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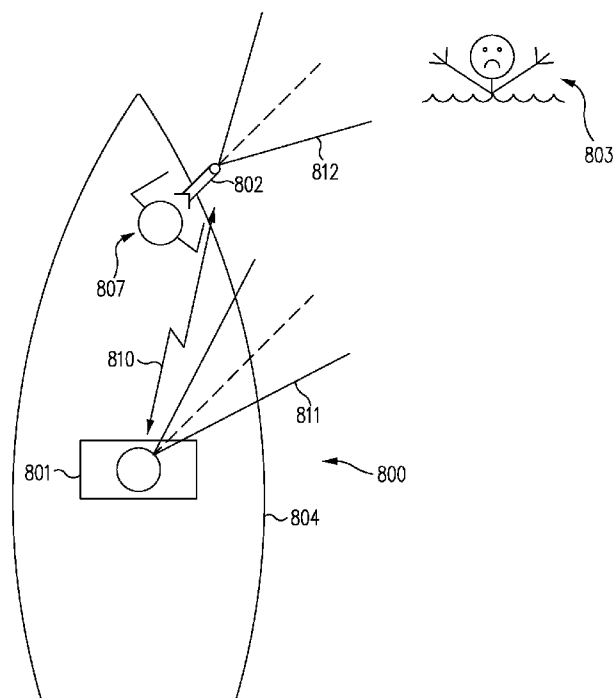


FIG. 8

(57) Abstract: Systems and methods disclosed herein provide, for some embodiments, infrared cameras and target position acquisition techniques for various applications. For example, in one embodiment, a system may include a portable imaging/viewing subsystem having a target position finder and may also include a fixed mount camera subsystem having a camera and a camera positioner. A communications link may be configured to communicate a signal from the target position finder to the camera positioner. The signal may be representative of a position of a target being imaged/viewed with the portable imaging/viewing subsystem. The camera positioner may aim the camera toward the target in response to the signal. The target may, for example, be a man overboard. Thus, the system may be useful in search and rescue operations.



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INFRARED CAMERA SYSTEMS AND METHODS

RELATED

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/474,209 filed April 11, 2011, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present disclosure relates to infrared imaging systems and, in particular, to infrared camera systems and methods.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Infrared cameras are utilized in a variety of imaging applications to capture infrared images. For example, infrared cameras may be utilized for maritime applications to enhance visibility under various conditions for a naval crew. However, there generally are a number of drawbacks for conventional maritime implementation approaches for infrared cameras.

[0004] One drawback of conventional infrared cameras is that a user is generally not allowed to switch between different processing techniques during viewing of the infrared image or the optimal settings may be difficult to determine by the user. Another drawback is that user-controlled processing may occur post capture, after initial processing has been performed, which generally lessens the user's input and control and may result in a less than desirable image being displayed. Another drawback is that it may be difficult to aim a camera at an object that is being viewed by a person using another camera (e.g., any type of portable viewing/imaging device, such as a pair of binoculars or a handheld camera).

[0005] As a result, there is a need for improved techniques for providing selectable viewing controls for infrared cameras. There is also a need for improved infrared camera processing techniques for land and/or maritime applications (e.g., for various types of watercraft, including large vessels, such as cargo ships and cruise ships). There is also a need for systems and methods that facilitate the aiming of a camera (e.g., a fixed mount camera) at an object within a field of view of another camera.

SUMMARY

[0006] Systems and methods disclosed herein, in accordance with one or more embodiments, provide for the aiming of one or more cameras (e.g., fixed mount cameras) at an object that is being viewed/imaged by a person using a portable viewing/imaging device or subsystem, such as a pair of binoculars, a night vision device, or a handheld camera. For example, in one embodiment, a more powerful, fixed mount night vision camera system may be aimed at a man overboard after the man overboard has been spotted with a less powerful, handheld night vision device.

[0007] More specifically, in accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure, a system includes a fixed mount camera subsystem having a camera, a camera positioner, and a first communications interface; and a portable imaging/viewing subsystem having a target position finder and a second communications interface adapted to establish a communications link with the first communications interface to communicate a signal from the target position finder to the camera positioner, the signal being representative of position information of a target being imaged/viewed with the portable imaging/viewing subsystem. The fixed mount camera subsystem may be configured to aim the camera using the camera positioner toward the target in response to the signal.

[0008] In accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure, an infrared camera includes an image capture component adapted to capture an infrared image of a scene; a target position finder adapted to obtain target position information for a target within the scene; and a communications interface configured to communicate a signal from the infrared camera based on information from the target position finder, the signal being representative of position information for the target being viewed with the infrared camera, wherein the communications interface is further configured to receive target position information from another device. The infrared camera may further include a control component adapted to provide selectable processing modes to a user, receive a user input corresponding to a user selected processing mode, and generate a control signal indicative of the user selected processing mode, wherein the selectable processing modes includes a processing of target position information received via the communications interface and a processing of the position information from the target position finder to provide via the communications interface; and a processing component adapted to receive the generated control signal from the control component and perform the selected processing function based on the user selected processing mode.

[0009] In accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure, a method includes capturing an infrared image of a target within a field of view of a first infrared camera; determining position information of the target in response to a user command; storing the position information of the target within the infrared camera; and communicating wirelessly the position information of the target to a remote infrared camera to assist the remote infrared camera in pointing to the target.

[0010] In accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure, a system may include a portable imaging/viewing subsystem having a target position finder and may also include a camera subsystem (e.g., fixed mount) having a camera and a camera positioner. A communications link may be configured to communicate a signal from the target position finder to the camera positioner. The signal may be representative of a position of a target being imaged/viewed by the portable imaging/viewing subsystem. The camera positioner may be configured to aim the camera toward the target in response to the signal.

[0011] In accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure, a handset may include a portable imaging/viewing subsystem having a target position finder. A communications link may be configured to communicate a signal from the target position finder. The signal may be representative of a position of a target being viewed by the portable imaging/viewing subsystem.

[0012] In accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure, a fixed mount camera subsystem may include at least one camera, a camera positioner, and a communications link configured to receive a signal representative of a position of a target. The camera positioner may be configured to aim the camera toward the target in response to the signal.

[0013] In accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure, a method may include imaging/viewing a target with a portable imaging/viewing subsystem, determining a position of the target with a target position finder of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem, and communicating information representative of the position of the target to a camera subsystem (e.g., a fixed mount camera subsystem). For example, a camera of the fixed mount camera subsystem may be aimed toward the target in response to the signal.

[0014] The scope of the disclosure is defined by the claims, which are incorporated into this section by reference. A more complete understanding of embodiments of the present disclosure will be afforded to those skilled in the art, as well as a realization of additional

advantages thereof, by a consideration of the following detailed description of one or more embodiments. Reference will be made to the appended sheets of drawings that will first be described briefly.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] Figs. 1A-1B show block diagrams illustrating various infrared imaging systems for capturing and processing infrared images in accordance with various embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0016] Figs. 1C-1D show block diagrams illustrating various configurations for the infrared imaging systems in accordance with various embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0017] Figs. 1E-1F show block diagrams illustrating various views of the infrared imaging systems in accordance with various embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0018] Fig. 2 shows a block diagram illustrating a method for capturing and processing infrared images in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0019] Figs. 3A-3F show block diagrams illustrating infrared processing techniques in accordance with various embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0020] Fig. 4 shows a block diagram illustrating an overview of infrared processing techniques in accordance with various embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0021] Fig. 5 shows a block diagram illustrating a control component of the infrared imaging system for selecting between different modes of operation in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0022] Fig. 6 shows a block diagram illustrating an embodiment of an image capture component of infrared imaging systems in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0023] Fig. 7 shows a block diagram illustrating an embodiment of a method for monitoring image data of the infrared imaging systems in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0024] Fig. 8 shows a block diagram illustrating an imaging system for aiming a camera of a fixed mount camera subsystem at a target being observed with a portable imaging/viewing subsystem, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0025] Fig. 9 shows a display that may be viewed by a user of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0026] Fig. 10 shows a block diagram illustrating the portable imaging/viewing subsystem, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0027] Fig. 11 shows a block diagram illustrating the fixed mount camera subsystem, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0028] Fig. 12 shows a flow chart illustrating a method for aiming the camera of the fixed mount camera subsystem at the target using the portable imaging/viewing subsystem, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0029] Fig. 13 shows a flow chart illustrating a method for determining a position of the target with respect to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0030] Embodiments of the present disclosure and their advantages are best understood by referring to the detailed description that follows. It should be appreciated that like reference numerals are used to identify like elements illustrated in one or more of the figures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0031] In accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure, Fig. 1A shows a block diagram illustrating an infrared imaging system 100A for capturing and processing infrared images. Infrared imaging system 100A comprises a processing component 110, a memory component 120, an image capture component 130, a display component 140, a control component 150, and optionally a sensing component 160.

[0032] In various implementations, infrared imaging system 100A may represent an infrared imaging device, such as an infrared camera, to capture images, such as image 170. Infrared imaging system 100A may represent any type of infrared camera, which for example detects infrared radiation and provides representative data (e.g., one or more snapshots or video infrared images). For example, infrared imaging system 100A may represent an infrared camera that is directed to the near, middle, and/or far infrared spectrums. Infrared imaging system 100A may comprise a portable device and may be incorporated, for example, into a vehicle (e.g., a naval vehicle, a land-based vehicle, an aircraft, or a spacecraft) or a non-mobile installation requiring infrared images to be stored and/or displayed.

[0033] Processing component 110 comprises, in one embodiment, a microprocessor, a single-core processor, a multi-core processor, a microcontroller, a logic device (e.g., a programmable logic device configured to perform processing functions), a digital signal processing (DSP) device, or some other type of generally known processor. Processing

component 110 is adapted to interface and communicate with components 120, 130, 140, 150 and 160 to perform method and processing steps as described herein. Processing component 110 may comprise one or more mode modules 112A-112N for operating in one or more modes of operation, which is described in greater detail herein. In one implementation, mode modules 112A-112N define preset display functions that may be embedded in processing component 110 or stored on memory component 120 for access and execution by processing component 110. Moreover, processing component 110 may be adapted to perform various other types of image processing algorithms in a manner as described herein.

[0034] In various implementations, it should be appreciated that each of mode modules 112A-112N (where “N” represents any number) may be integrated in software and/or hardware as part of processing component 110, or code (e.g., software or configuration data) for each of the modes of operation associated with each mode module 112A-112N, which may be stored in memory component 120. Embodiments of mode modules 112A-112N (i.e., modes of operation) disclosed herein may be stored by a separate computer-readable medium (e.g., a memory, such as a hard drive, a compact disk, a digital video disk, or a flash memory) to be executed by a computer (e.g., a logic or processor-based system) to perform various methods disclosed herein. In one example, the computer-readable medium may be portable and/or located separate from infrared imaging system 100A, with stored mode modules 112A-112N provided to infrared imaging system 100A by coupling the computer-readable medium to infrared imaging system 100A and/or by infrared imaging system 100A downloading (e.g., via a wired or wireless link) the mode modules 112A-112N from the computer-readable medium. As described in greater detail herein, mode modules 112A-112N provide for improved infrared camera processing techniques for real time applications, wherein a user or operator may change the mode while viewing an image on display component 140 and/or perform one or more methods.

[0035] Memory component 120 comprises, in one embodiment, one or more memory devices to store data and information. The one or more memory devices may comprise various types of memory including volatile and non-volatile memory devices, such as RAM (Random Access Memory), ROM (Read-Only Memory), EEPROM (Electrically-Erasable Read-Only Memory), flash memory, etc. Processing component 110 is adapted to execute software stored in memory component 120 to perform methods, processes, and modes of operations in manner as described herein.

[0036] Image capture component 130 comprises, in one embodiment, one or more infrared sensors (e.g., any type of infrared detector, such as a focal plane array) for capturing infrared image signals representative of an image, such as image 170. In one implementation, the infrared sensors of image capture component 130 provide for representing (e.g., converting) a captured image signal of image 170 as digital data (e.g., via an analog-to-digital converter included as part of the infrared sensor or separate from the infrared sensor as part of infrared imaging system 100A). Processing component 110 may be adapted to receive the infrared image signals from image capture component 130, process the infrared image signals (e.g., to provide processed image data), store the infrared image signals or image data in memory component 120, and/or retrieve stored infrared image signals from memory component 120. Processing component 110 may be adapted to process infrared image signals stored in memory component 120 to provide image data (e.g., captured and/or processed infrared image data) to display component 140 for viewing by a user.

[0037] Display component 140 comprises, in one embodiment, an image display device (e.g., a liquid crystal display (LCD)) or various other types of generally known video displays or monitors. Processing component 110 may be adapted to display image data and information on display component 140. Processing component 110 may also be adapted to retrieve image data and information from memory component 120 and display any retrieved image data and information on display component 140. Display component 140 may comprise display electronics, which may be utilized by processing component 110 to display image data and information (e.g., infrared images). Display component 140 may receive image data and information directly from image capture component 130 via processing component 110, or the image data and information may be transferred from memory component 120 via processing component 110. In one implementation, processing component 110 may initially process a captured image and present a processed image in one mode, corresponding to mode modules 112A-112N, and then upon user input to control component 150, processing component 110 may switch the current mode to a different mode for viewing the processed image on display component 140 in the different mode. This switching may be referred to as applying the infrared camera processing techniques of mode modules 112A-112N for real time applications, wherein a user or operator may change the mode while viewing an image on display component 140 based on user input to control component 150.

[0038] Control component 150 comprises, in one embodiment, a user input and/or interface device having one or more user actuated components, such as one or more push buttons, slide

bars, rotatable knobs or a keyboard, that are adapted to generate one or more user actuated input control signals. Control component 150 may be adapted to be integrated as part of display component 140 to function as both a user input device and a display device, such as, for example, a touch screen device adapted to receive input signals from a user touching different parts of the display screen. Processing component 110 may be adapted to sense control input signals from control component 150 and respond to any sensed control input signals received therefrom. Processing component 110 may be adapted to interpret the control input signal as a value, which will be described in greater detail herein.

[0039] Control component 150 may comprise, in one embodiment, a control panel unit 500 (e.g., a wired or wireless handheld control unit) having one or more push buttons adapted to interface with a user and receive user input control values, as shown in Fig. 5 and further described herein. In various implementations, one or more push buttons of control panel unit 500 may be utilized to select between the various modes of operation as described herein in reference to Figs. 2-4. For example, only one push button may be implemented and which is used by the operator to cycle through the various modes of operation (e.g., night docking, man overboard, night cruising, day cruising, hazy conditions, and shoreline), with the selected mode indicated on the display component 140. In various other implementations, it should be appreciated that control panel unit 500 may be adapted to include one or more other push buttons to provide various other control functions of infrared imaging system 100A, such as auto-focus, menu enable and selection, field of view (FoV), brightness, contrast, gain, offset, spatial, temporal, and/or various other features and/or parameters. In another implementation, a variable gain value may be adjusted by the user or operator based on a selected mode of operation.

[0040] In another embodiment, control component 150 may comprise a graphical user interface (GUI), which may be integrated as part of display component 140 (e.g., a user actuated touch screen), having one or more images of, for example, push buttons adapted to interface with a user and receive user input control values.

[0041] Optional sensing component 160 comprises, in one embodiment, one or more various types of sensors, including environmental sensors, depending upon the desired application or implementation requirements, which provide information to processing component 110. Processing component 110 may be adapted to communicate with sensing component 160 (e.g., by receiving sensor information from sensing component 160) and with image capture component 130 (e.g., by receiving data from image capture component 130 and providing

and/or receiving command, control or other information to and/or from other components of infrared imaging system 100A).

[0042] In various implementations, optional sensing component 160 may provide data and information relating to environmental conditions, such as outside temperature, lighting conditions (e.g., day, night, dusk, and/or dawn), humidity level, specific weather conditions (e.g., sun, rain, and/or snow), distance (e.g., laser rangefinder), and/or whether a tunnel, a covered dock, or that some type of enclosure has been entered or exited. Optional sensing component 160 may represent conventional sensors as would be known by one skilled in the art for monitoring various conditions (e.g., environmental conditions) that may have an affect (e.g., on the image appearance) on the data provided by image capture component 130.

[0043] In some embodiments, optional sensing component 160 (e.g., one or more of sensors 106) may comprise devices that relay information to processing component 110 via wireless communication. For example, sensing component 160 may be adapted to receive information from a satellite, through a local broadcast (e.g., radio frequency) transmission, through a mobile or cellular network and/or through information beacons in an infrastructure (e.g., a transportation or highway information beacon infrastructure) or various other wired or wireless techniques.

[0044] In various embodiments, components of image capturing system 100A may be combined and/or implemented or not, as desired or depending upon the application or requirements, with image capturing system 100A representing various functional blocks of a system (e.g., a portable camera or a distributed network system). For example, processing component 110 may be combined with memory component 120, image capture component 130, display component 140 and/or sensing component 160. In another example, processing component 110 may be combined with image capture component 130 with only certain functions of processing component 110 performed by circuitry (e.g., a processor, a microprocessor, a microcontroller, a logic device, etc.) within image capture component 130, while other processing functions are performed on a separate device (e.g., a computer on a network in communication with processing component 110). In still another example, control component 150 may be combined with one or more other components or be remotely connected to at least one other component, such as processing component 110, via a control wire or a network (e.g., a wireless or wired network link) so as to provide control signals thereto.

[0045] In accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure, Fig. 1B shows a block diagram illustrating an infrared imaging system 100B for capturing and processing infrared images. Infrared imaging system 100B comprises, in one embodiment, a processing component 110, an interface component 118, a memory component 120, one or more image capture components 130A-130N, a display component 140, a control component 150, and optionally a sensing component 160. It should be appreciated that various components of infrared imaging system 100B of Fig. 1B may be similar in function and scope to components of infrared imaging system 100A of Fig. 1A, and any differences between the systems 100A, 100B are described in greater detail herein.

[0046] In various implementations, infrared imaging system 100B may represent one or more infrared imaging devices, such as one or more infrared cameras, to capture images, such as images 170A-170N. In general, infrared imaging system 100B may utilize a plurality of infrared cameras, which for example detect infrared radiation and provide representative data (e.g., one or more snapshots or video infrared images). For example, infrared imaging system 100B may include one or more infrared cameras that are directed to the near, middle, and/or far infrared spectrums. As discussed further herein, infrared imaging system 100B may be incorporated, for example, into a vehicle (e.g., a naval vehicle or other type of watercraft, a land-based vehicle, an aircraft, or a spacecraft) or a non-mobile installation requiring infrared images to be stored and/or displayed.

[0047] Processing component 110 is adapted to interface and communicate with a plurality of components including components 118, 120, 130A-130N, 140, 150, and/or 160 of system 100B to perform method and processing steps as described herein. Processing component 110 may comprise one or more mode modules 112A-112N for operating in one or more modes of operation, which is described in greater detail herein. Processing component 110 may be adapted to perform various other types of image processing algorithms in a manner as described herein.

[0048] Interface component 118 comprises, in one embodiment, a communication device (e.g., modem, router, switch, hub, or Ethernet card) that allows communication between each image capture component 130A-130N and processing component 110. As such, processing component 110 is adapted to receive infrared image signals from each image capture component 130A-130N via interface component 118.

[0049] Each image capture component 130A-130N (where “N” represents any desired number) comprises, in various embodiments, one or more infrared sensors (e.g., any type of

infrared detector, such as a focal plane array, or any type of infrared camera, such as infrared imaging system 100A) for capturing infrared image signals representative of an image, such as one or more images 170A-170N. In one implementation, the infrared sensors of image capture component 130A provide for representing (e.g., converting) a captured image signal of, for example, image 170A as digital data (e.g., via an analog-to-digital converter included as part of the infrared sensor or separate from the infrared sensor as part of infrared imaging system 100B). As such, processing component 110 may be adapted to receive the infrared image signals from each image capture component 130A-130N via interface component 118, process the infrared image signals (e.g., to provide processed image data or the processed image data may be provided by each image capture component 130A-130N), store the infrared image signals or image data in memory component 120, and/or retrieve stored infrared image signals from memory component 120. Processing component 110 may be adapted to process infrared image signals stored in memory component 120 to provide image data (e.g., captured and/or processed infrared image data) to display component 140 (e.g., one or more displays) for viewing by a user.

[0050] In one implementation as an example, referring briefly to Fig. 6, each image capture component 130A-130N may comprise one or more components, including a first camera component 132, a second camera component 134, and/or a searchlight component 136. In one embodiment as shown in Fig. 6, first camera component 132 is adapted to capture infrared images in a manner as described herein, second camera component 134 is adapted to capture color images in a visible light spectrum, and searchlight component 136 is adapted to provide a beam of light to a position within an image boundary of the one or more images 170 (e.g., within a field of view of first camera component 132 and/or second camera component 134). Further scope and function related to each of these components is described in greater detail herein.

[0051] Fig. 1C shows a top-view of infrared imaging system 100B having a plurality of image capture components 130A-130D (e.g., infrared cameras) mounted to a watercraft 180 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. In various implementations, image capture components 130A-130D may comprise any type of infrared camera (e.g., infrared detector device) adapted to capture one or more infrared images. Watercraft 180 may represent any type of watercraft (e.g., a boat, yacht, ship, cruise ship, tanker, commercial vessel, military vessel, etc.).

[0052] As shown in Fig. 1C, a plurality of image capture components 130A-130D may be mounted in a configuration at different positions on watercraft 180 in a manner so as to provide one or more fields of view around watercraft 180. In various implementations, an image capture component 130A may be mounted to provide a field of view ahead of or around a bow 182 (e.g., forward or fore part) of watercraft 180. As further shown, an image capture component 130B may be mounted to provide a field of view to the side of or around a port 184 (e.g., left side when facing bow 182) of watercraft 180. As further shown, an image capture component 130C may be mounted to provide a field of view to the side of or around a starboard 186 (e.g., right side when facing bow 182) of watercraft 180. As further shown, an image capture component 130D may be mounted to provide a field of view behind of or around a stern 188 (e.g., rear or aft part) of watercraft 180.

[0053] Thus, in one implementation, a plurality of infrared capture components 130A-130D (e.g., infrared cameras) may be mounted around the perimeter of watercraft 180 to provide fields of view thereabout. As an example and as discussed further herein, watercraft 180 may incorporate infrared imaging system 100B to provide man overboard detection, to assist during various modes of operation, such as night docking, night cruising, and/or day cruising of watercraft 180, and/or to provide various information, such as improved image clarity during hazy conditions or to provide a visual indication of the horizon and/or shoreline.

[0054] Fig. 1D shows a top-view of infrared imaging system 100B having a plurality of image capture components 130E-130H (e.g., infrared cameras) mounted to a control tower 190 (e.g., bridge) of watercraft 180 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. As shown in Fig. 1D, a plurality of image capture components 130E-130H may be mounted to control tower 190 in a configuration at different positions on watercraft 180 in a manner so as to provide one or more fields of view around watercraft 180. In various implementations, image capture component 130E may be mounted to provide a field of view of bow 182 of watercraft 180. As further shown, image capture component 130F may be mounted to provide a field of view of port 184 of watercraft 180. As further shown, image capture component 130G may be mounted to provide a field of view of starboard 186 of watercraft 180. As further shown, image capture component 130H may be mounted to provide a field of view of stern 188 of watercraft 180. Thus, in one implementation, a plurality of image capture components 130E-130H (e.g., infrared cameras) may be mounted around control tower 190 of watercraft 180 to provide fields of view thereabout. Furthermore

as shown, image capture components 130B and 130C may also be mounted on control tower 190 of watercraft 180.

[0055] Fig. 1E shows the port-side-view of infrared imaging system 100B having port-side image capture component 130B of Fig. 1B mounted to watercraft 180 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. In reference to Fig. 1E, image capture component 130B provides a port-side field of view around watercraft 180.

[0056] In one implementation, image capture component 130B may provide a field of view of a port-side image of watercraft 180. In another implementation, the port-side field of view may be segmented into a plurality of views B1-B6. For example, image capture component 130B may be adapted to provide one or more segmented narrow fields of view of the port-side field of view including one or more forward port-side views B1-B3 and one or more rearward port-side views B4-B6. In still another implementation, as shown in Fig. 6, image capture component 130B may comprise a plurality of image capture components 132 (and optionally a plurality of image capture components 134) to provide the plurality of segmented or narrowed fields of view B1-B6 within the overall port-side field of view of watercraft 180.

[0057] As further shown in Fig. 1E, the port-side fields of view B1-B6 of watercraft 180 may extend through a viewing range from image capture component 130B to a water surface 198 adjacent to watercraft 180. However, in various implementations, the viewing range may include a portion below the water surface 198 depending on the type of infrared detector utilized (e.g., type of infrared camera, desired wavelength or portion of the infrared spectrum, and other relevant factors as would be understood by one skilled in the art).

[0058] Fig. 1F shows an example of locating and identifying a man overboard within the port-side field of view of port-side image capture component 130B mounted to watercraft 180 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. In general, image capture component 130B may be used to identify and locate a man overboard (e.g., within the narrowed port-side field of view B3) of watercraft 180. Once the man overboard is identified and located, processing component 110 of infrared imaging system 100B may control or provide information (e.g., slew-to-queue) to position searchlight component 136 within the port-side field of view B3 to aid in visual identification and rescue of the man overboard. It should be understood that searchlight component 136 may be separate from image capture component 130B (e.g., separate housing and/or control) or may be formed as part of image capture component 130B (e.g., within the same housing or enclosure). Further scope and function related to this procedure is described in greater detail herein.

[0059] Fig. 2 shows a method 200 for capturing and processing infrared images in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. For purposes of simplifying discussion of Fig. 2, reference may be made to image capturing systems 100A, 100B of Figs. 1A, 1B as an example of a system, device or apparatus that may perform method 200.

[0060] Referring to Fig. 2, an image (e.g., infrared image signal) is captured (block 210) with infrared imaging system 100A, 100B. In one implementation, processing component 110 induces (e.g., causes) image capture component 130 to capture an image, such as, for example, image 170. After receiving the captured image from image capture component 130, processing component 110 may optionally store the captured image in memory component 120 for processing.

[0061] Next, the captured image may optionally be pre-processed (block 215). In one implementation, pre-processing may include obtaining infrared sensor data related to the captured image, applying correction terms, and/or applying temporal noise reduction to improve image quality prior to further processing. In another implementation, processing component 110 may directly pre-process the captured image or optionally retrieve the captured image stored in memory component 120 and then pre-process the image. Pre-processed images may be optionally stored in memory component 120 for further processing.

[0062] Next, a selected mode of operation may be obtained (block 220). In one implementation, the selected mode of operation may comprise a user input control signal that may be obtained or received from control component 150 (e.g., control panel unit 500 of Fig. 5). In various implementations, the selected mode of operation may be selected from at least one of night docking, man overboard, night cruising, day cruising, hazy conditions, and shoreline mode. As such, processing component 110 may communicate with control component 150 to obtain the selected mode of operation as input by a user. These modes of operation are described in greater detail herein and may include the use of one or more infrared image processing algorithms.

[0063] In various implementations, modes of operation refer to preset processing and display functions for an infrared image, and infrared imagers and infrared cameras are adapted to process infrared sensor data prior to displaying the data to a user. In general, display algorithms attempt to present the scene (i.e., field of view) information in an effective way to the user. In some cases, infrared image processing algorithms are utilized to present a good image under a variety of conditions, and the infrared image processing algorithms provide the user with one or more options to tune parameters and run the camera in “manual mode”. In

one aspect, infrared imaging system 100A, 100B may be simplified by hiding advanced manual settings. In another aspect, the concept of preset image processing for different conditions may be implemented in maritime applications.

[0064] Next, referring to Fig. 2, the image is processed in accordance with the selected mode of operation (block 225), in a manner as described in greater detail herein. In one implementation, processing component 110 may store the processed image in memory component 120 for displaying. In another implementation, processing component 110 may retrieve the processed image stored in memory component 120 and display the processed image on display component 150 for viewing by a user.

[0065] Next, a determination is made as to whether to display the processed image in a night mode (block 230), in a manner as described in greater detail herein. If yes, then processing component 110 configures display component 140 to apply a night color palette to the processed image (block 235), and the processed image is displayed in night mode (block 240). For example, in night mode (e.g., for night docking, night cruising, or other modes when operating at night), an image may be displayed in a red palette or green palette to improve night vision capacity for a user. Otherwise, if night mode is not necessary, then the processed image is displayed in a non-night mode manner (e.g., black hot or white hot palette) (block 240).

[0066] In various implementations, the night mode of displaying images refers to using a red color palette or green color palette to assist the user or operator in the dark when adjusting to low light conditions. During night operation of image capturing system 100A, 100B, human visual capacity to see in the dark may be impaired by the blinding effect of a bright image on a display monitor. Hence, the night mode setting changes the color palette from a standard black hot or white hot palette to a red or green color palette display. In one aspect, the red or green color palette is generally known to interfere less with human night vision capacity. In one example, for a red-green-blue (RGB) type of display, the green and blue pixels may be disabled to boost the red color for a red color palette. In another implementation, the night mode display may be combined with any other mode of operation of infrared imaging system 100A, 100B, as described herein, and a default display mode of infrared imaging system 100A, 100B at night may be the night mode display.

[0067] Furthermore in various implementations, certain image features may be appropriately marked (e.g., color-indicated or colorized, highlighted, or identified with other indicia), such as during the image processing (block 225) or displaying of the processed image (block 240),

to aid a user to identify these features while viewing the displayed image. For example, as discussed further herein, during a man overboard mode, a suspected person (e.g., or other warm-bodied animal or object) may be indicated in the displayed image with a blue color (or other color or type of marking) relative to the black and white palette or night color palette (e.g., red palette). As another example, as discussed further herein, during a night time or daytime cruising mode and/or hazy conditions mode, potential hazards in the water may be indicated in the displayed image with a yellow color (or other color or type of marking) to aid a user viewing the display. Further details regarding image colorization may be found, for example, in U.S. Patent 6,849,849, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

[0068] In various implementations, processing component 110 may switch the processing mode of a captured image in real time and change the displayed processed image from one mode, corresponding to mode modules 112A-112N, to a different mode upon receiving user input from control component 150. As such, processing component 110 may switch a current mode of display to a different mode of display for viewing the processed image by the user or operator on display component 140. This switching may be referred to as applying the infrared camera processing techniques of mode modules 112A-112N for real time applications, wherein a user or operator may change the displayed mode while viewing an image on display component 140 based on user input to control component 150.

[0069] Figs. 3A-3E show block diagrams illustrating infrared processing techniques in accordance with various embodiments of the present disclosure. As described herein, infrared imaging system 100A, 100B is adapted to switch between different modes of operation so as to improve the infrared images and information provided to a user or operator.

[0070] Fig. 3A shows one embodiment of an infrared processing technique 300 as described in reference to block 225 of Fig. 2. In one implementation, the infrared processing technique 300 comprises a night docking mode of operation for maritime applications. For example, during night docking, a watercraft or sea vessel is in the vicinity of a harbor, jetty or marina, which have proximate structures including piers, buoys, other watercraft, other structures on land. A thermal infrared imager (e.g., infrared imaging system 100A, 100B) may be used as a navigational tool in finding a correct docking spot. The infrared imaging system 100A, 100B produces an infrared image that assists the user or operator in docking the watercraft. There is a high likelihood of hotspots in the image, such as dock lights, vents and running motors, which may have a minimal impact on how the scene is displayed.

[0071] Referring to Fig. 3A, the input image is histogram equalized and scaled (e.g., 0-511) to form a histogram equalized part (block 302). Next, the input image is linearly scaled (e.g., 0-128) while saturating the highest and lowest (e.g., 1%) to form a linearly scaled part (block 304). Next, the histogram-equalized part and the linearly scaled part are added together to form an output image (block 306). Next, the dynamic range of the output image is linearly mapped to fit the display component 140 (block 308). It should be appreciated that the block order in which the process 300 is executed may be executed in an different order without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[0072] In one embodiment, the night docking mode is intended for image settings with large amounts of thermal clutter, such as a harbor, a port, or an anchorage. The settings may allow the user to view the scene without blooming on hot objects. Hence, infrared processing technique 300 for the night docking mode is useful for situational awareness in maritime applications when, for example, docking a watercraft with low visibility.

[0073] In various implementations, during processing of an image when the night docking mode is selected, the image is histogram equalized to compress the dynamic range by removing “holes” in the histogram. The histogram may be plateau limited so that large uniform areas, such as sky or water components, are not given too much contrast. For example, approximately 20% of the dynamic range of the output image may be preserved for a straight linear mapping of the non-histogram equalized image. In the linear mapping, for example, the lowest 1% of the pixel values are mapped to zero and the highest 1% of the input pixels are mapped to a maximum value of the display range (e.g., 235). In one aspect, the final output image becomes a weighted sum of the histogram equalized and linearly (with 1% “outlier” cropping) mapped images.

[0074] Fig. 3B shows one embodiment of an infrared processing technique 320 as described in reference to block 225 of Fig. 2. In one implementation, the infrared processing technique 320 comprises a man overboard mode of operation for maritime applications. For example, in the man overboard mode, image capturing system 100A, 100B may be tuned to the specific task of finding a person in the water. The distance between the person in the water and the watercraft may not be known, and the person may be only a few pixels in diameter or significantly larger if lying close to the watercraft. In one aspect, even if a person may be close to the watercraft, the person may have enough thermal signature to be clearly visible, and thus the man overboard display mode may target the case where the person has weak

thermal contrast and is far enough away so as to not be clearly visible without the aid of image capturing system 100A, 100B.

[0075] Referring to Fig. 3B, image capture component 130 (e.g., infrared camera) of image capturing system 100A, 100B is positioned to resolve or identify the horizon (block 322). In one implementation, the infrared camera is moved so that the horizon is at an upper part of the field of view (FoV). In another implementation, the shoreline may also be indicated along with the horizon. Next, a high pass filter (HPF) is applied to the image to form an output image (block 324). Next, the dynamic range of the output image is linearly mapped to fit the display component 140 (block 326). It should be appreciated that the block order in which the process 320 is executed may be executed in an different order without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[0076] In one example, horizon identification may include shoreline identification, and the horizon and/or shoreline may be indicated by a line (e.g., a red line or other indicia) superimposed on a thermal image along the horizon and/or the shoreline, which may be useful for user or operators to determine position of the watercraft in relation to the shoreline. Horizon and/or shoreline identification may be accomplished by utilizing a real-time Hough transform or other equivalent type of transform applied to the image stream, wherein this image processing transform finds linear regions (e.g., lines) in an image. The real-time Hough transform may also be used to find the horizon and/or shoreline in open ocean when, for example, the contrast may be low. Under clear conditions, the horizon and/or shoreline may be easy identified. However, on a hazy day, the horizon and/or shoreline may be difficult to locate.

[0077] In general, knowing where the horizon and/or shoreline are is useful for situational awareness. As such, in various implementations, the Hough transform may be allied to any of the modes of operation described herein to identify the horizon and/or shoreline in an image. For example, the shoreline identification (e.g., horizon and/or shoreline) may be included along with any of the processing modes to provide a line (e.g., any type of marker, such as a red line or other indicia) on the displayed image and/or the information may be used to position the infrared camera's field of view.

[0078] In one embodiment of the man overboard mode, signal gain may be increased to bring out minute temperature differences of the ocean, such as encountered when looking for a hypothermic body in a uniform ocean temperature that may be close to the person's body temperature. Image quality is traded for the ability to detect small temperature changes when

comparing a human body to ocean temperature. Thus, infrared processing technique 320 for the man overboard mode is useful for situational awareness in maritime applications when, for example, searching for a man overboard proximate to the watercraft.

[0079] In various implementations, during processing of an image when the man overboard mode is selected, a high pass filter is applied to the image. For example, the signal from the convolution of the image by a Gaussian kernel may be subtracted. The remaining high pass information is linearly stretched to fit the display range, which may increase the contrast of any small object in the water. In one enhancement of the man overboard mode, objects in the water may be marked, and the system signals the watercraft to direct a searchlight at the object. For systems with both visible and thermal imagers, the thermal imager is displayed. For zoom or multi-FoV systems, the system is set in a wide FoV. For pan-tilt controlled systems with stored elevation settings for the horizon, the system is moved so that the horizon is visible just below the upper limit of the field of view.

[0080] In one embodiment, the man overboard mode may activate a locate procedure to identify an area of interest, zoom-in on the area of interest, and position a searchlight on the area of interest. For example, the man overboard mode may activate a locate procedure to identify a position of a object (e.g., a person) in the water, zoom-in the infrared imaging device (e.g., an infrared camera) on the identified object in the water, and then point a searchlight on the identified object in the water. In various implementations, these actions may be added to process 200 of Fig. 2 and/or process 320 of Fig. 3B and further be adapted to occur automatically so that the area of interest and/or location of the object of interest may be quickly identified and retrieved by a crew member.

[0081] Fig. 3C shows one embodiment of an infrared processing technique 340 as described in reference to block 225 of Fig. 2. In one implementation, the infrared processing technique 340 comprises a night cruising mode of operation for maritime applications. For example, during night cruising, the visible channel has limited use for other than artificially illuminated objects, such as other watercraft. The thermal infrared imager may be used to penetrate the darkness and assist in the identification of buoys, rocks, other watercraft, islands and structures on shore. The thermal infrared imager may also find semi-submerged obstacles that potentially lie directly in the course of the watercraft. In the night cruising mode, the display algorithm may be tuned to find objects in the water without distorting the scene (i.e., field of view) to the extent that it becomes useless for navigation.

[0082] In one embodiment, the night cruising mode is intended for low contrast situations encountered on an open ocean. The scene (i.e., field of view) may be filled with a uniform temperature ocean, and any navigational aids or floating debris may sharply contrast with the uniform temperature of the ocean. Therefore, infrared processing technique 340 for the night cruising mode is useful for situational awareness in, for example, open ocean.

[0083] Referring to Fig. 3C, the image is separated into a background image part and a detailed image part (block 342). Next, the background image part is histogram equalized (block 344) and scaled (e.g., 0-450) (block 346). Next, the detailed image part is scaled (e.g., 0-511) (block 348). Next, the histogram-equalized background image part and the scaled detailed image part are added together to form an output image (block 350). Next, the dynamic range of the output image is linearly mapped to fit the display component 140 (block 352). It should be appreciated that the block order in which the process 340 is executed may be executed in a different order without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[0084] In various implementations, during processing of an image when the night cruising mode is selected, the input image is split into detailed and background image components using a non-linear edge preserving low pass filter (LPF), such as a median filter or by anisotropic diffusion. The background image component comprises a low pass component, and the detailed image part is extracted by subtracting the background image part from the input image. To enhance the contrast of small and potentially weak objects, the detailed and background image components may be scaled so that the details are given approximately 60% of the output/display dynamic range. In one enhancement of the night cruising mode, objects in the water are tracked, and if they are on direct collision course as the current watercraft course, then they are marked in the image, and an audible and/or visual alarm may be sounded and/or displayed, respectively. In some implementations, for systems with both visible and thermal imager, the thermal imager may be displayed by default.

[0085] In one embodiment, a first part of the image signal may include a background image part comprising a low spatial frequency high amplitude portion of an image. In one example, a low pass filter (e.g., low pass filter algorithm) may be utilized to isolate the low spatial frequency high amplitude portion of the image signal (e.g., infrared image signal). In another embodiment, a second part of the image signal may include a detailed image part comprising a high spatial frequency low amplitude portion of an image. In one example, a high pass filter (e.g., high pass filter algorithm) may be utilized to isolate the high spatial frequency low

amplitude portion of the image signal (e.g., infrared image signal). Alternately, the second part may be derived from the image signal and the first part of the image signal, such as by subtracting the first part from the image signal.

[0086] In general for example, the two image parts (e.g., first and second parts) of the image signal may be separately scaled before merging the two image parts to produce an output image. For example, the first or second parts may be scaled or both the first and second parts may be scaled. In one aspect, this may allow the system to output an image where fine details are visible and tunable even in a high dynamic range scene. In some instances, as an example, if an image appears less useful or degraded by some degree due to noise, then one of the parts of the image, such as the detailed part, may be suppressed rather than amplified to suppress the noise in the merged image to improve image quality.

[0087] Fig. 3D shows one embodiment of an infrared processing technique 360 as described in reference to block 225 of Fig. 2. In one implementation, the infrared processing technique 360 comprises a day cruising mode of operation for maritime applications. For example, during day cruising, the user or operator may rely on human vision for orientation immediately around the watercraft. Image capturing system 100A, 100B may be used to zoom in on objects of interest, which may involve reading the names of other watercraft, and searching for buoys, structures on land, etc.

[0088] Referring to Fig. 3D, the image is separated into a background image part and a detailed image part (block 362). Next, the background image part is histogram equalized (block 364) and scaled (e.g., 0-511) (block 366). Next, the detailed image part is scaled 0-255 (block 368). Next, the histogram-equalized background image part and the scaled detailed image part are added together to form an output image (block 370). Next, the dynamic range of the output image is linearly mapped to fit the display component 140 (block 372). It should be appreciated that the block order in which the process 360 is executed may be executed in an different order without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[0089] In one embodiment, the day cruising mode is intended for higher contrast situations, such as when solar heating leads to greater temperature differences between unsubmerged or partially submerged objects and the ocean temperature. Hence, infrared processing technique 360 for the day cruising mode is useful for situational awareness in, for example, high contrast situations in maritime applications.

[0090] In various implementations, during processing of an image when the day cruising mode is selected, the input image is split into its detailed and background components respectively using a non-linear edge preserving low pass filter, such as a median filter or by anisotropic diffusion. For color images, this operation may be achieved on the intensity part of the image (e.g., Y in a YCrCb format). The background image part comprises the low pass component, and the detailed image part may be extracted by subtracting the background image part from the input image. To enhance the contrast of small and potentially weak objects, the detailed and background image parts may be scaled so that the details are given approximately 35% of the output/display dynamic range. For systems with both visible and thermal imagers the visible image may be displayed by default.

[0091] Fig. 3E shows one embodiment of an infrared processing technique 380 as described in reference to block 225 of Fig. 2. In one implementation, the infrared processing technique 380 comprises a hazy conditions mode of operation for maritime applications. For example, even during daytime operation, a user or operator may achieve better performance from an imager using an infrared (MWIR, LWIR) or near infrared (NIR) wave band. Depending on vapor content and particle size, a thermal infrared imager may significantly improve visibility under hazy conditions. If neither the visible nor the thermal imagers penetrate the haze, image capturing system 100A, 100B may be set in hazy conditions mode under which system 100A, 100B attempts to extract what little information is available from the chosen infrared sensor. Under hazy conditions, there may be little high spatial frequency information (e.g., mainly due, in one aspect, to scattering by particles). The information in the image may be obtained from the low frequency part of the image, and boosting the higher frequencies may drown the image in noise (e.g., temporal and/or fixed pattern).

[0092] Referring to Fig. 3E, a non-linear edge preserving low pass filter (LPF) is applied to the image (block 382). Next, the image is histogram equalized (block 384) and scaled (block 386) to form a histogram equalized output image. Next, the dynamic range of the output image is linearly mapped to fit the display component 140 (block 388). It should be appreciated that the block order in which the process 380 is executed may be executed in an different order without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[0093] In various implementations, during processing of an image when the hazy conditions mode is selected, a non-linear, edge preserving, low pass filter, such as median or by anisotropic diffusion is applied to the image (i.e., either from the thermal imager or the intensity component of the visible color image). In one aspect, the output from the low pass

filter operation may be histogram equalized and scaled to map the dynamic range to the display and to maximize contrast of the display.

[0094] Fig. 3F shows one embodiment of an infrared processing technique 390 as described in reference to block 225 of Fig. 2. In one implementation, the infrared processing technique 390 comprises a shoreline mode of operation for maritime applications.

[0095] Referring to Fig. 3F, the shoreline may be resolved (block 392). For example as discussed previously, shoreline identification (e.g., horizon and/or shoreline) may be determined by applying an image processing transform (e.g., a Hough transform) to the image (block 392), which may be used to position the infrared camera's field of view and/or to provide a line (e.g., any type of marker, such as a red line(s) or other indicia on the displayed image. Next, the image is histogram equalized (block 394) and scaled (block 396) to form an output image. Next, the dynamic range of the output image is linearly mapped to fit the display component 140 (block 398). It should be appreciated that the block order in which the process 390 is executed may be executed in a different order without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[0096] In one implementation, the information produced by the transform (e.g., Hough transform) may be used to identify the shoreline or even the horizon as a linear region for display. The transform may be applied to the image in a path separate from the main video path (e.g., the transform when applied does not alter the image data and does not affect the later image processing operations), and the application of the transform may be used to detect linear regions, such as straight lines (e.g., of the shoreline and/or horizon). In one aspect, by assuming the shoreline and/or horizon comprises a straight line stretching the entire width of the frame, the shoreline and/or horizon may be identified as a peak in the transform and may be used to maintain the field of view in a position with reference to the shoreline and/or horizon. As such, the input image (e.g., preprocessed image) may be histogram equalized (block 394) and scaled (block 396) to generate an output image, and then the transform information (block 392) may be added to the output image to highlight the shoreline and/or horizon of the displayed image.

[0097] Moreover, in the shoreline mode of operation, the image may be dominated by sea (i.e., lower part of image) and sky (i.e., upper part of image), which may appear as two peaks in the image histogram. In one aspect, significant contrast is desired over the narrow band of shoreline, and a low number (e.g., relatively based on the number of sensor pixels and the number of bins used in the histogram) may be selected for the plateau limit for the histogram

equalization. In one aspect, for example, a low plateau limit (relative) may reduce the effect of peaks in the histogram and give less contrast to sea and sky while preserving contrast for the shoreline and/or horizon regions.

[0098] Fig. 4 shows a block diagram illustrating a method 400 of implementing modes 410A-410E and infrared processing techniques related thereto, as described in reference to various embodiments of the present disclosure. In particular, a first mode refers to night docking mode 410A, a second mode refers to man overboard mode 410B, a third mode refers to night cruising mode 410C, a fourth mode refers to day cruising mode 410D, and a fifth mode refers to hazy conditions mode 410E.

[0099] In one implementation, referring to Fig. 4, processing component 110 of image capturing system 100A, 100B of Figs. 1A, 1B may perform method 400 as follows. Sensor data (i.e., infrared image data) of a captured image is received or obtained (block 402). Correction terms are applied to the received sensor data (block 404), and temporal noise reduction is applied to the received sensor data (block 406).

[00100] Next, at least one of the selected modes 410A-410E may be selected by a user or operator via control component 150 of image capturing system 100A, 100B, and processing component 110 executes the corresponding processing technique associated with the selected mode of operation. In one example, if night docking mode 410A is selected, then the sensor data may be histogram equalized and scaled (e.g., 0-511) (block 420), the sensor data may be linearly scaled (e.g., 0-128) saturating the highest and lowest (e.g., 1%) (block 422), and the histogram equalized sensor data is added to the linearly scaled sensor data for linearly mapping the dynamic range to display component 140 (block 424). In another example, if man overboard mode 410B is selected, then infrared capturing component 130 of image capturing system 100A, 100B may be moved or positioned so that the horizon is at an upper part of the field of view (FoV), a high pass filter (HPF) is applied to the sensor data (block 432), and the dynamic range of the high pass filtered sensor data is then linearly mapped to fit display component 140 (block 434). In another example, if night cruising mode 410C is selected, the sensor data is processed to extract a faint detailed part and a background part with a high pass filter (block 440), the background part is histogram equalized and scaled (e.g., 0-450) (block 442), the detailed part is scaled (e.g., 0-511) (block 444), and the background part is added to the detailed part for linearly mapping the dynamic range to display component 140 (block 446). In another example, if day cruising mode 410D is selected, the sensor data is processed to extract a faint detailed part and a background part

with a high pass filter (block 450), the background part is histogram equalized and scaled (e.g., 0-511) (block 452), the detailed part is scaled 0-255 (block 454), and the background part is added to the detailed part for linearly mapping the dynamic range to display component 140 (block 456). In still another example, if hazy condition mode 410E is selected, then a non-linear low pass filter (e.g., median) is applied to the sensor data (block 460), which is then histogram equalized and scaled for linearly mapping the dynamic range to display component 140 (block 462).

[00101] For any of the modes (e.g., blocks 410A-410E), the image data for display may be marked (e.g., color coded, highlighted, or otherwise identified with indicia) to identify, for example, a suspected person in the water (e.g., for man overboard) or a hazard in the water (e.g., for night time cruising, day time cruising, or any of the other modes). For example, as discussed herein, image processing algorithms may be applied (block 470) to the image data to identify various features (e.g., objects, such as a warm-bodied person, water hazard, horizon, or shoreline) in the image data and appropriately mark these features to assist in recognition and identification by a user viewing the display. As a specific example, a suspected person in the water may be colored blue, while a water hazard (e.g., floating debris) may be colored yellow in the displayed image.

[00102] Furthermore for any of the modes (e.g., blocks 410A-410E), the image data for display may be marked to identify, for example, the shoreline (e.g., shoreline and/or horizon). For example, as discussed herein, image processing algorithms may be applied (block 475) to the image data to identify the shoreline and/or horizon and appropriately mark these features to assist in recognition and identification by a user viewing the display. As a specific example, the horizon and/or shoreline may be outlined or identified with red lines on the displayed image to aid the user viewing the displayed image.

[00103] Next, after applying at least one of the infrared processing techniques for modes 410A-410E, a determination is made as to whether to display the processed sensor data in night mode (i.e., apply the night color palette) (block 480), in a manner as previously described. If yes, then the night color palette is applied to the processed sensor data (block 482), and the processed sensor data is displayed in night mode (block 484). If no, then the processed sensor data is displayed in a non-night mode manner (e.g., black hot or white hot palette) (block 484). It should be appreciated that, in night mode, sensor data (i.e., image data) may be displayed in a red or green color palette to improve night vision capacity for a user or operator.

[00104] Fig. 5 shows a block diagram illustrating one embodiment of control component 150 of infrared imaging system 100A, 100B for selecting between different modes of operation, as previously described in reference to Figs. 2-4. In one embodiment, control component 150 of infrared imaging system 100A, 100B may comprise a user input and/or interface device, such as control panel unit 500 (e.g., a wired or wireless handheld control unit) having one or more push buttons 510, 520, 530, 540, 550, 560, 570 adapted to interface with a user and receive user input control values and further adapted to generate and transmit one or more input control signals to processing component 100A, 100B. In various other embodiments, control panel unit 500 may comprise a slide bar, rotatable knob to select the desired mode, keyboard, etc., without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[00105] In various implementations, a plurality of push buttons 510, 520, 530, 540, 550, 560, 570 of control panel unit 500 may be utilized to select between various modes of operation as previously described in reference to Figs. 2-4. In various implementations, processing component 110 may be adapted to sense control input signals from control panel unit 500 and respond to any sensed control input signals received from push buttons 510, 520, 530, 540, 550, 560, 570. Processing component 110 may be further adapted to interpret the control input signals as values. In various other implementations, it should be appreciated that control panel unit 500 may be adapted to include one or more other push buttons (not shown) to provide various other control functions of infrared imaging system 100A, 100B, such as auto-focus, menu enable and selection, field of view (FoV), brightness, contrast, and/or various other features. In another embodiment, control panel unit 500 may comprise a single push button, which may be used to select each of the modes of operation 510, 520, 530, 540, 550, 560, 570.

[00106] In another embodiment, control panel unit 500 may be adapted to be integrated as part of display component 140 to function as both a user input device and a display device, such as, for example, a user activated touch screen device adapted to receive input signals from a user touching different parts of the display screen. As such, the GUI interface device may have one or more images of, for example, push buttons 510, 520, 530, 540, 550, 560, 570 adapted to interface with a user and receive user input control values via the touch screen of display component 140.

[00107] In one embodiment, referring to Fig. 5, a first push button 510 may be enabled to select the night docking mode of operation, a second push button 520 may be enabled to select the man overboard mode of operation, a third push button 530 may be enabled to select

the night cruising mode of operation, a fourth push button 540 may be enabled to select the day cruising mode of operation, a fifth push button 550 may be enabled to select the hazy conditions mode of operation, a sixth push button 560 may be enabled to select the shoreline mode of operation, and a seventh push button 570 may be enabled to select or turn the night display mode (i.e., night color palette) off. In another embodiment, a single push button for control panel unit 500 may be used to toggle to each of the modes of operation 510, 520, 530, 540, 550, 560, 570 without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[00108] Fig. 6 shows a block diagram illustrating an embodiment of image capture component 130 of infrared imaging system 100A, 100B. As shown, image capture component 130 may be adapted to comprise a first camera component 132, a second camera component 134, and/or a searchlight component 136. In various implementations, each of the components 132, 134, 136 may be integrated as part of image capture component 130 or one or more of the components 132, 134, 136 may be separate from image capture component 130 without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

[00109] In one embodiment, first camera component 132 may comprise an infrared camera component capable of capturing infrared image data of image 170. In general, an infrared camera is a device that is adapted to form an image using infrared radiation, which may be useful for rescue operations in water and/or darkness.

[0101] In one embodiment, second camera component 134 may comprise another infrared camera component or a camera capable of capturing visible spectrum images of image 170. In general, a visible-wavelength camera may be used by a crew member of watercraft 180 to view and examine the image 170. For example, in daylight, the visible-wavelength camera may assist with viewing, identifying, and locating a man overboard.

[0102] In various implementations, the camera components 132, 134 may be adapted to include a wide and/or narrow field of view (e.g., a fixed or variable field of view). For example, this feature may include a telescoping lens that narrows the field of view to focus on a particular area within the field of view.

[0103] In one embodiment, searchlight component 136 comprises a device capable of projecting a beam of light towards image 170 in the field of view. In one implementation, searchlight component 136 is adapted to focus a beam of light on a target within the field of view of at least one of camera components 132, 134 so as to identify and locate, for example, a position of a man overboard, which would allow a crew member of watercraft 180 to have improved visibility of the man overboard in darkness.

[0104] Fig. 7 shows a block diagram illustrating an embodiment of a method 700 for monitoring image data of infrared imaging system 100A, 100B. In one implementation, method 700 is performed by processing component 110 of infrared imaging system 100A, 100B. As shown in Fig. 7, image data is obtained (block 710). In various implementations, the image data may be obtained directly from the image capture component 130 or from storage in memory component 120.

[0105] Next, the obtained image data may be processed (block 714). In one implementation, the obtained image data may be processed using the man overboard mode of operation 320 of Fig. 3B to collect image data to detect an object, such as a person, falling into or in the water proximate to watercraft 180.

[0106] Next, a man overboard (e.g., person) may be identified from the processed image data (block 718). In one implementation, the object (e.g., a person) may be separated from the water based on the temperature difference therebetween. For example, when a person having a body temperature of approximately 98 degrees falls into the water having a water temperature of approximately 60-70 degrees or less, the difference between the temperatures is viewable with an infrared image, and therefore, the person may be quickly identified and located in the water.

[0107] In an example embodiment, various types of conventional image processing software (e.g., a software package by ObjectVideo located in Reston, VA) may be run by processing component 110 to perform image analysis to monitor the image data and detect a man overboard condition. In an example embodiment, features in such conventional software may support the use of threshold conditions or object discrimination, for example, to distinguish non-living objects, such as a deck chair or other inanimate objects, from a person.

Programming the software package with threshold factors such as temperature, shape, size, aspect ratio, velocity, or other factors may assist a software package in discriminating images of non-living and/or non-human objects from images of humans. Thus, threshold conditions for use as desired in a given application may provide that a bird flying through a camera's field of view, for example, may be ignored, as would a falling deck chair or cup of hot coffee thrown overboard.

[0108] When a man overboard condition is suspected or determined, an operator (e.g., crew member) may be alerted or notified (block 722) so that a rescue action may be initiated. In various implementations, this alert or notification may comprise an audio signal and/or visual signal, such as an alarm, a warning light, a siren, a bell, a buzzer, etc.

[0109] Next, the specific location of the man overboard may be identified based on the image data (block 726). In one implementation, identifying the location of the person may include narrowing the field of view of the image capture component 130. For example, a lens of the infrared camera may telescope to a position to zoom-in on the object or person in the water or zoom-in on at least the proximate location of the person in the water or another narrower field of view image capture component 130 may be directed to the proximate location of the person in the water. Furthermore, a searchlight (e.g., searchlight component 136 of the image capture component 130) may be directed to the proximate location of the person in the water (block 730) to assist with the retrieval and rescue of the person overboard.

[0110] When a man overboard condition is detected, for example in accordance with an embodiment, the time and/or location of the event may be recorded along with the image data (e.g., as part of block 722 or 726), such as to aid in the search and rescue operation and/or to provide information for later analysis of the suspected man overboard event. Alternatively, the time and/or location may be regularly recorded with the image data. For example, processing component 110 (Figs. 1a, 1b) may include a location determination function (e.g., a global positioning system (GPS) receiver or by other conventional location determination techniques) to receive precise location and/or time information, which may be stored (e.g., in memory component 120) along with the image data. The image data along with the location information and/or time information may then be used, for example, to allow a search and rescue crew to leave the ship (e.g., cruise ship) and backtrack in a smaller vessel or helicopter to the exact location of the man overboard condition in a prompt fashion as a large ship generally would not be able to quickly stop and return to the location of the man overboard event.

[0111] Where applicable, various embodiments of the invention may be implemented using hardware, software, or various combinations of hardware and software. Where applicable, various hardware components and/or software components set forth herein may be combined into composite components comprising software, hardware, and/or both without departing from the scope and functionality of the present disclosure. Where applicable, various hardware components and/or software components set forth herein may be separated into subcomponents having software, hardware, and/or both without departing from the scope and functionality of the present disclosure. Where applicable, it is contemplated that software components may be implemented as hardware components and vice-versa.

[0112] Software, in accordance with the present disclosure, such as program code and/or data, may be stored on one or more computer readable mediums. It is also contemplated that software identified herein may be implemented using one or more general purpose or specific purpose computers and/or computer systems, networked and/or otherwise. Where applicable, ordering of various steps described herein may be changed, combined into composite steps, and/or separated into sub-steps to provide features described herein.

[0113] In various embodiments, software for mode modules 112A-112N may be embedded (i.e., hard-coded) in processing component 110 or stored on memory component 120 for access and execution by processing component 110. As previously described, the code (i.e., software and/or hardware) for mode modules 112A-112N define, in one embodiment, preset display functions that allow processing component 100A, 100B to switch between the one or more processing techniques, as described in reference to Figs. 2-4, for displaying captured and/or processed infrared images on display component 140.

[0114] Referring now to Figs. 8-13, a system for aiming multiple optical devices, such as night vision devices and/or cameras, at a common target is discussed, according to various embodiments. For example, according to one embodiment, a more powerful (e.g., having greater magnification and/or greater sensitivity, for example), fixed night vision camera system may be aimed at a man overboard once the man overboard has been spotted with a less powerful (e.g., having less magnification and/or less sensitivity, for example), handheld night vision device. Also for one or more embodiments, the imaging devices may represent one or more infrared and/or visible cameras (e.g., fixed, fixable, and/or portable cameras) that may be in (or capable of) wireless communication and form a wireless camera system that provides slew-to-cue functionality (as discussed herein) between the cameras to provide information to allow one or more cameras to direct their field of view to an area of interest designated by one or more of the other cameras in the system. Furthermore for one or more embodiments, the cameras and techniques disclosed herein may be applied to land, marine, air, and/or space environments and may include user interfaces that allow a user to store the designated information (e.g., location, line of sight, pointing direction, compass, heading, and/or other information), selectively provide the information to other cameras in the system, and/or accept the provided information such that the camera for an associated user is directed to point to the area of interest corresponding to the received information from another camera in the system.

[0115] Fig. 8 shows a block diagram illustrating an imaging system 800 for aiming a fixed mount camera subsystem 801 at a target 803 being observed with a portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be held by a user 807 and in one or more embodiments portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may represent a fixed mount (or fixable mount) and similarly for some embodiments fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may represent a portable imaging/viewing subsystem.

[0116] The imaging system 800 may be implemented upon a watercraft 804, for example. When implemented upon a watercraft 804, the target 803 may be a man overboard, for example. Thus, the imaging system 800 may be useful in search and rescue operations, such as when a person falls off of a ship at sea.

[0117] The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may have a field of view 811. The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may have a field of view 812. Generally, the field of view 811 may at least partially overlap with the field of view 812, such that the target 803 may be imaged and/or viewed by both the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 and the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. Thus, once the user 807 locates the target 803 with the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, then the user 807 may signal the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 to view the target 803, as well, and provide the required information to point to the area of interest.

[0118] The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may have capabilities that are absent in the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. For example, fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may have multiple cameras, may have cameras of multiple focal lengths (magnifications), may have cameras that are sensitive to multiple wavelengths of light (such as visible light, infrared light, and/or ultraviolet light), may automatically track the target 803, and/or may relay information about the target to a remote location (such as off of the watercraft 804). The size and/or weight of the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be substantially greater than the size and/or weight of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. It may be substantially advantageous to have the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 view the target instead of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 or in addition to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802.

[0119] The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be permanently attached to the watercraft 804. The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be remotely operated by a person or may be operated by an automated system. For example, the fixed mount camera

subsystem 801 may be an M-Series camera system, manufactured by FLIR Systems™ of Wilsonville, Oregon.

[0120] The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be hand held, tripod mounted, or otherwise maintained in position. The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be manually operated by a collocated user. For example, the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be an H-Series thermal camera, manufactured by FLIR Systems™.

[0121] The imaging system 800 may comprise a communications link 810 that is configured to communicate a signal from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 to the fixed mount camera subsystem 801. The communications link 810 may be a wired communications link or a wireless communications link, with examples such as a cellular telephone communications link, an optical communications link, a network communications link, a Bluetooth™ communications link, and/or a Wi-Fi™ communications link. The communications link 810 may be any type of communications link. The communications link 810 may be any combination of communications links that operate serially and/or in parallel with respect to one another.

[0122] Fig. 9 shows a display 900 that may be viewed by the user 807 of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The display 900 may comprise a real time representation of a scene 901 being imaged and/or viewed via the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. The scene 901 may be provided optically, with or without electronic processing. Thus, the scene 901 may be a video display similar to that of a camcorder and/or may be an optical display like that of a telescope or binoculars.

[0123] The display 900 may comprise a heading indication 902 and/or a range indication 903. The heading indication 902 may be a heading tape, for example. The heading indication 902 may be an alpha-numeric indication. The heading indication 902 may be any type of indication. The range indication 903 may be a range tape, an alpha-numeric indication, and/or any other form of range indication.

[0124] Target designation indicia 904 may be provided on the display 900 to facilitate the designation of the target 803 for which a heading and range are desired. The target designation indicia 904 may be a window (such as a square, rectangular, oval, or round window), a set or cross-hairs (as shown in Fig. 9), or any other type of indicia. Moving the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 so as to place the target under or within the target

designation indicia 904 may facilitate determination of the heading and range to the target with respect to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802.

[0125] Fig. 10 shows a block diagram illustrating a portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may include an imaging device, such as a camera (a still camera and/or a video camera, for example), and may include a viewing device, such as a telescope or binoculars. The camera may be a visible light camera, an infrared camera or any other type of camera. The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may include a plurality of cameras of any type or combination of types (e.g., as discuss in reference to Fig. 6). The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may represent an infrared camera and additionally may include a position finder and at least a portion of the communication link 810.

[0126] For example, the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may comprise optics 1001 configured to receive light in from a scene (such as a man overboard in the ocean) and to provide light out to facilitate viewing by the user 807. The light out may be magnified, intensified, filtered (such as polarization and/or spectrally filtered), and/or otherwise optically and/or electronically processed. For example, the optics 1001 may comprise a telescope or a pair of binoculars.

[0127] According to an embodiment, the imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may comprise a camera, such as a video camera. For example, a video camera may be defined by an imager 1002, a controller 1004, and a display 1005. The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may facilitate viewing with the optics 1001 only (e.g., without a video camera, such as by viewing the light out), with a video camera only (e.g., via the display 1005), or with both the optics 1001 and the video camera. The optics 1001 may be used by the video camera (such as for focus, zoom, image stabilization, and/or filtering) or may be used only for optical (not camera) viewing. Thus, the video camera may use the optics 1001 that also facilitate optical viewing and/or may use separate, dedicated optics.

[0128] The imager 1002 may receive light from the optics 1001 via a beam splitter 1003 or the like. The imager 1002 may provide a signal representative of video images to the controller 1004. The controller 1004 may, among other things, process the video images for viewing upon the display 1005. The controller 1004 may, for example, comprise a microprocessor 1006 and may thus be a microprocessor based controller or other type of logic device (e.g., processor, programmable logic device, and/or application specific integrated circuit).

[0129] The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may comprise a portion of the communications link 810 (Fig. 8). The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may comprise a transmitter or transceiver (xcvr) 1007 that is configured to transmit information regarding the target 803 to the fixed mount camera subsystem 801. For example, the transceiver 1007 may transmit position information such as a position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, as well as a heading and a range to the target 803. As a further example, the transceiver 1007 may transmit the position of the target 803. As yet further examples, the transceiver 1007 may transmit the scene 901 (Fig. 9), voice, data, control signals, and/or any other information and similarly receive from other devices similar information. The transceiver 1007 may for some embodiments represent any type of communication interface to provide or receive information from another device (e.g., establish a communication link with the fixed mount camera subsystem 801).

[0130] The transceiver 1007 may transmit in response to the user 807 actuating a control of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. For example, the scene 901 may be transmitted in response to the user 807 depressing a button 1008, a display touch screen selection, or other control component (e.g., as discussed in reference to Figs. 1A and 5). For example, button 1008 may represent one or more user interface controls, which may be selected to perform various functions (e.g., slew-to-cue or other functionality), such as provide position information to a remote device to assist in locating the target of interest or request pointing cues to be displayed to assist a user in pointing in the direction of a target based on target position information received, as discussed further herein.

[0131] Actuating the control, e.g., depressing the button 1008, may also cause information to be stored, such as in a memory 1009 of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. The information may include position information such as the position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, as well as heading and range to the target 803, and/or position of the target 803. The memory 1009 may store this information, including the position of the target 803, the position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, heading and range to the target 803, the scene 901, voice, data, control signals, and/or any other information.

[0132] The position of the target 803 may be determined by a position finder defined by a GPS (global positioning system receiver) 1011, a range finder 1013, and a digital compass 1012. The controller 1004 may use information from the GPS 1011, the range finder 1013, and the digital compass 1012 to determine the position of the target 803. Alternatively, a

remote device, such as a remote computer and/or the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may use information from the GPS 1011, the range finder 1013 (e.g., laser rangefinder), and the digital compass 1012 (e.g., any type of compass) to determine the position of the target 803.

[0133] The position of the target 803 may be determined from the position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, the heading to the target 803 with respect to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, and the range to the target 803 from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. The position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be determined with the GPS 1011. The heading of the target 803 with respect to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be determined using a digital compass 1012. The range to the target 803 from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be determined using the rangefinder 1013. Thus, the digital compass 1012 and the rangefinder 1013 may cooperate to define a target position finder. Various types of rangefinders are suitable. For example, the rangefinder 1013 may be a laser rangefinder, an ultrasonic range finder, or an optical rangefinder.

[0134] The signal transmitted by the transceiver 1007 may be used by devices other than the fixed mount camera subsystem 801. For example, the position of the target 803 may be transmitted by the transceiver 1007 to search and rescue personnel in an aircraft or may be transmitted by the transceiver 1007 to another watercraft.

[0135] The controller 1004 may use instructions stored in the memory 1009 and/or may be configured (e.g., hard wired or programmed) to perform various tasks, such as determination of the location of the target 803, operation of the transceiver 1007, processing of the images from imager 1002, operation of the display 1005, and/or monitoring of a state of the button 1008. The controller 1004 may be a general purpose computer, an application specific computer, or any other type of controller or processor.

[0136] In accordance with an embodiment, the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be implemented as discussed in reference to Fig. 1A. For example for an embodiment, the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may represent an infrared camera or other device configured as infrared imaging system 100A (Fig. 1A) or infrared imaging system 100B (Fig. 1B), with sensing component 160 (Figs. 1A, 1B) including and representing the various wireless functionality and position finder features (discussed in reference to Figs. 8-10), such as transceiver 1007, GPS 1011, compass 1012, and/or rangefinder 1013. Furthermore, the various elements of Fig. 10 may correspond to various elements described herein, such as in reference to Figs. 1A, 1B, 5, and 6. For example for an embodiment,

imager 1002, controller 1004, display 1005, memory 1005, and button 1008 may be implemented as discussed for image capture component 130, processing component 110, display component 140, memory component 120 and/or mode modules 112A-112N, and control component 150, respectively.

[0137] Fig. 11 shows a block diagram illustrating the fixed mount camera subsystem 801, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be permanently or semi-permanently mounted, such as to the watercraft 804 (Fig. 1). The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be mounted to any desired vehicle or platform. For example, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be mounted to a land based vehicle, a ship, a submarine, an aircraft, a spacecraft, or a satellite. The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be mounted to a non-vehicle structure or to the earth. For example, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be mounted to a life guard station or may be autonomously mounted along a beach, pier, or waterfront.

[0138] A plurality of fixed mount camera subsystems 801 and/or a plurality of the portable imaging/viewing subsystems 802 may be included in the imaging system 800 (e.g., as configured and discussed in reference to Fig. 1C). Thus, one or more of the portable imaging/viewing subsystems 802 may communicate with one or more of the fixed mount camera subsystems 801 and/or one or more of the portable imaging/viewing subsystems 802 to communicate object position information to image a common target 803 (e.g., slew-to-cue techniques). As an example embodiment, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be implemented as discussed in reference to Figs. 1B-1F.

[0139] As an example, a plurality of portable imaging/viewing subsystems 802 may be included in the imaging system 800. Thus, the portable imaging/viewing subsystems 802 may communicate with one or more of the fixed mount camera subsystems 801 and in response the one or more fixed mount camera subsystems 801 may image a common target 803.

[0140] One portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may image and/or transmit the position of a plurality of separate targets 803. The portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may store the location of the plurality of separate targets 803.

[0141] Thus, the practice of various embodiments may involve multiple portable imaging/viewing subsystems 802, multiple fixed mount camera subsystems 801, and/or multiple targets 803. The imaging system 800 may accommodate any number of portable

imaging/viewing subsystems 802 and fixed mount camera subsystems 801, which cooperate with one another, to identify and view/image one or more targets 803.

[0142] The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may comprise a camera 1101 and camera positioner, e.g., a pan and tilt mount 1102. The pan and tilt mount 1102 may drive or aim the camera 1101 in a desired direction, such as toward the target 803. The fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may comprise any number of cameras 1101 that are driven by any number of pan and tilt mounts 1102. For example, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may comprise a wide angle visible light camera, a telephoto visible light camera, and/or an infrared camera that are all driven by a common pan and tilt mount 1102. Alternatively, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may comprise a wide angle visible light camera, a telephoto visible light camera, and/or an infrared camera that are each driven by separate pan and tilt mounts 1102.

[0143] The camera 1101 may comprise optics 1103 that provide light to an imager 1104. The imager 1104 may provide a video output to controller 1106. The controller 1106 may have a microprocessor 1107 and may thus be a microprocessor based controller or other type of logic device (e.g., processor, programmable logic device, and/or application specific integrated circuit).

[0144] The controller 1106 may receive information from a transceiver (xcvr) 1108. For example, the controller 1106 may receive information representative of the position of the target 803 from the transceiver 1108 after this information was communicated from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 to the fixed mount camera subsystem 801. The transceiver 1108 may receive voice, data, control signals, and/or any other information and may provide such information to the controller 1106. The transceiver 1108 may transmit any type of information, such as voice, data, control signals, and/or any other information to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. For example, the transceiver 1108 may transmit a close up (magnified) and polarization filtered (to reduce glare) image of the target 803 to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802. The transceiver 1108 may for some embodiments represent any type of communication interface to provide or receive information from another device (e.g., establish a communication link with the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802).

[0145] The pan and tilt mount 1102 may comprise a drive motor controller 1109. The drive motor controller 1109 may use position feedback to determine where the camera 1101 is being aimed. For example, position feedback sensors may be provided on gimbals (not

shown) of the pan and tilt mount 1102. The drive motor controller 1109 may provide drive signals to a pan motor and a tilt motor.

[0146] The position of the target 803, video images, or any other information may be stored in a memory 1112. The position of the target 803 may be indicated on a chart, such as by being plotted on a chart plotter (not shown) in a wheelhouse of the watercraft 804.

[0147] The controller 1106 may use instructions stored in the memory 1112 and/or may be configured (e.g., hard wired or programmed) to perform various tasks, such as determination of the location of the target 803, operation of the transceiver 1108, operation of the pan and tilt mount 1102 via the drive motor controller 1109, and/or tracking of the target 803. The controller 1106 may be a general purpose computer, an application specific computer, or any other type of controller or processor.

[0148] In accordance with an embodiment, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be implemented as discussed in reference to Figs. 1A-1F, 5, and 6 and implement various techniques as discussed in reference to Figs. 2-4 and 7. For example for an embodiment, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may represent an infrared camera or other device configured as infrared imaging system 100A (Fig. 1A) or infrared imaging system 100B (Fig. 1B), with sensing component 160 (Figs. 1A, 1B) including and representing the various wireless functionality and object position finder features (discussed in reference to Figs. 8-10), such as transceiver 1007, GPS 1011, compass 1012, and/or rangefinder 1013.

[0149] Furthermore, the various elements of Fig. 11 may correspond to various elements described herein, such as in reference to Figs. 1A, 1B, 5, and 6. For example for an embodiment, imager 1104, controller 1106, and memory 1112 may be implemented as discussed for image capture component 130, processing component 110, and memory component 120 and/or mode modules 112A-112N, respectively. For some embodiments, the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 (Fig. 10) may include pan/tilt mount 1102, as discussed in reference to Fig. 11, to provide a pointing mechanism. Additionally for some embodiments, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may be implemented with certain functionality as described for the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, such as for example the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may include object (or target) position finder functionality that may include GPS, rangefinder, and/or compass functionality such that this information may be wirelessly provided to other cameras in the vicinity (e.g., to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802).

[0150] Fig. 12 shows a flow chart illustrating a method for aiming the camera 1101 of the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 at the target 803 being observed using the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The target 803 may be imaged or viewed with the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 (block 1201). A position of the target 803 may be determined using a target position finder of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 (block 1202). The target position finder may include the GPS 1011, the digital compass 1012, and the rangefinder 1013, as discussed herein.

[0151] The position of the target 803 may be communicated from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 to the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 (block 1203), such as via the communications link 810. The fixed mount camera 1101 may be aimed toward the target 803 (block 1204), so as to facilitate imaging and/or viewing of the target 803 via the fixed mount camera 1101.

[0152] It should be understood that the method disclosed in Fig. 12 may be applied to any and between any imaging/viewing devices (e.g., fixed mount camera subsystem 801 or portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802) as disclosed herein. For example, the method may be applied such that the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 may communicate the target position to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 such that the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be pointed to the object of interest. As a further example for one or more embodiments, the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may provide pointing cues to a user of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 to assist a user in pointing the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 to the object of interest based on the information provided by another device (e.g., the fixed mount camera subsystem 801). For example, the desired heading and range may be displayed for a user to view and adjust the pointing direction of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, with the heading adjusted, as would be understood by one skilled in the art, based upon position difference between the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 and the device providing the information. Alternatively as an example, pointing cues (e.g., left, right, up, down arrows) may be provided on a display to guide a user in pointing in the desired direction based on the information provided by the other device.

[0153] Fig. 13 shows a flow chart illustrating a method for determining a position of the target 803 with respect to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. A position of the portable imaging/viewing

subsystem 802 may be determined (block 1301). The position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be determined using the GPS 1011, for example. Alternatively, the position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be determined using another method, such as triangulation, for example. According to an embodiment, the position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may be fixed (such as when the portable imaging/view subsystem 802 is installed at a lifeguard station) and thus may be predetermined.

[0154] The heading and range to the target 803 may be determined with respect to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 (block 1302). The heading may be determined using the digital compass 1012 and the range may be determined using the range finder 1013. The position of the target 803 may then be determined from the position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, the heading, and the range to the target 803 (block 1303), as would be understood by one skilled in the art. It should also be understood that the method of Fig. 13 may also be implemented for the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 given the position finder functionality, as discussed herein.

[0155] Thus, according to an embodiment, a more powerful, fixed night vision camera system may be aimed at a man overboard once the man overboard has been spotted with a less powerful, handheld night vision device. The use of the more powerful, fixed night vision camera may substantially enhance the likelihood of a successful rescue of the man overboard.

[0156] Various embodiments may be used to spot and/or identify pirates or terrorists. In addition to or in place of the cameras of the fixed mount camera subsystem 801, other devices may be aimed. Lethal and/or non-lethal weapons may be aimed, such as at a potential enemy or intruder. For example, sonic non-lethal weapons, microwave non-lethal weapons, water cannons, etc. may be aimed at a potential enemy or intruder. As further examples, machine guns, cannons, and or missiles may be aimed at a potential enemy or intruder.

[0157] As used herein, the term “heading” may be defined to include the angle between a line of sight from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 to the target 803 and a reference such a true north or the bow of the ship. As used herein, the term “heading” may be defined to be a direction from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 to the target 803 and may be the same as the bearing of the target 803 with respect to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802.

[0158] In accordance with one or more embodiments, the techniques disclosed herein may be applied to various types of application, as noted herein, in addition to the maritime applications. For example, the techniques disclosed herein may be applied to land, air, or space applications, where target location and pointing information (e.g., slew-to-cue) information may be useful.

[0159] In accordance with one or more embodiments, the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 and the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802 may implement various mode functionality as discussed herein (e.g., in reference to Figs. 1A-7) and may be implemented within a system to perform various techniques, as discussed herein (e.g., in reference to Figs. 1A-7 and/or Figs. 8-13). For example, a system (e.g., as discussed in reference to Figs. 1C or 8) may be implemented with (or made up of) various devices, including one or more of the fixed mount camera subsystem 801 and one or more of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem 802, with one or more of or each of the devices user operable to select various maritime modes (e.g., as discussed in reference to Figs. 2, 4, and 5).

[0160] One or more of the devices may also be user operable to provide object position information (e.g., automatically or by user command via a user interface as discussed herein, such as in reference to Figs. 1A, 5, and 8-13) to other devices within the system. One or more of the devices may further be user operable to receive object position information from other devices and automatically or by user acceptance (e.g., by user command via the user interface) allow the device to point to the designated object of interest or provide pointing cues (e.g., via the display) to guide the user to point the device to the designated location of the object based on the received object position information.

[0161] As an example for an embodiment, a user viewing an object of interest may command via the user interface to store object location information and/or provide the object location information to other devices within the system, which may then (or upon a corresponding user's acceptance via a corresponding user interface) slew to point at the object based on the object location information received. For example, the devices for one or more embodiments may provide on-screen graphics for slew-to-cue functionality (e.g., look where I am looking functionality). Therefore, the slew-to-cue techniques disclosed herein may provide certain advantages within a camera system architecture, as disclosed herein.

[0162] Embodiments described above illustrate but do not limit the disclosure. It should also be understood that numerous modifications and variations are possible in accordance

with the principles of the present disclosure. Accordingly, the scope of the disclosure is defined only by the following claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system, comprising:
a fixed mount camera subsystem having a camera, a camera positioner, and a first communications interface;
a portable imaging/viewing subsystem having a target position finder and a second communications interface adapted to establish a communications link with the first communications interface to communicate a signal from the target position finder to the camera positioner, the signal being representative of position information of a target being imaged/viewed with the portable imaging/viewing subsystem; and
wherein the fixed mount camera subsystem is configured to aim the camera using the camera positioner toward the target in response to the signal.
2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the portable imaging/viewing subsystem is configured to be handheld, and wherein the fixed mount camera subsystem further comprises a second target position finder, the first communications interface configured to communicate a second signal from the second target position finder through the communications link to the portable imaging/viewing subsystem, with the second signal being representative of position information of a target being imaged with the fixed mount camera subsystem.
3. The system of Claim 2, wherein the portable imaging/viewing subsystem comprises a display configured to provide pointing cues to a user based on the second signal received from the fixed mount camera subsystem to assist the user in pointing the portable imaging/viewing subsystem towards the target.
4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the portable imaging/viewing subsystem comprises a user actuatable control configured to initiate communication of the signal over the communications link, and wherein the portable imaging/viewing subsystem comprises at least one device selected from the list consisting of a night vision system, a telescope, a pair of binoculars, an infrared camera, and a visible light camera.

5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the fixed mount camera subsystem comprises a visible light camera and an infrared camera, and wherein the portable imaging/viewing subsystem comprises a display configured to provide pointing cues to a user based on the second signal received from the fixed mount camera subsystem to assist the user in pointing the portable imaging/viewing subsystem towards the target, with the pointing cues comprising at least one of directional arrows or heading and range cues.

6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the target position finder comprises:
a global positioning system (GPS) receiver configured to determine a position of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem;
a compass configured to provide an azimuth from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem to the target; and
a range finder configured to provide a range from the portable imaging/viewing subsystem to the target.

7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the camera positioner comprises a pan and tilt drive, wherein the portable imaging/viewing subsystem comprises a memory configured to store information representative of the position of the target, and wherein the portable imaging/viewing subsystem comprises an optical viewfinder and a display to provide a user with a direct optical view of a scene and a generated image view of the scene on the display..

8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the communications link comprises a wired communications link or a wireless communications link, and wherein the communications link is bi-directional and is configured to communicate voice and data.

9. The system of Claim 8, wherein at least one of the portable imaging/viewing subsystem and the fixed mount camera subsystem comprises:
an image capture component adapted to capture an infrared image;
a control component adapted to provide a plurality of selectable processing modes to a user, receive a user input corresponding to a user selected processing mode, and generate a control signal indicative of the user selected processing mode, wherein the plurality of selectable processing modes includes a night cruising mode, a day cruising mode, and a man overboard mode;

a processing component adapted to receive the generated control signal from the control component, process the captured infrared image according to the user selected processing mode, and generate a processed infrared image; and
a display component adapted to display the processed infrared image.

10. A vehicle comprising the system of Claim 1.

11. An infrared camera system, comprising:

an infrared camera having an image capture component adapted to capture an infrared image of a scene;

a target position finder adapted to obtain target position information for a target within the scene;

a communications interface configured to communicate a signal from the infrared camera based on information from the target position finder, the signal being representative of position information for the target being viewed with the infrared camera, and wherein the communications interface is further configured to receive target position information from another device;

a control component adapted to provide selectable processing modes to a user, receive a user input corresponding to a user selected processing mode, and generate a control signal indicative of the user selected processing mode, wherein the selectable processing modes includes a processing of target position information received via the communications interface and a processing of the position information from the target position finder to provide via the communications interface; and

a processing component adapted to receive the generated control signal from the control component and perform the selected processing function based on the user selected processing mode.

12. The infrared camera system of Claim 11, further comprising:

a display component adapted to display the infrared image; and

wherein the processing component is adapted to generate pointing cues to the user based on the target position information received via the communications interface to provide on the display to assist the user in pointing the infrared camera towards the target.

13. The infrared camera system of Claim 12, wherein:

the control component is adapted to provide a plurality of selectable processing modes to a user, receive a user input corresponding to a user selected processing mode, and generate a second control signal indicative of the user selected processing mode, wherein the plurality of selectable processing modes includes a night cruising mode, a day cruising mode, and a man overboard mode; and

the processing component is adapted to receive the generated second control signal from the control component, process the captured infrared image according to the user selected processing mode, and generate a processed infrared image; and

the display component is adapted to display the processed infrared image.

14. The infrared camera system of Claim 11, further comprising:

a display component adapted to display the infrared image; and

a positioner configured to point the infrared camera toward the target based on target position information received via the communications interface;

wherein the infrared camera system is configured to automatically identify the target, display a target designation indicia associated with the target on the display, and control pan/tilt via the positioner to automatically track the target.

15. The infrared camera system of Claim 14, wherein the target designation indicia comprises a square, a crosshair, and/or an oval to identify the target on the display, and wherein the target is identified as a hottest object in the infrared image.

16. A method, comprising:

capturing an infrared image of a target within a field of view of a first infrared camera;

determining position information of the target in response to a user command;

storing the position information of the target within the infrared camera; and

communicating wirelessly the position information of the target to a remote infrared camera to assist the remote infrared camera in pointing to the target.

17. The method of Claim 16, further comprising:
 - receiving, by the infrared camera, position information of a target; and
 - generating pointing cues on a display of the infrared camera to assist a user in pointing the infrared camera towards the target.
18. The method of Claim 16, further comprising:
 - providing a plurality of selectable processing modes for a user of the infrared camera, wherein the plurality of selectable processing modes includes a night docking mode, a man overboard mode, and a night cruising mode;
 - receiving a user input corresponding to a user selected processing mode;
 - processing the captured infrared image according to the user selected processing mode;
 - generating a processed infrared image; and
 - displaying the processed infrared image.
19. The method of Claim 16, wherein the remote infrared camera is a fixed mount camera subsystem and the infrared camera is a portable imaging/viewing subsystem, and wherein the method further comprises aiming the fixed mount camera subsystem toward the target based on the position information received from the infrared camera.
20. A system configured to perform the method of Claim 16.

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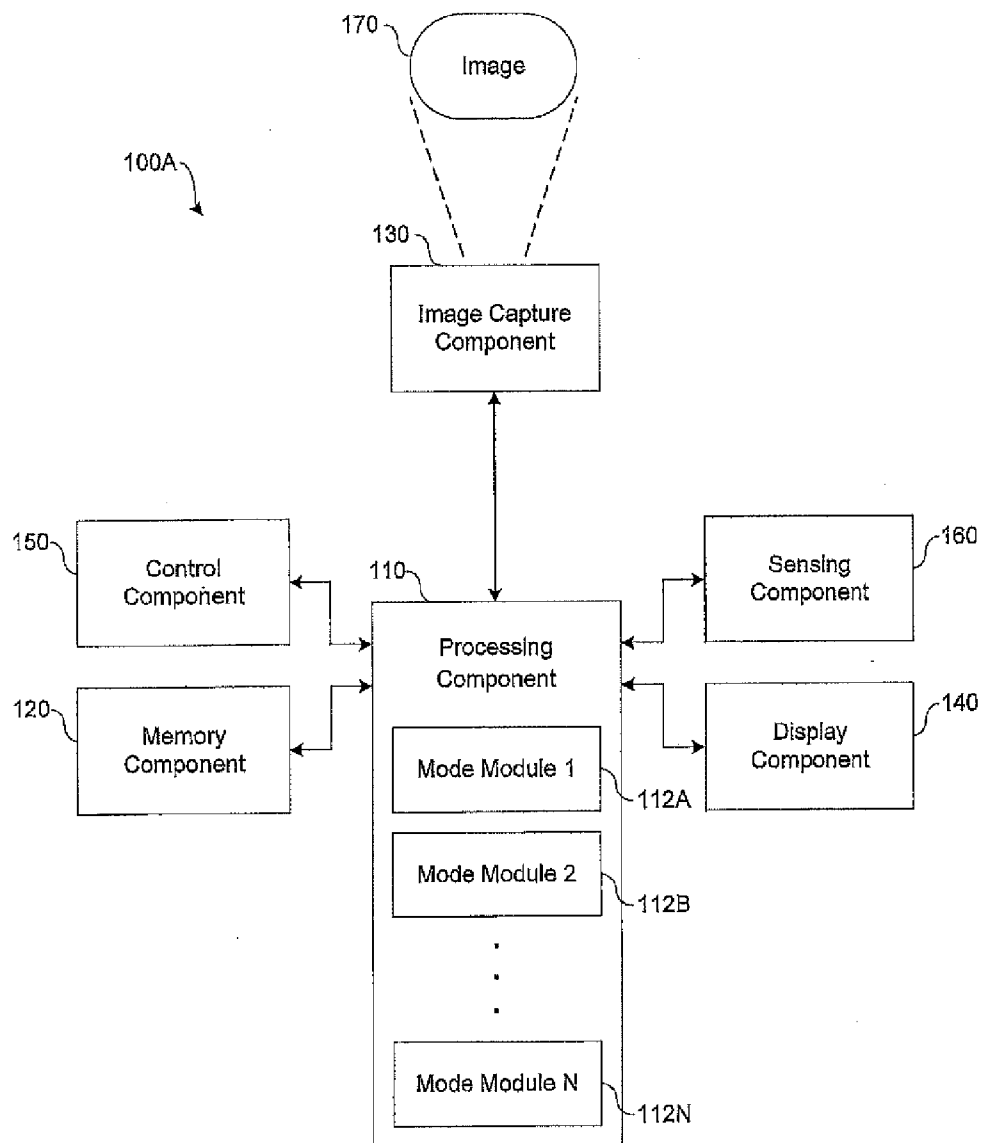


Fig. 1A

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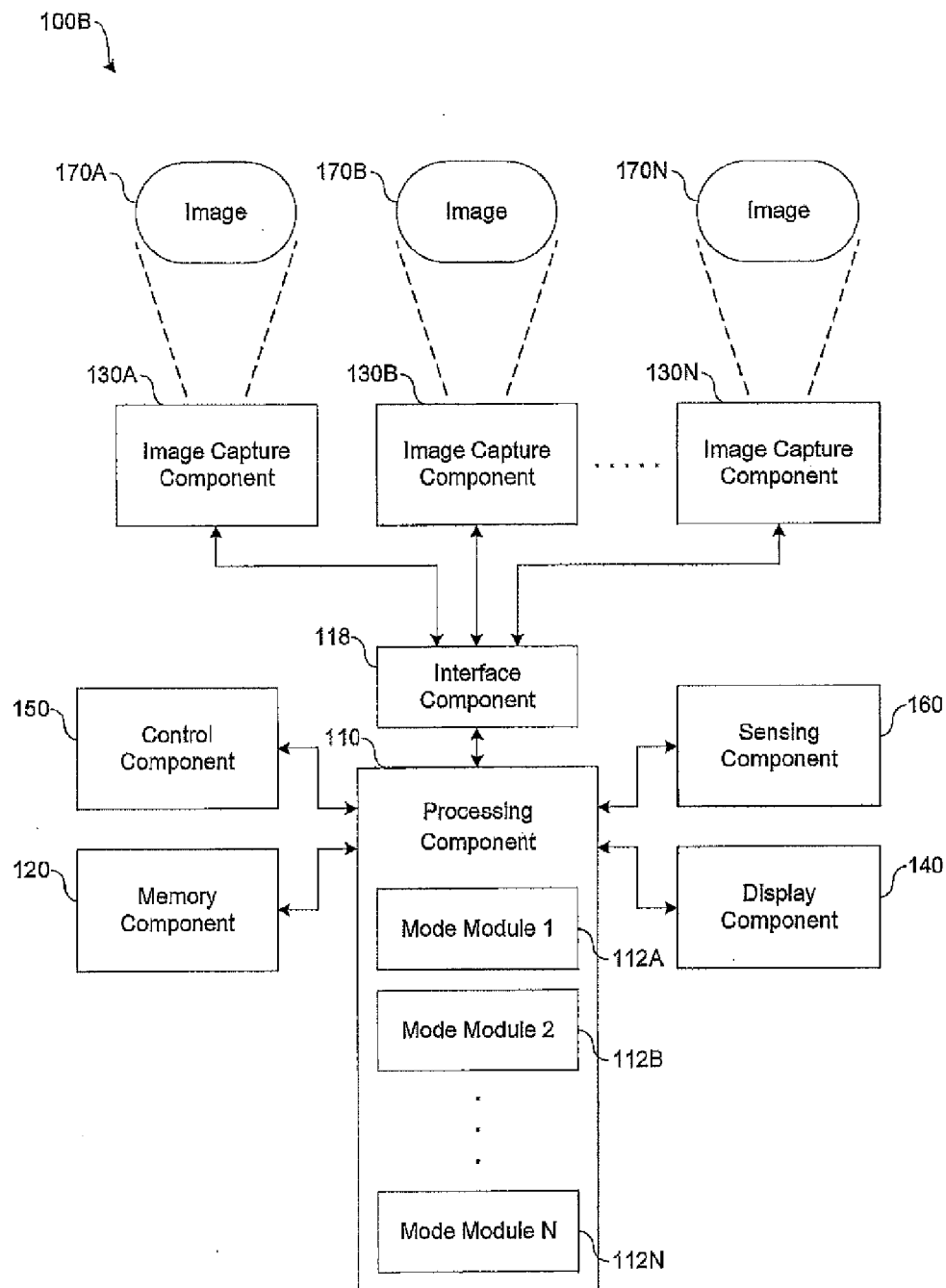


Fig. 1B

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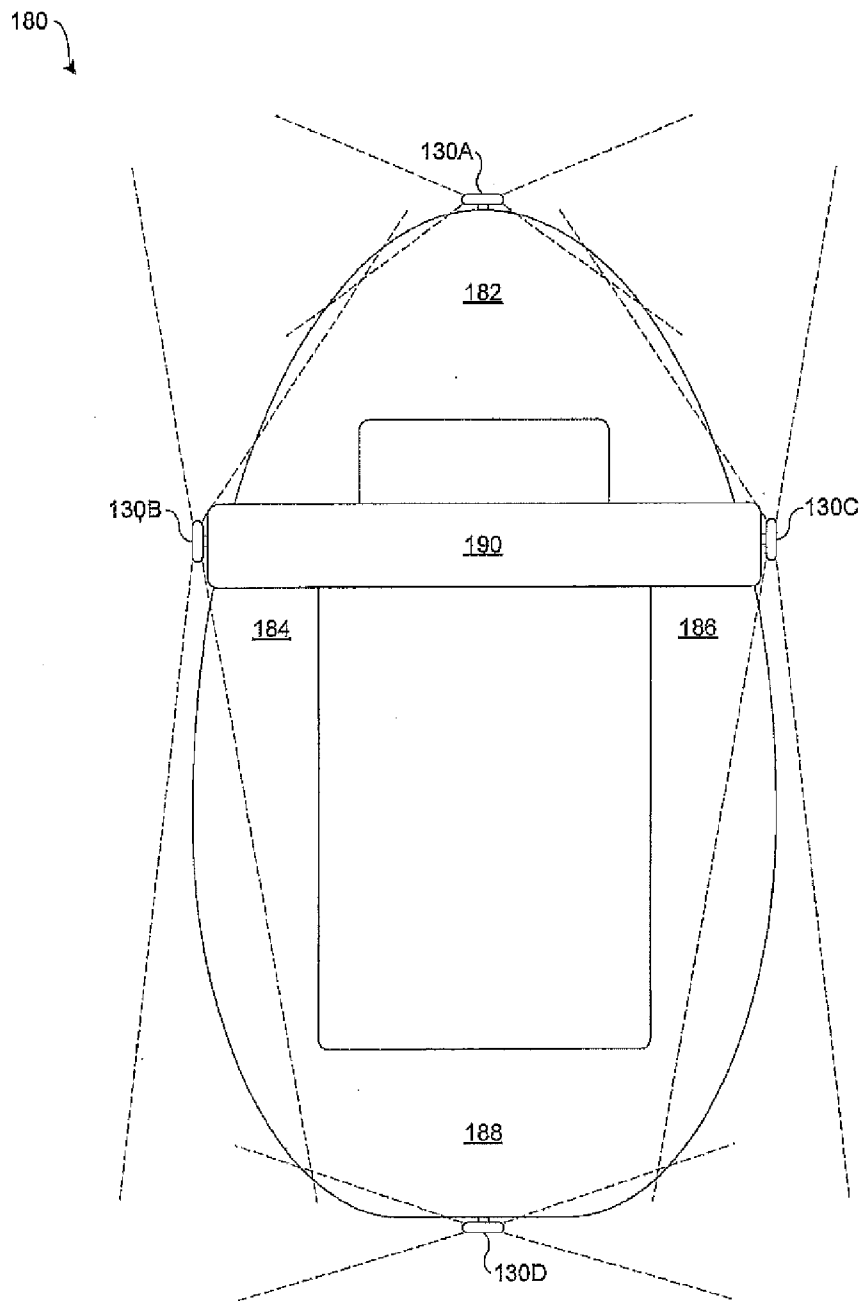


Fig. 1C

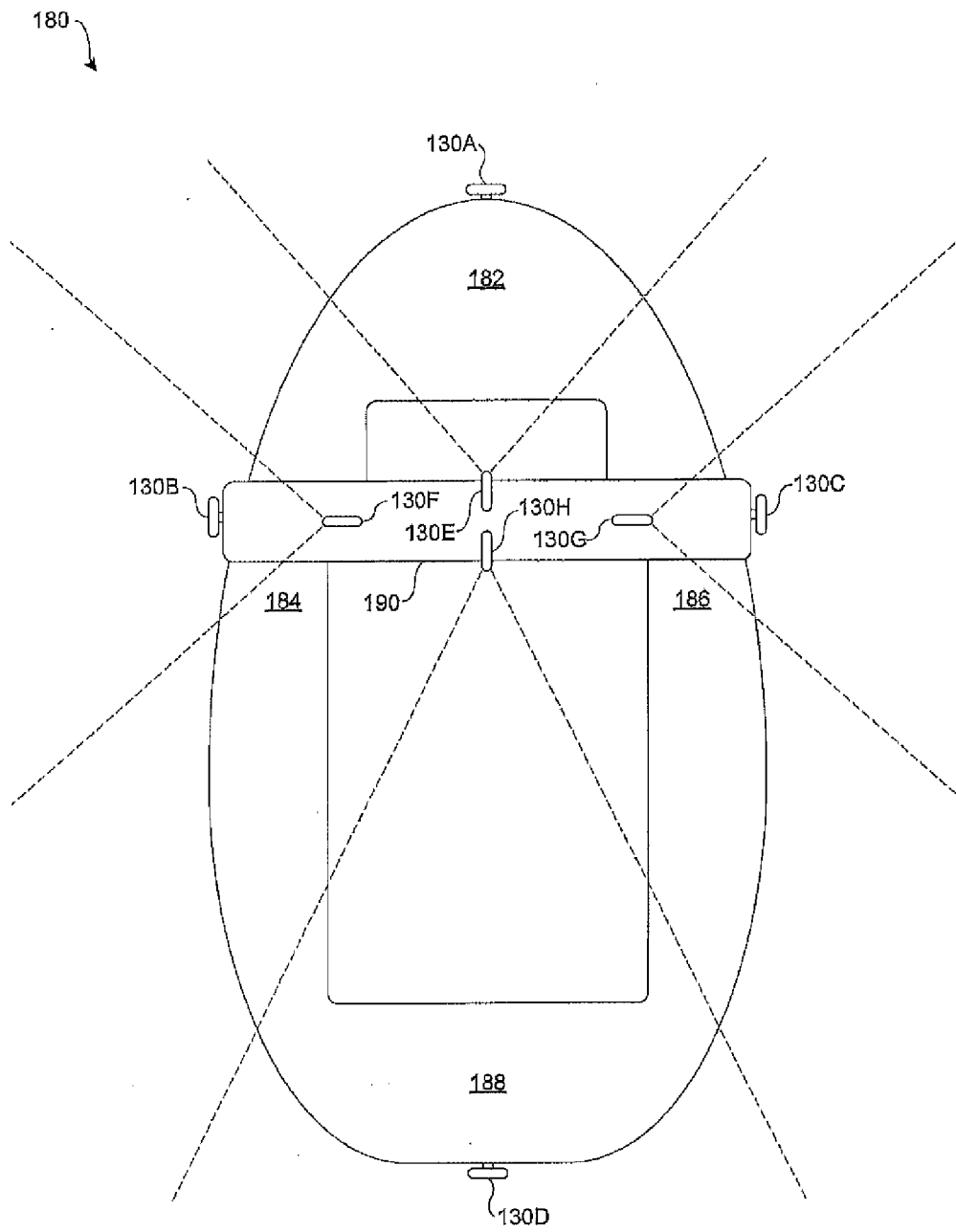


Fig. 1D

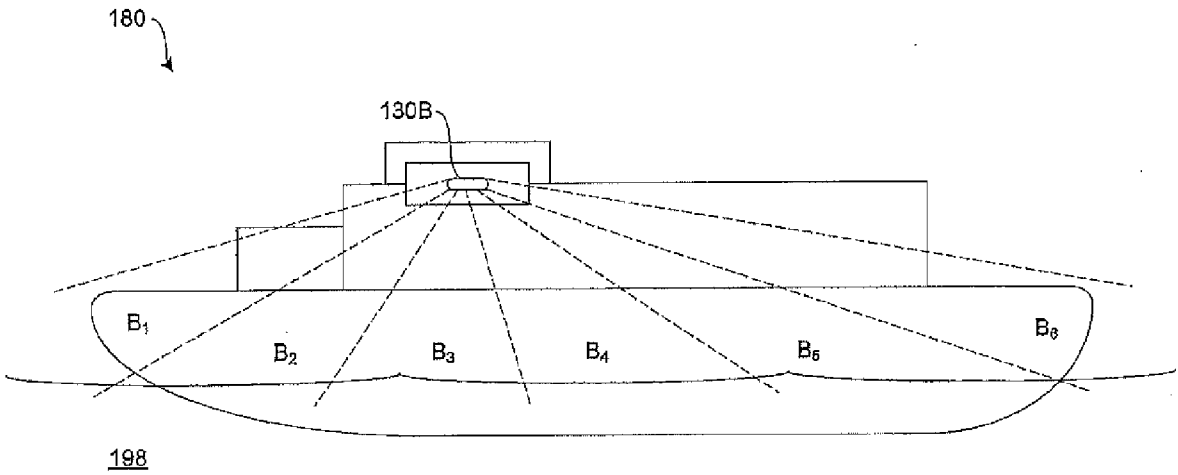


Fig. 1E

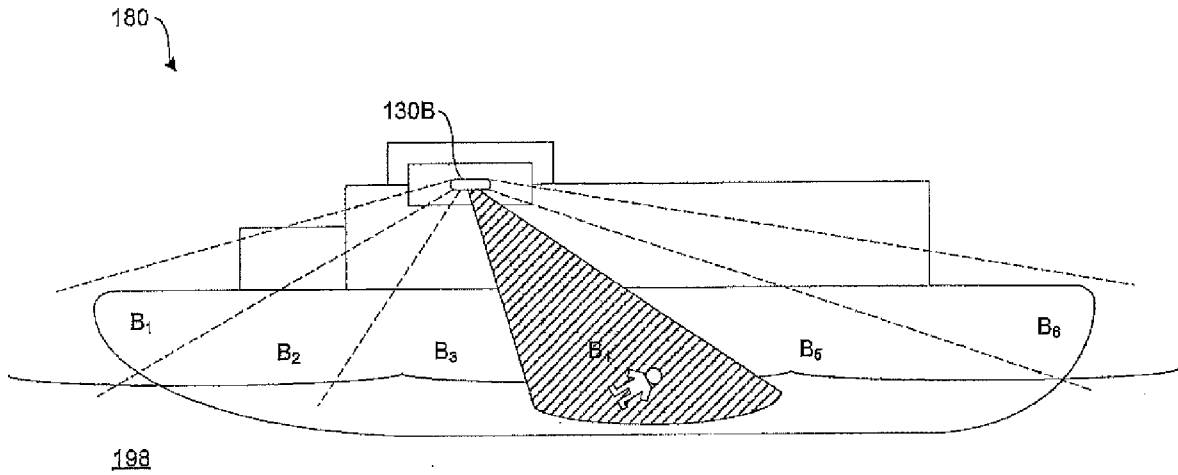


Fig. 1F

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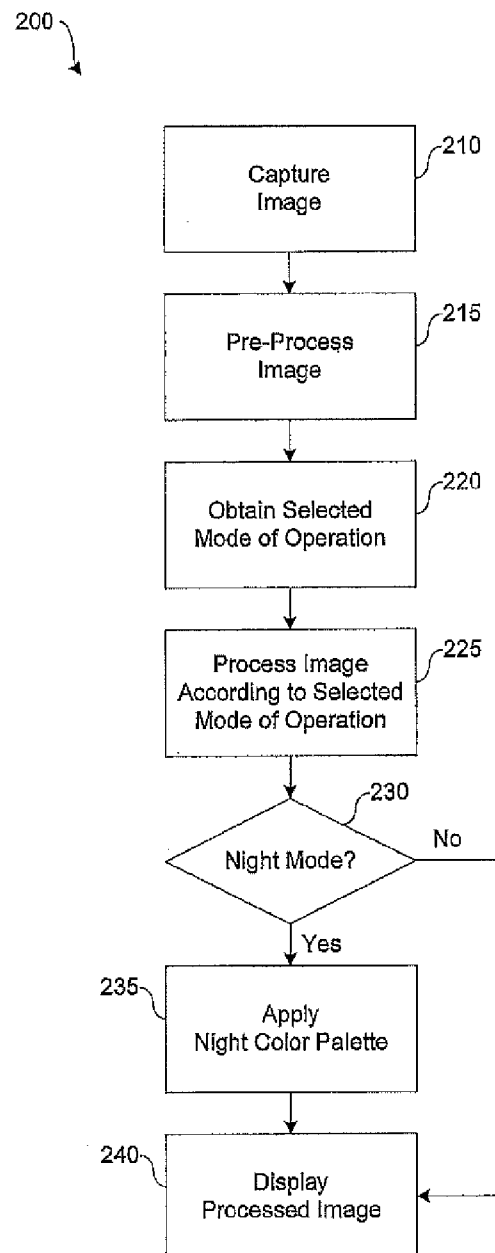


Fig. 2

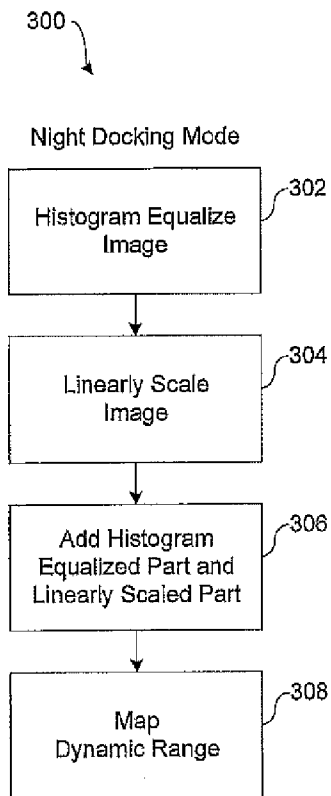


Fig. 3A

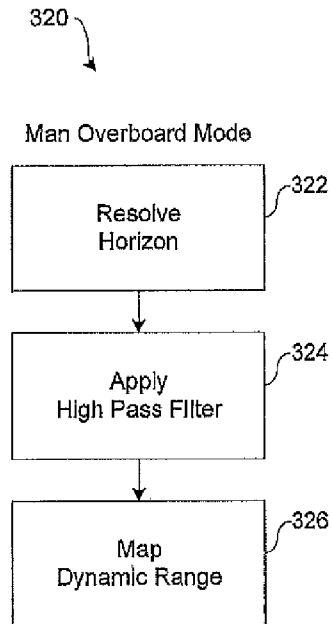


Fig. 3B

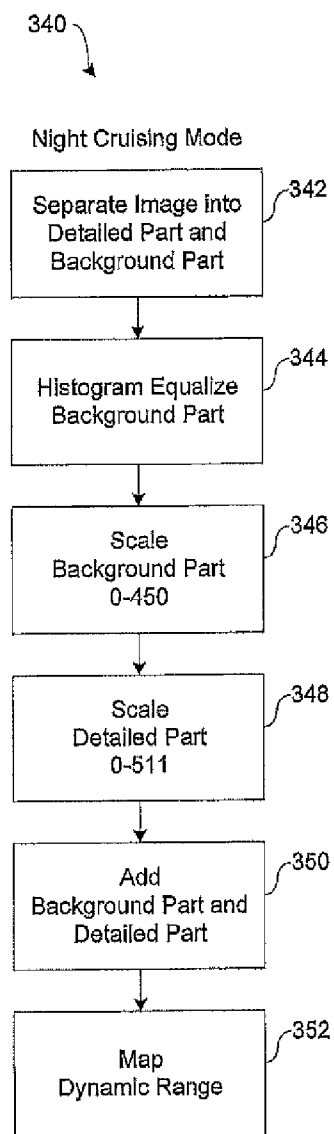


Fig. 3C

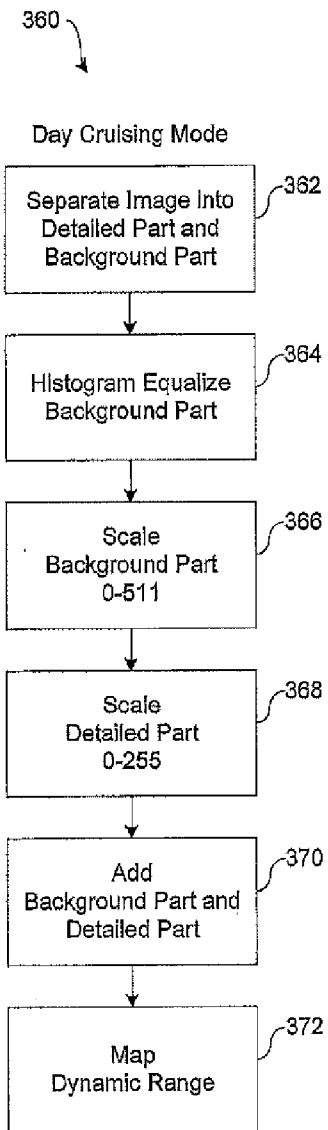


Fig. 3D

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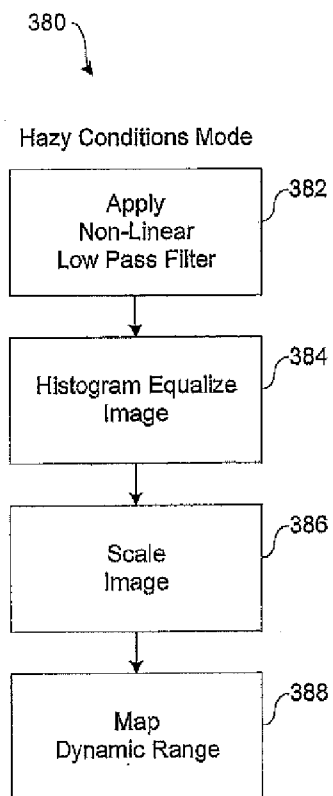


Fig. 3E

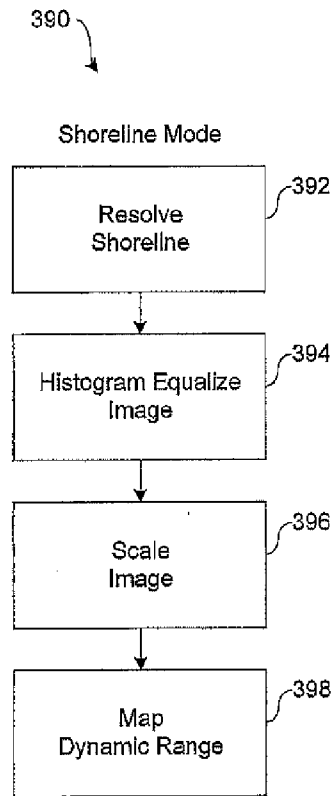


Fig. 3F

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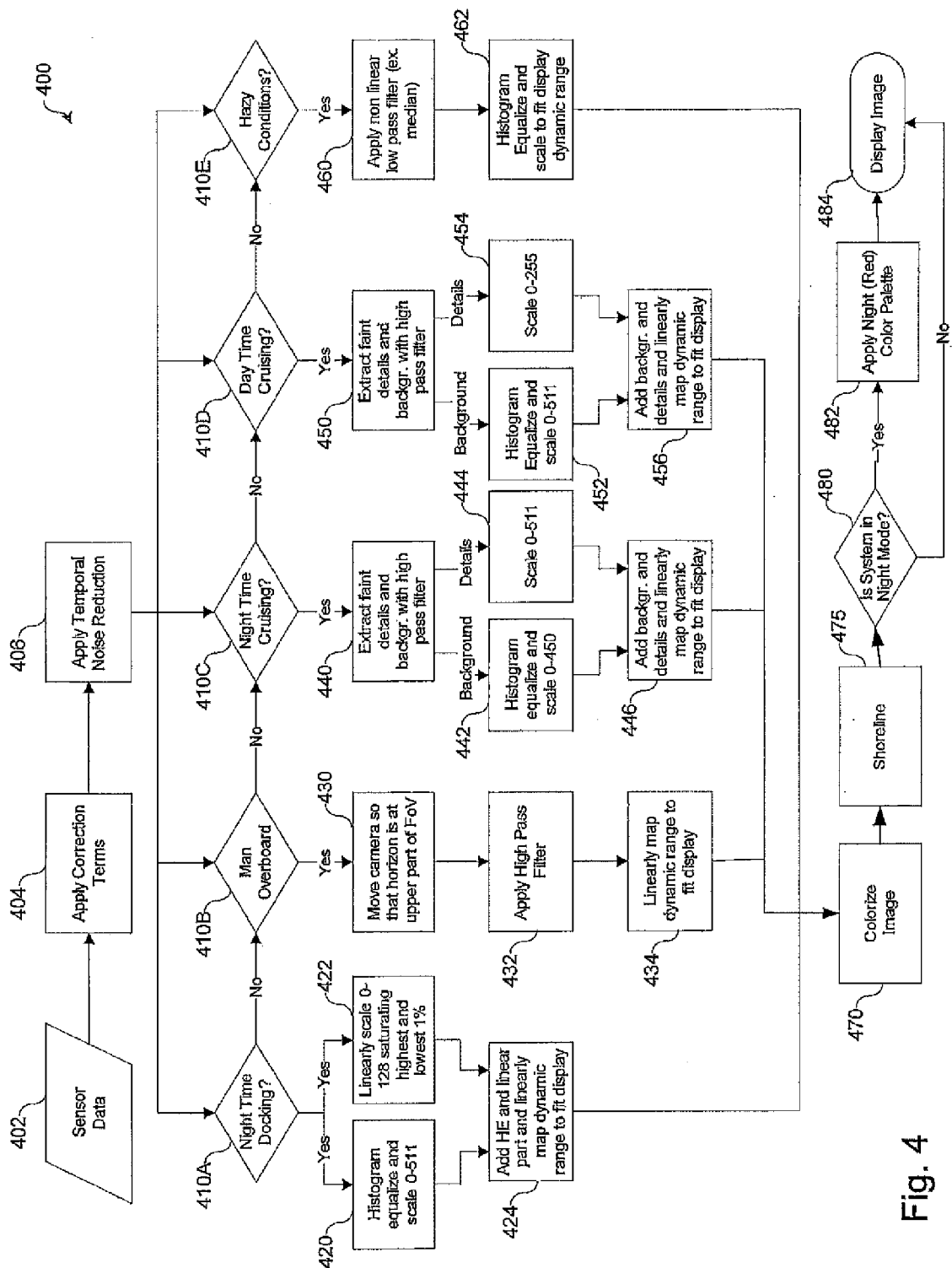


Fig. 4

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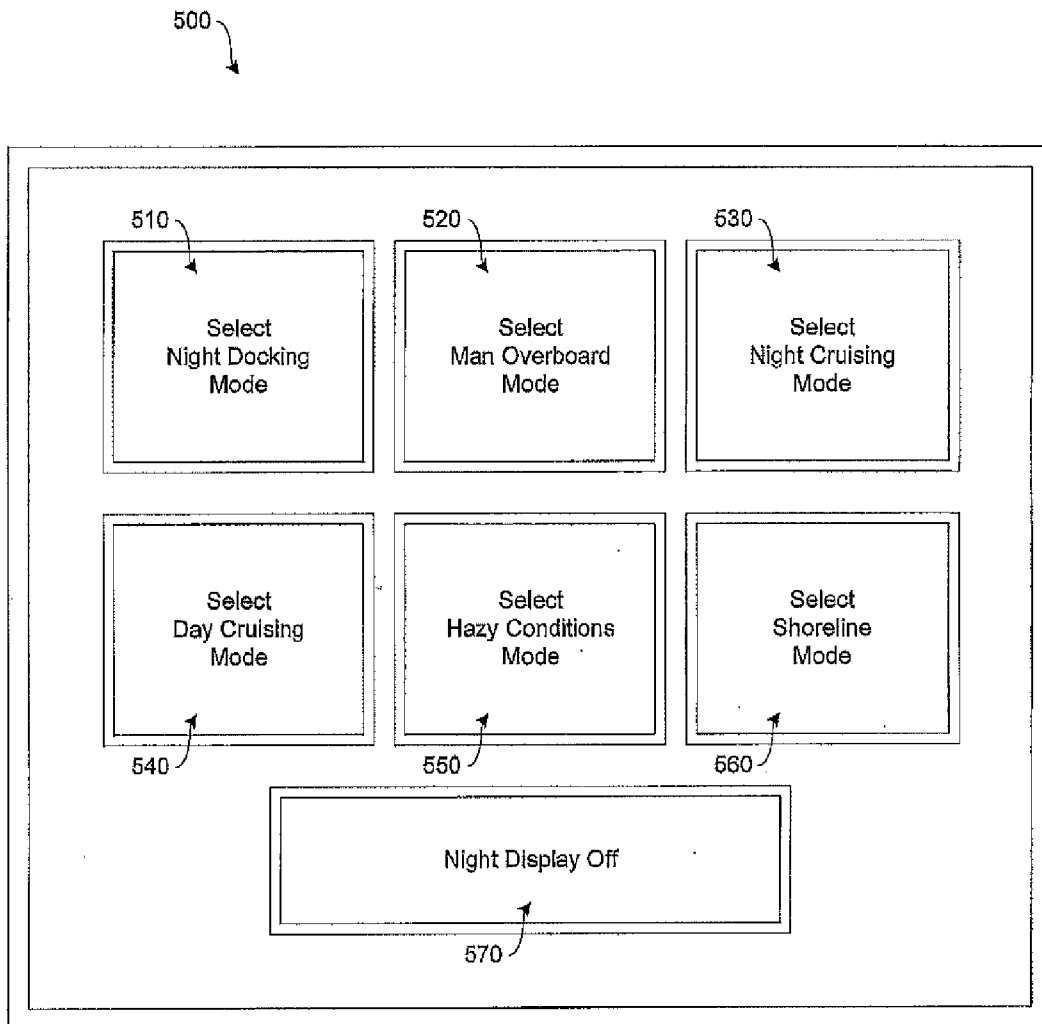


Fig. 5

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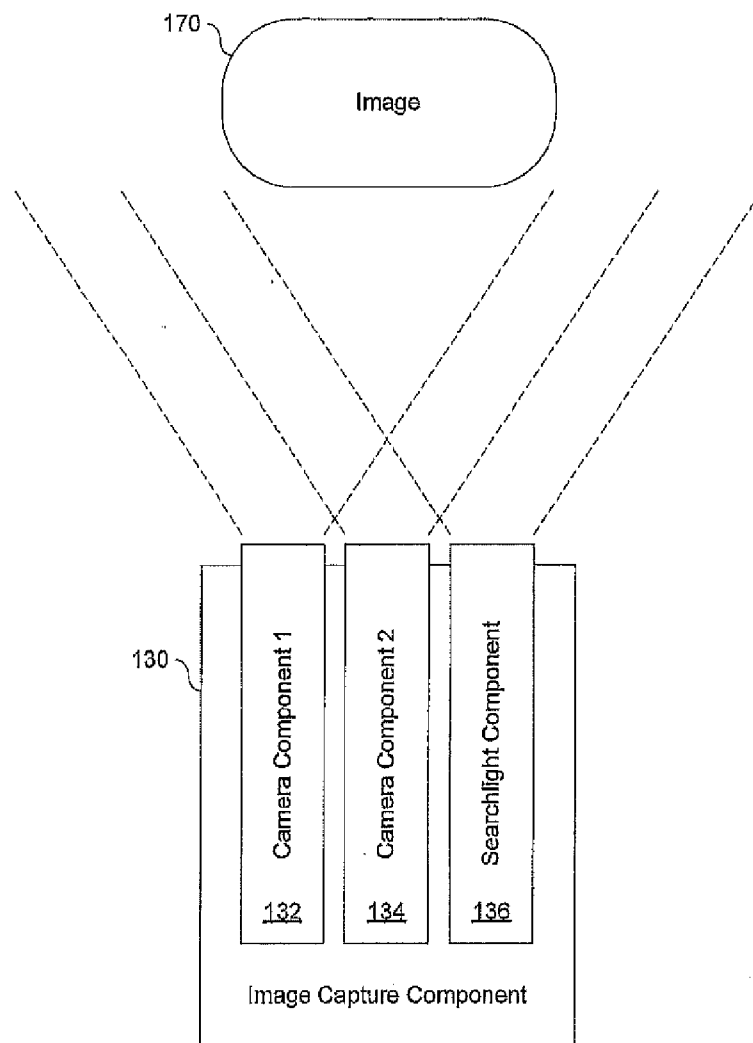


Fig. 6

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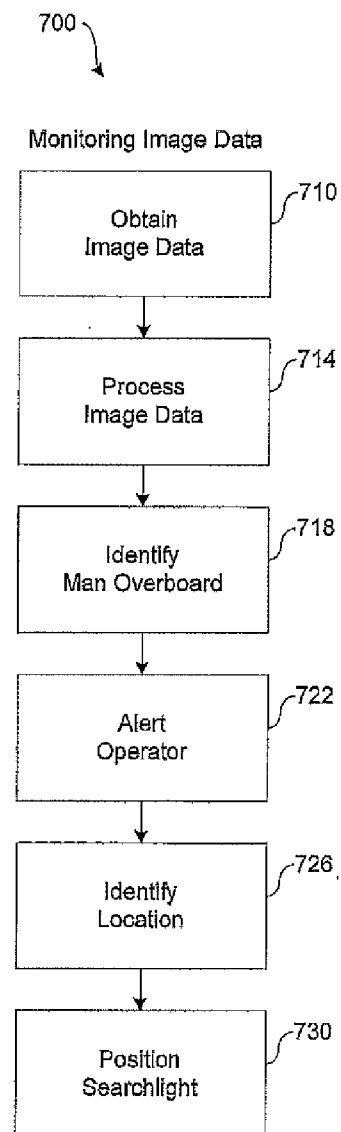


Fig. 7

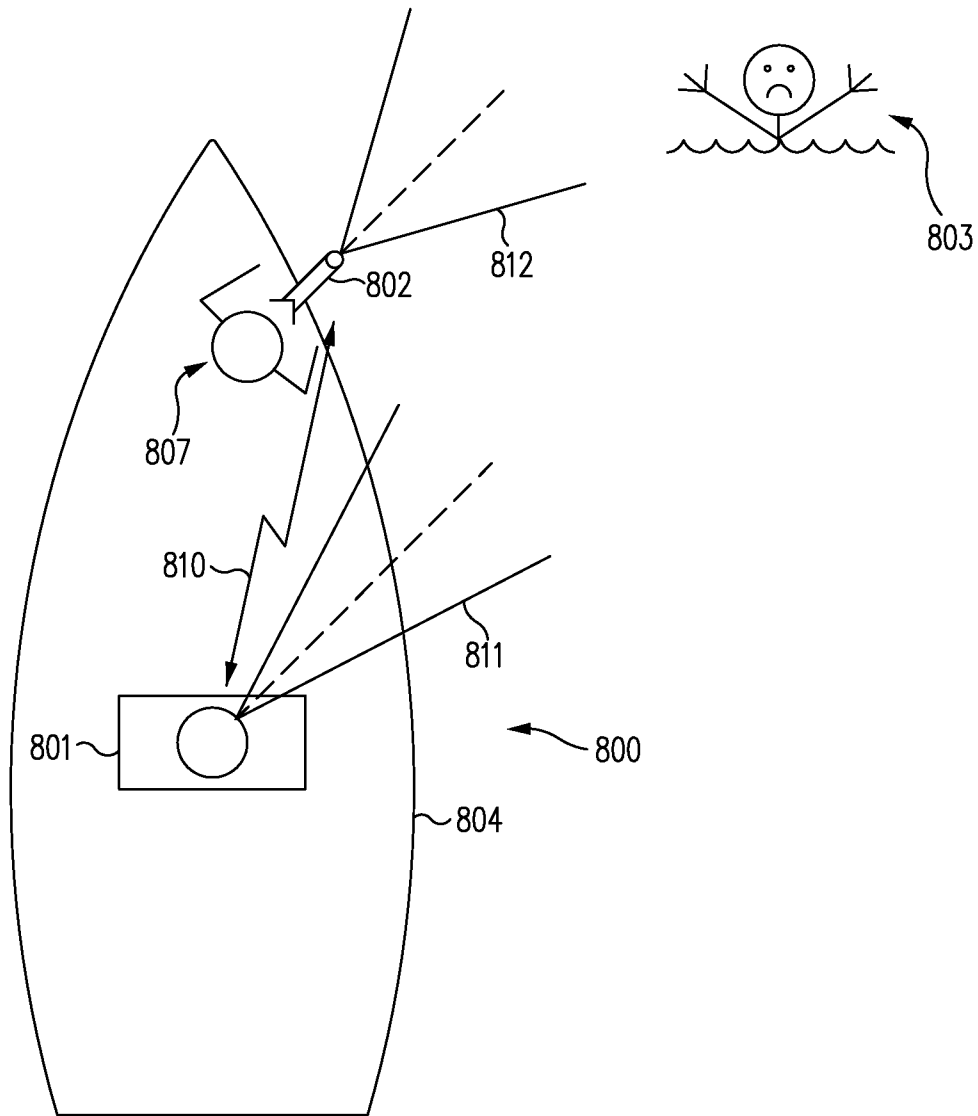


FIG. 8

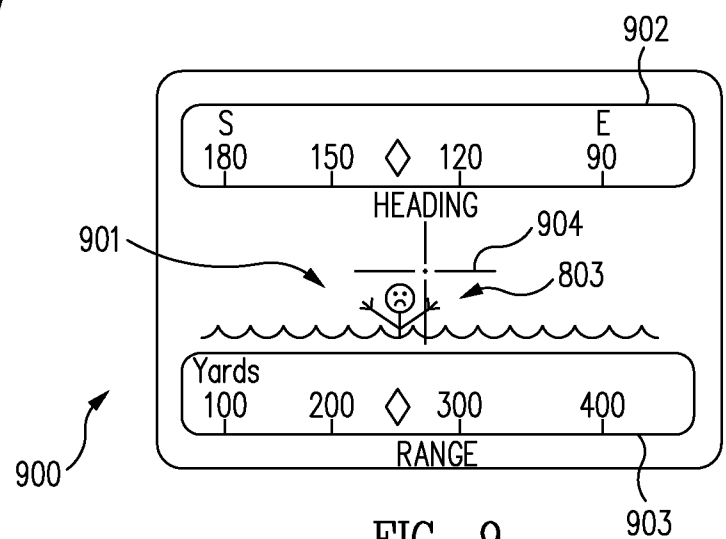


FIG. 9

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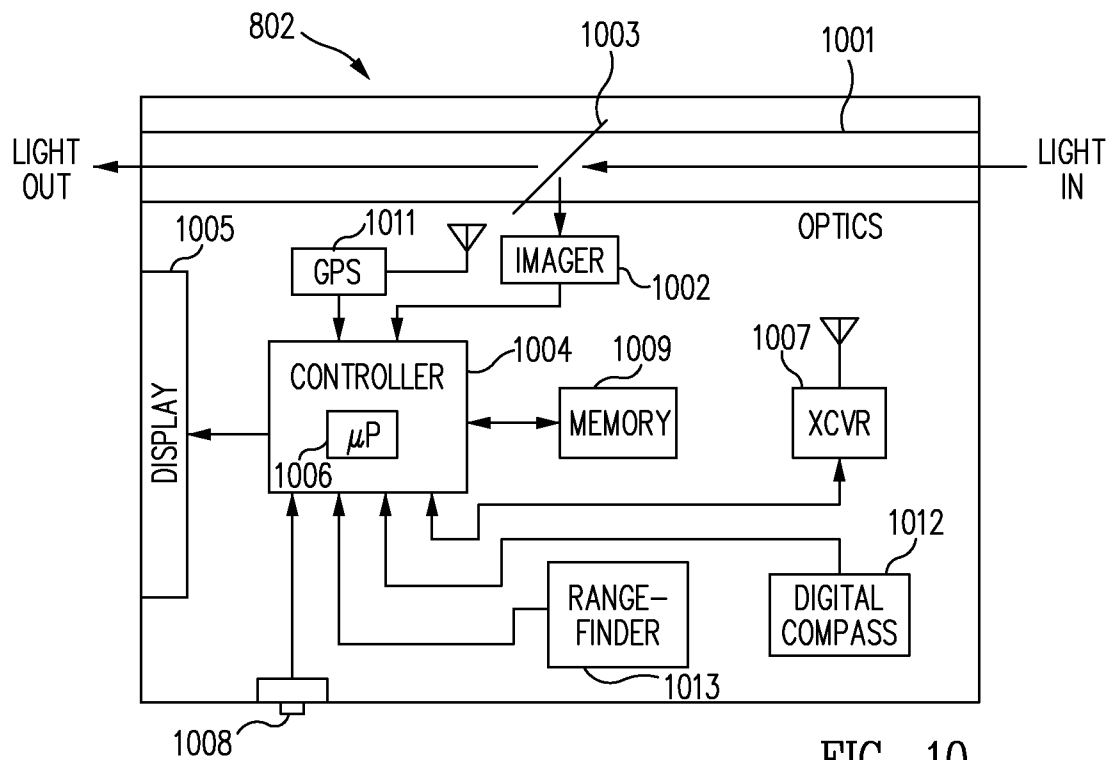


FIG. 10

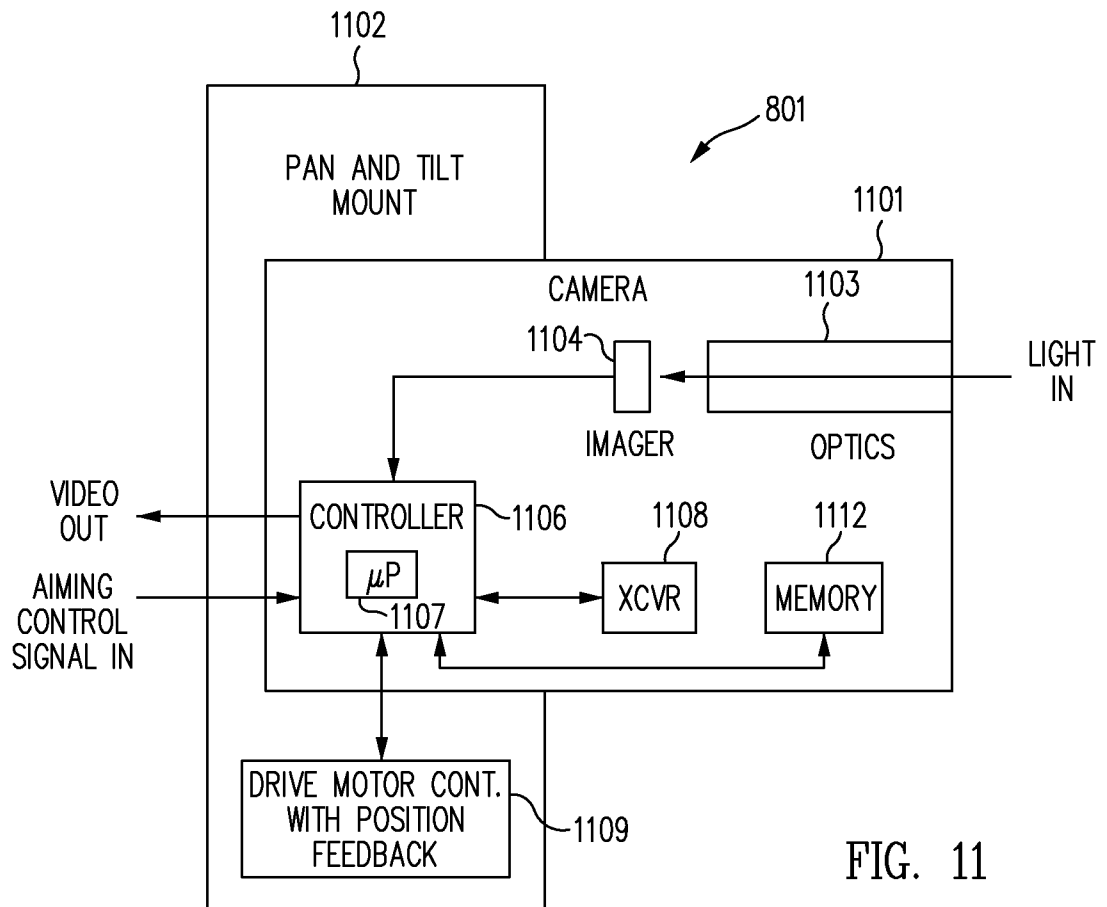


FIG. 11

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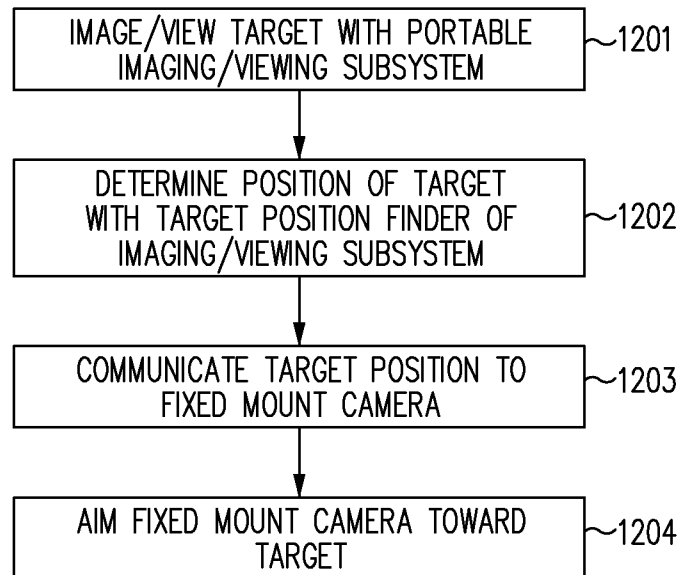


FIG. 12

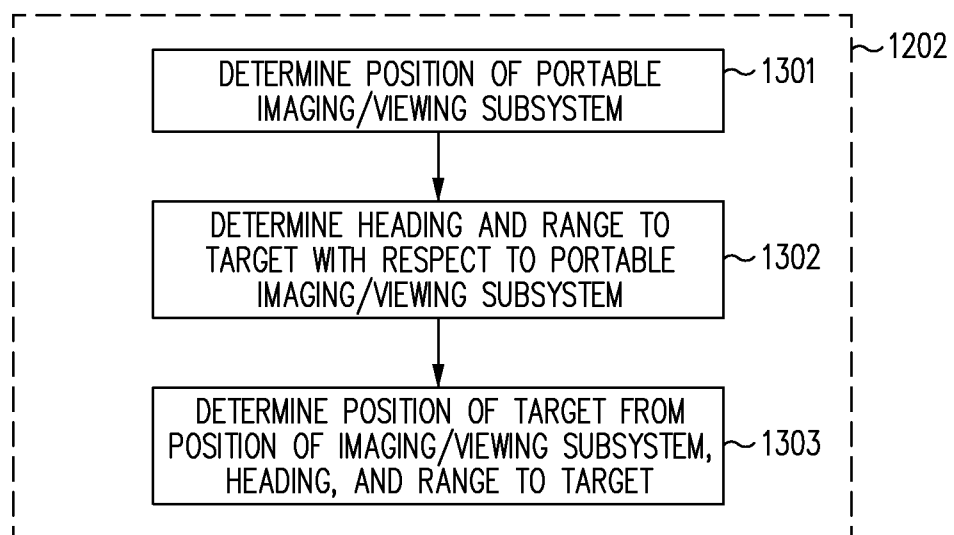


FIG. 13

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/US2012/032937

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. H04N5/232 G08B13/196
ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

H04N G08B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EP0-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2007/039030 A1 (ROMANOWICH JOHN F [US] ET AL) 15 February 2007 (2007-02-15)	8,10-12, 14-17, 19,20
Y	abstract paragraph [0012] - paragraph [0015] paragraph [0057] - paragraph [0103]; figures 3-8	1-7,9, 13,18
Y	----- WO 2010/141772 A1 (FLIR SYSTEMS [US]; HOGASTEN NICHOLAS [US]; SCOTT JEFFREY S [US]; RICHA) 9 December 2010 (2010-12-09) figures 1F,2-8	9,13,18
Y	----- US 2006/136972 A1 (METZGER RAYMOND [US] ET AL) 22 June 2006 (2006-06-22)	1,2
A	paragraph [0049] - paragraph [0051]; figure 4	3-20
	----- -/-	



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

29 June 2012

Date of mailing of the international search report

11/07/2012

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
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Authorized officer

Bakstein, Hynek

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2012/032937

C(Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	Hunter research and technology: "Theodolite iPhone App", 29 October 2010 (2010-10-29), XP002678903, Retrieved from the Internet: URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20101029194748/http://www.hrtapps.com/theodolite/ [retrieved on 2012-06-28] the whole document -----	3-7
A	DE 10 2004 034663 A1 (SIEMENS AG [DE]) 9 February 2006 (2006-02-09) the whole document -----	1-20

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No
PCT/US2012/032937

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 2007039030	A1	15-02-2007	NONE

WO 2010141772	A1	09-12-2010	CN 102461156 A 16-05-2012
			EP 2438754 A1 11-04-2012
			KR 20120038431 A 23-04-2012
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DE 102004034663	A1	09-02-2006	CN 101023669 A 22-08-2007
			DE 102004034663 A1 09-02-2006
			EP 1769638 A1 04-04-2007
			WO 2006032552 A1 30-03-2006
