

(51) International Patent Classification:
G01C 19/56 (2006.01)(21) International Application Number:
PCT/US2009/056744(22) International Filing Date:
11 September 2009 (11.09.2009)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
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(US).(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every
kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM,
AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ,
CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO,
DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT,
HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP,
KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD,
ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI,
NO, NZ, OM, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD,
SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT,
TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every
kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH,
GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM,
ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ,
TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE,
ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV,
MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, SM,
TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW,
ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— with international search report (Art. 21(3))

(54) Title: LOW INERTIA FRAME FOR DETECTING CORIOLIS ACCELERATION

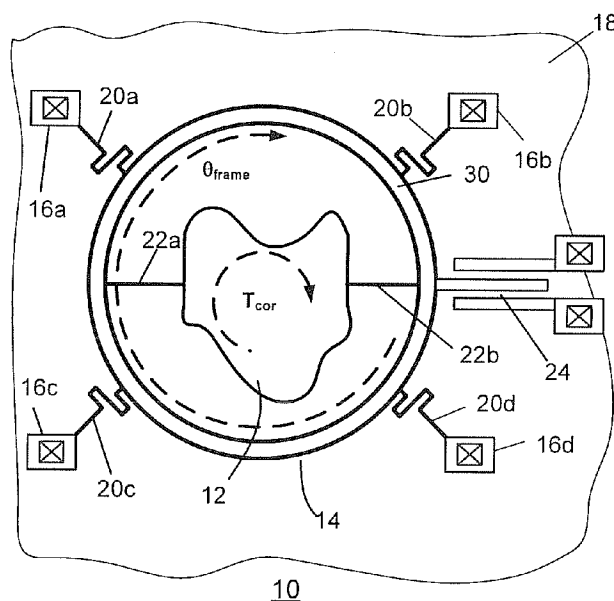


FIGURE 1A

(57) Abstract: A sensing frame that moves in response to torque generated by the Coriolis acceleration on a drive subsystem is disclosed. The sensing frame include a first rail. The first rail is constrained to move along the first axis parallel to the first rail. The frame includes a second rail substantially parallel to said first rail. The second rail is constrained to move along the first axis. The frame includes a base and at least two guiding arms for ensuring that the first rail and the second rail move in anti-phase fashion along the first axis. A first guiding arm is flexibly coupled to the first rail and flexibly coupled to the second rail and a second guiding arm is flexibly coupled to the first rail and flexibly coupled to the second rail. The first guiding arm is flexibly suspended to the base at a first anchoring point for allowing rotation of the first guiding arm around the second axis that is perpendicular to the first axis and normal to the plane, and the second guiding arm is suspended to the base at a second anchoring point allowing rotation of the second guiding arm around the third axis parallel to the second axis. The sensing frame includes a plurality of coupling flexures connecting said sensing frame to the drive subsystem and a transducer for sensing motion of the first and second rails responsive to said angular velocity.

LOW INERTIA FRAME FOR DETECTING CORIOLIS ACCELERATION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to angular velocity sensors, and more particularly to the sensing frame of in-plane angular velocity sensors.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Typically a vibratory angular rate sensor comprises drive and sense subsystems. The drive subsystem is driven into oscillation at the resonant frequency of the drive mode. The Coriolis force acts on the oscillating drive subsystem and generated force which is then transferred to the sense subsystem. Consequently, the sense subsystem moves at the drive frequency proportional to the input rate of rotation and that motion is typically sensed by an appropriate transducer.

[0003] There are various implementations of these types of sensors. Some sensors may have a plurality sense modes or a single sense mode. In other embodiments, the sense mode may match the drive mode or in another embodiment the sense mode and drive mode may be apart from each other. Vibratory angular velocity sensors have an active mass and a parasitic mass. The active mass is the mass participating in the generation of the Coriolis force while the parasitic mass does not contribute to the generation of the Coriolis force. However, the Coriolis force moves the parasitic mass, and therefore the sensitivity of the angular velocity sensor can be substantially increased if the parasitic mass is minimized.

Accordingly, what is desired is a system and method that addresses the above-identified issues. The system and method should be cost effective, easily implemented and adaptable to existing sensors.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] A sensing frame that moves in response to torque generated by the Coriolis acceleration on a drive subsystem is disclosed. The sensing frame include a first rail. The first rail is constrained to move along the first axis parallel to the first rail. The frame includes a second rail substantially parallel to said first rail. The second rail is constrained to move along the first axis. The frame includes a base and at least two guiding arms for ensuring that the first rail and the second rail move in anti-phase fashion along the first axis. A first guiding arm is flexibly coupled to the first rail and flexibly coupled to the second rail and a second guiding arm is flexibly coupled to the first rail and flexibly coupled to the second rail. The first guiding arm is flexibly suspended to the base at a first anchoring point for allowing rotation of the first guiding arm around the second axis that is perpendicular to the first axis and normal to the plane, and the second guiding arm is suspended to the base at a second anchoring point allowing rotation of the second guiding arm around the third axis parallel to the second axis. The sensing frame includes a plurality of coupling flexures connecting said sensing frame to the drive subsystem and a transducer for sensing motion of the first and second rails responsive to said angular velocity.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0005] FIG. 1A illustrates an angular velocity sensor with substantially circular sensing frame in accordance with prior art.

[0006] FIG. 1B illustrates a simplified scheme of angular velocity sensor with substantially rectangular sensing frame, in accordance with prior art.

[0007] FIG. 2A shows the sensing frame with a drive system that is flexibly coupled to the rails, in accordance with the present invention.

[0008] FIG. 2B shows the sensing frame with a drive system that is flexibly coupled to the guiding arms, in accordance with the present invention.

[0009] FIG. 3 illustrates the way the inertia of the flexible sensing frame is reduced.

[0010] FIG. 4 illustrates in detail the way the inertia of the sensing frame with attached transducers is reduced.

[0011] FIG. 5 provides sensitivity of a single mode angular velocity sensor as a function of electrode length.

[0012] FIG. 6 shows generic angular velocity sensor with disclosed frame.

[0013] FIG. 7 shows top view and drive mode of the X and Z angular velocity sensing subassemblies.

[0014] FIG. 8 shows mechanism of transferring the Coriolis torque to the sense subsystem.

[0015] FIG 9 shows the sense and the drive subsystems sharing the same pair of anchors.

[0016] FIG. 10 illustrates flexibility of the design of the flexible frame with respect to its shape.

[0017] FIG. 11 shows a preferred embodiment wherein the movable part of the transducer faces outwards.

[0018] FIG 12 shows a preferred embodiment wherein the movable part of the transducer faces inwards.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0019] The present invention relates to angular velocity sensors, and more particularly to the sensing frame of the angular velocity sensors. The following description is presented to enable one of ordinary skill in the art to make and use the invention and is provided in the context of a patent application and its requirements. Various modifications to the preferred embodiment and the generic principles and features described herein will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. Thus, the present invention is not intended to be limited to the embodiment shown but is to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and features described herein.

[0020] The purpose of a system and method in accordance with the present invention is to provide an improved sensing frame by reducing an effective mass of said sensing frame. The advantage of reduced inertia is that it improves sensitivity of the angular velocity sensor.

[0021] Another advantage of a system and method in accordance with the present invention is to provide the sensing frame which can be suspended to the sensing base at a minimum number of points. Minimizing the number of suspensions improves package sensitivity.

[0022] Another advantage of a system and method in accordance with the present invention is to provide a sensing frame having two rails constrained to move linearly in anti-phase fashion. Anti-phase sensing rejects linear acceleration sensitivity of the angular velocity sensor.

[0023] Another advantage of a system and method in accordance with the present invention is to provide a universal and flexible sensing frame. The sensing frame can be used with X, Y or Z angular velocity sensor. Also, the sensing frame is easily adjustable in terms of its shape without altering its functionality. The sensing frame can be easily designed so that an angular velocity sensor fits easily onto the substrate with the neighboring MEMS devices. The sensing frame can be easily designed to enclose different

drive systems. This substantially reduces the area of the sensor die without degrading performance of the angular velocity sensor.

[0024] FIG. 1A and FIG. 1B show two embodiments of simplified illustrations of a sensing subassembly for detecting angular velocity as disclosed in U.S. patent application, serial No. 6,892,575, entitled "X-Y axis dual-mass tuning fork gyroscope with vertically integrated electronics and wafer-scale hermetic packaging," and assigned to the assignee of the present application. In each embodiment, sensing subassembly 10 and 10' comprises a drive subsystem 12 and 12' and a sense subsystem 14 and 14'. In FIG. 1A the rigid sense frame 30 is circular. In FIG. 1B the rigid sense frame 32 is rectangular. The sense subsystem 14 and 14' is suspended to the base 18 at a plurality of anchoring points 16A-16D through a plurality of anchoring flexures 20A-20D. Drive subsystem 12 and 12' may be driven into oscillations based on the fundamental frequency of the drive subsystem 12 and 12'. Coriolis forces may generate a torque on the drive subsystem 12 and 12' as depicted in FIG. 1A and FIG. 1B. Torque is transferred to the sense subsystem 14 and 14' through the coupling flexures 22A-22B that connect drive subsystem 12 and 12' and sense subsystems 14 and 14' causing sense frame 30 and 32 to rotate. Motion of the sense subsystem 14 and 14' is proportional to the input angular velocity and can be sensed by appropriate transducer 24.

[0025] Referring to FIG. 2A and FIG. 2B, a flexible sensing frame is disclosed in accordance with two embodiments. In these embodiments, a sense subsystem 100 and 100' comprises anchoring flexures 110A-110B and a frame further comprising rails 101A-101B and guiding arms 102A-102B. The rails 101A and 101B and guiding arms 102A-102B are flexibly coupled through the four frame flexures 103A-103D. Both rails 101A and 101B and guiding arms 102A-102B are rigid when compared to stiffness of the frame flexures 103A-103D and anchoring flexures 110A-110D. Also, the rails 101A and 101B may support transducer 130. Drive subsystem 112 and the sense subsystem 114 are flexibly connected through the coupling flexures 150A and 150B. In one implementation, the drive subsystem 112 may be connected to the rails 101A and 101B as shown in FIG.

2A. In the other implementation, the drive subsystem 112 may be connected to the guiding arms 102A and 102B as depicted in FIG. 2B.

[0026] The frame flexures 103A-103D ensure flexibility of the sensing frame. When torque is applied to the frame through flexures 150A-150B, the sensing frame deforms and assumes the shape of a parallelogram. The anchoring flexures 110A and 110B define pivot points for guiding arms 102A-102B ensuring anti-phase motion of the rails 101A and 101B. The coupling flexures 150A-150B couple the drive subsystem 112 to the sense subsystem 114 and transfer the Coriolis force to the sensing frame. A system and method in accordance with US patent application serial number 12/026,493, entitled Dual Mode Sensing For Vibratory Gyroscope and assigned to the Assignee of the present application, would allow for the coupling flexure 150 to be designed substantially compliant such that the drive subsystem and sense subsystem form two modes with two modal frequencies that are relatively close to each other.

[0027] Referring to FIG. 3A and FIG. 3B, the difference in effective moving mass between the stiff and flexible sensing frame is illustrated. FIG. 3A shows the stiff sensing frame rotating about the axis passing through the center of gravity of the frame. The whole frame contributes to the effective moving mass. If, instead of a stiff frame, the flexible sensing frame is used as shown in FIG. 3B, two rails translate along the axis parallel to the plane contributing to the effective moving mass substantially similar as they did in said stiff frame case. However, two guiding arms rotate around their pivot points. Effectively, as each of two rotational axes pass through the center of gravity of each of two guiding arms, their effective moving mass is reduced by an order of magnitude. This substantially reduces the total effective mass of the sensing frame. Reduction in the mass of the sensing frame increases sensitivity of the angular velocity sensor.

[0028] Referring to FIG. 4A and FIG. 4B, the advantage of the low-inertia flexible sensing frame on angular rate sensor sensitivity is described. In order to compare the circular frame shown in FIG. 4A and the flexible frame shown in FIG. 4B, the drive system, the generated Coriolis force and the sense frequency are assumed to be the same. The

sensitivity of the single-sense-mode angular velocity sensor is proportional to capacitance sensitivity over the combined inertia of the drive and sense subsystems

$$S \sim \frac{\partial C}{\partial \theta} / (I_s + I_D),$$

where $\partial C / \partial \theta$ is total effective rotational capacitance sensitivity, I_s is the equivalent moment of inertia of the frame with transducers and I_D is the equivalent moment of inertia of the drive subsystem.

[0029] Translational capacitance sensitivity of one electrode is given as $\partial C / \partial y = \varepsilon_c L$, where ε_c is capacitance sensitivity per unit length and L is the length of the transducer. For N electrodes the capacitance sensitivity is given as $(\partial C / \partial y)_N = N \varepsilon_c L$. Referring to circular frame in FIG 4A, the effective frame motion is given as an average of motion at the two sides of the transducer, i.e. $y_{eff} = (R + L/2)\theta$. On the other hand, for the flexible frame from FIG 4B, the effective frame motion is given as motion of the rails, $y_{eff} = R\theta$. Corresponding rotational capacitance sensitivities are then given as

$$\left(\frac{\partial C}{\partial \theta} \right)_c = N \varepsilon_c L \left(R + \frac{L}{2} \right)$$

for the circular frame, and

$$\left(\frac{\partial C}{\partial \theta} \right)_f = N \varepsilon_c L R$$

for the flexible frame.

[0030] Inertia of both sense subsystems from FIG. 4 is given as a sum of the inertia of the frame and inertia of attached electrodes, $I_s = I_F + I_E$. Inertia of the circular frame from FIG 4A may be written as $I_{Fc} = 4mR^2$. The inertia of the attached electrodes may be written as $I_{Ec} = N\mu_{cf}L(R^2 + RL + L^2/3)$. Total inertia of the circular frame is given as

$$I_{Sc} = 4mR^2 + N\mu_{cf}L\left(R^2 + RL + \frac{L^2}{3}\right),$$

where μ_{cf} is mass of the electrode per unit length and $\mu_{cf}L$ is the mass of the electrode.

On the other hand the inertia of the flexible frame may be written as $I_{Ff} = \frac{8}{3}mR^2$ and the inertia of the attached fingers may be written as $I_{Ef} = N\mu_{cf}LR^2$. Total inertia of the flexible frame with electrodes is given as

$$I_{Sf} = \frac{8}{3}mR^2 + N\mu_{cf}LR^2.$$

[0031] Substituting the expressions for capacitance sensitivity and inertia into the equation for sensitivity yields the sensitivity of the circular frame

$$S_c \sim \left(\frac{\partial C}{\partial \theta}\right)_c / (I_{Sc} + I_D) = \frac{N\epsilon_c L \left(R + \frac{L}{2}\right)}{4mR^2 + N\mu_{cf}L\left(R^2 + LR + \frac{L^2}{3}\right) + I_D},$$

and sensitivity of the flexible frame

$$S_{Flex} \sim \left(\frac{\partial C}{\partial \theta}\right)_f / (I_{Sf} + I_D) = \frac{N\epsilon_c LR}{\frac{8}{3}mR^2 + N\mu_{cf}LR^2 + I_D}$$

Sensitivity of both circular and flexible frame as a function of length of the electrode is shown in FIG. 5. The circular frame reaches sensitivity maximum when influence of the moment of inertia becomes dominant over the gain in capacitance sensitivity. Length of the transducers is therefore related to the radius of the circular frame. Flexible frame allows adding longer transducers resulting in increased sensitivity. There are no limits on relation between transducer length and frame geometry. The design of the low inertia frame is therefore more flexible. Furthermore, the addition of more transducers to the circular frame requires increase in the frame radius. On the other hand, the transducers can be added to

the low-inertia frame just by extending the length of the rails. Moreover, unlike in the case of the circular frame, the low-inertia frame allows transducers to be attached to the frame parallel with respect to each other. This increases the area density of the capacitance sensitivity.

[0032] The disclosed sensing frame may be used for sensing the angular velocity with input axis laying in-plane with the sensing frame or with input axis laying out-of-plane with respect to the sensing frame. FIG. 6 depicts generic sensing subassembly 600 for detecting angular velocity around an in-plane and out-of-plane axes. Sensing subassembly comprises a drive subsystem 602 and a sense subsystem 604. Only proof masses 610A-B, transmission mass 620A-620B, and flexures 640A-640B of the drive system are shown. Sense subsystem 604 comprises the anchoring flexures 611A-B and a frame further comprising a first and second rails 601A and 601B and first and second guiding arms 622A and 622B flexibly coupled through the four frame flexures 603A-603D. Drive subsystem and the sense subsystem share coupling flexures 650A and 650B.

[0033] FIG. 7 shows the way the drive subsystem from FIG. 6 may be driven into sustained oscillations at the frequency of the drive mode with an appropriate actuator. In one implementation, the drive subsystem may be designed such that the proof masses move out-of-plane in anti-phase fashion as depicted in FIG. 7A. If the base 618 rotates around input axis X, generated Coriolis force is in plane. Coriolis forces act in opposite fashion on proof masses 610A and 610B resulting in Coriolis torque acting on the mass 620. In one implementation, the input axis may be X axis. In another implementation, the input axis may be Y axis. In yet another implementation, the drive mode may comprise proof masses moving in anti-phase fashion in plane as depicted in the bottom part of FIG. 7B. If the base 618 rotates around input axis Z, the Coriolis force is generated in plane. Coriolis force acts in one direction on proof mass 610A and in the opposite direction on proof mass 610B resulting in Coriolis torque which eventually gets transferred on the mass 620. The resulting Coriolis torque on mass 620 is normal to the X-Y plane regardless whether input axis is X, Y or Z.

[0034] FIG. 8 illustrates how the Coriolis torque acting on the drive subsystem 602 gets transferred to the sense subsystem 604. Rails 601A and 601B are flexibly connected to the center mass 620 through the pair of flexures 650 and are flexibly connected to the guiding arms 622A and 622B through the four frame flexures 603A-D. The flexures 603A-D allow the frame to deform. The guiding arms are suspended to the base 618 through the anchoring flexures 611A and 611B. Torque acting on the mass 620 causes opposite forces acting on rails 601A and 601B. Guiding arms 622A-622B can only rotate causing the ring to deform. Motion of the rails is proportional to the input angular rate of rotation. In one implementation the transducer may be attached to the rail so the motion of the rail can be detected.

[0035] The sensing frame inherently rejects linear acceleration along the in-plane axis parallel to the rails. Referring to FIG. 8, the sensing frame has two rails constrained to move in anti-phase fashion. This way it is ensured that there is no low frequency translational mode associated with motion of the sensing frame along the axis parallel to the rails. Consequently, any substantial motion caused by linear acceleration is mechanically rejected.

[0036] The sensing frame needs to be suspended to the base at minimum of two points. These points provide pivot points for the guiding arms. As shown in FIG. 9, the drive subsystem may be suspended to the base 618 at two anchoring points as well. Two anchoring points may be shared by both drive and sense subsystems. This way, the whole angular velocity sensing subassembly relies on two anchoring point. Undesired effects of package stresses on mechanical structure is substantially reduced.

[0037] The rails and guiding arms may assume any shape as long as they are substantially stiff compared to flexures 603A-603D and flexures 611A-611B. Referring to FIG. 10, the sense frame can be shaped as needed without decreasing the performance of the angular velocity sensor. Typically, the drive subsystem may be optimized resulting in a particular shape. In order to minimize the sensor area, the optimized drive subsystem should be tightly enveloped with the sense frame. Circular, or even rigid rectangular frame may result in an unnecessary waste of area - first, the flexures suspending the sense

subsystem to the substrate should be attached at a particular place at a particular angle, and second, the frame rotates so the attached transducers should lie along lines at angle such that their axial axes cross center of rotation. On the other hand, it is much easier to accommodate low-inertia flexible frame around that drive subsystem. Both rails and guiding arms can be any shape as long as they remain substantially rigid. The flexibility of the shape of the frame also allows such angular velocity sensor to fit into sensing assembly with other devices such as the other angular velocity sensors or linear acceleration sensors. Furthermore, the transducers can be attached to the rail in several different ways. FIG. 10 illustrates several different embodiments with different frame shape and transducer accommodation.

[0038] Referring to FIG. 11 an embodiment is shown with capacitive transducer 730 aligned along the rail with its movable portion pointing out from the drive subsystem 760. The anchoring flexures 710A and 710B comprise three beams each providing a pivot point for each of the guiding arms 702A and 702B. The anchoring flexures 710A and 710B also increases translational stiffness as well as and out-of-plane rotational stiffness. The guiding arms 702A and 702B are further connected to the rails 701A and 701B through the frame flexures 703A-703D. There are total of four frame flexures 703A-D comprising a single beam each. The frame flexures 703A-703D provide necessary flexibility of the frame. The whole frame assembly ensures that any torque generated on the drive subsystem 760 gets transferred to the sense system 762 through coupling flexures 750, and cause the rails 701A and 701B to move linearly in opposite directions. Further, the drive subsystem 760 is suspended to the base at the same anchor 720A and 720B as the guided arm. Joint anchoring reduces effects of package sensitivity by allowing the sense and drive system to move substantially similar as a result the stresses induced by the package.

[0039] In yet another embodiment shown in FIG. 12, two rails are elongated so they can support capacitive transducers with its movable portion facing inwards. This way different configurations of the angular velocity sensors may be accommodated on multi-axis die. The teaching on frame and its flexures is essentially similar to that related to FIG. 11.

[0040] The shape of the rails 701A and 701B, guiding arms 702A and 702B, frame flexures 703A-703D and anchoring flexures 710A and 710B can differ from the shapes shown in FIG. 11 and FIG. 12, and still provide the same benefit as described above.

[0041] Although the present invention has been described in accordance with the embodiments shown, one of ordinary skill in the art will readily recognize that there could be variations to the embodiments and those variations would be within the spirit and scope of the present invention. Accordingly, many modifications may be made by one of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A sensing frame that moves in response to torque generated by the Coriolis acceleration on a drive subsystem, the sensing frame comprising:

a base;

a first rail; constrained to move along the first axis parallel to the base;

a second rail substantially parallel to said first rail; said second rail constrained to move along the first axis;

at least two guiding arms ensuring the first rail and the second rail to move in anti-phase fashion along the first axis; a first guiding arm flexibly coupled to the first rail and flexibly coupled to the second rail; a second guiding arm flexibly coupled to the first rail and flexibly coupled to the second rail; the first guiding arm flexibly suspended to the base at a first anchoring point allowing rotation of the first guiding arm around the second axis that is perpendicular to the first axis and normal to the plane; the second guiding arm suspended to the base at a second anchoring point allowing rotation of the second guiding arm around the third axis parallel to the second axis;

plurality of coupling flexures connecting said sensing frame to the drive subsystem;
and

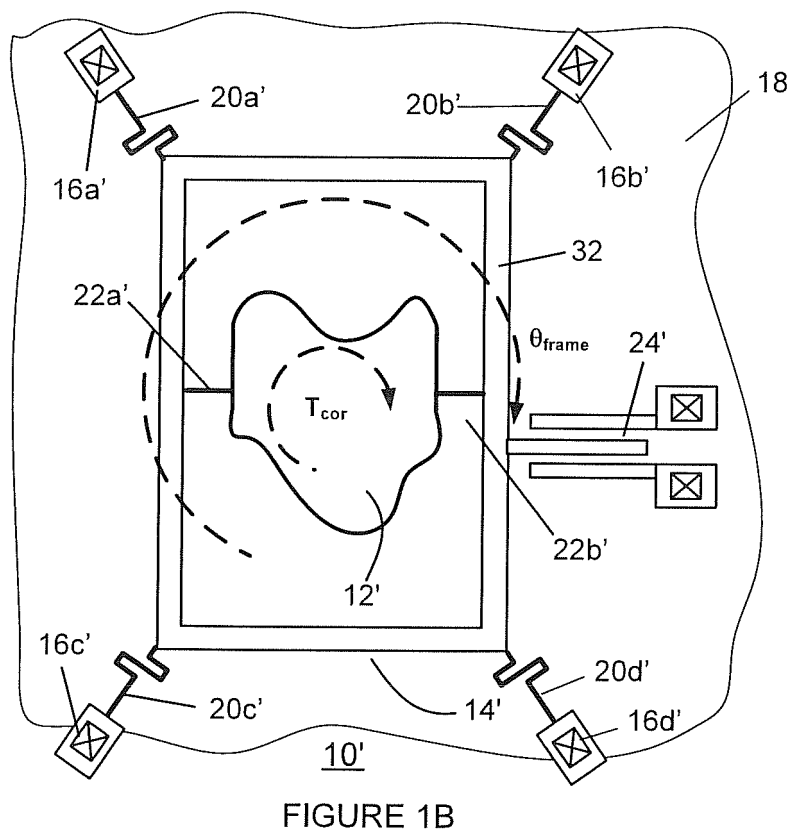
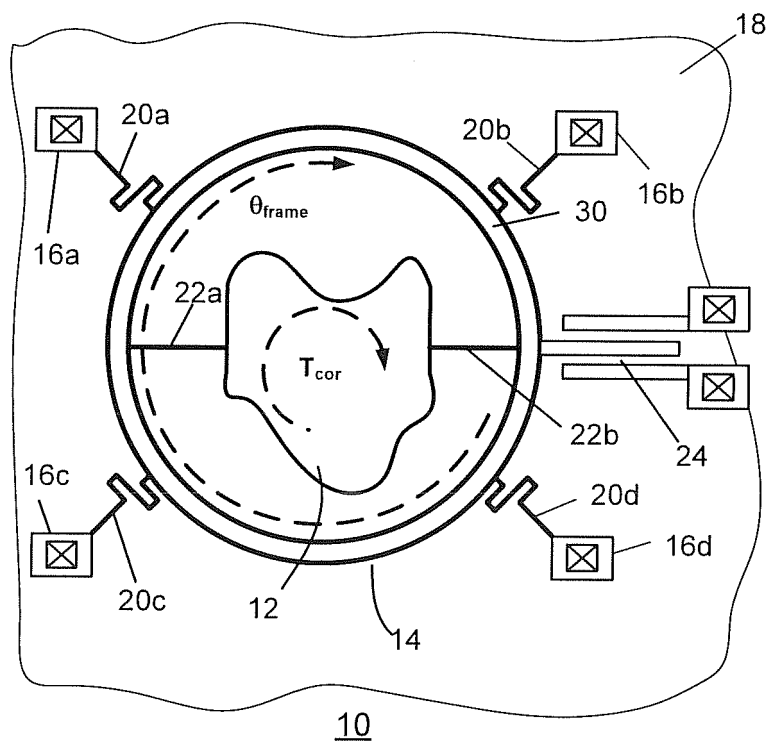
a transducer for sensing motion of rails responsive to said angular velocity.

2. The frame of claim 1 comprising plurality of guiding arms; each guiding arm flexibly coupled to the first rail and each guiding flexibly coupled to the second rail; each guiding arm flexibly suspended to the base at an anchoring point allowing rotation of the guiding arm around the axis perpendicular to the first axis and normal to the plane.

3. The frame of claim 1 wherein said plurality of coupling flexures connecting said drive subsystem and said frame, connect said drive system to said first rail and said second rail.

4. The frame of claim 1 wherein said plurality of coupling flexures connecting said drive subsystem and said frame, connect said drive system to said first and said second guiding arm.
5. The frame of claim 1 wherein:
said first anchoring point is shared with at least one anchoring point of the drive subsystem; and said second anchoring point is shared with at least one anchoring point of the drive subsystem.
6. The frame of claim 1 wherein said first rail and said second rail support movable part of said transducer.
7. The frame of claim 1 wherein said transducer is selected from the group consisting of capacitive sensors, electromagnetic sensors, piezoelectric sensors, and piezoresistive sensors.

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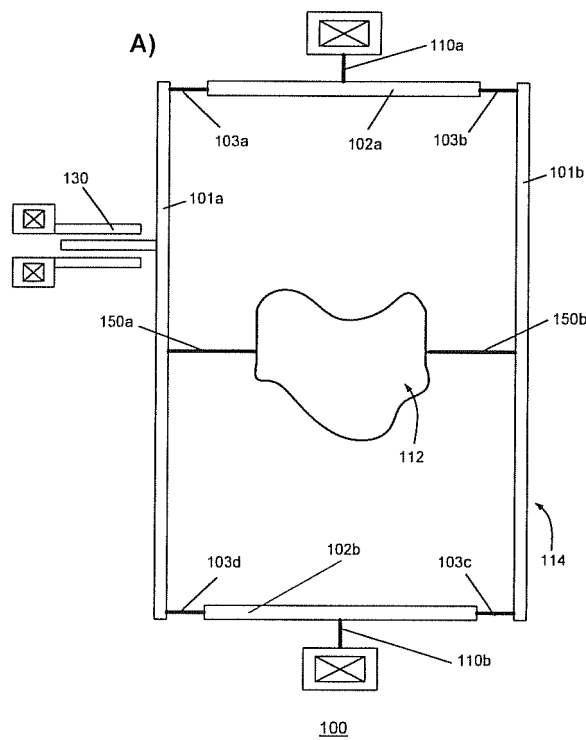


FIGURE 2A

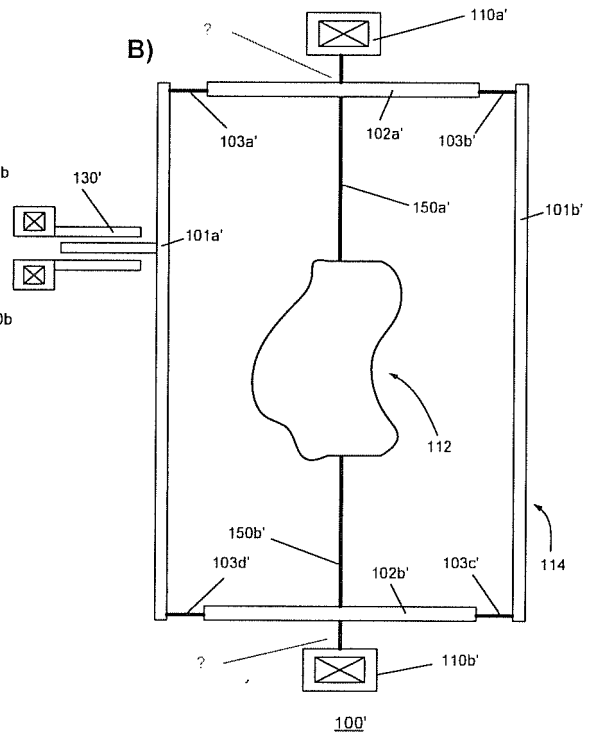


FIGURE 2B

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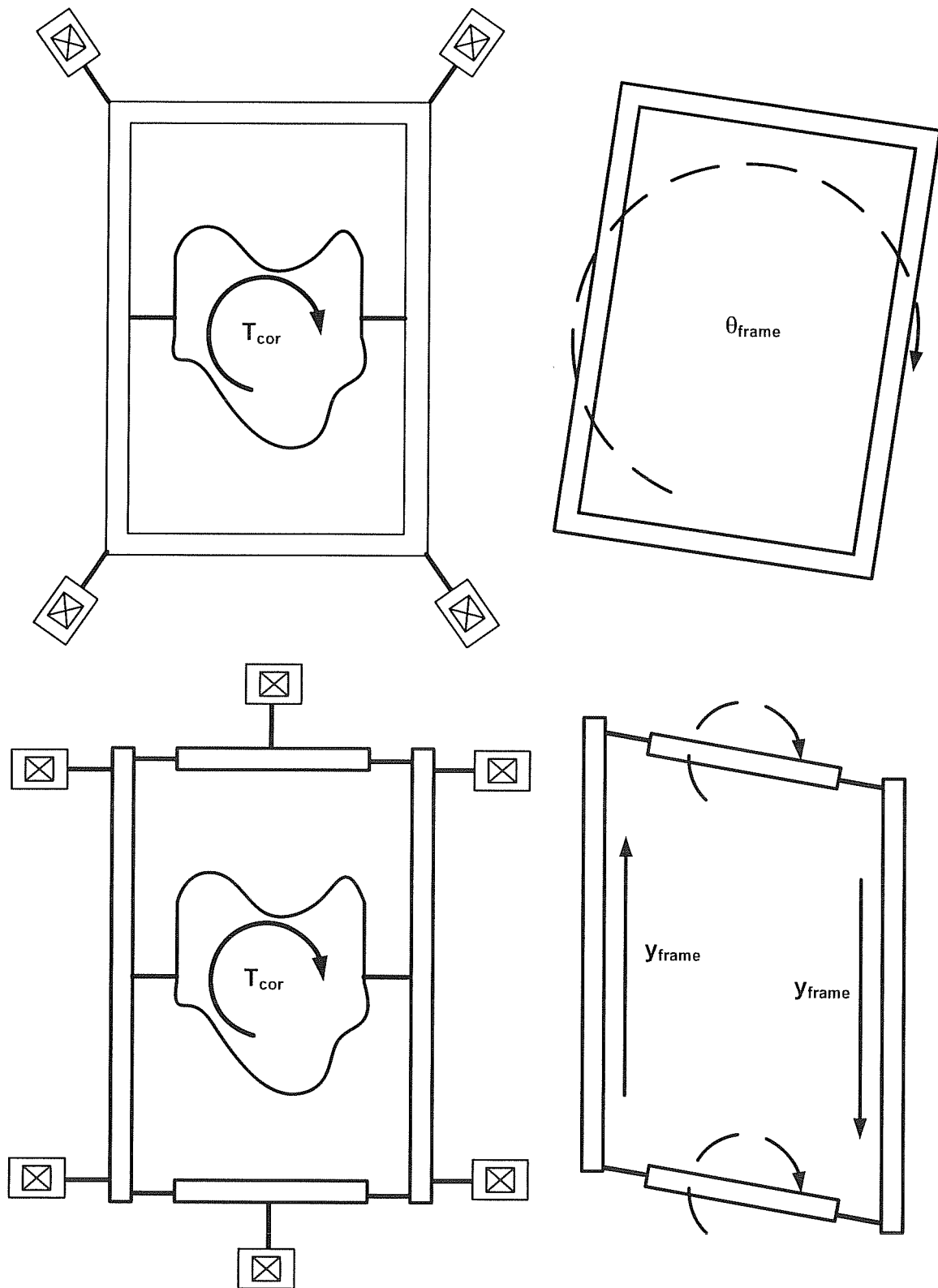


FIGURE 3

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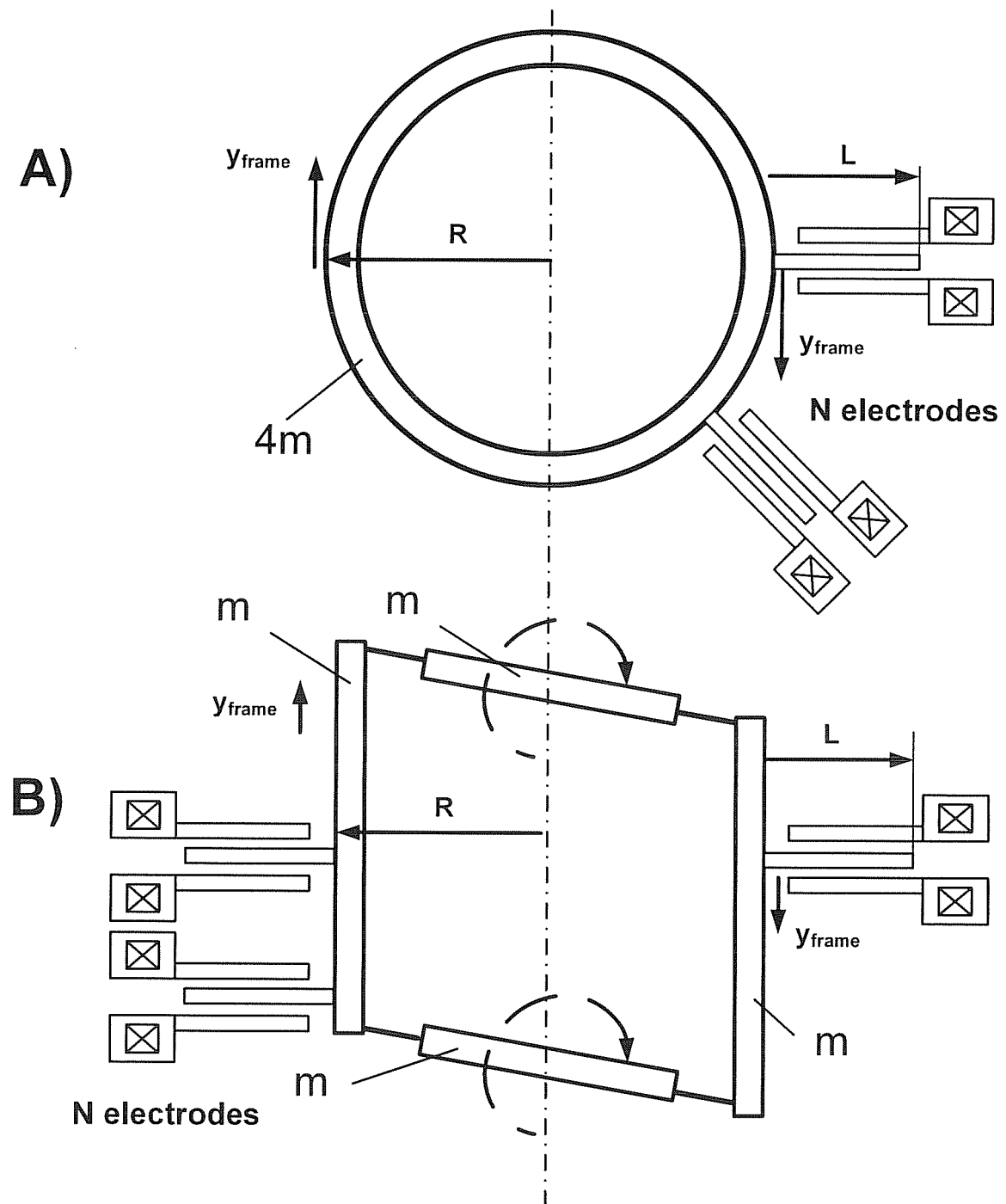


FIGURE 4.

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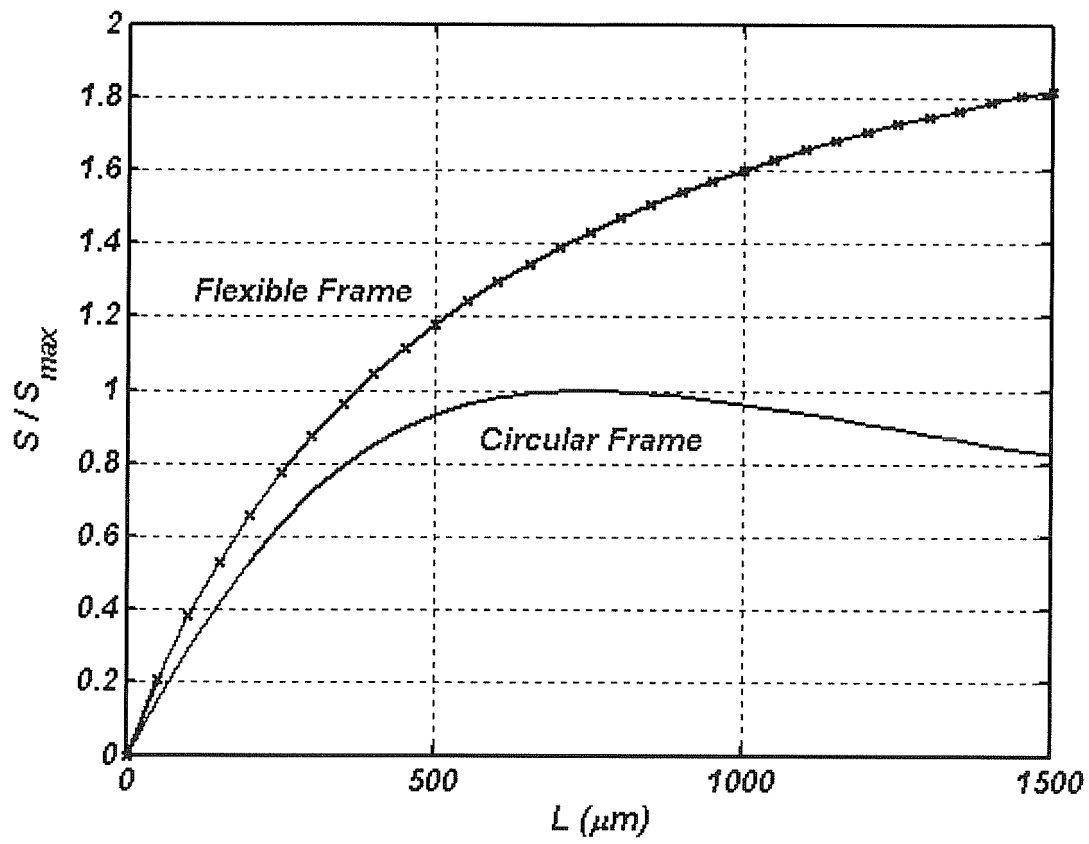


FIGURE 5.

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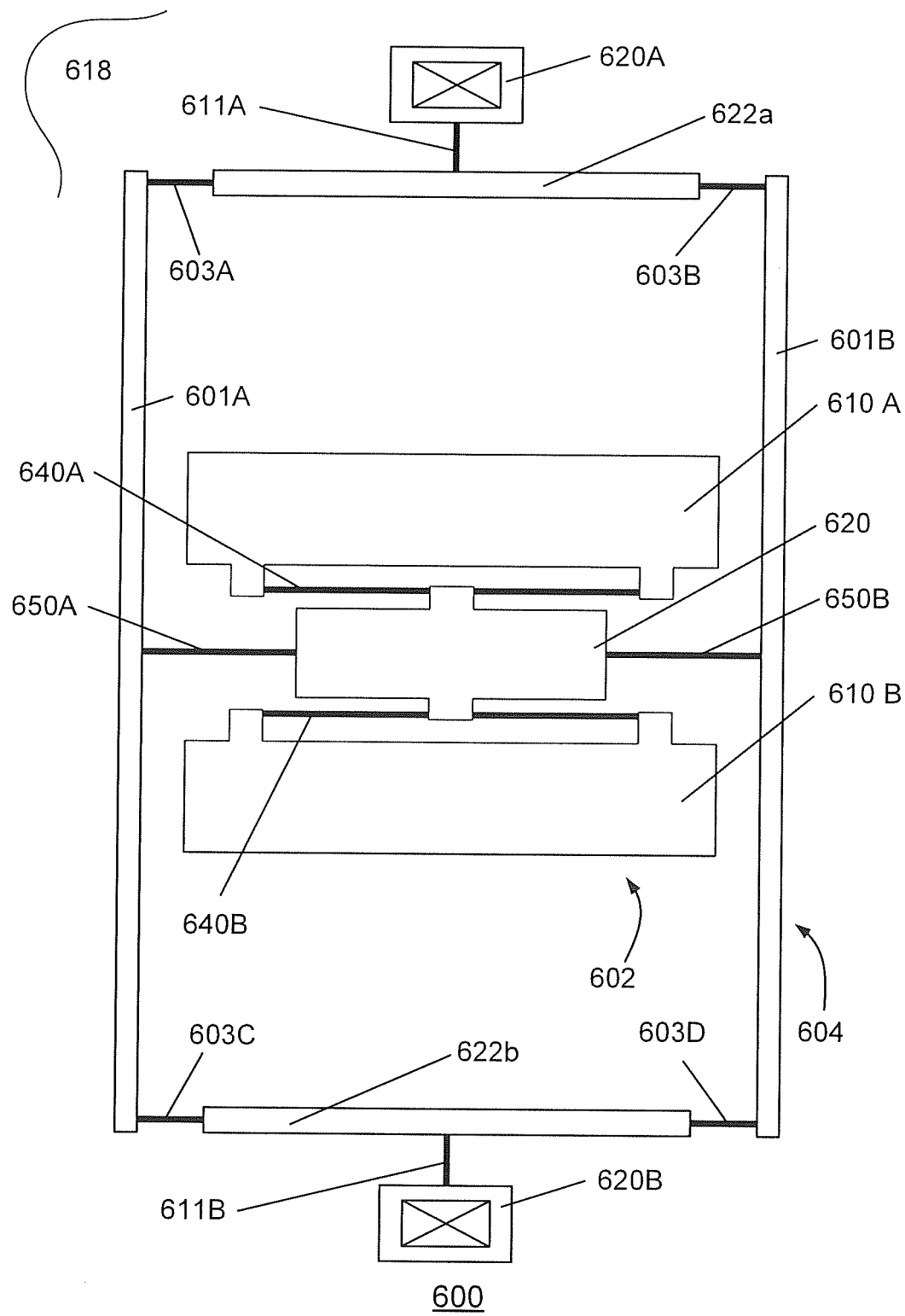


FIGURE 6.

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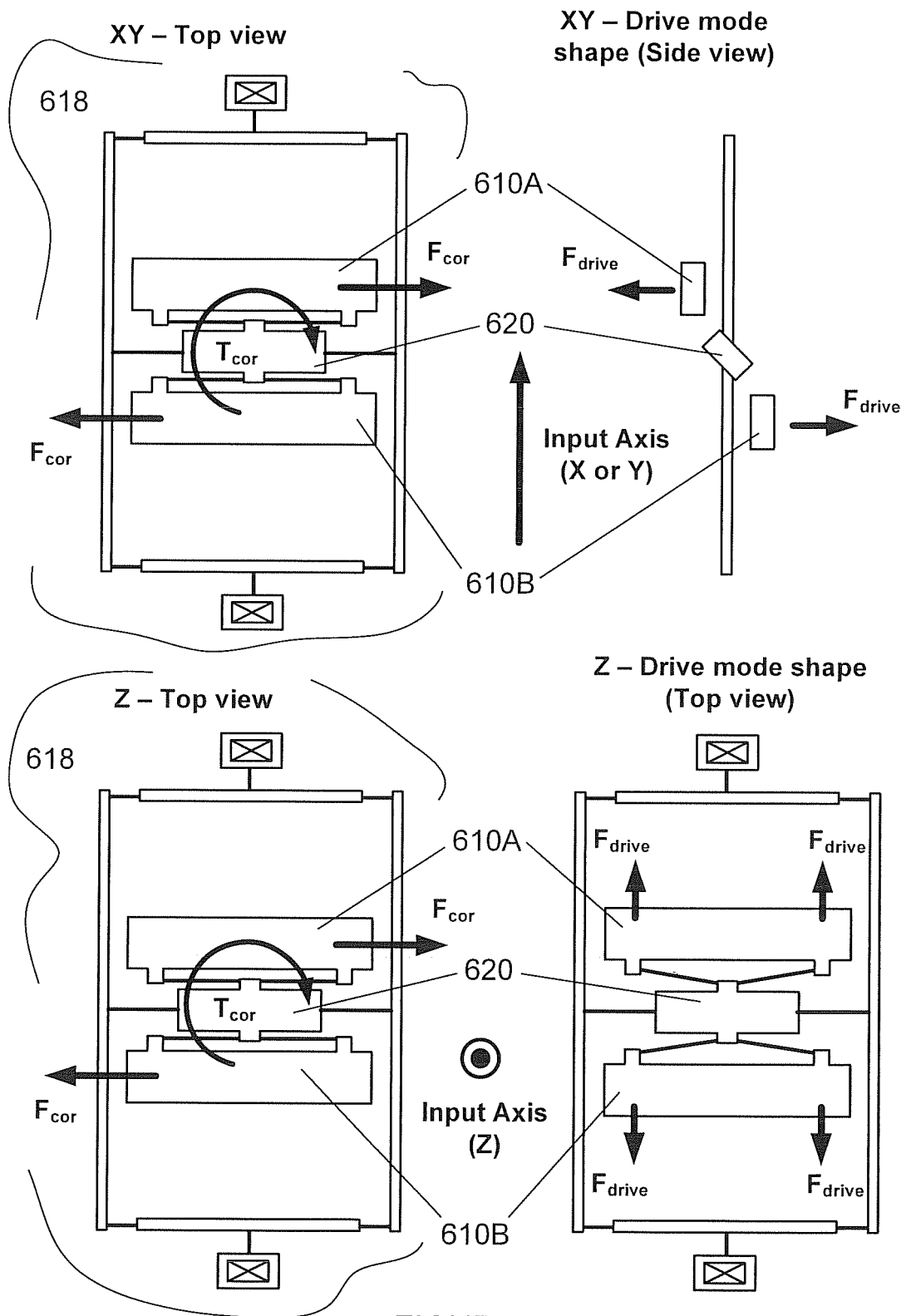


FIGURE 7.

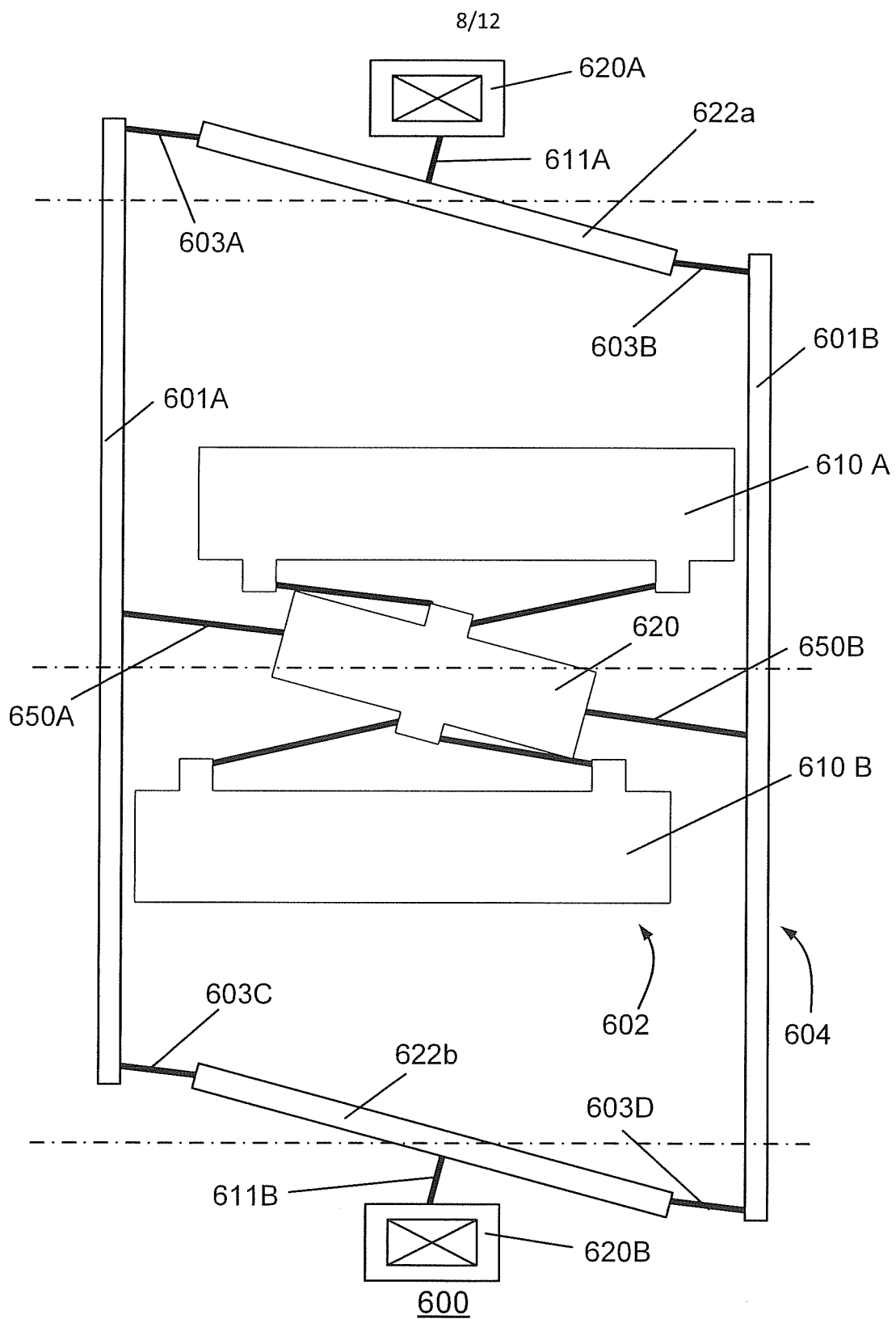


FIGURE 8.

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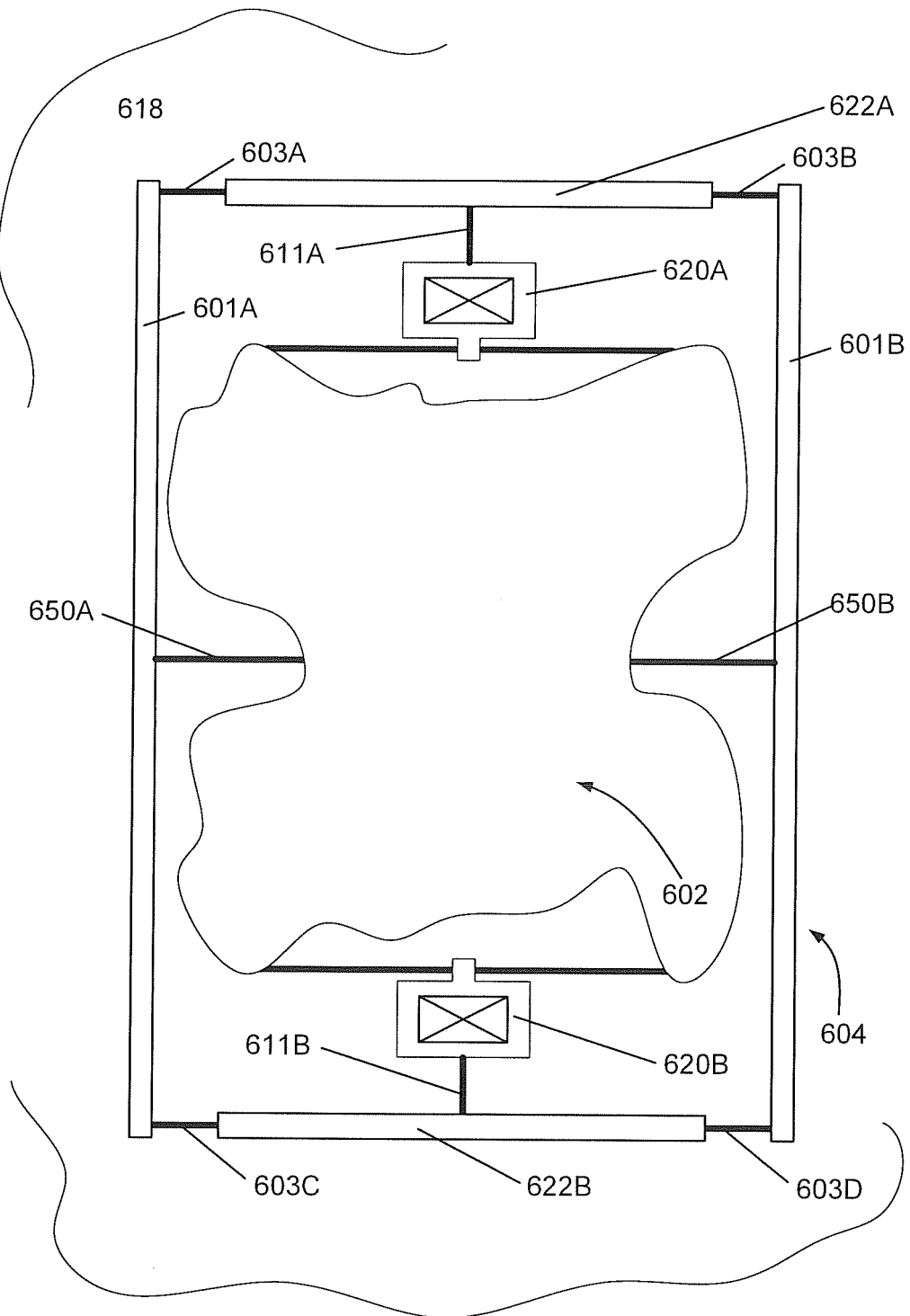


FIGURE 9.

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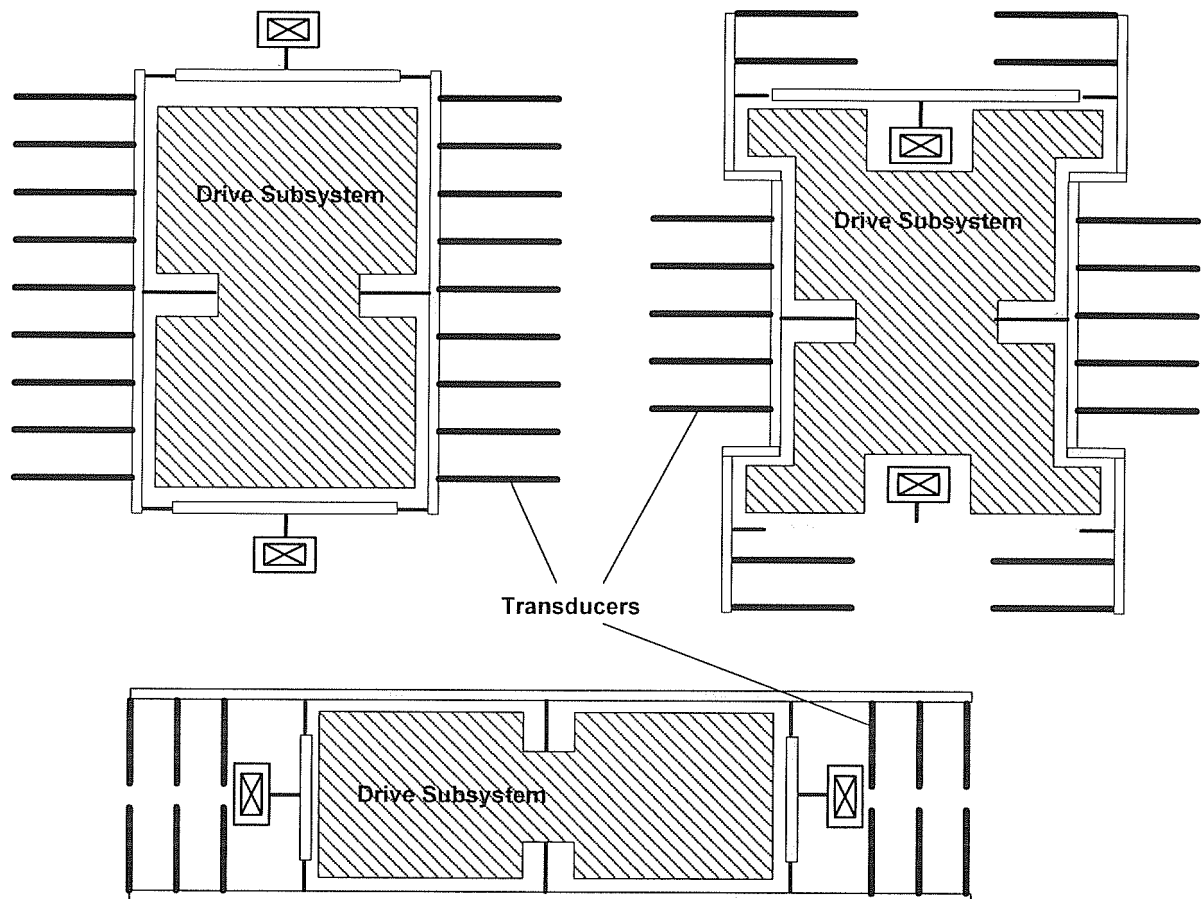


FIGURE 10.

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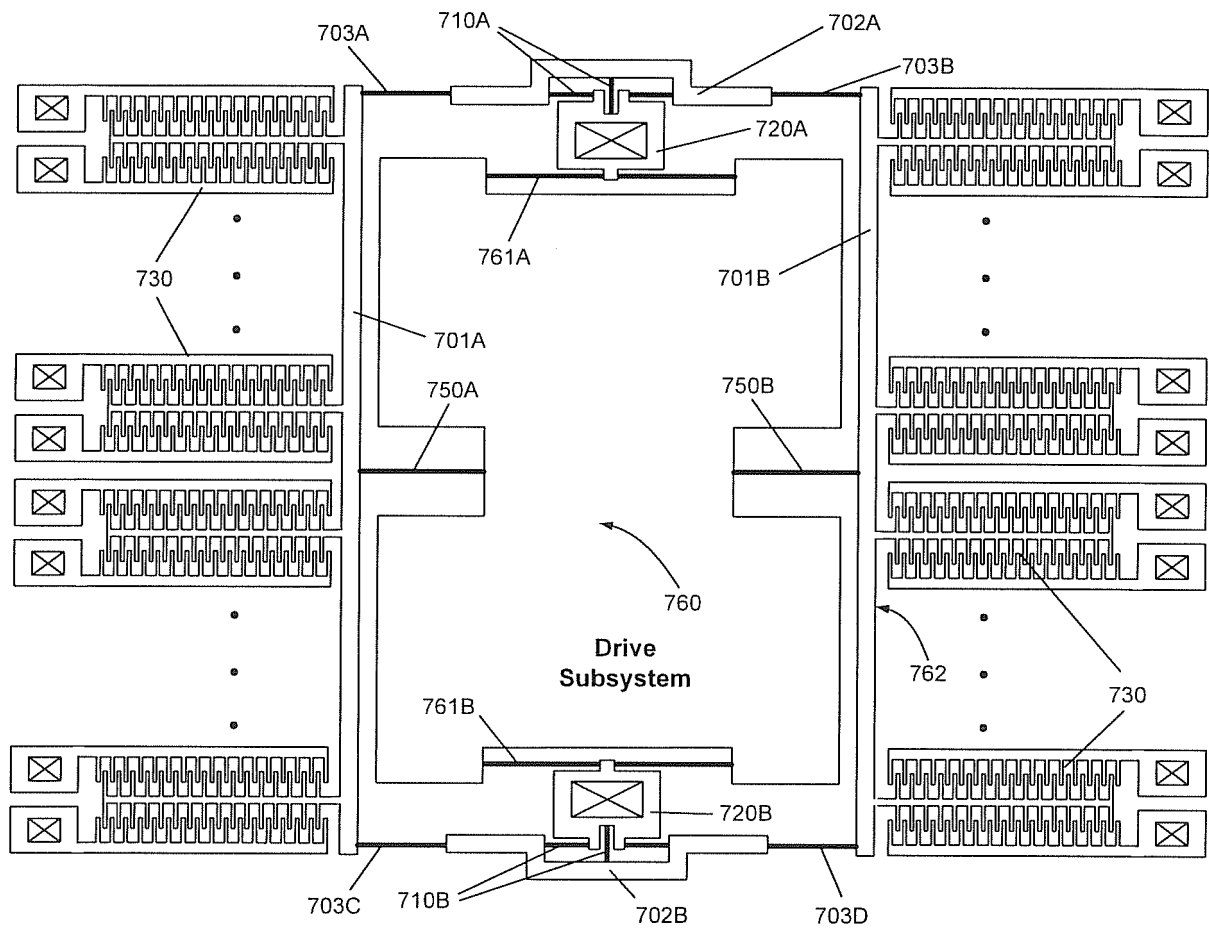


FIGURE 11.

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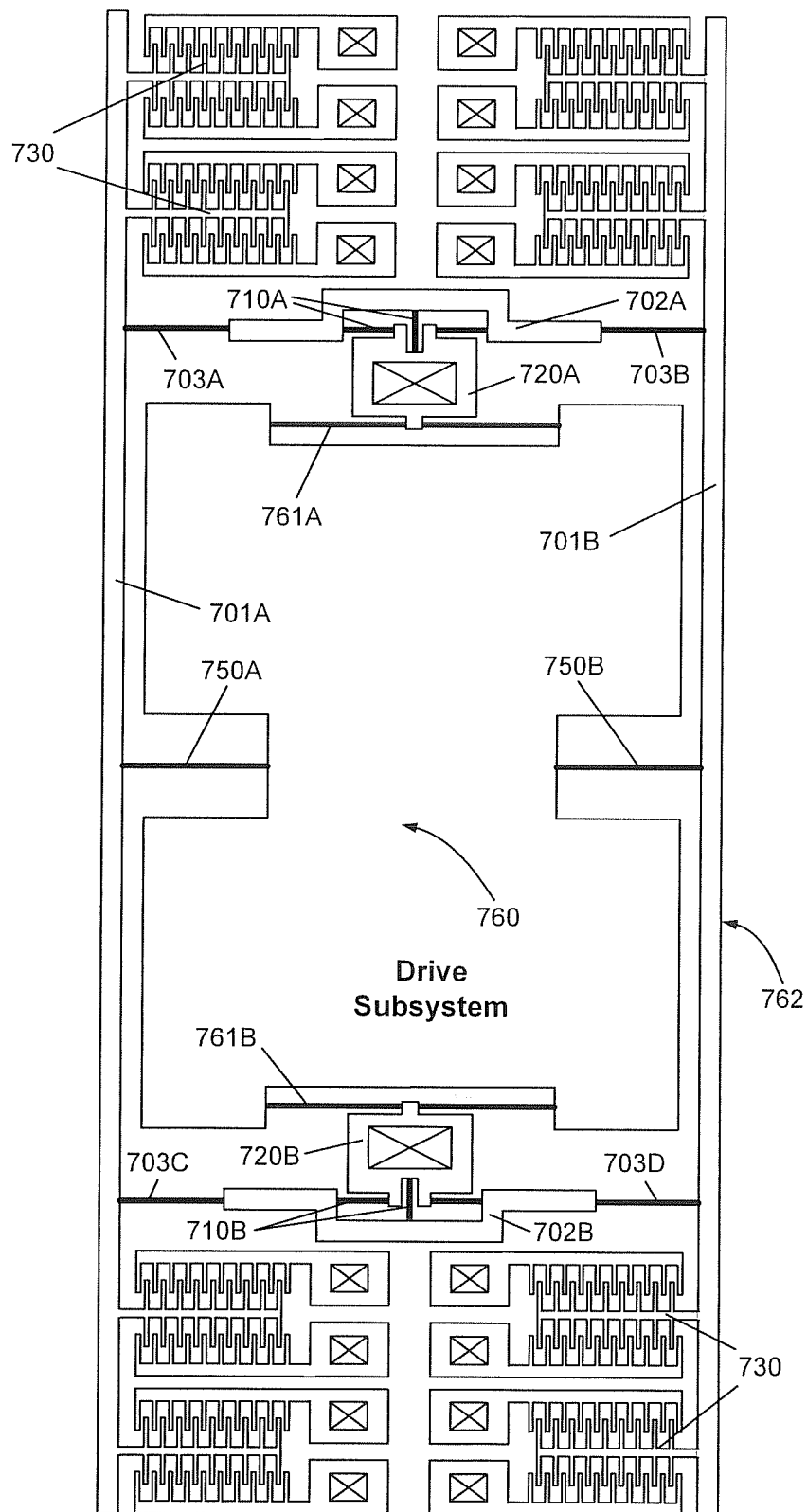


FIGURE 12.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US2009/056744

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - G01C 19/56 (2009.01)

USPC - 73/504.02

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC(8) - G01C 19/56 (2009.01)

USPC - 73/504.02, 504.03, 504.04, 504.05, 504.06, 504.07, 504.08, 504.09, 504.11, 504.12, 504.13, 504.14, 504.15, 504.16

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

PatBase

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 4,510,802 A (PETERS) 16 April 1985 (16.04.1985) entire document	1-7
Y	US 6,892,575 B2 (NASIRI et al) 17 May 2005 (17.05.2005) entire document	1-7
A	US 2006/0032308 A1 (ACAR et al) 16 February 2006 (16.02.2006) entire document	1-7
A	US 6,386,033 B1 (NEGORO) 14 May 2002 (14.05.2002) entire document	1-7
A	US 5,992,233 A (CLARK) 30 November 1999 (30.11.1999) entire document	1-7

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

19 October 2009

Date of mailing of the international search report

02 NOV-2009

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