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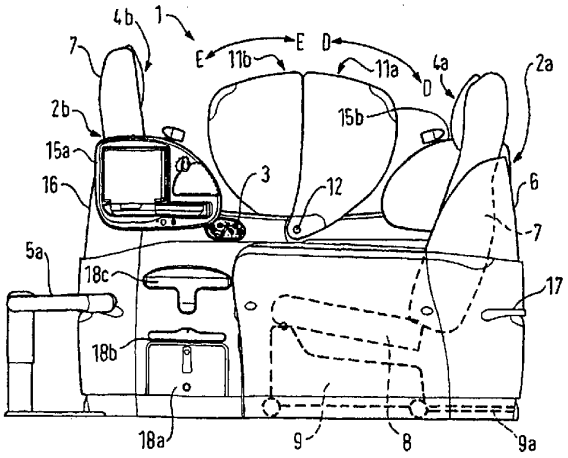

(57) Abstract

A seating unit for a vehicle comprises a pair of seats facing in opposite directions with each seat comprising a seating space for receiving the seated body of an occupant and an extension space in which the legs of an occupant may be placed. The seats are positioned each side of a notional dividing axis with the seating space of one extending over the axis at the extension space of the other. The pair of seats is suitable for use in an aircraft cabin with one of the seats facing substantially forward in the cabin and the other of the seats facing substantially aft.

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A SEATING UNIT

This invention relates to a seating unit for a vehicle and particularly, but not exclusively, to an aircraft seating unit.

WO 96/18537 (British Airways) describes a seating unit which comprises a primary seat and a secondary unit. The seating unit can be easily manipulated from a "seating configuration" wherein the primary seat functions as a seat to a "bed configuration" wherein the primary seat co-operates with the secondary unit to form a flat sleeping surface. For increased passenger privacy each seating unit is contained within its own fixed housing.

The seats described in WO 96/18537 are currently being used in British Airways' first class cabins. The ease of manipulation of each seating unit from a "seat configuration" to a "bed configuration" within a fixed housing, and also the staggered arrangement of the units helps provide a level of comfort and privacy which has set an industry benchmark. In most aircraft the business class cabin is fitted with large reasonably spaced apart seats. However, such seats are not designed to lie flat and do not provide passengers with as much privacy as they would ideally prefer. Despite their success in first class cabins the seating units described in WO 96/18537 are not well suited for use in business class cabins. This is because fitting such seats in a business cabin would mean having to reduce the overall seating capacity of the cabin to an uneconomical level.

It is therefore desirable to provide a seating unit suitable for use in an aircraft cabin, the unit being private and comfortable and making efficient use of the space available in the cabin. It is an object of the invention to provide such a unit or at least provide the public with a useful choice.

The above discussion of documents, acts, materials, devices, articles and the like is included in this specification solely for the purpose of providing a context for the present invention. It is not suggested or represented that any of these matters formed part of the prior art base or were common general knowledge in the field relevant to the present invention as it existed in Australia before the priority date of each claim of this application.

According to the invention there is provided a seating unit for a vehicle, the seating unit comprising a pair of seats facing in opposite directions with each seat comprising a seating space for receiving the seated body of an occupant and an extension space in which the legs of an occupant may be placed, the seats being positioned each side of a longitudinal axis of the seating unit with the seating space of one extending over the longitudinal axis at the extension space of the other; wherein either of said seats has a seat axis substantially parallel to said longitudinal axis and wherein each seat comprises a back portion and a seating portion, the seating portion being movable with the back portion to move between an upright position and a fully reclined position in which the seating portion and back portion form a flat surface.

In a preferred arrangement, the two seats are arranged such that when the seating unit is fitted in an aircraft, one seat faces substantially forward and the other faces substantially aft and the seating space of one of the seats is larger than the extension space of the other of the seats.

In a seating unit for use in an aircraft, the seat preferably comprises a back portion and a seat portion movable together to a plurality of different positions including a take-off position at which the seat portion is inclined to the floor of the aircraft to compensate for the take off angle of the aircraft.

The secondary unit preferably comprises a pad mounted on an elongate support, the support being of variable height, whereby the elevation of the pad above the aircraft floor can be altered.

Preferably, the secondary unit is movable into and out of alignment with the seat and the seating unit further comprises an actuator arranged to move the secondary unit into alignment with the seat, when the seat is moved towards the secondary unit.

Preferably, the seats are provided with an in-flight entertainment unit comprising: a housing; a monitor supported on the housing by a support arm, the support arm being rotatable about the housing to move the monitor between a stored position and a viewing position and the monitor being

rotatable about the support arm to vary a viewing angle when in the viewing position.

The above and further features of the invention are set forth with particularity in the appended claims and together with advantages thereof will become clearer from consideration of the following detailed description of an exemplary embodiment of the invention given with reference to the accompanying drawings.

In the drawings:

Figure 1 shows a side view of a pair of seats embodying the invention;

Figure 2 shows a side view of a pair of seats embodying the invention;

Figure 3 shows a plan view of a pair of seats embodying the invention;

Figure 4 shows a plan view of a pair of housings for the seats shown in Figures 1 to 3;

Figures 5a to 5c show an in-flight entertainment unit;

Figures 6a to 6e show a side view pair of a pair of multimode seats;

Figure 7a shows a perspective view of a secondary unit;

Figure 7b shows a secondary unit in an upright configuration;

Figure 7c shows a secondary unit having a pad in a lowered configuration;

Figure 7d shows a secondary unit having a pad in a stored configuration;

Figure 7e shows a plan view of a secondary unit;

Figure 8 shows a plan view of a pair of seats embodying the invention;

Figure 9 shows a plan view of a seating portion approaching a misaligned secondary unit;

Figure 10 shows a side view in partial cut-away of a secondary unit;

Figure 11 shows an arrangement of seats in an aircraft cabin;

Referring now to Figures 1 to 3 of the accompanying drawings there is shown a pair of seating units 1 for an aircraft. The pair of seats 1 is mounted on a pallet to facilitate fitting of the pair in an aircraft cabin. Such pallets are known in the art and therefore need not be described further herein. The pair of seating units 1 are in side-by-side arrangement, with a first seating unit 2a for facing towards the front of the aircraft cabin and a second seating unit 2b facing towards the rear of the aircraft cabin. Each of the first and second seating units 2a and 2b comprises a primary reclinable seat 4a, 4b which faces a secondary unit 5a, 5b. During a flight, a passenger can recline in comfort on a primary seat 4 whilst resting his or her feet on the corresponding secondary unit 5.

The primary seat 4a is contained in a first housing 6, within which the primary seat 4a can recline. The primary seat 4b is contained within a second housing 16 within which it can recline. The first housing 6 and the second housing 16 provide privacy between the two primary seats 4a and 4b.

In many respects the two seating units are substantially identical. In order to simplify the following description, reference will be made to the features and operation of a single seating unit except where there are differences between the two.

Each primary seat 4 comprises a back portion 7 pivotally connected to a seating portion 8. The seating portion 8 is supported on the cabin floor by a trolley 9 which is drivable, under the control of a respective control pad 3, by a motor operated screw shaft 9a. Driving of the trolley 9 serves to move the primary seat 4 between an upright position, as shown in Figure 1, to a bed position, as shown in Figure 2. In the bed position, the secondary unit 5 together with the seat portion 8 and back portion 7 of the primary seat 4 form a sleeping surface. Also, in this bed position the back portion 7 is supported by a support 17 in the housing. The movement of the seating portion 8 and the back portion 7 between the upright and bed positions is guided by suitable guide tracks (not shown) contained in the housing 6 or 16 at each side of the primary seat 4. Such guide tracks are well known in the art and are described in greater detail in the aforementioned international patent publication WO 96/18537.

The first housing 6 and the second housing 16 are most clearly shown in plan view in Figure 4. For improved clarity the primary seats 4 and secondary units 5 are not shown in Figure 4. The first housing 6 comprises a first side wall 6a, a second side wall 6b, and a curved back wall 6c which together define a space within which the seating unit 2a (not shown) is contained.

The first side wall 6a, the second side wall 6b and the back wall 6c are preferably separate structures and are assembled together by clipping the back wall 6c to each of the first 6a and second 6b side walls. The second housing 16 is similar in design to the first housing 6 and comprises its own first side wall 16a, second side wall 16b and curved back wall 16c respectively.

In the side-by-side arrangement in which the seating units are placed the first side wall 6a and the first side wall 16a are adjacent to each other. Thus, the first housing 6 and the second housing 16 together form in plan view a distorted S shape. Arm rests 10a and 10b are provided on the first side

walls 6a, 16a and second side walls 6b, 16b. This arrangement simplifies the maintenance of components of the seating unit, because access to the components which would otherwise be difficult, can be gained by unclipping and removing a back wall from its housing.

The first side wall 6a of the first housing 6 and the first side wall 16a of the second housing 16 both extend along an axis A-A which axis is offset with respect to the longitudinal axis B-B of the pair of seating units. The second side walls 6b and 16b of the housings 6 and 16 extend along an axis which is substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the pair of seating units. The space defined by the housings, 6, 16 are therefore less at the secondary units 5 than at the back walls 6c and 16c. The first housing 6 can therefore be thought of as defining a major occupancy area Xa for the upper part of one occupant and a minor occupancy area Ya for the lower part of the one occupant. Similarly the second housing 16 can be thought of as defining a major occupancy area Xb for the upper part of another occupant and a minor occupancy area Yb for the lower part of the other occupant.

In this configuration, the seating units can be thought of as being positioned each side of a notional dividing line corresponding to the longitudinal axis B-B of the pair of seating units. The housings 6 and 16 are shaped so that the major occupancy area Xa of the first seating unit 2a extends over the dividing line B-B at the minor occupancy area Yb of the second seating unit 2b and so that the major occupancy area Xb of the second seating unit 2b extends over the dividing line B-B at the minor occupancy area Ya of the first seating unit 2a. Thus, extra space is provided where it is needed for the upper body of a passenger and less space, where it is not needed, for the legs. Enough space is made available for each of the seating units to be provided with the arm rests 10a, 10b with the arm rests 10a arranged along a common axis.

Conveniently, each seating unit is also provided with storage space located underneath the primary seat of the adjacent seating unit and accessible via a hatch 18a (see Figure 1). The storage space may be used to store personal belongings of a passenger, or safety equipment such as a lifejacket. Additional storage space may be provided within each of the trolleys that support a seating portion. A recess 18b and a literature pocket 18c are also provided above the storage hatch 18a.

To provide privacy between the two seating units 2a and 2b the seating unit 2a is provided with a petal or blade-like privacy screen 11a and the seating unit 2b is provided with a corresponding privacy screen 11b (see Figures 1 and 2). The privacy screen 11a is pivoted to the first side wall 6a of the housing 6 at a pivot point 12. The privacy screen 11b is similarly pivoted at a pivot point (not shown) to the second housing 16. Each privacy screen 11a, 11b dissects the common axis of the first arm rests 10a and is rotatable about its respective pivot point in a plane defined by the respective first side wall 6a, 16a. The sense of rotation of the privacy screens 11a, 11b is indicated by the arrows D-D and E-E respectively in Figure 1.

Ideally, each of the privacy screens 11a and 11b is rotatable to block eye-to-eye contact between adjacent passengers when either of the seating units is in any configuration between fully upright and fully reclined positions. Each privacy screen can be fixed in a desired position by a suitable détente mechanism (not shown). Of course, should adjacent passengers wish to converse with each other, then the privacy screens 11a, 11b can be suitably positioned to allow eye contact between the passengers.

Preferably, each of the privacy screens 11a and 11b is composed of a lightweight flexible material so that in the event of an emergency, the screen can be easily rotated out of the way, or if necessary pushed to one side, to allow access to oxygen masks released from overhead compartments. One

known material having these properties from which a privacy screen may be constructed is Tufnol(RTM).

As is shown in Figure 3 of the accompanying drawings, the first seating unit 2a is provided with a one-piece table 13 which is positionable to extend across the seating unit 2a over the lap of a passenger (not shown). The table 13 is stored in a known manner in the arm rest 10b. The table 13 is pivotally mounted to the arm rest 10b of the seating unit 2a by a knuckle joint (not shown). To deploy the table 13 from the stored position the table 13 is first rotated in the plane of the arm 10 out of the storage area and then rotated down over the passenger's lap. When deployed, the joint connecting the table to the arm rest allows the table to be slid perpendicular to the arm 10, in a fore and aft direction (indicated by the arrows F-F) to a position at which the passenger is comfortable. The table 13 can also be rotated in a plane parallel to that of the cabin floor between the position in which the table 13 extends across the seat (shown in full lines), to a position (shown in broken lines) in which the table 13 extends parallel to the axis of the seat. This allows for easy access to and from the seat without a passenger having to return the table 13 to the storage area.

The table 13 includes at one end a fin-shaped projection 14 shaped and positioned to rest on the arm rest 9 of the seating unit 2a when the table 13 extends across the seating unit 2a. Preferably, the projection 12a is made of a resilient material so that when the table 13 supports a load, and the projection 14 rests on the arm rest 10a the arm rest 10a is not damaged.

Traditionally, in-flight entertainment devices, such as display screens, headphone points and the like have been mounted to the arm rests of aircraft seats. Accommodating such devices at arm rests has resulted in arm rests that are wider than would be otherwise necessary just to support the arms of an occupant. This is an inefficient use of space. Each of the seating units 2a and 2b is therefore provided with a self-contained in-flight entertainment unit 15a

and 15b respectively, each of which is positioned in front of its corresponding primary seat 4 and fixed to the housing of the adjacent seating unit. Such an entertainment unit, is shown in detail in Figures 5a to 5c, comprises a housing 20 containing a display monitor 21, headphone points 22, a PC power point 23, a cocktail table 24 and a reading light 25.

The display monitor 21 on which a passenger may watch in-flight movies and the like is pivotally connected to the housing 20 by a support arm 21a. The support 21a is rotatably hinged to the housing 20 and may be rotated to move the display screen 21 from a stored position shown in Figure 5a, in which the screen 21 fits snugly in a recess 21b in the housing 20, to a deployed position shown in Figure 5b, in which the screen faces the passenger in the seat. The display screen 21 is itself rotatably mounted to the support arm 21a and can be rotated about the axis of the support arm 21a thereby allowing the passenger to position the screen at a comfortable viewing angle depending on whether the passenger is sitting up or lying down. A rotatable latch 21c is provided to lock the display 21 in the stored position for take off and landing.

The cocktail table 24 is positioned above the support arm 21a to avoid drinks placed on the table 24 being spilt accidentally during adjustment of the position of the display 21. The cocktail table 24 is hinged to the housing 20 by a hinge connection 24a and is movable between a stored position in which the table 24 fits snugly in a recess 24b formed in the housing 20, as is shown in Figure 5c, and a deployed position in which the table 24 extends from the housing 20, as is shown in Figure 5a. A rotatable latch 24c is provided to latch the table 24 in the stored position. The headphone 22a and PC power points 23 are suitably positioned to minimize the risk of headphone and PC cables becoming tangled, when such devices are being used.

The reading light 25 is positioned on the top of the housing 20 and is arranged to direct light downwards towards the primary seat of the other seating unit.

Advantageously, access to the rear of an entertainment unit for maintenance or removal of the unit is achieved by unclipping the back portion of the housing of the adjacent seating unit and removing the back portion from its seating unit and the pallet on which the seating unit is placed. After a unit has been repaired or replaced the back portion is clipped back into place.

How a passenger chooses to configure his or her seat during normal flight is entirely up to the passenger and to this end, the primary seat is drivable between any position between upright and fully reclined. Furthermore, each seating unit also has a plurality of predetermined modes associated therewith into which the seating unit is automatically moved by use of a control pad. In each mode, the backrest 4 and the seat portion 8 of a seating unit are fixed at predetermined angles to the vertical and horizontal respectively, horizontal being defined by the plane of the cabin floor. Figures 6a to 6e each show the seating unit 2a in a different predetermined seating mode. For reasons of clarity, the trolley supporting the seating portion 8 of the seating unit 2a is not shown.

During take off and landing an aircraft is inclined at about 15° to the horizontal. If the seating units were designed so that the seating portion and the back portion were parallel with and perpendicular to the cabin floor respectfully, a passenger of a rearward facing seat would feel that during take off that he or she were slipping forward out of their seat. This is undesirable, because passengers would understandably find such a sensation uncomfortable.

In order to avoid such a problem, one of the modes in which a seating unit can be configured is a taxi, take off and landing (TTOL) mode which is shown in Figure 6a. In this TTOL mode, which passengers would be required

to adopt during taxiing, taking off or landing, the seat portion 8 is inclined at a predetermined angle to the horizontal, and the back portion 4 is inclined at a predetermined angle to the vertical to compensate for the take-off angle of the aircraft and thus leave a passenger feeling comfortable in his or her seat. Studies have shown that passengers find that having the backrest inclined at 30° to the vertical and the seat rest inclined at 15° to the horizontal is particularly comfortable and also acceptable for safety reasons. Preferably, each seat carries solenoid actuated shoot bolts (not shown) which mate with apertures in the seat guide tracks (not shown) to lock the seat in the TTOL position, thereby providing security for the passenger during taxiing, take of and landing.

During the course of a flight passengers will spend some time working and some time eating and drinking. One of the predetermined modes that the seats is designed to adopt is a working and eating mode which is shown in Figure 6b. In the working and eating mode, the back portion 4 is more upright than it is in the TTOL mode, and the seating portion 8 is less inclined to the horizontal than it is in the TTOL mode. This is necessary because passengers would find the orientation of the back and seat portions in the TTOL mode uncomfortable for working or eating in. Preferably, but not essentially, in the working and eating mode the backrest 8 is inclined at about 13° to the horizontal and the seating portion is inclined at about 4° to the horizontal.

Should passengers find their posture in the working and eating mode uncomfortable, there is also provided a less upright working and eating mode in which the seating unit 2a is shown in Figure 6c. In this mode, the back portion 8 is preferably inclined at about 20° to the vertical and the seat portion 4 is at inclined about 10° to the horizontal.

Figure 6d shows a seating unit 2a in a half reclined mode in which it is envisaged that a passenger can comfortably relax to watch in-flight

entertainment on the display monitor or to read. Preferably, in this mode, the back portion is inclined at about 25° to the vertical and the seat portion 8 at about 12° to the horizontal.

Figure 6e shows the seat 2a in a bed mode similar to that already shown in Figure 2a. In this mode, the primary seat 14 and the secondary unit 5 form a substantially flat surface.

Figures 7a to 7e of the accompanying drawings depict a secondary unit 50 which is shown in more detail than the secondary unit 5 shown in Figures 1 to 3. The secondary unit 50 comprises a pad 51 supported by a support member 52 which is anchored to a base part 53. The support member 52 comprises a first portion 52a which supports the pad 51 and a second portion 52b on which the first portion 52a is slidably mounted. The second portion 52b is securely attached to the base part 53.

In use, the pad may be raised and lowered to any position between the raised position shown in Figures 7a and 7b and the lowered position shown in Figure 7c. This is achieved by manually sliding the first portion 52a of the support member over the second portion 52b. Preferably, the secondary unit is configured so that if a predetermined minimum excessive force is exerted thereon, for instance three hundred pounds, then the unit is automatically lowered to the lowered position.

When in the upright position, the pad 51 can co-operate with a primary seat to form a flat surface, as is shown in Figure 2a.

The pad 51 is pivotally connected to the support 52a at a pivot 54. This allows the pad 51 to be pivoted between the horizontal position shown in Figure 7b and 7c and the vertical position shown in Figure 7d. It is envisaged that the pad 51 will be placed into the vertical position for take off and landings and also to allow passenger egress from a seat. In the vertical position, the footpad can be latched, to the back of the housing (not shown) of the next seat in front or to a bulkhead or other fixed structure within the cabin.

Figure 7e shows a plan view of the pad 51. The pad 51 is angled in shape to allow a passenger to place his or her legs on the cabin floor on each side of the pad. This allows the passenger to leave the seat without necessarily having to flip the pad into the stored position show in Figure 7d. This is possible because the front edge 55 of the pad 51 is wider than the back edge 56.

Preferably, the base part 53 is pivotally connected to the cabin floor at a pivot point 57. The whole of the secondary unit is rotatable about pivot point 57 for off centre rotation through 90° in the plane of the cabin floor. The rotation of the secondary unit in this plane allows a passenger more easily to change position in a seat during a flight. Full support of the passenger's legs on the secondary unit produces even pressure on the legs which in turn reduces circulation over a period of time. The rotation allows the passenger to avoid such discomfort as a "dead leg" feeling when getting up out of a seat.

Furthermore, this rotation about the point 57 allows the pad to be rotated from a position in which its front edge 51 faces towards the primary seat of the seating unit, to a position where its front edge 51 faces away from the primary seat. This is illustrated in Figure 8 of the drawings, where the front edge 61 of a secondary unit 60 faces a primary seat 63 and a secondary unit 64 has been rotated or swivelled through 90° so that its front edge 66 faces away from the primary seat 65.

When a primary seat is moved to a fully extended position, in order to form a bed with its secondary unit, it is preferable that the secondary unit is aligned with the primary seat so that the front edge of the unit faces the primary seat. In this configuration maximum support is given to the legs of a passenger. It would be inconvenient for a passenger to have to get up from a primary seat to correctly align the secondary unit each time a seating unit is put into the bed mode. Therefore, preferably each seating unit is arranged so that as the primary seat moves into bed mode, if the secondary unit is not

aligned with the primary seat, then, the secondary unit is automatically caused to swivel until the front edge of the unit faces the primary seat. One mechanism for achieving this is shown in Figure 9 of the accompanying drawings. Figure 9 shows a plan view of a seat portion 71 approaching a secondary unit 74 which is misaligned with the seat and has a pad 75 with a front edge 76 facing away from the seat.

The seat portion 70 is carried by a trolley 71 which runs in tracks 72a, 72b on the cabin floor. The trolley 71 has a pusher 73 extending therefrom which runs ahead of the trolley in the track 72a. The secondary unit 74 has a base 77 on which the pad 74 is supported by a support 78. The base 77 is pivotably mounted to the cabin floor at a pivot point 79. The base 77 of the secondary unit 74 is shaped so that as the seat portion 70 and the trolley 71 approach the unit 74, if the front edge 76 of the pad 75 is misaligned with the seat portion 70, the pusher 73 contacts the base 77 exerting a force thereon which causes the base 77 to swivel anti-clockwise about the pivot point 79 until, when the seat portion 70 reaches its fully extended position, the secondary unit 74 has been swivelled until its front edge 76 faces the seat portion 70.

Turning now to Figure 10 of the accompanying drawings, there is shown a partial cut away section of a secondary unit 80 including a mechanism for raising and lowering the secondary unit 80, between a fully upright position and a fully lowered position. The unit 80 comprises a first support 81 in the form of an elongate rod which is slidably mounted in a tube like second support 82. The first support 81 carries at one end a footpad, which for reasons of clarity is not shown, and at the other end is attached to a metal yoke 83. The second support 82 contains a pair of spaced apart upright supporting rods 84 each of which passes through a respective one of a pair of holes (not shown) formed in the yoke 83. The yoke 83 thus bridges the supporting rods 84 and the fit between each rod and hole is loose enough to

allow the yoke 84, and thus the first support 81 and the pad, to be slid between the fully raised position (shown in full lines) and the fully lowered position, (shown in broken lines).

The first support 81 and the yoke 83 can be locked at any position between the fully raised and fully lowered positions by means of a "mech lock" 85 attached to the yoke 83. The "mech lock" 85 is operated by an activating handle (not shown) fixed underneath the footpad (not shown), the handle being connected to the "mech lock" 85 via an operating cable 86. Preferably, the lock is configured to release if a force of three hundred pounds or more is applied to the unit. "Mech locks" are well known in the art and will not be discussed any further herein. Preferably, the first support 81 and the cable are surrounded by a protective casing (not shown), which shields the first support 81 and the cable 86 from view and which, as the first support 81 is raised and lowered, slides over the outer surface of the second support 82.

One possible cabin arrangement for the seating units described hereinabove shown in Figure 11. In this arrangement, pairs of seating units 1 are arranged in rows A, B, extending across the width of the cabin, and plural lines C, D, E, F along the length of the cabin. Each row comprises four pairs of seating units 1 extending across the width of the cabin. In Figure 9, only two rows A and B of pairs of seating units are illustrated although of course there would be many more rows on an actual aircraft. The first and second pair and the third and fourth pair in each row are separated by aisles 92, which provide access to the seating units and of course, allow passengers and attendants to walk up and down the cabin. Each of the seating units which is adjacent to an aisle faces towards the front of the cabin, whereas the non-aisle seats face towards the rear of the cabin.

Having thus described the present invention by reference to a preferred embodiment it is to be well understood that the embodiment in question is exemplary only and that modifications and variations such as will occur to those possessed of appropriate knowledge and skills may be made without departure

from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims and equivalents thereof.

Throughout the description and claims of the specification the word "comprise" and variations of the word, such as "comprising" and "comprises", is not intended to exclude other additives, components, integers or steps.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A seating unit for a vehicle, the seating unit comprising a pair of seats facing in opposite directions with each seat comprising a seating space for receiving the seated body of an occupant and an extension space in which the legs of an occupant may be placed, the seats being positioned each side of a longitudinal axis of the seating unit with the seating space of one extending over the longitudinal axis at the extension space of the other; wherein either of said seats has a seat axis substantially parallel to said longitudinal axis and wherein each seat comprises a back portion and a seating portion, the seating portion being movable with the back portion to allow the back portion to move between an upright position and a fully reclined position in which the seating portion and back portion form a flat surface.

2. A seating unit according to claim 1, wherein each of the seats includes an arm rest, with the arm rest of one of the seats arranged along a common axis with the arm rest of the other seat.

3. A seating unit according to claim 2, wherein the common axis is substantially coincident with the longitudinal axis of the seating unit.

4. A seating unit according to claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein the pair of seats are contained within a housing or each seat is contained within a respective housing, the housing or housings bounding the seating spaces and the extension spaces, and forming a wall between the seats, which wall is offset with respect to the longitudinal axis of the seating unit.

5. A seating unit according to any one of the preceding claims, further comprising a secondary unit in each of the extension spaces, said secondary units being spaced from and positioned to face the respective seat.

6. A seating unit according to claim 6, wherein when said back portion is in said fully reclined position, said seating portion is in a fully extended

position in which together the secondary unit, the seating portion and the back portion form a flat surface.

7. A seating unit according to any preceding claim, wherein the seating unit is for an aircraft.

8. A seating unit according to claim 7, fitted in an aircraft, wherein the pair of seats is arranged so that one of the seats faces substantially forward and the other of the seats faces substantially aft.

9. A seating unit as claimed in claim 8, wherein the said seating space of one of the seats is larger than the extension space of the other of the seats.

10. A seating unit as claimed in claim 7, 8 or 9, wherein the back portion and seating portion of a said seat are movable together to a plurality of different positions including a take-off position at which the seating portion is inclined to the floor of the aircraft to compensate for the take off angle of the aircraft.

11. A seating unit according to claim 10, wherein the seat is for facing aft when fitted in an aircraft.

12. A seating unit according to claim 10 or 11, wherein the seat is drivable between a plurality of different positions including the take-off position, in which the back portion is partially reclined in the take off position and the take-off position is between said fully reclined position in which the back portion is fully reclined and a fully upright position.

13. A seating unit according to claim 10, 11 or 12, wherein the seating portion is less inclined to the horizontal when the seat is in the fully upright position than when the seat is in the take-off position.

14. A seating unit according to any of claims 10 to 13, comprising latching means for latching the seat in position in the take off position during take-off.

15. A seating unit according to any one of claims 7 to 14 when dependent on claim 5 or 6, wherein the secondary unit comprises:

a pad mounted on an elongate support, the support being of variable height, whereby the elevation of the pad above the aircraft floor can be altered.

16. A seating unit according to claim 15, wherein the pad is supported for rotation in a plane substantially parallel to that of the aircraft floor.

17. A seating unit according to claim 15 or 16, wherein the pad is mounted to the support for pivotable movement about an axis substantially perpendicular to the support between a deployed position and a latched position.

18. A seating unit according to claim 17, wherein the pad in the deployed position is substantially parallel to the aircraft floor and in the latched position is substantially perpendicular to the aircraft floor.

19. A seating unit according to any of claims 15 to 18, wherein the support comprises means arranged to lower the pad when a load in excess of a predetermined maximum is applied to the secondary unit.

20. A seating unit according to any one of claims 15 to 19, wherein the secondary unit is movable into and out of alignment with the seat and further comprising an actuator arranged to move the secondary unit into alignment

with the seat, when the seating portion is moved towards said fully extended position.

21. A seating unit according to claim 20, wherein the actuator comprises a projection that extends forwardly from the seat which contacts the secondary unit when the seating portion is moved towards said fully extended position.

22. A seating unit according to claim 21, wherein the seat comprises a carriage for moving the seat and where the projection extends forwardly from the carriage.

23. A seating unit according to claim 22, wherein the seating unit comprises tracks mountable to an aircraft floor for the carriage to move along to move the seat, with the projection extending from the carriage along one of the tracks.

24. A seating unit according to any of claims 20 to 23, wherein the secondary unit comprises a base mountable to an aircraft floor for rotation in the plane of the floor and wherein the actuator is arranged to contact the base of the secondary unit to rotate the secondary unit into alignment when the seating portion is moved towards said fully extended position.

25. A seating unit according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the seats are provided with an in-flight entertainment unit comprising:

a housing;

a monitor supported on the housing by a support arm, the support arm being rotatable about the housing to move the monitor between a stored position and a viewing position and the monitor being rotatable about the support arm to vary a viewing angle when in the viewing position.

26. A seating unit according to claim 25, further comprising a cocktail table mounted on the housing and movable between deployed and undeployed positions.

27. A seating unit according to claim 25 or 26, further comprising one or more of a computer power point, an audio output jack and a condition indicator.

28. A seating unit according to claim 25, 26 or 27, wherein the entertainment unit for one seat is mounted in a housing associated with the other seat.

29. A seating unit as claimed in claim 1, substantially as herein described.

30. A seating unit substantially as herein described with reference to any of the embodiments shown in the accompanying drawings.

DATED: 11 December 2003
PHILLIPS ORMONDE & FITZPATRICK
Attorneys for:
BRITISH AIRWAYS PLC

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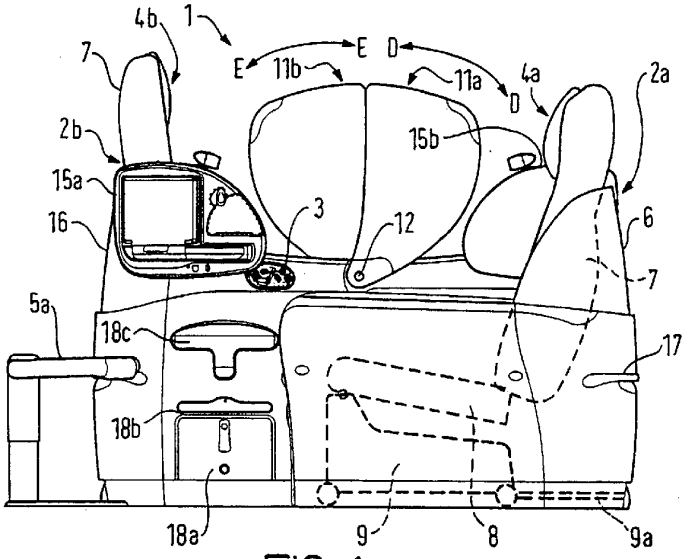

FIG. 1

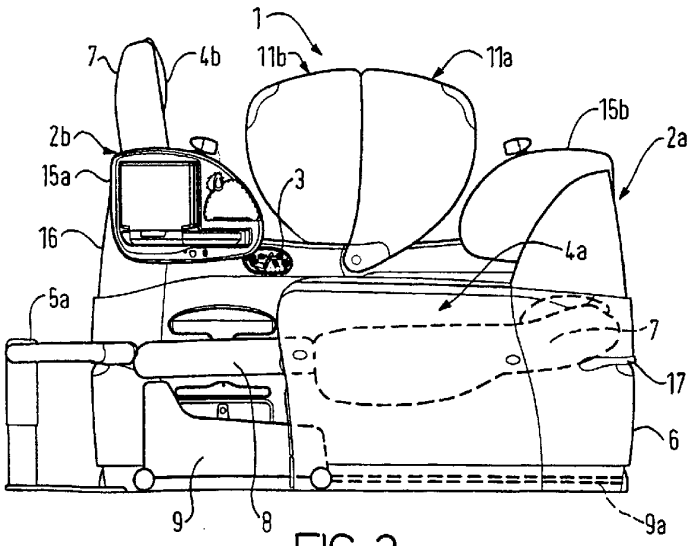

FIG. 2

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)

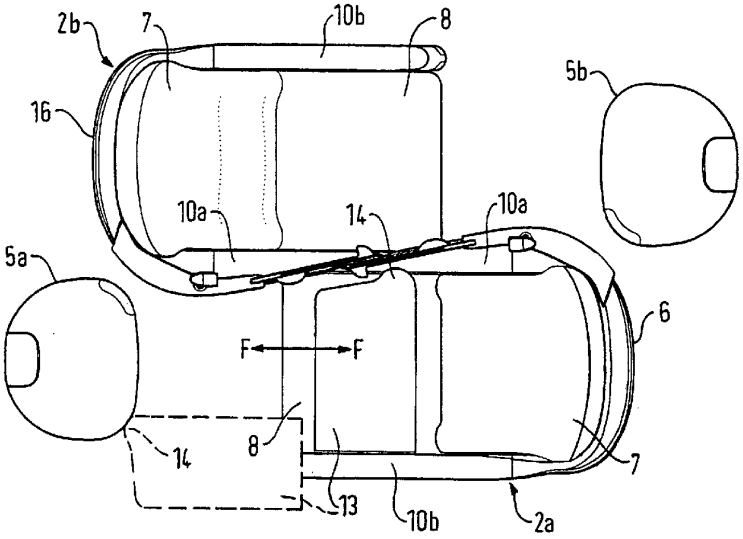

FIG. 3

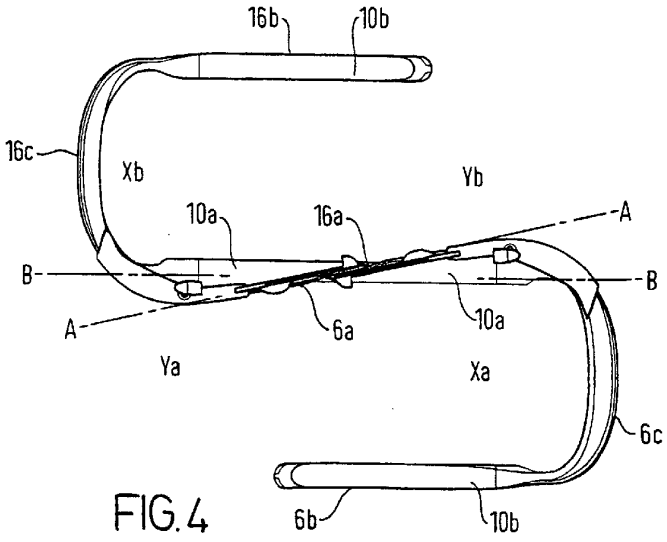

FIG. 4

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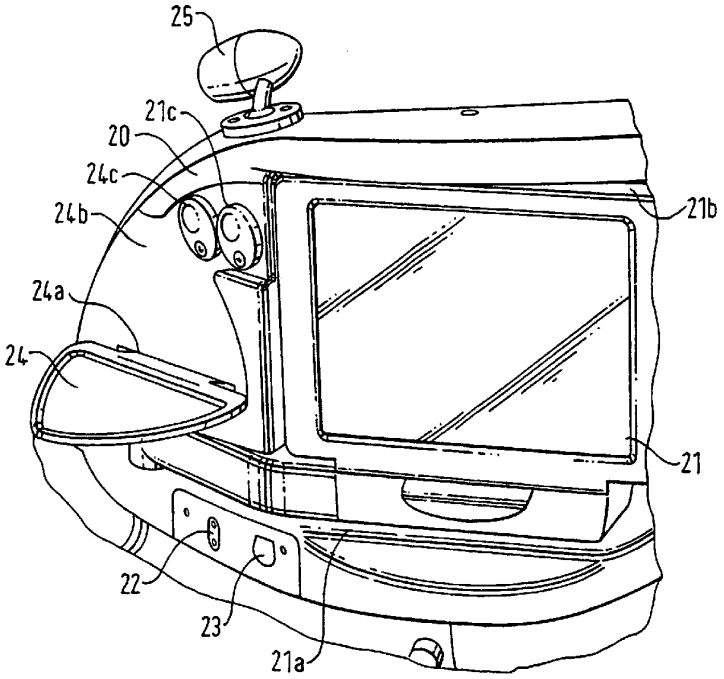

FIG. 5a

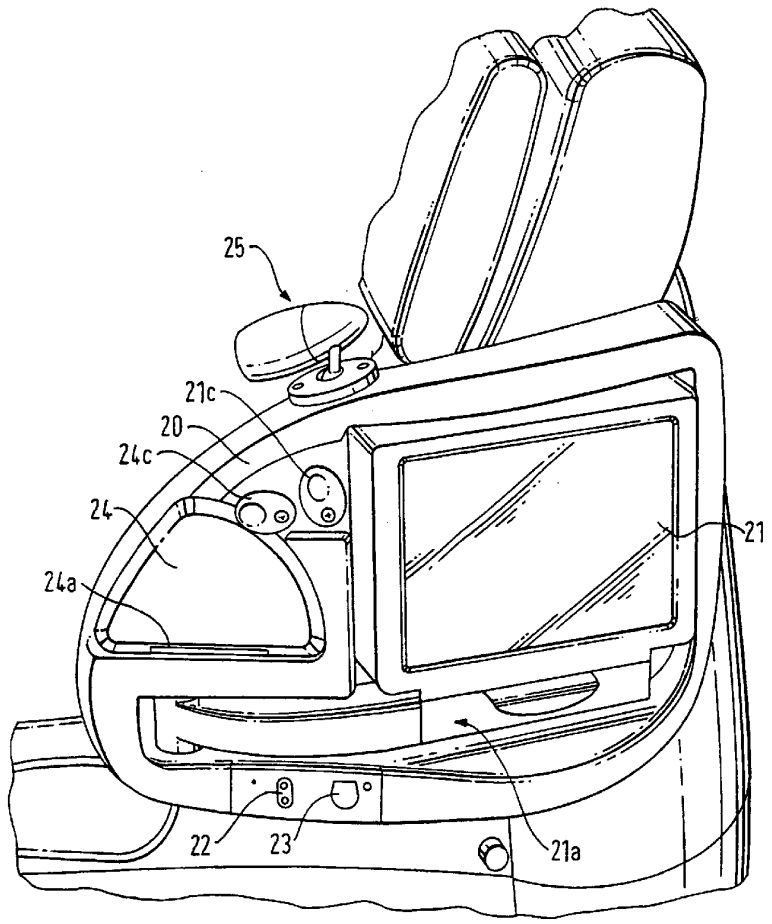

FIG.5c

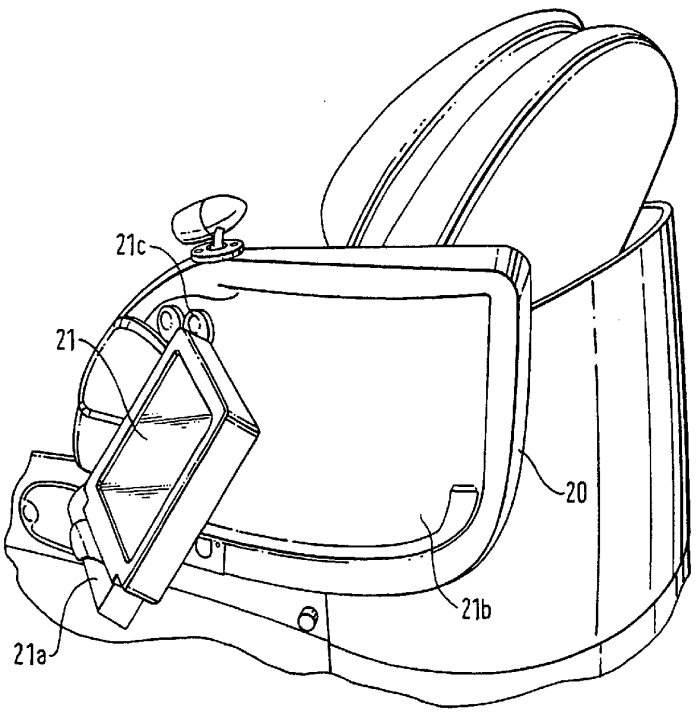

FIG. 5b

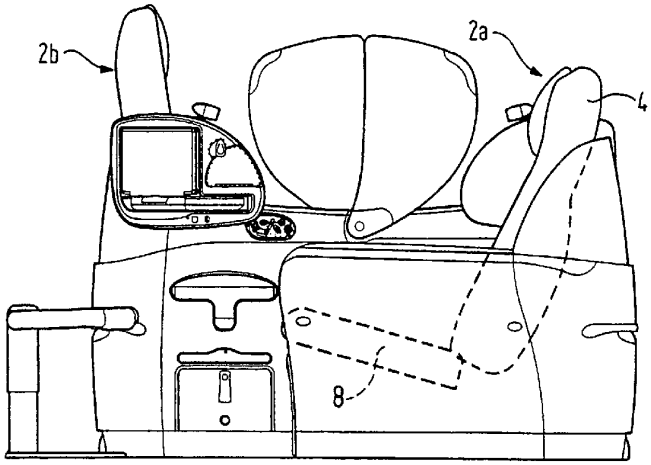

FIG. 6a

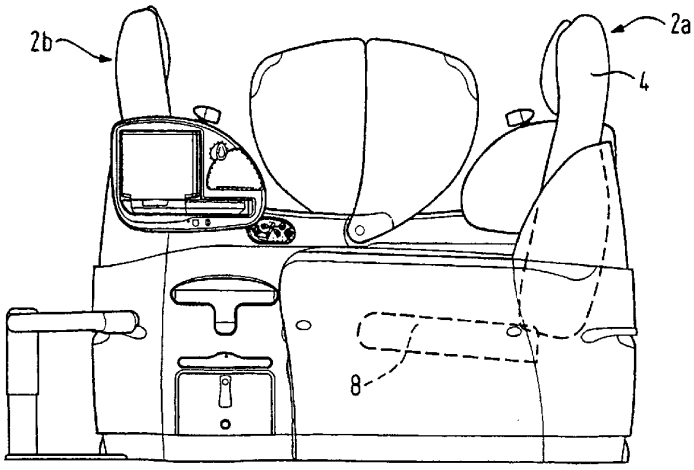

FIG. 6b

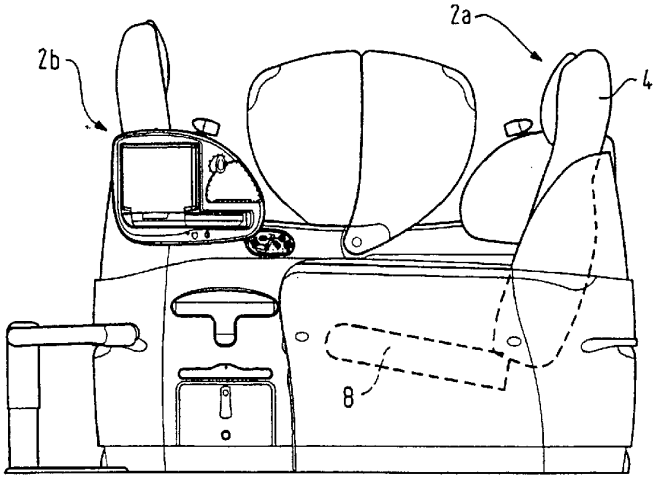

FIG. 6c

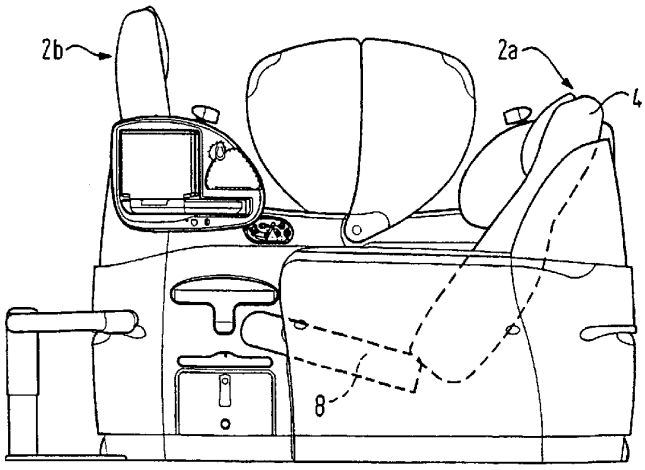

FIG. 6d

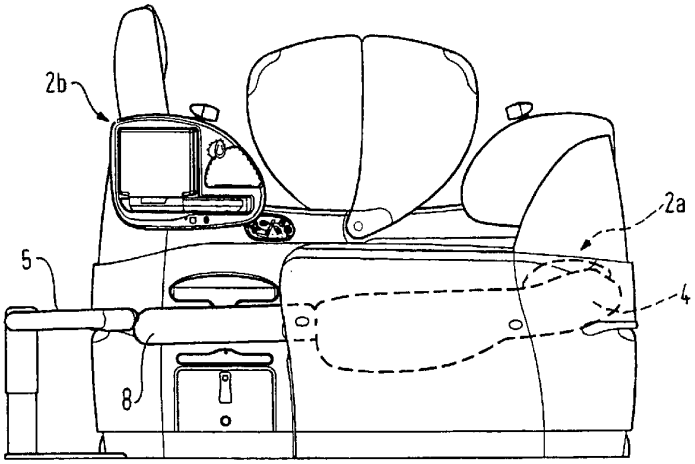

FIG. 6e

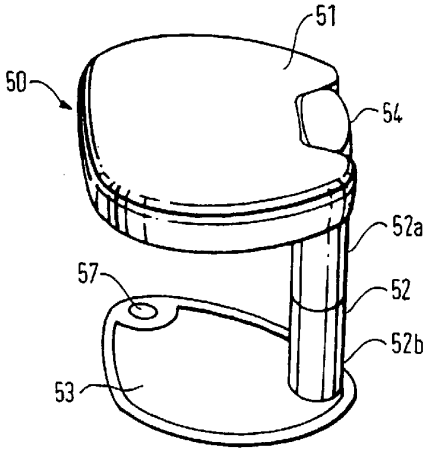

FIG. 7a

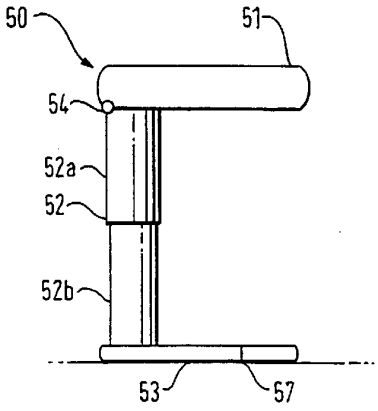

FIG. 7b

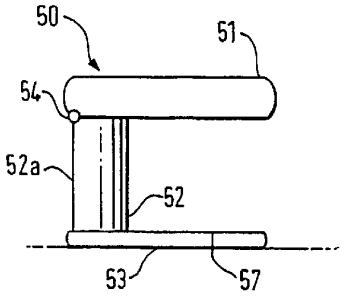

FIG. 7c

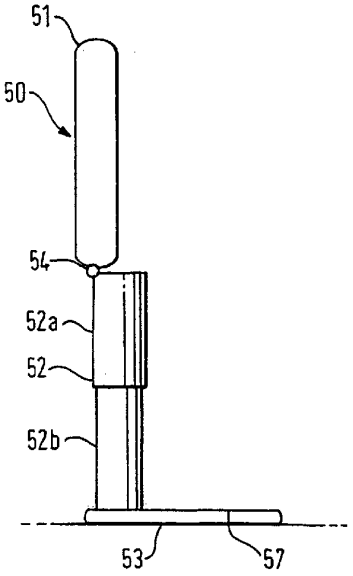

FIG. 7d

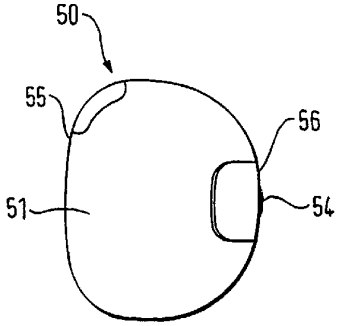

FIG. 7e

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)

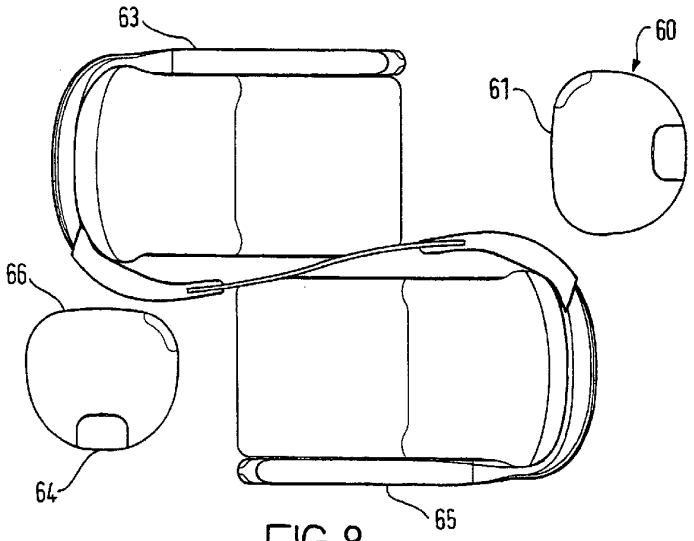

FIG.8

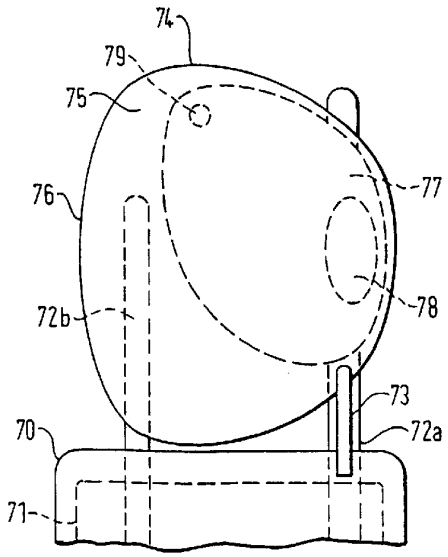

FIG.9

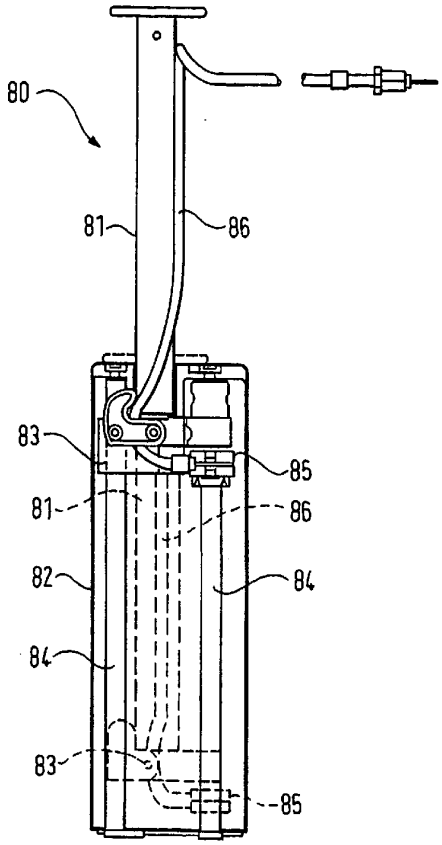

FIG. 10

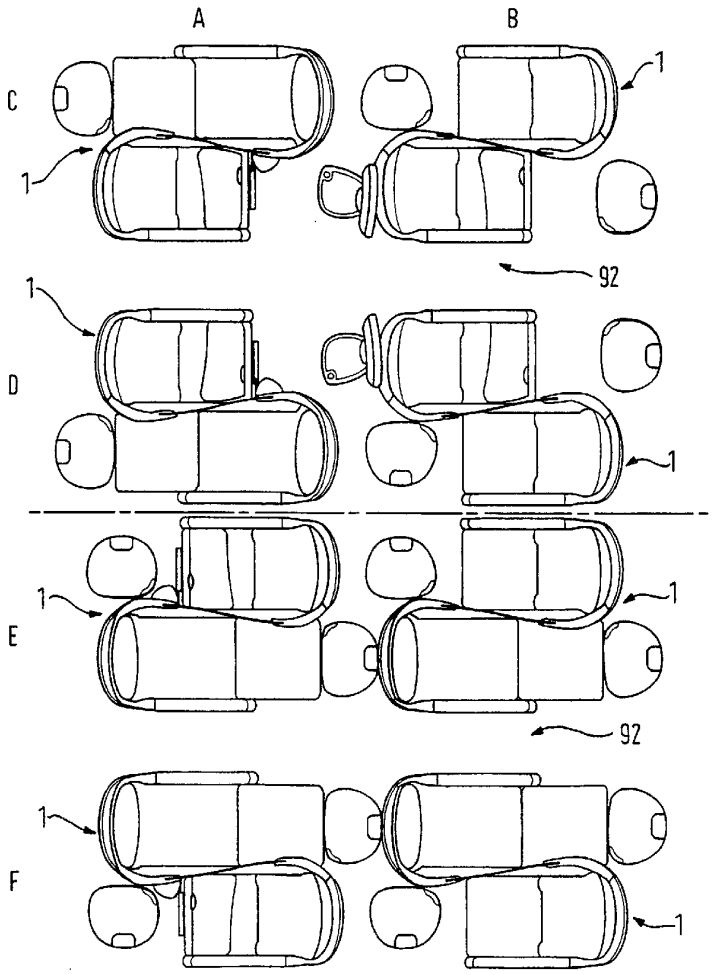

FIG. 11