(54) Title: ELECTRICAL CONNECTOR CONFIGURED AS A FASTENING ELEMENT

SMART CONNECTORIZED POUCH (SCP)

WEARABLE CONNECTOR

WEARABLE CONNECTOR

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to a connector configured as a fastening element. Some embodiments are in the form of a wearable "smart" electrical connector and associated connector system in the form of a modular network, which for the first time integrates electronics into protective clothing in a body-conformable and comfortable fashion. It has these unique features: wearability compatible with existing and future military/civilian vests/uniforms; a button-like snap-fastener that can be snapped and unsnapped "blindly" with one hand; and resilience to harsh temperature/humidity, chemicals, water and laundering. Another embodiment is employed in a carton-centric system to indicate tampering with the carton during transit.
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ELECTRICAL CONNECTOR CONFIGURED AS A FASTENING ELEMENT

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a connector configured as a fastening element. Some embodiments are in the form of a wearable "smart" electrical connector and associated connector system in the form of a modular network, which for the first time integrates electronics into protective clothing in a body-conformable and comfortable fashion. It has these unique features: wearability compatible with existing and future military/civilian vests/uniforms; a button-like snap-fastener that can be snapped and unsnapped "blindly" with one hand; and resilience to harsh temperature/humidity, chemicals, water and laundering. Another embodiment is employed in a carton-centric system to indicate tampering with the carton during transit.
BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Electronic devices are being miniaturized for personal use, but no comprehensive connector technology exists to integrate them into clothing in order to integrate electronics into clothing in a body-conformable and comfortable fashion. The present invention comprises a wearable connector element and interconnects for it, satisfying the need for body-conformability/comfort, specific environmental stability (to harsh weather and laundering) and mission-specificity, as well as a real-world architecture for military and non-military garments.

There is a need for a secure system to ensure that the integrity of a shipping carton within an intermodal shipping container (International Standards Organization) has not been compromised during shipment. Current carton security systems do not meet homeland security needs and require bulky electronics and specialized shipping cartons with hard cases and traditional switch-activated intrusion alarm systems.
SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention comprises an entirely wearable electrical connector for power/data connectivity. The principal element of the network is the wearable electrical connector, which is integrated into a personal area network (PAN) with USB compatibility. In general, the network layered architecture corresponds to four Open Systems Interconnect (OSI) layers: physical layer-1; data link layer-2 (intra-PAN); network layer-3 (inter-PAN); and application layer-4 interface. Our effort focused on layer-1 (connector and interconnects), and intra-PAN layer-2.

Progressively more mature wearable connector prototypes were developed. The first, an O-ring based prototype, was subsequently replaced by a more mature second prototype, which is based on a novel anisotropic pressure sensitive conductive elastomer. Both are snap-style, low-profile, 360°-moving, round, blind operable, plug-and-play, reconfigurable wearable connectors with power/data daisy-lattice-style connectivity. A third embodiment comprises a non-conductive elastomeric environmental seal. A fourth embodiment utilizes a self-actioning, automatic shutter-type environmental seal. A fifth embodiment reduces the dimensions of the connector to that of a conventional snap fastener commonly used on clothing and employs an iris-like sealing mechanism.

The basic wearable connector specifications are:

- USB 2 compatible (480 Mbps)
- Human body conformable and comfortable
- One-hand, blind operable (360° rotational symmetry)
- Durable, rugged (low-profile, button-like shape)
  and easy to operate (snap style)
- Operable at temperatures from -65°C to +125°C
- Environmentally resistant (functions under chemically contaminated conditions)
• Low-cost, mass-producible (off-the-shelf common materials)
• Multi-operational, reconfigurable smart connector that can self-terminate; performs automatic routing; self-diagnose, and identify connected devices; and automatically adjust to power requirement.

The wearable connector, network connectivity, and a personal area GPS/medical network on a military-style vest have been demonstrated, including the following features:

• Snap fastener capable of interfacing (through the invention's network hub) a medical heart rate monitor into the USB network
• GPS device and a PDA connected via wearable snap fasteners into the personal area network
• Integration with a ribbon-style USB narrow fabric cable sewn into seams
• Wireless system communication via an 802.11b card in the PDA to display the location and heart rate of the wearer.

The present invention represents the first fully functional wearable connector, with three major unique features: wearability and compatibility with conformability to existing and future military/civilian vests/uniforms; snap-fastener button-like style, so that it can be snapped and unsnapped "blindly" with one hand; mechanical stability and resilience not only in standard environments of temperature and humidity, but also to aggressive chemicals, water and laundering.

The present technology will also benefit many outside the military, especially public safety personnel such as police, fire, EMT and other services that require special protective clothing integrated with multiple electronic devices. Other applications include special clothing for the disabled,
prisoners, the mentally ill and children. Outdoor computer-game commercial applications are also obvious candidates to benefit from the disclosed technology. These wearable connector technology can be both retrofitted into existing designs of protective clothing and added to new uniform/vest designs.

The wearable connector of the invention is also disclosed herein in an embodiment suitable for use in ensuring the integrity of cartons in shipping containers. A connector of the present invention is used in conjunction with a conductive ink "smart-skin" distributed throughout the carton surface and terminating at the connector which, in effect, closes the circuit formed by the paths of conductive ink. The connector is only about one centimeter in diameter in the preferred embodiment for this application. Nevertheless, it is designed to contain two Wheatstone bridges, a battery, an alarm latch and an RFID device to communicate a binary alarm signal to the outside world (i.e., shipping container RFID device).
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The aforementioned objects and advantages of the present invention, as well as additional objects and advantages thereof, will be more fully understood herein after as a result of a detailed description of a preferred embodiment when taken in conjunction with the following drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a series of three-dimensional views of the male and female connectors of a first embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 2 is a photograph of various female connector PCB configurations of the first embodiment;

FIG. 3 is an illustration of the fabric/female connector interface;

FIG. 4 is an illustration of the various components of the male connector of the first embodiment;

FIG. 5 illustrates the pins of the male connector;

FIG. 6, comprising FIG. 6(a) and FIG. 6(b), are illustrations of the first embodiment female and male connector/cable interfaces;

FIG. 7, comprising FIG. 7(a) and FIG. 7(b), are illustrations of the second embodiment female and male connector/cable interfaces;

FIG. 8, comprising FIGs. 8(a), 8(b), 8(c) and 8(d), illustrate four alternative female connector/cable interfaces for one-way, two-way, three-way and four-way interconnections;

FIG. 9 is a schematic representation of a wearable connector according to a second embodiment shown in its non-conducting condition;
FIG. 10 is a schematic representation similar to FIG. 9, but shown in its conducting condition;

FIG. 11, comprising FIGs. 11(a) and 11(b), illustrates details of the wearable connector of the second embodiment;

FIG. 12 is an illustration of various possible connector configurations using the present invention;

FIG. 13 is an illustration of a connector printed circuit board (PCB) having such features as an electronic serial number integrated circuit to uniquely identify the connector;

FIG. 14 is a photograph of a wireless camera having a male connector integral thereto;

FIG. 15 is a photograph showing a number of haptic actuators affixed to strategic locations on a garment to provide the wearer with directional information that he or she can feel;

FIG. 16 is an illustration of a wearable connector embodiment having a micro-coax plug for high bandwidth signals;

FIGs. 17-19 are illustrations of a wearable connector having an X-SNAP pin sealing feature;

FIGs. 20-22 are illustrations of an alternative pin sealing technique using a curable silicone rubber compound;

FIGs. 23-25 illustrate a wearable connector that is the size of a conventional snap fastener commonly used on clothing;

FIG. 26 illustrates a pouch having a wearable connector therein;
FIG. 27 is a schematic drawing of a full body network facilitated by the wearable connector of the invention, and

FIG. 28 is a schematic representation of the architectural relationships among four security layers relating to the carton-centric embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 29 illustrates the various security layers of FIG. 28 including the SPIDER carton body of the invention;

FIG. 30, comprising FIGs. 30 (a) and 30 (b), shows photographs of a carton skin undamaged and damaged, respectively, with a conductive ink skin network;

FIG. 31 is a schematic diagram of the conductive ink paths (CIPs);

FIG. 32, comprising FIGs. 32 (a), 32 (b) and 32 (c), shows a damaged CIP including (a) an overview, (b) top view, and (c) differential element; and

FIG. 33 is a schematic drawing of a Wheatstone bridge configuration used for smart skin monitoring.
WEARABLE CONNECTOR EMBODIMENTS

The electrical connector chosen for modular network is the wearable connector (see FIG. 1). This connector is the result of several design and test iterations. The robust wearable electrical connector is capable of delivering both electrical power and electrical signals to devices connected to the body conformable network.

This connector is the first "truly blind" electrical connector developed for the wearable environment. The wearable snap connector can be engaged reliably in total darkness, using only one bare or gloved hand and in one simple movement. The wearable snap connector does not have to be meticulously aligned before mating. In fact, it has full 360° freedom in one plane (see FIG. 2).

Mating the male and female halves of the wearable connector is simple and intuitive. Everyone is familiar with clothing in which snaps join segments of fabric. The wearable connector is simpler than zippers, which often require the use of two hands (or visual alignment). The snaps can be mated with only one hand and without the need for visual alignment. The inventive snap connector is identical to a traditional garment snap in the operational sense. No special training or skills are needed by personnel wearing modular network garments in order to attach or detach electrical devices.

The wearable snap connector has a low-profile, symmetrical (round) design, which can be easily integrated into existing garments (see FIG. 3). The housing of the wearable snap connector can be riveted or sewn into garments, much as traditional snaps are currently affixed.
These styles of attachment give the wearable snap connector excellent protection against the rigors of wear and laundering. The electrical contacts of the wearable snap connector are protected against the elements, and dry and liquid contaminants such as perspiration, dirt, water, oil, solvents, laundry detergent and the like, such as by an O-ring (a torus-shaped mechanical component manufactured from an elastomeric material) seal. O-rings seal by deforming to the geometry of the cavity, called a gland, to which they are fitted. The O-ring is then compressed during the fastening process to form a tight environmental seal. In one embodiment of wearable snap connector, the radial seal around the circumference of the electrical connectors is formed by machining the circular gland near the outer rim of the connector body (see FIG. 4). The O-rings are 2% oversized for a robust interference fit within the gland.

Considerations in the design of this environmental seal include size and shape of the gland, the size and shape of the O-ring (inner diameter, minimum cross-section diameter, maximum cross-section diameter, cross-section tolerance, minimum compression and maximum compression), and the material from which it is to be manufactured. Various elastomers may be utilized to form the O-ring, based upon their physical durability, resistance to solvents and other chemicals, and their temperature range. Silicone rubber was selected for the experimental prototype.

The wearable snap connector terminates the wearable electrical cable, which forms the backbone of the body-conformable network. This termination connection was made by soldering. Other methods such as insulation displacement connection may be employed.

The wearable snap connector pin contacts are spring-loaded and self-wiping (see FIG. 5). Being compression-spring-loaded, the wearable snap connector contact pins compensate for vibration, twisting, and turning of the connector, keeping a constant pressure between the metallic contact surfaces within the two halves of the snap connector. Mill-Max Manufacturing Corporation in Oyster Bay, New York manufactures the spring-loaded pins.
with a minimum life of 100,000 cycles that were utilized to fabricate the prototype snap fastener connectors. Additional specifications of these contact spring-loaded pins are presented in FIG. 5.

The oxides that can form on the surface of metallic contacts are wiped away by the mating action of the two halves of the snap connector. This action extends the time between manual contact cleanings and may even eliminate the need for such operations in some environments.

The connectors may be radio frequency interference (RFI) and electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielded, as may the wearable cabling backbone. Decoupling capacitors and (optionally) metal-oxide varistors (MOVs) can reduce and/or eliminate disruptive electrical noise and harmful electrical spikes at the connection points.

**NETWORK PERFORMANCE**

The network is capable of carrying various types of electrical signals in addition to power. The electrical signal specifications listed in Table 2-1 are representative of the type of electrical signals that the invention is capable of transporting. This list is not all-inclusive.

**TABLE 2-1 EXAMPLES OF ELECTRICAL SIGNALING METHODS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNAL</th>
<th>TYPICAL BANDWIDTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethernet</td>
<td>10 Mbps - 100 Mbps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USB 2.0</td>
<td>480 Mbps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS-170/343</td>
<td>4.5 MHz (RS-170A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEEE 1394 (FireWire)</td>
<td>400 Mbps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS-232 (C, D, and E)</td>
<td>115 kbps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEEE 1284</td>
<td>3Mbps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From these, we selected the Universal Serial Bus (USB) version 2.0 specification to be used for the prototypes for both its high data rate and its compatibility with wearable data cabling. USB 2.0 480 Mbps capability is essential for high bandwidth visual communication, such as 2.5 G and 3G RF wireless/cellular and to transmit even VGA video (740 x 480, 24 bpp, 30 fps). One USB connector can support up to 127 USB devices, such as sensors, digital cameras, cell phones, GPS and PDAs (personal digital assistants). The need to connect to a PC is completely eliminated. For example, a digital camera could transfer pictures directly to a printer, a PDA or microdisplay, and become in effect a miniature PC. The USB protocol supports intelligence to tell the host what type of USB device is being attached and what needs to be done to support it. USB (among other features):

- Is hot-pluggable (new attachment/detachment automatically detected)
- Performs error detection and recovery
- Supports four types of transfer (bulk, isochronous, interrupt, control).

In the near future, efforts in the 802.15a (ultrawideband) area will lead to a USB 2.0-compliant wireless interface. For now, only 802.15.3a as been defined for USB.

An enhancement to the wearable connector includes OSI Layer 2 (and potentially Layer 3) functionality. We call this enhancement the Smart Self-Contained Network-enabled Apparel-integrated multi-Protocol Snap connector enhancement.

Data Link layer functionality is supported by including electronic serial numbers at the wearable snap-connector points. These points serve as node connection points at Layer 2. Electronic serial numbers will serve as Media Access Control (MAC) addresses, identifying devices attached anywhere within the network. This can serve not only to notify the network of
a device being connected and disconnected, but can also maintain a dynamic
inventory of all modules attached to a network-enabled garment. Since both
halves of the wearable connector will have such MAC addresses, even non-
network-aware modules such as batteries or analog sensors can be identified
for inventory and automatic configuration purposes. This also allows for the
assignment of a Layer 3 address (such as an Internet Protocol (IP) address)
to a personal area network (PAN) on a network-enabled garment even when
no other electronic devices are attached to any network nodes. This can
locate, inventory and address each individual PAN within a local area network
(LAN) or within a wide area network (WAN).

In a second embodiment, the O-ring is replaced with a conductive
elastomer-based sealing mechanism, which seals not only when mated but
also when unmated.

The invention also comprises the integration of the wearable snap
connector with narrow fabric electrical cable conduits and their embedded
conductors (see FIG. 6). We enhanced self-sealing capability by connector redesign.

Reflow soldering connects the individual wires from the narrow fabric
cable to the interconnect contact pads on the PCBs in the snap connector as
shown in FIG. 7.

Although one can manufacture woven e-textile cables, the connector
is designed to fully integrate with existing narrow fabric cables in various
configurations, accommodating the existing form factor and electrical
specifications, as shown in FIG. 8. The female connector configuration can
be varied to increase the degrees of freedom in the interconnectivity of
devices within the network.

One can easily apply the highway analogy to the multiple
configurations possible for the female portion of the wearable
connector/cabling subsystem. Sometimes only a "dead-end" road is
necessary, like the "one-way" female cable. In this case, the connector-
terminated narrow fabric can be used for garment-to-device connection, or
garment-to-garment connection. At other times, a through road is desirable.
We want our vehicles (power and data packets) to be able to keep on going,
but we also want to allow the flexibility to exit or enter the road before it ends,
somewhere in the middle. The two-way connector satisfies this need. Still, at
other times we need to exit (or enter) a highway junction from many
directions. The three-way and four-way interconnects allow us to do just that.
Like a highway interchange, they allow power and data to flow in multiple
directions within the network, yet also allow data and power to enter or exit at
the nexus of this "super-junction." The narrow fabric interconnects to the
garment essentially become data superhighways, which can distribute data
and power to all parts of the garment reliably and elegantly in a body-
conformable configuration.

Male wearable connectors can also be in a stand-alone
configuration. Instead of terminating a narrow fabric cable that leads
elsewhere, they may go nowhere. A chemical, biological, physiological or
environmental sensor or other device such as a haptic-feedback stimulator
(see FIG. 15) or emergency beacon can be integrated within one male
connector. Such a microelectronic device can be housed in its entirety on the
male connector, so that one can electrically connect and mechanically
mount a miniature electronic or electromechanical device such as a sensor,
stimulator or beacon in one step, simply by snapping it on. FIG. 14 shows a
small video camera that has a male connector built in.

In the second embodiment of the invention an anisotropic conductive
rubber layer conducts electricity unidirectionally, always in the vertical or Z-
axis. The directional conductivity results from relatively low volume loading of
conductive filler. The low volume loading, which is insufficient for interparticle
contact, prevents conductivity in the plane (X and Y axes) of the rubber sheet.
This conductive rubber layer is placed between the substrates or surfaces to
be electrically connected, in this case, the male and female PCB electrical
contact surfaces (see FIG. 9).
Application of pressure (in the vertical direction) to this stack causes conductive particles to be trapped between opposing conductors on the two halves of the connector (see FIG. 10). This rubber matrix stabilizes the electrical connection mechanically, which helps maintain the electrical contact between the PCB conductors and the conductive particles suspended in the rubber sheet. It both acts as a "contact spring", eliminating costly compression springs on each individual male contact pin and protects against both contact "bounce" during connection and momentary contact interruptions from vibration after mating. Anisotropic conductive products are now being used to connect flat panel displays and other fine-pitch electronic devices. Another characteristic inherent in the rubber matrix is the hydrophobicity of the rubber matrix, making it intrinsically water/moistureproof, a significant asset for the inventive connector.

Benefits of anisotropic conductive rubber layer are:

- Compatibility with a wide range of surfaces and intrinsic hydrophobicity (moisture resistance)
- Low-temperature process; low thermal stress during processing
- Low thermomechanical fatigue; good temperature cycling performance
- No significant release of volatile organic compounds
- No lead or other toxic metals
- Wide processing latitude; easy process control and fine-pitch capability.

Anisotropic conductive rubber comprising a rubber base compound and suspended conductive particles supports electrical contact between the conductive areas. The conductive rubber can be applied as a top surface layer in the connector (see FIG. 11). The composition of the rubber compound can control the overall hardness of the conductive rubber layer.
The rubber compound is made of room temperature cured rubber, accelerants and precision silver-coated glass microspheres. We have experimented with different ratios of silver-coated glass microspheres and rubber compounds to optimize conductivity.

Regardless of the ultimate source, the conductive rubber sheet will not only form an environmental seal for the connector contacts, protecting them from moisture, dirt, abrasion, solvents and other contaminants, but by reducing oxidation and fretting, will also extend the lifetime (number of usable mating and demating cycles).

The exact hardness of the conductive rubber layer will be determined by the strength of the torsion spring that keeps the male and female halves of the wearable connector mated. A 60 A shore durometer hardness was required for the prototype. Manufacture and installation of the conductive rubber sheets is simple and not expensive. One may design a nonconductive support structure for the conductive rubber sheeting, similar to the function of rebar in concrete structures, to further strengthen the conductive rubber sheet by reducing friability and wear from repeated compression and decompression cycles.

The invention's power and data network is formed by integrating wearable connectors and e-textile cabling. This new network can be dynamically reconfigured by daisy chaining individual snap connectors with e-textile cable segments (see FIG. 12).

A network can be detached easily (from the garment) because each wearable connector can be attached only by snaps rather than being permanently affixed. Some of the major advantages of this removable arrangement are:

- Existing garments can be retrofitted without major redesign.
- The location is no longer limited to the vest; for example, it can be on pants.
- The design affords unlimited function-oriented reconfigurability.
- It can be completely removed from the garment:
  - For laundering
  - For shipment
  - For repair.

General fabrication methodology comprises the following basic steps:

- Each snap connector is attached to the end of a piece of fabric with enclosed electric cable.
- Reflow soldering bonds the circuits to the contact pads on each PCB, and strain relief secures the cable to the connector.
- The inventive connector's conductive rubber gasket is manufactured by conventional mechanical die punch technology.
- The fasteners and torsion springs are purchased as off-the-shelf items in quantities sufficient to keep costs low.
- The snap connector PCBs are made by established fabrication houses that ensure cost effective production with fast turnaround.
- The eyelet and strain relief covers for both the female and male snap connectors are injection molded.
- Both the socket (male connector) and stud (female connector) are produced by metal injection molding.
- Metal injection molding applies plastic injection
molding techniques to economically produce complex shapes, yet delivers the near-full density and properties of standard steels and other alloys.

FIG. 16 illustrates an alternative connector embodiment comprising at least one coaxial connection for high bandwidth applications. The female portion is shown in FIG. 16 to include a coax PCB which accommodates a coax plug as well as a plurality of contact pins. The corresponding male portion has a mating coax plug in addition to a PCB having conductive paths to engage the pins. In all other respects, the connector of FIG. 16 is consistent with the connector of FIGs. 6 and 7.

FIGs. 17 through 22 illustrate alternative embodiments for sealing connector components against the environment. FIGs. 17 to 19 show the use of an X-shaped shutter and attendant torsion spring in the female portion and an X-shaped shutter and attendant torsion spring in the female portion and an X-shaped PCB in the male portion. When the mating portions are demated, the torsion spring causes the shutter plate to automatically rotate into a position which seals the pin contacts in the female portion to prevent their contamination. FIGs. 20 to 22 illustrate another pin sealing technique. A silicone rubber compound is poured in a liquid state into the stud of the female portion up to the top of the pins and cured into a hardened state leaving only the axial ends of the pins exposed as shown in FIG. 21 and in FIG. 22. The silicon rubber can be shaped so that a flap is formed above the axial end of each pin which seals the end when the connector is demated, but permits the ends to extend through the flaps when the connector is mated.

FIGs. 23 to 25 illustrate the fifth version of the invention, which is the smallest wearable connector currently developed. As seen in FIG. 25, this embodiment (even with a center coax plug) is a little greater in diameter than the diameter of a U.S. dime. It is configured to have the same appearance, tactile feel and function of a conventional fabric snap fastener as shown in FIG. 23. FIG. 24 illustrates the individual components of the male and female connector of this fifth embodiment.
FIG. 26 shows a Smart Connectorized Pouch. The garment pouch is suitably sized for receiving an electronic device and having a wearable connector at the end of a short length of fabric ribbon within the pouch. The connector attaches to the device held in the pouch thereby providing both electrical interface and mechanical support. In some cases, where the electrical device has a proprietary connector, an intermediate cable (universal interface) can be provided with appropriate wire and signal protocol interfaces to convert the type of connection.

FIG. 27 is a schematic illustration of front and rear views of a typical full body network using wearable connectors and conductive paths to integrate a variety of components. Included devices in this illustrative example are a GPS system, camera, CPU, battery and power supply, locator beacon, antenna, head-mounted display, chemical agent sensor, wireless transceiver, PDA, radio, modem, laser rangefinder, heart rate sensor, infrared sensor, directional locating device, acoustic sensor and haptic feedback actuator.

CARTON SECURITY EMBODIMENT

A "carton-centric" system, called Secure Parcel ISO Distributed Enhanced RFID (SPIDER), will enhance the Advanced Container Security Device and radio frequency identification (ACSD and RFID tag) technologies and can be retrofitted to existing shipping cartons and/or parcels, including those consisting of boxboard or corrugated cardboard, and is flexible enough to be integrated with all future secure shipping carton technologies. FIG. 28 illustrates the architectural relationships among the proposed security layers — SL-1, SL-2, SL-3, and SL-4. We see that the physical skin arming and monitoring intra-carton SL-1 is entirely all-carton-centric.
The Turn-key Alarm and Reporting System (TARS) SL-2 is RFID/ACSD-compatible, including local communication between carton RFID tags and the ISO container ACSD. It is inter-carton and intra-ACSD, for one-bit alarming within the ACSD in the event of either disarming or tampering with the carton. The removal or destruction of the TARS electronics will be detected and indicated with an alarm by the ISO container's RFID/ACSD system, as will disarming the SL-2 itself, irrespective of whether or not the disarming was authorized. After this, the system can be rearmed and used again. The SL-2 TARS will be packaged within a unique Smart Connector/Interface/Armor (SCIA), based on the above disclosed wearable connector technology. It can be integrated with carton-based RFIDs.

The major advantage of the SPIDER system is that its smart skin, or SL-1, is implanted inside the carton body, in an integrated and concealed way (see FIG. 29), and is easy to mass-produce. The smart skin consists of a thin five-layer sandwich: a protective outer layer, a layer imprinted with parallel conductive ink traces, an insulating layer, a layer imprinted with conductive ink traces perpendicular to those in the second layer, and a final inner protective layer. This is in contrast to the wires in the security systems of Wal-Mart, Target, and others, which must be mechanically damaged to sound an alarm. When the SPIDER web (skin) is damaged even slightly (by breaking a single path, which is unavoidable in even slight tampering, similar to tearing cloth); the SL-1 sets off what is, in effect, a silent alarm.

The SPIDER carton-centric security system uniquely combines a low-cost version of ruggedized inventive connector technology; and a novel carton security system arming/monitoring/local communication RF electronics. The SPIDER system is depicted in FIG. 29. The SPIDER system will fully meet the homeland security need to autonomously seal, secure, and monitor the integrity of shipping cartons/parcels below the ISO intermodal shipping container level. The SPIDER system will seal the contents of a shipping carton within a "smart skin/wrapper," which physically surrounds the contents, monitors the physical integrity of the shipping carton and detects any intrusion
into the carton, providing notification of violation of the carton or tampering with the SPIDER security system, including alteration (addition/subtraction/replacement) of the carton contents, or even theft or unauthorized removal of the entire carton (or addition of an unauthorized one) being monitored/protected by SPIDER. The SPIDER system will ensure complete end-to-end shipping carton/parcel integrity verification, with no specialized knowledge or training required of any of the shipping and receiving personnel (i.e. "turn-key" activation/arming and monitoring). Any penetration of the SPIDER smart skin/wraper or tampering with the TARS electronics (including the embedded RFID technology) will be immediately detected and indicated by the security violation alarm latched into the TARS electronics in a tamperproof fashion. The RFID scanner to interrogate the TARS and report carton status can be located outside the ISO shipping container (e.g., handheld, loading dock mounted, truck mounted).

The SPIDER smart skin carton-lining subsystem will be fabricated from thin sheets of slightly elastomeric plastic material as a substrate to support a two-dimensional (2D) matrix of electrically resistive conductive ink "wires", forming an "electrical cage" around the carton's contents. This electrically active part will be surrounded on both sides by a thin dielectric layer to protect against the environment. This 2D smart matrix subsystem will be fabricated in two versions: flexible (as "e-paper"), and rigid (as "e-boxboard"), to protect both cartons and parcels. The "smart skin" matrix will be monitored by electronics, which will be embedded in the inventive snap-fastener connector, which can be operated blind and single-handed, and will be used to close the loop of the smart skin electrical cage around the carton's contents, engage and arm the TARS alarm system, and report the carton's integrity to an ACSD or to an external RFID scanner via an electronic one-bit-alarm system (SL-2) embedded into the TARS connector. For detection of tampering, the smart skin 2D net will be constructed of <5 mm square cells forming a 2D matrix of conductive ink paths (CIPs), with 1-3 mil (75 μm) x 500 μm rectangular cross sections. The CIP material is carbon-derivative with controlled density, so that the specific resistance can be adjusted to tune the 1 μW total power consumption with 5 s pulses; this
enables the system to operate on low-cost minibatteries within the connector, which resembles a small button (~18 mm in diameter) or a clothing snap-fastener.

It should be emphasized that typical electrical resistive wires are unsuitable because of their poor mechanical stability and low smart skin conformability. The CIP approach used in SPIDER does not share these deficiencies and instead has the following unique advantages: a) High mechanical stability; b) Tunable electrical resistivity; c) "Binary" response; d) Transmittivity under X-ray inspection (if needed); and e) High mass-productability.

While the first two advantages are rather apparent, the third, explained in detail hereinafter, is due to the fact that unless the CIP is completely broken, its resistance preserves nearly its original value. Therefore, the electrical response to a CIP breaking is almost binary. So a precise Wheatstone electrical bridge circuit ensures the sensitivity and stability to the TARS sensing electronics. The fourth advantage is due to the fact that the CIP carbon derivatives are virtually transparent to X-rays, in contrast to most metallic compounds. The fifth advantage is due to well-established low-cost mass-production web-imprinting for fabrication of the SPIDER smart skin.

The printed electrical cage (PEC) (See FIG. 30) is a critical aspect of SPIDER, protecting the carton against tampering. It consists of a square network of conductive paths, with very low baseline electrical currents that would be altered by tampering. This 2D net consists of two sandwiched nets. Consider one such 1D SPIDER net. It consists of a parallel set of uniformly distributed resistive paths, fabricated from carbon-based conductive ink paths (CIP). Consider such a CIP in the form of a rectangular-cross-section-bar, with length (L = 1 m), height (h = 75 µm), and width (W = 500 µm), illustrated in FIG. 31. Such a path is only 3 mil (75 µm) high, because it is
web-imprinted on a slightly elastic substrate for good stickiness. The process is similar to web-press printing, where the height of the ink is also quite low.

From FIG. 31, we have $RQ = pL/hw$, where $L = 1 \text{ m}$, $h = 75 \text{ \textmu m}$, and $w = 500 \text{ \textmu m}$, while $p$ is tuned to satisfy the electrical balance conditions; where $p$ is resistivity, or specific resistance, in $\Omega \text{ m}$. It is not easily achievable by other techniques such as metal wires. FIG. 31 is not to scale because: $L \gg w \gg h$. In our case, we assume $s = 5 \text{ mm}$ (it can be smaller if needed), and 200 CIPs cover the $1 \text{ m} \times 1 \text{ m}$ area.

The conductive path is also from conductive ink, but with much higher material density. In the case of 1D SPIDER net, the total resistance $R_X$, is $1/R_X = n/R_{Ij}$, or $R_X = R_{Ij}/n$, where $n = 200$, and total power consumption of a single CIP is assumed to be $1 \mu W$ to minimize power consumption; thus, for $v = 1 \text{ V}$,

$$P_X = \frac{u^2}{R_X}, \text{ and } R_X = \frac{u^2}{P_X} = \frac{(1 \text{ V})^2}{1 \mu \text{ W}} = 10^6 \Omega.$$ 

Thus, the specific resistance of the CIP, or its resistivity in $\Omega \text{ m}$, is $1.875 \times 10^{-3} \ \Omega$ which is five orders of magnitude higher than that of copper (for which $\rho_0 = 0.08 \ \text{m}$). Therefore, the tunability of CIP resistivity is very high, an extremely useful feature to minimize SPIDER power consumption, and maximize system sensitivity.
The major challenge for the PEC (Printed Electrical Cage) design is to minimize power consumption, and at the same time to maximize PEC sensitivity to tampering. For PEC purposes, the minimum tampering is breaking a single CIP, which will create the minimum current change $\Delta I$. The total 1D PEC current $I_x$, is $nI_0$, where $I_0 = \frac{u_0^2}{R_0}$, and $n=200$, with $u_0=1V$. Thus, $\Delta I$ is substituting by $(n - 1)$ for $(n)$, leading to: $\Delta I = I_0 = \sqrt{P_0 / R_0}$, where $P_0 = 1 \mu W$, and $R_0 = 10^6 \Omega$; thus, $\Delta I = 10^{-6}$ A, which is a reasonable value easy to achieve with a Wheatstone bridge as discussed below.

The electrical power consumption is also very low because the PEC signals are in 1 ms 200 $\mu W$ pulses, with an energy of $2 \times 10^{-7} J$, generated in 1 s periods (i.e., with a 1/1000 duty cycle). Since a year consists of ~315 million seconds, the total time of such pulses is 315,000 seconds per year, which yields only a 126 mWs energy consumption per year for two 1D SPIDER nets forming a single 1 m x 1 m 2D SPIDER net, which is extremely low power consumption even for mini-batteries (typical value: 100 mWh).

The SPIDER binary response is a rather unexpected feature for the CIP and PEC. This is because tampering reduces the CIP cross section by damaging the CIP, while the $R_0$ value remains almost unchanged. To show this, consider a partially damaged CIP as in FIG. 32.

According to FIG. 32(c), the resistance change in the damaged part A or B (A and B are identical) $\Delta R_0$ is

$$\Delta R_0 = \frac{\rho_x}{h} \int_{0}^{\Delta L/2} \frac{dx}{y} = \frac{\rho_x (\Delta L/2)}{h(w-a)} \ln \left( \frac{w}{a} \right)$$

where $y = z = ((w-a)/(\Delta L/2)) x + a$ and $\ln (...)$ is natural logarithm. Since $R_n = \frac{(\rho_x \times L)}{(w \times h)}$, the relative resistance charge for both A and B is, for $a \approx w,$
equal to \( \left( \frac{L}{L_a} \right)^{\left( \frac{w}{a} \right)} \). Assume that \( \Delta L/L = 10^{-3} \), for \( L = 1 \text{ m} \) and \( \Delta L = 1 \text{ mm} \). Then, in order to achieve a relative resistance change comparable with 0.1, the logarithm must be of the order of 100, which is possible only for extremely high \( (w/a) \) ratios. For example, for \( (w/a) = 10^9 \), the \( \ln 10^9 \) is only 21. Therefore, we conclude that unless the CIP is completely broken, its damaged resistance value is equal to \( R_0 \). This confirms the binary response of the CIP under tampering, which is a very useful feature for the SPIDER net, since the CIP resistance values are very tolerant of partial damage caused by careless packaging, poorly controlled fabrication, etc.

The SPIDER connector will close the circuit, arming the PEC system. This single-hand operable low-cost blind connector is specially configured for SPIDER purposes, including such components as two SPIDER Wheatstone bridges, a miniature battery, latching storage for alarm recording, and RFIDs to send a binary alarm signal to the container RFID. The SPIDER connector will have the form factor of a coin 1 cm in diameter and 3 mm in height, connected into the 2D SPIDER PEC net. Since the Wheatstone bridge balance condition is \( R_1R_3 = R_2R_4 \), we assume the particular case: \( R_1 = R_2 = R_3 = R_4 = R_x \), where \( R_x \) is the resistance of an undamaged 1D SPIDER net (FIG. 33). Then for the balanced bridge case, the total resistance \( R \) is equal to \( R_x \), and the power consumption of the bridge is four times that of the PEC, or 800 \( \mu W \); i.e., still very low because of the low duty-cycle electrical pulse voltage supply.

All of the SPIDER electronics except for the smart skin will be housed inside the electrical snap connector.

This snap connector functions as both the mechanical closure and the electrical arming mechanism. For SL-1 security, the increase in the total resistance of the smart-skin is measured by means of a sensitive "proportional balance" electronic circuit known as a Wheatstone bridge, as illustrated in FIG. 33.
This measurement configuration will enable the SPIDER to detect even small changes in the total resistance of the smart-skin with enough sensitivity to detect even a single violated trace in the smart-skin matrix. This is accomplished by placing the digital equivalent of a galvanometer across the bridge circuit, which is balanced (nulled) at the time of arming the SPIDER-protected carton (after it has been filled at the point of origin) by setting digital potentiometers to the values necessary to establish zero voltage across the middle of the bridge. After arming/balancing, any change in the resistance of the smart-skin will unbalance the Wheatstone bridge and produce a measurable voltage across the digital galvanometer, thereby activating an alarm condition, indicating that the smart-skin (and therefore the carton being protected) has been violated.

Level SL-2 security includes an RFID chip, the smart-skin sensing electronics, the alarm activation electronics, anti-static protection circuitry, the RFID interface electronics, and a button-cell battery such as an Eveready CR-1025. The electronics to perform this will be provided as an application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC) (or FPGA). The working prototype will use discrete surface-mount components and commercial off-the-shelf ASICs such as the S2C hybrid ASIC from CYPAK in Sweden, which includes a 13.56 MHz RFID interface on board the ASIC. ASICs such as these can be mounted "naked" for low component profile (0.25 mm) and low "real estate" (-1.0 cm²) on the SPIDER smart connector PCB and can operate from -200 to +400C.

For SL-3 security protection, SPIDER'S "delay generator" and associated communications electronics will also be in the snap connector. Inside the body of the snap connector is a printed circuit board (PCB), which can be fabricated from standard FR-4 PCB material or from flexible PCB materials. All electronic components plus the terminals from the smart-skin matrix will be soldered to this PCB. The "cap" and "base" snap connector pieces, which form the snap connector housing, will be formed of RF-transparent materials so as not to interfere with operation of the RFID subsystem, possibly even using this surface area to print an RFID antenna in
conductive ink. These pieces can be made by injection-molding at extremely low cost.

Low-cost manufacturing by injection molding and wave soldering will mean that the SPIDER electronics can be discarded with the shipping carton after unpacking. Recovery operations for recycling the SPIDER electronics could also be employed for environmental reasons.

The flexible, slightly elastomeric substrate base for the smart-skin is available on >300 ft. rolls as a film, and can be imprinted with the conductive ink traces by web-printing. For example, PET polyester is a durable yet biodegradable substrate at a tenth the cost of polyamide, and can be processed into the SPIDER smart-skin in this fashion. PET has very good dielectric properties, and has low moisture absorption, making it ideal for use in shipping containers. As rolls of the raw substrate enter the web press, controlled amounts of high-resistance carbon-based conductive ink are deposited at regular intervals across the width of the substrate by pneumatic dispensers and set by pressure rollers. As the substrate proceeds from the supply drum to the take-up drum, evenly-spaced lines of conductive ink are formed along the length of the substrate. Laminating two such sections of imprinted film substrate, with one of them rotated 90 degrees, forms the Crosshatch smart-skin matrix.

Having thus disclosed preferred embodiments of the present invention, it will now be apparent that the illustrated examples may be readily modified without deviating from the inventive concepts presented herein. By way of example, the precise shape, dimensions and layout of the connectors and connector pins may be altered while still achieving the function and performance of a wearable smart electrical connector. Accordingly, the scope hereof is to be limited only by the appended claims and their equivalents.

We claim:
CLAIMS

1. An electrical connector for use on a garment with electrical conducting paths integrated into the garment; the connector comprising:

   a fastening element configured as a snap fastener which mates said connector when said fastening element is closed and demates said connector when said fastening element is opened.

2. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said snap fastener is substantially indistinguishable from a conventional clothing snap fastener when closed.

3. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said fastening element comprises at least one torsion spring for retaining said connector in a mated configuration.

4. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said snap fastener has the appearance, tactile sensation and function of a conventional clothing snap fastener.
5. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said fastening element is configured to be readily mated and demated with only one hand.

6. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said fastening element is configured so that mechanical orientation is irrelevant during mating.

7. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said fastening element is configured so that mechanical orientation is irrelevant after mating.

8. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said fastening element comprises male and female connector portions, at least one of said portions having a plurality of pins and the other of said portions having a plurality of continuous concentric annular conducting paths aligned with said pins when said portions are mated so that respective said pins are in electrical contact with respective said conducting paths regardless of the relative angular orientation of said connector portions.
9. The electrical connector recited in claim 8 wherein said pins are spring biased.

10. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said fastening element comprises male and female connector portions, at least one of said portions having a plurality of pins and the other of said portions having a plurality interrupted concentric annular conducting paths aligned with said pins when said portions are mated so that respective said pins are in electrical contact with selected respective said conducting paths depending upon the relative angular orientation of said connector portions.

11. The electrical connector recited in claim 10 wherein said pins are spring biased.

12. The electrical connector recited in claim 1 wherein said fastening element comprises male and female connector portions, at least one of said portions being affixed to said conducting paths integrated into said garment and the other of said portions being affixed to an electrical device for electrically connecting said device to said integrated conducting paths upon mating of said connector portions.
13. The electrical connector recited in claim 12 wherein said connector portion affixed to said electrical device comprises an identification signaling tag for identifying a selected characteristic of said electrical device.

14. The electrical connector recited in claim 13 wherein said connector portion affixed to said conducting paths integrated into said garment comprises at least one connection to at least one said conducting path that is responsive to said identification signaling tag to communicate said selected characteristic through said garment.

15. The electrical connector recited in claim 12 wherein said garment has a pouch for receiving said electrical device and wherein said male and female connector portions are contained within said pouch.

16. The electrical connector recited in claim 15 further comprising a conversion cable within said pouch and interposed between said electrical device and said connector portions for rendering said electrical device compatible with said electrical connector.
17. The electrical connector recited in claim 12 wherein at least one of said male and female connector portions comprises a node in a network formed in said garment.

18. The electrical connector recited in claim 12 wherein said electrical device is taken from the group of electrical devices consisting of a global positioning system receiver, a video camera, a central processing unit, a battery, a power supply, a locator beacon, an antenna, a display, a chemical agent sensor, a wireless transceiver, a PDA, a radio, a modem, a laser rangefinder, a heart rate sensor, an infrared sensor, a directional locating device, a haptic feedback actuator, a head-mounted display and an acoustic sensor.

19. An electrical connector for use on a garment having electrical conducting paths integrated into the garment, the connector comprising mating male and female portions, at least one such portion affixed to said conducting paths, said portions having the appearance of conventional fastening elements of said garment at least when said portions are mated to one another.
20. The electrical connector recited in claim 19 wherein said male and female portions are configured for being mated and demated with only one hand.

21. The electrical connector recited in claim 19 wherein said male and female portions are configured for being mated regardless of their relative angular orientation.

22. The electrical connector recited in claim 19 wherein at least one of said male and female portions comprise contact pins and wherein said contact pins are substantially sealed off from the environment when said portions are demated.

23. The electrical connector recited in claim 22 further comprising a non-conductive elastomer environmental seal for sealing off said contact pins from the environment.

24. The electrical connector recited in claim 22 further comprising a spring-biased shutter for sealing off said contact pins from the environment.
25. A wearable electrical connector apparatus for integration into an article of clothing for selectively interconnecting electric cables; the apparatus comprising:

a male connector configured as a disc having a plurality of spring-loaded contact pins surrounded by a resilient annular seal peripherally mounted on said disc, said seal providing collapsible separation between said pins and mating contacts;

a female connector mounted co-axially to said male connector and configured as a disc having a plurality of mating contacts for selective engagement with said contact pins upon compression of said annular seal by application of axial pressure to said co-axial male and female connector discs.

26. The wearable electrical connector apparatus recited in claim 25 wherein said mating contacts of said female connector are configured for proper engagement with said contact pins of said male connector irrespective of rotational orientation between said male and female connectors.

27. The wearable electrical connector apparatus recited in claim 25 wherein said resilient annular seal comprises an O-ring.

28. The wearable electrical connector apparatus recited in claim 27 wherein said O-ring comprises rubber.
29. The wearable electrical connector apparatus recited in claim 25 wherein each said male and female connector comprises a circular shaped disc of substantially equal diameters.

30. The wearable electrical connector apparatus recited in claim 25 wherein each said male and female connector comprises at least one wire-receiving flange member for mating with wires in said electric cables.

31. A wearable electrical connector apparatus for integration into an article of clothing for selectively interconnecting electric cables; the apparatus comprising

   - a pair of opposed disc-shaped connectors each having a plurality of contacts in mutual opposition to the contacts of the other disc;
   - a layer of anisotropic conductive rubber positioned between said disc-shaped connectors for interconnecting respective mutually opposed contacts of said discs upon the application of axial pressure compressing said layer.

32. The wearable electrical connector apparatus recited in claim 31 wherein each said plurality of contacts are provided on a respective printed circuit board each mounted into a respective one of said discs.
33. The wearable electrical connector apparatus recited in claim 31 wherein said connectors comprise circular-shaped discs of substantially equal diameters.

34. The wearable electrical connector apparatus recited in claim 31 wherein each of said connectors comprises at least one wire-receiving flange member for mating with wires in said electric cables.

35. An electrical connector assembly configured as a fastening device; the connector assembly comprising:
   a female connector having a base, a stud, a first printed circuit board contact pad having a plurality of spring biased contact pins extending therefrom;
   a male connector having a cap, a socket, a second printed circuit board contact pad having conductors thereon and a torsion spring;
   each of said first and second printed circuit board contact pads being adapted to mate with electrically conductive paths received by said connector assembly;
   said stud and said socket being adapted to mate to each other with said pins affixed to said first printed circuit board contact pad being in electrical engagement with said conductors on said second printed circuit
board contact pad, said torsion spring maintaining mechanical engagement between said male and female connectors.

36. A connector in combination with a system for rendering a carton tamper evident, the system having at least one set of conductive resistance paths distributed throughout the wall of the carton, the connector comprising:

- a male connector element and a female connector element, said elements being mated upon closure of the carton;
- said conductive resistance paths being connected to at least one of said elements, the resistance of said resistance paths being altered by intrusive tampering of said carton;
- said connector having a device for detecting said resistance altering.

37. The connector recited in claim 36 wherein said detecting device comprises a Wheatstone bridge and said resistance forms at least one arm of said bridge.

38. The connector recited in claim 36 further comprising an alarm for indicating altered resistance detected by said device.
39. The connector recited in claim 38 further comprising an RFID tag for communicating said alarm indication externally of said carton.

40. A connector affixed to a carton for use in a system for indicating intrusive tampering of the carton; the connector comprising:
   a pair of mateable connector elements configured to be mated upon closure of the carton;
   at least one of said elements connected to a network of resistive electrical paths distributed throughout the wall of the carton; and
   a detector for detecting a change in the resistance of said resistive electrical paths.

41. The connector recited in claim 40 further comprising an indicator for indicating a detected change in resistance.

42. The connector recited in claim 41 further comprising a communication device for communicating a detected change in resistance to a location outside the carton.

43. The connector recited in claim 40 wherein said resistive electrical paths comprise conductive ink having a selected resistivity.
44 The connector recited in claim 40 wherein said detector comprises a Wheatstone bridge and wherein said network forms at least one resistance arm of said bridge.

45 The connector recited in claim 41 wherein said indicator comprises a digital latch.

46 The connector recited in claim 42 wherein said communication device comprises an RFID tag.

47 The connector recited in claim 44 further comprising at least one battery providing a voltage source for said Wheatstone bridge.

48 The connector recited in claim 43 wherein said resistivity of said conductive ink electrical paths exhibits a substantially binary resistive profile whereby a resistance change is detected only when a path is broken.
FOUR-WAY FEMALE AUTOSEALING CONNECTOR

FIG. 8D
FIG. 9

MALE PCB
ANISOTROPIC CONDUCTIVE RUBBER
FEMALE PCB
CONDUCTIVE PARTICLE
NO ELECTRICAL CONTACT BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE CONTACTS IN THE ABSENCE OF PRESSURE

FIG. 10

MALE PCB
ANISOTROPIC CONDUCTIVE RUBBER
FEMALE PCB
CONDUCTIVE PARTICLE
PRESSURE
ELECTRICAL CONTACT BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE CONTACTS UNDER PRESSURE
PRESSURE
PRESSURE