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(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SECURING PROGRAMMING DATA OF A PROGRAMMABLE DEVICE

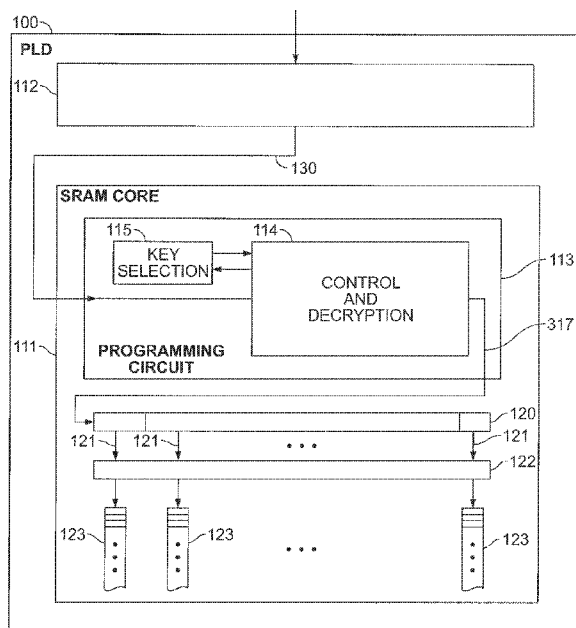


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: Configuration data for a programmable integrated circuit device is at least partially encrypted according to at least one encryption scheme. A plurality of key stores store a plurality of decryption keys for the at least one encryption scheme. Control circuitry identifies a required key from the at least partially encrypted configuration data and generates a key selection signal. Key selection circuitry responsive to the key selection signal reads the plurality of key stores and provides the required key to the control circuitry. The control circuitry may include decryption circuitry that decrypts the at least partially encrypted configuration data using the required key. In some embodiments, different portions of the configuration data, which may represent separate partial reconfigurations of the device, require different decryption keys. Keys may be generated from combinations of the contents of the key stores.



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METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR
SECURING PROGRAMMING DATA
OF A PROGRAMMABLE DEVICE

Background of the Invention

5 [0001] This invention relates to a method and an apparatus for securing the programming data of a programmable device -- e.g., a field-programmable gate array (FPGA) or other programmable logic device (PLD) -- against copying, and to a programmable device so secured.

[0002] Programmable devices are well known. In one class of known
10 PLDs, each device has a large number of logic gates, and a user programs the device to assume a particular configuration of those logic gates, frequently using a software tool provided by the manufacturer of the device, with the software tool being executed on a computer having an adapter into which the device is inserted. Early generations of such
15 devices typically used some form of programmable read-only memory ("PROM") technology to store the configuration data produced by the software tool. In those early devices, the software tool caused the computer to "burn" the pattern into the PROM storage by fusing fusible links. In later generations, the PROM technology may have been erasable
20 programmable read-only memory ("EPROM") technology, which was not burned, and could be erased (for reprogramming) by exposure to ultraviolet light. Still later generations may have used electrically erasable programmable read-only memory ("EEPROM" or "E²PROM")
technology.

25 [0003] All of those technologies were relatively secure. In the case of a user who chose to use a programmable logic device rather than incur the effort and expense of a developing a custom chip, if a competitor of that user were to try to reverse engineer the programmed programmable

logic device, the competitor would essentially have to slice the device layer by layer to discern its programming. While such an effort might be technically feasible, for the types of users being discussed, who by definition are not chip manufacturers, the likelihood that a competitor
5 could or would undertake the effort was small.

[0004] Later, programmable logic devices that store their configuration data in static random access memory ("SRAM") storage became available and remain prevalent. Such devices have the advantage of being smaller and faster than the devices based on EPROM technology.

10 [0005] However, SRAM storage is volatile; it does not retain its contents when power is lost. Therefore, programmable logic devices based on SRAM technology are used with nonvolatile storage, to retain the configuration programming data during times that the device is switched off or otherwise not provided with power. Such nonvolatile
15 storage may be provided, for example, in the form of Flash memory, although any form of nonvolatile storage may be used, and it may be either on, or separate from, the device.

[0006] Whatever type of nonvolatile storage is used, an SRAM programmable logic device having nonvolatile storage of its
20 configuration data is less secure against reverse engineering by a competitor of its user. That is because a competitor can monitor the data flowing out of the nonvolatile storage on power-up, and thereby determine the programming configuration of the programmable logic device. Indeed, the competitor need not even analyze the data stream,
25 but need only record it and store it in its own devices.

[0007] Commonly-assigned U.S. Patents Nos. 5,768,372 and 5,915,017 describe the encryption of the configuration data stored in the nonvolatile storage and its decryption upon loading into the programmable device, including provision of an indicator to signal to
30 the decryption circuit which of several possible encryption/decryption schemes was used to encrypt the configuration data and therefore should be used to decrypt the configuration data.

[0008] Subsequently, the programmable device market has become more sophisticated. Previously a device manufacturer would sell blank
35 programmable devices to an original customer who typically would program them and sell each device as part of an end-user product. Thus, the manufacturer's original customer typically was the only party providing configuration data and therefore the only party needing to protect

configuration data. More recently, vendor-provided proprietary configuration data for various commonly-used functions (frequently referred to as "intellectual property cores") have been sold either by device manufacturers or third parties, freeing the original customer
5 from having to program those functions on its own. If a party provides such proprietary configuration data, it may want to protect those data from being read, but the original customer needs to be free to add additional proprietary configuration data from another vendor (which also will want to protect its proprietary configuration data), as well
10 as its own configuration data, and then to protect the final configuration including its own configuration data and any vendor-provided configuration data.

Summary of the Invention

[0009] The present invention relates to circuitry and methods for
15 separately protecting different portions of configuration data of a programmable device using different encryptions (including the option of no encryption) and keys, as well as providing different keys and combinations of keys.

[0010] Therefore, in accordance with embodiments of the present
20 invention, there is provided a programmable integrated circuit device having an input for configuration data for the programmable integrated circuit device. The configuration data is at least partially encrypted according to at least one encryption scheme. A plurality of key stores store a plurality of decryption keys for the at least one encryption
25 scheme. Control circuitry identifies a required key from the at least partially encrypted configuration data and generates a key selection signal. Key selection circuitry responsive to the key selection signal reads the plurality of key stores and provides the required key to the control circuitry. The control circuitry may include decryption
30 circuitry that decrypts the at least partially encrypted configuration data using the required key.

[0011] In accordance with additional embodiments of the present invention, the configuration data include a plurality of partial
35 partial configuration data portions. Respective ones of the plurality of partial configuration data portions are encrypted and require respective decryption keys. The control circuitry identifies respective required keys from the configuration data and generates respective key selection

signals. The key selection circuitry reads the plurality of key stores responsive to the respective key selection signal and provides those respective required keys to the control circuitry.

[0012] Methods of configuring and operating such programmable
5 integrated circuit devices are also provided.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0013] Further features of the invention, its nature and various advantages will be apparent upon consideration of the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in
10 which like reference characters refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

[0014] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a programmable device in which the present invention may be implemented;

[0015] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of key selection circuitry according
15 to an implementation of the present invention; and

[0016] FIG. 3 is a simplified block diagram of an illustrative system employing a programmable logic device incorporating the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

20 [0017] FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of a programmable logic device 100 as an example of a programmable device in which the present invention may be implemented. Programmable logic device 100 preferably includes nonvolatile storage 112 which stores the programming data, and an SRAM-based programmable logic core 111, having a programming
25 circuit 113. SRAM-based programmable logic core 111 could be an FPGA, where nonvolatile storage 112 is on a separate die, which may be in a common package with core 111 or completely separate (and connected only by wires or traces). Alternatively, device 100 could be a type of PLD in which nonvolatile storage 112 and core 111 are on the same die.

30 [0018] If the configuration data were not encrypted, then when power would first be applied to programmable logic device 100, configuration data stored in nonvolatile storage 112 would be output over connection 130 to programmable logic core 111. The data preferably would be clocked serially into shift register chain 120. Preferably,
35 when shift register chain 120 is filled, the data in shift register chain 120 would be transferred over connections 121 to buffer 122,

whence they are transferred to "columns" 123 of SRAM programming registers which configure the logic structure of programmable logic core 111. As data in buffer 122 are being transferred to columns 123, configuration data preferably would continue to be clocked into shift register chain 120 from nonvolatile storage 112 (until storage 112 is empty). By the time shift register chain 120 is full again, buffer 122 preferably would be ready to receive data again, preferably allowing an uninterrupted flow of data out of nonvolatile storage 112 into shift register chain 120.

10 [0019] However, because encryption of the configuration data may be used to prevent unauthorized interception of the configuration data on connection 130, programming circuit 113 includes a control and decryption block 114 to select the appropriate key or keys and decrypt the configuration data, as described below.

15 [0020] As discussed above, it is desirable to allow different portions of the configuration data to be encrypted separately. For example programming circuit 113 may allow partial reconfiguration of device 100. Thus, in one scenario, an initial configuration may be stored in the nonvolatile configuration storage by the device manufacturer, including certain proprietary configuration data. The purchaser of that device 100 from the device manufacturer could then use the partial reconfiguration feature to add its own proprietary configuration data without destroying or overwriting the device manufacturer's configuration data. Device 100 could then be sold to a further purchaser which could then use the partial reconfiguration feature to add the final programming, without destroying or overwriting the device manufacturer's configuration data or the first purchaser's configuration data, and device 100 could then be incorporated into an end-user product. As an alternative, the device manufacturer could provide its configuration data to the first purchaser on a separate medium and the first purchaser can provide both the manufacturer's configuration data and its own configuration data to the further purchaser on a separate medium. The further purchaser could then input those data from the separate medium into the programming software along with its own programming instructions to create the final configuration. As discussed below, each portion, or partial configuration, can remain separately encrypted.

[0021] In another scenario, a first company wants to buy a PLD from a first vendor and some intellectual property core or cores from a second vendor. Either the first vendor or the second vendor sells the devices to the first company. Either way, the devices are sold with a preset
5 nonvolatile key, which may be a "fuse key," set by blowing selected fuses in a fuse array. Regardless of who set the preset key, the second vendor sells the first company a configuration image encrypted with the preset key. The first company does not know the preset key, so the second vendor's configuration image is secure. The first company then
10 generates its own configuration image, as well as a volatile key which it uses to generate an encrypted version of its own configuration image.

[0022] The first company then incorporates the device in a final product to be sold to end users, after configuring the device with the second vendor's encrypted configuration image, and then performing a
15 partial reconfiguration to add in the first company's own encrypted configuration image. Both configurations may reside in an on- or off-chip memory device, as described above. Both the first company's proprietary configuration and the second vendor's proprietary configuration remain secure for each of those two companies and from the
20 end users.

[0023] These sequences of events are only examples and more or fewer intermediate purchasers and reconfigurations may be possible. In any event, in these examples, some or all of the entities providing configuration data may want to protect those configuration data by
25 encryption. To that end, the partial reconfiguration feature may be designed to allow different partial reconfigurations, including the initial configuration itself (which may be a full or partial configuration in accordance with copending, commonly-assigned Gao et al. United States Patent Application No. 13/085,679, filed April 13, 2011),
30 to be either encrypted or unencrypted. A series of control bits corresponding to each partial reconfiguration (including the initial configuration) identifies whether a particular partial reconfiguration is encrypted or not. Thus, in an example where there are two reconfigurations -- the initial configuration and one partial
35 reconfiguration -- there may be two control bits as follows (where "POF" stands for the "programmer object file" containing the configuration bitstream):

Bit Sequence	Initial POF	Partial Reconfiguration POF
00	Unencrypted	Unencrypted
11	Encrypted	Encrypted
01	Unencrypted	Encrypted
10	Encrypted	Unencrypted
0X	Unencrypted	User control
1X	Encrypted	User control

If there are more partial reconfigurations, then there would be a correspondingly greater number of control bits. In cases listed above as being under "user control," the indication of whether the partial reconfiguration POF is encrypted or not could come from an external signal applied to a device pin, or from the user logic on device 100.

[0024] In addition, as described in above-identified U.S. Patents Nos. 5,768,372 and 5,915,017, more than one encryption scheme could be used for the different partial reconfigurations. If so, additional control bits would be provided to indicate which encryption scheme is used for each portion.

[0025] Regardless of the number of configurations/reconfigurations and encryption schemes, according to other embodiments of the present invention, a plurality of keys may be provided and used individually or combined. For example, a device 100 according to embodiments of the invention may have three keys -- a nonvolatile key, a volatile key, and user-inputted key (also volatile) loaded through the programming port (e.g., JTAG port) of device 100.

[0026] The nonvolatile key could be a fuse key -- i.e., it could be set by blowing selected fuses in a fuse array -- or could be stored in another nonvolatile storage medium. The volatile key may be stored in volatile memory, which preferably has battery back-up.

[0027] Whatever the format of the nonvolatile key, it would be particularly well-suited for use by the device manufacturer to protect the manufacturer's own proprietary portion of the configuration data. That would be particularly true of a fuse key implementation. Similarly, the volatile key could be used by the first purchaser, while the loadable key could be used by the second purchaser who, in the three-configuration example above, provides the final configuration for an end-user product (the end-user does not provide any configuration).

[0028] Key selection could be facilitated in one implementation by providing a key selection circuit 115 under control of control and decryption block 114, as shown in FIG. 1 and in more detail in FIG. 2. As seen in FIG. 2, control and decryption block 114 has access to
5 nonvolatile key storage 201, volatile key storage 202 (which may include battery back-up 212), and loadable key storage 203. Alternatively, control and decryption block 114 may be connected directly to the JTAG or similar port 213 for capture of the loadable key. Control and decryption block 114, which would "know," based on control bits in the
10 configuration/reconfiguration being loaded which key was required, would generate a key selection signal 204 which would instruct key selection circuit 115 to select the appropriate one of the three keys 201, 202, 203 to allow decryption of the configuration/reconfiguration being loaded. Those control bits would be expected to be clear data;
15 otherwise, they could not be read until the decryption had occurred.

[0029] In the implementation just described, where the individual keys are associated with separate configurations/reconfigurations, key selection circuit 115 could be a simple $n:1$ multiplexer (in the specific example given, $n=3$). However, there could be other implementations in
20 which the various keys 201, 202, 203 are combined -- in the same or different ways -- for loading various ones of the configuration data portions. In such an implementation, key selection circuit 115 would include the appropriate logic to implement the various combinations that may be called for by signal 204. A simple implementation would call for
25 concatenating two or more of the keys 201, 202, 203 in a specified order. Another relatively simple implementation would call for combining two or more of the keys 201, 202, 203 by a simple logical operation -- e.g., an exclusive-OR operation.

[0030] It should be noted that while implementations have been
30 described that include three keys, any number of keys could be provided and could be used individually or combined in different ways, as described.

[0031] A PLD 90 programmed according to any embodiment of the present invention may be used in many kinds of electronic devices. One possible
35 use is in a data processing system 900 shown in FIG. 3. Data processing system 900 may include one or more of the following components: a processor 901; memory 902; I/O circuitry 903; and peripheral devices 904. These components are coupled together by a system bus 905

and are populated on a circuit board 906 which is contained in an end-user system 907.

[0032] System 900 can be used in a wide variety of applications, such as computer networking, data networking, instrumentation, video
5 processing, digital signal processing, or any other application where the advantage of using programmable or reprogrammable logic is desirable. PLD 90 can be used to perform a variety of different logic functions. For example, PLD 90 can be configured as a processor or
10 controller that works in cooperation with processor 901. PLD 90 may also be used as an arbiter for arbitrating access to a shared resources in system 900. In yet another example, PLD 90 can be configured as an interface between processor 901 and one of the other components in system 900. It should be noted that system 900 is only exemplary, and that the true scope and spirit of the invention should be indicated by
15 the following claims.

[0033] Various technologies can be used to implement PLDs 90 as described above and incorporating this invention.

[0034] It will be understood that the foregoing is only illustrative of the principles of the invention, and that various modifications can
20 be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention. For example, the various elements of this invention can be provided on a PLD in any desired number and/or arrangement. One skilled in the art will appreciate that the present invention can be practiced by other than the described embodiments,
25 which are presented for purposes of illustration and not of limitation, and the present invention is limited only by the claims that follow.

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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A programmable integrated circuit device comprising:
an input for configuration data for said programmable
integrated circuit device, said configuration data being at least partially
encrypted according to at least one encryption scheme;
5 a plurality of key stores that store a plurality of
decryption keys for said at least one encryption scheme;
control circuitry operable to identify a required key
from said at least partially encrypted configuration data and operable to
generate a key selection signal; and
10 key selection circuitry responsive to said key selection
signal operable to read said plurality of key stores and operable to
provide said required key to said control circuitry; wherein:
said control circuitry includes decryption circuitry
operable to decrypt said at least partially encrypted configuration data
15 using said required key.
2. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 1
wherein said key selection circuitry is operable to select said required
key from one of said plurality of key stores.
3. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 2
wherein said key selection circuitry comprises a multiplexer.
4. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 1
wherein said key selection circuitry is operable to read at least two of
said decryption keys from said plurality of key stores and is operable to
generate said required key from said at least two of said decryption keys.
5. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 4
wherein:
said key selection circuitry comprises an exclusive-OR
gate; and
5 said key selection circuitry is operable to generate said
required key by combining said at least two of said decryption keys using
said exclusive-OR gate to perform an exclusive-OR function.

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6. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 1
wherein:

said programmable integrated circuit device is partially
reconfigurable by writing an additional portion of configuration data into
5 said input, said additional portion of configuration data being at least
partially encrypted according to one of said at least one encryption
scheme;

respective ones of an original portion of configuration
data and said additional portion of configuration data require respective
10 decryption keys;

said control circuitry is operable to identify respective
required keys from said at least partially encrypted original portion of
configuration data and said at least partially encrypted additional portion
of configuration data, and is operable to generate respective key selection
15 signals; and

said key selection circuitry is operable to read said
plurality of key stores responsive to said respective key selection signal
and is operable to provide said respective required keys to said control
circuitry.

7. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 6
further comprising:

configuration data storage operable to store said
configuration data and operable to provide said configuration data to said
5 input; wherein:

said configuration data storage is operable to store said
respective ones of said original portion of configuration data and said at
least one said additional portion of configuration data in their respective
encrypted forms.

8. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 1
wherein said plurality of decryption keys comprise:

a nonvolatile key;
a volatile key; and
5 a loadable key.

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9. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 8 wherein said nonvolatile key is a fuse key.

10. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 8 further comprising battery back-up for said volatile key.

11. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 1, wherein:

said programmable integrated circuit device comprises a programmable logic core; and

5 said control circuitry is operable to provide decrypted configuration data via said input to said programmable logic core.

12. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 11 further comprising configuration data storage operable to store said configuration data and operable to provide said configuration data to said input.

13. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 12 wherein said configuration data storage and said programmable logic core are formed on a single die.

14. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 12 wherein said configuration storage and said programmable logic core are formed on separate dice.

15. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 14 wherein said configuration storage and said programmable logic core are mounted in a single package.

16. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 11 wherein said programmable logic core is a field-programmable gate array.

17. A programmable integrated circuit device comprising:
control circuitry;
a plurality of key stores operable to store a plurality
of decryption keys;

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5 key selection circuitry; and
 an input for configuration data for said programmable
integrated circuit device, said configuration data including a plurality of
partial configuration data portions; wherein:

 respective ones of said plurality of partial
10 configuration data portions are encrypted and require respective decryption
keys;

 said control circuitry is operable to identify respective
required keys from said configuration data and is operable to generate
respective key selection signals; and

15 said key selection circuitry is operable to read said
plurality of key stores responsive to said respective key selection signal
and is operable to provide said respective required keys to said control
circuitry.

18. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 17
wherein said plurality of decryption keys comprise:

 a nonvolatile key;
 a volatile key; and
5 a loadable key.

19. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 18
wherein said nonvolatile key is a fuse key.

20. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 19
further comprising battery back-up for said volatile key.

21. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 17,
wherein:

 said programmable integrated circuit device comprises a
programmable logic core; and

5 said control circuitry is operable to provide decrypted
configuration data via said input to said programmable logic core.

22. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 21
further comprising configuration data storage operable to store said

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configuration data and operable to provide said configuration data to said input.

23. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 22 wherein said configuration data storage and said programmable logic core are formed on a single die.

24. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 22 wherein said configuration data storage and said programmable logic core are formed on separate dice.

25. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 24 wherein said configuration storage and said programmable logic core are mounted in a single package.

26. The programmable integrated circuit device of claim 21 wherein said programmable logic core is a field-programmable gate array.

27. A method of configuring a programmable integrated circuit device comprising:

storing partial configuration data for said programmable integrated circuit device in nonvolatile storage, said partial
5 configuration data being at least partially encrypted according to at least one encryption scheme; and

storing at least one decryption key for said partial configuration data in one of a plurality of key stores on said programmable integrated circuit device.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein said at least one decryption key comprises one of:

a nonvolatile key;
a volatile key; and
5 a loadable key.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein:
said at least one decryption key is a nonvolatile key;
and

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said nonvolatile key is a fuse key.

30. A method of operating a programmable integrated circuit device in which configuration data of said integrated circuit device is encrypted, said method comprising:

5 reading control data associated with said configuration data; and

based on said control data, selecting a key to decrypt said configuration data; wherein said key is selected from one of:

- 10 (a) a nonvolatile key;
(b) a volatile key;
(c) a loadable key; and
(d) a combination of at least two of said nonvolatile key, said volatile key and said loadable key.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein:
portions of said configuration data are separately encrypted;

5 said reading comprises reading control data associated with each of said portions; and

said selecting comprises selecting a separate key to decrypt said configuration data.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein each said separate key is separately selected from one of:

- 5 (a) said nonvolatile key;
(b) said volatile key;
(c) said loadable key; and
(d) a separate combination of at least two of said nonvolatile key, said volatile key and said loadable key.

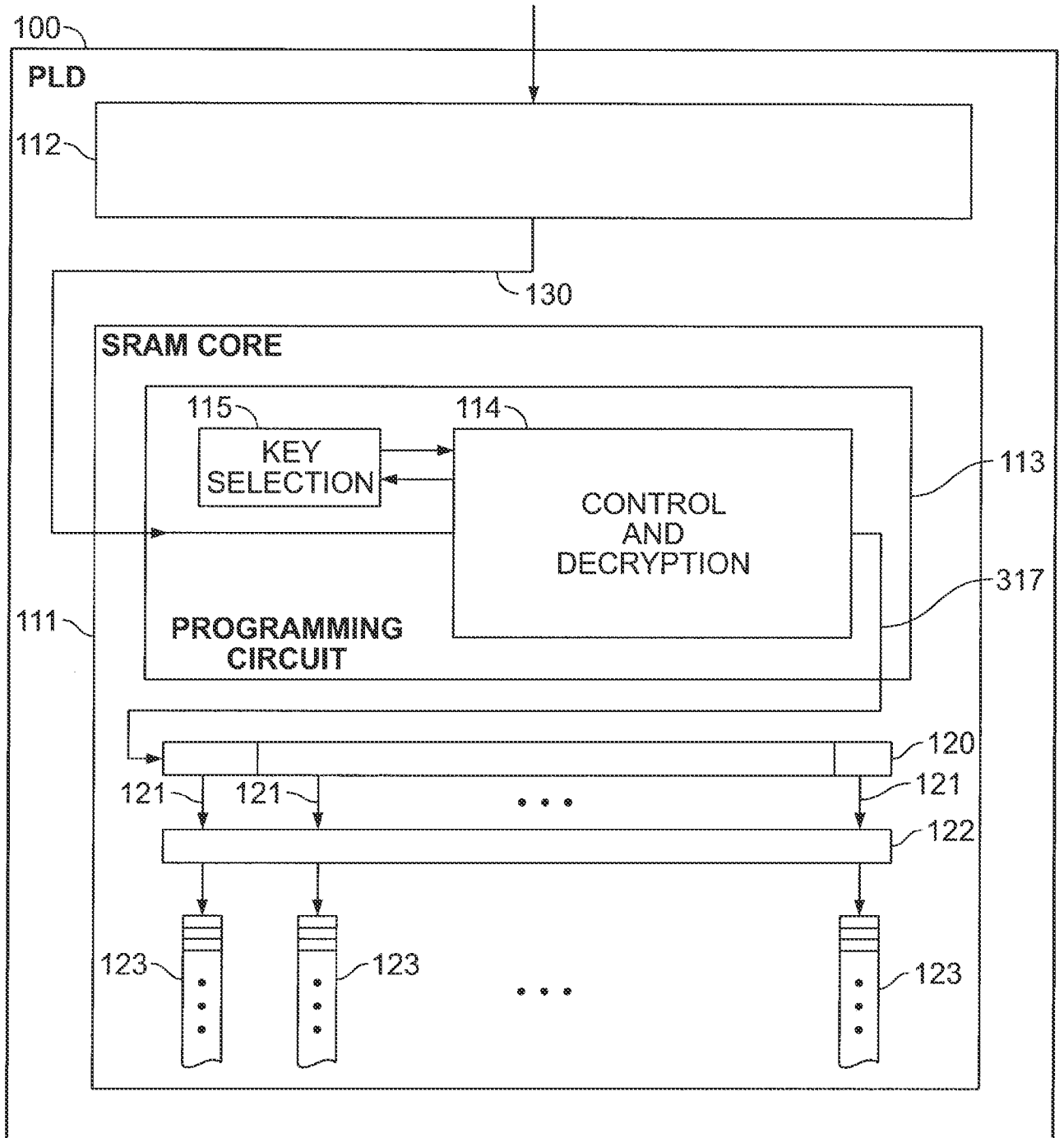


FIG. 1

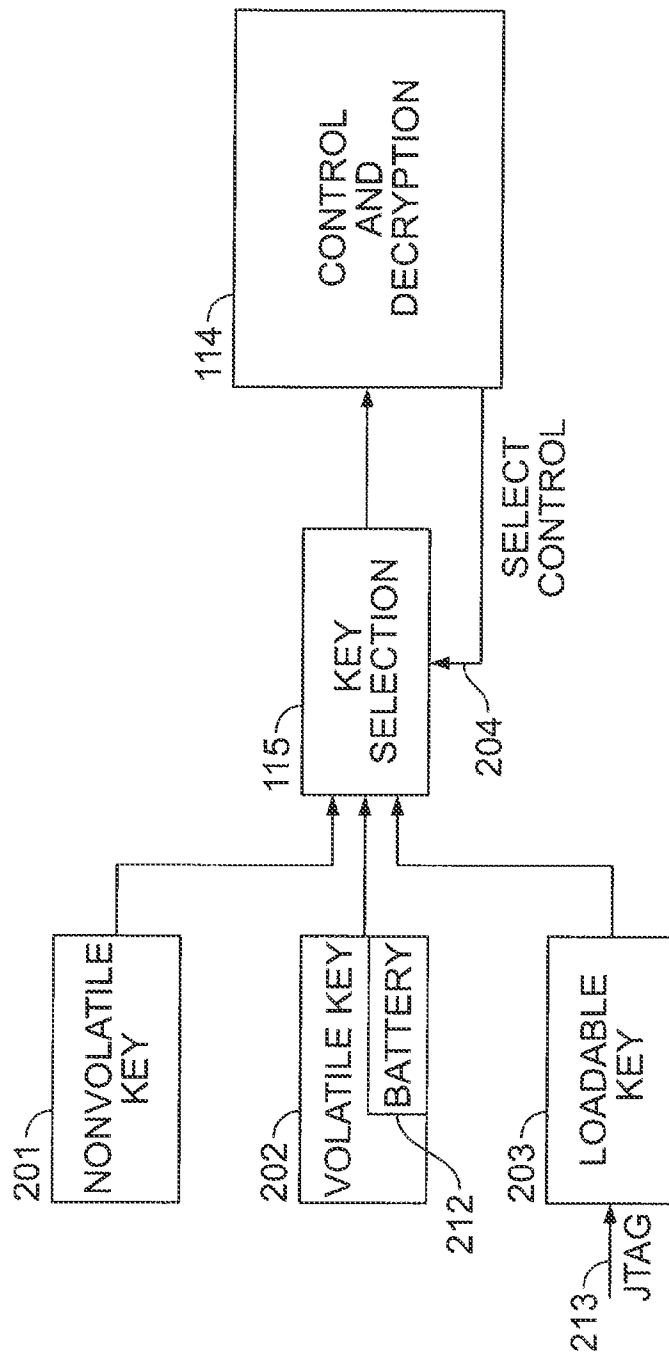


FIG. 2

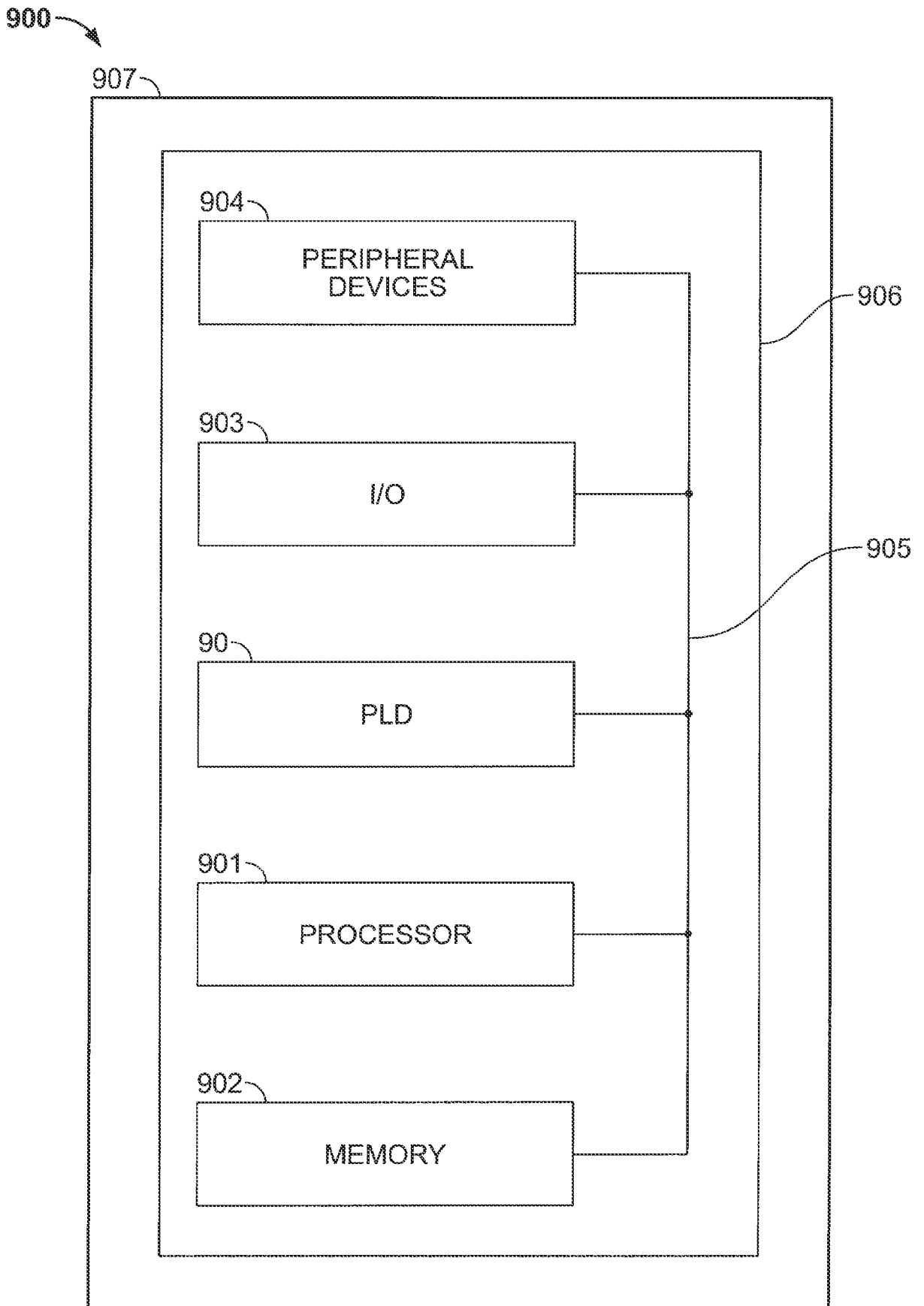


FIG. 3