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- (54) Title:** STAGED FORCE FEEDBACK TRANSITIONING BETWEEN CONTROL STATES

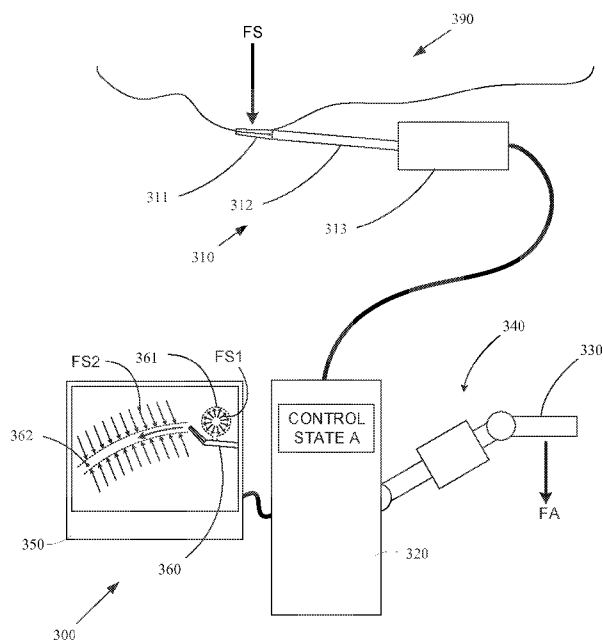


FIG. 3A

- (57) Abstract:** A surgical system is provided comprising: an input device; and a controller for receiving control inputs from the input device and for providing haptic feedback at the input device, the controller configured to apply a staged transition from a first haptic feedback profile at the input device to a second haptic feedback profile at the input device.



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GN, GQ, GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

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

STAGED FORCE FEEDBACK TRANSITIONING BETWEEN CONTROL STATES

CLAIM OF PRIORITY

[0001] This application claims the benefit of priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/277,820, filed on January 12, 2016, which is hereby incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

FIELD

[0002] The present invention is directed towards systems and methods for providing haptic feedback to the operator of a surgical system, and more particularly to maintaining an intuitive haptic profile for the user when the control state of the system changes.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Tele-operated surgical systems are often intended to enhance surgeon precision and/or reduce patient trauma during a medical procedure. In such systems, a surgeon interacts with input devices (sometimes referred to as "masters" or "master controllers") to control surgical instruments that are actuated by drive mechanisms such as motors. Because the surgeon is not directly manipulating the surgical instruments, it can sometimes be beneficial to provide haptic feedback at the input devices that indicates or replicates the forces felt at the surgical instruments. To provide a good user experience, the surgeon would ideally experience a seamless haptic experience through system state and configuration changes. However, this can be difficult to accomplish, particularly when a given input device is used in multiple different control states. For example, a single input device may be used to control multiple different instruments (requiring switching control between those different instruments), may be used to control an overall positioning of the surgical system (e.g., changing the viewpoint of an endoscope looking at the anatomical region of interest), may be used to change settings of the surgical system, and/or may be simply be disassociated from any control effects.

[0004] Simply activating/deactivating/changing haptic feedback in response to such control state changes can create jerky and unintuitive interactions. If a force

is being applied to a user in one state and will not be applied to the user in the next state, immediately changing the force from full force on to no force is disconcerting to the user. For example, when transitioning from controlling an instrument with haptic feedback to controlling an instrument without haptic feedback (e.g., the endoscope) or otherwise entering a control state without haptic feedback (or even a different haptic feedback), such as instrument changes (i.e., removal of an instrument from a manipulator), exit from following (i.e., disabling the control of the instrument by the input device), or arm swap (i.e., changing the surgical instrument/arm/manipulator under control by the input device), an immediate loss of haptic feedback would feel like an unexpected loss of resistance to the user.

[0005] Users find it similarly disconcerting if force feedback is immediately enabled when a user transitions from an instrument that is rendering no (or low) force to an instrument with a (high) force. This can happen, for example, when we transition from camera control back to an instrument with force feedback. This also occurs any time a user initially takes control of an instrument (e.g. transitioning first going into following with an instrument).

[0006] Another problem arises when the user is changing control states to an intermediate state in which they remain associated with a particular instrument (e.g. clutching, head-in UI, etc.) but control is not being applied. Turning the force feedback off during the intermediate state and back on again when returning to directly controlling the instrument is not ideal for users. Often these intermediate control states are short in duration, so turning on/off the force quickly can be problematic.

[0007] Note that the force feedback being presented to the user may be the sum of the feedback from a sensor, from an algorithm, from a user interface cue, collision detection, etc.

SUMMARY

[0008] To mitigate the discomfort of abrupt force transitions when changing control states, a staged transition can be performed from the original force being displayed at the input device (and hence, to the user) to a level appropriate for the new control state.

[0009] In some embodiments, the haptic feedback force vector transitions (over some non-zero time, in direction and/or magnitude) from force A to force B. Force A magnitude can be greater than or less than force B (or in some embodiments equivalent, where the transition is one of direction only). The profile of the staged transition from the magnitudes of force A to force B can be any profile that takes place over time, including linear or curvilinear transitions, and can include discontinuities (e.g., steps) as part of the transition.

[0010] In some embodiments, for the control state changes that involve going into an intermediate mode where the user remains associated with a particular instrument, the force feedback can remain at the level it was last at when the user stopping directly controlling the instrument. For example, if the control state transitions from instrument control (following) to non-instrument control (exit following), the haptic feedback at the associated input device can be maintained at its current level for at least some period of time. In various embodiments, after such stable period, a staged transition to a reduced force or no-force state could subsequently be applied.

[0011] It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory in nature and are intended to provide an understanding of the present disclosure without limiting the scope of the present disclosure. In that regard, additional aspects, features, and advantages of the present disclosure will be apparent to one skilled in the art from the following detailed description.

DRAWINGS

[0012] Aspects of the present disclosure are best understood from the following detailed description when read with the accompanying figures. It is emphasized that, in accordance with the standard practice in the industry, various features are not drawn to scale. In fact, the dimensions of the various features may be arbitrarily increased or reduced for clarity of discussion. In

addition, the present disclosure may repeat reference numerals and/or letters in the various examples. This repetition is for the purpose of simplicity and clarity and does not in itself dictate a relationship between the various embodiments and/or configurations discussed.

[0013] FIGS. 1A-1B show methods of providing intuitive haptic feedback to a user of a surgical system during control state changes, in accordance with various embodiments of the invention.

[0014] FIG. 2A shows an exemplary haptic force vector transition during a control state change, in accordance with various embodiments of the invention.

[0015] FIG. 2B shows exemplary haptic force feedback transition profiles in accordance with various embodiments of the invention.

[0016] FIGS. 3A-3C show an exemplary surgical system providing a haptic force feedback transition in response to a change in control state, in accordance with various embodiments of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] In the following detailed description of the aspects of the invention, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the disclosed embodiments. However, it will be obvious to one skilled in the art that the embodiments of this disclosure may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances well known methods, procedures, components, and circuits have not been described in detail so as not to unnecessarily obscure aspects of the embodiments of the invention. And, to avoid needless descriptive repetition, one or more components or actions described in accordance with one illustrative embodiment can be used or omitted as applicable from other illustrative embodiments.

[0018] By providing a staged transition between force feedback profiles when the control state of a surgical system changes, an intuitive haptic experience can be maintained for the user of the surgical system.

[0019] FIG. 1A shows an exemplary method for providing such a staged haptic transition. In a PROVIDE HAPTIC FEEDBACK step 110, a surgical system that allows a user (e.g., surgeon) to control a surgical instrument (and/or other elements of the surgical system, such as a robotic arm, set up structure, or

positioning element such as a boom or cart) via an input device(s) (e.g., lever(s), gripper(s), joystick(s), and/or any other structure capable of receiving user input) and then provides force feedback to that input device based on a desired haptic feedback profile (a set of one or more haptic feedback effects that at least partially reproduce or represent the physical experience of a real or virtual/modeled interaction). The haptic feedback profile can be based on any haptic model input, such as sensed forces at the instrument (e.g., tissue or other instrument interactions) or robotic arm (e.g., arm collisions with structures or staff), user guidance (e.g., haptic detents, fences, or other profiles to provide guidance for the user to move the input device(s) along a desired path or trajectory), and user interface (UI) elements (e.g., presenting a virtual handle or steering wheel to the user). The transformation applied to the desired haptic feedback profile to generate the haptic feedback at the input device can be anything from direct replication of the haptic feedback profile, to scaling of the haptic feedback profile, to applying a non-linear modification of the haptic feedback profile, or any other transformation (e.g., force scaling that varies depending on one or more other factors such as instrument state/speed, viewing magnification, etc.). The haptic feedback in step 110 may also include forces that are computed based on additional sensors of the surgical system such as position sensors, buttons, or contact sensors.

[0020] Then in a CHANGE CONTROL MODE step 120, a control mode change in the surgical system occurs (typically in response to user command/action, but in other examples in response to external commands such as system timer or warning, or third party action/command), such that inputs at the input device are no longer providing the same effect at the surgical instrument. For example, in a surgical system that includes both a surgical instrument and a camera (e.g., endoscope), there can be instances where the control state changes from one in which the input device is controlling the surgical instrument, to a "camera control mode" where the input device is controlling the viewpoint of the camera/field of view of the surgical site. If the input device is providing haptic feedback to the user when such a control state change occurs, then immediately removing the haptic feedback in response to the change would result in an abrupt loss of force feedback at the input device, which could be disconcerting and/or disorienting to the user.

[0021] Therefore, in an APPLY STAGED HAPTIC FEEDBACK TRANSITION step 130, a staged transition is performed from the original haptic feedback profile to the desired haptic feedback profile for the new control state. In other words, the transition from the original haptic feedback profile to the desired haptic feedback profile includes at least one intermediate stage that reduces the sudden change in haptic feedback that would occur from an immediate switch between the old and new haptic profiles corresponding to the switch between control states.

[0022] Often, this transition from the original haptic feedback profile to the desired (new) haptic feedback profile will involve an adjustment to the force feedback vector expressed at the input device. FIG. 2A shows an exemplary haptic force feedback vector transition from an initial force F_A to a new force F_B . Force F_A can be greater than or less than force F_B (or in some embodiments equivalent, where the transition is one of direction only). The staged transition from force F_A to a new force F_B can take any path, including linear or curvilinear transitions, and can include discontinuities (e.g., steps) as part of the transition. For example, FIG. 2B shows several exemplary staged transitions between haptic feedback profiles that could occur in response to step 120, including a straight linear scaling (#1), a monotonic scaling (#2), a sawtooth bidirectional scaling (#3), and a curvilinear multi-directional scaling (#4). In some instances, the transition may move the force magnitude through a zero force state (e.g., #3 and #4). In various other embodiments, the transition from force F_A to force F_B could use several algorithms, including summing scaled versions of forces F_A and F_B to create intermediate direction vectors or remaining aligned with force F_A for a period of time and then with force F_B .

[0023] Note that in some embodiments, a "phantom" haptic feedback can be maintained when changing between a control state having haptic feedback and a control state that normally would not generate haptic feedback. FIG. 1B shows an exemplary method for providing this type of stable transition.

[0024] As described above with respect to FIG. 1A, in a PROVIDE HAPTIC FEEDBACK step 110, the surgical system is in a control state that provides force feedback to the input device based on haptic model input, such as sensed forces at the instrument and/or other system structure, or haptic feedback profiles based on virtual or synthetic interactive elements (e.g., user interface elements,

virtual fences, and/or virtual control features, among others). Also as above, the haptic feedback in step 110 may also include forces that are computed based on additional sensors of the surgical system such as position sensors, buttons, or contact sensors. And in a CHANGE CONTROL MODE step 120, the control state of the surgical system changes to a control state for which haptic feedback is not associated (or is different than the original haptic feedback profile), such as a system settings mode, an arm change mode (i.e., switching control to a different instrument on the surgical system), or an exit following mode (i.e., simply disabling the control link between the input device and the surgical instrument), among others.

[0025] Then, in a MAINTAIN HAPTIC FEEDBACK step 125, the haptic feedback profile is left unchanged even as the control state of the system changes. Such haptic feedback consistency can sometimes provide a more intuitive experience for the user, compared to changing or eliminating feedback altogether. For example, changing from an instrument control state (having haptic feedback) to a control state in which the input device is used to change system parameters (e.g., selecting menu options) and therefore does not have any logical haptic feedback relationship to the surgical instrument forces, it can be beneficial to simply maintain the feedback profile from the instrument control state even during the system settings control state, so that when the control state changes back to the instrument control state, the user is not surprised by a sudden appearance of force feedback at the input device. Thus, even though the haptic feedback profile in the new state is technically inconsistent with the control actions performed at the input device for the new state, that haptic inconsistency can actually provide a more consistent user experience.

[0026] Note that in some embodiments, step 125 can include overlaying or adding additional haptic feedback associated with the new control state to the original haptic feedback profile. For in the system settings example described above, certain haptic feedback effects could be associated with the system settings control state, such as haptic "clicks" or "bumps" when settings are changed or selected. In some embodiments, such haptic effects could be provided along with the original force feedback from the previous control state.

[0027] Note further that in some embodiments, the haptic feedback maintenance of step 125 can be followed by an APPLY STAGED HAPTIC

FEEDBACK TRANSITION step 130, as described above with respect to FIG. 1A. In such case, the haptic feedback profile would be initially unchanged after the control state change of step 120, but would eventually undergo a staged transition to a new haptic feedback profile.

[0028] FIG. 3A shows a block diagram of a surgical system 300 incorporating haptic feedback and means for providing an intuitive haptic experience for the user as described above with respect to FIGS. 1A and/or 1B. Surgical system 300 includes an instrument 310 for performing a surgical task (e.g., forceps, cutter, retractor, vessel sealer, needle driver, catheter, etc.), an input device 330 (e.g., a lever(s), gripper(s), joystick(s), or any other structure capable of receiving user input) for receiving inputs from a user (e.g., surgeon), and a controller 320 for receiving input instructions from input device 330, controlling the actions of instrument 310 accordingly via a manipulation structure 313, and providing instructions to a haptic feedback actuator 340 to provide haptic feedback to input device 330 according to a desired haptic feedback profile. In various embodiments, manipulation structure 313 can include any number of systems and structures for maneuvering, positioning, actuating, or otherwise controlling the behavior of instrument 310, including a robotic arm(s)/manipulator(s), set up structure(s), and/or positioning element(s) such as a boom(s) or cart(s), among others. Controller 320 can include any combination of hardware, software, firmware, and other modalities for generating, managing, controlling, and effecting the actions described herein. In various embodiments, controller 320 can be integrated with instrument 310, input device 330, and/or discrete control hardware (e.g., a standalone processing unit or computing platform).

[0029] For exemplary purposes, FIG. 3A shows surgical system 300 in a control state A, in which input device 330 is controlling instrument 310. As depicted in FIG. 3A, the surgeon has used input device 330 to grasp and retract a portion of tissue 390 with an end effector 311 on shaft 312 of instrument 310. This results in a downward force F_s at end effector 311, and in response controller 320 delivers a haptic feedback force F_A to input device 330 (e.g., as described with respect to step 110 above). In this manner, the surgeon would "feel" the resistance being provided by tissue 390 as it is being retracted.

[0030] Note that this description of control state A is for exemplary purposes only, as this initial control state A could be any state of surgical system 300. For example, while the haptic feedback profile force FA is described as being derived from a force FS sensed at end effector 311 of instrument 310 for exemplary purposes, in various other embodiments, force FS could be sensed at any location for which corresponding haptic feedback at input device 330 would be beneficial, such as interactions at shaft 312 or any other element of manipulation structure 313 (e.g., arm pressure against structures or staff).

[0031] In various other embodiments, force FS can be defined according to non-physical parameters, such as the synthetic interactive elements described above. For example, in some embodiments, surgical system 300 can include an optional display 350 (e.g., a monitor(s), a head-in viewer(s), projections, video glasses/helmet(s), and/or any other graphical presentation element). In various embodiments, display 350 can present a virtual or synthetic element 361 that can be interacted with via input device 330. In some embodiments, synthetic element 361 can be used as a supplemental interface for interacting with a physical component of surgical system 300. For example, as shown in FIG. 3A, synthetic element 361 can be a virtual handle or knob that can be "grasped" and dragged around using input device 330 to reposition instrument 310 at the surgical site. In other embodiments, synthetic element 361 can provide a purely virtual interaction element, such as a dial, toggle, lever, or any other structure for controlling surgical system 300. In any case, by generating a haptic feedback profile based on model forces FS1 associated with interacting with synthetic element 361 (e.g., radially outward resistive force produced with grasping a round knob), controller 320 can then attempt to provide an appropriate haptic feedback profile force FA at input device 330.

[0032] In various other embodiments, surgical system 300 may provide guidance to the user with respect to movement of instrument 310 and/or input device 330. For example, a desired motion of instrument 310 (e.g., a targeted or safe dissection path, a desired retraction movement, or any other beneficial articulation) could optionally be defined as a trajectory 362. By generating a haptic feedback profile based on model forces FS2 associated with maintaining the position of instrument 310 along trajectory 362 (e.g., inwardly directed forces produced upon deviations from trajectory 362), controller 320 can then

attempt to provide an appropriate haptic feedback profile force F_A at input device 330.

[0033] Then, in an exemplary control state change to a new control state B depicted in FIG. 3B (e.g., as described with respect to step 120 above) shifts control by input device 330 from its existing element (e.g., original instrument 310 such as a retractor) to a new element (e.g., instrument 310(2) such as a needle driver for suturing tissue 390). The control state change results in a force $F_{s'}$ at the new element (e.g., instrument 310(2)), different than the force F_s at original element (e.g., instrument 310), needing to be expressed as haptic feedback F_B at input device 330. Thus, over a time $(t_2 - t_1)$, a staged transition from haptic force feedback F_A to F_B is performed, as described with respect to step 130 above. As noted previously, because of the staged transition the user at input device 330 does not experience a sudden and disconcerting jump from force feedback F_A to F_B that would otherwise occur if the force feedback transformation applied to the sensed force switched concurrently with the control state change. For example, the staged transition would ensure that haptic feedback representative of supporting retracted tissue would not immediately vanish, or that the sense of holding a virtual knob or handle would not immediately disappear.

[0034] In other embodiments, another exemplary control state change from control state A in FIG. 3A to a new control state C depicted in FIG. 3C (e.g., as described with respect to step 125 above) shifts input device 330 control from instrument 310 (or any other control state with haptic feedback) to a system setting selection interface 321 (or any other control state with no haptic feedback (or different haptic feedback)). Here, the haptic feedback profile is maintained even as the control state is changed, and thus the feedback force at input device 330 is maintained as force F_A , even though the settings selection menu is not a force-generating environment. As a result, the user is not surprised by a sudden disappearance of force feedback at the input device (or a sudden reappearance of force feedback once the selection menu is exited).

[0035] As noted above, in some embodiments the retained haptic force F_A be overlaid with additional haptic feedback associated with the new control state, such as haptic "clicks" or "bumps" when settings are changed or selected. As

further noted above, the maintained haptic feedback can be followed by a subsequent staged transition to a new haptic feedback profile.

[0036] While certain exemplary embodiments of the invention have been described and shown in the accompanying drawings, it is to be understood that such embodiments are merely illustrative of and not restrictive on the broad invention, and that the embodiments of the invention not be limited to the specific constructions and arrangements shown and described, since various other modifications may occur to those ordinarily skilled in the art.

CLAIMS

1. A surgical system comprising:
 - an input device; and
 - a controller for receiving control inputs from the input device and for providing haptic feedback at the input device,
 - the controller configured to apply a staged transition from a first haptic feedback profile at the input device to a second haptic feedback profile at the input device when the surgical system transitions from a first control state associated with the first haptic feedback profile to a second control state associated with the second haptic feedback profile.
2. The surgical system of Claim 1, wherein the staged transition comprises at least one of a linear scaling, a curvilinear scaling, and a directional modification of the first haptic feedback profile.
3. The surgical system of Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the staged transition includes a zero force state.
4. The surgical system of Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the staged transition comprises scaling a force magnitude of the haptic feedback profile.
5. The surgical system of Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the staged transition comprises changing a force angle of the haptic feedback profile.
6. The surgical system of Claim 1, further comprising an instrument, and wherein the first control mode comprises an instrument control mode.
7. The surgical system of Claim 1 or Claim 6, wherein the first and second control states comprise different ones of an instrument control mode, a clutching mode, an instrument exchange mode, a camera control mode, a system settings mode, an arm exchange mode, a following exit mode, and a synthetic interactive element manipulation mode.

8. The surgical system of Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the staged transition comprises maintaining the first haptic feedback profile at the input device for a predetermined interval.
9. The surgical system of Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the controller is further configured to overlay at least one haptic effect onto the staged transition.
10. The surgical system of Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the controller is further configured to restore the first haptic feedback profile at the input device when the surgical system transitions from the second control state back to the first control state.
11. A method comprising:
 - generating a first haptic feedback profile associated with a first control state of a surgical system at an input device of the surgical system;
 - detecting a change to a second control state of the surgical system associated with a second haptic feedback profile at the input device; and
 - applying a staged transition from the first haptic feedback profile to the second haptic feedback profile.
12. The method of Claim 11, further comprising:
 - controlling a surgical instrument with the surgical system in the first control state according to input received the input device; and
 - receiving sensed force data from the surgical instrument; and
 - generating the first haptic feedback profile based on the sensed force data.
13. The method of Claim 11, wherein the first haptic feedback profile is based on a synthetic interactive element generated by the controller.
14. The method of any of Claims 11, 12, and 13, wherein the staged transition comprises at least one of a linear scaling, a curvilinear scaling, and a directional modification of the haptic feedback profile.

15. The method of any of Claims 11, 12, and 13, wherein the staged transition includes a zero force state.

16. The method of any of Claims 11, 12, and 13, wherein the staged transition comprises scaling a force magnitude of the haptic feedback profile.

17. The method of any of Claims 11, 12, and 13, wherein the staged transition comprises changing a force angle of the haptic feedback profile.

18. The method of Claim 11, wherein changing the control state comprises changing between any of an instrument control mode, a clutching mode, an instrument exchange mode, a camera control mode, a system settings mode, an arm exchange mode, a synthetic interactive element manipulation mode, and a following exit mode.

19. The method of any of Claims 11, 12, and 13, wherein the staged transition comprises maintaining the first haptic feedback profile at the input device.

20. The method of Claim 19, wherein maintaining the first haptic feedback profile at the input device comprises maintaining the haptic feedback profile for a predetermined interval.

21. The method of any of Claims 11-13, 18 or 20, further comprising overlaying additional haptic effects onto the haptic profile.

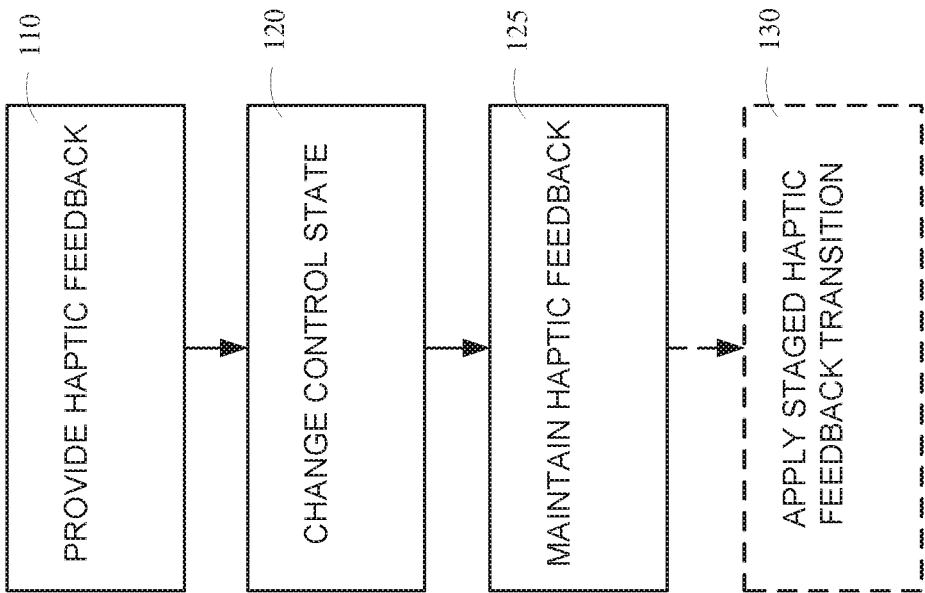


FIG. 1B

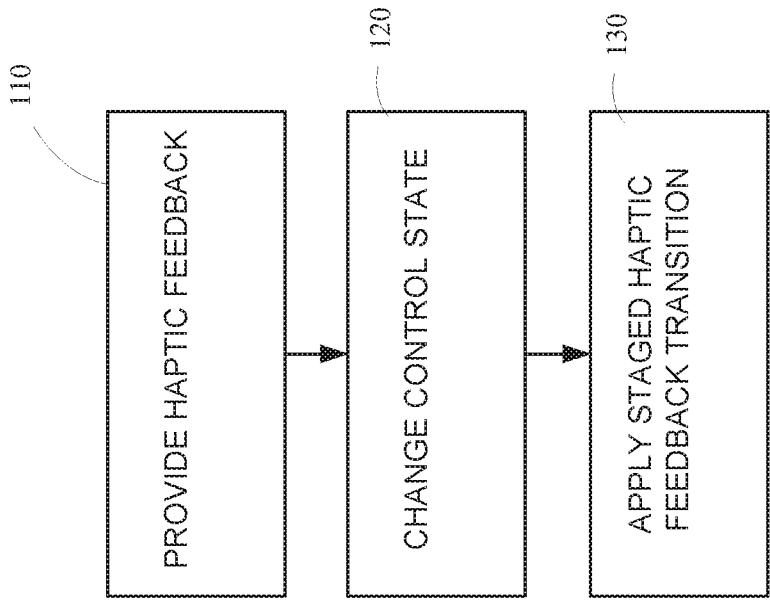


FIG. 1A

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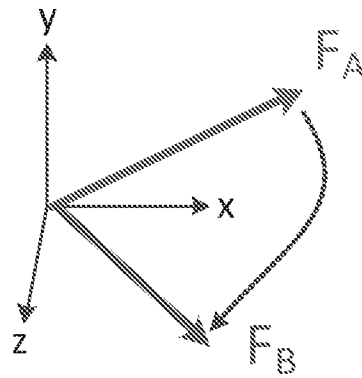


FIG. 2A

Example Staged Transition Profiles

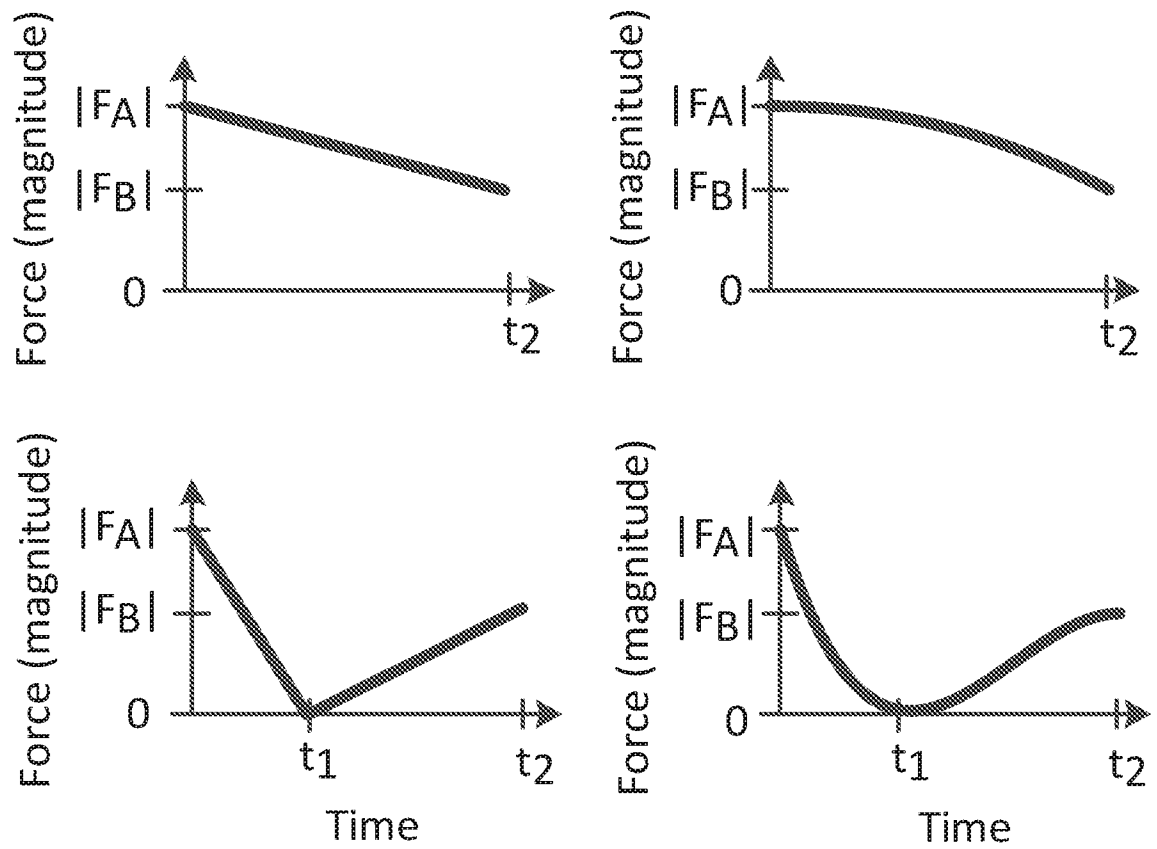


FIG. 2B

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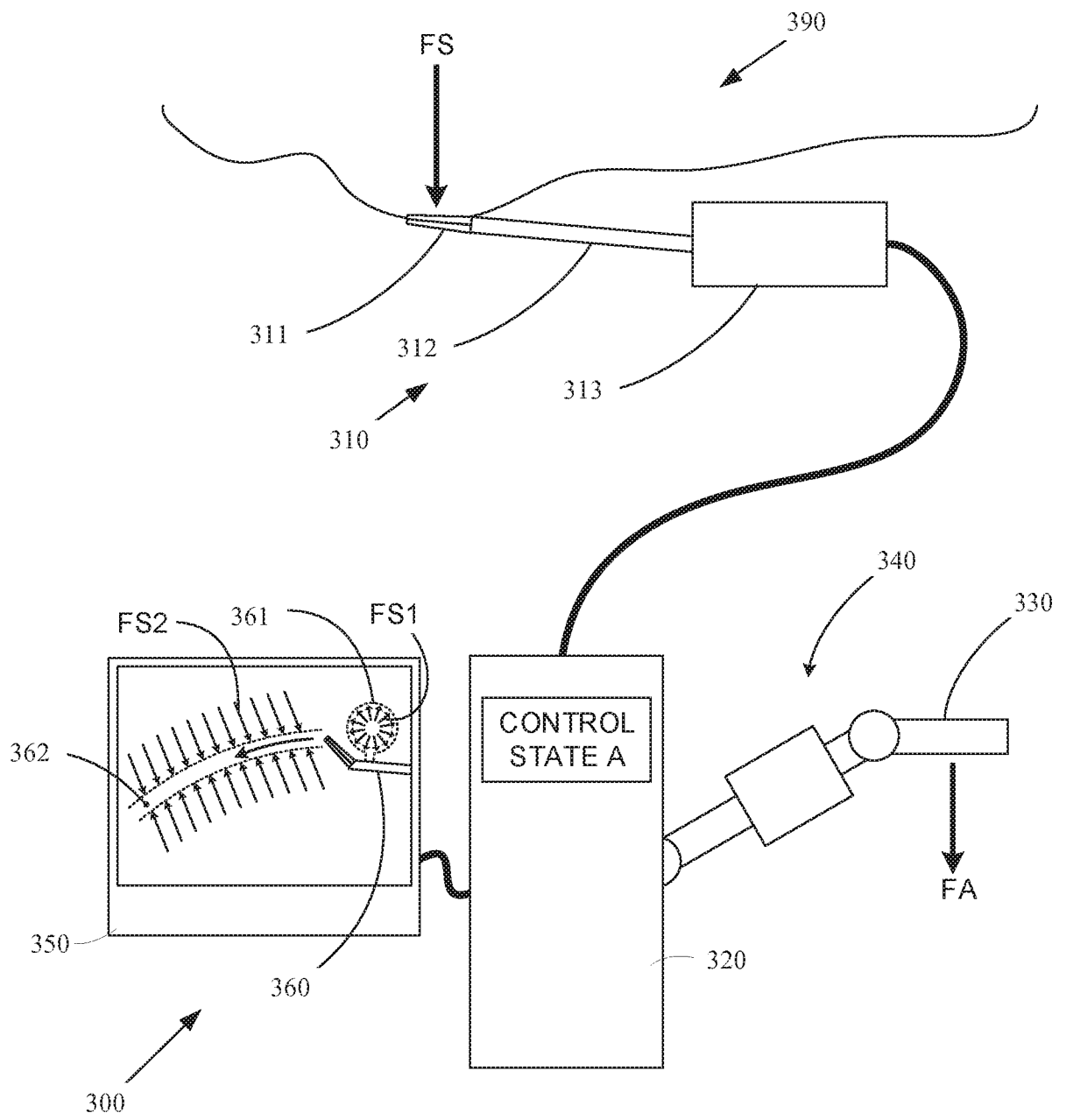


FIG. 3A

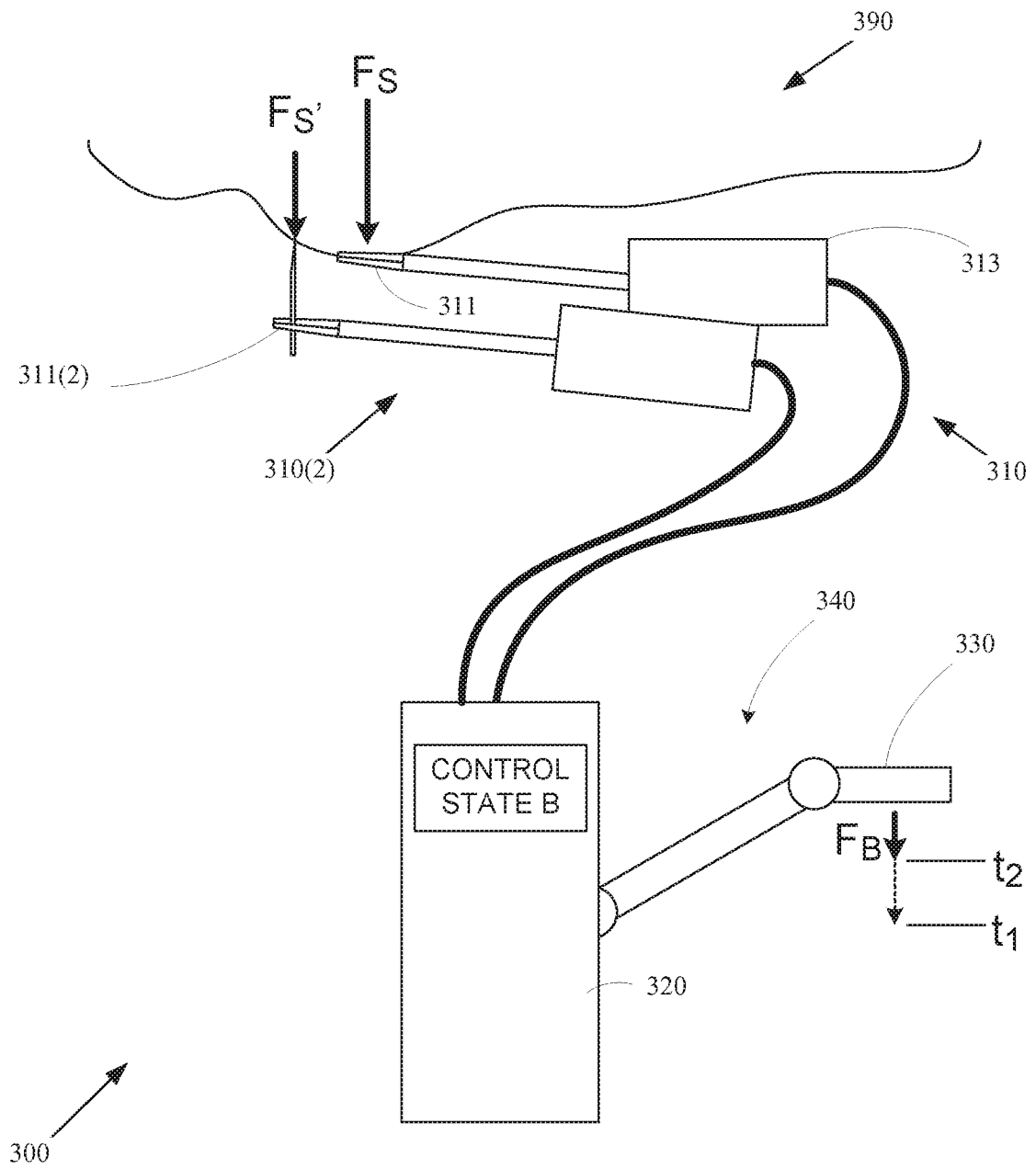


FIG. 3B

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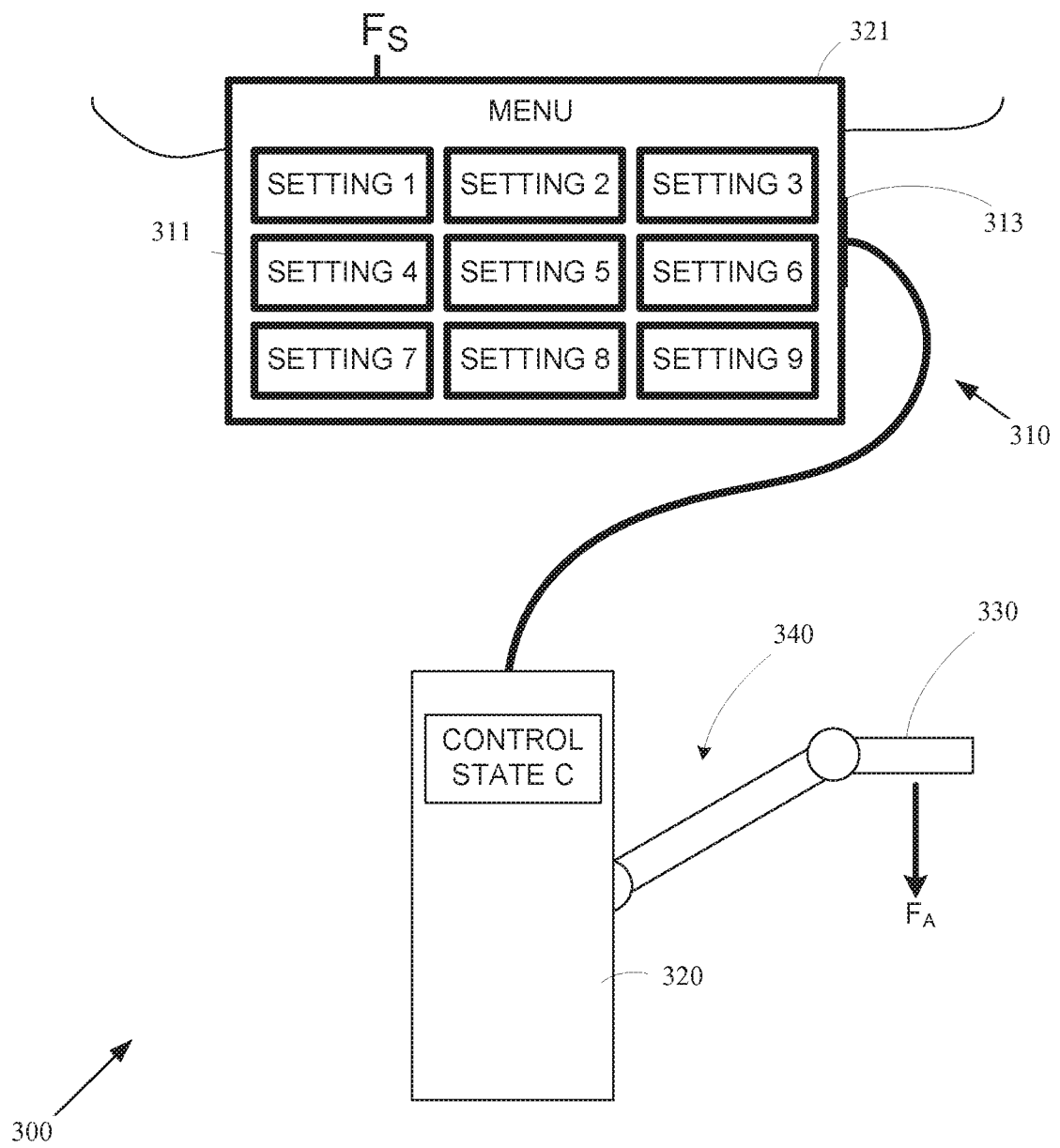


FIG. 3C

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2017/013237**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER****A61B 34/00(2016.01)i, A61B 34/35(2016.01)i**

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)

A61B 34/00; G06F 19/00; A61B 18/14; A61B 19/00; A61B 34/35

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

Korean utility models and applications for utility models

Japanese utility models and applications for utility models

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

eKOMPASS(KIPO internal) & keywords: haptic, feedback, staged, transition, force

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|
| A | US 2013-0103050 A1 (INTUITIVE SURGICAL OPERATIONS, INC) 25 April 2013 See paragraphs [0033]-[0063]; claims 1-28; and figures 1A-7. | 1-20 |
| A | WO 2005-074435 A2 (IMMERSION CORPORATION et al.) 18 August 2005 See the whole document. | 1-20 |
| A | WO 2013-169303 A1 (YKNOTS INDUSTRIES LLC) 14 November 2013 See the whole document. | 1-20 |
| A | US 7373219 B2 (NOWLIN et al.) 13 May 2008 See the whole document. | 1-20 |
| A | US 9198714 B2 (WORRELL et al.) 1 December 2015 See the whole document. | 1-20 |



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

01 May 2017 (01.05.2017)

Date of mailing of the international search report

02 May 2017 (02.05.2017)

Name and mailing address of the ISA/KR

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/US2017/013237

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORTInternational application No.
PCT/US2017/013237**Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)**

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☒ Claims Nos.: 21
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fees.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.
- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.