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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **MICROSOFT CORPORATION** [US/US]; One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (US).(72) Inventors: **GRUBER, Michael**; c/o Microsoft Corporation, LCA - International Patents, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (US). **PONTICELLI, Martin, Josef**; c/o Microsoft Corporation, LCA - International Patents, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (US). **SCHICKLER, Wolfgang**; c/o Microsoft Corporation, LCA - International Patents, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (US).

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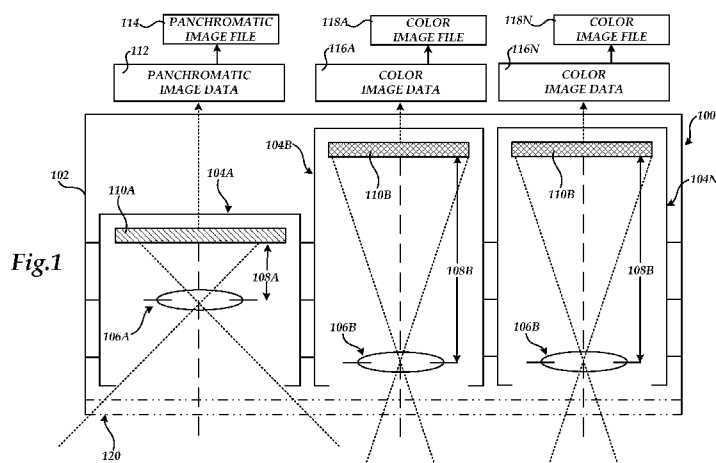
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(54) Title: MULTI-RESOLUTION DIGITAL LARGE FORMAT CAMERA WITH MULTIPLE DETECTOR ARRAYS



(57) Abstract: A large format digital camera has a primary camera system configured for collecting panchromatic image data and two or more secondary camera systems configured for collecting color image data. Each of the secondary camera systems has an optical system that has a longer focal length than the optical system of the primary camera system. The resolution of each of the secondary camera systems is also greater than the resolution of the primary camera system. The footprint of images produced by the primary camera system is larger in size than the footprint of images produced by the secondary camera systems. Images produced by the primary camera system offer information for performing image-based georeferencing by means of photogrammetric triangulation. Images produced by the secondary camera systems offer a high-resolution narrow angle color image suitable for use in ortho image production.

MULTI-RESOLUTION DIGITAL LARGE FORMAT CAMERA WITH MULTIPLE DETECTOR ARRAYS

BACKGROUND

[0001] The optical airborne registration (photogrammetric mapping) of very large
5 areas, such as an entire country, a continent, or even the entire world, has typically been
very costly and time consuming. This is primarily a function of the number of flights
required to map the entirety of a very large area.

[0002] It is with respect to these and other considerations that the disclosure made
herein is presented.

SUMMARY

[0003] Concepts and technologies are described herein for a multi-resolution
digital large format camera with multiple detector arrays. Through an implementation of
the concepts and technologies presented herein, a multi-resolution large format digital
camera having multiple optical systems and detector arrays is provided that is suitable for
15 use in the airborne optical registration of large areas, such as entire countries, continents,
or even the entire world.

[0004] According to embodiments, a multi-resolution large format digital camera
is disclosed herein that is capable of producing images at different photographic scales.
The large format digital camera presented herein can produce panchromatic images having
20 a wide-angle geometry that are suitable for use in a photogrammetric workflow that
includes image-based georeferencing and digital surface modeling. The large format
digital camera disclosed herein can also concurrently produce multiple color images
having a narrow-angle geometry suitable for use in a photogrammetric workflow that
includes ortho image production. An ortho image is an image that shows ground objects
25 in an orthographic projection. Because a single flight utilizing the digital large format
camera presented herein can produce both wide-angle and narrow-angle images, the cost
of mapping a large area can be reduced as compared to previous solutions.

[0005] According to one aspect presented herein, a large format camera is
provided that includes a primary camera system and two or more secondary camera
30 systems. The primary camera system is configured for collecting panchromatic image
data and the secondary camera systems are configured for collecting color image data.
Each of the secondary camera systems has an optical system that has a longer focal length
than the optical system of the primary camera system. The primary camera system and the

secondary camera systems may be mounted within a common housing suitable for installation and use within an aircraft.

[0006] According to other aspects, the primary camera system has an electro optical detector array capable of capturing the panchromatic image data. Each of the secondary camera systems has an electro optical detector array capable of capturing the color image data. The resolution of the electro optical detector in each of the secondary camera systems is greater than the resolution of the electro optical detector in the primary camera system. According to other aspects, the radiometric resolution of the secondary camera systems may be greater than the radiometric resolution of the primary camera system.

[0007] According to other aspects, the primary camera system and the secondary camera systems are configured such that the large format digital camera can produce images at two different image scales offering two different footprints. Images produced by the primary camera system have a larger footprint and are larger in size than those produced by the secondary camera systems and offer information for performing image-based georeferencing by means of photogrammetric triangulation. Images produced by the secondary camera systems have a smaller footprint and are smaller in size than those produced by the primary camera system and offer a high-resolution narrow angle color image. The color images produced by the secondary camera systems may be utilized as a source data set for high-resolution ortho image production. The footprint of the images generated by the secondary camera systems may be configured to overlap the footprint of the primary camera system in a direction perpendicular to a flight path.

[0008] According to other aspects, the large format digital camera may be configured to generate a sequence of consecutive images along a flight line. The large format camera may be further configured such that the primary camera system produces a sequence of consecutive panchromatic images that overlap one another. The secondary camera systems may be configured to produce a sequence of consecutive color images that overlap one another and the images produced by the primary camera system. The overlap between consecutive panchromatic images may be greater than the overlap between consecutive color images.

[0009] This Summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the Detailed Description. This Summary is not intended to identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter, nor is it intended that this Summary be used to limit the scope of the

claimed subject matter. Furthermore, the claimed subject matter is not limited to implementations that solve any or all disadvantages noted in any part of this disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIGURE 1 is a schematic diagram showing aspects of a multi-resolution digital large format camera with multiple detector arrays provided in one embodiment presented herein;

[0011] FIGURE 2 is a schematic diagram showing the footprint of a primary camera system overlaid with the footprints of four secondary camera systems in a large format digital camera presented in one embodiment disclosed herein;

[0012] FIGURE 3 is a perspective diagram showing a perspective view of the footprint of a primary camera system and the footprints of four secondary camera systems in a large format digital camera presented in one embodiment disclosed herein;

[0013] FIGURE 4A is a schematic diagram showing a top-down view that illustrates the overlap between the footprint of a sequence of consecutive images taken with a primary camera system and the footprint of a sequence of consecutive images taken with four secondary camera systems in a large format digital camera presented one embodiment disclosed herein;

[0014] FIGURE 4B is a schematic diagram showing a perspective view that illustrates the overlap between the footprint of a sequence of consecutive images taken along a flight line with a primary camera system and the footprint of a sequence of consecutive images taken with four secondary camera systems in a large format digital camera presented one embodiment disclosed herein; and

[0015] FIGURE 5 is a flow diagram showing one illustrative process presented herein for the airborne optical registration of large areas using a multi-resolution digital large format camera with multiple detector arrays provided in one embodiment presented herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] The following detailed description is directed to a multi-resolution digital large format camera with multiple detector arrays. In the following detailed description, references are made to the accompanying drawings that form a part hereof, and which are shown by way of illustration specific embodiments or examples. Referring now to the drawings, in which like numerals represent like elements throughout the several figures, aspects of a multi-resolution digital large format camera with multiple detector arrays will be presented.

[0017] FIGURE 1 is a schematic diagram showing aspects of a large format digital camera 100 having multiple optical systems 106A-106B and detector arrays 110A-110B provided in one embodiment presented herein. As shown in FIGURE 1, the large format digital camera 100 includes a primary camera system 104A and two or more secondary camera systems 104B-104N. Although FIGURE 1 illustrates two secondary camera systems 104B-104N, it should be appreciated that other embodiments might include additional secondary camera systems 104B-104N. For instance, in an embodiment described below, the large format digital camera 100 includes four secondary camera systems 104B-104N.

[0018] According to one embodiment, the primary camera system 104A includes an optical system 106A that has a focal length 108A. Each of the secondary camera systems 104B-104N has an optical system 106B that has a focal length 108B that is longer than the focal length 108A of the optical system 106A. In this manner, the secondary camera systems 104B-104N are configured to produce images having a narrower field of view than images produced by the primary camera system 104A. Images produced by the primary camera system 104A have a wider field of view than images produced by the secondary camera systems 104B-104N. The optical systems 106A-106B may include other conventional optical elements to produce a suitable image at the desired focal length.

[0019] According to one implementation, the primary camera system 104A is configured with an electro optical detector array 110A capable of capturing panchromatic image data 112. As known in the art, a panchromatic image sensor, such as the electro optical detector array 110A, is sensitive to all or most of the entire visible spectrum. According to embodiments, each of the secondary camera systems 104B-104N is configured with an electro optical detector array 110B capable of capturing color image data 116. For instance, the secondary camera systems 104B-104N might be equipped with a suitable charge coupled device ("CCD") array configured for capturing the color image data 116A-116N, respectively. According to embodiments, the camera system presented herein is a frame camera (also referred to as a framing camera), as opposed to a camera that utilizes push-broom sensing.

[0020] It should be appreciated that the detector arrays 110A-110B comprise arrays of individual electro-optical detectors, e.g., semiconductor devices that output an electric signal, the magnitude of which is dependent on the intensity of light energy incident on such electro-optical detector. Therefore, the signal from each electro-optical detector in the arrays 110A-110B is indicative of light energy intensity from a pixel area

of the portion of the object or terrain being photographed, and the signals from all of the individual electro-optical detectors in the arrays 110A-110B are indicative of light energy intensity from all of the pixel areas of the portion of the object or terrain being photographed. Consequently, the signals from the electro-optical detectors in each of the detector arrays 110A-110B, together, are indicative of the pattern of light energy from the portion of the object being photographed, so a sub-image of the portion of the object can be produced from such signals. First, however, the signals are amplified, digitized, processed, and stored, as is well known to those of ordinary skill in the art.

[0021] The electro-optical detector arrays 110A-110B are connected electrically by suitable conductors to a control circuit (not shown), which includes at least a microprocessor, input/output circuitry, memory, and a power supply for driving the electro-optical detector arrays 110A-110B, retrieving image data from of the arrays 110A-110B, and storing the image data. Other data processing functions, for example combining images and/or performing image display functions may be accomplished within the large format digital camera 100 or by other external data processing equipment.

[0022] According to implementations, the resolution of the electro optical detector arrays 104B in the secondary camera systems 104B-104N are greater than the resolution of the electro optical detector array 104A in the primary camera system 104A. In this manner, the large format digital camera 110 can produce a panchromatic image file 114 from the primary camera system 104A using a wide-angle geometry that is suitable for use in a photogrammetric workflow that includes image-based georeferencing and digital surface modeling. The large format digital camera 110 can also simultaneously produce multiple higher-resolution color image files from the secondary camera systems 104B-104N using a narrow-angle geometry suitable for use in a photogrammetric workflow that includes ortho image production.

[0023] As described briefly above, the primary camera system 104A and the secondary camera systems 104B-104N might be mounted within a common housing 102. In this embodiment, a front glass plate 120 might be mounted within the housing 102 to protect the optical systems 106A-106B. In alternate implementations, the primary camera system 104A and the secondary camera systems 104B-104N are mounted in separate housings (not shown). In both cases, the primary camera system 104A, the secondary camera systems 104B-104N, and the housing 102 are configured for mounting and use within an aircraft.

[0024] FIGURE 2 is a schematic diagram showing the footprint 202 of the primary camera system 104A overlaid with footprints 204A-204B of the secondary camera systems 104B-104N in the large format digital camera 100 according in one embodiment disclosed herein. In this embodiment, the large format digital camera 100 includes four
5 secondary camera systems 104B-104N configured with the footprints 204A-204D illustrated in FIGURE 2, respectively. As shown in FIGURE 2, the primary camera system 104A and the secondary camera systems 104B-104N are configured in one embodiment such that the large format digital camera 100 can produce overlapping images at two different image scales offering two different footprints 202 and 204A-204D.
10 According to other embodiments, two primary camera systems 104A and four secondary camera systems 104B-104N are utilized.

[0025] According to one embodiment, images produced by the primary camera system 104A have a larger footprint 202 and are larger in size than those produced by the secondary camera systems 104B-104N. Images produced by the secondary camera
15 systems 104B-104N have smaller footprint 204A-204D and are smaller in size than those produced by the primary camera system 104A and offer a higher resolution narrow angle color image.

[0026] As also illustrated in FIGURE 2, the four secondary camera systems 104B-104N may be configured such that the footprints 204A-204D of the secondary camera
20 systems 104B-104N cover the footprint 202 of the primary camera system 104A in a direction perpendicular to a flight line 400. In this way, the footprints 204A-204D of the four secondary camera systems 104B-104N cover a “stripe” of the footprint 202 of the primary camera system 104A in a direction perpendicular to the flight line 400. By overlapping the footprints 202 and 204A-204D in the manner shown in FIGURE 2, a
25 portion of the images produced by the primary camera system 104A can be enhanced by the images produced by the secondary camera systems 104B-104N. FIGURE 3 provides a perspective view of the footprint 200 of the primary camera system 104A and the footprints 204A-204N of the four secondary camera systems 104B-104N when an image is taken from a common point 302 by the primary camera system 104A and the four
30 secondary camera systems 104B-104N.

[0027] FIGURE 4A shows a top-down view that illustrates the overlap between the footprints 202A-202D of a sequence of consecutive images taken with the primary camera system 104A and the footprint 204A-204D of a sequence of consecutive images taken with four secondary camera systems 104B-104N in the large format digital camera

100 in one embodiment disclosed herein. As discussed briefly above, the large format digital camera 100 may be mounted and configured for use within an aircraft (not shown). When the aircraft is flown according to a well-defined flight line 400, the large format digital camera 100 may be configured to capture a sequence of images along the flight line
5 400. FIGURE 4A illustrates the footprints 202A-202D of a sequence of images taken using the primary camera system 104A and the footprints 204A-204D of a sequence of images taken using by four secondary camera systems 104B-104N along the flight line 400.

[0028] As illustrated in FIGURE 4A, the large format camera 100 may be further
10 configured such that the primary camera system 104A produces a sequence of consecutive panchromatic images that have footprints 202A-202D wherein consecutive sequential images overlap one another. The secondary camera systems 104B-104N may similarly be configured to produce a sequence of consecutive color images that have footprints 204A-204D wherein consecutive sequential images overlap one another and also overlap the
15 images produced by the primary camera system 104A. The overlap between the footprints of consecutive panchromatic images may be greater than the overlap between the footprints of consecutive color images.

[0029] FIGURE 4B is a perspective diagram illustrating the overlap between the footprints 202A-202D of a sequence of consecutive images taken on several flight lines
20 400 with the primary camera system 104A and the footprints 204A-204D of a sequence of consecutive images taken with four secondary camera systems 104B-104N in the large format digital camera 100 in one embodiment disclosed herein. If, as illustrated in FIGURE 4B, images are produced by the primary camera system 104A and the secondary camera systems 104B-104N along multiple well-defined flight lines by means of aerial
25 photogrammetric image acquisition, the footprints 202 of the primary camera system 104A overlap one another in the sequence of exposures along the flight lines. The footprints 204A-204D of the secondary camera systems 104B-104N also overlap with the footprints 202A-202D of the primary camera system 104A and the footprints 204A-204D of the four secondary camera systems 104B-104N.

[0030] Along the flight line 400 images are therefore produced in such a way that
30 the sequence of images produced by the primary camera system 104A and the images produced by the secondary camera systems 104B-104N create continuous image strips of overlapping images. The flight lines may be defined in such a way that the large format digital camera 100 captures images covering an entire project area.

[0031] According to various embodiments, image acquisition by the secondary camera systems 104B-104N may be triggered substantially simultaneously with image acquisition by the primary camera system 104A and, accordingly, images from the secondary camera systems 104B-104N may be acquired at the same position and with the same camera attitude as images from the primary camera system 104A. Alternatively, the trigger for the secondary camera systems 104B-104N may be independent from the primary camera system 104A, e.g., may be at a higher rate than images captured by the primary camera system. Either embodiment, as well as any combination thereof, is contemplated to be within the scope of embodiments presented herein.

[0032] When the primary camera system 104A and the secondary camera systems 104B-104N are triggered at the same time, the images produced by the secondary camera systems 104B-104N may be registered to the images produced by the primary camera system 104A using the same trigger event. Additionally, images produced by the secondary camera systems 104B-104N may be calibrated to images of the primary camera system 104A through the use of a precisely surveyed and well-structured object (known as a “calibration object”).

[0033] The images of the secondary camera systems 104B-104N may also be stitched to the images of the primary camera system 104B using traditional methods. Additionally, the images generated by the primary camera system 104A can be used to reconstruct the three dimensional form of an object (for instance, the buildings of a city by means of a digital surface model) and the images of the secondary camera system 104B, with a higher geometric resolution, may be used to extract high resolution photo texture which can then used for the production of ortho image maps.

[0034] Referring now to FIGURE 5 additional details will be provided regarding the embodiments presented herein for a large format digital camera 100 having multiple optical systems and detector arrays. In particular, FIGURE 5 is a flow diagram showing a routine 500 that illustrates one process presented herein for the airborne optical registration of large areas using the large format digital camera 100 described above.

[0035] The routine 500 begins at operation 502, where the large format digital camera 100 is calibrated. As discussed above, the large format digital camera 100 may be calibrated using a calibration object such that the footprint of images produced by the secondary camera systems 104B-104N overlap the footprint of images produced by the primary camera system 104A in the manner discussed above. As also discussed above, the large format digital camera 100 may be installed in an aircraft and utilized to capture

ground images as the aircraft is flown along a well-defined flight line. Such images may be captured and stored in an appropriate digital storage device integrated with or external to the large format digital camera 100.

[0036] From operation 502, the routine 500 proceeds to operation 504 where
5 panchromatic image files 114 are received from the primary camera system 104A. The routine then proceeds to operation 506, where the color image files 118A-118N are received from the secondary camera systems 104B-104N. Once the images files have been received from all of the camera systems 104A-104N, the routine 500 proceeds to operation 508, where the image files 114 from the primary camera system 104A are co-
10 registered with the image files 118A-118N from the secondary camera systems 104B-104N.

[0037] From operation 508, the routine 500 proceeds to operation 510, where the image files 114 from the primary camera system 104A are utilized in a photogrammetric workflow that includes image-based georeferencing and digital surface modeling. From
15 operation 510, the routine 500 proceeds to operation 512, where the image files 118A-118N from the secondary camera systems 104B-104N are utilized for ortho image production. The routine 500 proceeds from operation 512 to operation 514, where it ends.

[0038] Based on the foregoing, it should be appreciated that a multi-resolution digital large format camera 100 with multiple detector arrays has been disclosed herein
20 that is suitable for use in the airborne optical registration of large areas. It should also be appreciated that the subject matter described above is provided by way of illustration only and should not be construed as limiting. Various modifications and changes may be made to the subject matter described herein without following the example embodiments and applications illustrated and described, and without departing from the true spirit and scope
25 of the present invention, which is set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A large format framing camera, comprising:

a primary camera system configured for collecting panchromatic image data, the primary camera system comprising an optical system having a first focal length; and

5 two or more secondary camera systems configured for collecting color image data, each of the secondary camera systems comprising an optical system having a second focal length, and wherein the second focal length is longer than the first focal length.

2. The large format camera of claim 1, wherein the primary camera system further comprises an electro optical detector array having a first resolution for collecting
10 the panchromatic image data, wherein each of the secondary camera systems further comprises an electro optical detector array having a second resolution for collecting the color image data, and wherein the second resolution is greater than the first resolution.

3. The large format camera of claim 2, wherein the primary camera system has a footprint, wherein each of the secondary camera systems has a footprint, and
15 wherein the footprint of each of the secondary camera systems is smaller than the footprint of the primary camera system.

4. The large format camera of claim 3, wherein the footprints of the secondary camera systems overlap such that the footprints of the secondary camera systems cover the footprint of the primary camera system in a direction perpendicular to a flight line.

20 5. The large format camera of claim 4, wherein the large format camera is configured to output one image comprising the panchromatic image data and two or more images comprising the color image data.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein a radiometric resolution of each of the secondary camera systems is greater than a radiometric resolution of the primary camera
25 system.

7. The large format camera of claim 6, wherein the primary camera system and the two or more secondary camera systems are mounted within a single housing.

8. The large format camera of claim 7, wherein the primary camera system is configured to generate a consecutive sequence of first images, wherein each of the
30 secondary camera systems are configured to generate a sequence of consecutive second images, wherein consecutive first images overlap one another, consecutive second images overlap one another, and wherein the overlap of the first images is greater than the overlap of the second images.

9. The large format camera of claim 8, wherein the images generated by the primary camera system are suitable for use in a photogrammetric workflow that includes image-based georeferencing and digital surface modeling.

10. The large format camera of claim 9, wherein the images generated by the secondary camera systems are suitable for use in a photogrammetric workflow that includes ortho image production.

11. A large format framing camera, comprising:

a single primary camera system configured for collecting panchromatic image data, the primary camera system comprising an optical system having a first focal length and being configured to output a first image comprising the panchromatic image data, the first image having a first footprint; and

two or more secondary camera systems configured for collecting color image data, each of the secondary camera systems comprising an optical system having a second focal length and being configured to output a second image comprising the color image data, the second image having a second footprint, and wherein the second focal length is longer than the first focal length and the second footprint is smaller than the first footprint.

12. The large format camera of claim 11, wherein the footprints of each of the secondary camera systems overlap such that the footprints of the secondary camera systems cover the first footprint in a direction perpendicular to a flight line.

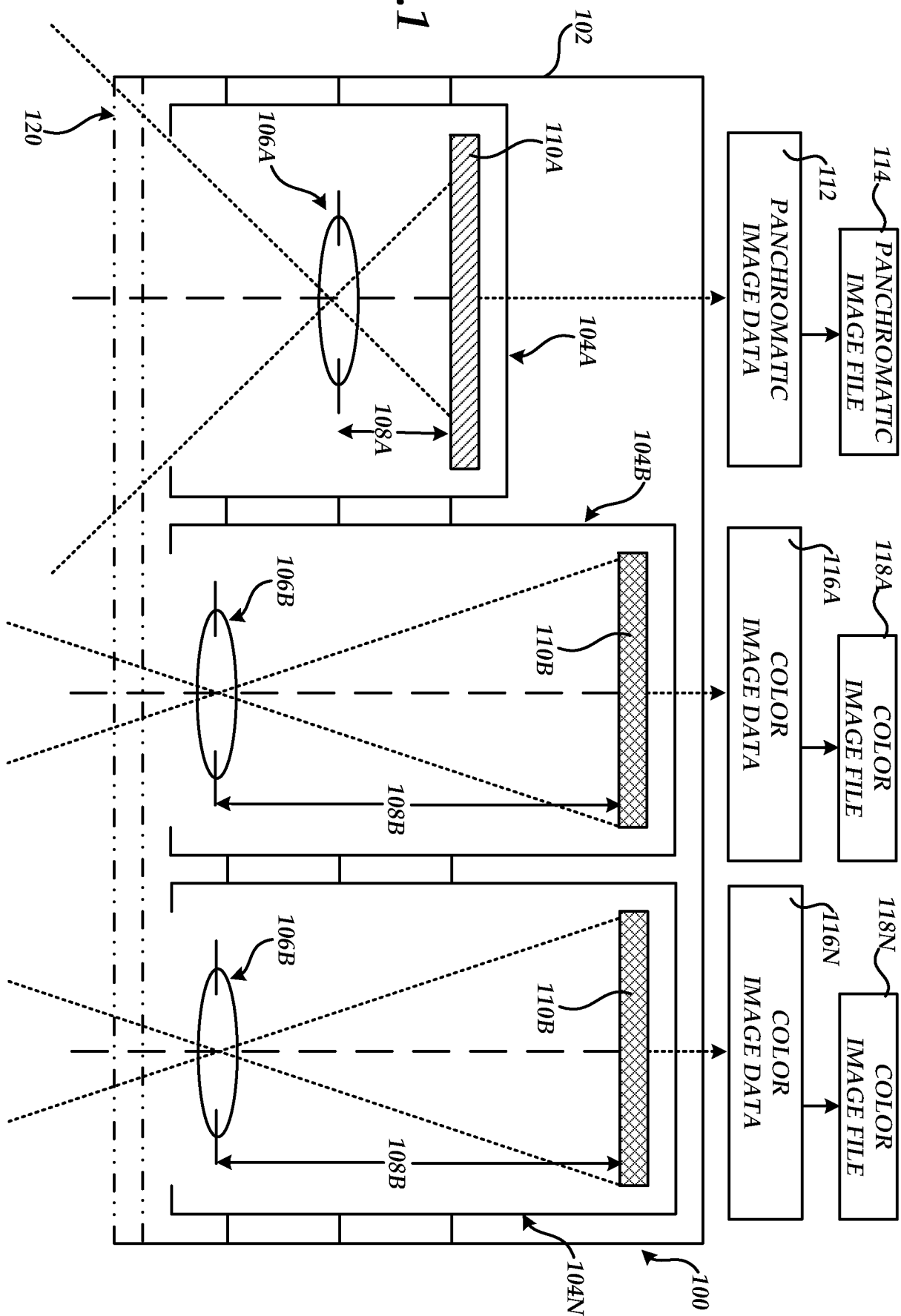
13. The large format camera of claim 12, wherein the primary camera system and the secondary camera systems are mounted within a single housing.

14. The large format camera of claim 13, wherein the primary camera system further comprises an electro optical detector array having a first resolution for collecting the panchromatic image data, wherein each of the secondary camera systems further comprises an electro optical detector array having a second resolution for collecting the color image data, and wherein the second resolution is greater than the first resolution.

15. The large format camera of claim 14, wherein the primary camera system is configured to generate a sequence of consecutive first images, wherein each of the secondary camera systems are configured to generate a sequence of consecutive second images, wherein consecutive first images overlap one another, consecutive second images overlap one another, and wherein the overlap of the first images is greater than the overlap of the second images.

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Fig.1



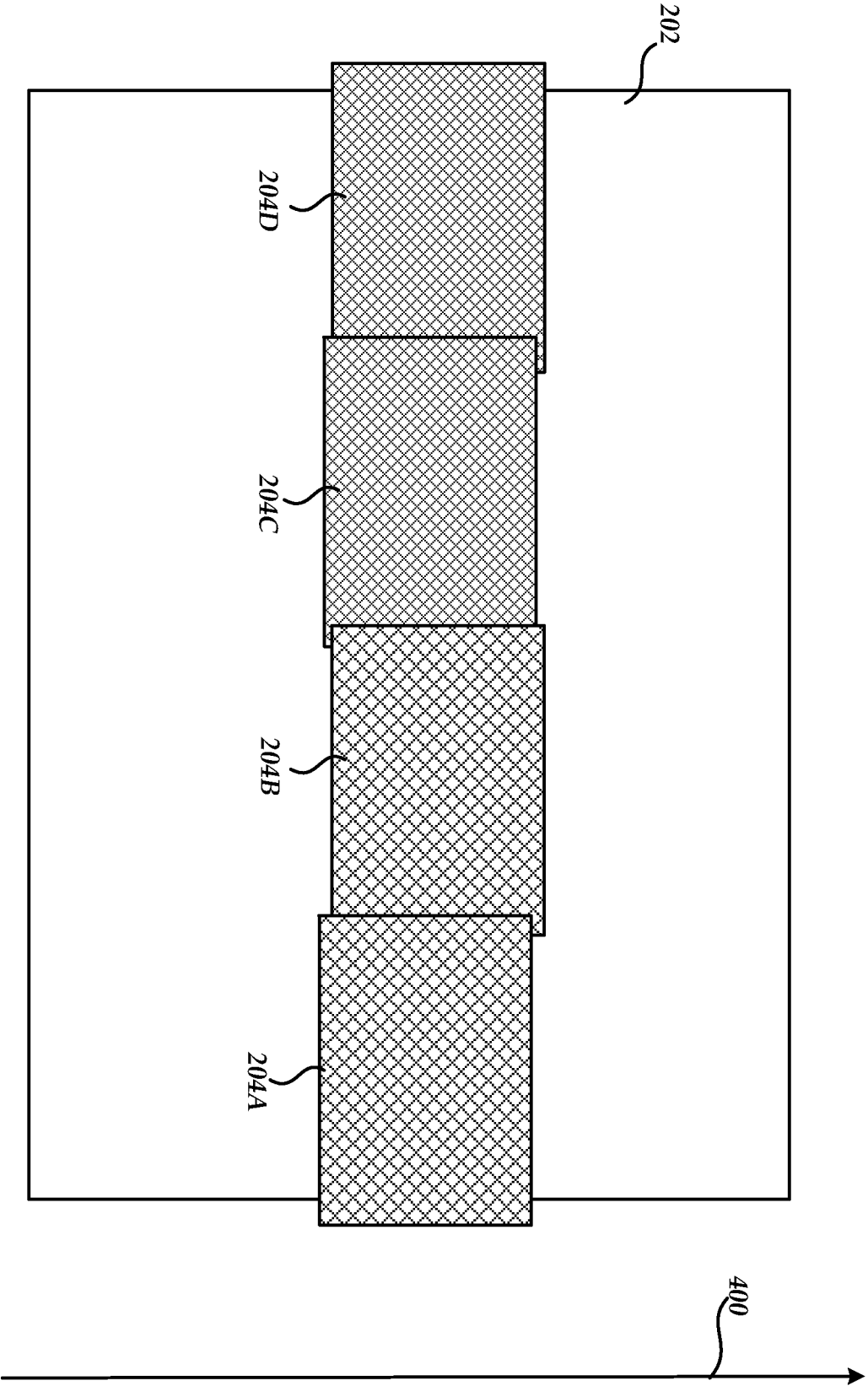
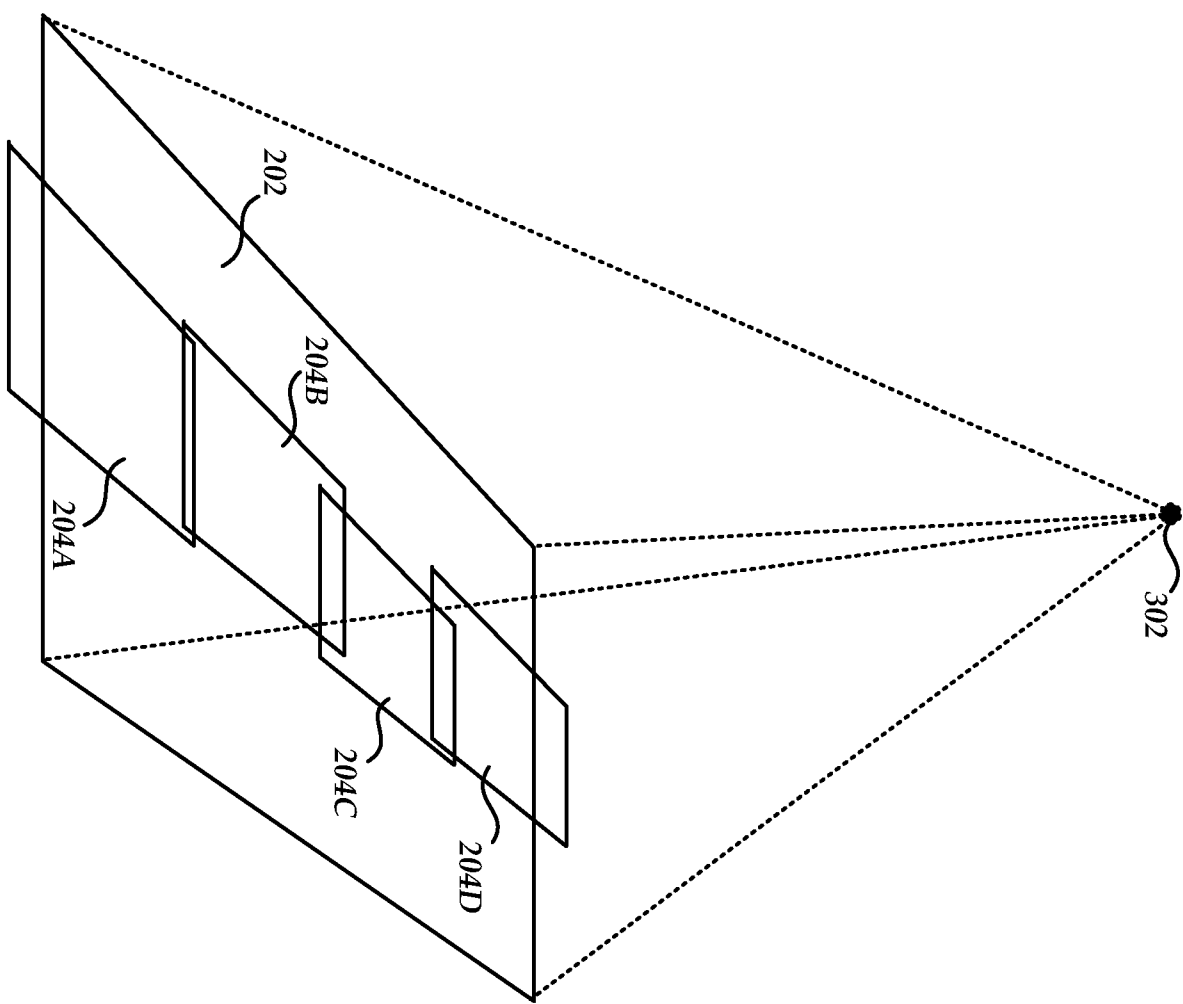


Fig. 2

Fig.3



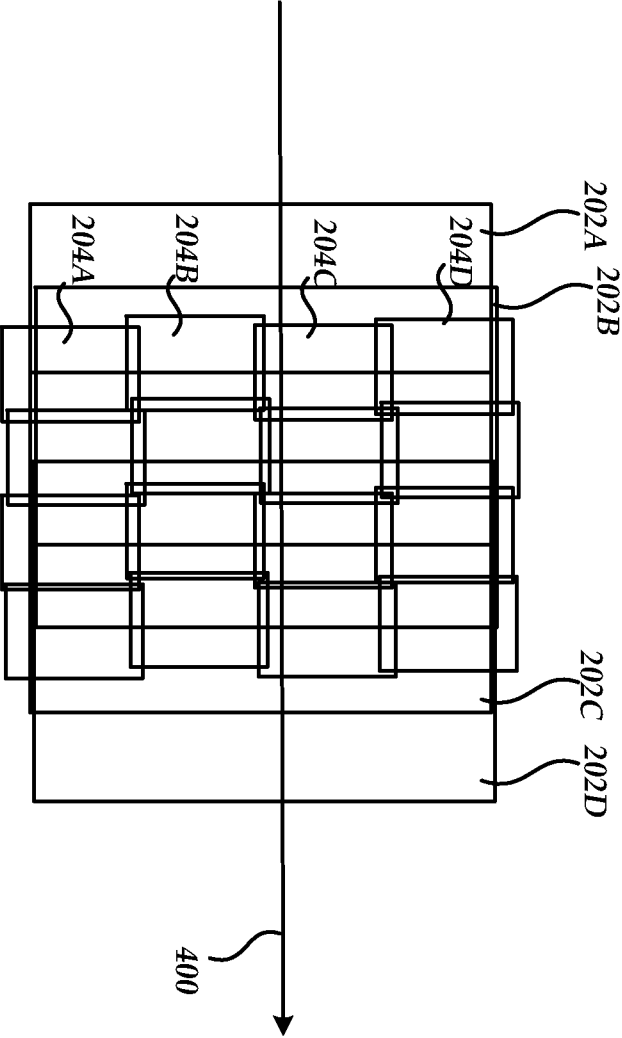


Fig. 4A

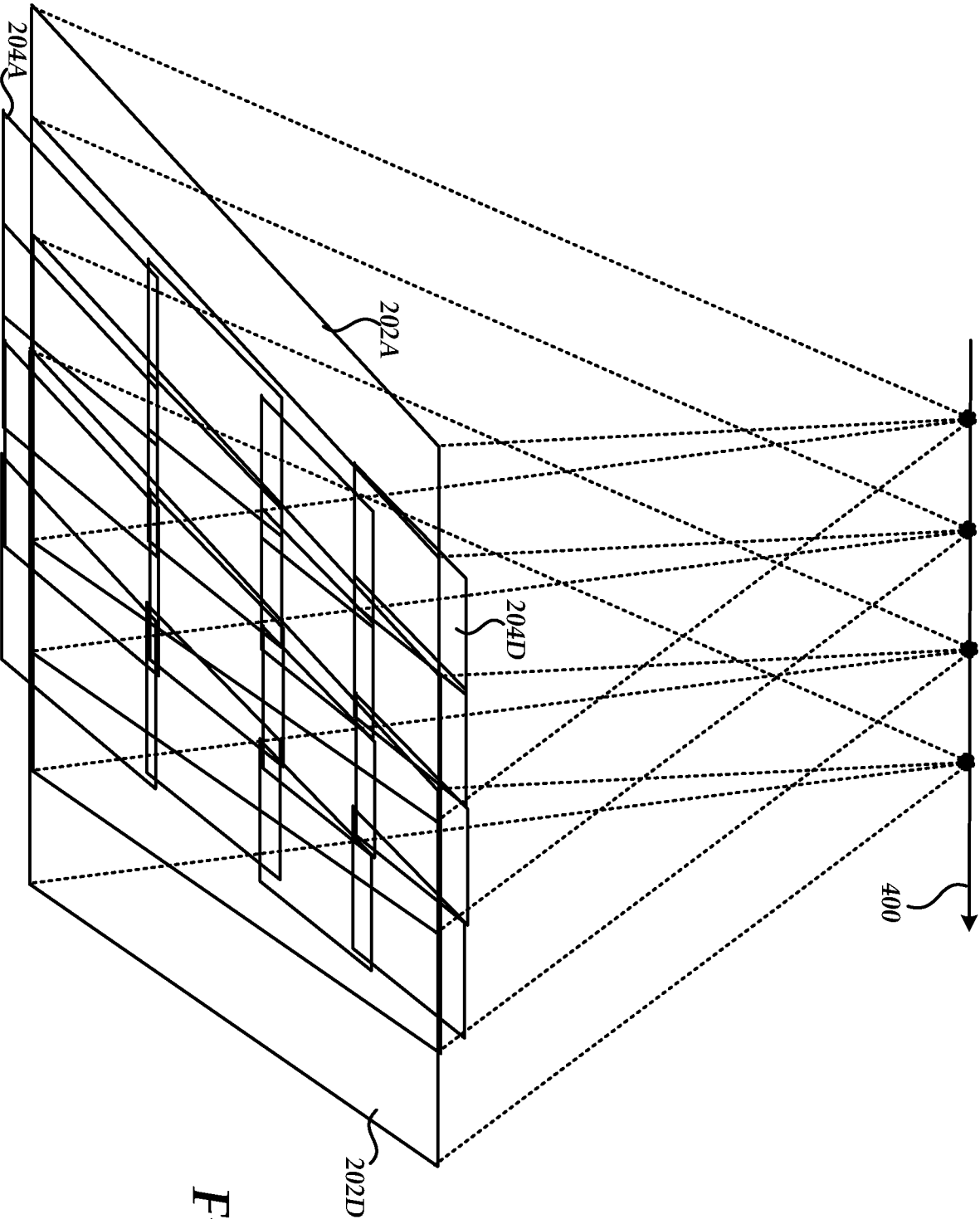
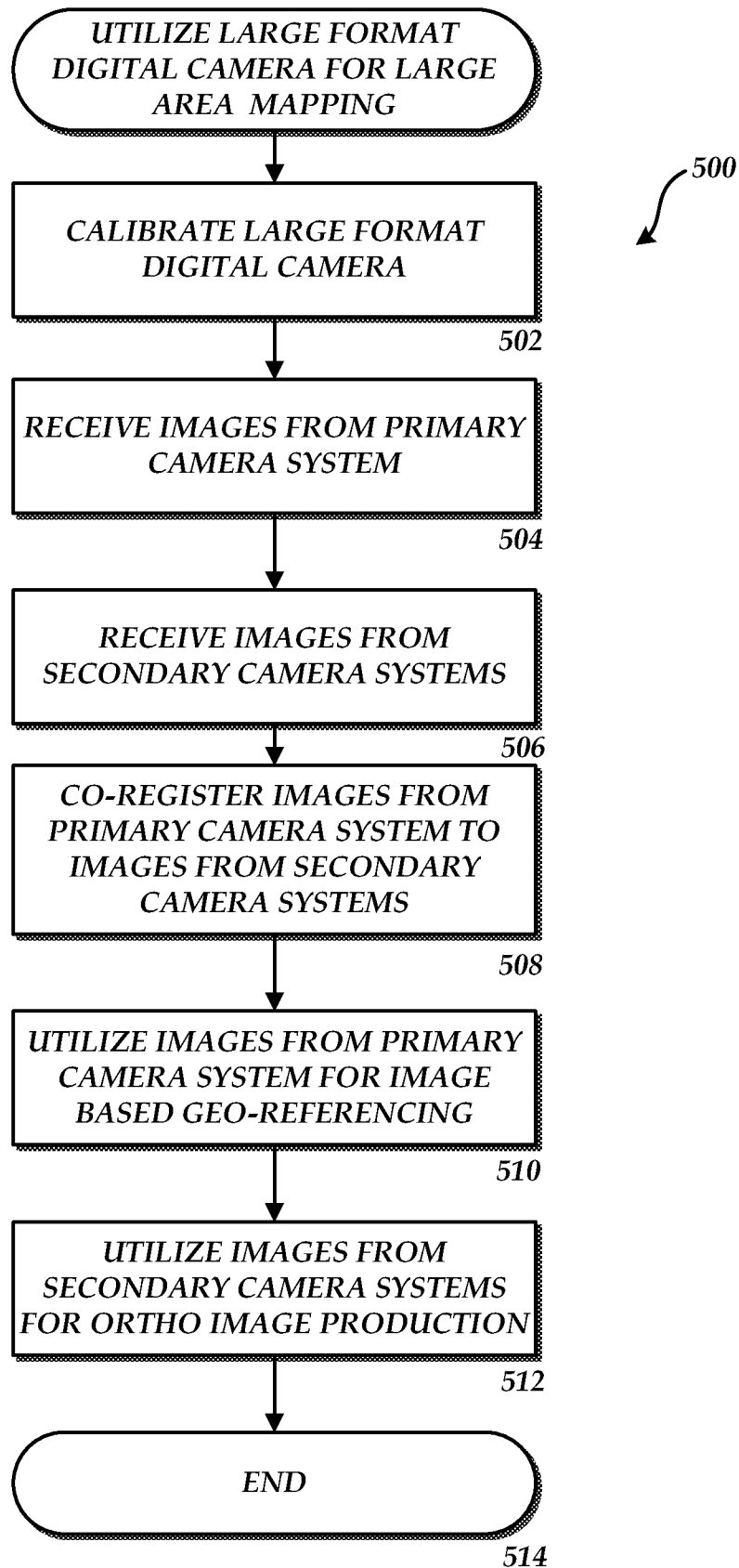


Fig.4B

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*Fig.5*