



(86) Date de dépôt PCT/PCT Filing Date: 2001/05/11
(87) Date publication PCT/PCT Publication Date: 2001/11/22
(45) Date de délivrance/Issue Date: 2011/02/08
(85) Entrée phase nationale/National Entry: 2002/11/12
(86) N° demande PCT/PCT Application No.: EP 2001/005430
(87) N° publication PCT/PCT Publication No.: 2001/089228
(30) Priorité/Priority: 2000/05/15 (GB0011639.2)

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *H04N 7/68* (2006.01),
G06T 9/00 (2006.01), *H04N 5/14* (2006.01),
H04N 7/26 (2006.01), *H04N 7/50* (2006.01)

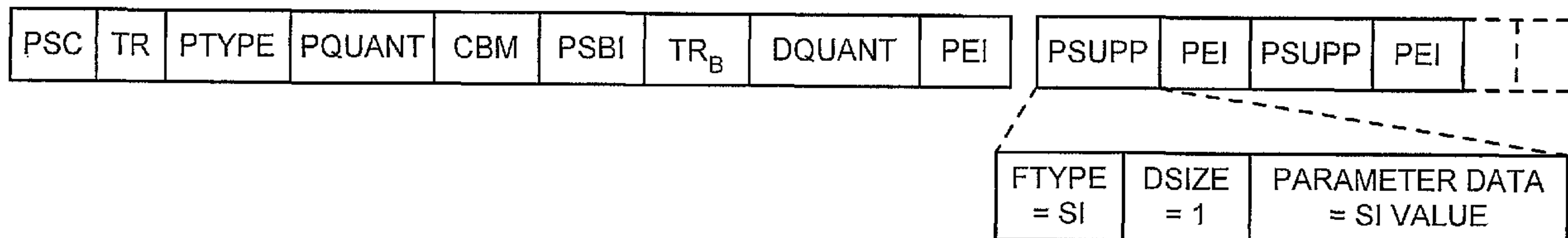
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(54) Titre : CODAGE DE SIGNAUX VIDEO

(54) Title: VIDEO CODING



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A method of encoding a video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the method comprising comparing a first picture with a second picture, calculating a measure of the similarity between the first and the second pictures, comparing the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity and, when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, outputting an indicator indicating that a non-temporally predictive error concealment method should be used by a subsequent decoder and, when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, outputting an indicator indicating that a temporally predictive error concealment method should be used by a subsequent decoder.

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

CORRECTED VERSION

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
22 November 2001 (22.11.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/89228 A1

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: **H04N 7/68**, 5/14

(21) International Application Number: PCT/EP01/05430

(22) International Filing Date: 11 May 2001 (11.05.2001)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
0011639.2 15 May 2000 (15.05.2000) GB

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(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AT
(utility model), AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA,
CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, CZ (utility model), DE, DE (utility

model), DK, DK (utility model), DM, DZ, EE, EE (utility
model), ES, FI, FI (utility model), GB, GD, GE, GH, GM,
HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK,
LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX,
MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SK
(utility model), SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN,
YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM,
KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian
patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European
patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE,
IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF,
CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

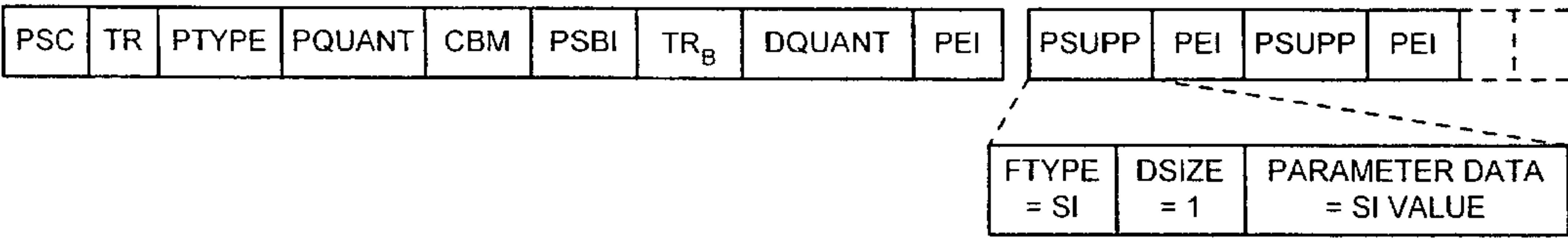
Published:
— with international search report

(48) Date of publication of this corrected version:
7 February 2002

(15) Information about Correction:
see PCT Gazette No. 06/2002 of 7 February 2002, Section
II

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guid-
ance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the begin-
ning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: FLAG CONTROLLED VIDEO CONCEALING METHOD



(57) Abstract: A method of encoding a video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the method comprising comparing a first picture with a second picture, calculating a measure of the similarity between the first and the second pictures, comparing the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity and, when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, outputting an indicator indicating that a non-temporally predictive error concealment method should be used by a subsequent decoder and, when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, outputting an indicator indicating that a temporally predictive error concealment method should be used by a subsequent decoder.



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VIDEO CODING

This invention relates to video coding and in particular to concealing artefacts
5 introduced by errors.

A video sequence consists of a series of still pictures or frames. Video
compression methods are based on reducing the redundant and perceptually
irrelevant parts of video sequences. The redundancy in video sequences can
10 be categorized into spectral, spatial and temporal redundancy. Spectral
redundancy refers to the similarity between the different colour components of
the same picture. Spatial redundancy results from the similarity between
neighbouring pixels in a picture. Temporal redundancy exists because objects
appearing in a previous image are also likely to appear in the current image.
15 Compression can be achieved by taking advantage of this temporal
redundancy and predicting the current picture from another picture, termed an
anchor or reference picture. Further compression is achieved by generating
motion compensation data that describes the motion between the current
picture and the reference picture.

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However, sufficient compression cannot usually be achieved by only reducing
the inherent redundancy of the sequence. Thus, video encoders also try to
reduce the quality of those parts of the video sequence which are subjectively
less important. In addition, the redundancy of the encoded bit-stream is
25 reduced by means of efficient lossless coding of compression parameters and
coefficients. The main technique is to use variable length codes.

Video compression methods typically differentiate between pictures that utilise
temporal redundancy reduction and those that do not. Compressed pictures
30 that do not utilise temporal redundancy reduction methods are usually called
INTRA or I-frames or I-pictures. Temporally predicted images are usually
forwardly predicted from a picture occurring before the current picture and are

called INTER or P-frames. In the INTER frame case, the predicted motion-compensated picture is rarely precise enough and therefore a spatially compressed prediction error frame is associated with each INTER frame. INTER pictures may contain INTRA-coded areas.

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Many video compression schemes also use temporally bi-directionally predicted frames, which are commonly referred to as B-pictures or B-frames. B-pictures are inserted between anchor picture pairs of I- and/or P-frames and are predicted from either one or both of these anchor pictures. B-pictures normally yield increased compression as compared with forward-predicted pictures. B-pictures are not used as anchor pictures, i.e., other pictures are not predicted from them. Therefore they can be discarded (intentionally or unintentionally) without impacting the picture quality of future pictures. Whilst B-pictures may improve compression performance as compared with P-

10 pictures, their generation requires greater computational complexity and memory usage, and they introduce additional delays. This may not be a problem for non-real time encoding such as video streaming but may cause problems in real-time applications such as video-conferencing.

20 A compressed video clip typically consists of a sequence of pictures, which can be roughly categorized into temporally independent INTRA pictures and temporally differentially coded INTER pictures. Since the compression efficiency in INTRA pictures is normally lower than in INTER pictures, INTRA pictures are used sparingly, especially in low bit-rate applications.

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A video sequence may consist of a number of scenes or shots. The picture contents may be remarkably different from one scene to another, and therefore the first picture of a scene is typically INTRA-coded. There are frequent scene changes in television and film material, whereas scene cuts

30 are relatively rare in video conferencing. In addition, INTRA pictures are typically inserted to stop temporal propagation of transmission errors in a

reconstructed video signal and to provide random access points to a video bit-stream.

Compressed video is easily corrupted by transmission errors, mainly for two
5 reasons. Firstly, due to utilisation of temporal predictive differential coding (INTER frames), an error is propagated both spatially and temporally. In practice this means that, once an error occurs, it is easily visible to the human eye for a relatively long time. Especially susceptible are transmissions at low
10 bit-rates where there are only a few INTRA-coded frames, so temporal error propagation is not stopped for some time. Secondly, the use of variable length codes increases the susceptibility to errors. When a bit error alters the codeword, the decoder will lose codeword synchronisation and also decode subsequent error-free codewords (comprising several bits) incorrectly until the next synchronisation (or start) code. A synchronisation code is a bit pattern
15 which cannot be generated from any legal combination of other codewords and such codes are added to the bit stream at intervals to enable re-synchronisation. In addition, errors occur when data is lost during transmission. For example, in video applications using the unreliable UDP transport protocol in IP networks, network elements may discard parts of the
20 encoded video bit-stream.

There are many ways for the receiver to address the corruption introduced in the transmission path. In general, on receipt of a signal, transmission errors are first detected and then corrected or concealed by the receiver. Error
25 correction refers to the process of recovering the erroneous data perfectly as if no errors had been introduced in the first place. Error concealment refers to the process of concealing the effects of transmission errors so that they are hardly visible in the reconstructed video sequence. Typically some amount of redundancy is added by the source or transport coding in order to help error
30 detection, correction and concealment. Error concealment techniques can be roughly classified into three categories: forward error concealment, error concealment by post-processing and interactive error concealment. The term

"forward error concealment" refers to those techniques in which the transmitter side adds redundancy to the transmitted data to enhance the error resilience of the encoded data. Error concealment by post-processing refers to operations at the decoder in response to characteristics of the received signals. These methods estimate the correct representation of erroneously received data. In interactive error concealment, the transmitter and receiver co-operate in order to minimize the effect of transmission errors. These methods heavily utilise feedback information provided by the receiver. Error concealment by post-processing can also be referred to as passive error concealment whereas the other two categories represent forms of active error concealment.

There are numerous known concealment algorithms, a review of which is given by Y. Wang and Q. -F. Zhu in "Error Control and Concealment for Video Communication: A Review", Proceedings of the IEEE, Vol. 86, No. 5, May 1998, pp. 974 – 997 and an article by P. Salama, N. B. Shroff, and E. J. Delp, "Error Concealment in Encoded Video," submitted to IEEE Journal on Selected Areas in Communications.

Current video coding standards define a syntax for a self-sufficient video bit-stream. The most popular standards at the time of writing are ITU-T Recommendation H.263, "Video coding for low bit rate communication", February 1998; ISO/IEC 14496-2, "Generic Coding of Audio-Visual Objects. Part 2: Visual", 1999 (known as MPEG-4); and ITU-T Recommendation H.262 (ISO/IEC 13818-2) (known as MPEG-2). These standards define a hierarchy for bit-streams and correspondingly for image sequences and images.

To assist in error concealment, the MPEG-2 video coding standard allows for the transmission of motion vectors for INTRA macroblocks within INTRA pictures. These motion vectors are used only for error concealment, as follows: if an INTRA macroblock is lost (or corrupted), the decoder uses the motion vectors belonging to the macroblock above the lost one to get

resembling blocks from a reference picture. If the INTRA macroblock does not contain motion information, the decoder conceals the errors with a spatial algorithm.

- 5 In H.263, the syntax has a hierarchical structure with four layers: picture, picture segment, macroblock, and block layer. The picture layer data contain parameters affecting the whole picture area and the decoding of the picture data. Most of this data is arranged in a so-called picture header.
- 10 The picture segment layer can either be a group of blocks layer or a slice layer. By default, each picture is divided into groups of blocks. A group of blocks (GOB) typically comprises 16 successive pixel lines. Data for each GOB consists of an optional GOB header followed by data for macroblocks. If the optional slice structured mode is used, each picture is divided into slices
- 15 instead of GOBs. A slice contains a number of successive macroblocks in scan-order. Data for each slice consists of a slice header followed by data for the macroblocks.

Each GOB or slice is divided into macroblocks. A macroblock relates to 16 x 16 pixels (or 2 x 2 blocks) of luminance and the spatially corresponding 8 x 8 pixels (or block) of chrominance components. A block relates to 8 x 8 pixels of luminance or chrominance.

Block layer data consist of uniformly quantised discrete cosine transform coefficients, which are scanned in zigzag order, processed with a run-length encoder and coded with variable length codes. MPEG-2 and MPEG-4 layer hierarchies resemble that used in H.263.

In H.263, the issue of error concealment is typically perceived as a post-processing function and is generally left to the decoder. In ITU-T Study Group 16 Question 15 documents no. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 & 22, presented at the Ninth

meeting of ITU-T Study Group 16 in New Jersey in the USA in October 1999, it is proposed to add normative language to H.263 to specify several error concealment techniques and to define a signalling mechanism by which an encoder can announce this to a decoder, preferably on a picture-by-picture basis.

However this approach is unduly restrictive on the decoder since the error concealment method to be used by the decoder is specified by the encoder. Thus other concealment methods cannot be used, even if the decoder has these methods available to use.

Accordingly, in a first aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the method comprising: generating an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

Consequently, the decoder is free to choose an appropriate type of error concealment method for a corrupted picture on the basis of the indicator. However the indicator does not specify a particular algorithm and thus the decoder is not restricted to using a particular algorithm.

Preferably the error concealment indicator is updated when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion. The indicator then indicates what may be viewed as a change in scene.

Thus the invention enables the decoder to detect which pictures belong to the same scene and, on the basis of this indication, to select an appropriate type of error concealment method, if required. Thus, when the error concealment indicator changes from one frame to another, the decoder

responds by applying a non-predictive error concealment method. If the error concealment indicator is the same from one frame to another, responds by applying a temporally predictive error concealment method.

- 5 For example, at a scene change, the similarity between the current picture (the first picture in a new scene) and the last picture of the previous scene will be low. The encoder will therefore update the error concealment indicator for the current picture. If the picture is corrupted, the decoder detects the change in the error concealment indicator and uses a non-
10 temporally predictive concealment method. Additionally the decoder can determine which INTRA pictures are used to code a scene change and which ones are inserted into the video sequence for other reasons and can select an appropriate concealment algorithm on the basis of this information.
- 15 Some video encoders code all frames (after the initial frame) as INTER pictures. If the first INTER picture after a scene cut gets corrupted, a traditional decoder is likely to utilise temporal prediction in an attempt to conceal the errors introduced by loss of an INTER picture. Consequently, the contents of two pictures from different scenes are mixed and the
20 concealed picture may be unacceptably distorted. However a decoder according to the invention is able to detect on the basis of the error concealment indicator that it should use a non-temporal concealment method instead of a temporal concealment method. Hence a picture from a different scene is not used for error concealment.
- 25 Compared with the solution introduced in MPEG-2, which requires additional motion vectors, the invention requires considerably fewer bits per frame. In addition, the invention operates with existing video compression standards that do not allow motion vectors for INTRA macroblocks, as allowed in
30 MPEG-2.

The error concealment indicator may be included in respect of the whole picture or part of a picture. In the former case, typically the indicator is included in a picture header. In a preferred implementation of the invention,

the video signal is encoded according to the H.263 standard and the error concealment indicator is included in the Supplemental Enhancement Information. In the latter case the error concealment indicator may also be included in picture segment headers or macroblock headers of the encoded
5 picture.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the method comprising: examining a received error concealment
10 algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process; using the value of the received error concealment algorithm type
15 indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and applying the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

According to a third aspect of the present invention there is provided a video
20 encoder for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the video encoder being configured to: generate an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error
25 concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

According to a fourth aspect of the present invention there is provided a
30 video decoder for decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the decoder configured to: examine a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and

having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process; use the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and apply the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

According to a fifth aspect of the present invention there is provided a portable radio communications device comprising a video encoder for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, wherein the video encoder is configured to: generate an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

According to a sixth aspect of the present invention there is provided a portable radio communications device comprising a video decoder for decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, wherein the video decoder is configured to: examine a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process; use the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and apply the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

According to a seventh aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video

signal, wherein the apparatus is configured to: generate an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

According to an eight aspect of the present invention there is provided an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, wherein the apparatus is configured to: examine a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process; use the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and apply the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

According to a ninth aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the apparatus comprising one or more functional units for: generating an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

According to a tenth aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the apparatus comprising one or more functional units for:

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examining a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment
5 algorithm to be used in the decoding process; using the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and applying the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

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According to an eleventh aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the method comprising: calculating a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a
15 second picture of the sequence; comparing the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and generating an error concealment algorithm type indicator, for indicating a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator having a
20 value, the value of said indicator being based on a result of said comparison.

According to a twelfth aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, wherein the apparatus is configured to: calculate a measure of
25 similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence; compare the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and generate an error concealment algorithm type indicator, for indicating a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process for
30 the first picture or said part of a first picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator having a value, the value of said indicator being based on a result of said comparison.

According to a thirteenth aspect of the present invention there is provided an

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apparatus for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the apparatus comprising one or more functional units for: calculating a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence;

5 comparing the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and generating an error concealment algorithm type indicator, for indicating a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator having a value, the

10 value of said indicator being based on a result of said comparison.

The invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

- Figure 1 shows a multimedia mobile communications system;
- 15 Figure 2 shows an example of the multimedia components of a multimedia terminal;
- Figure 3 shows an example of a video codec;
- Figure 4 shows the syntax of a bit stream as known according to H.263;
- Figure 5a shows an example of a bit stream output by an encoder according
- 20 to a first implementation of the invention;
- Figure 5b shows an example of a bit stream output by an encoder according to a second implementation of the invention;
- Figure 6a shows an example of a bit stream output by an encoder according to a third implementation of the invention;
- 25 Figure 6b shows an example of a bit stream output by an encoder according to a fourth implementation of the invention;
- Figure 7 shows an example of a bit stream output by an encoder according to a fifth implementation of the invention.
- 30 Figure 1 shows a typical multimedia mobile communications system. A first multimedia mobile terminal 1 communicates with a second multimedia mobile

terminal 2 via a radio link 3 to a mobile communications network 4. Control data is sent between the two terminals 1,2 as well as the multimedia data.

Figure 2 shows the typical multimedia components of a terminal 1. The terminal comprises a video codec 10, an audio codec 20, a data protocol manager 30, a control manager 40, a multiplexer/demultiplexer 50 and a modem 60 (if required). The video codec 10 receives signals for coding from a video capture device of the terminal (not shown) (e.g. a camera) and receives signals for decoding from a remote terminal 2 for display by the terminal 1 on a display 70. The audio codec 20 receives signals for coding from the microphone (not shown) of the terminal 1 and receive signals for decoding from a remote terminal 2 for reproduction by a speaker (not shown) of the terminal 1.

The control manager 40 controls the operation of the video codec 10, the audio codec 20 and the data protocol manager 30. However, since the invention is concerned with the operation of the video codec 10, no further discussion of the audio codec 20 and protocol manager 30 will be provided.

Figure 3 shows an example of a video codec 10 according to the invention. The video codec comprises an encoder part 100 and a decoder part 200. The encoder part 100 comprises an input 101 for receiving a video signal from a camera or video source (not shown) of the terminal 1. A switch 102 switches the encoder between an INTRA-mode of coding and an INTER-mode.

In INTRA-mode, the video signal from the input 101 is transformed into DCT co-efficients by a DCT transformer 103. The DCT coefficients are then passed to a quantiser 104 that quantises the coefficients. Both the switch 102 and the quantiser 104 are controlled by an encoding control manager 105 of the video codec which also receives feedback control from the receiving terminal 2 by means of the control manager 40.

In INTER mode, the switch 102 is operated to accept from a subtractor 106 the difference between the signal from the input 101 and a previous picture which is stored in a picture store 107. The difference data output from the subtractor 106 represents the prediction error between the current picture and the previous picture stored in the picture store 107. The data in the picture store 107 is generated by passing the data output by the quantiser through an inverse quantiser 108 and applying an inverse DCT transform 109 to the inverse-quantised data. The resulting data is added to the contents of the picture store 107 by adder 110. A motion estimator 111 may generate motion compensation data (motion vectors) from the data in the picture store 107 in a conventional manner.

The video codec outputs the quantised DCT coefficients 112a, the quantising index 112b (i.e. the details of the quantising used), an INTRA/INTER flag 112c to indicate the mode of coding performed (I or P/B), a transmit flag 112d to indicate the number of the frame being coded and the motion vectors 112e for the picture being coded. These are multiplexed together by the multiplexer 50 together with other multimedia signals.

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The decoder part 200 of the video codec 10 comprises an inverse quantiser 120, an inverse DCT transformer 121, a motion compensator 122, a picture store 123 and a controller 124. The controller 124 receives video codec control signals demultiplexed from the encoded multimedia stream by the demultiplexer 50. In practice the controller 105 of the encoder and the controller 124 of the decoder may be the same processor.

The operation of an encoder according to the invention will now be described. The video codec 10 receives a video signal to be encoded. The encoder 100 of the video codec encodes the video signal by performing DCT transformation, quantisation and motion compensation. The encoded video data is then output to the multiplexer 50. The multiplexer 50 multiplexes the

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video data from the video codec 10 and control data from the control 40 (as well as other signals as appropriate) into a multimedia signal. The terminal 1 outputs this multimedia signal to the receiving terminal 2 via the modem 60 (if required).

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The invention relates to the inclusion of an indicator in the video sequence syntax that indicates the type of concealment method to be used by the decoder. This may be included in the picture layer of the bit stream or be provided as a separate layer. The indicator may enable identification of different scenes and thus the type of concealment method to be used.

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In a first embodiment of the invention, the error concealment indicator comprises a so-called scene identifier (SI), which is added to the bit-stream representation of each coded picture. The scene identifier is a value, which is the same for all of the pictures of the same scene. Pictures belonging to different scenes typically have different scene identifiers. Preferably, the value of SI is incremented each time it is updated. However, it is envisaged that the scene identifier may take one of two values, with pictures from adjacent scenes having non-identical SI values e.g. the pictures of the odd-numbered scenes having SI set to 0 and the pictures of the even-numbered scenes having SI set to 1.

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The controller 105 of the encoder detects a scene cut by comparing the similarity between one frame and another. The controller 105 compares the pixel representation of the current picture (received from input 102) with the pixel representation of the previous picture stored in the picture store 107. Each time the similarity between the two pictures is below a certain threshold, the controller detects a scene cut and an updated scene indicator 112f is output. If the similarity is above the threshold the scene indicator is not updated but is repeated.

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The scene identifier does not necessarily identify an actual scene cut; a change in the scene identifier indicates that the current picture has changed sufficiently with respect to a previous picture that the current picture may be deemed to be a new scene.

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Other known methods for detecting scene changes may be used.

In a second embodiment of the invention, a so-called concealment method indicator (CMI) is added to the bit-stream representation of each coded picture. The CMI indicates to a decoder the type of concealment method that the decoder should use if the associated picture is corrupted. The encoder decides which CMI to associate with the picture by comparing the similarity between a current picture and a previous one. If the similarity between the two pictures is below a certain threshold, the controller outputs a first concealment method indicator CMI=0 as output 112f. This indicates to a decoder that a non-temporal predictive concealment method should be used. If the similarity is above the threshold a second concealment method indicator CMI=1 is output as output 112f. This indicates to a decoder that a temporal predictive concealment method should be used.

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The measure of similarity may be formed by calculating the mathematical correlation between the two pictures.

An error concealment indicator may also be included in the picture segment header and/or the macroblock header to influence at this level the selection by a receiving decoder of an appropriate error concealment method.

Considering the terminal 1 as receiving encoded video data from terminal 2, the operation of the video codec 10 will now be described with reference to its decoding role. The terminal 1 receives a multimedia signal from the transmitting terminal 2. The demultiplexer 50 demultiplexes the multimedia signal and passes the video data to the video codec 10 and the control data

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to the control manager 40. The decoder 200 of the video codec decodes the encoded video data by inverse quantising, inverse DCT transforming and motion compensating the data. The controller 124 of the decoder checks the integrity of the received data and, if an error is detected, attempts to correct and conceal the error in a manner to be described below. The decoded, corrected and concealed video data is then output for reproduction on a display 70 of the receiving terminal 1.

Errors in video data may occur at the picture level, the picture segment level or the macroblock level. Error checking may be carried out at any or all of these levels.

Considering first a signal encoded according to the invention, in which an indicator SI is included, when an error is detected, the decoder examines the SI of the received but corrupted picture. If the SI of the corrupted picture is the same as that of the temporally-neighbouring correctly decoded picture(s), the decoder applies a temporal prediction (INTER) concealment algorithm. The decoder may be capable of carrying out various temporal prediction concealment algorithms. The indicator SI indicates to the decoder the type of concealment algorithm that should be used but does not specify the algorithm to be used.

If the SI of the corrupted picture differs from that of the temporally-neighbouring correctly decoded picture(s), the decoder conceals the picture using a spatial (INTRA) concealment method.

Considering a signal encoded according to the invention, in which an indicator CMI is included, when an error is detected, the decoder examines the CMI of the received but corrupted picture. If the CMI of the corrupted picture is CMI1, the decoder conceals the picture using a spatial concealment method. If the CMI of the corrupted picture is CMI2, the decoder applies a temporal prediction concealment algorithm. Again the decoder may be capable of

carrying out various error concealment algorithms. The indicator CMI indicates to the decoder the type of concealment method that should be used but does not specify the algorithm to be used.

- 5 An example of how the error concealment indicator may be included in the syntax of an encoded signal will now be addressed with reference to the H.263 video coding standard.

Figure 4 shows the syntax of a bit stream as known according to H.263. (The following implementations describe the GOB format but it will be clear to a skilled person that the invention may also be implemented in the slice format.) As mentioned already, the bit stream has four layers: the picture layer, picture segment layer, macroblock layer and block layer. The picture layer comprises a picture header followed by data for the Group of Blocks, eventually followed
10 by any optional end-of-sequence code and stuffing bits.
15

The prior art H.263 bit stream is formatted as shown in Figure 4. A descriptor for each part is given below:

	PSC	The picture start code (PSC) indicates the start of the picture
20	TR	The Temporal Reference (TR) is formed by incrementing its value in the temporally previous reference picture header by one plus the number of skipped or non-referenced pictures since the previously transmitted one
	PTYPE	Amongst other things, PTYPE includes details of the picture coding type i.e. INTRA or INTER
25	PQUANT	A codeword that indicates the quantiser to be used for the picture until updated by any subsequent quantiser information
	CPM	A codeword that signals the use of optional continuous presence multipoint and video multiplex (CPM) mode
30	PSBI	Picture Sub-Bit stream Indicator – only present if CPM is set
	TR _B	Present if the frame is a bi-directionally predicted frame (known as a PB-frame)

	DBQUANT	Present if a bi-directional frame
5	PEI	This relates to extra insertion information and is set to "1" to indicate the presence of the following optional data fields PSUPP and PEI. PSUPP and PEI are together known as Supplemental Enhancement Information, which is further defined in Annex L of H.263.
	GOBS	Is the data for the group of blocks for the current picture
	ESTUF	A stuffing codeword provided to attain byte alignment before EOS
	EOS	A codeword indicating the end of the data sequence for the picture
10	PSTUF	A stuffing codeword to allow for byte alignment of the next picture start code PSC

15 The structure as shown in Figure 4 does not include the optional PLUSTYPE data field. PSBI is only present if indicated by CPM (labelled as "CBM" in the Figures). TR_B and DBQUANT are only present if PTYPE indicates use of a so-called PB frame mode (unless the PLUSTYPE field is present and the used of DBQUANT is indicated therein). These issues are addressed in more detail in the H.263 specification.

20 The following paragraphs outline possible implementations of the bit-stream output by an encoder according to the invention.

25 The concealment method indicator may be incorporated into a H.263 bit stream as follows. Figure 5a shows an example of a bit stream output by an encoder according to the first implementation of the invention. As shown in Figure 5a, the bit stream includes an additional codeword SI which is a codeword indicating the scene to which the picture belongs. This is inserted by the encoder according to the amount of change between successive pictures, as described above. A change in identifier indicates that the similarity between the picture being coded and a reference picture is low. The decoder uses this information to select an error concealment method of the

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indicated type. In this case, the type of error concealment method to be used is not specifically indicated, but can be determined from the changes in SI.

Figure 5b shows an example of a bit stream output by an encoder according to the second implementation of the invention. As shown in Figure 5b, the bit stream may include an additional codeword CMI which is a codeword indicating the type of concealment method to be used by the decoder. This is inserted by the encoder according to the amount of change between successive pictures, as described above.

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Alternatively, the SI or CMI may be included in the Supplemental Enhancement Information PSUPP (see Annex L of H.263 and Figure 4). The supplemental information may be present in the bit stream even though the decoder may not be capable of providing the enhanced capability to use it, or even to properly interpret it. Simply discarding the supplemental information is allowable by decoders unless a requirement to provide the requested capability has been negotiated by external means.

If PEI is set to "1", then 9 bits follow consisting of 8 bits of data (PSUPP) and then another PEI bit to indicate if a further 9 bits follow and so on.

The PSUPP data consists of a 4-bit function type indication FTYPE, followed by a 4-bit parameter data size specification DSIZE followed by DSIZE octets of function parameter data, optionally followed by another FTYPE and so on. It is known to use this PSUPP codeword to signal various situations such as: to indicate a full-picture or partial-picture freeze or freeze-release request with or without resizing; to tag particular pictures or sequences of pictures within the video stream for external use; or to convey chroma key information for video compositing.

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To implement the invention using the Supplemental Enhancement Information, a further FTYPE is defined as "Scene Identifier" or "CMI". For example, FTYPE 15 may be used for this purpose.

- 5 This is illustrated in Figures 6a and 6b. Figure 6a illustrates the example where a parameter SI is included in the SEI of the picture header. The FTYPE is defined as Scene Identifier SI. The DSIZE specifies the size of the parameter and the following octet is the parameter data i.e. the value of SI. From this value a receiving decoder can determine whether a corrupted
10 picture is from the same "scene" as a previous one and so select the most appropriate type of concealment method. Figure 6b illustrates the example where a parameter CMI is included in the SEI of the picture header. The FTYPE is defined as Concealment Method Indicator CMI. The DSIZE specifies the size of the parameter and the following octet is the parameter
15 data i.e. the value of CMI. From this value a receiving decoder can determine the most appropriate type of concealment method for a corrupted picture.

Alternatively, the information may be contained in the additional Supplemental Enhancement Information as specified in a "Draft of new Annex W: Additional
20 Supplementary Enhancement Information Specification" P. Ning and S. Wenger, ITU-T Study Group 16 Question 15 Document Q15-I-58, November 1999.

In this draft proposal, FTYPE 14 is defined as "Picture Message". When this
25 FTYPE is set, the picture message function indicates the presence of one or more octets representing message data. The first octet of the message data is a message header with the structure shown in Figure 7 i.e. CONT, EBIT and MTYPE. DSIZE is equal to the number of octets in the message data corresponding to a picture message function, including the first octet message
30 header.

The continuation field CONT, if equal to 1, indicates that the message data associated with the picture message is part of the same logical message as the message data associated with the next picture message function. The End Bit Position field EBIT specifies the number of least significant bits that shall be ignored in the last message octet. Further details of these fields can
5 be found in the draft of Annex W, referred to above.

The field MTYPE indicates the type of message. Various types of message are suggested in the draft of Annex W. According to the invention one type
10 e.g. MTYPE 9 is defined as Error Concealment Type. The value of the scene identifier or CMI is defined in the octet following the message header. For the scene identifier the value is the same in all pictures of the same scene. Pictures belonging to different scenes have different scene identifier values. The decoder uses the SI or CMI to determine the type of error concealment to
15 be used.

The message may also indicate the type of error concealment that should be used for particular specified rectangular areas of the current picture if at least part of the area is not correctly received. There may be multiple error
20 concealment type messages for one picture each specifying the concealment type for a non-overlapping rectangular area. Advantageously if the messages do not cover some areas of the picture, a decoder uses any error concealment for those areas. Preferably, the decoder uses the concealment type that corresponds to the picture type i.e. a temporal predictive
25 concealment method for an INTER-frame and a non-temporal predictive concealment method for an INTRA-frame.

A specific example will now be given. For each error concealment type message, DSIZE shall be 6, CONT shall be 0, and EBIT shall be 0. If the first
30 data byte is equal to one (0000 0001), this indicates to a decoder that transmission errors are to be concealed using spatial concealment algorithms only. If the first data byte is equal to two (0000 0010), this indicates to a

- decoder that transmission errors are to be concealed using temporal prediction. The following four PSUPP octets contain the horizontal and vertical location of the upper left corner of the specified rectangular region within the picture within which errors are to be concealed, and the width and height of the rectangular region, respectively, using eight bits each and expressed in units of 16 pixels (of luminance picture). For example, an entire Quarter Common Intermediate Format (QCIF) picture (which has a luminance picture of 176 X 144 pixels) is specified by the four parameters (0, 0, 11, 9).
- 10 For picture formats having a width and height that is not divisible by 16, the specified area may extend to the next larger size that would be divisible by 16. For example, an entire image having size of 160 x 120 pixels is specified by the four parameters (0, 0, 10, 8). Preferably, the specified area does not cross picture boundaries. and preferably does not overlap with other specified
- 15 error concealment areas of the same picture.

- The error concealment indicator may also be incorporated into other video coding protocols. For example MPEG-4 defines so-called user data, which can contain any binary data and is not necessarily associated with a picture.
- 20 The error concealment identifier may be added to these fields.

- The invention is not intended to be limited to the video coding protocols discussed above: these are intended to be merely exemplary. The invention is applicable to any video coding protocol in which a choice of error
- 25 concealment methods is available. The addition of the information as discussed above allows a receiving decoder to determine which would be the best type of error concealment method to use.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the method comprising:
generating an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.
2. A method according to claim 1, comprising generating the error concealment algorithm type indicator value to indicate either a temporally-predictive or a non-temporally-predictive type of error concealment algorithm.
3. A method according to claim 1, comprising:
calculating a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence;
comparing the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and
generating the error concealment algorithm type indicator value based on a result of said comparison.
4. A method according to claim 2, comprising:
calculating a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence;
comparing the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and
generating the error concealment algorithm type indicator value based on a result of said comparison.
5. A method according to claim 4, comprising:
when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, generating a value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate that a non-temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm is to be

used in the corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture; and

when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, generating a value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate that a temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm is to be used in the corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture.

6. A method of encoding a video signal according to claim 5, comprising:
when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion, generating the value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator by updating the previous value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator; and

when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, generating the value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator by leaving the previous value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator unchanged.

7. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, comprising providing the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in a picture header of the encoded video signal.

8. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, comprising encoding the video signal according to the H.263 video coding standard and providing the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in the Supplemental Enhancement Information of the H.263 video coding standard.

9. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, comprising using the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having the same value for all pictures of a particular scene, the scene identifier having a different value for each different scene.

10. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, comprising using the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator

value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having one of two values with pictures from adjacent scenes having non-identical scene indicator values.

11. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, comprising providing the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in a picture segment header or a macroblock header.

12. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, comprising generating the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate a type of error concealment algorithm to be applied to a specified rectangular area of a picture.

13. A method according to claim 12, comprising generating multiple error concealment algorithm type indicators for a picture, each error concealment algorithm type indicator being specific to one of a plurality of non-overlapping rectangular areas of the picture.

14. A method of decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the method comprising:

- examining a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process;

- using the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and

- applying the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

15. A method according to claim 14, comprising:

- checking the integrity of video data received in the encoded video signal to detect an error; and

- examining the received error concealment algorithm type indicator responsive to detection of an error.

16. A method according to claim 14, comprising choosing either a temporally predictive or non-temporally-predictive type of error concealment algorithm based on the value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator.
17. A method according to any one of claims 14 to 16, comprising examining a picture header of the encoded video signal to obtain the value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator.
18. A method according to any one of claims 14 to 16, comprising receiving a video signal encoded according to the H.263 video coding standard, and examining the Supplemental Enhancement Information of the H.263 video coding standard to obtain the value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator.
19. A method according to any one of claims 14 to 16, comprising using the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having the same value for all pictures of a scene, the scene identifier having a different value for each different scene.
20. A method according to any one of claims 14 to 16, comprising using the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having one of two values with pictures from adjacent scenes having non-identical scene indicator values.
21. A method according to any one of claims 14 to 16, comprising examining a picture segment header or a macroblock header to obtain the value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator.
22. A method according to any one of claims 14 to 16, comprising choosing a type of error concealment algorithm for concealing an error in a specified rectangular area of a picture, based on the value of an error concealment algorithm type indicator for the specified rectangular area.

23. A method according to claim 22, comprising receiving multiple error concealment algorithm type indicators for a picture, each error concealment algorithm type indicator being specific to one of a plurality of non-overlapping rectangular areas of the picture and correspondingly applying a respective error concealment algorithm.

24. A method according to claim 19 or 20, comprising comparing the value of a scene identifier for a picture with the value of a scene identifier for a temporally neighbouring correctly decoded picture and applying a temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm in the decoding process for the picture when the value of the scene identifier for the picture is the same as the value of the scene identifier for the temporally neighbouring correctly decoded picture.

25. A method according to claim 19 or 20, comprising comparing the value of a scene identifier for a picture with the value of a scene identifier for a temporally neighbouring correctly decoded picture and applying a non-temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm in the decoding process for the picture when the value of the scene identifier for the picture is different from the value of the scene identifier for the temporally neighbouring correctly decoded picture.

26. A video encoder for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the video encoder being configured to:

generate an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

27. A video encoder according to claim 26, wherein the video encoder is configured to generate the error concealment algorithm type indicator value to indicate either a temporally-predictive or a non-temporally-predictive type of error concealment algorithm.

28. A video encoder according to claim 26, wherein the encoder is configured to:

calculate a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence,
compare the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and
generate the error concealment algorithm type indicator value based on a result of said comparison.

29. A video encoder according to claim 27, wherein the video encoder is configured to:

calculate a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence;
compare the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and
generate the error concealment algorithm type indicator value based on a result of said comparison.

30. A video encoder according to claim 29, wherein:

when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, the video encoder is configured to generate a value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate that a non-temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm is to be used in the corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture; and

when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, the video encoder is configured to generate a value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate that a temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm is to be used in the corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture.

31. A video encoder according to claim 30, wherein:

when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, the video encoder is configured to generate the value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator by updating the previous value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator; and

when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, the video encoder is configured to generate the value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator by leaving the previous value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator unchanged.

32. A video encoder according to any one of claims 26 to 31, wherein the encoder is configured to provide the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in a picture header of the encoded video signal.

33. A video encoder according to any one of claims 26 to 31, wherein the video encoder is configured to encode the video signal according to the H.263 video coding standard and to provide the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in the Supplemental Enhancement Information of the H.263 video coding standard.

34. A video encoder according to any one of claims 26 to 31, wherein the video encoder is configured to use the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having the same value for all pictures of a particular scene, the scene identifier having a different value for each different scene.

35. A video encoder according to any one of claims 26 to 31, wherein the video encoder is configured to use the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having one of two values with pictures from adjacent scenes having non-identical scene indicator values.

36. A video encoder according to any one of claims 26 to 31, wherein the video encoder is configured to provide the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in a picture segment header or a macroblock header.

37. A video encoder according to any one of claims 26 to 31, wherein the video encoder is configured to generate the error concealment algorithm type

indicator to indicate a type of error concealment algorithm to be applied to a specified rectangular area of a picture.

38. A video encoder according to claim 37, wherein the video encoder is configured to generate multiple error concealment algorithm type indicators for a picture, each error concealment algorithm type indicator being specific to one of a plurality of non-overlapping rectangular areas of the picture.

39. A video decoder for decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the decoder configured to:

- examine a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process;

- use the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and

- apply the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

40. A video decoder according to claim 39, wherein the video decoder is configured to:

- check the integrity of video data received in the encoded video signal to detect an error; and

- examine the received error concealment algorithm type indicator responsive to detection of an error.

41. A video decoder according to claim 39, wherein the video decoder is configured to choose either a temporally-predictive or a non-temporally-predictive type of error concealment algorithm based on the value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator.

42. A video decoder according to any one of claims 39 to 41, wherein the video decoder is configured to examine a picture header of the encoded video signal to obtain the value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator.

43. A video decoder according to any one of claims 39 to 41, wherein the video decoder is configured to receive a video signal according to the H.263 standard, and to examine the Supplemental Enhancement Information of the H.263 video coding standard to obtain the value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator.

44. A video decoder according to any one of claims 39 to 41, wherein the video decoder is configured to use the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having the same value for all pictures of a scene, the scene identifier having a different value for each different scene.

45. A video decoder according to any one of claims 39 to 41, wherein the video decoder is configured to use the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having one of two values with pictures from adjacent scenes having non-identical scene indicator values.

46. A video decoder according to any one of claims 39 to 41, wherein the video decoder is configured to examine a picture segment header or a macroblock header to obtain the value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator.

47. A video decoder according to any one of claims 39 to 41, wherein the video decoder is configured to choose a type of error concealment algorithm for concealing an error in a specified rectangular area of a picture, based on the value of an error concealment algorithm type indicator for the specified rectangular area.

48. A video decoder according to claim 47, wherein the video decoder is configured to receive multiple error concealment algorithm type indicators for a picture, each error concealment algorithm type indicator being specific to one of a

plurality of non-overlapping rectangular areas of the picture and to correspondingly apply a respective error concealment algorithm.

49. A video decoder according to claim 44 or 45, wherein the video decoder is configured to compare the value of a scene identifier for a picture with the value of a scene identifier for a temporally neighbouring correctly decoded picture and to apply a temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm in the decoding process for the picture when the value of the scene indicator for the picture is the same as the value of the scene identifier for the temporally neighbouring correctly decoded picture.

50. A video decoder according to claim 44 or 45, wherein the video decoder is configured to compare the value of a scene identifier for a picture with the value of a scene identifier for a temporally neighbouring correctly decoded picture and to apply a non-temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm in the decoding process for the picture when the value of the scene identifier for the picture is different from the value of the scene identifier for the temporally neighbouring correctly decoded picture.

51. A portable radio communications device comprising a video encoder for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, wherein the video encoder is configured to:

generate an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

52. A portable radio communications device comprising a video decoder for decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, wherein the video decoder is configured to:

examine a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an

encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process;

use the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and

apply the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

53. An apparatus for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, wherein the apparatus is configured to:

generate an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

54. An apparatus for decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, wherein the apparatus is configured to:

examine a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process;

use the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and

apply the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

55. An apparatus for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the apparatus comprising one or more functional units for:

generating an error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture or a part of a picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an encoding mode indicator for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding

process, thereby providing for choice of a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated in the corresponding decoding process.

56. An apparatus for decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the apparatus comprising one or more functional units for:

- examining a received error concealment algorithm type indicator for a picture of the sequence or a part of a picture of the sequence, the error concealment algorithm type indicator being distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the picture and having a value indicative of a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in the decoding process;

- using the value of the received error concealment algorithm type indicator as the basis for choosing a particular error concealment algorithm of the type indicated; and

- applying the chosen error concealment algorithm to conceal an error in the picture or said part of a picture.

57. A method of encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the method comprising:

- calculating a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence;

- comparing the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and

- generating an error concealment algorithm type indicator, for indicating a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator having a value, the value of said indicator being based on a result of said comparison.

58. A method according to claim 57, wherein the error concealment algorithm type indicator value indicates either a temporally-predictive or a non-temporally-predictive type of error concealment algorithm.

59. A method according to claim 58, wherein:

- when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, generating a value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate that a non-temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm is to be

used in the corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture; and

when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, generating a value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate that a temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm is to be used in the corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture.

60. A method according to claim 59, wherein:

when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, generating the value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator by updating the previous value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator; and

when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, generating the value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator by leaving the previous value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator unchanged.

61. A method according to claim 57 or 58, comprising providing the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in a picture header of the encoded video signal.

62. A method according to claim 57 or 58, wherein the sequence of pictures is encoded according to the H.263 video coding standard, and wherein the method further comprises providing the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in the Supplemental Enhancement Information of the H.263 video coding standard.

63. A method according to claim 57 or 58, comprising using the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having the same value for all pictures of a particular scene, the scene identifier having a different value for each different scene.

64. A method according to claim 57 or 58, comprising using the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having one of two values, with pictures from adjacent scenes having non-identical scene identifier values.

65. A method according to claim 57 or 58, comprising providing the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in a picture segment header or a macroblock header.

66. A method according to claim 57 or 58, wherein the error concealment algorithm type indicator indicates a type of error concealment algorithm to be applied to a specified rectangular area of a picture.

67. A method according to claim 66, comprising generating multiple error concealment algorithm type indicators for a picture, each error concealment algorithm type indicator being specific to one of a plurality of non-overlapping rectangular areas of the picture.

68. A method according to claim 57 or 58, comprising generating the error concealment algorithm type indicator distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the first picture.

69. An apparatus for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, wherein the apparatus is configured to:

- calculate a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence;

- compare the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and

- generate an error concealment algorithm type indicator, for indicating a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator having a value, the value of said indicator being based on a result of said comparison.

70. An apparatus according to claim 69, wherein the apparatus is configured to generate the error concealment algorithm type indicator value to indicate either a temporally-predictive or a non-temporally-predictive type of error concealment algorithm.

71. An apparatus according to claim 70, wherein:

when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, the apparatus is configured to generate a value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate that a non-temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm is to be used in the corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture; and

when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, the apparatus is configured to generate a value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate that a temporally-predictive error concealment algorithm is to be used in the corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture.

72. An apparatus according to claim 70, wherein:

when the measure of similarity does not meet the predetermined criterion of similarity, the apparatus is configured to generate the value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator by updating the previous value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator; and

when the measure of similarity meets the predetermined criterion of similarity, the apparatus is configured to generate the value for the error concealment algorithm type indicator by leaving the previous value of the error concealment algorithm type indicator unchanged.

73. An apparatus according to claim 69 or 70, wherein the apparatus is configured to provide the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in a picture header of the encoded video signal.

74. An apparatus according to claim 69 or 70, wherein the apparatus is configured to encode the video signal according to the H.263 video coding standard and to provide the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in the Supplemental Enhancement Information of the H.263 video coding standard.

75. An apparatus according to claim 69 or 70, wherein the apparatus is configured to using the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having the same value for all pictures of a particular scene, the scene identifier having a different value for each different scene.

76. An apparatus according to claim 69 or 70, wherein the apparatus is configured to use the value of a scene identifier as the error concealment algorithm type indicator value, the scene identifier being associated with a scene, the scene comprising a number of consecutive similar pictures of the sequence, the scene identifier having one of two values with pictures from adjacent scenes having non-identical scene identifier values.

77. An apparatus according to claim 69 or 70, wherein the apparatus is configured to provide the generated error concealment algorithm type indicator in a picture segment header or a macroblock header.

78. An apparatus according to claim 69 or 70, wherein the apparatus is configured to generate the error concealment algorithm type indicator to indicate a type of error concealment algorithm to be applied to a specified rectangular area of a picture.

79. An apparatus according to claim 78, wherein the apparatus is configured to generate multiple error concealment algorithm type indicators for a picture, each error concealment algorithm type indicator being specific to one of a plurality of non-overlapping rectangular areas of the picture.

80. An apparatus according to claim 69 or 70, wherein the apparatus is configured to generate the error concealment algorithm type indicator distinct from an indication of an encoding mode for the first picture.

81. An apparatus for encoding a sequence of pictures to form an encoded video signal, the apparatus comprising one or more functional units for:

calculating a measure of similarity between a first picture of the sequence or a part of a first picture of the sequence and a second picture of the sequence;

comparing the measure of similarity with a predetermined criterion of similarity; and

generating an error concealment algorithm type indicator, for indicating a type of error concealment algorithm to be used in a corresponding decoding process for the first picture or said part of a first picture, the error concealment algorithm type indicator having a value, the value of said indicator being based on a result of said comparison.

82. A portable radio communications device comprising at least one of an apparatus for encoding according to claim 69 or 81.

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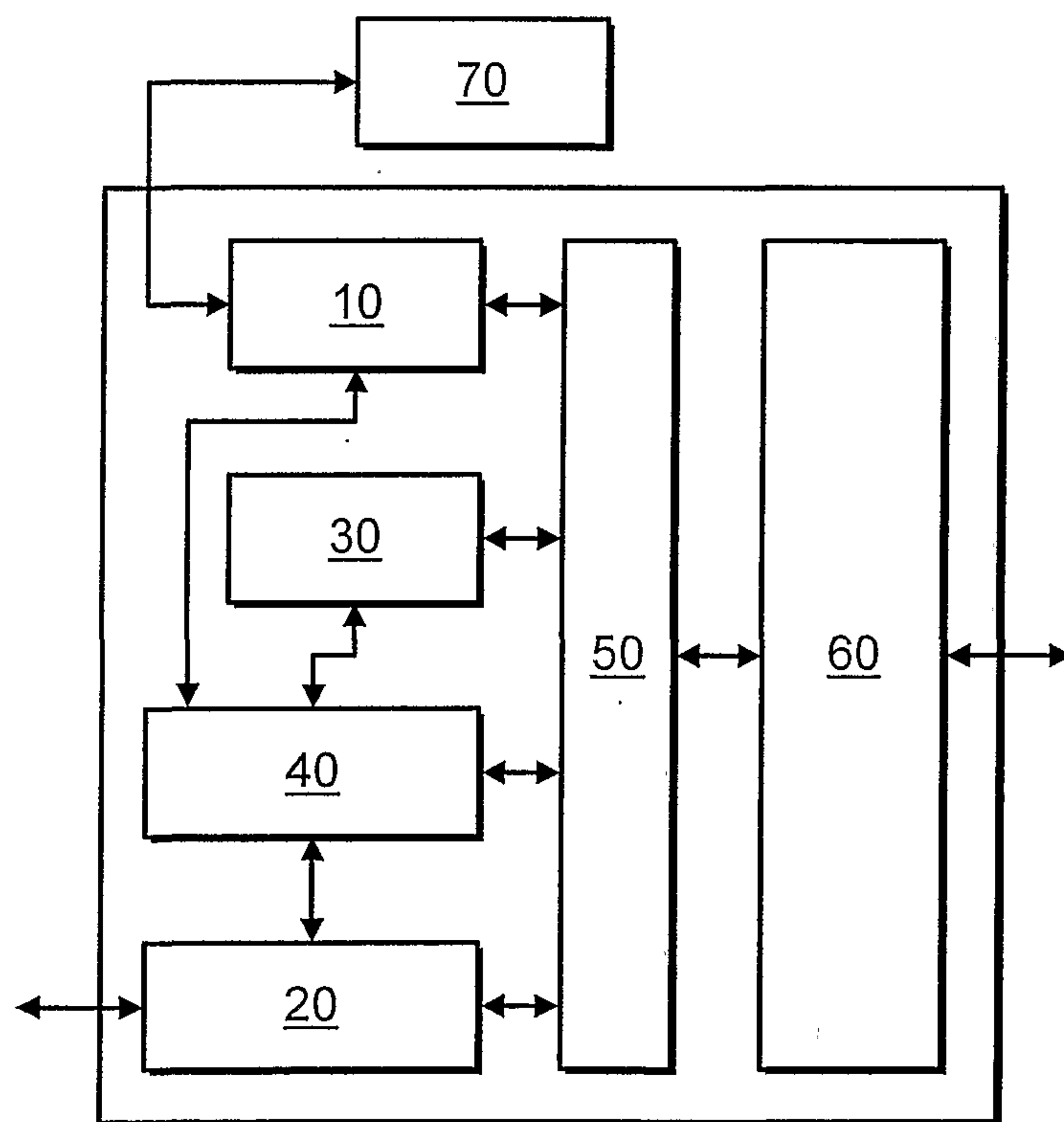
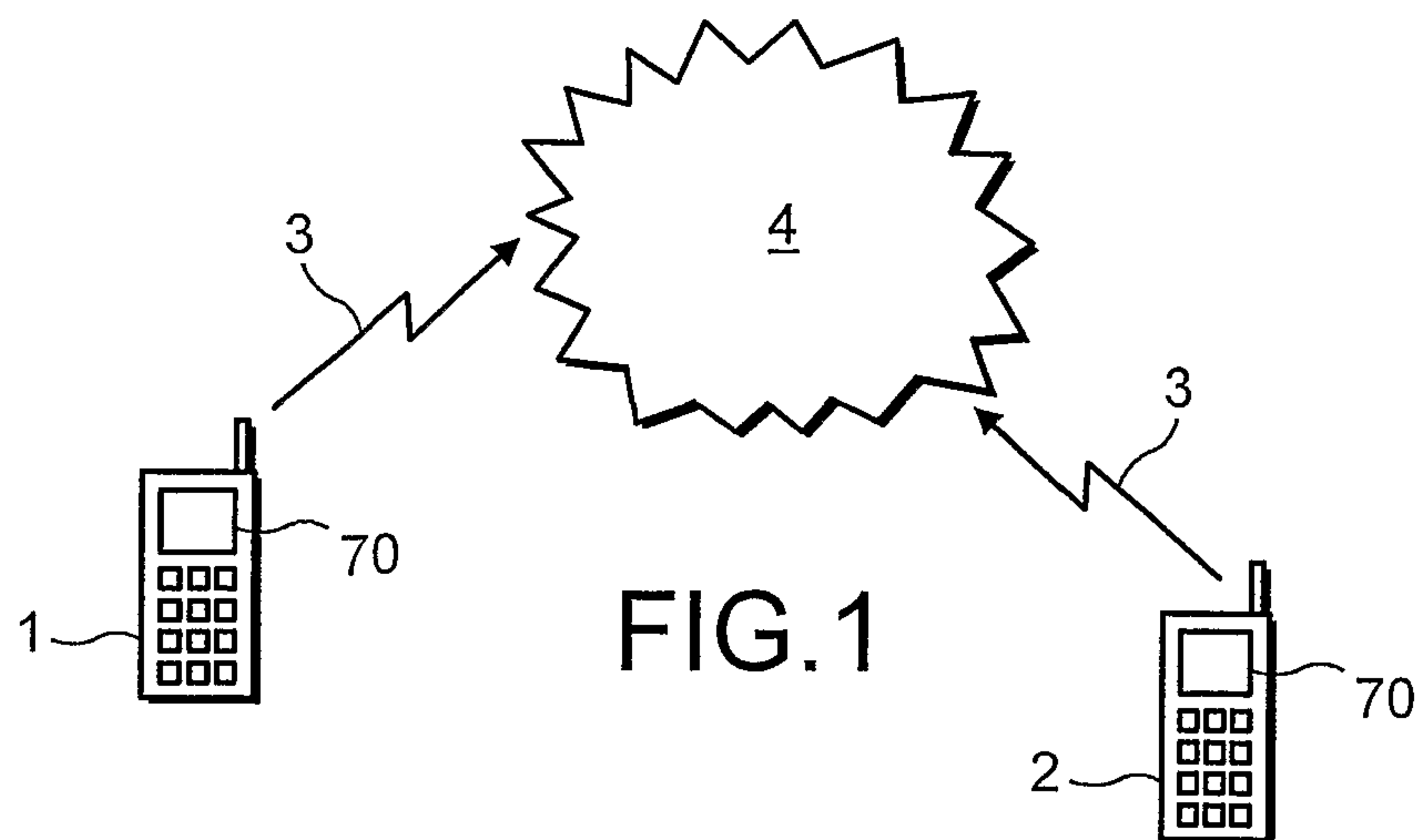


FIG.2

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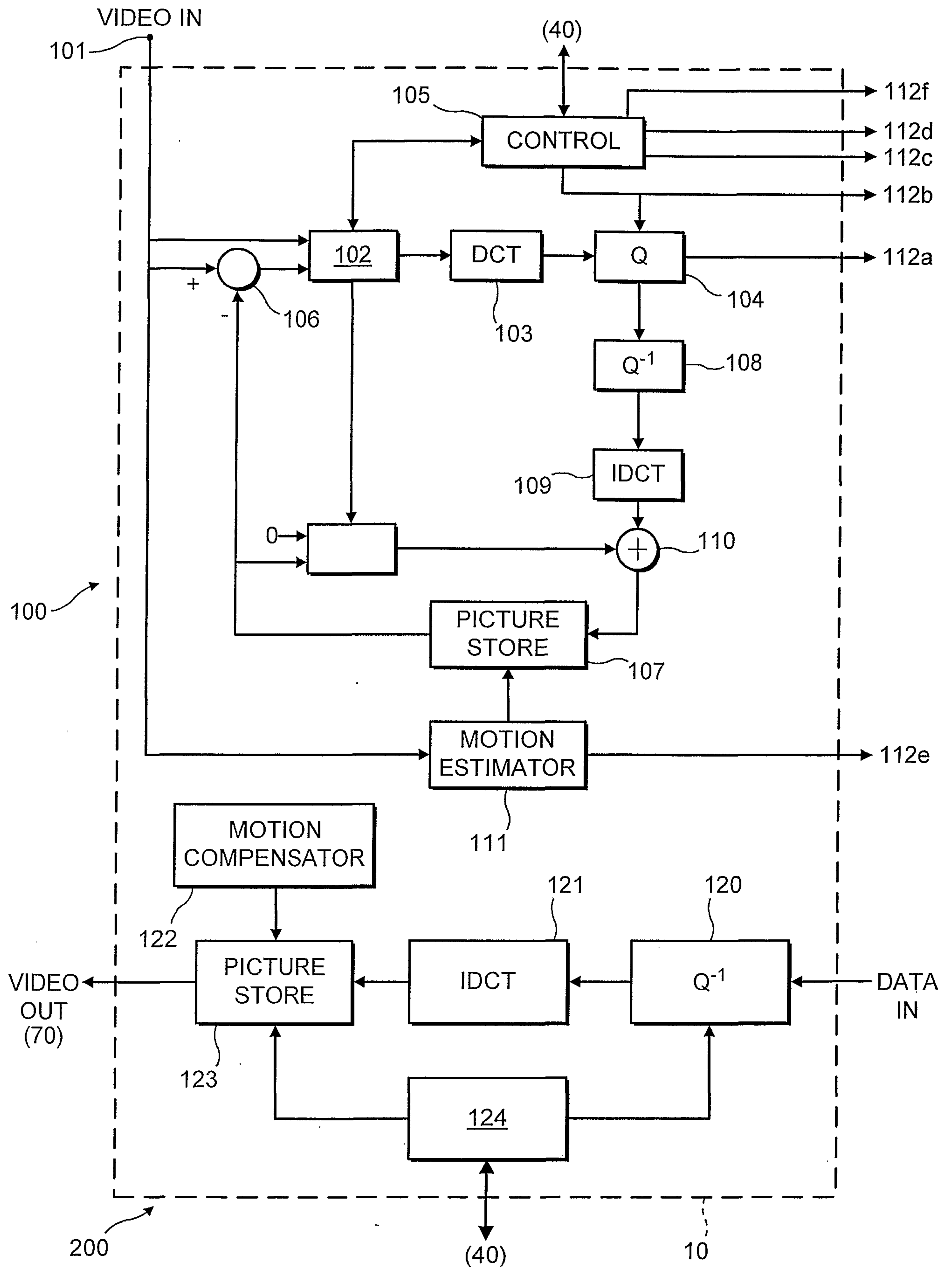


FIG.3

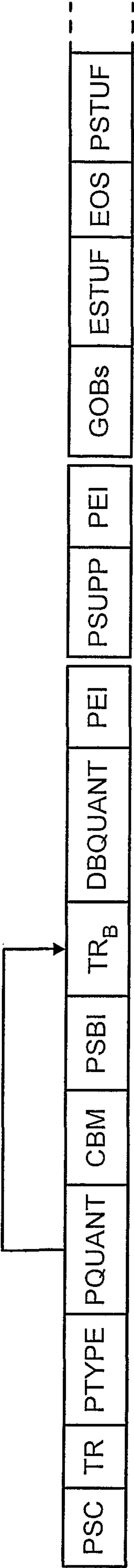


FIG.4

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FIG.5a

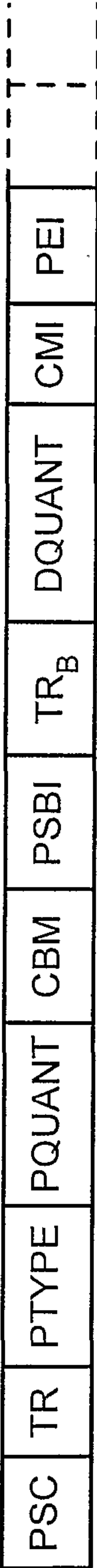


FIG.5b

