273] FIG. **45** is a block diagram illustrating a specific embodiment of a base station for use with a remote unit such as shown in FIG. **44**. The base station is designated generally by the reference numeral **1432** and includes an antenna **1434**, a radio receiver **1436**, a display **1440** for displaying the remote unit location, and an alarm **1442**. In normal use, the radio receiver **1436** receives a radio transmission from a remote unit via the antenna **1434**. The radio receiver provides two output signals. A first output **1438** provides the global coordinates of the remote unit location for display while a second output **1439** becomes active when a transmission is received from a remote unit. The output **1439** is used to activate the alarm **1442**. In another specific embodiment of the base station **1432**, the output signal(s) **1438** includes both the remote unit location information and sensor status information.

[0274] FIG. **46** is a block diagram of a personal alarm system according to another aspect of the present invention. The personal alarm system is designated generally by the reference numeral **1500** and includes a remote unit **1502** and a base station **1504**.

[0275] The remote unit **1502** includes a navigational receiver **1506**, a demodulator circuit **1508**, a precise time-of-day circuit **1510**, a voice-activated detector circuit **1512**, a microphone **1514**, a radio transmitter **1515**, a navigational receiver antenna **1516**, and a radio transmitter antenna **1518**.

[0276] The navigational receiver provides modulated navigational information **1530** to the demodulator circuit **1508**. The demodulator circuit **1508** “demodulates” the modulated navigational information **1530** and provides demodulated navigational information **1532** to the radio transmitter **1515**. The precise time-of-day circuit **1510** provides a precise time-of-day signal **1534** to the radio transmitter.

[0277] The microphone **1514** is connected to the voice-activated detector circuit **1512** permitting the detector circuit **1512** to activate an output signal **1536** when a predetermined distress phrase is detected, for example “HELP!”

[0278] The radio transmitter **1515** is connected to transmit the demodulated navigational information **1532** and the precise time-of-day information **1534** when the voice-activated output signal **1536** becomes active.

[0279] The base station **1504** includes an antenna **1520**, a radio receiver **1522** circuits **1524** for computing the remote unit location, a display **1526** and an alarm **1528**.

[0280] Radio transmissions from the remote unit **1502** are received via the antenna **1520** and is converted by the radio receiver into demodulated navigational information **1538**, and precise time-of-day information **1540**. The circuits **1524** receive the demodulated navigational information and the precise time-of-day information and compute a global location **1544** for the transmitting remote unit **1502**. The computed global location (in appropriate coordinates) is displayed on the display **1526**. The alarm **1528** is activated by a receiver output signal **1542** when a radio transmission from the remote unit is received.

[0281] FIG. **47** is a block diagram that illustrates another embodiment of a personal alarm system remote unit. The remote unit is designated generally by the reference numeral **1600** and includes a navigational antenna **1616**, a navigational receiver **1602**, a microphone **1610**, a voice-activated detector **1604**, a radio transmitter **1606** a radio antenna **1618**, a radio receiver **1608**, and a speaker **1612**.

[0282] The navigational receiver **1602** receives navigational information via the navigational antenna **1616** and provides a location **1620** of the remote unit in appropriate coordinates.

[0283] The microphone **1610** and the voice-activated detector **1604** are connected to provide a Transmit Location signal **1628** that becomes active when the detector **1604** recognizes an audible predetermined distress phrase such as “HELP!” The radio transmitter **1606** is connected with the Transmit Location signal **1628**, and with the remote unit location information **1620** so that the location information is transmitted when the signal **1628** becomes active. Thus, in normal use, the remote unit **1600** transmits its own location (in appropriate coordinates) when an audible, predetermined distress phrase is detected. The predetermined distress phrase is preset to a specific language. In another embodiment, the predetermined distress phrase is programmed into a programmable storage unit (not illustrated) that is connected with the voice-activated detector **1604**.

[0284] The remote unit **1600** includes a switch **1614** that connects the microphone **1610** with the radio transmitter **1606** for transmitting one-half of a two-way radio communication. The switch **1614** also is connected to generate a Transmit Voice signal **1626** that becomes active when the switch **1614** is operated. The radio transmitter **1606** is connected with the Transmit Voice signal **1628** so that when the switch is operated, the microphone is connected for voice transmission in a push-to-talk arrangement (half-duplex mode), and the radio transmitter transmits the voice via radio antenna **1618**. The other half of the two-way radio communication is received by the radio antenna **1618**, then converted to audible sound by the radio receiver **1608** and the speaker **1612**.

[0285] FIG. **48** is a partial block diagram that illustrates the use of a wireless phone within a personal alarm system remote unit according to a specific embodiment of the present invention. The personal alarm system remote unit is designated generally by the reference numeral **1700**, and includes a wireless phone **1702**, a wireless phone antenna **1704**, remote unit location information **1706**, and a Transmit Location signal **1710**.

[0286] The wireless phone **1702** typically includes elements necessary for two-way radio communication (full-duplex mode), such as a microphone (**1610** of FIG. **47**) and a speaker (**1612** of FIG. **47**).

[0287] When the Transmit Location signal **1710** becomes active, the wireless phone **1702** transmits the remote unit location information **1706**.

[0288] FIG. **49** is a partial block diagram illustrating the wireless phone of FIG. **48** and including a circuit that automatically dials “911” for transmitting the remote unit location. The wireless phone is designated by the reference numeral **1720**, while the circuit that automatically dials “911” is designated by the reference numeral **1722**. When the Transmit Location signal **1724** becomes active, the circuit **1722** automatically dials the dedicated public safety help telephone number “911” via connection **1726** with the wireless phone **1720**. Once the telephone connection with the 911 service is established, the wireless phone **1720** transmits the remote unit location information (**1706** of FIG. **48**). Recently, additional public safety help telephone numbers have been contemplated and, in some cases, assigned. A person having an ordinary level of skill in the relevant arts will appreciate that (1) the use of these additional telephone numbers is also contemplated by the present invention, and (2) a typical wire-

less phone includes a keypad permitting a user to place a call in the normal manner, including a call placed to a dedicated public safety help telephone number.

[0289] FIG. 50 is a partial block diagram that illustrates the use of a cellular telephone 1730 for transmitting the remote unit location and for two-way radio communication. In the illustrated embodiment, the wireless phone of FIGS. 48, 49 is the cellular telephone 1730. FIG. 51 is a partial block diagram that illustrates the use of a PCS telephone for transmitting the remote unit location and for two-way radio communication. In the illustrated embodiment the wireless phone of FIGS. 48, 49 is the PCS telephone 1740.

What is claimed is:

1. A personal alarm system remote unit having a radio transmitter, a radio receiver, a navigational receiver, the navigational receiver providing remote unit location information, and the remote unit including a manually operated switch, wherein:

the radio transmitter and the radio receiver comprises a cellular telephone providing a two-way communication link with a microphone and speaker connected for two-way voice communication, the navigational receiver being connected to the cellular telephone for cellular data transmission of the remote unit location information from the remote unit to a safety response center;

the cellular telephone is configured so that activation of the manually operated switch initiates a call to a predetermined telephone number of a safety response center to transmit from the remote unit to the safety response center remote unit location information provided by said navigational receiver and to open a voice channel between the remote unit and the safety response center.

2. A personal alarm system remote unit as claimed in claim 1, wherein a plurality of manually operated switches are provided for initiating calls to predetermined telephone numbers in addition to the safety response center.

3. A personal alarm system remote unit as claimed in claim 1, wherein the remote unit comprises timing circuits for providing time information, and a demodulator for demodulating the received navigational information, wherein operation of the switch causes transmission of the demodulated navigational information and the time information from the remote unit to the safety response center.

4. A method for determining the location of a personal alarm system remote unit, the method comprising:

providing a remote unit as claimed in claim 1; and, in response to activation of said switch, initiating a call to a predetermined telephone number of a safety response center, thereby transmitting from the remote unit to the safety response center remote unit location information provided by said navigational receiver and opening a voice channel between the remote unit and the safety response center.

5. A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein the remote unit comprises timing circuit for providing time information, and a demodulator for demodulating the received navigational information, wherein operation of the switch causes transmission of the demodulated navigational information and the time information from the remote unit to the safety response center and wherein, in response to activation of said switch, the method further comprises transmitting demodulated received navigational information and time information; and

using computation means to combine the received demodulated navigational information and the time information to determine the location of the remote unit.

6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the computational means is provided at the safety response center and the step of determining the location of the remote unit is carried out at the safety response center.

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