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A convenience gaming system is provided. The convenience gaming system allows users to access applications via gaming communication devices coupled to a communication network. At least a portion of the network may be wireless. The gaming applications include gambling, financial, entertainment service, and other types of transactions. The system may include a user location determination feature to prevent users from conducting transactions from unauthorized areas.

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(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CONVENIENCE GAMING

(57) Abstract: A convenience gaming system is provided. The convenience gaming system allows users to access applications via gaming communication devices coupled to a communication network. At least a portion of the network may be wireless. The gaming applications include gambling, financial, entertainment service, and other types of transactions. The system may include a user location determination feature to prevent users from conducting transactions from unauthorized areas.

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CONVENIENCE GAMING

TECHNICAL FIELD

      The present invention relates generally to the field of gaming and, more particularly to a

5   gaming system and method incorporating a wireless network.

BACKGROUND

      On-line casinos are accessible via the Internet. These on-line casinos present a graphical

representation of games, such as casino games, to a user on the screen of a computer in

10   communication with the Internet. The user may place wagers, participate in the gaming, and win

or lose money. Receipt of winnings, or payment of losses is typically handled through a credit

account.

SUMMARY

15   Certain exemplary embodiments can provide a method, comprising: responsive to a user

using a device to access a gaming system to start a gaming session: determining, by at least one

processor, that the device is within a geographic area in which the gaming session is permitted

and beyond a predetermined distance from a border of the geographic area in which the gaming

session is permitted; allowing, by at least one processor, the device to submit wagers on gaming

20   activities based upon the determination that the device is located within the geographic area and

beyond the predetermined distance from the border of the geographic area; wherein allowing the

user to wager further includes presenting, by at least one processor, to the user via the device a

gaming environment, wherein the gaming environment includes a plurality of gaming activities,

and a cashier option; receiving, by at least one processor, from the user via the device a selection

25   of the cashier option and adding funds to an account of the user based in part on a selection of

the cashier option; receiving, by at least one processor, from the user via the device a selection

of one of the plurality of gaming activities; based in part on receiving the selection of one of the

plurality of gaming activities, presenting, by at least one processor, to the user via the device with

one or more options related to a selected gaming activity, wherein the one or more options include

30   a wager option; executing, by at least one processor, the selected gaming activity, wherein

executing the selected gaming activity includes: receiving, by at least one processor, from the user via the device a selection of one or more options related to selected gaming activity including a selection of the wager option, the selection of the wager option resulting in a wager on the selected gaming activity; monitoring, by at least one processor, keystrokes made by the user

5　with respect to the selected gaming activity, and establishing an electronic record of the monitored keystrokes; determining, by at least one processor, through the use of a random number generator an outcome of the selected gaming activity; and when the outcome is a winning outcome, communicating by at least one processor to the user via the device an amount won, and crediting the amount won to the account of the user.

10　Certain exemplary embodiments can provide an apparatus, comprising: at least one processor; and at least one memory device electronically coupled to the at least one processor, in which the memory device stores instructions which, when executed by the at least one processor, direct the at least one processor to: responsive to a user using a device to access a gaming system to start a gaming session: determine that the device is within a geographic area in which the

15　gaming session is permitted and beyond a predetermined distance from a border of the geographic area in which the gaming session is permitted; allowing, by at least one processor, the device to submit wagers on gaming activities based upon a determination that the device is within the geographic area and located beyond the predetermined distance from the border of the geographic area; wherein to allow the user to wager further includes to present to the user via the device a

20　gaming environment, wherein the gaming environment includes a plurality of gaming activities and a cashier option; receive from the user via the device a selection of the cashier option and adding funds to an account of the user based in part on a selection of the cashier option; receive from the user via the device a selection of one of the plurality of gaming activities; based in part on receiving the selection of one of the plurality of gaming activities, present to the user via the

25　device with one or more options related to a selected gaming activity, wherein the one or more options include a wager option; execute the selected gaming activity, wherein to execute the selected gaming activity includes to: receive from the user via the device a selection of one or more options related to selected gaming activity including a selection of the wager option, the selection of the wager option resulting in a wager on the selected gaming activity; monitor

30　keystrokes made by the user with respect to the selected gaming activity, and establish an

electronic record of the monitored keystrokes; determine through the use of a random number generator an outcome of the selected gaming activity; and when the outcome is a winning outcome, communicate to the user via the device an amount won, and credit the amount won to the account of the user.

5   Certain exemplary embodiments can provide a method comprising: responsive to a device accessing a gaming system to engage in at least one gaming activity, determining by at least one server whether the device is located within a pre-defined location; transmitting gaming information to the device over an Internet communication path and transmitting wagering information to the device over a private communication path, in response to determining that the

10   device is located in the pre-defined location; and in response to the device accessing the gaming system, altering certain functionality of the device to ensure wagers received by the at least one server from the device, while the device is located in the pre-defined location, did not originate from outside boundaries of the pre-defined location.

Certain exemplary embodiments can provide an apparatus, comprising: at least one

15   processor; and at least one memory device electronically coupled to the at least one processor, in which the memory device stores instructions which, when executed by the at least one processor, direct the at least one processor to: responsive to a user using a device to access a gaming system to engage in at least one gaming activity, determining whether the device is located within a pre-defined location; transmit gaming information to the device over an Internet communication path

20   and transmitting wagering information to the device over a private communication path, in response to determining that the device is located in the pre-defined location; and in response to the device accessing the gaming system, altering certain functionality of the device to ensure wagers received by the at least one processor from the device, while the device is located in the pre-defined location, did not originate from outside boundaries of the pre-defined location.

25   Due to a variety of factors, Internet-based electronic gaming systems may have a number of undesirable aspects. For example, the Internet lacks the security necessary to ensure confidence that operation of an electronic gaming system will proceed without tampering. An operator of an Internet gaming system is prone to hacking, viruses and other shortcomings of

conducting business over the Internet. Users of Internet-based systems often lack confidence that their financial transactions are secure and that their privacy will remain intact. Moreover, the use of the Internet does not provide location verification suitable to ensure that a user is within an approved gaming area.

5   Among other things, certain embodiments of the present invention incorporate non-Internet based technology with respect to a communications network in order to avoid the problems encountered in operating a gaming system via the Internet.

In one embodiment the present invention provides a convenience gaming system, which includes at least one server and at least one gaming communication device connected to the at

10   least one server by a telecommunications network. The at least one gaming communication device is operable to send and receive gaming

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information to and from the at least one gaming server if the at least one gaming communication device meets at least one predetermined criteria.

5   In another embodiment, a method is provided for conducting convenience gaming activities on a gaming communication device in communication with a gaming server. The method includes presenting a user of the gaming communication device with one or more gaming activity options. The method further includes accepting a selection of a gaming activity option by the user, transmitting information associated with the selected gaming activity option between the gaming communication device and the server, determining a result associated with the user's
10 selection, and transmitting the result to the user.

Various embodiments of the present invention may benefit from numerous advantages. It should be noted that one or more embodiments may benefit from some, none, or all of the advantages discussed below.

One advantage is that the system enables remote, wireless, mobile gaming
15 over a secure network. Another advantage is that the system enables remote, wireless, mobile, gaming, while preventing gaming by unauthorized users and from unauthorized locations. Another advantage is the enablement of a gaming system accessible by remote, wireless, mobile users, wherein the system includes gaming communication devices used by the users and connected to a communication network,
20 and wherein a portion of the communication network is movable.

Other advantages will be readily apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art from the following figures, descriptions, and claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

25 For a more complete understanding of the present invention and for further features and advantages, reference is now made to the following description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIGURE 1 illustrates a convenience gaming system according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 2 illustrates a convenience gaming system with a wireless network according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 3 is a block diagram of a convenience gaming system illustrating various gaming activities in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 4 illustrates a convenience gaming system showing coverage areas in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 5 illustrates a convenience gaming system with a wireless network showing triangulation location determination in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 6 is a flow chart depicting steps in a convenience gaming method according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 7 depicts a convenience gaming system showing a communication path in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIGURE 8 illustrates a ship-based convenience gaming system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

A convenience gaming system enables participants to engage in gaming activities from remote and/or mobile locations. The possible gaming activities include gambling, such as that provided by casinos. Gambling activities may include any casino-type gambling activities including, but not limited to, slot machines, video poker, table games (e.g., craps, roulette, blackjack, pai gow poker, Caribbean stud poker, baccarat, etc), the wheel of fortune game, keno, sports betting, horse racing, dog racing, jai alai, and other gambling activities. The gaming activities can also include wagering on any type of event. Events can include, for example, sporting events, such as horse or auto racing, and athletic competitions such as football, basketball, baseball, golf, etc. Events can also include such things that do not normally involve wagering. Such events may include, without limitation, political elections, entertainment industry awards, and box office performance of movies. Gaming can also include non-wagering games and events. Gaming can also include

lotteries or lottery-type activities such as state and interstate lotteries. These can include all forms of number-selection lotteries, "scratch-off" lotteries, and other lottery contests. The convenience gaming system may be implemented over a communications network such as a cellular network or a private wireless and/or wireline network. Examples of the latter include WiFi and WiMax networks. In one embodiment, the convenience gaming system communications network is entirely independent of the Internet. In another embodiment, the convenience gaming system operation makes minimal use of the Internet, such that only information for which there is no security issues is transmitted via the Internet and/or information may be encrypted. Preferably, the communications network enables players to participate in gaming from remote locations (e.g., outside of the gaming area of a casino). Also, the system may enable players to be mobile during participation in the convenience gaming activities. Preferably, the system has a location verification or determination feature, which is operable to permit or disallow gaming from the remote location depending upon whether or not the location meets one or more criteria. The criterion may be, for example, whether the location is within a pre-defined area in which gaming is permitted by law.

The gaming industry is frustrated in maximizing the efficiency of its production facilities because different jurisdictions have different rules relating to gaming. Furthermore, within the United States, different states have different rules relating to gaming. Complying with all the rules, in a single system, can be very difficult. If a manufacturer of a gaming machine or system wishes to sell the machine in a number of different jurisdictions, they have to ensure that the machine meets the operational requirements of each different jurisdiction. Additionally, Internet gaming is difficult to control because of its all-pervasive nature.

Some establishments, such as a casino, or a betting office, require a license, and to keep their license, they have to control the gaming that takes place in their premises to be within the rules set by the country or state. This means that they cannot use certain types of machine because there is a possibility of using them

outside of the rules. For example, Internet gambling is, typically, not allowed in casinos and betting shops because of difficulties in controlling who is betting. Many countries and states have rules governing the age of people who can bet, their geographical location, and possibly the need to pay tax on bets (which is difficult to collect if the bets are made over the Internet).

One aim of the invention is to provide a new gaming apparatus. This may have enhanced interest to users, or purchasers of a system.

In one embodiment, the invention includes location verification or determination apparatus. This enables us to use mobile devices, which cannot be guaranteed to be in a certain location, as gaming apparatus and yet still comply with rules relating to the physical location of people who use the gaming apparatus. The apparatus can be disabled if it is in certain locations, or if it is not in specified locations.

In other embodiments, the apparatus requires the input of an identification code to identify the user. Identity can be authenticated by alternative techniques.

Internet gaming has problems from the perspective of jurisdictional requirements. We have realized that it is possible to segregate allowable and non-allowable "remote" gambling. In many embodiments this will be wireless networked gambling. This can allow users the freedom to move around with gaming machines that are portable, and play them in more convenient local locations, without fear of losing the gaming/gambling license of the establishment (e.g. casino). Apparatus with such ability and flexibility offered to the customer is new, interesting, and will improve the game-playing experience of a user.

In another embodiment, the apparatus/system includes a keystroke log. This improves the security of the gaming operations. The history of which keys were pressed/what date and time a bet was actually entered would be very useful if there were disputes about what bets were placed when.

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In some embodiments, the connection between a "handset" and a gaming server comprises a non-Internet connection. This has the capability of enhanced security, and proprietary control over who has access to the network. By using a non-Internet wireless network, we can have appropriate interface software to prevent access to the gaming server by devices that either have not had an allowable person-identifying code entered, or that are not in the correct geographical place (or are in an excluded geographical place), or both.

In some embodiments, the handsets are pre-programmed with either or both of gaming software and authentication software (either personal identification, position identification, or network carrier identification). By providing at least some functional software in the handset, we can reduce the data traffic/bandwidth requirement between the handset and the gaming server. This might be especially applicable if the handset has a display screen to either display images, or moving images (which can be data-transfer intensive), and it can be better to store the images/moving images at the handset rather than transmit them to the handset. Not all embodiments may have this.

As shown in FIGURE 1, for example, convenience gaming system 10 includes at least one user 12. The system may include additional users such that there is at least a first user 12 and a second user 14. Multiple users may access a first convenience gaming system 10, while other multiple users access a second convenience gaming system (not shown) in communication with first gaming system 10. Users 12 and 14 preferably access system 10 by way of a gaming communication device 13. Gaming communication device 13 may comprise any suitable device for transmitting and receiving electronic communications. Examples of such devices include, without limitation, mobile phones, personal data assistants (PDAs), computers, mini-computers, etc. Gaming communication devices 13 transmit and receive gaming information to and from communications network 16. Gaming information is also transmitted between network 16 and a computer 18, such as a server, which may reside within the domain of a gaming service provider 20. The

location of computer 18 is not critical, however, and computer 18 may reside adjacent to or remote from the domain of gaming service provider 20. Moreover, in certain embodiments, a gaming service provider is not required. The computer 18 and/or gaming service provider 20 may reside within, adjacent to, or remote from a gaming

5   provider (not shown in FIGURE 1). The gaming provider may be an actual controller of games, such as a casino. As an example, a gaming service provider may be located on the grounds of a casino and the computer 18 may be physically within the geographic boundaries of the gaming service provider. As discussed, however, other possibilities exist for remote location of the computer 18 and the gaming service

10   provider 20. Computer 18 may function as a gaming server. Additional computers (not expressly shown) may function as database management computers and redundant servers, for example.

Preferably, software resides on both the gaming communication device 13 and the computer 18. Software resident on gaming communication device 13 is

15   preferably operable to present information corresponding to gaming activities (including gambling and non-gambling activities discussed herein) to the user. The information includes, without limitation, graphical representations of objects associated with the activities, and presentation of options related to the activities and selectable by the user. The gaming communication device software is also preferably

20   operable to receive data from the computer and data input by the user. Software resident on the computer is preferably able to exchange data with the gaming communication device, access additional computers and data storage devices, and perform all of the functions described herein as well as functions common to known electronic gaming systems.

25   Thus, the system encompasses one or more databases and data structures for maintaining the various types of information pertinent to the gaming activities the users of the system and the operations of the system. Example databases may include a database of allowable users, allowable geographical areas, allowable telecommunication providers, etc. The data structures may include data linking users

30   with devices and/or allowable geographical areas. The information maintained in the

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database(s) may periodically change or be periodically updated. For example, if a new user is loaned a device, the database will be updated to reflect the relationship between the new user and the device, and to delete information (or move/store the information) related to the prior user. Preferably, data pertinent to users may be

5   readily changed to reflect new users, new credit information, new user codes, addresses, names, preferences, etc.

Gaming information transmitted across network 16 may include any information, in any format, which is necessary or desirable in the operation of the gaming experience in which the user participates. The information may be

10   transmitted in whole, or in combination, in any format including digital or analog, text or voice, and according to any known or future transport technologies, which may include, for example, wireline or wireless technologies. Wireless technologies may include, for example, licensed or license-exempt technologies. Some specific technologies which may be used include, without limitation, Code Division Multiple

15   Access (CDMA), Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM), General Packet Radio Service (GPRS), WiFi (802.11x), WiMax (802.16x), Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), or cable modem technologies. These are examples only and one of ordinary skill will understand that other types of communication techniques are

20   within the scope of the present invention. Further, it will be understood that additional components may be used in the communication of information between the users and the gaming server. Such additional components may include, without limitation, lines, trunks, antennas, switches, cables, transmitters, receivers, computers, routers, servers, fiber optical transmission equipment, repeaters, amplifiers, etc.

25   In at least one embodiment, the communication of gaming information takes place without involvement of the Internet. This has an advantage of avoiding the security problems which typically arise when conducting business over the Internet. However, in certain embodiments, a portion of the gaming information may be transmitted over the Internet. Also, some or all of the gaming information may be

30   transmitted partially over an Internet communications path. In certain embodiments,

some information is transmitted entirely or partially over the Internet, but the information is either not gaming information or is gaming information that does not need to be maintained secretly. For instance, data that causes a graphical representation of a table game on the user's gaming communication device might be transmitted at least partially over the Internet, while wagering information transmitted by the user might be transmitted entirely over a non-Internet communications network.

Where certain information, such as non-confidential information, may be transmitted over the Internet, there may be savings due to the accessibility and relatively low-cost of using the Internet as a communications medium.

According to one embodiment, as shown in FIGURE 2 for example, the communications network comprises a cellular network 22. Cellular network 22 comprises a plurality of base stations 23, each of which has a corresponding coverage area 25. Base station technology is generally known and the base stations may be of any type found in a typical cellular network. The base stations may have coverage areas that overlap. Further, the coverage areas may be sectorized or non-sectorized. The network also includes mobile stations 24, which function as the gaming communication devices used by users to access the convenience gaming system and participate in the activities available on the convenience gaming system. Users are connected to the network of base stations via transmission and reception of radio signals. The communications network also includes at least one voice/data switch, which is preferably connected to the wireless portion of the network via a dedicated, secure landline. The communications network also includes a gaming service provider, which is likewise connected to the voice/data switch via a dedicated, secure landline. The voice/data switch may be connected to the wireless network of base stations via a mobile switching center (MSC), for example and the landline may be provided between the voice/data switch and the MSC.

Users access the convenience gaming system by way of mobile stations which are in communication with, and thus part of, the communications network. The mobile station may be any electronic communication device that is operable in

connection with the network as described. For example, in this particular embodiment, the mobile station may comprise a cellular telephone.

Preferably, in the case of a cellular network for example, the convenience gaming system is enabled through the use of a private label carrier network. Each base station is programmed by the cellular carrier to send and receive private secure voice and/or data transmissions to and from mobile station handsets. The handsets are preferably pre-programmed with both gaming software and the carrier's authentication software. The base stations communicate via Private T-1 lines to a switch. A gaming service provider leases a private T-1 or T-3 line, which routes the calls back to gaming servers controlled by the gaming service provider. Encryption can be installed on the telephones if required by a gaming regulation authority, such as a gaming commission.

The cellular network is preferably a private, closed system. Mobile stations communicate with base stations and base stations are connected to a centralized switch located within a gaming jurisdiction. At the switch, voice calls are transported either locally or via long distance. Specific service provider gaming traffic is transported from the central switch to a gaming server at a host location, which can be a casino or other location.

As subscribers launch their specific gaming application, the handset will only talk to certain base stations with cells or sectors that have been engineered to be wholly within the gaming jurisdiction. For example, if a base station is close enough to pick up or send a signal across state lines, it will not be able to communicate with the device. When a customer uses the device for gaming, the system may prohibit, if desired, the making or receiving voice calls. Moreover, voice can be eliminated entirely if required. Further, the devices are preferably not allowed to "connect" to the Internet. This ensures a high level of certainty that bets/wagers originate and terminate within the boundaries of the gaming jurisdiction and the "private" wireless system cannot be circumvented or bypassed. Although in certain embodiments some data and/or voice traffic may be communicated at least partially over the Internet, it is preferred that the communication path does not include the Internet. Alternatively, in

some embodiments, certain non-gaming information may be transported over a path which includes the Internet, while other information relating to the gaming activities of the system is transported on a path that does not include the Internet.

As shown in FIGURE 3, a gaming communication device 32 is in communication with a gaming service provider over a network 34. The gaming service provider preferably has one or more servers, on which are resident various gaming and other applications. As shown in FIGURE 3, some example gaming applications include horse racing and other sports, financial exchange, casino and/or virtual casino, entertainment and other events exchange, and news and real time entertainment. Each of these applications may be embodied in one or more software modules. The applications may be combined in any possible combination. Additionally, it should be understood that these applications are not exhaustive and that other applications may exist to provide an environment to the user that is associated with any of the described or potential convenience activities.

In another embodiment, as shown in FIGURE 4, for example, the communications network comprises a private wireless network. The private wireless network may include, for example, an 802.11x (WiFi) network technology to cover "Game Spots" or "Entertainment Spots." In FIGURE 4, various WiFi networks are indicated as networks 41. Networks 41 may use other communications protocols to provide a private wireless network including, but not limited to, 802.16x (WiMax) technology. Further, networks 41 may be interconnected. Also, a convenience gaming system may comprise a combination of networks as depicted in FIGURE 4. For example, there is shown a combination of private wireless networks 16, a cellular network comprising a multi-channel access unit or sectorized base station 42, and a satellite network comprising one or more satellites 46.

With respect to the private wireless network, because the preferable technology covers smaller areas, (e.g., in the range of 100-300 feet) and provides very high-speed throughput, the private wireless network is particularly well-suited for gaming commission needs of location and identity verification for the gaming service provider products. The gaming spots enabled by networks 41 may include a current

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casino area 48, new areas such as swimming pools, lakes or other recreational areas 49, guest rooms and restaurants such as might be found in casino 48 or hotels 45 and 47, residential areas 40, and other remote convenience gaming areas 43. The configuration of the overall convenience gaming system depicted in FIGURE 4 is

5   intended only as an example and may be modified within the scope of the present invention.

In one embodiment, the system architecture for the convenience gaming system includes:

(1)   a wireless LAN (Local Access Network) component, which consists of mostly

10   802.11x (WiFi) and/or 802.16x WiMax technologies; robust security and authentication software; gaming software; mobile carrier approved handsets with Windows® or Symbian® operating systems integrated within; and

(a) CDMA-technology that is secure for over-the-air data protection;

(b) at least two layers of user authentication, (that provided by the mobile

15   carrier and that provided by the gaming service provider);

(c) compulsory tunneling (static routing) to gaming servers;

(d) end-to-end encryption at the application layer; and

(e) state-of-the-art firewall and DMZ technologies;

(2)   an MWAN (Metropolitan Wireless Access Network), which consists of

20   licensed and license-exempt, point-to-point links, as well as licensed and license-exempt, point-to-multi-point technologies;

(3)   private MAN (Metropolitan Access Network) T-1 and T-3 lines to provide connectivity where wireless services cannot reach; and

(4)   redundant private-line communications from the mobile switch back to the

25   gaming server.

Each of the "Game Spots" or "Entertainment Spots" is preferably connected via the MWAN/MAN back to central and redundant game servers. For accessing the private wireless networks 41, the gaming communication devices are preferably WiFi- or WiMax-enabled PDAs or mini-laptops, and do not have to be managed by a

30   third-party partner.

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Preferably, the convenience gaming system includes a location verification feature, which is operable to permit or disable gaming from a remote location depending upon whether or not the location meets one or more criteria. The criterion may be, for example, whether the location is within a pre-defined area in which

5   gaming is permitted by law. As another example, the criterion may be whether the location is in a no-gaming zone, such as a school. The location verification technology used in the system may include, without limitation, "network-based" and/or "satellite-based" technology. Network-based technology may included such technologies as multilateration, triangulation and geo-fencing, for example. Satellite-

10   based technologies may include global positioning satellite (GPS) technology, for example.

As previously discussed, the cellular approach preferably includes the use of at least one cellular, mobile, voice and data network. For gaming in certain jurisdictions, such as Nevada for example, the technology may involve triangulation,

15   global positioning satellite (GPS) technology, and/or geo-fencing to avoid the potential for bets or wagers to be made outside Nevada state lines. In one embodiment, the network would not cover all of a particular jurisdiction, such as Nevada. For instance, the network would not cover areas in which cellular coverage for a particular base station straddled the state line or other boundary of the

20   jurisdiction. This is done in order to permit the use of location verification to insure against the chance of bets originating or terminating outside of the state. Triangulation may be used as a method for preventing gaming from unapproved locations. Triangulation may be accomplished, for example, by comparing the signal strength from a single mobile station received at multiple base stations, each having

25   GPS coordinates. This technology may be used to pinpoint the location of a mobile station. The location can then be compared to a map or other resource to determine whether the user of the mobile station is in an unapproved area, such as a school. Alternatively, GPS technology may be used for these purposes.

As shown in FIGURE 5, the convenience gaming system includes a plurality

30   of gaming communication devices 54, 55, and 56. Device 54 is located outside the

gaming jurisdiction 58. Devices 55 and 56 are both located inside gaming jurisdiction 58. However only device 56 is located within geo-fence 57, which is established by the coverage areas of a plurality of base station 53. Thus, geo-fencing may be used to enable gaming via device 56 but disable gaming via devices 54 and 55. Even though some gaming communication devices that are within the gaming jurisdiction 58, such as device 55, are not permitted access to the convenience gaming system, the geo-fence 57 ensures that no gaming communication devices outside jurisdiction 58, such as device 54, are permitted access.

Geo-fencing does not specify location. Rather, it ensures that a mobile station is within certain boundaries. For instance, geo-fencing may be used to ensure that a mobile station beyond state lines does not access the convenience gaming system. Triangulation on the other hand specifies a pinpoint, or near-pinpoint, location. For example, as shown in FIGURE 5, device 56 is triangulated between three of the base stations 53 to determine the location of device 56. Triangulation may be used to identify whether a device, such as a mobile station, is located in a specific spot where gambling is unauthorized (such as, for example, a school). Preferably, the location determination technology utilized in conjunction with the present invention meets the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC's) Phase 2 E911 requirements. Geological Institute Survey (GIS) mapping may also be utilized to compare identified coordinates of a gaming communication device with GIS map features or elements to determine whether a device is in an area not authorized for gaming. It should be noted that any type of location verification may be used such as triangulation, geo-fencing, global positioning satellite (GPS) technology, or any other type of location determining technology, which can be used to ensure, or provide an acceptable level of confidence, that the user is within an approved gaming area.

In another embodiment, location verification is accomplished using channel address checking or location verification using some other identifying number or piece of information indicative of which network or portion of a network is being accessed by the gaming communication device. Assuming the using of an identifying number for this purpose, then according to one method of location checking, as an

example, a participant accesses the gaming system via a mobile telephone. The identifying number of the mobile telephone, or of the network component being accessed by the mobile telephone, identifies the caller's connection to the mobile network. The number is indicative of the fact that the caller is in a defined area and is on a certain mobile network. A server application may be resident on the mobile telephone to communicate this information via the network to the gaming service provider. In a related embodiment, the identifying number or information is passed from a first network provider to a second network provider. For example, a caller's home network may be that provided by the second provider, but the caller is roaming on a network (and in a jurisdiction) provided by the first provider. The first provider passes the identifying information through to the second provider to enable the second provider to determine whether the caller is in a defined area that does or does not allow the relevant gaming activity. Preferably the gaming service provider either maintains, or has access to, a database that maps the various possible worldwide mobile network identifying numbers to geographic areas. The invention contemplates using any number or proxy that indicates a network, portion of a network, or network component, which is being connected with a mobile telephone. The identifying number may indicate one or more of a base station or group of base stations, a line, a channel, a trunk, a switch, a router, a repeater, etc.

In another embodiment, when the user connects his mobile telephone to the gaming server, the gaming server draws the network identifying information and communicates that information to the gaming service provider. The software resident on the gaming communication device may incorporate functionality that will, upon login or access by the user, determine the user's location (based at least in part on the identifying information) and send a message to the gaming service provider. The identifying number or information used to determine location may be country-specific, state-specific, town-specific, or specific to some other definable boundaries.

In connection with any of the location determination methods, the gaming system may periodically update the location determination information. This may be done, for example, during a gaming session, at pre-defined time intervals to ensure

that movement of the gaming communication device to an unauthorized area is detected during play, and not just upon login or initial access.

Thus, depending on the location determination technology being used, the decision whether to permit or prohibit a gaming activity may be made at the gaming communication device, at the gaming server, or at any of the components of the telecommunication network being used to transmit information between the gaming communication device and the gaming server (such as at a base station, for example).

An aspect of the private wireless network related to preventing gaming in unauthorized areas is the placement of sensors, such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) sensors on the gaming communication devices. The sensors trigger alarms if users take the devices outside the approved gaming areas. Further, the devices may be "tethered" to immovable objects. Users might simply log in to such devices using their ID and password.

The system may be configured to allow some users to engage in gaming activities in certain geographical areas while other users may not. Similarly, a user might be permitted to engage in only one or more particular activities located in a certain geographical area.

In connection with FIGURE 6, an example embodiment of a method according to the present invention can be described as follows. As discussed, software is preferably loaded on a gaming communication device and is operable to receive input data for gaming. The input data may originate at associated gaming software resident on the gaming server, or it may be input by the user of the gaming communication device. The software on the device is operable to present a representation of a gaming environment. This can include, among other things, a representation of a table game such as a blackjack table or a slot machine. Other examples of the representation of a gaming environment include graphical representations of any of the other applications described herein.

In the example method shown in FIGURE 6, in a first step 602, the gaming communication device is activated. This may take place as a function of turning on a phone, PDA, or other communication device as described elsewhere herein.

Preferably, activation comprises connecting the gaming communication device to a private data network. Part of the activation includes logging in at a prompt. This may be considered as a first level of authentication of a user of the gaming communication device. A second level of user authentication comprises authentication of the gaming

5   communication device itself. This may occur, for example, by authentication of a mobile station by a mobile carrier. A third level of user identification may comprise biometrics. Various examples of biometrics may include, but are not limited to, fingerprint identification, photo identification, retina scanning, voice print matching, etc.

10   It should be noted that the various types of verification and authentication are made easier by the configuration of the gaming system. For example, the wireless access to the gaming servers makes verification and authentication more efficient.

                In a next step 604, the user is presented with the gaming environment. The gaming environment may be presented in various stages. For instance, in a first stage,

15   the gaming environment may comprise a casino lobby where the user is presented with certain gaming options including, for example, table games, slots, sports book, video poker, and a casino cashier. In a subsequent stage, the user may be presented with optional instances of the type of activity selected from the casino lobby.

                In a next step 606, the user selects an activity, such as a particular casino table

20   game. In step 608, the user is presented with one or more options related to the selected activity. In step 610, the user selects an option. For instance, at this point, the user might place a wager, draw a card, select a restaurant or restaurant menu item, select a news source or a news story, place a buy or sell order on a financial exchange, place a bet on a certain box office performance over/under amount for a given movie,

25   etc. The options for user input are myriad. In step 612, the software resident on the gaming communication device accepts the option input by the user and transmits the input data to the software resident at the gaming server. In step 614, the gaming server software acts on the input data.

                Actions at this point, may include, without limitation, determining an outcome

30   and/or amount, accessing another server and/or software application, retrieving

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information, preparing a response to the user, etc. The action of determining an outcome and/or amount might take place, for example, if the user is using the device to place wagers in connection with a gambling activity. For certain gambling activities, such as a table game or slot machine, a random number generator may be incorporated to determine the outcome (i.e., whether the user won or lost) and the gaming server software would also determine an amount won or lost based on the amount wagered and any applicable odds. The action of accessing another server and/or software application might occur, for example, in the event the user is engaging in a services activity such as accessing news services, making reservations and placing food and beverage orders at a restaurant, or making a retail purchase. The action of retrieving information might occur when the gaming server software is prompted to access another server for the purpose of retrieving a certain type of information requested by the user.

Preferably, the gaming server software prepares a response to the user's input data and in step 616. In step 618, the user acknowledges the response. For example, in the case of gambling, the user might acknowledge that he won a hand of blackjack because the dealer busted and that his payout was $100 based on a $50 bet at even odds. In step 620, the user logs out.

In the situation where the user is gambling, after the series of steps described in connection with FIGURE 6, (or a subset or modified series of steps), the user physically enters a casino and goes to a casino cashier for payout and/or settlement (which can include, for example, extensions of credit or advance deposits). In one embodiment, there is a waiting period (e.g., twenty-four hours) before the user can collect winnings. The purpose of the waiting period is to allow time for fraud monitoring. The waiting period may depend on the amount of the balance. For example, if the user is owed less than $5,000 the waiting period may be twelve hours. If the user is owed between $5,000 and $10,000 the waiting period may be twenty-four hours. If the user is owed more than $10,000 the waiting period may be forty-eight hours.

The duration of activation of the gaming communication device, the duration of a particular session, and/or the duration of a particular activity may be controlled according to any number of different parameters. For example, the duration may be based on a predetermined amount of time or period of time. Activation of the gaming

5   communication device may terminate upon the expiration of a predetermined time period. As another example, an activity may only be permitted until the occurrence of a particular time of day. According to an alternative, an administrator, or another party to a transaction within any of the various activities, may determine the time period or amount of time. According to yet another alternative, the duration may end

10   upon the occurrence of an event such as the user entering or leaving a particular location. The duration of activation may be dynamically determined based on a period of non-use. In other words, after a predetermined time without being used, the device may "time out" and be deactivated. The period of time, or amount of time, may be cumulatively determined. For example, an activity may only be permitted for

15   a period of five hours, collectively. Time counting toward the five hours might stop and start depending upon the location of the user. As another example, an activity might only be permitted so long as the user does not enter or leave a particular location for longer than a predetermined period of time.

Similarly, activation of the gaming communication device and/or the ability

20   for a user to engage in a particular activity may only be permitted during a specified time of day, or for a particular period of time prior to an event, or for a particular period of time after notification to the user. Also, activation and/or access may be controlled based upon the location of the user. For example, if a user is in a particular casino in which a particular show will take place that evening, the user might be

25   notified that tickets to the show are available for a specified period of time prior to the show. The user might only be permitted to engage in the activity of purchasing tickets for the show if the user is in the casino and during the specified period of time prior to the show. For example, the user might only be able to purchase tickets while in the casino and up to five minutes before the start time of the show. Similarly, the

30   activation of the device may be restricted based on the location of the user and a

corresponding period of time. For example, if a user is in a location where a show is occurring, or is going to occur, the device may be deactivated (either automatically, or by a party other than the user) during a period beginning five minutes prior to the show and ending five minutes after the end of the show.

According to another alternative, the duration or enablement of one activity might be determined by the participation of the user in another activity. For example, a user might be allowed to make dinner reservations at a popular restaurant if the user has been gambling enough at a given casino. In this way, bonuses or comps may be determined or managed based on the activity of the user via the gaming communication device.

Preferably, data is transmitted back and forth during the convenience gaming activities between the gaming communication device and a server controlled by the gaming service provider. An example of the path of communication is shown in FIGURE 7. Gaming data, such as a wager placed by the user, is transmitted from gaming communication device 701 to a base station 702 (or a transmitter in the case of a private wireless network such as a WiFi or WiMax network). Base station 702 routes the data through network 703 to a hub or gateway 704, which in turn routes the data to a gaming server 705 operated by a gaming service provider. Preferably, the communication from gaming communication device 701 to the network 703 comprises wireless communication. This may be any type of known wireless communication or any type of wireless communication available in the future. Examples of acceptable wireless communication protocols include CDMA, GSM, and GPRS.

Preferably, the communication from the network 703 to the gateway 704 and to the server 705 is conducted over secure land lines. FIGURE 7 is an example communication network only and the present invention should be understood to cover other networks in which data may be transmitted from gaming communication device 701 to server 705. Preferably, data in response to data being transmitted from gaming communication device 701 to server 705 is transmitted back to gaming communication device 701 along a path essentially opposite to the path of the first

transmission. It should be noted that in at least certain embodiments of the methods and systems described herein, a user is not actually playing a game on the gaming communication device. Rather, the user is actually playing the game on the server controlled by the gaming service provider, which may be located within a casino.

5   With respect to payment and/or receipt of winnings and losses, one possible approach is as follows. Upon check-in at a casino hotel, a hotel representative may query a guest as to whether the guest wants access to a gaming communication device. If the guest does want such access, the hotel representative may provide the guest with a gaming communication device in exchange for a credit-card type deposit

10   or other deposit. The guest then deposits money into an account for wireless gaming. The guest's account balance information is loaded onto the guest's account file, which is preferably maintained on the gaming server. The user may load money into his gaming account by establishing a credit account, for example, at a casino cashier and/or by paying cash to the casino cashier. Many other alternatives exist and this

15   process is an example only. Guest accounts or gaming communication devices may be preloaded with funds. Funds may be deposited during a convenience gaming session. This may occur, for example, if a user selected a casino cashier activity from the gaming environment and instructed the cashier to add funds to the account. The finance subsystem may also utilize account card technology (such as ATM cards,

20   credit cards, stored value cards, gift cards, etc) in order to conduct financial transactions associated with a user's account. Moreover, the user may receive or make payments remotely, by way of inputting instructions via the gaming communication device or by another remote device such as an automatic teller machine (ATM), which is in electronic communication with the gaming server or

25   other server operated by the casino, hotel, gaming service provider or other entity involved in the convenience gaming activities. For example, a user might remotely (via the gaming communication device) place an order at a restaurant. Then, the user might make advance payment for the meal at an ATM-type machine which is operable to receive instructions corresponding to the financial transaction

30   requirements of the convenience gaming activity of ordering food.

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A unique aspect of the present invention includes establishing an electronic record of the gaming transactions undertaken by a user. Preferably, this is accomplished by utilization of a keystroke log, which is an electronic record of all keystrokes made by the user. Utilization of a keystroke log in this context allows for

5   unprecedented monitoring of a user's gaming activity. In the event of a dispute, one may refer to the keystroke log and readily determine whether, in fact, a user placed a particular wager, for example.

An additional possible aspect of the electronic record is to allow a gaming control board or other regulatory authority, access to the electronic record in a direct

10   manner in order to conduct periodic independent monitoring of the convenience gaming activities conducted over the system. Another possible aspect is to allow policing against rigged machines. For instance, it is possible that the gaming control board (or other regulatory authority) could obtain a gaming communication device and compare their test results over time against records in the electronic record

15   database (e.g., by comparing the results shown in the keystroke log). This essentially comprises electronic access for testing.

In another embodiment of the invention, as shown in FIGURE 8, a ship-based convenience gaming system is provided. The system preferably comprises passenger vessel 802, such as a cruise liner for example. The system includes one or more

20   gaming communication devices 806 connected to a communication network. The network shown in FIGURE 8 comprises a mobile network with base stations 808 connected via a LAN to a base station controller (BSC) 810. BSC 810 is connected via a T1 interface to a first Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) modem 812, which is in communication with a first satellite 814. First satellite 814 is operable to

25   transmit and receive signals from second satellite 814, which is in communication with second VSAT modem 812. Second VSAT modem 812 is in communication with a gaming server 818 located at gaming service provider 816. Gaming server is coupled to gaming database 820. Again, the network configuration depicted in FIGURE 8 is for example purposes only, and other configurations are within the

30   scope of the present invention. An on-board back office 822 is preferably provided.

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Data is communicated by the on-board VSAT modem and transmitter to the first satellite for relay to the second (preferably land-based) VSAT receiver and modem. The data is then communicated to a server and/or centralized database via a mobile station controller (not shown).

A corresponding business model involves the gaming service provider contracting with a cruise line, which agrees to allow the gaming service provider to provide coverage throughout the cruise line's ship(s), by using repeaters for example. The gaming service provider may provide a private wireless network, in which case any revenue generated from use of or access to the private wireless network, and revenue from gaming activities, may be allocated among all or any subset of the cruise line and the gaming service provider. Alternatively, the gaming service provider may contract with a mobile carrier and a satellite provider, in which case revenue from the mobile calls, and revenue from gaming activities, may be allocated among all or any subset of the cruise line, the mobile carrier and the gaming service provider.

There are several scenarios for a user's activity relative to transactions conducted over the convenience gaming system. In one example scenario the user is in a fixed, but remote, location from the gaming server, which may be located on the premises of a casino. This may be include, for instance, a situation in which the gaming communication device is a kiosk or some other communication device which is in a fixed position or which is tethered to a fixed position so that the gaming communication device cannot be moved beyond a certain area. In another example scenario, the user starts a convenience gaming transaction at a first location and ends the transaction at a second location different from the first location. In another example scenario, the user is mobile during a single convenience gaming transaction. In another example scenario, the user is mobile within a first approved area then (during the convenience gaming transaction) the user moves outside the first approved area, through an unapproved area, to a remote second approved area.

In an alternative embodiment, the convenience gaming system may be configured to operate as a "curb-to-curb" gaming system. In such a system, a

communication path may be established between the device and a particular server, based upon whether the user is in a location corresponding to that particular server. For example, the user might enter a first casino, or an authorized area associated with the first casino, and thereby activate the establishment of a communication path between the device and a server located at and/or controlled by the first casino. While the user is on the premises of the first casino, the user might be able to participate in activities, such as playing blackjack, at the first casino. Then, if the user leaves the first casino, the convenience gaming system might be configured to terminate the first communication path (i.e., between the device and the first casino's server), or otherwise deactivate the device and/or terminate the user's ability to use the device to participate in activities associated with the first casino. When the user enters a second casino, or an authorized area associated with the second casino, a second communication path (e.g., between the device and a second server located at or controlled by the second casino) may be established. Thus, the user would now be able to play blackjack (or engage in other activities) at the second casino, rather than the first casino.

As another example, a particular casino is often related to other casinos within a jurisdiction or specified area. Under such a scenario, if a user entered any of the related casinos, then the appropriate communication path or paths could be established between the gaming communication device and one or more of the casinos in the group of related casinos, thereby enabling the user to play casino games (or engage in other activities) at the one or more casinos in the group of related casinos. Depending on regulatory requirements, the preferred configuration might be to establish a communication path with a server at a particular casino within the group at which the user wants to play. Then, a different communication path could be established at a subsequent casino if the user wants to play at another casino. Under certain circumstances, and again depending on regulatory requirements, some information associated with user activity might be maintained at a centralized server accessible by more than one casino within the group.

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In another example embodiment, the convenience gaming system may be used to enable gaming activities involving multiple wireless users who interact with one another. For instance, the system may enable a table game (such as blackjack) in which a first user and a second user are conducting gaming transactions on the same table and in which options selected by the first user directly impact outcomes and options relative to the second user. Preferably, the gaming environment presented on the gaming communication devices of both the first and second users will indicate the existence and activity of the other respective user. Another example of multiple users interacting on the convenience gaming system is the provision of a poker game in which users place bets against one another instead of, or in addition to, placing bets against the house. Another example of interaction between users is when a first user makes restaurant reservations or purchases event tickets, thereby reducing the options available to the second user.

Preferably, the gaming service provider provides at least the following functions. First the gaming service provider provides and controls the one or more gaming servers. These servers may be physically located within the confines of the gaming service provider or may exist at a remote location. As mentioned, the gaming servers may also be located at or near a games provider such as a casino, casino hotel, racino, cruise ship, race track, etc. The gaming service provider may also provide monitoring services such as transaction monitoring and key stroke logging services. The gaming service provider may also provide data management and security services. These services are not intended to be exhaustive and the gaming service provider may provide other services which facilitate the convenience gaming process.

It should be noted that the invention can be implemented in connection with any gaming environment or an environment for any other activity, which may be conducted electronically. The invention is not limited to Nevada or any other particular gaming jurisdiction. For instance, the invention can be employed in connection with casinos in Atlantic City, New Jersey, international jurisdictions, Native American gaming facilities, and "racinos" which are race tracks that also have slot machines, video lottery terminals, or other gambling devices. For example, in

connection with "racinos," the invention might be used by participants who wish to play slot machine games while they are viewing race horses in the paddock area. This might be desirable in the event that the slot machine area does not allow smoking and a participant wishes to gamble from an outdoor smoking area. Alternatively, the slot

5   machine area might permit smoking and the gambler wishes to play the slot machines from an area where he or she can avoid breathing second-hand smoke. Numerous other scenarios can be envisioned in which the gaming participant can use the invention to participate in remote gaming, while enjoying some other primary activity in a location remote from the gaming facility. Further, the invention is not limited to

10   gaming, but can include other applications, such as trading financial instruments, and wagering on other types of events, such as elections, award events, or any other activity.

Another example embodiment involves the application of one or more of the methods and systems described herein to the activity of conducting financial

15   transactions. Thus, the gaming communication device may be configured to enable a user to conduct such financial transactions, which may include, without limitation, any transaction involving a financial institution, such as banking, trading securities, or managing 401K or other investment fund assets. Preferably, a communication path would be established between the user and any of the servers or other computers

20   necessary to conduct the financial transaction. As with certain other embodiments the ability to engage in this activity may be controlled by one or more parameters including location and/or identity verification and time or duration limits.

Conducting financial transactions may be one of the activities presented to the user of the gaming communication device. Any of the possible financial transactions

25   might be presented as sub-activities. As an example, a user might want to trade securities listed on a particular exchange. Regulations might require the trader to be located within a certain jurisdiction to execute trades on the exchange. The exchange might have its own rules and could require that the trader be located on the premises. With the location verification techniques described elsewhere herein, the particular

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financial transaction activity might only be enabled if the user is located in a particular geographic area, for example.

As a related feature, the system may be configured to provide a credit verification feature, according to which a user's creditworthiness may be checked by a party to a transaction, or by which the user might apply for credit. For example, if a user wants to purchase $10,000 worth of a particular stock, then a communication path might be established between the user and a server located at and/or controlled by an exchange upon which the stock is being traded. An additional communication path might be established between the exchange server and a server of an account manager that manages the user's account. These communication paths would enable the basic transaction -- that of the user purchasing the stock. Yet another communication path, however, might be established between a seller's server, the exchange server, and/or the account manager server and a server located at and/or controlled by a credit agency. This path would enable an interested party to the transaction to check and/or approve the user's credit to prior enabling the transaction.

According to one aspect of certain embodiments, a user of the gaming communication device can connect from the device to a financial service provider's server to provide a "Push to Trade" feature. In order to enable this feature, the device is configured to be capable of facilitating a "Push to Talk" protocol, whereby the device behaves like a walkie-talkie. Thus, the device may include any suitable program or application that enables the Push to Talk feature. As used herein, the phrase "Push to Talk" includes any protocol that allows for a direct connection feature for an end user. Included are all such protocols (e.g. Instant Talk, Fastchat, etc.) within the broad rubric of "Push to Talk" including those that provide wide-area, instantaneous contact.

The Push to Talk protocol allows a given device to instantly connect to any number of other devices, such as any other telephone (mobile or landline-based), personal computer, laptop, etc. The connection for the end user does not have to be spawned by any conventional dialing or by triggering some form of automatic dialing. A simple button can be depressed to provide the requisite connection. In the context

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of timing, Nextel (who developed the original Push to Talk technology) suggests that their Push to Talk protocol should connect within 2 seconds.

A related technology is Push to Talk Over Cellular (PoC). PoC service is a form of interactive voice messaging that combines walkie-talkie and cellular phone connectivity, allowing users to quickly connect with another person or an entire group of friends and contacts at the push of a button on a PoC-enabled handset.

The Push to Talk protocol allows users to use the walkie-talkie paradigm over an IP or a cellular network, which diminishes the boundary limitations of a conventional two-way radio. The Push to Talk service is based on a disruptive technology. Latency is an issue during some traditional mobile telephone conversations. One appeal of the Push to Talk platform, as compared to executing a traditional telephone call, is being able to talk to an individual or to a group of individuals instantly, without waiting for someone to answer due to latency issues. Another benefit of the Push to Talk feature is a shorter than normal phone call, which cuts down on dialing costs for corresponding end users. Nextel estimates that the average Push to Talk call lasts forty seconds. Push to Talk technology is compatible with virtually any network communications; for example, the Push to Talk protocol may readily be used in conjunction with cellular telephone networks, including GSM and CDMA. The network equipment used for the Push to Talk feature is currently being offered by companies such as Ericsson Motorola, Siemens, Sony Ericsson, and Nextel.

Because Push to Talk effectively turns the handheld device into a walkie-talkie, it not only successfully enables end users to send voice messages, it also enables immediate data texts (commonly referred to as "direct messaging"). Push to Talk messaging represents a significant improvement over short messaging systems in bypassing the slow and clumsy process of entering text via a phone keypad. This makes text messaging quicker and more effective.

According to the "Push to Trade" feature, once the end user initiates the call, the financial service provider is instantly connected to the end user. In one embodiment, the financial service provider has one or more electronic trade desks that

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are dedicated to this feature for their clients. Thus, all "Push to Trade" requests may be received at this location. In other embodiments, any suitable entity, broker, standard trading desk, or electronic device may receive such Push to Trade communications.

5   Once the connection has been established, the financial service provider may then simply conduct the trade as prescribed by the end user. For example, upon connection, the end user may be presented with the financial or market environment in which he seeks to participate. The trade desk representative or device can query the end user to execute an electronic or a broker-assisted trade. In addition, the

10   financial environment may be presented in various stages. For instance, in a first stage, the financial environment may comprise a financial summary of all markets where the user is presented with certain financial options including, for example, specific market summaries, specific prices for selected assets (e.g. commodities, stocks, bonds, etc.), current positions, buying power, etc. In a subsequent stage, the

15   user may be presented with optional instances of the type of activity selected from the market platform.

          From this platform, the end user can select an activity, such as a particular type of trade. Thus, the user is presented with one or more options related to the selected activity. For instance, at this point, the user might place a buy or a sell order

20   on a financial exchange. The software, which may be resident on the device, on the server, or on a combination of both, accepts the option input by the user and transmits the input data to the financial service provider. Subsequently, the financial service provider acts on the input data. The Push to Talk technology readily accommodates a voice log of the transaction for audit or confirmation purposes. Hence, a digital voice

25   storage may be provided, whereby the transaction (e.g., inclusive of bid and ask prices) is recorded. In addition, the automatic voice log can then relay this information back to the end user (e.g., via his e-mail or via a conventional postal mail service). This could occur as a matter of course such that the end user is routinely provided with a suitable confirmation receipt for all of his trading activity.

Actions at this point may include, without limitation, determining an outcome and/or amount for the trade, accessing another server and/or software application, retrieving additional information, preparing a suitable response to the user, etc. The action of determining an outcome and/or amount might take place, for example, if the

5   user is using the device to place trades in conjunction with his account and a given exchange. Hence, this could include a formal tallying of the executed trade, inclusive of the charged commission, the amount debited from the account to cover the trade, etc. The action of accessing another server and/or software application might occur, for example, in the event the user is engaging in a services activity such as accessing

10   news services. The action of retrieving information might occur when the financial software is prompted to access another server for the purpose of retrieving a certain type of information requested by the user. The financial service provider can then prepare a response to the user's input data. Once this activity has concluded, the user can acknowledge the response and then log out and terminate his session.

15   It should be noted that the "Push to Trade" feature can be used in other applications of the convenience gaming technology described herein. For example, in an application where the user of the gaming communication device is playing blackjack from an authorized area outside the casino gaming area, the Push to Trade feature would enable the user to participate audibly in the blackjack game actually

20   taking place within the casino gaming area. The Push to Talk technology would allow the user to immediately and virtually "sit down" at an actual blackjack table without the delay caused by the conventional setup and tear down process of certain traditional telecommunication protocols. Also, once the user is participating in the game, the user can communicate orally with the dealer, or other players that are

25   physically at the table, without the latency issues of certain mobile telecommunication systems.

It at least one embodiment, the invention provides jurisdictional controls, which limit gaming to approved geographical areas. The invention may also include an age/identity verification feature. This can be accomplished through any applicable

30   technique including retina scanning, finger print identification, voice print matching,

or other biometrics. Identity verification can also be accomplished by having a customer take a picture of himself (e.g., by use of a digital picture phone) and transmitting the picture to the gaming service provider for comparison to a stored picture of the pre-approved user. Identity verification can also be accomplished by

5   way of comparison of participant provided data to stored data, and execution of electronic agreements or contracts by the participant. Identity verification can also be accomplished by monitoring a keystroke characteristic (e.g., rhythm, patterns, or cadence) of the user, or any other method in which a parameter uniquely associated with the user can be observed. The invention may also provide for the logging of

10 keystrokes. In at least one embodiment, all communications are accomplished without accessing the Internet.

Mobile, remote gaming may be desirable for many reasons, some of which have already been described. The invention may allow supplementation of existing in-house gaming revenue by allowing bettors to place bets while enjoying other

15 leisure activities such as golf, swimming, dining and shows. The invention may complement the new coinless wagering environment as bettors can play their favorite games outside the casino. The invention provides a high-speed, reliable, accurate, and secure mobile gaming environment that complies with regulatory requirements for identification and location verification of the bettor with the ability to generate key

20 stroke logs. The invention may restrict unauthorized usage from a geographic perspective and is capable of implementation using location verification technology (e.g., geo-fencing) to conform the gaming activities to legal parameters.

Consumers may benefit from an increased choice of gaming environments. Consumers will be able to bet in whatever surroundings they prefer, benefiting from

25 the knowledge that the product is regulated, fair and secure while enjoying the gaming experience at the speed they choose without external influences, such as that which might occur within the in-house casino environment. The gaming businesses can use the invention to increase their revenue base through a new, regulated, mobile, remote channel. Customers wanting to be entertained during downtime or outside a casino

30 will be able to play games on their gaming communication device and customers

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intimidated by a traditional casino environment will be able to play in private. The gaming jurisdictions may benefit from an increase in gaming an ancillary revenue growth because customers will have a more enjoyable experience.

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The invention may also be used to deliver content at an increased speed compared to traditional telecommunications systems. The content may include, for example, live reports, entertainment, news, promotions and advertising.

As mentioned, the invention provides a mobile gaming environment that complies with regulatory requirements for identification and location verification of the bettor. Moreover, the system is designed to be one hundred percent "clean" from

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a regulatory perspective. The software is clean in that it has not been and will not be licensed to anyone who does business illegally or otherwise operates in a "gray" area. For example, in a preferred embodiment, the software is not licensed to an entity that will illegally operate the software, or otherwise illegally do business on, the Internet. This may be desirable in that certain gaming jurisdictions will not grant gaming

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permits or licenses to companies that do business with, or license technology to or from, other entities known to be engaging in illegal operations.

Preferably, the system is designed such that the gaming software (or other application software operating on the system) is also one hundred percent clean from a regulatory perspective. For instance, before granting a license, a gaming

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jurisdiction may require that the software being used is not tainted in that it has not been used by the license applicant in violation of any laws and has not been licensed or otherwise distributed or disseminated to others who have used the software for illegal purposes, or who have been engaging in illegal activity. Therefore, it is preferred that the gaming software be clean and untainted from this perspective.

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The systems and methods described herein may also be used to deliver and/or access "Rich Media" content such as, for example, sports video (live or nearly live) and audio commentary. Such may often only be distributed within specific jurisdictions. Therefore, the distribution may benefit from the inventive aspects discussed herein, particularly the location verification aspect, such as geofencing.

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The gaming system and methods described herein may permit, among other things, pari-mutuel wagering, sports betting, and dissemination of news and other content. The invention also enables a casino or other gaming provider to advertise ancillary services such as shows, bars, and restaurants. The invention also enables remote reservations and

5   purchases in connection with such services.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the convenience gaming system provides for the dissemination of real-time odds to users accessing the system.

In another embodiment, an outcome in one transaction can trigger the presentation to the user of options for a second transaction. For example, if a user wins a predetermined

10   amount of money playing blackjack, the user might be presented with an option to purchase retail items at a casino store or to make reservations for certain services at a club. As another example, if a user uses the system to purchase show tickets, the user might be offered to make reservations at one of several restaurants within a certain proximity to the show.

15   Although this disclosure has been described in terms of certain embodiments and generally associated methods, alterations and permutations of these embodiments and methods will be apparent to those skilled in the art.

CLAIMS:

1.   A method comprising:

transmitting, by at least one server of a gaming service provider, a first component of a gaming application to a plurality of devices over a non-Internet network and a second component of the gaming application to the plurality of the devices over the Internet, wherein the gaming application includes software instructions to present a graphical representation of a slot machine on respective devices, and wherein the gaming application is configured to interface with a server application and enable respective devices to engage in a slot machine game together with the server application;

detect selection of an option related to the slot machine;

in response to detecting the selection of the option, determining by the at least one server whether the device is located within a pre-defined location; and

allowing, by the at least one server, the device to engage in the slot machine game, in response to determining that the device is located in the pre-defined location.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the pre-defined location is an area in which gaming is permitted by law.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the pre-defined location is a hotel room.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one server is configured to communicate with the device via a private wireless network.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one server is configured to communicate with the device via a private wireless network and a public wireless network.

6.   The method of claim 1, wherein allowing the device to engage in the slot machine game includes the device engaging in the slot machine at least partially over the non-Internet network.

7.   The method of claim 1, wherein the devices further include PDAs.

8.   The method of claim 1, wherein the devices further include computers.

5   9.   The method of claim 1, wherein the gaming application further includes software instructions to present a graphical representation of a table game on respective devices.

10.   The method of claim 9, wherein the table game includes a card game.

10   11.   The method of claim 9, wherein the graphical representation of the table game comprises a graphical representation of a blackjack table.

12.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the device is located within the pre-defined location includes making the determination upon initial access by the device to the
15   at least one server.

13.   The method of claim 12, further comprising:
        at pre-defined time intervals after the initial access, determining whether the device is still located within the pre-defined location; and
20   continuing to allow the device to engage in the slot machine game from the device based upon the determination that the device is still located in the pre-defined location.

14.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the device is located within the pre-defined location includes making the determination using geo-fencing.
25
15.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the device is located within the pre-defined location includes making the determination using triangulation.

16.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the device is located within the
30   pre-defined location includes making the determination using multilateration.

17.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the device is located within the pre-defined location includes making the determination through an identification of which network, portion of a network, or network component the device is accessing.

5   18.   The method of claim 17, wherein the identification indicates at least one of a base station, group of base stations, a line, a channel, a trunk, a switch, a router, and a repeater.

19.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the device is located within the pre-defined location includes making the determination using GPS.

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20.   The method of claim 19, wherein determining whether the device is located within the pre-defined location includes:

receiving the location of the device; and

based upon the location, determining whether the device is located within the pre-

15   defined location.

21.   The method of claim 20, wherein receiving the location of the device comprises receiving the location from the device.

20   22.   The method of claim 1, wherein the pre-defined location comprises at least two geographically separate locations.

23.   The method of claim 1, wherein the device has an account; and

wherein the method further comprises debiting and/or crediting the account in response

25   to at least one wager generated from the device.

24.   The method of claim 23, further comprising receiving from the device an instruction to add funds to the account.

30   25.   The method of claim 23, further comprising receiving from the device an instruction to deduct funds from the account.

26.   The method of claim 23, further comprising:

receiving from a kiosk an instruction to deduct funds from the account; and

providing the funds to the device via the kiosk.

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27.   A method comprising:

transmitting, by at least one server of a gaming service provider, a first component of a gaming application to a plurality of devices over a non-Internet network and a second component of the gaming application to the plurality of devices over the Internet, wherein the gaming application includes software instructions to present a graphical representation of a table game on respective devices, and wherein the gaming application is configured to interface with a server application and enable respective devices to engage in the table game together with the server application;

detect a selection of an option related to the table game;

in response to detecting the selection of the option, determining by the at least one server whether the device is located within a pre-defined location; and

allowing, by the at least one server, the device to engage in the table game from, in response to determining that the device is located in the pre-defined location.
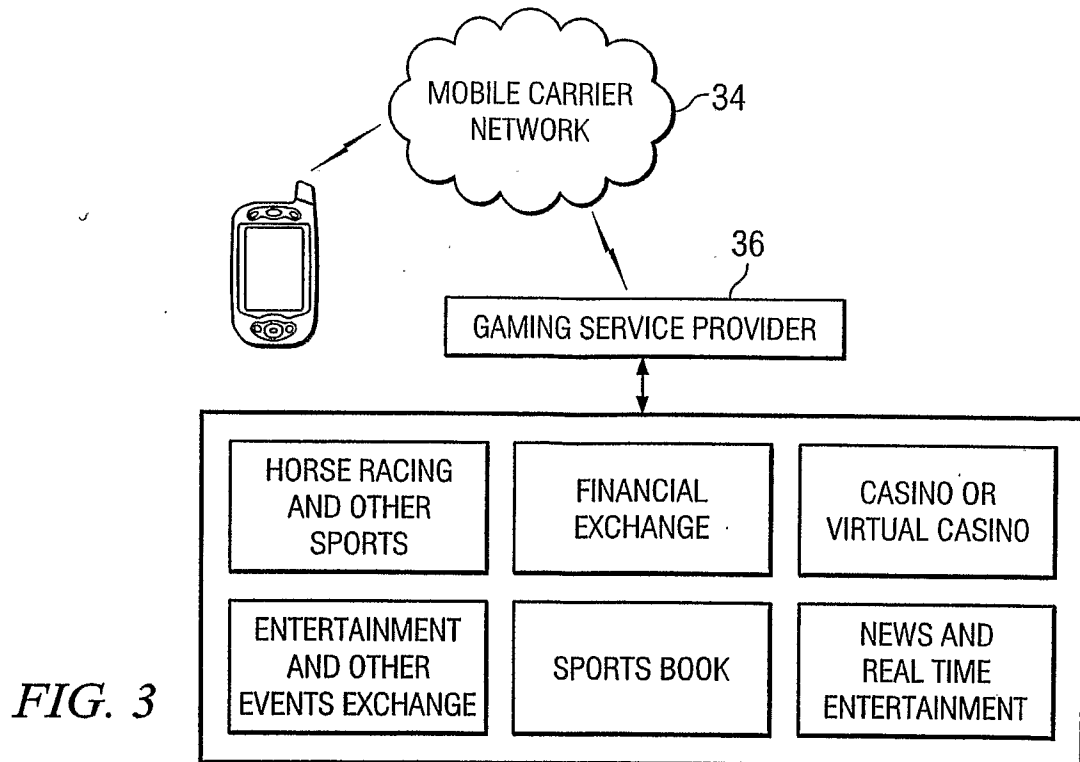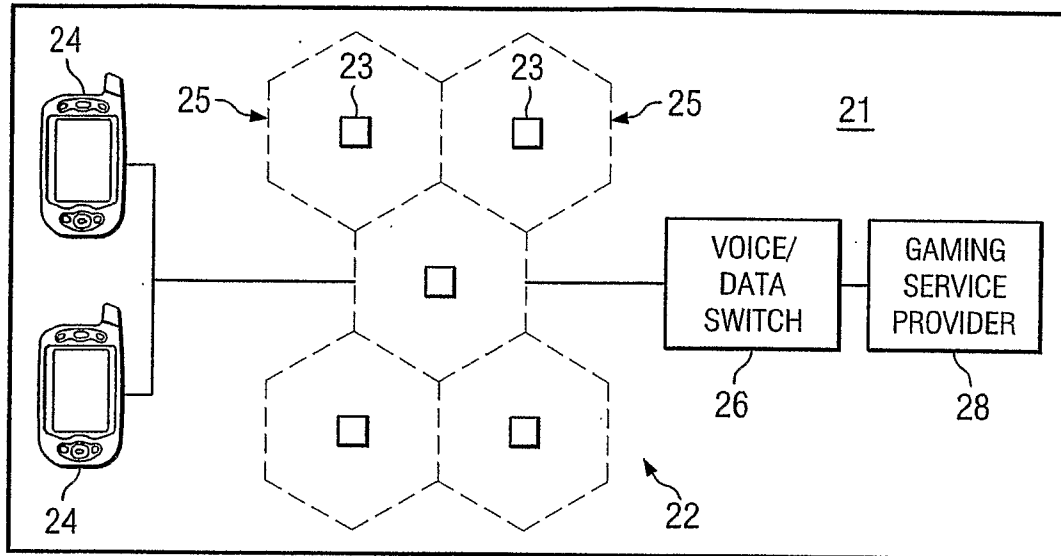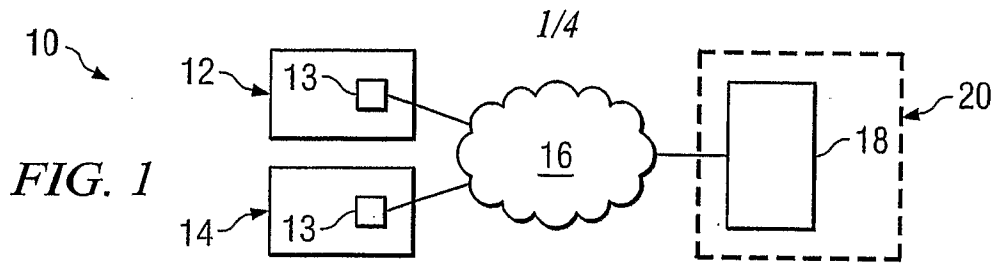
28.   The method of claim 27, wherein the devices further include PDAs.
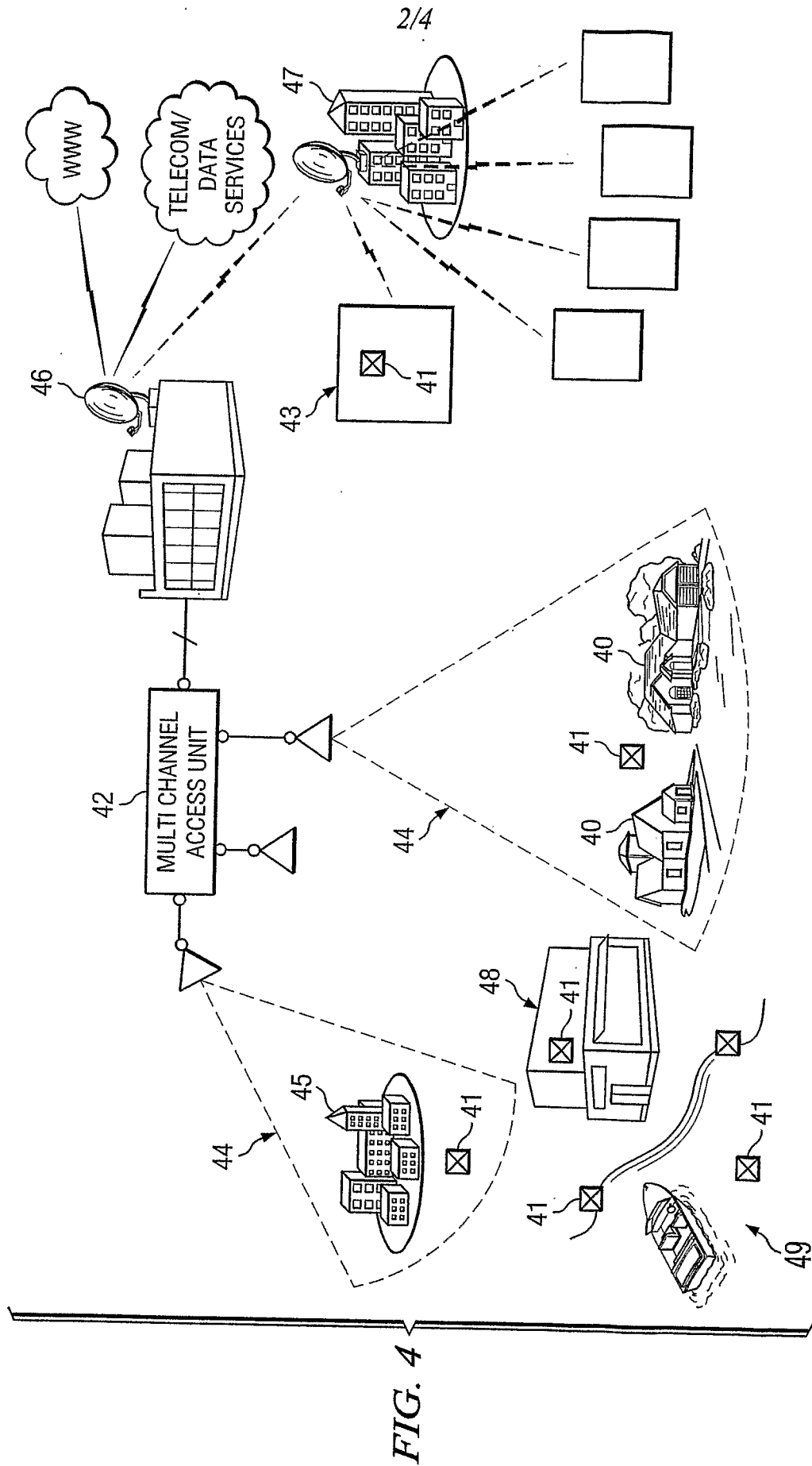
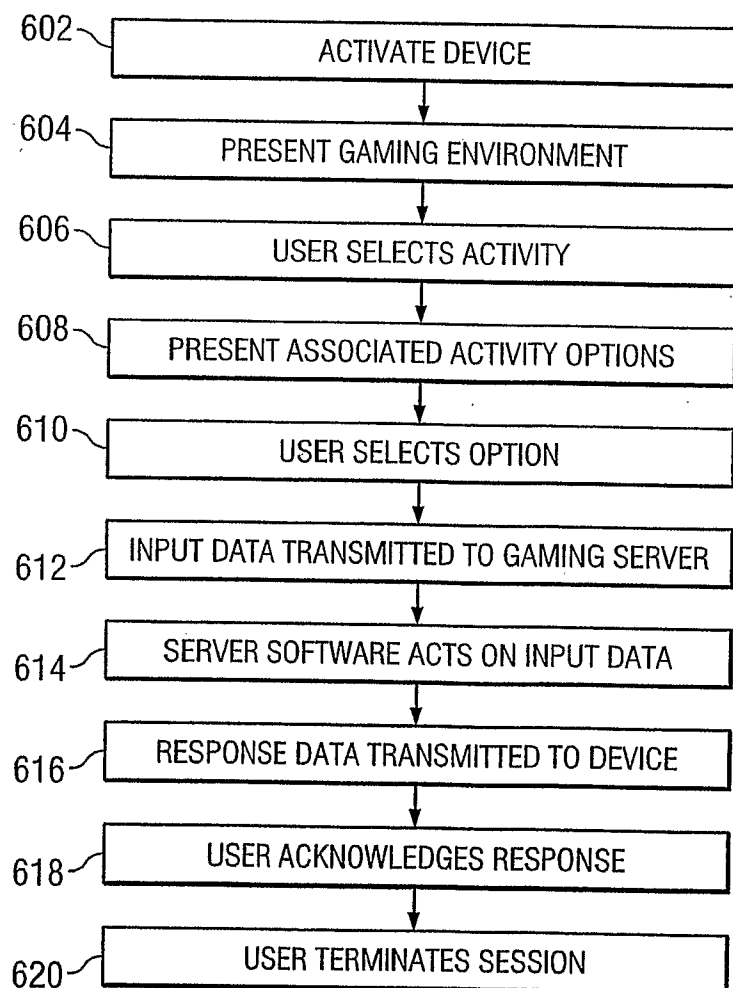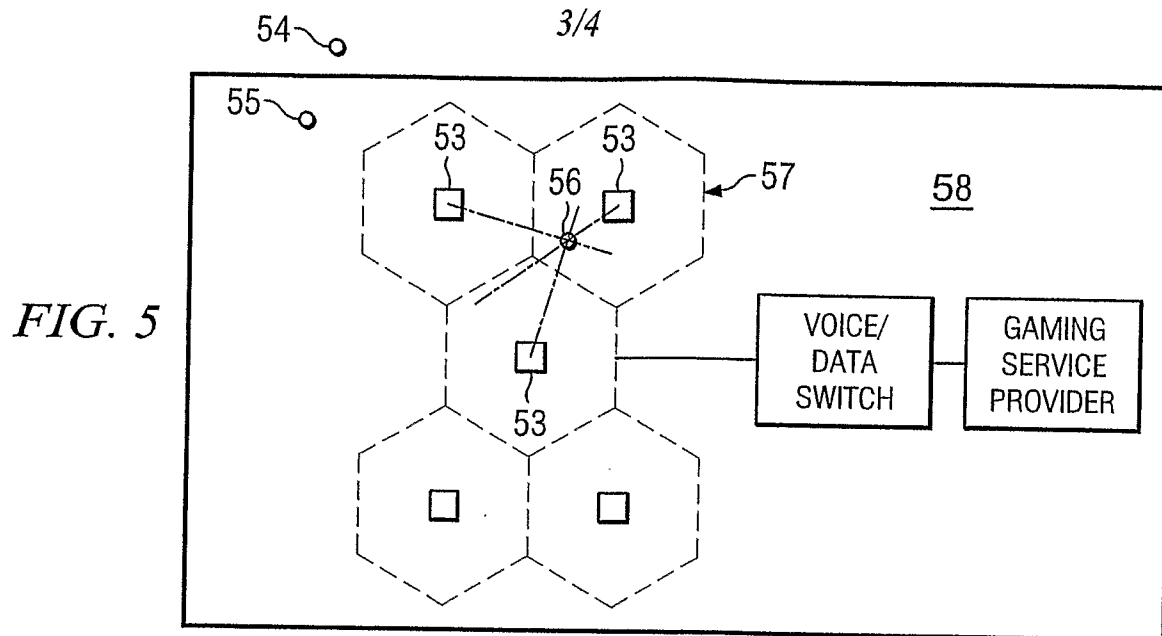29.   The method of claim 27, wherein the devices further include computers.

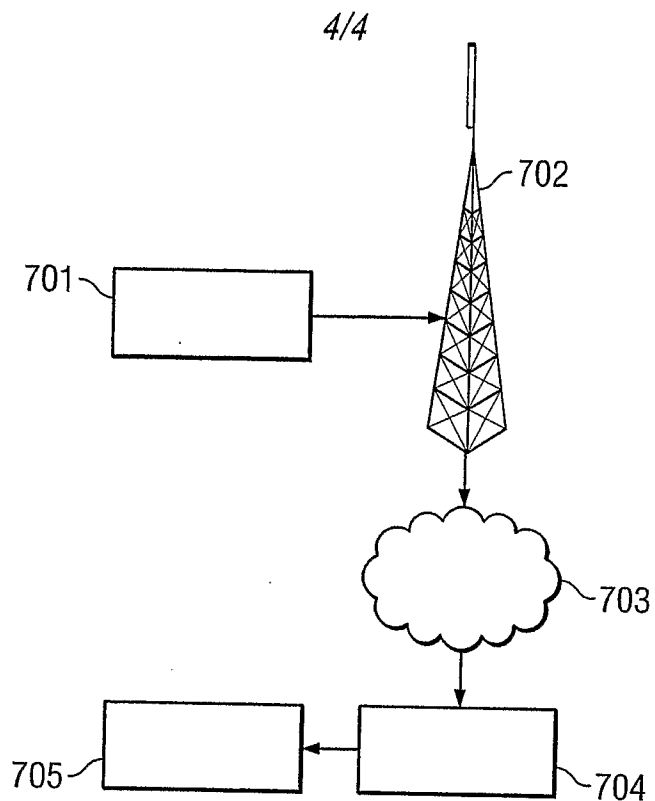30.   The method of claim 27, wherein the table game includes a card game.

31.   The method of claim 27, wherein the graphical representation of the table game comprises a graphical representation of a blackjack table.

FIG. 1

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FIG. 2

FIG. 3

HORSE RACING AND OTHER SPORTS

FINANCIAL EXCHANGE

CASINO OR VIRTUAL CASINO

ENTERTAINMENT AND OTHER EVENTS EXCHANGE

SPORTS BOOK

NEWS AND REAL TIME ENTERTAINMENT

MOBILE CARRIER NETWORK

GAMING SERVICE PROVIDER

VOICE/ DATA SWITCH

GAMING SERVICE PROVIDER

FIG. 4

54 ⌐o

55 ⌐o

FIG. 5

VOICE/ DATA SWITCH	GAMING SERVICE PROVIDER

602 ⌐ ACTIVATE DEVICE

604 ⌐ PRESENT GAMING ENVIRONMENT

606 ⌐ USER SELECTS ACTIVITY

608 ⌐ PRESENT ASSOCIATED ACTIVITY OPTIONS

610 ⌐ USER SELECTS OPTION

612 ⌐ INPUT DATA TRANSMITTED TO GAMING SERVER

614 ⌐ SERVER SOFTWARE ACTS ON INPUT DATA

616 ⌐ RESPONSE DATA TRANSMITTED TO DEVICE

618 ⌐ USER ACKNOWLEDGES RESPONSE

620 ⌐ USER TERMINATES SESSION

FIG. 6

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FIG. 7

FIG. 8