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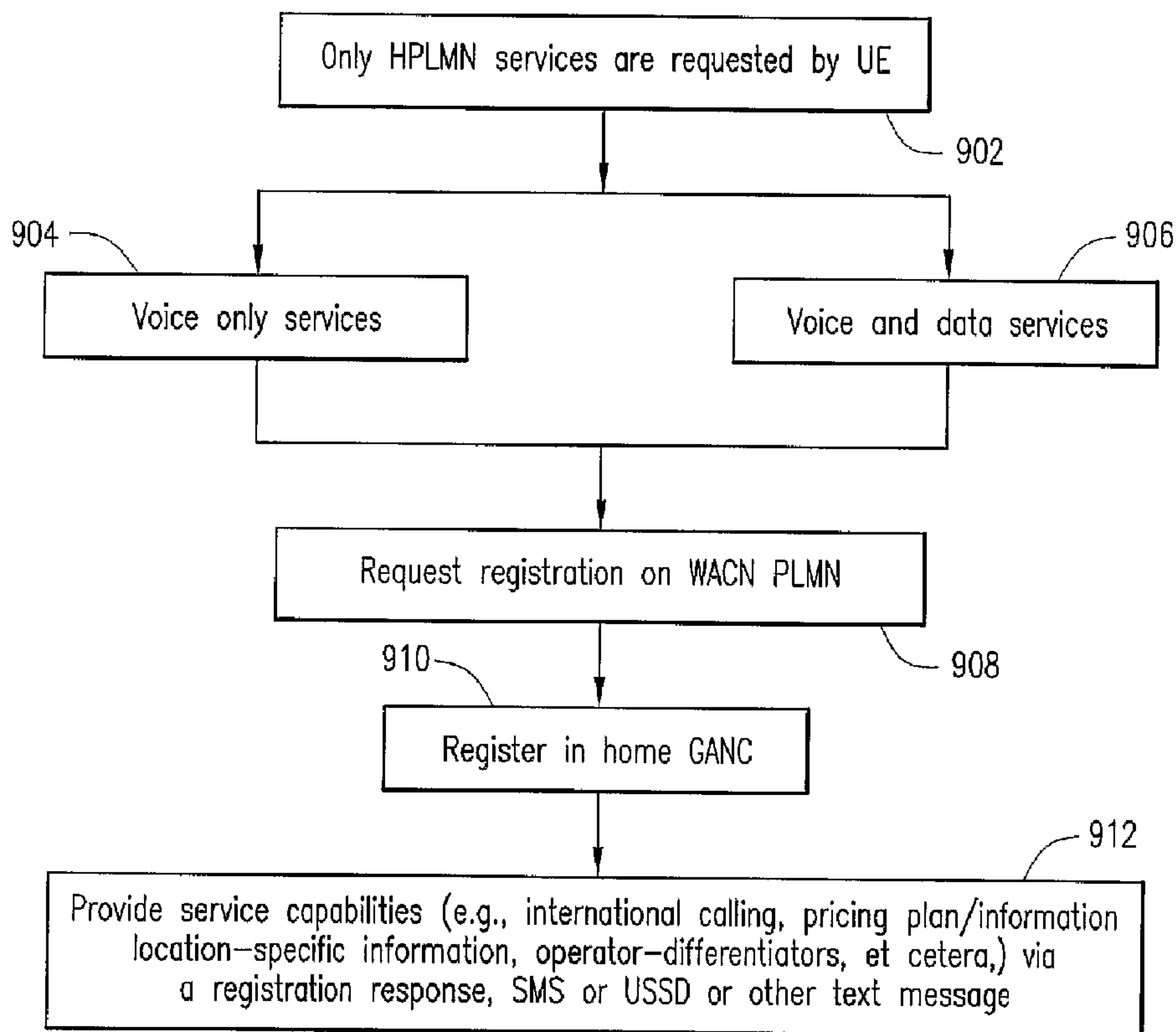
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(54) Titre : SYSTEME ET PROCEDE POUR LA FOURNITURE DE MESSAGERIE A DIFFERENCIATION D'OPERATEUR
A UN DISPOSITIF D'EQUIPEMENT D'UTILISATEUR SANS FIL

(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING OPERATOR-DIFFERENTIATED MESSAGING TO A WIRELESS
USER EQUIPMENT (UE) DEVICE



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

In one embodiment, a scheme is disclosed for providing operator-differentiated messaging to a user equipment (UE) device that is operable in wide area cellular network (WACN) bands as well as in wireless access network bands (e.g., GAN bands and/or UMA

(57) **Abrégé(suite)/Abstract(continued):**

bands). A network node (e.g., a GAN controller (GANC) or UMA network controller (UNC)) is equipped with logic for resolving service requirements as well as network information gathered by the UE device. Based thereon, a response message is transmitted to the UE device, the response message including supplementary fields for carrying operator-differentiated information in free-form text.

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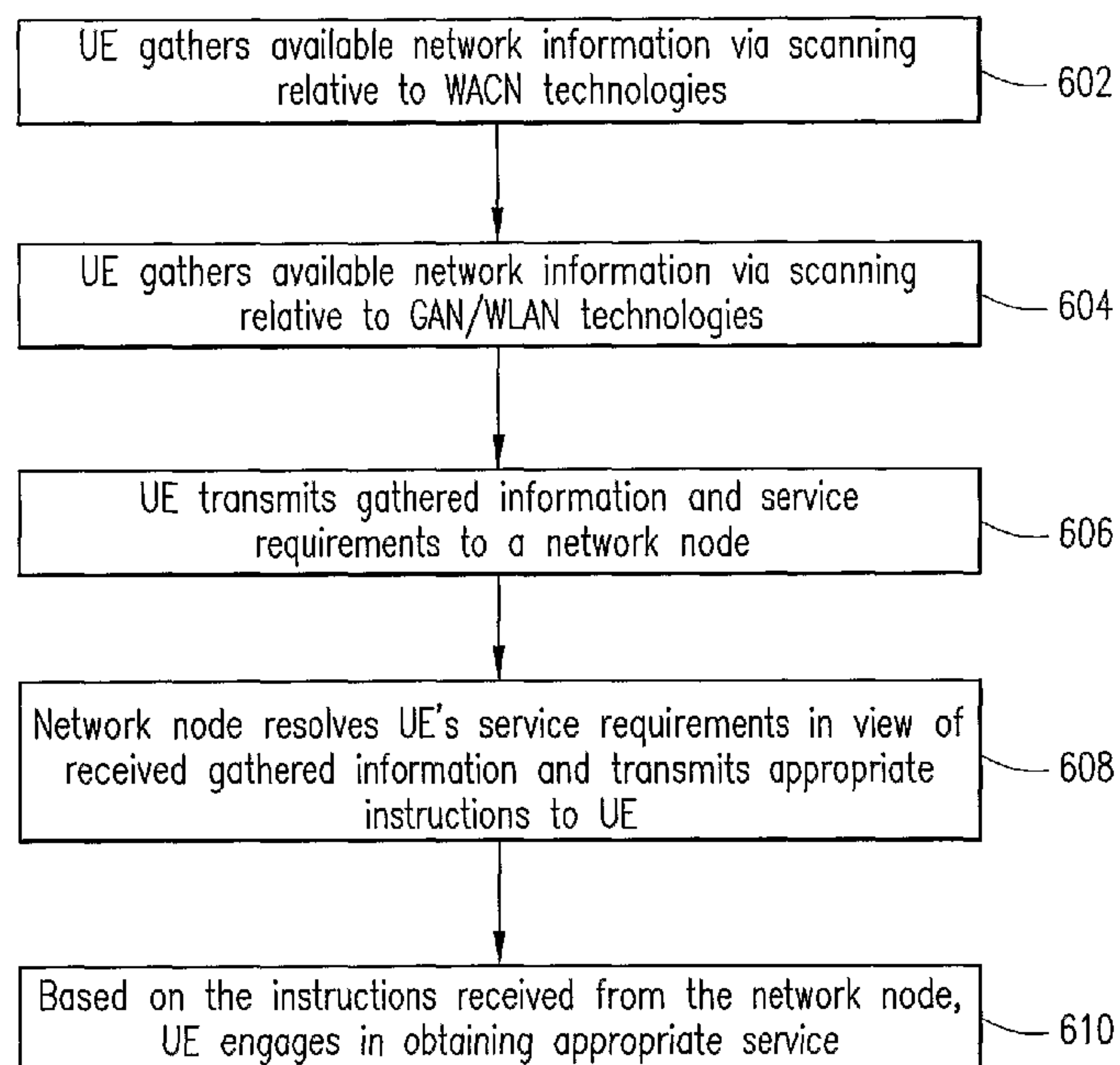
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**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING OPERATOR-DIFFERENTIATED
MESSAGING TO A WIRELESS USER EQUIPMENT (UE) DEVICE**

FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present patent disclosure generally relates to communication networks. More particularly, and not by way of any limitation, the present patent application is directed to a system and method for providing operator-differentiated messaging to a wireless user equipment (UE) device operable in a wireless access network (AN) space that may be interconnected to a wide area cellular network (WACN) space.

BACKGROUND

Wireless access networks have become a key element of a variety of telecommunications network environments. As to enterprise networks, they provide convenient access to network resources for workers carrying portable computers and mobile handheld devices, and for guests or temporary workers similarly equipped. They also provide a cost-effective alternative to relocating physical Ethernet jacks in environments where facilities are moved or changed frequently. In addition, wireless access points operable with diverse communication/computing devices are becoming ubiquitous in public environments such as, e.g., hotels, airports, restaurants, and coffee shops. With the increase in high-speed Internet access, the use of access point(s) in the users' homes is also envisioned and has started for other applications.

Concomitantly, several developments in the user equipment (UE) arena are also taking place to take advantage of the capabilities offered by wireless access networks. Of particular interest is the integration of cellular phones with the capability to interface with a wireless access network such as a wireless Local Area Network (WLAN). With such "dual mode" devices becoming available, it should be appreciated that some interworking mechanism between the cellular network and WLAN would be required so as to facilitate efficient handover of services from one type of network to the other.

Current GAN specifications provide that a UE device (e.g., a mobile station or MS) may register on a wide area cellular network (WACN) such as a Public Land Mobile Network (PLMN) if it is discovered and allowed according to applicable 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) standards. Also, the UE device may be allowed to register on a GAN under certain circumstances where there is no WACN connectivity. Additionally,

similar network connectivity behavior may be encountered where Unlicensed Mobile Access (UMA) technologies are deployed as well. However, several important issues arise in such a scenario e.g., number plan compatibility, service handover, emergency call routing, just to name a few, especially when connectivity to a PLMN is desired via a GAN or UMA-based access network.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A more complete understanding of the embodiments of the present patent application may be had by reference to the following Detailed Description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 depicts a generalized network environment wherein an embodiment of the present patent disclosure may be practiced;

FIG. 2 depicts an exemplary embodiment of a network environment where a user equipment (UE) device is operably disposed in accordance with the teachings of the present patent disclosure;

FIG. 3 depicts a functional block diagram of a network system where a wide area cellular network (WACN) such as a Public Land Mobile Network (PLMN) is accessible through a generic access network (GAN) and associated controller (GANC);

FIG. 4A depicts an exemplary embodiment of a circuit-switched (CS) protocol stack operable with the network system shown in FIG. 3;

FIG. 4B depicts an exemplary embodiment of a packet-switched (PS) protocol stack operable with the network system shown in FIG. 3;

FIG. 5A depicts a network arrangement where an access network (GAN or Wireless LAN) is operable to connect to a plurality of PLMNs according to one embodiment wherein each PLMN is served by a corresponding GANC;

FIG. 5B depicts a network arrangement where an access network (GAN or Wireless LAN) is operable to connect to a plurality of PLMNs according to one embodiment wherein a plurality of virtual GANC partitions on a single GANC are operable to serve the corresponding PLMNs;

FIG. 6 is a flowchart of a generalized network discovery and selection scheme according to one embodiment;

FIG. 7A is a flowchart of a method of gathering network information according to one embodiment for purposes of the present disclosure;

FIG. 7B is a flowchart of a GANC discovery and registration method according to one embodiment;

FIGS. 8A and 8B are flowcharts associated with a generalized GANC selection and redirection scheme according to one embodiment;

5 FIG. 9 is a flowchart associated with a scheme for providing operator-differentiated messaging to a wireless UE device according to one implementation of the present disclosure;

10 FIG. 10 is a flowchart associated with a scheme for providing operator-differentiated messaging to a wireless UE device according to another implementation of the present disclosure;

FIG. 11 depicts a functional block diagram of an exemplary GANC/UNC node according to one embodiment; and

FIG. 12 depicts a block diagram of an embodiment of a UE device operable according to the teachings of the present patent disclosure.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present patent disclosure is broadly directed to a scheme for providing operator-differentiated messaging to a UE device that is operable in wide area cellular network (WACN) bands as well as in wireless access network bands (e.g., GAN bands and/or UMA bands). A network node (e.g., a GAN controller (GANC) or a UMA network controller (UNC)) is equipped with logic for resolving service requirements as well as network information gathered by the UE device. Based thereon, a response message is transmitted to the UE device, the response message including supplementary fields for carrying operator-differentiated information in free-form text.

25 In one aspect, an embodiment of a network messaging method is disclosed which comprises: gathering network information by a UE device via scanning in at least one band; transmitting by the UE device at least one of the network information and a set of service requirements to a network node via a registration request message; and responsive to the registration request message, transmitting a response message by the network node to the UE device, the response message including operator-differentiated textual information.

30 In another aspect, an embodiment of a network messaging system is disclosed which comprises: means associated with a UE device for gathering network information

via scanning in at least one band; means associated with the UE device for transmitting at least one of the network information and a set of service requirements to a network node via a registration request message; and means associated with the network node, responsive to the registration request message, for transmitting a response message to the
5 UE device, the response message including operator-differentiated textual information.

In a still further aspect, an embodiment of a UE device is disclosed which comprises: a logic module for facilitating identification of a set of appropriate service requirements relative to operating the UE device; a communication subsystem for gathering network information via scanning in at least one band and for transmitting at
10 least one of the gathered network information and the service requirements to a network node via a registration request message; and a logic module for processing operator-differentiated textual information received from the network node via a response message responsive to the registration request message.

In yet another aspect, an embodiment of a GANC node operable with a UE device
15 disposed in a wireless environment is disclosed which comprises: means for receiving at least one of network information and a set of service requirements from the UE device via a registration request message; and means, operable responsive to the registration request message, for transmitting a response message to the UE device, the response message including operator-differentiated textual information.

20 A system and method of the present patent disclosure will now be described with reference to various examples of how the embodiments can best be made and used. Like reference numerals are used throughout the description and several views of the drawings to indicate like or corresponding parts, wherein the various elements are not necessarily drawn to scale. Referring now to the drawings, and more particularly to FIG. 1, depicted
25 therein is an exemplary generalized network environment 100 wherein an embodiment of the present patent disclosure may be practiced. A user equipment (UE) device 102 may comprise any portable computer (e.g., laptops, palmtops, or handheld computing devices) or a mobile communications device (e.g., cellular phones or data-enabled handheld devices capable of receiving and sending messages, web browsing, et cetera), or any
30 enhanced personal digital assistant (PDA) device or integrated information appliance capable of email, video mail, Internet access, corporate data access, messaging, calendaring and scheduling, information management, and the like, that is preferably operable in one or more modes of operation. For example, UE device 102 may operate in

the cellular telephony band frequencies as well as wireless Local Area Network (WLAN) bands, or possibly in the WLAN bands alone. Further, other bands in which the UE device could operate wirelessly may comprise Wi-Max bands or one or more satellite bands. Additionally, the network environment 100 is comprised of three broad categories of communication spaces capable of providing service to UE device 102. In wide area cellular network (WACN) space 104, there may exist any number of Public Land Mobile Networks (PLMNs) that are operable to provide cellular telephony services which may or may not include packet-switched data services. Depending on the coverage area(s) and whether the user is roaming, WACN space 104 can include a number of cellular RANs, associated home networks (i.e., home PLMNs or HPLMNs) 110 and visited networks (i.e., VPLMNs) 112, each with appropriate infrastructure such as Home Location Register (HLR) nodes 115, Mobile Switching Center (MSC) nodes 116, and the like. Since the WACN space 104 may also include a General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) network that provides a packet radio access for mobile devices using the cellular infrastructure of a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM)-based carrier network, a Serving GPRS Support Node (SGSN) 114 is exemplified therein. Additionally, by way of generalization, the PLMNs of the WACN space 104 may comprise networks selected from the group comprising one or more Enhanced Data Rates for GSM Evolution (EDGE) networks, Integrated Digital Enhanced Networks (IDENs), Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) networks, Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS) networks, Universal Terrestrial Radio Access Networks (UTRANs), or any 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP)-compliant network (e.g., 3GPP or 3GPP2), all operating with well known frequency bandwidths and protocols.

Further, UE device 102 is operable to obtain service from an access network (AN) space 106 that is operably associated with the WACN space 104. In one implementation, the AN space 106 includes one or more generic access networks (GANs) 118 as well as any type of WLAN arrangements 120. GAN 118, described in additional detail below, is operable to provide access services between UE device 102 and a PLMN core network using a broadband Internet Protocol (IP)-based network. WLAN arrangements 120 provide short-range wireless connectivity to UE device 102 via access points (APs) or "hot spots," and can be implemented using a variety of standards, e.g., IEEE 802.11b, IEEE 802.11a, IEEE 802.11g, HiperLan and HiperLan II standards, Wi-Max standard, OpenAir standard, and the Bluetooth standard. Accordingly, it is envisaged that the AN space 106

may also be inclusive of UMA-based access networks that deploy UMA network controller (UNC) nodes for effectuating seamless transitions between cellular RAN (part of the WACN space 104) and unlicensed wireless networks.

In one embodiment, interfacing between the WACN and AN spaces may be effectuated in accordance with certain standards. For instance, GAN 118 may be interfaced with a PLMN core using the procedures set forth in the 3GPP TR 43.901 and 3GPP TS 43.xxx documents as well as related documentation. Likewise, WLAN 120 may be interfaced with a PLMN core using the procedures set forth in the 3GPP TS 22.234, 3GPP TS 23.234 and 3GPP TS 24.234 documents as well as related documentation, and may therefore be referred to as an Interworking WLAN (I-WLAN) arrangement.

Additionally, there may exist an access network (AN) space 108 not interfaced to the WACN space 104 that offers short-range wireless connectivity to UE device 102. For instance, AN space 108 may comprise WLANs 122 offering non-3GPP services, such as communications over “public” access points (hotels, coffee shops, bookstores, apartment buildings, educational institutions, etc., whether free or for fee), enterprise access points, and visited (other enterprise) access points where the user may not be a member of that enterprise but is allowed at least some services.

Given the mosaic of the wireless network environment 100 in which UE device 102 may be disposed, it is desirable that a vertical handover mechanism exists such that the user can engage in a call as it moves from a PLMN’s radio access network (RAN) to a GAN (i.e., handover in) or from GAN to the PLMN’s RAN (i.e., handover out). It should be recognized that for purposes of the present patent disclosure, the terms “GAN” or “WLAN” may be interchangeable, and may also include any UMA-based access networks as well. At any rate, in order to facilitate such functionality as well as to customize and enhance the overall user experience associated therewith, the present patent disclosure provides a scheme wherein network information gathered by the UE device as well as information relating to its service options, plans, features, and the like (more generally, “service requirements”) is transmitted to a network node disposed in the wireless environment 100 so that suitable network-based logic is operable to respond with appropriate network selections, lists, etc. that the UE device may use. Further, as will be seen in detail below, such network-based logic may invoke procedures that involve one or more correlation and filtering schemes, database queries, such that redirection to more optimal networks may be effectuated in the generalized network environment 100.

To formalize the teachings of the present disclosure, reference is now taken to FIG. 2 wherein an exemplary embodiment of a network environment 200 is shown that is a more concrete subset of the generalized network environment 100 illustrated in FIG. 1. As depicted, UE device 102 is operably disposed for discovering a set of PLMNs that allow access via conventional RAN infrastructure in addition to having connectivity with one or more GANs accessible to UE device 102. By way of example, GAN-1 202-1 through GAN-N 202-N, which may be generalized for purposes of the present patent disclosure to also include any type of WLAN and/or I-WLAN arrangements (known or heretofore unknown), are operable to be discovered by UE device. A GAN may support connectivity to one or more PLMNs, or none at all, which can include VPLMNs 204-1 through 204-M as well as HPLMNs (e.g., HPLMN 206) with respect to UE device 102. Where GAN-PLMN connectivity is supported, which PLMNs behind a particular GAN are visible to UE device 102 may depend on a number of commercial factors, e.g., contractual arrangements between GAN operators and PLMN operators. As illustrated, GAN-1 202-1 supports connectivity to VPLMN-1 204-1 and VPLMN-2 204-2. Likewise, GAN-2 202-2 supports connectivity to VPLMN-M 204-M as well as to HPLMN 206. On the other hand, GAN-N 202-N has no connectivity to the wide area PLMNs.

As is well known, each of the wide area cellular PLMNs may be arranged as a number of cells, with each cell having sectors (e.g., typically three 120-degree sectors per base station (BS) or cell). Each cell may be provided with a cell identity, which can vary depending on the underlying WACN technology. For example, in GSM networks, each individual cell is provided with a Cell Global Identification (CGI) parameter to identify them. A group of cells is commonly designated as a Location Area (LA) and may be identified by an LA Identifier (LAI). Further, at the macro level, the PLMNs may be identified in accordance with the underlying technology. For instance, GSM-based PLMNs may be identified by an identifier comprised of a Mobile Country Code (MCC) and Mobile Network Code (MNC). Analogously, the CDMA/TDMA-based PLMNs may be identified by a System Identification (SID) parameter. Regardless of the cellular infrastructure, all cells broadcast the macro level PLMN identifiers such that a wireless device (e.g., UE device 102) wishing to obtain service can identify the wireless network.

FIG. 3 depicts a functional block diagram of an exemplary network system 300 where a wide area cellular PLMN 306 is accessible to UE device 102 through a GAN 302 and associated controller (GANC) 304. Essentially, in the embodiment shown, GAN 302

is operable as a broadband IP-based access network providing access to the well known A/Gb interfaces of PLMN 306, wherein GANC 300 is a network node coupled to GAN 302 via a Up reference point interface 303. As provided in applicable 3GPP specification documents, the Up reference point 303 defines the interface between GANC 304 and UE device 102. Where the GAN is operable to co-exist with the GSM/EDGE RAN (GERAN) infrastructure, it interconnects to the core PLMN via the same A/Gb interfaces used by a standard GERAN Base Station Subsystem (BSS) network element. Accordingly, the functionality of GANC 304 includes necessary protocol interworking so as to emulate the functionality of the GERAN BSS (not shown in this FIGURE). The A-interface 305 defines the interface for GSM-based circuit-switched (CS) services and is disposed between GANC 304 and an MSC 308 of PLMN 306. The Gb-interface 307 defines the interface for GPRS-based packet-switched (PS) services and is disposed between GANC 304 and an SGSN 310 of PLMN 306. A Security Gateway (SGW) 311 may also be included in GANC 304 that is interfaced via a Wm reference point 309 (as defined by 3GPP TS 23.234) with an Authentication, Authorization and Accounting (AAA) proxy/server node 312 disposed in PLMN 306, wherein an HLR 316 is operably coupled to AAA node 312. Those skilled in the art will recognize that similar infrastructure may be deployed in a UMA-based implementation wherein a UMA network controller or UNC is operable in generally in the same way as GANC 304.

In operation, GANC 304 appears to the core PLMN 306 as a GERAN BSS network element by mimicking the role of the Base Station Controller (BSC) in the GERAN architecture as seen from the perspective of the A/Gb interfaces. Accordingly, PLMN 306 to which GANC 304 is connected is unaware of the underlying access mechanism being supported by GANC, which is different from the radio access supported by the BSC. As alluded to before, GAN 302 disposed between generic access (GA)-enabled UE device 102 and GANC 304 may be effectuated by a suitable broadband IP network. The overall functionality provided by GANC 304 includes the following:

- User plane CS services that involve interworking CS bearers over Up interface to CS bearers over A-interface, including appropriate transcoding of voice to/from UE and PCM voice from/to the MSC.
- User plane PS services that involve interworking data transport channels over Up interface to packet flows over Gb interface.

- Control plane functionality including: (i) SGW for the set-up of secure tunnel with UE for mutual authentication, encryption and data integrity; (ii) registration for GAN service access and providing system information; (iii) set-up of GAN bearer paths for CS and PS services (e.g., establishment, management, and teardown of signaling and user plane bearers between UE the GANC); and (iv) GAN functional equivalents to GSM Radio Resource (RR) management and GPRS Radio Link Control (RLC) such as for paging and handovers.

FIG. 4A depicts an exemplary embodiment of a protocol stack 400A operable with the CS domain signaling plane associated with the network system 300 shown in FIG. 3. Likewise, FIG. 4B depicts an exemplary embodiment of a protocol stack 400B operable with the PS domain signaling plane associated with network system 300. Additional details regarding generic access to the A/Gb interfaces and associated architecture may be found in the applicable 3GPP specifications. Furthermore, to be consistent with the broad generalization of the teachings of the present patent disclosure, an “access network server” may comprehend a network node or element operable to interface between the core PLMN and the UE as set forth above, which may include a GANC or a UNC as a specific implementation.

It should be apparent to those skilled in the art that given the mosaic of various GANs/WLANs and PLMNs provided within a generalized network environment such as the network environments described hereinabove with respect to FIGS. 1 and 2, a number of GAN/GANC configurations are possible from the perspective of providing access between a UE device and the available WACNs (i.e., PLMNs). FIG. 5A depicts a network arrangement 500A where a single access network (AN) 502 is operable to connect to a plurality of PLMNs 504-1 through 504-K according to one embodiment, wherein each PLMN is served by a corresponding GANC. By way of illustration, AN 502 may be generalized as a GAN which can be a WLAN operable with the GANC protocols described above, wherein a plurality of Up interfaces 503-1 through 503-K are supported for coupling to the GANCs. Reference numerals 506-1 through 506-K refer to a plurality of separate GANC nodes, each for interfacing with a particular PLMN associated therewith, wherein MSCs 508-1 through 508-K and SGSNs 510-1 through 510-K are illustrative of respective PLMN's infrastructure. One skilled in the art should recognize

that although each PLMN is provided with a SGSN node, it is not a requirement for purposes of the present disclosure, and PLMNs 504-1 through 504-K may be implemented in accordance with different wide area cellular technologies, protocols and standards.

Referring now to FIG. 5B, depicted therein is an alternative network arrangement 5 500B where AN 502 (GAN or Wireless LAN) is operable to connect to the plurality of PLMNs 504-1 through 504-K via a single physical GANC 550 that supports a plurality of virtual GANC partitions 552-1 through 552-K. Each virtual GANC (VGANC) is independently operable to provide the requisite A/Gb interfacing functionality with respect to a corresponding PLMN. Accordingly, there is one logical GANC per PLMN that it 10 connects to. Such a deployment may be used where the PLMNs supporting the WLAN connectivity do not see the need to own and operate their own GANC.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it should be appreciated that the GAN architecture provides a generalized framework for interworking WLANs with 3GPP-compliant WACNs by utilizing existing protocols, e.g., GPRS, whereby little or no 15 adaptation or standardization work is required to be performed in the core. This allows for services to be handed over from a GAN/WLAN to a 3GPP-compliant WACN and vice versa, keeping the signaling and user plane traffic intact. However, as CS-switched protocols and GPRS protocols (Logical Link Control or LLC and Sub-Network Dependent Convergence Protocol or SND CP) are used, the GAN/WLAN that is chosen must be able 20 to reach an MSC/SGSN that is in the same PLMN as the MSC/SGSN used to terminate the GAN/WLAN traffic. To further complicate matters, a GAN/WLAN could connect to many PLMNs each having a separate, independently discoverable GANC node as described hereinabove. When a user encounters such a GAN/WLAN environment, there is currently no standardized procedure to define the selection of a particular GANC. As a 25 consequence, a number of potential issues arise wherein the overall user experience as well as call handover behavior may be negatively impacted. For instance, if a GA-compliant UE device that operates in dual mode (i.e., two different technologies, each preferably in a separate band, for example) discovers a macro PLMN or WACN and subsequently chooses a GANC that belongs to a different WACN, handover between the 30 AN and WACN spaces would not work. Such issues may also arise in network arrangements where a single GANC is partitioned to support a number of independently discoverable VGANC partitions.

Further, because of various levels of technology penetration and deployment in different regions and countries, additional complexities can arise where the AN and WACN spaces are to be interfaced using the GAN/WLAN approach. For example, a GA-compliant UE device may find itself in an area where there is no WACN coverage but there is WLAN coverage. If one or more WLANs are based on the I-WLAN approach rather than the GAN architecture, it is preferable that the UE differentiate between GAN and I-WLAN due to the differences in various control processes, e.g., registration, de-registration, etc., in addition to whatever service differences that may exist between them. For purposes of highlighting the scope of the present patent disclosure, some of the user experience-related issues are set forth below.

- The UE is not currently registered on a WACN. Here the UE cannot check the cellular band signals to determine the country it is in (i.e., MCC is unknown) to select the best or optimal provider. Although HPLMN is usually selected first, VPLMN preference may depend on location (e.g., country). In this situation, the UE may not know which VPLMN it prefers to connect to when it is examining the available GAN/WLANs.
- The operator's "Preferred PLMN" list on the Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) or Removable user Identity Module (RUIM) associated with the user does not take into account the UE's need for PS data services (e.g., GPRS capability) or other services such as Unlicensed Mobile Access (UMA) services. Such a situation may arise where the PLMN list is based only on CS voice roaming agreements and, as a result, the user may not be able to use email and other data services. One skilled in the art will note that such an issue can arise whether or not GAN or I-WLAN is used.
- Some or all of the operator-controlled lists for PLMNs may not be up-to-date, or particular entries for the country the UE is operating in may not be current.
- Because it takes up capacity to update lists over the cellular band, the HPLMN may wish to update lists during off-hours or when the UE is connected over I-WLAN or GAN.
- When there are no WACN signals to allow the UE to determine the MCC, the availability of AGPS (Assisted Global Positioning System) in the UE,

or a (manual) user input, as well as recent (i.e., time-stamped) information on WACN MCC may be helpful.

- The case of operation close to country border(s) may result in the UE obtaining signals from more than one MCC, enabling user choice or “least cost” choice.

Those skilled in the art should recognize that the list set forth above is purely illustrative rather than limiting. It is envisaged that upon reference hereto various related problems may become apparent with respect to user experience and call behavior in the context of interfacing between GAN/WLAN and PLMN spaces.

For purposes of the present disclosure, the GA-capable UE may operate in either Automatic or Manual mode with certain differences in network discovery and selection procedures, although the particular features and capabilities of the two may vary depending on the applicable specification(s) as well as any modifications and changes that may be made to them. In general, the Manual mode allows the user to do more detailed selection/filtering of the available PLMNs, the bearer(s) to be used, and potentially even of the method to be used when using WLAN or other unlicensed radio technology (i.e., I-WLAN, GAN, or just a connection through the WLAN to the PLMN).

Referring now to FIG. 6, shown therein is a flowchart of a generalized network discovery and selection scheme according to one embodiment wherein a UE device is disposed in a network environment comprising a GAN/WLAN space as well as a WACN space. As illustrated, the flowchart of FIG. 6 captures a methodology where the UE device gathers appropriate network information upon power-up and initial discovery (as per applicable 3GPP-compliant procedures), which is then transmitted to a network node for determining a more optimal network arrangement (i.e., appropriate GANC+PLMN combination), preferably in view of the UE device’s service requirements that may also be advertised to the network node. Accordingly, by effectuating appropriate resolution of UE-discovered network information and its service requirements, the network node is amenable to provide suitable instructions to the UE device for obtaining better service instantiation, which may include redirection to more suitable networks, location-based filtering, and the like.

Continuing to refer to FIG. 6, at block 602, the UE device gathers network information via scanning relative to one or more WACN technologies, bands, and frequencies. Additionally or alternatively, the UE device is also adapted to gather network information via scanning relative to one or more GAN/WLAN technologies, bands, and frequencies (block 604). Thereafter, the UE device transmits the gathered network information as well as service/feature requirements (e.g., voice-only services, data-only services, voice-and-data services, GAN services, handover services, UMA services capability, calling plans associated with the UE device, and/or location area information associated with the UE device, et cetera) to a network node (block 606). In one embodiment, the gathered network information may comprise at least one of cell identity information of a WACN on which the UE device is registered (i.e., CGI information of a registered GSM/GERAN), CGI/cell ID information relating to other available wide area cellular networks, cause values of any prior registration failures, Broadcast Control Channel (BCCH) information of at least one available wide area cellular network, and Packet Control Channel (PCCH) information of at least one available wide area cellular network. As alluded to hereinabove, in one embodiment, WACNs may be identified by their {MCC,MNC} combinations. Also, additional features such as identifying whether a particular WACN is data-capable (e.g., GPRS-capable) may also be provided. To the extent the UE device is adapted to operate based on various network lists, stored or otherwise, additional selection criteria and filters such as Forbidden GAN/PLMN lists, Priority GAN/PLMN lists (which may be stored, for example, in a Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) or Removable user Identity Module (RUIM), or in a device memory) and the like, may also be provided to the network node. In a further implementation, the UE could also list PLMNs that only provide WACN and/or WAN coverage.

It should be realized that scanning operations set forth above may be performed via active scanning or passive scanning methods. Also, there may be more than one band operable with GANs and/or with PLMNs. In one instance, a frequency band may be selected from the group comprising 450MHz, 850MHz, 900MHz, 1800MHz, 1700 MHz, 1900MHz, 2100MHz, 2700MHz, or other frequencies and/or any satellite bands.

Upon receiving the gathered network information, service requirement information and/or location information from the UE device, the service logic associated with the network node is operable to resolve the service requirements requested by the UE device in view of the other bodies of the received information so that a determination may be

made as to whether additional or alternative network arrangements are available for the UE device. In some implementations, such resolution may involve interfacing with additional network nodes and databases (e.g., HPLMN and/or home GANC, service databases, roaming databases, and so on). Thereafter, appropriate instructions may be provided via a suitable response message to the UE device, including pertinent information relative to any additional or alternative network arrangements. These operations are illustrated in block 608. Based on the instructions received from the network node, the UE device may then engage in obtaining appropriate service, which can sometimes warrant network redirection (block 610).

FIGS. 7A and 7B depict flowcharts of exemplary scenarios of the network information collection process set forth above. Presently, applicable GAN specifications state that a UE device, e.g., a mobile station (MS), shall first register on a GSM/GERAN PLMN if found and allowed according to current 3GPP network selection procedures. Accordingly, the process flow exemplified in FIG. 7A begins with scanning available bands for GERAN PLMN networks (block 702). For each GERAN PLMN found, information is obtained and stored (blocks 704, 706 and 708), e.g., CGI information, BCCH and/or PCCH information, etc. The UE device then selects and registers on a GERAN PLMN (block 710) according to 3GPP specifications, which may be mediated by the UE device's network lists, preferences, and other filters. If the registration with a particular PLMN fails, the reason for failure is stored as a cause value (blocks 712 and 714). Once the reason for failure is stored, the registration process may repeat with respect to the additional PLMNs discovered according to 3GPP specifications (block 716). On the other hand, if the PLMN registration is successful or if registration with no PLMN has been successful and the UE device is allowed to operate in GAN-only mode, further process flow may accordingly follow (block 718). However, if the PLMN registration is successful but that PLMN does not support GAN connectivity, various concerns might arise that could negatively impact the service selection behavior of the UE device.

With respect to operating in GAN-mode, the UE device is operable to provide a number of information elements to a GANC node with which it establishes initial connectivity. Preferably, as pointed out in the foregoing discussion, such information can include network information gathered via scanning in other bands or modes as well as service requirements. Referring to FIG. 7B in particular, upon successful registration a PLMN or failure to register on any PLMN (block 750), the UE device is operable to

search for a GAN network (block 752), preferably according to applicable 3GPP specifications. Once a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) or IP address of a GANC node has been obtained (block 754), the UE device authenticates and registers with the GANC using, for instance, known Generic Access – Resource Control (GA-RC) REGISTER
5 REQUEST messaging (block 756). In accordance with the discussion set forth in the foregoing sections, such a registration message to the GANC may include information elements pertaining to any of the following in any combination:

- registered GERAN CGI information if available;
- if the registration is for voice and/or data;
- 10 - services and features requested by the UE device, e.g., voice-only services, data-only services, voice-and-data services, GAN services, multimedia services, value-added services, etc.;
- if handover is required;
- if home-country-calls-only calls are required;
- 15 - prior GERAN PLMN registration attempts and associated cause values for failure;
- the registration request may also include GERAN PLMN information for which registration was successful but a GANC redirect was received. Any VPLMN information identified therein may be marked as such (described
20 in detail hereinbelow);
- CGI information for other PLMNs available; and
- BCCH / PCCH information for available PLMNs. For instance, in one implementation, BCCH/PCCH information for all available PLMNs are included. In other implementations, BCCH/PCCH information for a
25 portion of available PLMNs may be included.

Further, upon successful authentication and registration with the GANC, additional network information may be collected by the UE device (e.g., appropriate network arrangement via a suitable response message), as illustrated in block 758.

Those skilled in the art should recognize upon reference hereto that additional
30 operations and/or information elements may be involved if the registration processes take place after the initial network discovery and registration process by the UE device as set forth above. For instance, with respect to WACN space (e.g., GERAN), if the UE device receives a redirect message from a GANC node (which could be a separate message or

part of a general redirect message, as will be set forth in further detail below), the UE device may deregister from the current serving GERAN VPLMN and attempt registration on the VPLMNs in a number of ways. By way of illustration, the VPLMNs may be provided by the GANC in some priority order that may be followed by the UE device.

5 Alternatively, if no order has been provided, a VPLMN may be chosen from the supplied list at random. With respect to subsequent registrations in GAN space, if the UE device has been redirected to another VPLMN and registration with that new VPLMN is successful, the UE device may be required to re-register with the home GANC using the same GAN as before. Alternatively, the UE device may register with the GANC
10 associated with the new VPLMN if that information has been made available by the redirecting GANC. In a still further variation, there may be no subsequent GANC registration pursuant to instructions from the GANC.

Given the interfacing between the WACN and GAN spaces as described in the foregoing sections, selecting a proper PLMN and GANC combination that allows optimal
15 service may be modulated based on a number of factors, e.g., service requirements, available network information, service capabilities, location information, and the like. When a serving network node (e.g., a default GANC or a provisioning GANC) receives appropriate information from the UE device, at least part of the service logic involves resolving whether a home GANC or a GANC associated with a VPLMN should provide
20 service to the UE device. FIGS. 8A and 8B are two flowcharts associated with GANC selection and optional redirection in accordance with an embodiment of the present patent disclosure. When the serving network node receives information from a UE device (block 802), the service logic associated with the node determines (i) if local home network calls are required; and/or (ii) if handover is not required and no VPLMN GANC can be used
25 (block 804). If so, the network node provides instructions to the UE device to select a home network GANC (block 806). On the other hand, based on the received information from the UE device (block 820), the network node service logic determines (i) handover of services is required; and/or (ii) VPLMN dialing plan is required (block 822). In that case, the network node provides instructions to the UE device to select a VPLMN-associated
30 GANC (block 824).

It should be apparent that the service logic is preferably operable to evaluate and resolve a number of service scenarios based on the combinations of service and feature requirements as well as the network information received from the UE device.

Set forth below is a discussion on providing operator-differentiated messaging to a wireless UE device by a network server node in certain exemplary scenarios.

Referring now to FIG. 9, shown therein is a flowchart associated with a scheme for providing operator-differentiated messaging to a wireless UE device according to one implementation of the present disclosure. As illustrated in the flowchart, the implementation is exemplary of the scenario wherein only HPLMN services are requested by the UE device (block 902). If voice-only services (block 904) or voice-and-data services (block 906) are requested (which may be determined at least in part based on the working mode of the UE device or on the application(s) being used), the registered PLMN in the WACN space is considered acceptable (block 908). The UE device then registers with an access network server node (i.e., GANC or UNC, as the case may be) associated with the home network by means of a suitable registration request message (e.g., GA-RC REGISTER REQUEST) block 910). Upon registration, the UE device may be informed that HPLMN dialing is available. Additionally, the network server node is operable to provide messaging with respect to various operator-specific and/or subscriber-specific service information (e.g., applicability of international calling or long distance charges, location-specific information, calling plans and associated pricing information, other operator-differentiated indicators including free-form textual information, et cetera) to the UE device. Such response messaging may be effectuated via a suitable REGISTER ACCEPT message or via a Short Messaging Service (SMS) or Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) message. Further, the network server node may send an indication to the UE device that it is registered with a GANC/UNC node in the HPLMN (i.e., home GANC/UNC node). These various message responses and processes are set forth in block 912.

FIG. 10 depicts a flowchart associated with a scheme for providing operator-differentiated messaging to a wireless UE device according to another exemplary service scenario of the present disclosure. For purposes of illustration, an HPLMN GANC node is provided as the network server node that eventually resolves the various service and feature requirements as well as the network information gathered by a UE device. Upon receiving the pertinent information from the UE device (e.g., via a REGISTER REQUEST

message, as alluded to previously), the GANC node may perform one or more database queries involving local and/or remote databases in order to evaluate roaming service agreements, service capabilities, address lookup, etc. (block 1002). If the VPLMN that the UE device is registered on is determined to have GAN connectivity (block 1004), then the HPLMN GANC is operable to send a redirect message to the UE device (e.g., a GA-RC REGISTER REDIRECT message) which contains the URL/IP address of the VPLMN GANC node (block 1006). On the other hand, where the registered VPLMN does not have GAN connectivity, the service logic is operable to determine whether there exist other PLMNs that support GANCs. If so, their URL/IP address information may also be determined by performing appropriate database queries. Additionally, such determinations may be evaluated responsive to other information such as the UE's location, existence of applicable service arrangements, etc. These determinations are consolidated in block 1008. In one embodiment, it may involve verifying that the cells identified in received broadcast information still include cells that are available for use. The VPLMNs that are still available after this initial investigation may optionally be sent to a roaming database to determine if a roaming agreement exists between the HPLMN and VPLMN(s). If a suitable roaming agreement exists, preferred PLMN information may also be returned to the HPLMN GANC. After these optional procedures, the service logic of the GANC may transmit the filtered VPLMN information to another database to determine the URLs/IP addresses of available GANCs. Where redirection is established to be appropriate, a suitable redirect message (e.g., a GA-RC REGISTER REDIRECT message) may be transmitted to the UE device which includes one or more URLs/IP addresses of GANCs associated with a plurality of available VPLMNs (block 1010). Otherwise, a response message may be provided to the UE device that indicates a number of options (block 1012). For example, the response message may include an indication that no GAN services are available to the UE device. Another indication may be that only home network services are available. Alternatively or additionally, the response message may also include one or more supplementary fields (e.g., free-form text fields) operable to indicate additional capabilities where applicable. By way of illustration, such fields may be used with respect to various operator-specific and/or subscriber-specific service information (e.g., applicability of international calling or long distance charges, location-specific information, and other operator-differentiated indicators including textual information, et cetera) as described above. Further, as before, such messaging may be

effectuated via a suitable GA-RC REGISTER ACCEPT message or via an SMS or USSD message.

With respect to the general syntax of the redirect messages set forth above, one embodiment may include a list of PLMN Identities (e.g., {MCC,MNC} combinations) as well as supported services and/or features that may be mandatory or optional. In another embodiment, the redirect message may include a list of GANC addresses (i.e., URLs, IP addresses) as well as supported services and/or features. Additional details regarding the structure and syntax of redirect messaging as well as the usage and taxonomy of location information may be found in one or more provisional and nonprovisional patent application(s) cross-referenced hereinabove.

In the scenarios where a GA-RC REGISTER ACCEPT message may be employed (as described above with respect to the flowcharts of FIGS. 9 and 10), its content may include various standardized information elements such as, e.g., GA-RC protocol indicator, message identity, cell identity, location area identification, timer and band information, GAN Service Zone information, etc., in addition to any supplementary fields as alluded to in the foregoing description.

Referring now to FIG. 11, shown therein is a functional block diagram of an exemplary AN server node 1100, e.g., GANC/UNC node 1100 according to one embodiment. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that AN server node 1100 may be provided in any of the configurations depicted in FIGS. 5A and 5B described hereinabove. Regardless, AN server node 1100 includes appropriate network selection logic 1102 operable to perform one or more of the procedures set forth above with respect to resolving gathered network information and service/feature requirement information that is provided by a UE device. Accordingly, in one embodiment, suitable storage areas may be provided for storing service/feature requirements 1104 as well as gathered network information 1106. Database query logic 1108 is provided to facilitate database query and interrogation of local and/or remote databases, e.g., DB 1110-1 through DB 1110-N.

FIG. 12 depicts a block diagram of an embodiment of a UE device operable according to the teachings of the present patent disclosure. It will be recognized by those skilled in the art upon reference hereto that although an embodiment of UE 102 may comprise an arrangement similar to one shown in FIG. 12, there can be a number of variations and modifications, in hardware, software or firmware, with respect to the various modules depicted. Accordingly, the arrangement of FIG. 12 should be taken as

illustrative rather than limiting with respect to the embodiments of the present patent disclosure. A microprocessor 1202 providing for the overall control of an embodiment of UE 102 is operably coupled to a communication subsystem 1204 which includes transmitter/receiver (transceiver) functionality for effectuating multi-mode
5 communications over a plurality of bands. By way of example, a wide area wireless Tx/Rx module 1206, a GAN Tx/Rx module 1208 and an I-WLAN Tx/Rx module 1210 are illustrated. Although not particularly shown, each Tx/Rx module may include other associated components such as one or more local oscillator (LO) modules, RF switches, RF bandpass filters, A/D and D/A converters, processing modules such as digital signal
10 processors (DSPs), local memory, etc. As will be apparent to those skilled in the field of communications, the particular design of the communication subsystem 1204 may be dependent upon the communications networks with which the UE device is intended to operate. In one embodiment, the communication subsystem 1204 is operable with both voice and data communications.

15 Microprocessor 1202 also interfaces with further device subsystems such as auxiliary input/output (I/O) 1218, serial port 1220, display 1222, keyboard 1224, speaker 1226, microphone 1228, random access memory (RAM) 1230, a short-range communications subsystem 1232, and any other device subsystems generally labeled as reference numeral 1233. To control access, a SIM/RUIM interface 1234 is also provided
20 in communication with the microprocessor 1202. In one implementation, SIM/RUIM interface 1234 is operable with a SIM/RUIM card having a number of key configurations 1244 and other information 1246 such as identification and subscriber-related data as well as one or more PLMN and Service Set ID (SSID) lists and filters alluded to hereinabove.

Operating system software and other control software may be embodied in a
25 persistent storage module (i.e., non-volatile storage) such as Flash memory 1235. In one implementation, Flash memory 1235 may be segregated into different areas, e.g., storage area for computer programs 1236 as well as data storage regions such as device state 1237, address book 1239, other personal information manager (PIM) data 1241, and other data storage areas generally labeled as reference numeral 1243. Additionally, appropriate
30 network discovery/selection logic 1240 may be provided as part of the persistent storage for executing the various procedures, correlation techniques, service/feature requirement selection and identification processes as well as GANC selection mechanisms set forth in the preceding sections. Associated therewith is a storage module 1238 for storing the

SSID/PLMN lists, selection/scanning filters, capability indicators, et cetera, also alluded to hereinabove.

Based on the foregoing, it should be clear that the UE device logic and hardware includes at least the following: a logic module for facilitating identification of a set of
5 appropriate service requirements relative to operating the UE device; a communication subsystem for gathering network information via scanning in at least one band and for transmitting at least one of the network information and the service requirements to a network node via a registration request message; and a logic module for processing operator-differentiated textual information received from the network node via a response
10 message responsive to the registration request message.

It is believed that the operation and construction of the embodiments of the present patent disclosure will be apparent from the Detailed Description set forth above. While the exemplary embodiments shown and described may have been characterized as being preferred, it should be readily understood that various changes and modifications could be
15 made therein without departing from the scope of the present invention as set forth in the following claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A network messaging method for a user equipment (UE) device, the method comprising:

gathering network information by the UE;

performing a registration procedure with a default generic access network controller (GANC) connected to a first public land mobile network (PLMN), the registration procedure comprising transmitting a register request message including location information and at least one of the network information and a request for one or more PLMN services provided through a GANC; and

receiving a response message from the default GANC, the response message including one or more fields that contain operator-differentiated textual information relating to one or more PLMNs operable with the UE device including location-specific information responsive to the location information.

2. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first PLMN comprises at least one of a General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) network, an Enhanced Data Rates for Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) Evolution (EDGE) network, a 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP)-compliant network, an Integrated Digital Enhanced Network (IDEN), a Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) network, a Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS) network, and a Universal Terrestrial Radio Access Network (UTRAN).

3. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, wherein the operator-differentiated textual information comprises calling plan pricing information.

4. The network messaging method as recited in claim 3, wherein the calling plan pricing information pertains to a long-distance dialing service operable with the UE device.

5. The network messaging method as recited in claim 3, wherein the calling plan pricing information pertains to an international dialing service operable with the UE device.
6. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, wherein the response message comprises a Short Messaging Service (SMS) message.
7. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, wherein the response message comprises an Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) message.
8. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, wherein the network information comprises at least one of Cell Global Identification (CGI) information of a registered PLMN, CGI information relating to available PLMNs, cause values of any prior registration failures, Broadcast Control Channel (BCCH) information of at least one available PLMN, and Packet Control Channel (PCCH) information of at least one available PLMN.
9. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more PLMN services comprise at least one of voice-only services, data-only services, voice-and-data services, multimedia services, value-added services and Unlicensed Mobile Access (UMA) services.
10. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first PLMN is a home PLMN associated with the UE device.
11. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first PLMN is a visited PLMN with respect to the UE device.
12. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, further comprising connecting with an IP access point using at least one of IEEE 802.11b standard, IEEE 802.11a standard, IEEE 802.11g standard, HiperLan and HiperLan II standards, Wi-Max standard, OpenAir standard, and the Bluetooth standard.

13. The network messaging method as recited in claim 1, further comprising accessing another GANC by the UE device that is coupled to a corresponding PLMN via at least one of a corresponding A interface and a corresponding Gb interface based on the operator-differentiated textual information pertaining to the corresponding PLMN.

14. A user equipment (UE) device, comprising:

a processor configured to control at least one of a plurality of sub-systems to gather network information;

the processor further configured to control at least one of the plurality of sub-systems to transmit a register request message to a default generic access network controller (GANC) connected to a first public land mobile network (PLMN), the register request message including location information and at least one of the network information and a request for one or more PLMN services provided through a GANC; and

the processor still further configured to control at least one of the plurality of sub-systems to process a response message received from the default GANC, the response message including one or more fields that contain operator-differentiated textual information relating to one or more PLMNs operable with the UE device including location-specific information responsive to the location information.

15. The UE device as recited in claim 14, wherein the operator-differentiated textual information comprises calling plan pricing information.

16. The UE device as recited in claim 15, wherein the calling plan pricing information pertains to a long-distance dialing service operable with the UE device.

17. The UE device as recited in claim 15, wherein the calling plan pricing information pertains to an international dialing service operable with the UE device.

18. The UE device as recited in claim 14, wherein the response message comprises a Short Messaging Service (SMS) message.

19. The UE device as recited in claim 14, wherein the response message comprises an Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) message.

20. The UE device as recited in claim 14, wherein the network information comprises at least one of Cell Global Identification (CGI) information of a registered PLMN, CGI information relating to available PLMNs, cause values of any prior registration failures, Broadcast Control Channel (BCCH) information of at least one available PLMN, and Packet Control Channel (PCCH) information of at least one available PLMN.

21. The UE device as recited in claim 14, wherein the one or more PLMN services comprise at least one of voice-only services, data-only services, voice-and-data services, multimedia services, value-added services and Unlicensed Mobile Access (UMA) services.

22. The UE device as recited in claim 14, wherein the processor is further configured to control at least one of a plurality of sub-systems to connect to an IP access point using at least one of IEEE 802.11b standard, IEEE 802.11a standard, IEEE 802.11g standard, HiperLan and HiperLan II standards, Wi-Max standard, OpenAir standard, and the Bluetooth standard.

23. The UE device as recited in claim 14, wherein the processor is still further configured to control accessing of another GANC by the UE device that is coupled to a corresponding PLMN via at least one of a corresponding A interface and a corresponding Gb interface based on the operator-differentiated textual information pertaining to the corresponding PLMN.

24. A generic area network controller (GANC) connected to a public land mobile network (PLMN), the GANC comprising:

- a component configured to process a register request message received from a user equipment (UE) device, the message including location information and at least one of network information and a request for one or more PLMN services; and

- a component configured to transmit a response message to the UE device, the

response message including one or more fields that contain operator-differentiated textual information relating to one or more PLMNs operable with the UE device including location-specific information responsive to the location information.

25. The GANC as recited in claim 24, wherein the one or more PLMN services requested by the UE device comprise at least one of voice-only services, data-only services, voice-and-data services, multimedia services, value-added services and Unlicensed Mobile Access (UMA) services.

26. The GANC as recited in claim 24, wherein the network information comprises at least one of Cell Global Identification (CGI) information of a registered PLMN, CGI information relating to available PLMNs, cause values of any prior registration failures, Broadcast Control Channel (BCCH) information of at least one available PLMN, and Packet Control Channel (PCCH) information of at least one available PLMN.

27. The GANC as recited in claim 24, wherein the operator-differentiated textual information comprises calling plan pricing information.

28. The GANC as recited in claim 27, wherein the calling plan pricing information pertains to a long-distance dialing service operable with the UE device.

29. The GANC as recited in claim 27, wherein the calling plan pricing information pertains to an international dialing service operable with the UE device.

30. The GANC as recited in claim 24, wherein the response message comprises a Short Messaging Service (SMS) message.

31. The GANC as recited in claim 24, wherein the response message comprises an Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) message.

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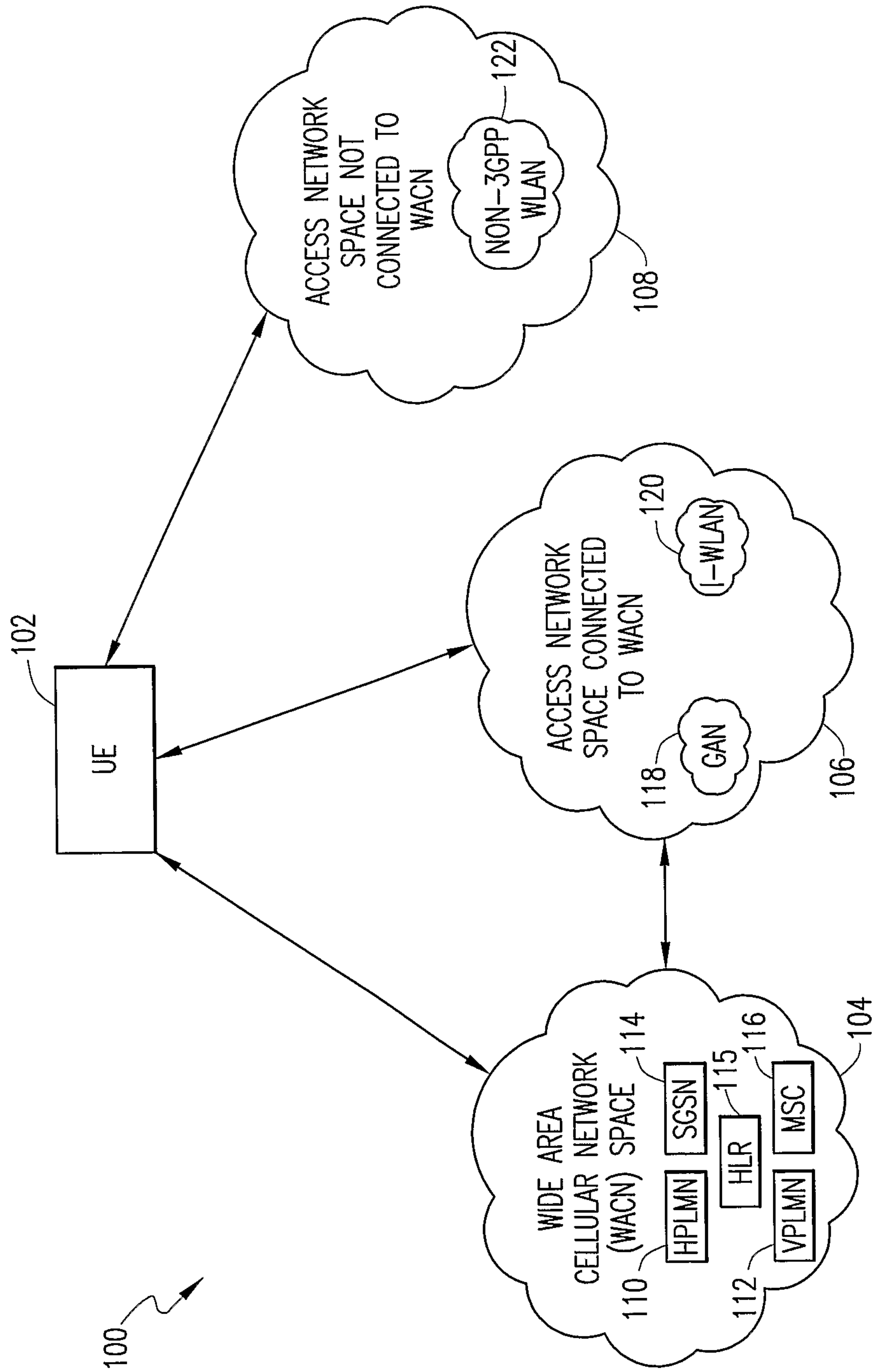


FIG. 1

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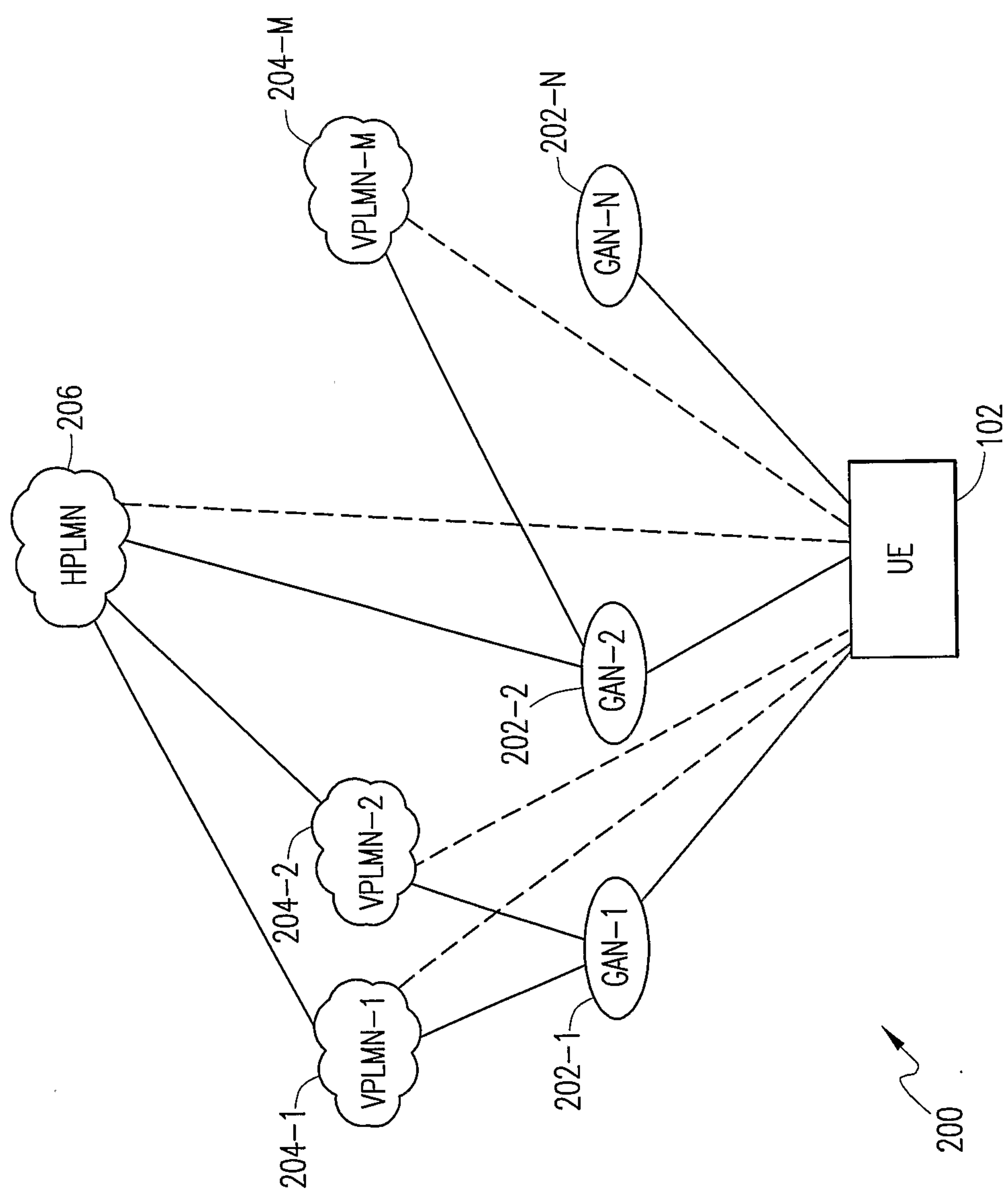


FIG. 2

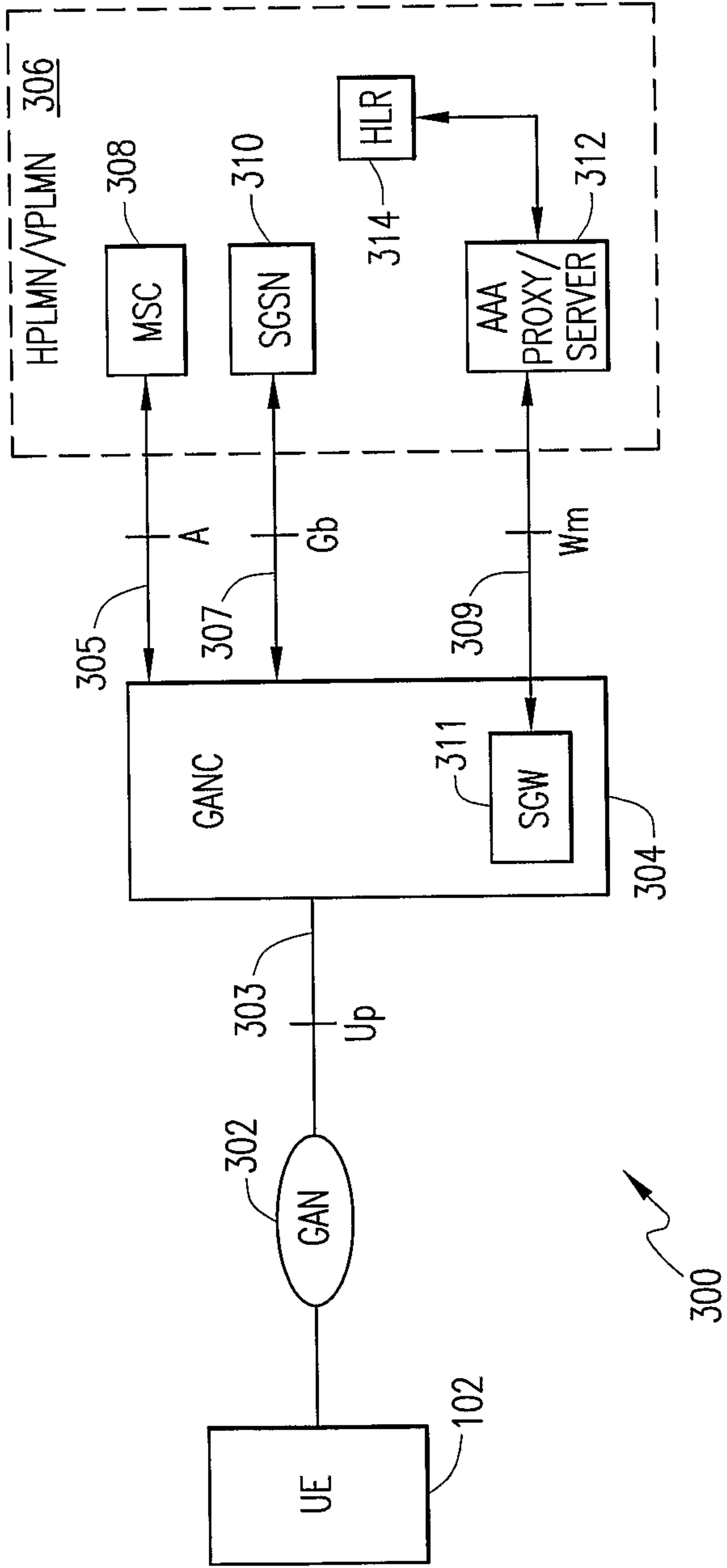


FIG. 3

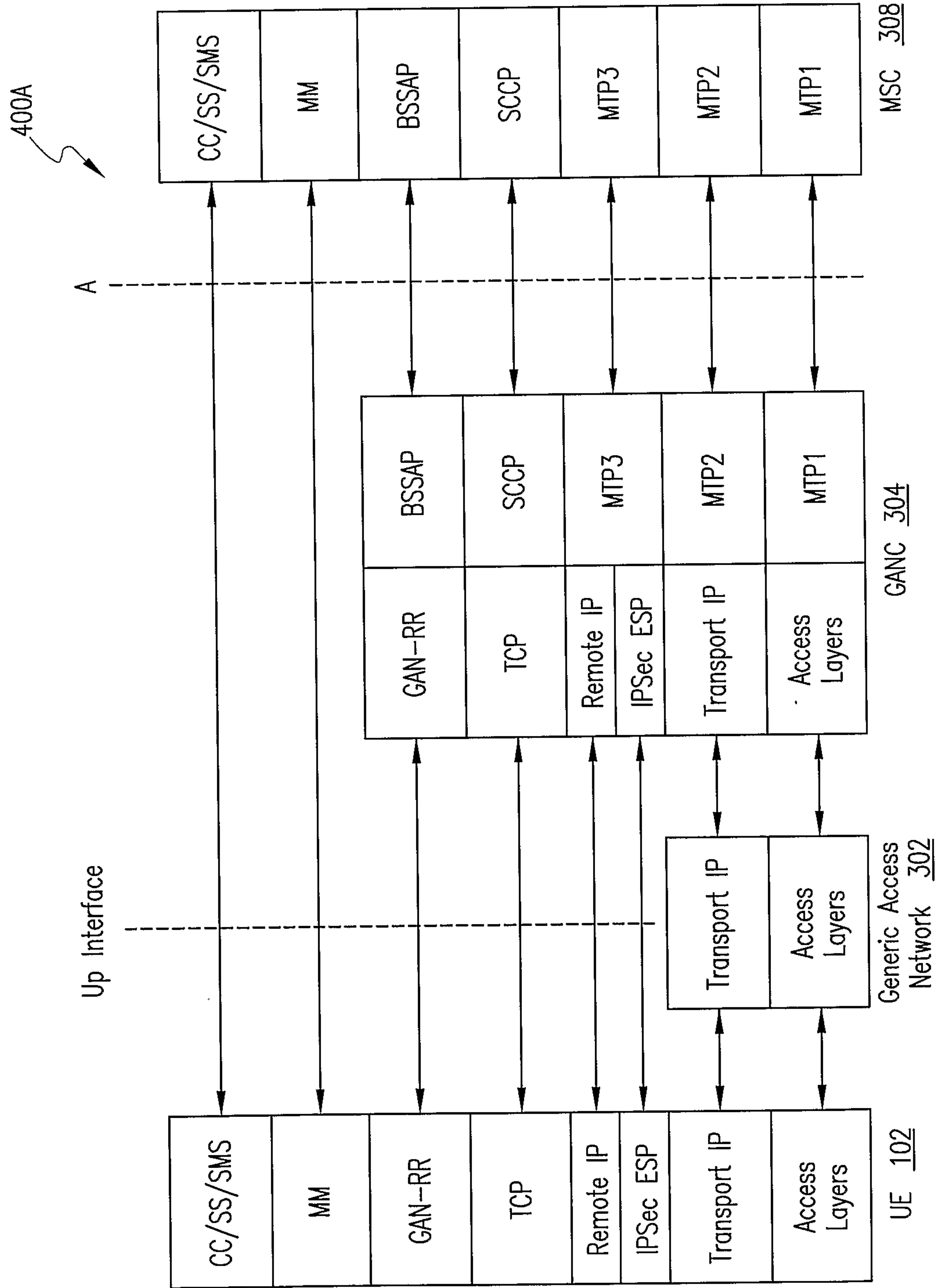


FIG. 4A

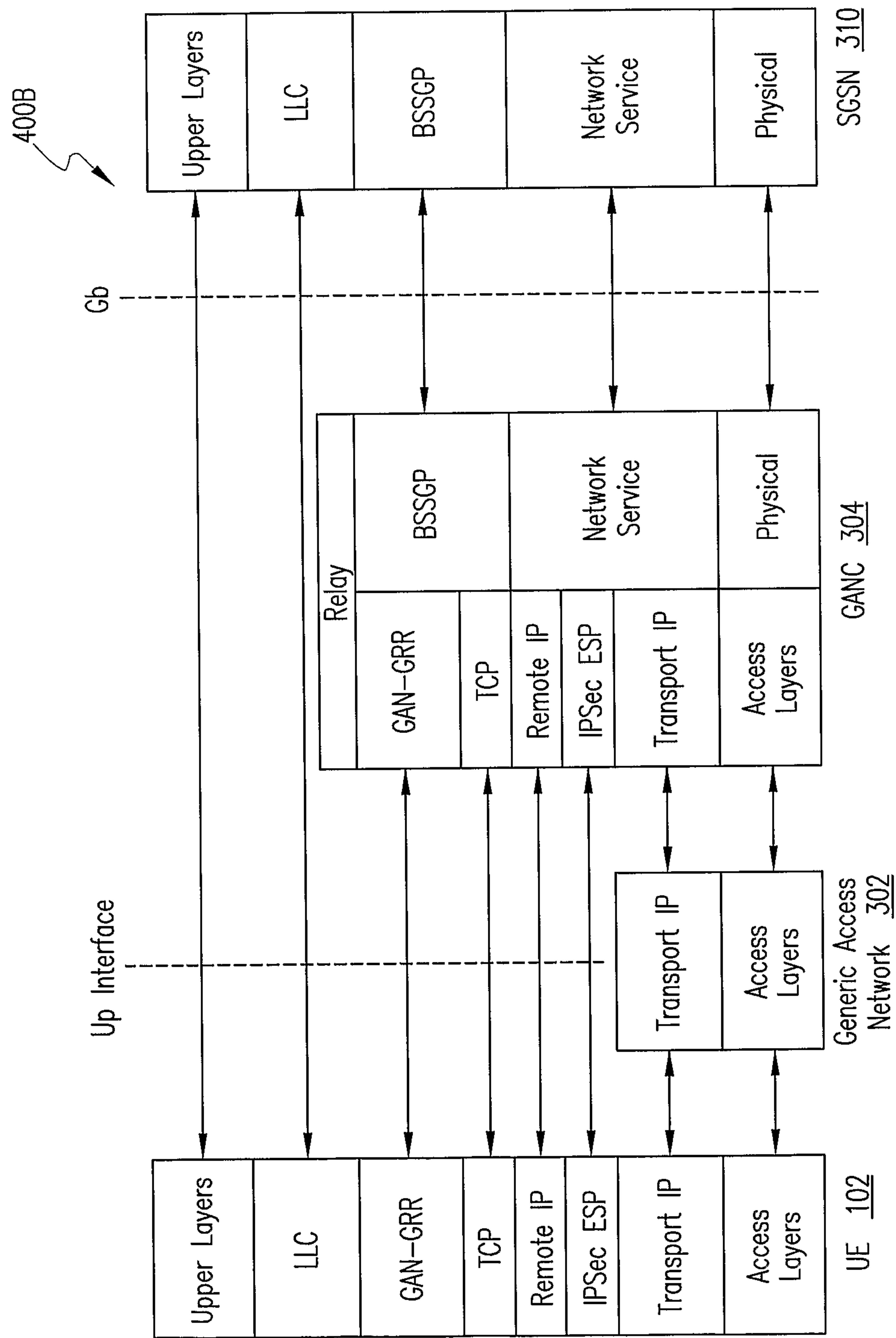


FIG. 4B

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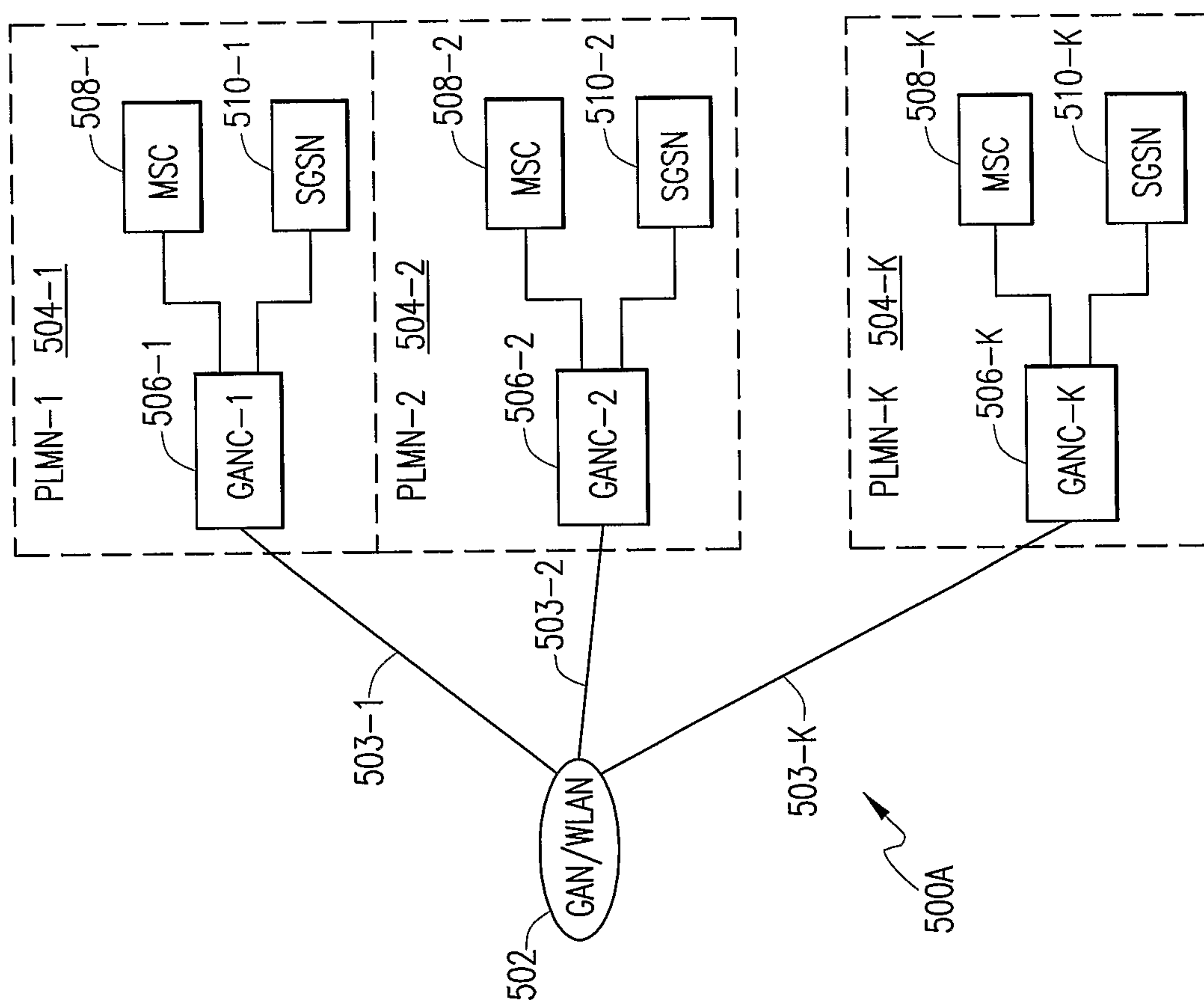


FIG. 5A

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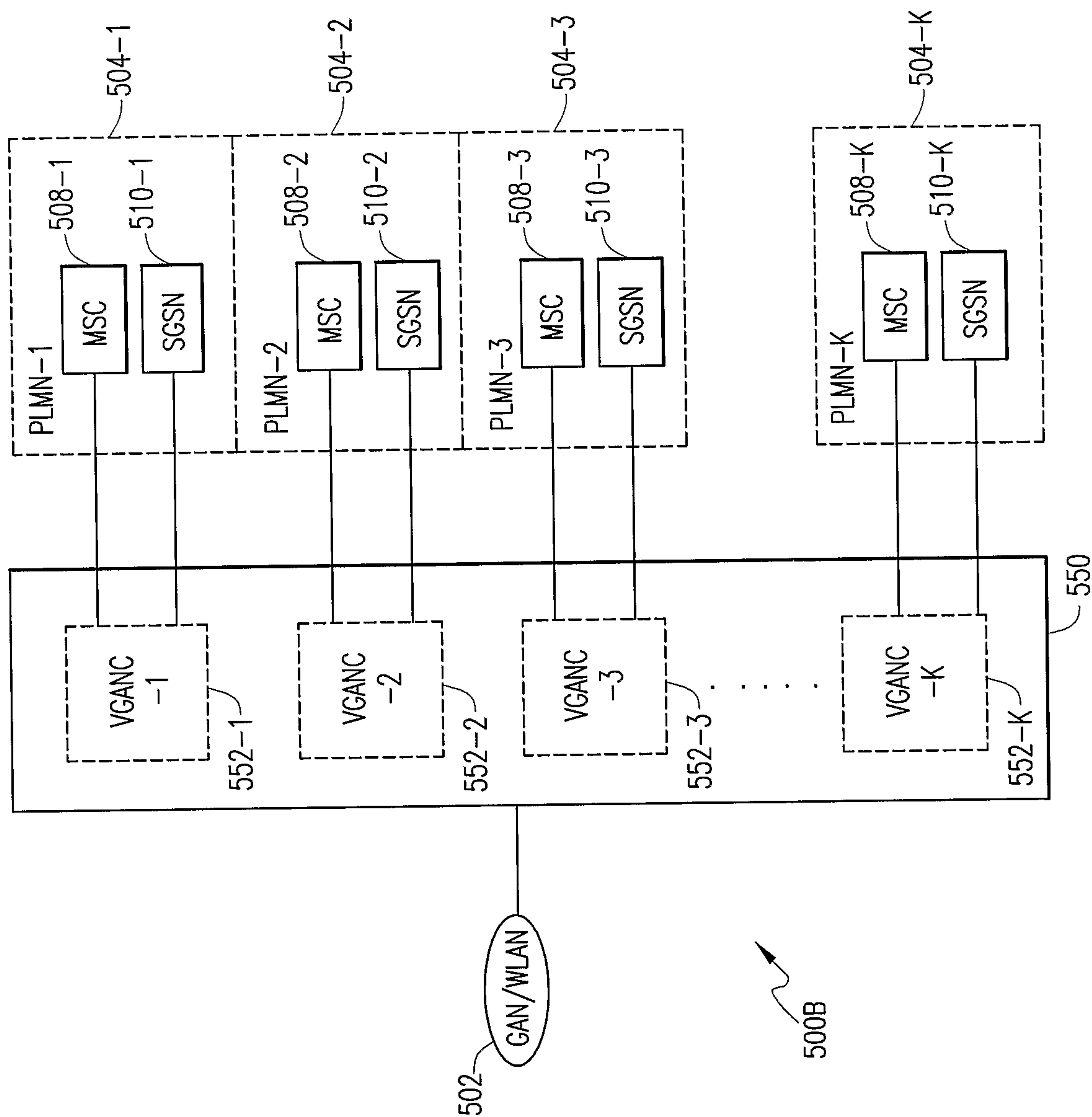
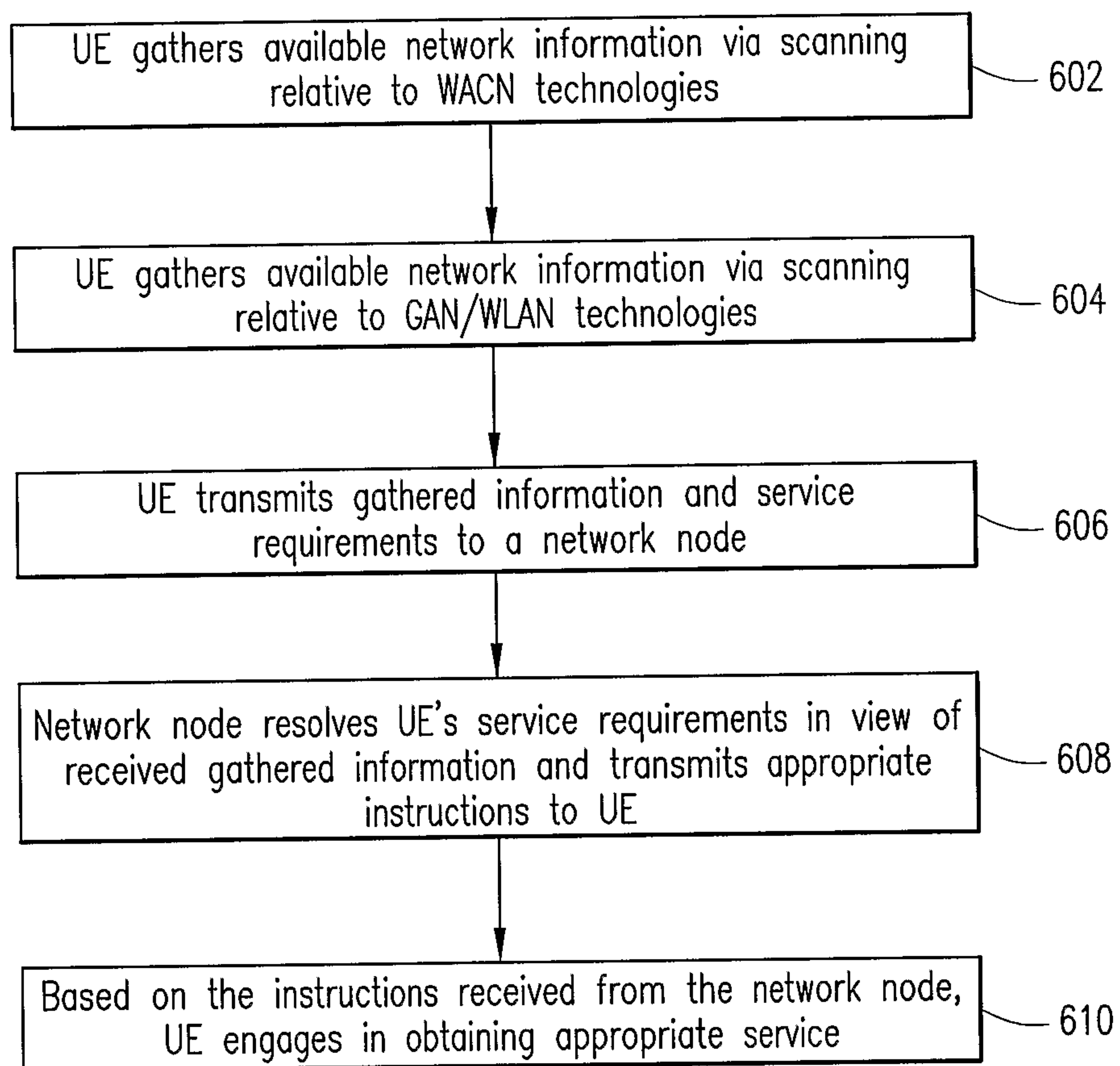
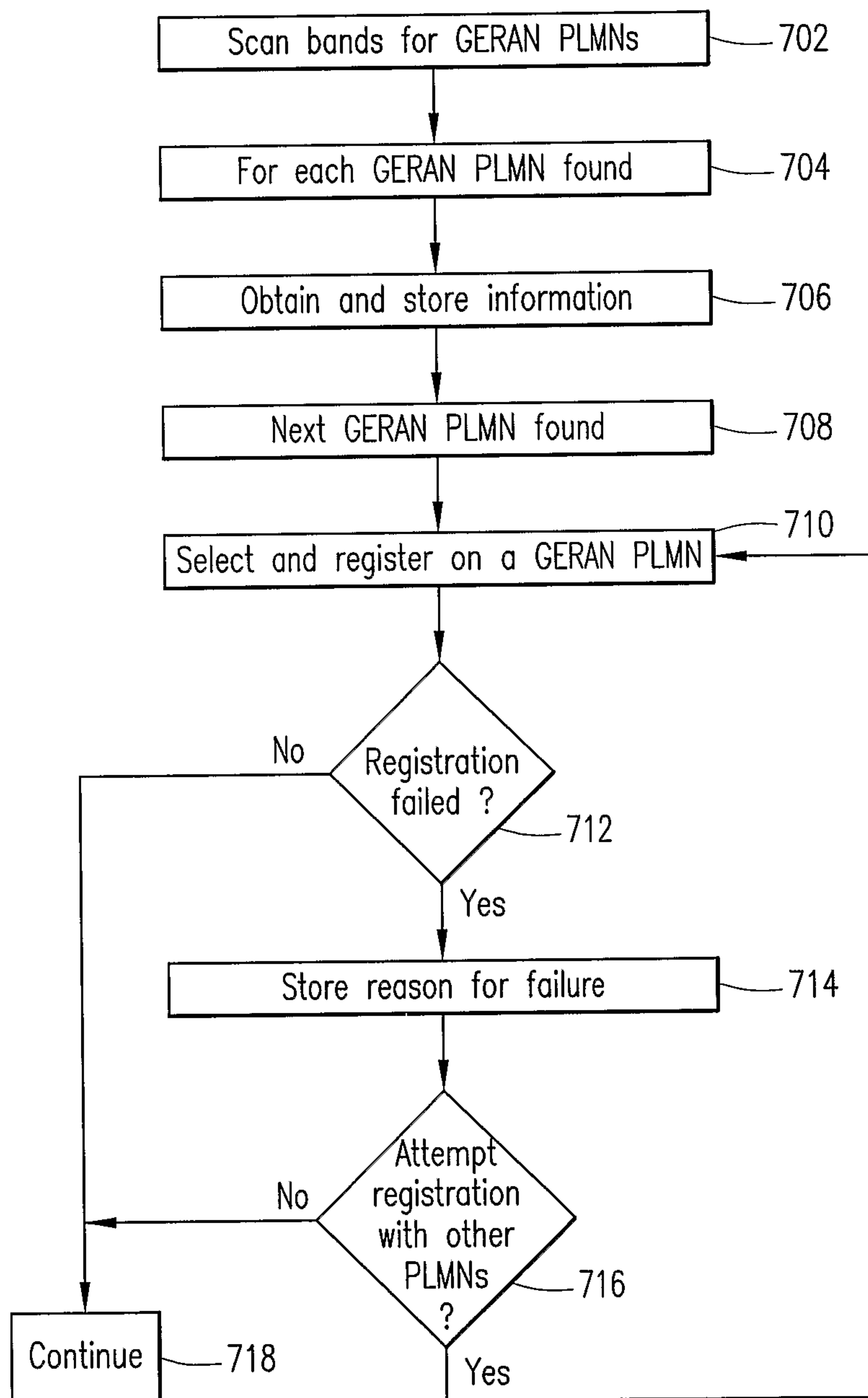


FIG. 5B

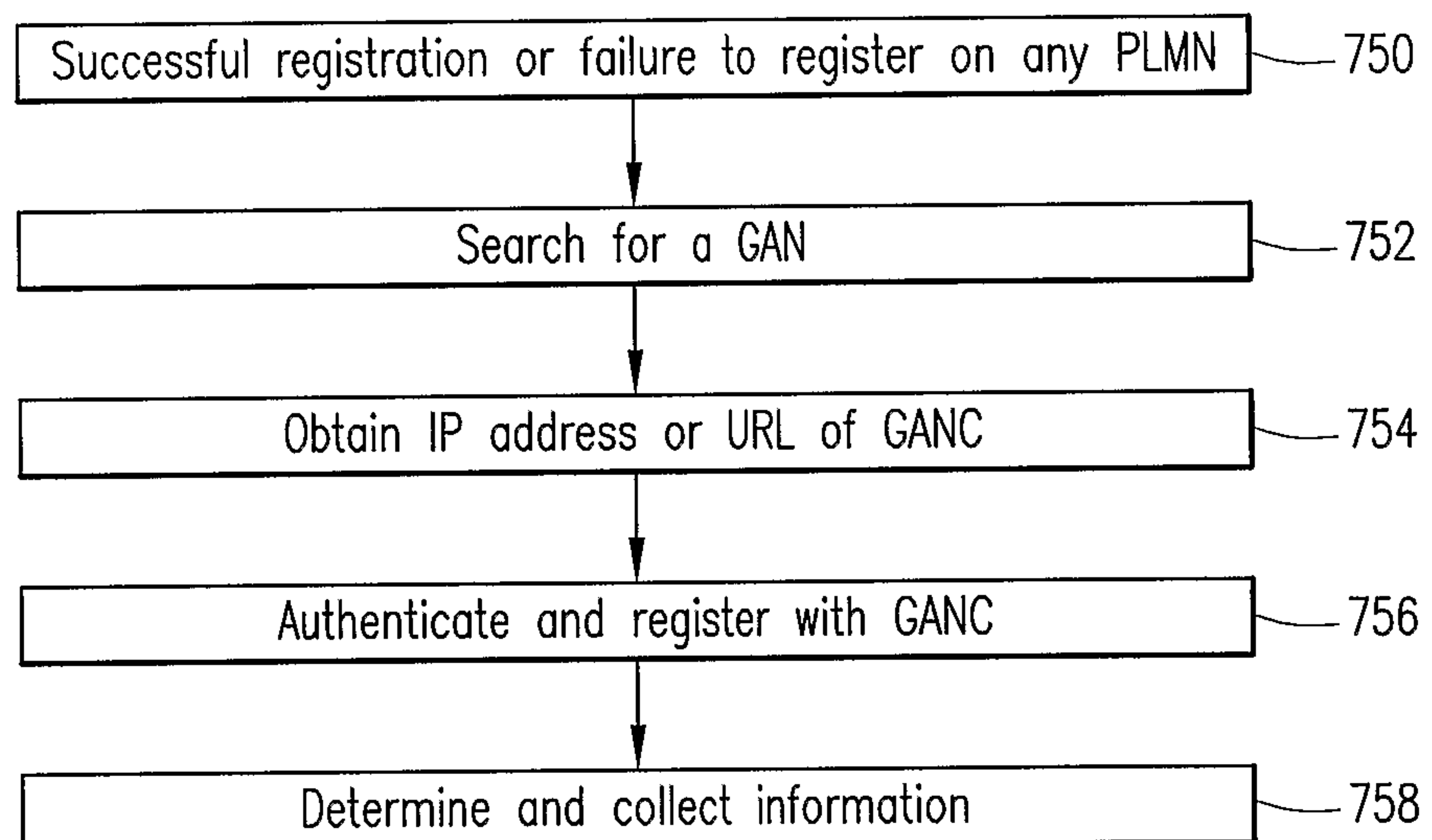
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*FIG. 6*

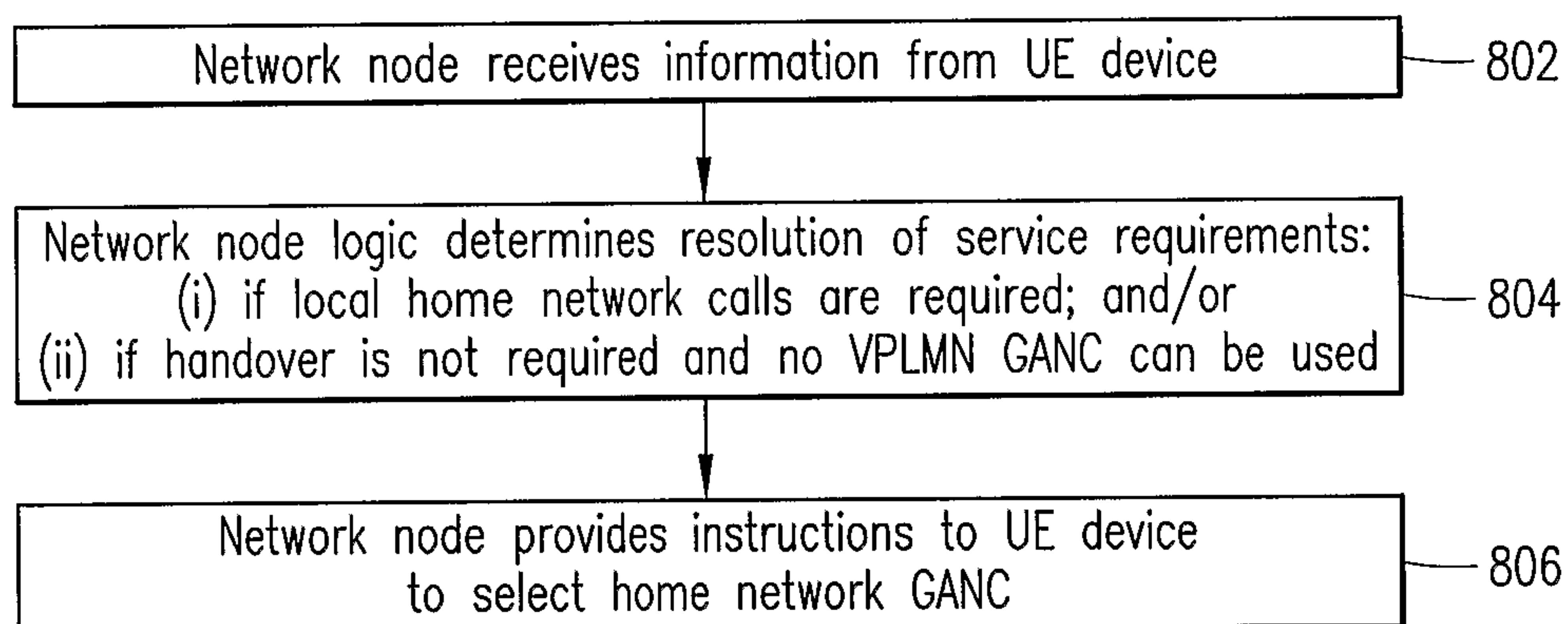
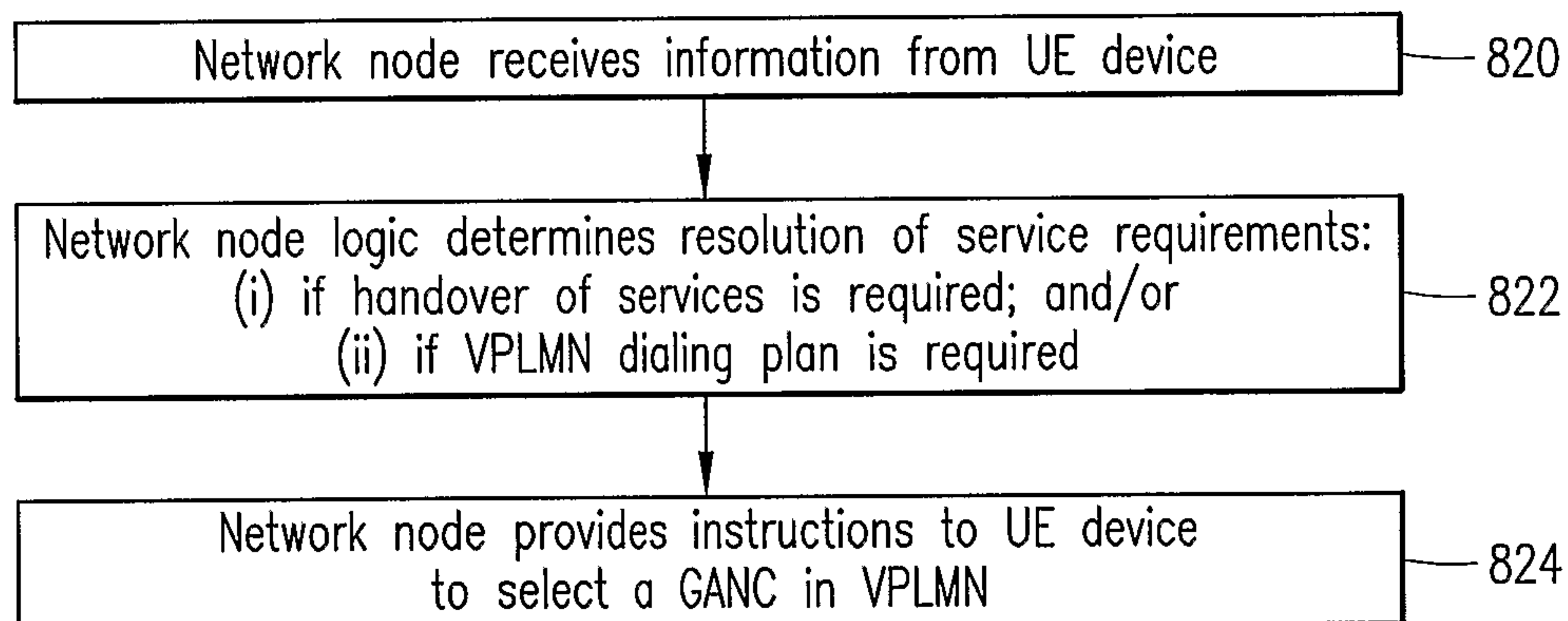
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*FIG. 7A*

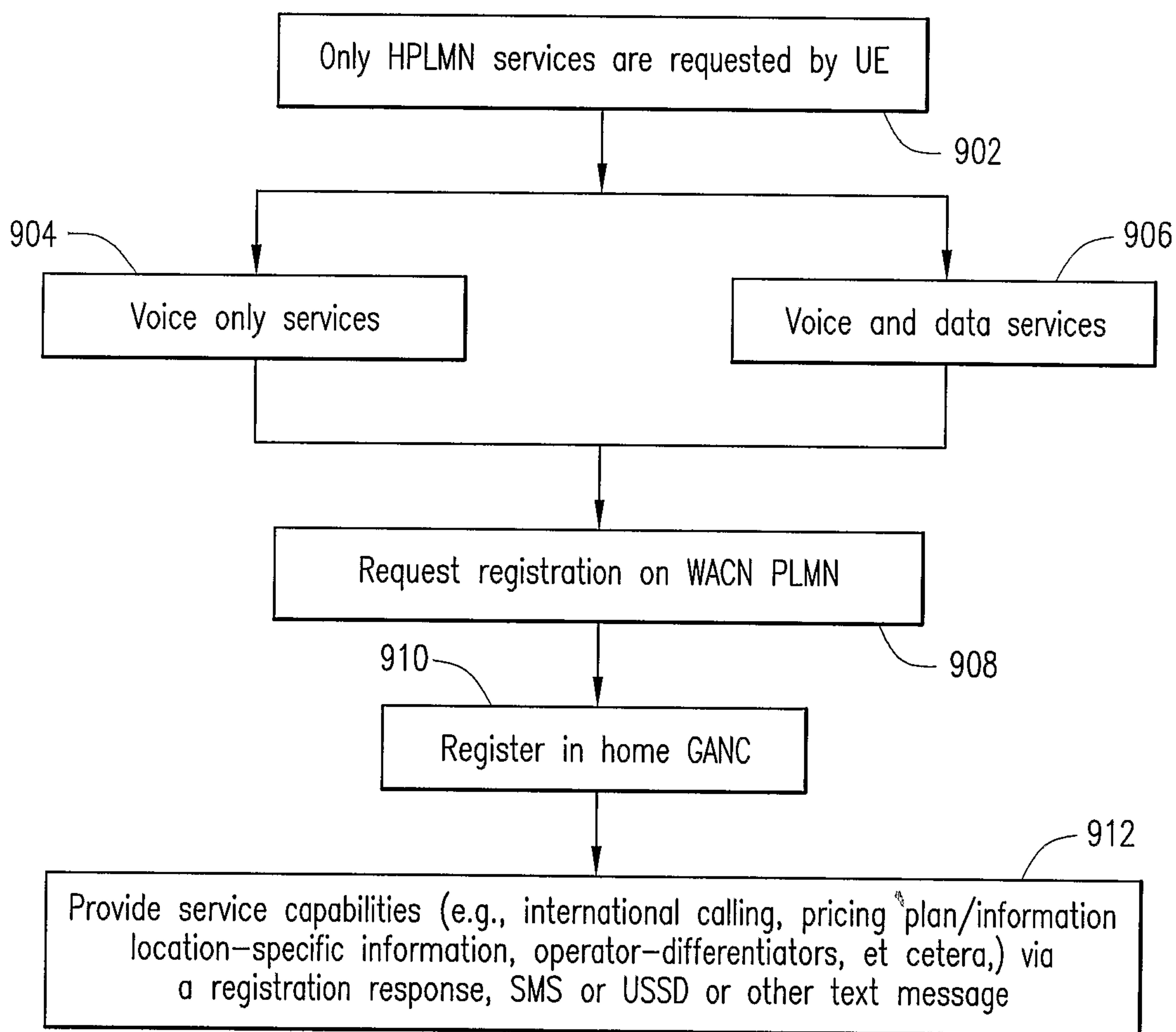
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*FIG. 7B*

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*FIG. 8A**FIG. 8B*

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**FIG. 9**

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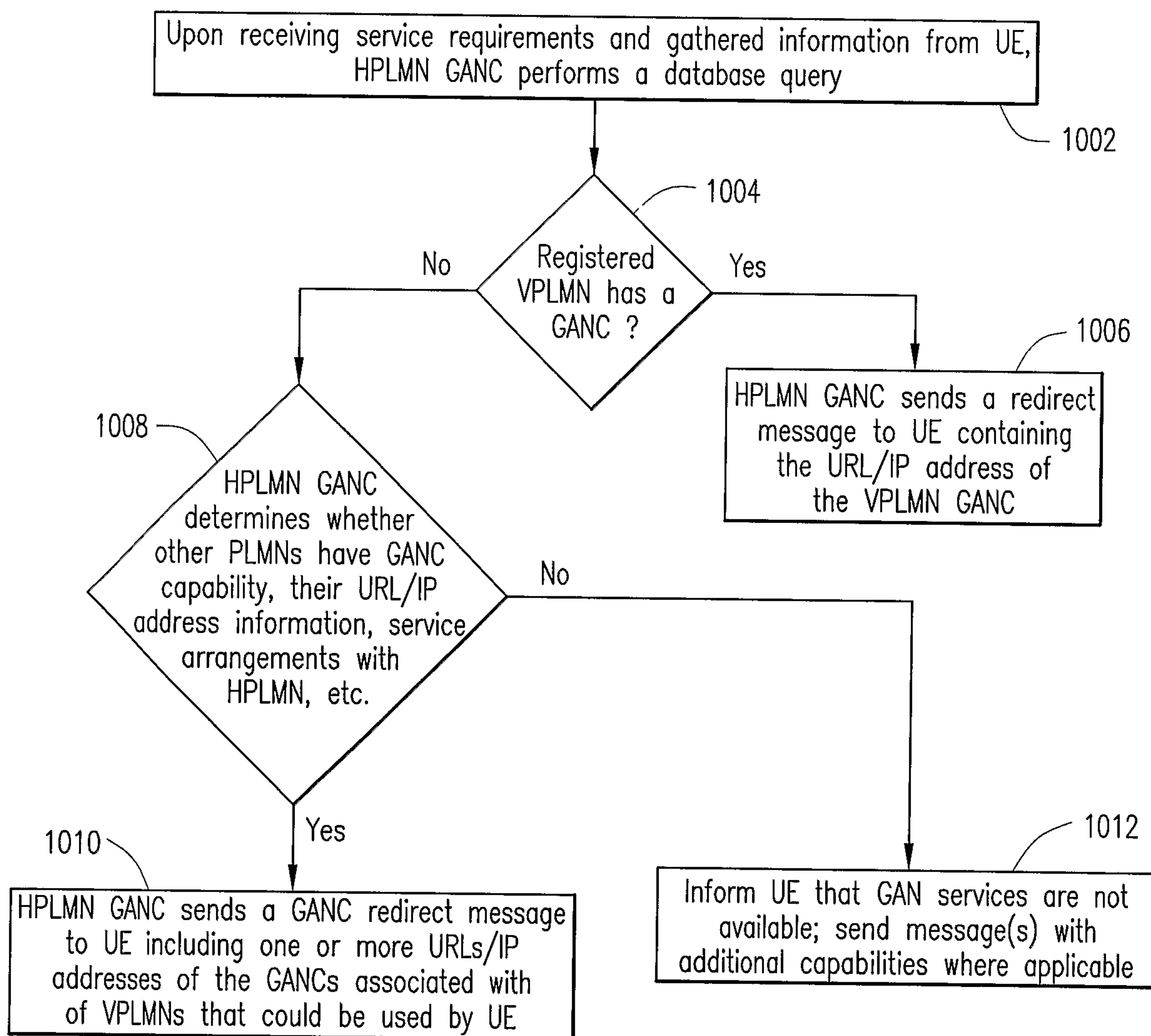
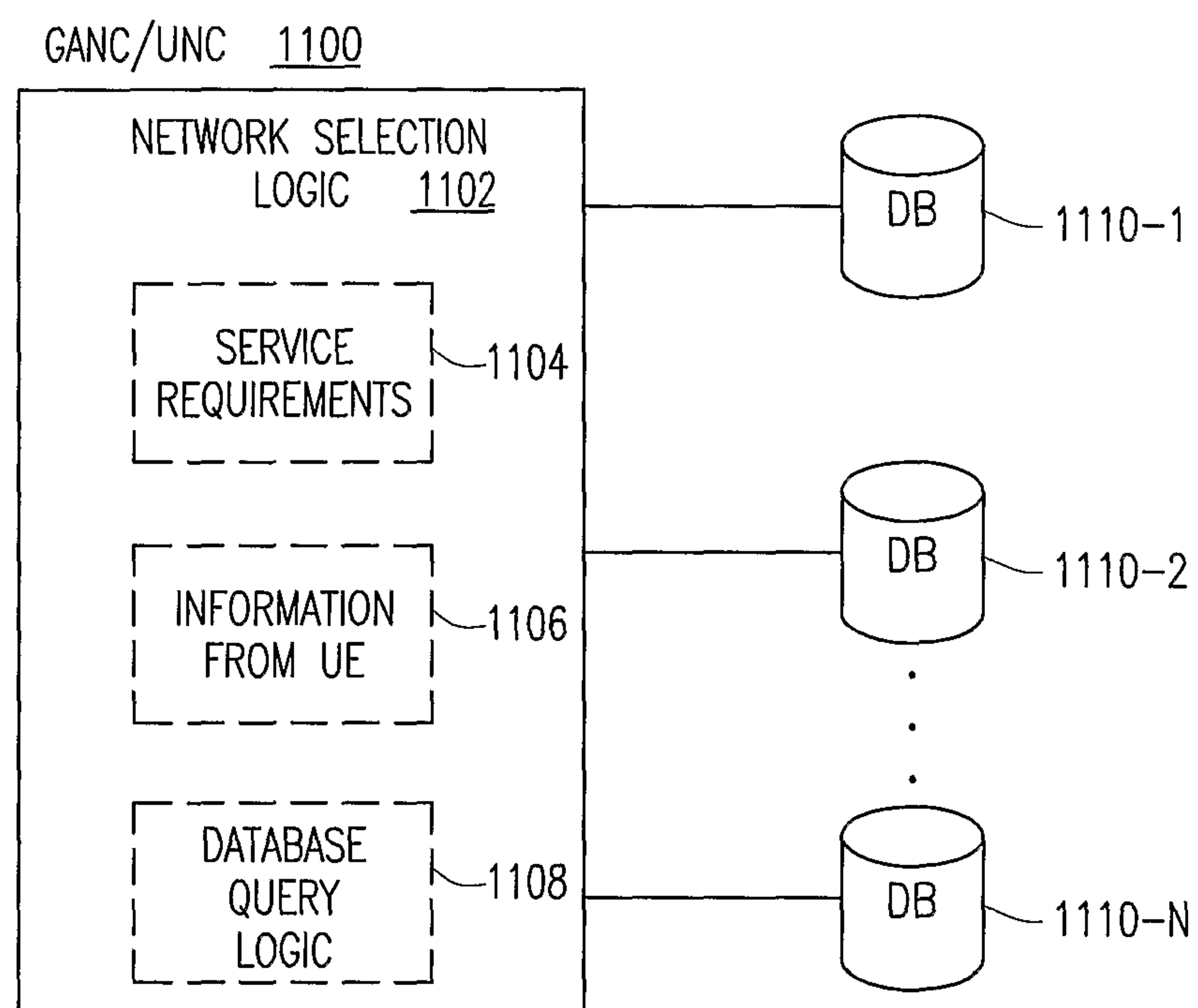


FIG. 10

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*FIG. 11*

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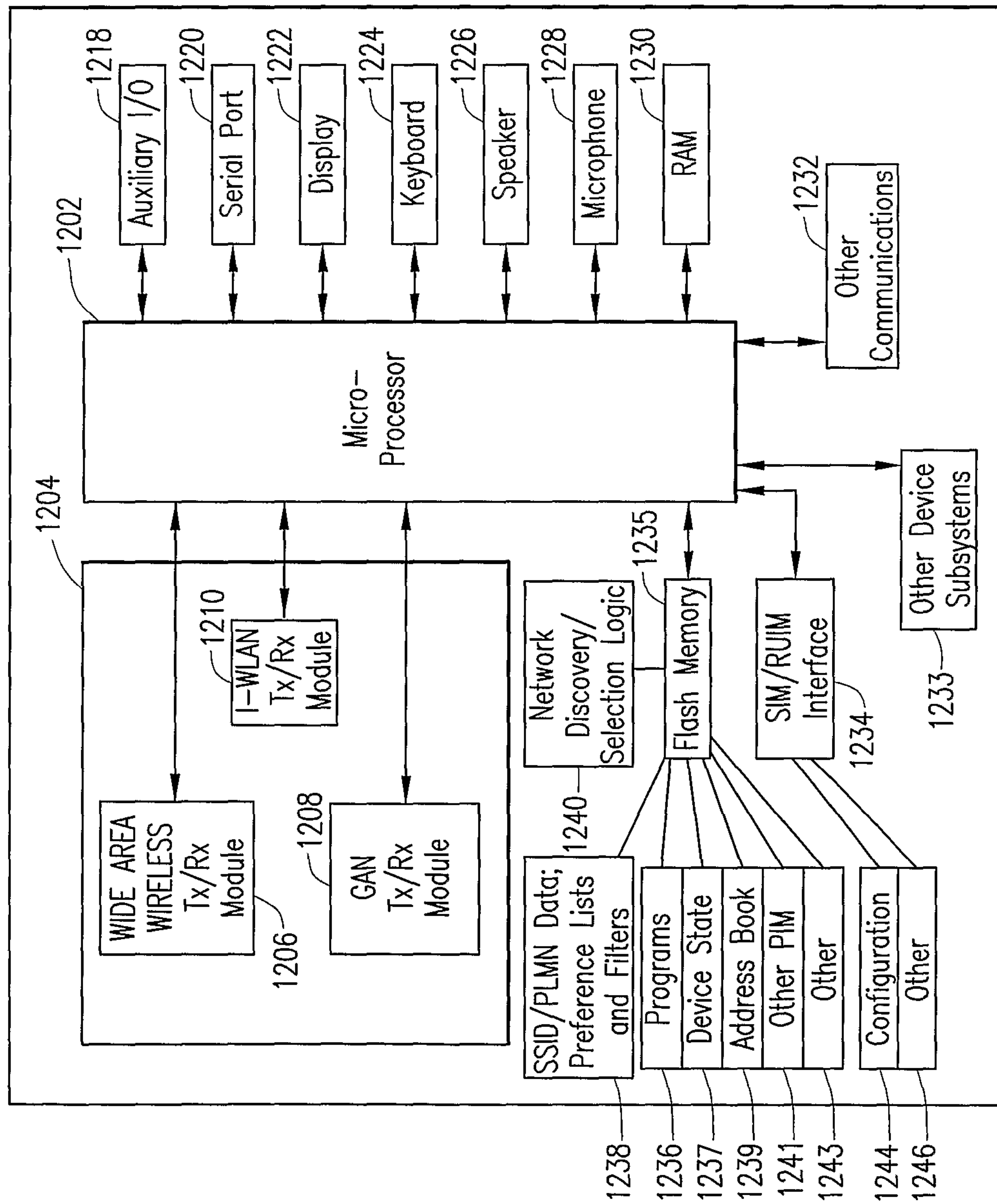


FIG. 12

