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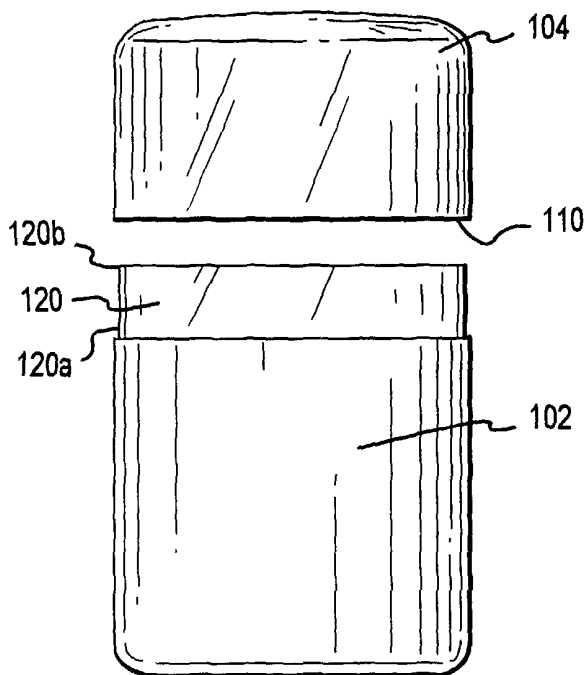
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(54) Title: CIGAR AND CIGARETTE CONTAINER



(57) Abstract: A container (100) suitable for the storage of cigarettes and/or cigars is provided. The container may comprise a base (102) having an aperture therein that is suitably configured to provide an enclosure for the tobacco products, and may comprise rigid materials configured to provide protection of the cigars and cigarettes from being damaged, such as by folding or bending of the cigarettes and cigars. In addition, the container may comprise a cap (104) configured with the base portion to provide an air-tight and/or resealable container. For example, the cap and base can be configured in a press-fitting engagement to facilitate the maintaining of the container in an air-tight condition. Further, the container may comprise an indexing arrangement (106, 107) configured within the base to facilitate guidance and positioning of the cigarettes and/or cigars within the container. For example, the indexing arrangement can comprise various forms, such as one or more dividers, partitions, or apertures to provide suitably indexing or segregation of the cigarettes and cigars.

WO 01/56411 A1

CIGAR AND CIGARETTE CONTAINER

Technical Field

The present invention relates, generally, to a container for cigars and/or cigarettes, and
5 more particularly, to a container having a substantially air-tight enclosure configured to
facilitate the maintaining of the freshness of the cigars and/or cigarettes.

Background of the Invention

Despite recent legislative and other governmental attempts to limit the advertising and
10 marketing of tobacco products, as well as the increasing taxation on such products introduced
by governments, the smoking of cigarettes and cigars continues to be enjoyed by millions of
individuals worldwide. For many years without change, cigarettes have been provided in
simple paper or thin cardboard packages. In many instances, the packages may also be wrapped
or contained in thin plastic or foil films. As one should appreciate, these types of packaging are
15 typically designed to achieve low manufacturing costs.

These thin paper, cardboard, plastic or foil films are not designed to provide sufficient
environmental protection to the cigarettes. Instead, the purpose of such packages has been to
simply contain the cigarettes for transport by an individual during the course of a day or night,
and provide minimal protection to the cigarettes from being damaged by folding or bending of
20 the cigarettes. Moreover, such packages are generally not configured to provide protection
from moisture, such as the spilling of a beverage onto the container, or from the ambient air
which can serve to "dry out" the cigarettes. Upon use, these packages are generally discarded
by the user.

Cigars have also had very little changes in the containers and other boxes used for
25 shipment. Because cigars have a propensity to be particularly effected by ambient air which
can "dry out" the cigars, thus making them stale and unsuitable for consumption, cigars have
required wrappings to temporarily provide air-tight protection or the use of humidors to prevent
drying out. However, these wrappings have generally consisted of thin plastic films which
typically provide only minimal protection for a week or more, often much less than the shelf
30 life of the product. Humidors, on the other hand, can provide suitable protection, but are not
readily transportable. Furthermore, humidors are typically very expensive which can prohibit
the purchase by the casual smoker.

Accordingly, a need exist for a container configured to provide protection of cigarettes
and/or cigars against the environment, such as from moisture and dry air conditions which can

damage the tobacco products. In addition, a need exist for a container configured to permit cigarettes and cigars to be selectively removed, and then permit the container to be resealed to continue to maintain protection.

5

Summary of the Invention

A container according to the present invention addresses many of the shortcomings of the prior art. In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, a container suitable for the storage of cigarettes and/or cigars is provided. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the container may comprise a base having an aperture therein that is suitably configured to provide an enclosure for the tobacco products.

10

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, the container comprises rigid materials configured to provide protection of the cigars and cigarettes from being damaged, such as by folding or bending of the cigarettes and cigars. For example, the container can comprise various polymers and plastics, metals and metal alloys, or other like materials configured to provide protection of the cigars and cigarettes from damage.

15

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, the container may comprise a cap and a base portion configured to provide an air-tight and/or resealable container. In accordance with this aspect, the container can be configured such that the cap and base can be overlapped to provide an air-tight seal for the cigarettes and cigars within the container. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the cap and base can be configured in a press-fitting or other closing or sealing engagement to facilitate the maintaining of the container in a substantially air-tight condition.

20

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, the container may comprise an indexing arrangement configured within the base to facilitate guidance and positioning of the cigarettes and/or cigars within the container. For example, the indexing arrangement can comprise various forms, such as one or more dividers, partitions, chambers or other like apertures to provide suitably indexing or segregation of the cigarettes and cigars. Such an indexing arrangement can be implemented in manners with a press-fitting or other closing or sealing engagement.

25

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Brief Description of Drawing Figures

A more complete understanding of the present invention may be derived by referring to the detailed description and claims when considered in connection with the Figures, where like reference numbers refer to similar elements throughout the Figures, and:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an exemplary container in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is a top view of an exemplary container in accordance with the present invention;

5 Figure 3 is a bottom view of an exemplary container in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 4 is a side view of an exemplary container in accordance with the present invention;

10 Figure 5 is a front view of an exemplary container in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 6 is a top view of an exemplary indexing arrangement for a container in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 7 is a top view of another exemplary indexing arrangement for a container in accordance with the present invention;

15 Figure 8 is a exploded view of an exemplary container in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 9 is a top view of another exemplary indexing arrangement for a container in accordance with the present invention;

20 Figure 10 is a top view of another exemplary indexing arrangement for a container in accordance with the present invention; and

Figure 11 is a front view of an exemplary container comprising an exemplary indexing arrangement in accordance with the present invention.

Detailed Description of Exemplary Embodiments

25 The present invention may be described in terms of various materials and components. It should be appreciated that such materials and components may be realized by any number of compositions of matter and other elements configured to perform the specified functions. For example, the present invention may employ various known or hereinafter devised materials, such as various polymers and other synthetics and the like, to provide the structure of the
30 container as may be utilized in accordance with the present invention. Further, it should be noted that the container described herein is merely one exemplary application for the invention. For example, the container may be configured for repeated use, for example, with refill inserts, or may be configured in a disposable fashion.

As discussed above, a container according to the present invention addresses many of the shortcomings of the prior art. In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, a container suitable for the storage of cigarettes and/or cigars is provided. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the container may comprise a base having an aperture therein that is suitably configured to provide an enclosure for the tobacco products. The base may be suitably configured in various sizes and dimensions from a variety of materials suitable for enclosing the tobacco products. As a result, cigarettes and cigars can be suitably stored for later use.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, an exemplary container can comprise rigid materials configured to provide protection of the cigars and cigarettes from being damaged, such as by folding or bending of the cigarettes and cigars. For example, the container can comprise various polymers and plastics, metals and metal alloys, or other like materials configured to provide protection of the cigars and cigarettes from damage.

With reference to Figure 1, in accordance with an exemplary embodiment, a container 100 for storage of tobacco products suitably comprises a base 102. In accordance with this embodiment, base 102 comprises a container wall defining an aperture therein suitably configured to store a plurality of cigarettes and/or cigars of a variety of sizes, as well be described in more detail below. In addition, base 102 suitably comprises a bottom portion 106 configured for maintaining the tobacco products within container 100. Preferably, base 102 is configured with bottom portion 106 to allow container 100 to be suitably positioned in an upright manner when placed on a substantially flat surface, such as a table, desk or countertop. However, base 102 can also be configured to be positioned on a sidewall as well.

Base 102 may comprise various materials configured for storage or containing of the tobacco products, such as for example, plastic or other polymers, fiberglass, thin metals and other similar substantially rigid materials. As a result, base 102 can provide protection to the cigarettes and cigars from bending, folding or other like damage. Preferably, base 102 comprises a plastic-like material. In addition, the material of the wall comprising base 102 may comprise various thicknesses, depending on any number of design criteria.

The shape of base 102 may be provided in a variety of designs and configurations suitable for the storage of tobacco products. With reference to Figure 3 which illustrates bottom portion 106, an exemplary base 102 may have an outer perimeter 107 configured in an elliptical manner. However, base 102 may be configured in a variety of other shapes. For example, base 102 may comprise an outer perimeter configured in a circular, rectangular, diamond or any other known configuration or shape suitable for storage of cigarettes and cigars.

In addition, base 102 may be configured in various widths, thicknesses and heights. With reference to Figures 4 and 5, base 102 may be configured with a narrower thickness and a greater width portion. However, base 102 may be configured with a narrower width and a greater thickness, or with a substantially equal width and thickness. Moreover, base 102 may be configured at various heights, for example, between 3" and 6" or more, depending on the length of the cigarette or cigar enclosed within container 100. Further, although base 102 can be suitably configured such that cigarettes and cigars can be positioned along the axis of a wall and perpendicular to bottom portion 106, base 102 can also be configured to permit the cigarettes and cigars to be positioned parallel to bottom portion 106.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, container 100 suitably comprises a cap 104. In accordance with this embodiment, cap 104 suitably comprises a cap, lid, cover or other similar device or component configured to provide a covering for base 102, and thus providing an enclosure of the tobacco products within base 102. In addition, cap 104 may be configured to permit container 100 to be opened and then reclosed as desired by a user. Cap 104 may also be configured in a variety of shapes and dimensions, such as those described above with base 102.

With reference to Figure 2 which illustrates a top portion 106, an exemplary cap 102 may have an outer perimeter 109 configured in an elliptical manner. However, cap 104, like base 102, may be configured in variety of other shapes. For example, cap 104 may comprise an outer perimeter configured in a circular, rectangular, diamond or any other known configuration. In addition, cap 104 may be configured in a variety of sizes, e.g., a variety of widths lengths and thicknesses. Although cap 104 may be configured in different shapes and sizes than base 102, cap 104 may also be configured in substantially similar shapes and sizes, e.g., both base 102 and cap 104 may comprise an elliptical outer perimeter having substantially the same dimension as the other outer perimeter.

In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, cap 104 suitably comprises a substantially transparent or transparent material to permit the user to determine the quantity of cigarettes and cigars within base 102 while container 100 is in a closed position, i.e., when cap 102 is suitably positioned to cover base 104. For example, cap 104 may comprise a semi-transparent plastic or other like material.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, container 100 can be configured to provide a resealable container. In accordance with this aspect of the present invention, an exemplary cap 104 may be configured with an inner perimeter having a length greater than the length of the outer perimeter of base 104 to suitably allow cap 104 to provide a

cover over the aperture of base 102. For example, the inner perimeter of cap 104 can be configured at a length large enough to permit an upper portion of base 102 to be inserted into the aperture of cap 104, and thus allow cap 104 to suitably overlap base 102 to provide an enclosure for the tobacco products, such as may be illustrated by region 112. In this
5 embodiment, the inner perimeter of cap 104 is slightly larger than the outer perimeter of base 102, for example, from one thousandths of an inch to twenty thousandths of an inch or larger, to facilitate a secure fit upon insertion of the upper portion of base 102 into cap 104. However, base 102 and cap 104 can also be suitably configured such that the inner perimeter of cap 104 is slightly smaller than the outer perimeter of base 102.

10 In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, to provide a more desirable and efficient air-tight fitting between cap 104 and base 102, container 100 may be configured for a press-fitting engagement. For example, container 100 may be configured with base 102 comprising an upper portion configured to facilitate a press-fitting engagement with cap 104. For example, with reference to an exemplary embodiment as illustrated in Figure 8, base 102 can suitably
15 comprise an upper portion 120 configured to couple base 102 with an aperture 110 of cap 104. In accordance with this embodiment, upper portion 120 suitably comprises an outer perimeter having a length slightly smaller than the inner perimeter of cap 104. In addition, upper portion can also include an outer perimeter having a length slightly smaller than, slightly larger than, or the same as the outer perimeter of base 102. Upper portion 120 may suitably comprise an
20 integral member of base 102, and thus be comprised of the same material, for example, a plastic composition or other polymer and the like. However, upper portion 120 may also comprise a separate shell-like member, comprised of similar or different materials than base 102, suitably inserted into the aperture of base 102.

Continuing in accordance with this exemplary embodiment, upper portion 120 can be
25 suitably configured in a tapered manner to facilitate the press-fitting engagement between base 102 and cap 104. In accordance with this embodiment, upper portion 120 is suitably configured in an outwardly tapering configuration, i.e., the outer perimeter of upper portion 120 diminishes as portion 120 extends outwardly towards cap 104. In other words, with continued reference to Figure 8, an outer perimeter 120a of portion 120 suitably includes a length greater than the
30 length of an outer perimeter 120b of portion 120. Accordingly, as cap 104 is suitably placed over portion 120, the inner perimeter of cap 104 will realize increasingly more contact with the outer perimeter of upper portion 120, for example, the contact within region 112, thus providing a tighter fit as cap 104 is continually pressed onto base 102. As a result of this press-fitting engagement, cap 104 and base 102 can provide a substantially air-tight enclosure for tobacco

products stored within container 100, i.e., container 100 prevents almost all, if not all, outside ambient air from penetrating the storage area of container 100 when base 102 and cap 14 are in a closed or sealed position. Furthermore, cap 104 may be readily removed and replaced as desired to provide a resealable container 100.

5 Although the above embodiment illustrates upper portion 120 configured in a tapered manner, other press-fitting arrangements can be realized. For example, upper portion 120 can be configured without tapering, and instead, the interior walls of cap 104 can be suitably tapered such that a press-fitting arrangement will occur upon pressing of cap 104 onto upper
10 portion 120. Moreover, instead of, or in addition to, the press-fitting arrangements described above, container 100 can suitably include other mechanisms for providing a substantially secure air-tight fit that is readily resealable. For example, cap 104 and base 102 can be suitably configured in a threaded or other screwing arrangement, or with a snap lock or other like
15 manner of providing a secure fit. Still further, container 100 can include a clasp, clamp or other like device configured to facilitate a tight closure of base 102 and cap 104. Accordingly, container 100 can be configured in any manner which facilitates a substantially air-tight and/or
resealable container for cigarettes and cigars.

 In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, an exemplary container may comprise an indexing arrangement configured within base 102 to facilitate guidance and
20 positioning of the cigarettes and/or cigars within container 100. For example, the indexing arrangement can comprise various forms, such as one or more dividers, partitions, chambers or openings to provide suitably indexing or segregation of the cigarettes and cigars. In addition, the indexing arrangement can suitably comprise an integral member of base 102, or may be
separately configured and inserted into base 102. Furthermore, the indexing arrangement may
25 comprise the same or different material than base 102. Moreover, the indexing arrangement can be configured to position or align any number of cigarettes and/or cigars having a variety of dimensions and sizes.

 In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, with reference to Figure 7, base 102 may suitably include an indexing portion comprising a divider member 702, such as a wall or other
30 like component, to suitably divide or partition an aperture 704 within base 102 into various compartments. For example, divider member 702 may be configured to partition aperture 704 into an aperture portion 704a and an aperture portion 704b, each of which could store cigars and/or cigarettes. In addition, divider member 702 may be configured with various lengths along the interior area of base 102, for example, being connected approximate upper portion
120 and bottom portion 106, or any location and any length in between.

Although only one divider member 702 is illustrated, it should be noted that any number of such divider members could be configured within base 102 to provide any number of partitions or compartments, such as, for example, three, four or more. Moreover, the plurality of divider members 702 could be configured in parallel and or in a perpendicular or otherwise crossing fashion. Further, the plurality of divider members 702 could be configured in any orientation within base 102.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, base 102 may be configured with an indexing portion suitably configured to contain a suitably selected number of cigarettes and/or cigars. For example, with reference to Figure 6, an exemplary indexing portion may comprise an upper surface 602 which suitably includes a plurality of openings 604 configured to hold or position the cigarettes and/or cigars within base 102. For example, with additional reference to Figure 4, various cigarettes and/or cigars could be partially inserted into openings 604s such that one end of the cigarettes and/or cigars is adjacent bottom portion 106 while the other end of the cigarettes and/or cigars is protruding out from opening 604. Such an arrangement is also configured to permit cap 104 to be suitably placed over base 102 and any cigarettes and/or cigars stored within.

Upper surface 602 may suitably comprise any number of openings 604, such as, for example, two, three, five, or more, depending on different design criteria. For example, many casual smokers may desire only three or four cigars or cigarettes over a given period, and thus a three or four tobacco product unit, such as illustrated in Figure 9, would be desirable. On the other hand, another smoker may desire a dozen or more cigars or cigarettes and thus could suitably select such a configuration of container 100. Moreover, with reference to Figure 10, a container 100 may be provided including both one or more dividers 702 and one or more openings 604, such as for a combination of cigars and/or cigarettes having same or different sizes. In addition, openings 604 can be arranged in various shapes and dimensions, for example, circles, ellipses, square, rectangles or diamonds and the like, that are configured to position and/or align the cigarettes and/or cigars within base 102.

In addition, upper surface 602 may comprise a wall member of various thicknesses suitably configured in a top portion 102a of base 102, such as below or alongside upper portion 120. Further, upper surface 602 may be configured within top portion 102a, with the area underneath upper surface 602 and within base 102 suitably open and otherwise not restricted.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, the indexing arrangement may also comprise upper surface 602 and openings 604 configured with a suitably number of chambers configured to contain the cigarettes and/or cigars. For example, with reference to Figure 11, the

indexing arrangement may comprise a chamber 605 or other tube-like compartment having a substantially solid member extending from the bottom portion of base 102 to upper portion 120 of base 102, and configured with an opening 604. In addition, the indexing arrangement may include any number of chambers, or tube-like or other similar compartments for the storage and
5 positioning of cigarettes and cigars. Further, the plurality of chambers may have different diameters, shapes and lengths from each other. Still further, any of the chambers may also be tapered. Further, any of the chambers can be configured in length to extend only partially along the interior area of base 102, i.e., from upper portion 120 of base 102 to the middle region of base 102, or longer or shorter in length.

10 The present invention has been described above with reference to various exemplary embodiments. However, it should be noted that changes and modifications may be made to the various exemplary embodiments without departing from the scope of the present invention. For example, the caps and base of the container can be configured on same or different color configurations. Further, the cap may be configured for disposal while keeping the base. It
15 should also be noted that while the expression "storage" of cigars and cigarettes is mentioned, the expression "storage" can mean containing, holding, positioning or otherwise maintaining of cigars and/or cigarettes within the container for short term and long term applications. These and other similar changes are contemplated by the present invention, as set forth in the following claims.

CLAIMS

We claim:

- 5 1. A container for providing for the storage of tobacco products, said container comprising:
- a base having an aperture configured for storing of the tobacco products; and
- a cap configured for covering the tobacco products, wherein said cap is configured in a press-fitting engagement with said base to provide a substantially air-tight enclosure for said tobacco products.
- 10
2. A container according to claim 1, wherein said base comprises an upper portion, and said cap has an inner perimeter larger than an outer perimeter of said upper portion such that when said cap is positioned over said upper portion and pressed towards said base, said cap and said base provide the press-fitting engagement.
- 15
3. A container according to claim 2, wherein said upper portion is configured in an outwardly tapered manner to facilitate the press-fitting arrangement.
- 20
4. A container according to claim 1, wherein said container further comprises an indexing arrangement configured within said base to facilitate positioning of the tobacco products within said container.
5. A container according to claim 4, wherein said indexing arrangement is integral to said base and comprises a material identical to a material comprised in said base.
- 25
6. A container according to claim 4, wherein said indexing arrangement comprises at least one divider member configured within said base.
- 30
7. A container according to claim 4, wherein said indexing arrangement comprises an upper surface having a plurality of openings configured to position the tobacco products.

8. A container according to claim 7, wherein said indexing arrangement comprises a plurality of chambers configured for containing the tobacco products, each of said plurality of chambers interfaced with said plurality of openings.

5 9. A container according to claim 2, wherein said cap comprises a material having transparent characteristics to permit visual inspection of the tobacco products.

10 10. A container according to claim 2, wherein said base comprises a bottom portion opposite an opening to said aperture and configured for positioning said container to stand upright on said bottom portion.

11. A container according to claim 2, wherein said cap and said base comprise at least one of a plastic, polymer, or metal alloy material.

15 12. A resealable container for storing of tobacco products, said resealable container comprising:

a base having an aperture configured for storing of the tobacco products, said base comprising an indexing arrangement configured to facilitate positioning of the tobacco products within said container; and

20 a cap configured for covering the tobacco products, wherein said cap is configured to connect to said base to provide a sealed enclosure, and wherein said cap can be removed from said base to permit access to said tobacco products.

25 13. A resealable container according to claim 12, wherein said resealable container comprises said base and cap configured with one of an overlapping arrangement, a threaded arrangement, and a snap-fitting arrangement for resealing said resealable container.

14. A resealable container according to claim 12, wherein said resealable container comprises said base and cap configured in a press-fitting engagement.

30 15. A resealable container according to claim 12, wherein said press-fitting arrangement comprises said base having an upper portion, and said cap having an inner perimeter larger than an outer perimeter of said upper portion such that when said cap is

positioned over said upper portion and pressed towards said base, said cap and said base provide said press-fitting engagement.

5 16. A container according to claim 15, wherein said upper portion is configured in an outwardly tapered manner to facilitate the press-fitting arrangement, said upper portion having an outer perimeter less than an outer perimeter of said base.

17. A container according to claim 12, wherein said indexing arrangement is integral to said base and comprises a material identical to a material comprised in said base.

10

18. A container according to claim 17, wherein said indexing arrangement comprises at least one divider member configured within said base.

15 19. A container according to claim 12, wherein said indexing arrangement comprises an upper surface having a plurality of openings configured to position the tobacco products.

20. A container according to claim 19, wherein said indexing arrangement comprises a plurality of chambers configured for containing the tobacco products, each of said plurality of chambers interfaced with said plurality of openings.

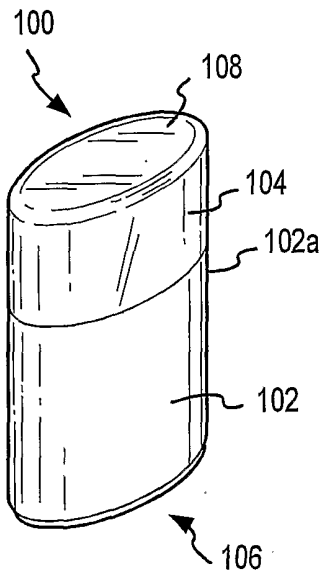


FIG. 1

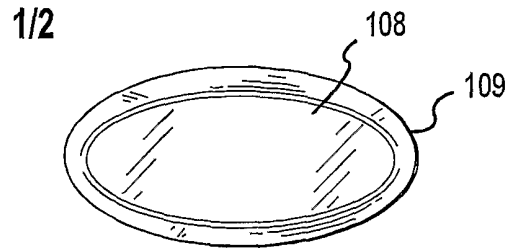


FIG. 2

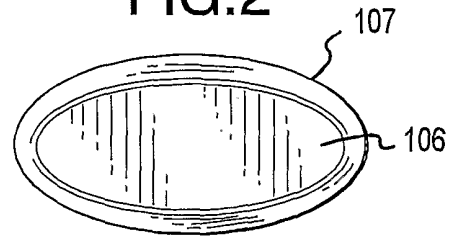


FIG. 3

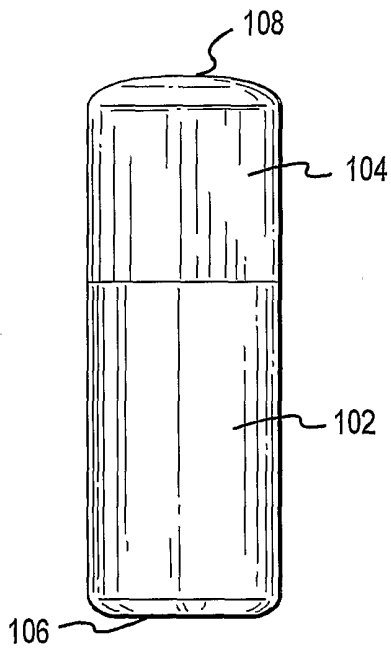


FIG. 4

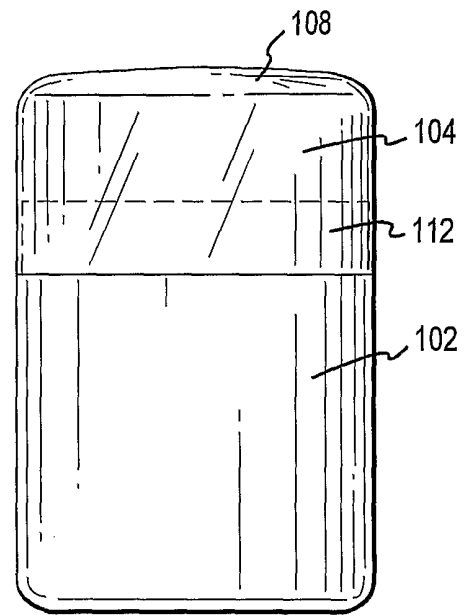


FIG. 5

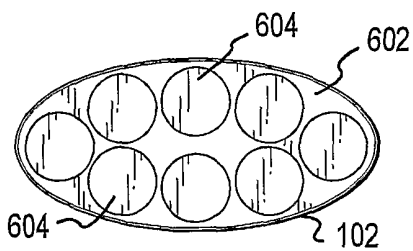


FIG. 6

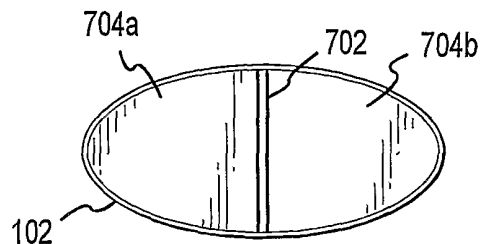


FIG. 7

2/2

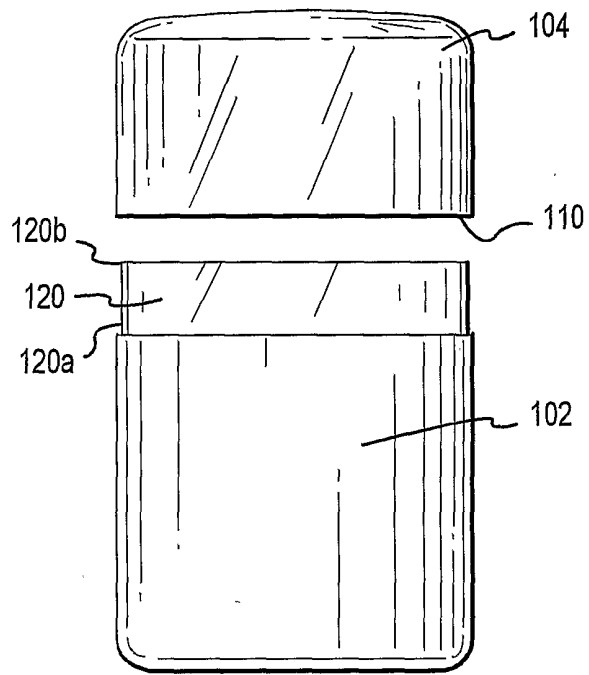


FIG. 8

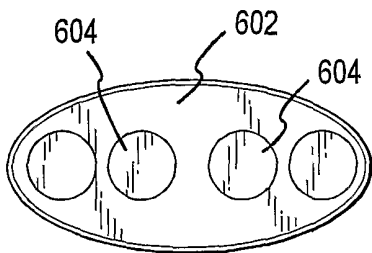


FIG. 9

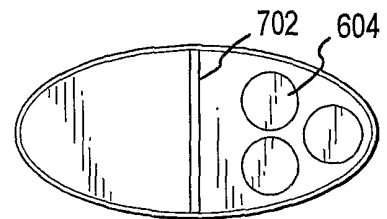


FIG. 10

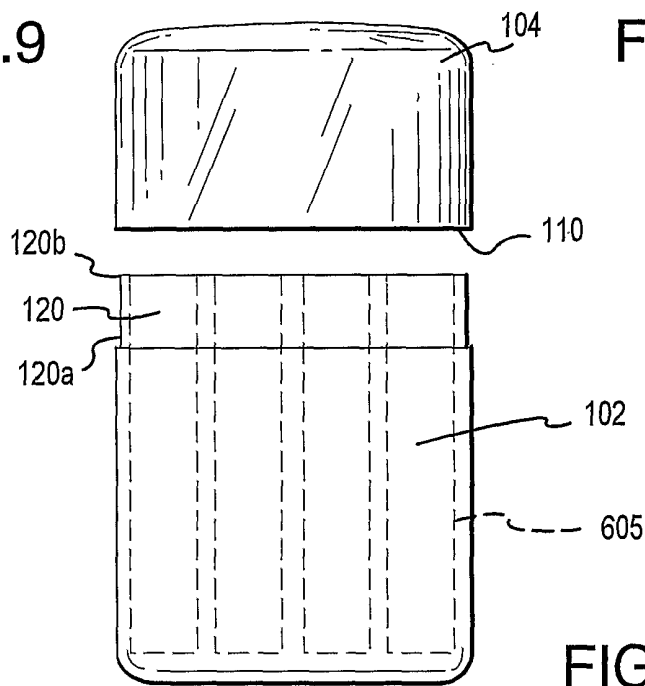


FIG. 11

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Internal Application No

PCT/US 01/03727

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 A24F15/12 A24F15/20 A24F23/00

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 7 A24F A45C

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 practical, search terms used)

WPI Data, PAJ, EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	FR 2 623 696 A (ZAFRA JIMENEZ) 2 June 1989 (1989-06-02) the whole document ---	1,2,4-6, 8,10-15, 17,18,20
X	US 5 277 315 A (PLEIN) 11 January 1994 (1994-01-11) the whole document ---	1,2,4, 12-15
X	FR 1 381 874 A (PHILIP MORRIS INC.) 2 November 1964 (1964-11-02) the whole document ---	1,2,11
X	WO 97 43916 A (TECOM SERVICES AG) 27 November 1997 (1997-11-27) the whole document ---	1,2
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Internationa	Application No
PCT/US	01/03727

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