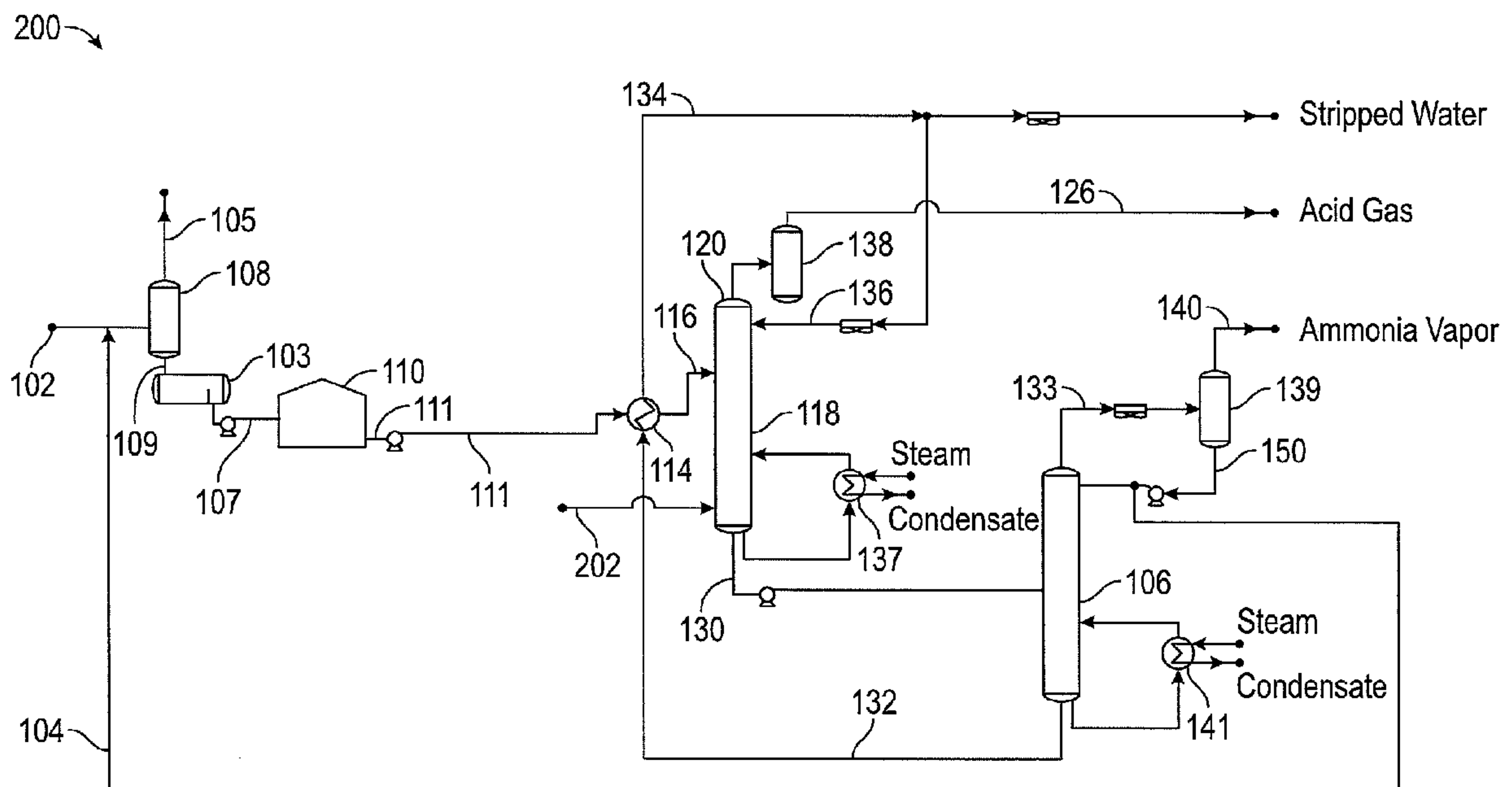




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(54) **Titre : SYSTEMES ET PROCEDES PERMETTANT LA SEPARATION AMELIOREE DE SULFURE D'HYDROGENE ET D'AMMONIAC DANS UN DECAPANT DE SULFURE D'HYDROGENE**
(54) **Title: SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR ENHANCED SEPARATION OF HYDROGEN SULFIDE AND AMMONIA IN A HYDROGEN SULFIDE STRIPPER**



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

Systems and methods for enhanced separation of H₂S and NH₃ are provided. Specifically, the present invention includes a method for separating hydrogen sulfide and ammonia, which comprises: i) introducing a fluid mixture of the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia into a hydrogen sulfide stripper; ii) introducing a stripping gas into the hydrogen sulfide stripper, wherein the stripping gas comprises at least one of a carbon dioxide and an inert gas; and iii) separating most of the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia in the fluid mixture using the stripping gas in the hydrogen sulfide stripper, which forms a hydrogen sulfide stripper overheads stream and a hydrogen sulfide stripper bottoms stream.

**SYSTEMS AND METHODS
FOR ENHANCED SEPARATION OF HYDROGEN SULFIDE AND
AMMONIA IN A HYDROGEN SULFIDE STRIPPER**

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH

[0002] Not applicable.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention generally relates to systems and methods for enhanced separation of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) and ammonia (NH₃) in an H₂S stripper. More particularly, the present invention relates to enhanced separation of H₂S and NH₃ in an H₂S stripper using carbon dioxide and/or an inert gas.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0004] Conventional technology separately recovers H₂S and NH₃ from sour water using an H₂S stripper and an NH₃ stripper, which is sometimes referred to as a two-column sour water stripping process. This process yields acid gas (H₂S) with less than 50 ppmw NH₃ and a high purity gaseous or liquid NH₃ product. The separated water is of excellent quality, making it suitable for reuse as coke drum quench water, crude unit desalter water, and hydro-processing unit injection water or it may be sent to effluent treating for discharge.

[0005] A two-column sour water stripping process typically includes four main processing stages: 1) degassing and feed preparation; 2) H₂S stripping; 3) NH₃ stripping; and 4) NH₃ purification and liquefaction. Referring now to **FIGS. 1A** and **1B**, a schematic diagram of a conventional two-column sour water stripping system illustrates the four processing stages. The following pressures and temperatures are exemplary and only for purposes of illustration.

Degassing and Feed Preparation:

[0006] Sour water feeds **102** from a single or several sources are combined with a recycle stream **104** from the NH₃ stripper **106**, which are cooled and passed through a degasser **108** where dissolved hydrogen (H₂), methane (CH₄) and other light hydrocarbons are removed as a hydrocarbon vapor stream **105**. The sour water feeds **102** include dissolved NH₃ and H₂S. The recycle stream **104** includes rich NH₃, which helps keep acid gases in solution in the degasser **108**, thereby minimizing the release of acid gas and possible air pollution. The degassed sour water stream **109** is sent to a deoiler **103**, which removes free oil from the degassed sour water stream **109** to produce a degassed/deoiled sour water stream **107**. The degassed/deoiled sour water stream **107** is pumped to a feed preparation tank **110**, which serves to attenuate flow rate and composition changes while also providing the opportunity to remove entrained oil and solids. The feed preparation tank **110** produces a processed sour water stream **111**, which is pumped to a feed coalescer unit **112** that filters solids remaining in the processed sour water stream **111** and further separates entrained oil to produce a hydrocarbon liquid **113** and a deoiled sour water stream **115**. The deoiled sour water stream **115** is sent to a feed/product

exchanger **114**, which acts as a heat exchanger to heat the deoiled sour water stream **115** and cool the NH₃ stripper bottoms stream **132** to produce a heated deoiled sour water stream **116** and the stripped water stream **134**. In this manner, the components comprising the NH₃ stripper bottoms stream **132**, stripped water stream **134** and the components comprising the deoiled sour water stream **115**, heated deoiled sour water stream **116** are, respectively, the same but may have different concentrations and temperatures. The heated deoiled sour water stream **116** is then sent to an H₂S stripper **118**.

H₂S Stripping:

[0007] The H₂S stripper **118** contains trays or packing (not shown) that the heated deoiled sour water stream **116** flows through and around to separate H₂S from the heated deoiled sour water stream **116**. A cooled reflux water stream (e.g. water wash) **136** is used remove heat and suppress evolution of gaseous NH₃ in the H₂S stripper. A reboiler **137** acts as a heat exchanger to provide the energy required to i) heat the heated deoiled sour water stream **116** and the cooled reflux water stream **136** to a preferred temperature; and ii) strip out H₂S from the heated deoiled sour water stream **116**. The resulting H₂S stripper overheads stream **120** is sent to a knock out drum **138** to substantially remove any entrained droplets and produce H₂S stream **126**. The H₂S stream **126** is of high purity and is an excellent feed for a sulfur recovery unit (SRU) or a sulfuric acid plant. It contains a negligible amount of NH₃ (less than 50 ppmw) and very little hydrocarbons since the sour water feeds **102** have been degassed. The H₂S stream **126** is available at about

100-180 psig and 100-120°F. The resulting H₂S stripper bottoms stream **130**, which contains NH₃ and some H₂S, is sent directly to the NH₃ stripper **106**.

NH₃ Stripping:

[0008] The NH₃ stripper **106** is a steam re-boiled, refluxed distillation column. In the NH₃ stripper **106**, essentially all NH₃ and any remaining H₂S are removed from the H₂S stripper bottoms stream **130**, which leaves the NH₃ stripper **106** as an NH₃ stripper bottoms stream **132**. The NH₃ stripper bottoms stream **132** is sent to the feed/product exchanger **114** where heat is exchanged with the deoiled sour water stream **115** and the NH₃ stripper bottoms stream **132** is cooled to form the stripped water stream **134**. The stripped water stream **134** is suitable for many plant reuse needs or may be discharged. The containment levels of H₂S and NH₃ in the stripped water stream **134** may be tailored to individual requirements and is typically 10-50 ppmw NH₃ and 1-25 ppmw H₂S. The stripped water stream **134** is available at about 100-200°F. In the NH₃ stripper **106**, essentially all NH₃ and any remaining H₂S are removed from the H₂S stripper bottoms stream **130**, which leaves the NH₃ stripper **106** as an NH₃ stripper overheads stream **133**. The NH₃ stripper overheads stream **133** is sent to an overhead condenser where it is converted to an NH₃ vapor stream and an NH₃ liquid stream. A knock out drum **139** separates the NH₃ vapor stream **140** and the NH₃ liquid stream **150**. A portion of the NH₃ liquid stream **150** is returned as reflux to the NH₃ stripper **106** and another portion of the NH₃ liquid stream **150** forms the recycle stream **104**. A reboiler **141** acts as a heat exchanger to provide the energy required to remove

NH₃ and any remaining H₂S. The NH₃ vapor stream **140** is an NH₃-rich gas, which may be processed in a variety of ways.

NH₃ Purification and Liquefaction:

[0009] Referring now to **FIG. 1B**, the NH₃ vapor stream **140** is sent to a water wash **142** to remove residual amounts of H₂S and some hydrocarbons. This step is also referred to as water scrubbing, which produces a scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **160**. If NH₃ recovery is not desired or economic, the scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **160** may be incinerated. In most cases, however, it is desirable to further purify the scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **160** to produce either anhydrous liquid NH₃ **170** or aqueous NH₃ **180** suitable for commercial use. In order to further purify the scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **160**, the scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **160** is sent to a caustic wash **144** to remove residual contaminants including some hydrocarbons. This step is also referred to as caustic scrubbing, which produces a double scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **162** and may be necessary when problems are expected with process upsets, carbon dioxide, or complex sulfur compounds (e.g. mercaptans or disulfides). The double scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **162** may be sent to either a compressor **146** or a refrigeration unit **148** to produce the anhydrous liquid NH₃ **170**, which contains a negligible amount of H₂S (less than 5 ppmw). The anhydrous liquid NH₃ **170** is available at about 200 psig and 100°F if liquefied by compression and at atmospheric pressure and about -26 F if liquefied by cooling. Cooling water and/or a refrigerant may be used to exchange heat with the compressed double scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **162**. The double scrubbed NH₃ vapor stream **162** may also be sent to an NH₃ absorber **149**, which is

NH₃ vapor stream **162** may also be sent to an NH₃ absorber **149**, which is essentially another water wash, to produce the aqueous NH₃ **180**, which contains a negligible amount of sulfur (no more than about 2ppmw). The aqueous NH₃ **180** is available at about 35 psig and 100°F.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The present invention overcomes one or more of the prior art disadvantages by providing systems and methods for enhanced separation of H₂S and NH₃ in an H₂S stripper using carbon dioxide and/or an inert gas.

[0011] In one embodiment, the present invention includes a system for separating hydrogen sulfide and ammonia, which comprises: a hydrogen sulfide stripper for separating the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia; and a stripping gas stream connected to the hydrogen sulfide stripper, wherein the stripping gas stream comprises an inert gas selected from the group consisting of Hydrogen, Helium, Neon, Argon, Krypton, Xenon and Radon; and wherein the hydrogen sulfide stripper contains a fluid mixture of the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia.

[0012] In one particular embodiment, there is provided a method for separating hydrogen sulfide and ammonia, which comprises: introducing a fluid mixture of the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia into a hydrogen sulfide stripper; introducing a stripping gas into the hydrogen sulfide stripper, wherein the stripping gas comprises only carbon dioxide and an inert gas selected from the group consisting of Helium,

Neon, Argon, Krypton, Xenon, and Radon; and separating most of the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia in the fluid mixture using the stripping gas in the hydrogen sulfide stripper, which forms a hydrogen sulfide stripper overheads stream and a hydrogen sulfide stripper bottoms stream.

[0013] Additional aspects, advantages and embodiments of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following description of the various embodiments and related drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] The present invention is described below with references to the accompanying drawings in which like elements are referenced with like numerals and in which:

[0015] **FIGS. 1A-1B** are schematic diagrams illustrating a conventional two-column sour water stripping system.

[0016] **FIG. 2** is a schematic diagram illustrating the H₂S stripping stage in **FIG. 1A** according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0017] The subject matter of the present invention is described with specificity, however, the description itself is not intended to limit the scope of the invention. The subject matter thus, might also be embodied in other ways, to include different steps or combinations of steps similar to the ones described herein, in conjunction with other technologies. Moreover, although the term “step” may be used herein to describe different elements of methods employed, the term should not be interpreted as implying any particular order among or between various steps herein disclosed unless otherwise expressly limited by the description to a particular order. While the following description refers to the oil and gas industry, the

systems and methods of the present invention are not limited thereto and may also be applied in other industries to achieve similar results.

[0018] The present invention provides systems and methods to enhance the separation of H₂S and NH₃ in an H₂S stripper using carbon dioxide and/or an inert gas. The purpose of the carbon dioxide and/or an inert gas, also referred to as a stripping gas, is to enhance the separation of H₂S and NH₃ during the H₂S stripping stage by i) lowering the partial pressure of H₂S; and ii) providing a stripping action.

[0019] Referring now to **FIG. 2**, a schematic diagram of the H₂S stripping stage in **FIG. 1A** illustrates the use of a stripping gas stream **202** to enhance the separation of H₂S and NH₃ in the H₂S stripper **118**. This stage can consist of various pieces of equipment depending upon the ultimate concentration and quality of NH₃ desired. The stripping gas stream **202** may be introduced anywhere between the top and bottom of the H₂S stripper **118**. Preferably, however, the stripping gas stream **202** is introduced near the bottom of the H₂S stripper **118** because it will contact more of the heated deoiled sour water stream **116**. In this manner, any conventional two-column sour water stripping system that includes a H₂S stripping stage may be easily retrofitted with the introduction of a stripping gas.

[0020] The stripping gas stream **202** may include carbon dioxide and/or any inert gas, which is a gas that does not react with other constituents of the H₂S stripper **118** or sour water stripper such as, for example, Hydrogen, Helium, Boron, Neon, Argon, Krypton, Xenon, Radon, diatomic nitrogen, methane, and ethane.

The stripping gas stream may comprise equal amounts of carbon dioxide and the inert gas; more of the carbon dioxide than the inert gas; or more of the inert gas than the carbon dioxide.

[0021] In the operation of a two-column sour water stripping system with an H₂S stripping stage that includes a stripping gas stream **202** comprising carbon dioxide, the separation of the H₂S and NH₃ may be improved by at least five percent. By enhancing the separation of H₂S and NH₃ in this manner, the consumption of utilities (e.g. reboiler heating media) in the two-column sour water stripping system will be lowered resulting in energy savings or performance may be improved with the same utility consumption.

[0022] Conventional two-column sour water stripping systems have been around since the 1960's. While operators of such systems have recognized the need for enhanced separation of H₂S and NH₃, the characteristics of carbon dioxide are similar to those of an acid gas. This explains why the need for enhanced separation of H₂S and NH₃ using carbon dioxide in the H₂S stripping stage of a two-column sour water stripping system, with another acid gas (H₂S), has been unresolved since the 1960's.

CLAIMS

1. A method for separating hydrogen sulfide and ammonia, which comprises:

introducing a fluid mixture of the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia into a hydrogen sulfide stripper;

introducing a stripping gas into the hydrogen sulfide stripper, wherein the stripping gas comprises only carbon dioxide and an inert gas selected from the group consisting of Helium, Neon, Argon, Krypton, Xenon, and Radon; and

separating most of the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia in the fluid mixture using the stripping gas in the hydrogen sulfide stripper, which forms a hydrogen sulfide stripper overheads stream and a hydrogen sulfide stripper bottoms stream.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the hydrogen sulfide stripper overheads stream comprises the most hydrogen sulfide from the fluid mixture and the hydrogen sulfide stripper bottoms stream comprises the most ammonia from the fluid mixture.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the stripping gas separates most of the hydrogen sulfide and the ammonia in the fluid mixture by lowering a partial pressure of the hydrogen sulfide in the hydrogen sulfide stripper and providing a stripping action.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the stripping gas stream comprises equal amounts of the carbon dioxide and the inert gas.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the stripping gas stream comprises more of the carbon dioxide than the inert gas.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the stripping gas stream comprises more of the inert gas than the carbon dioxide.

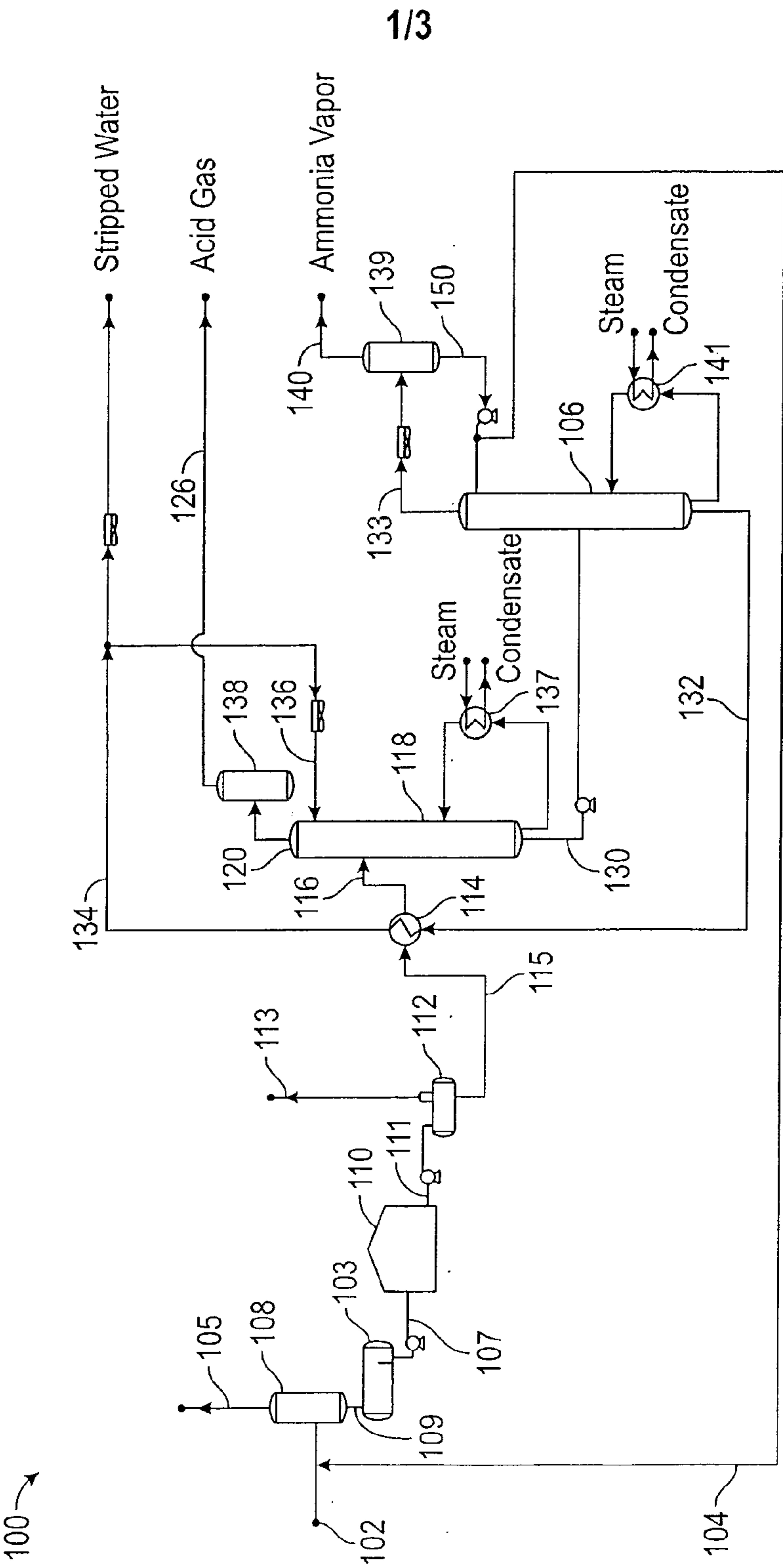


FIG. 1A PRIOR ART

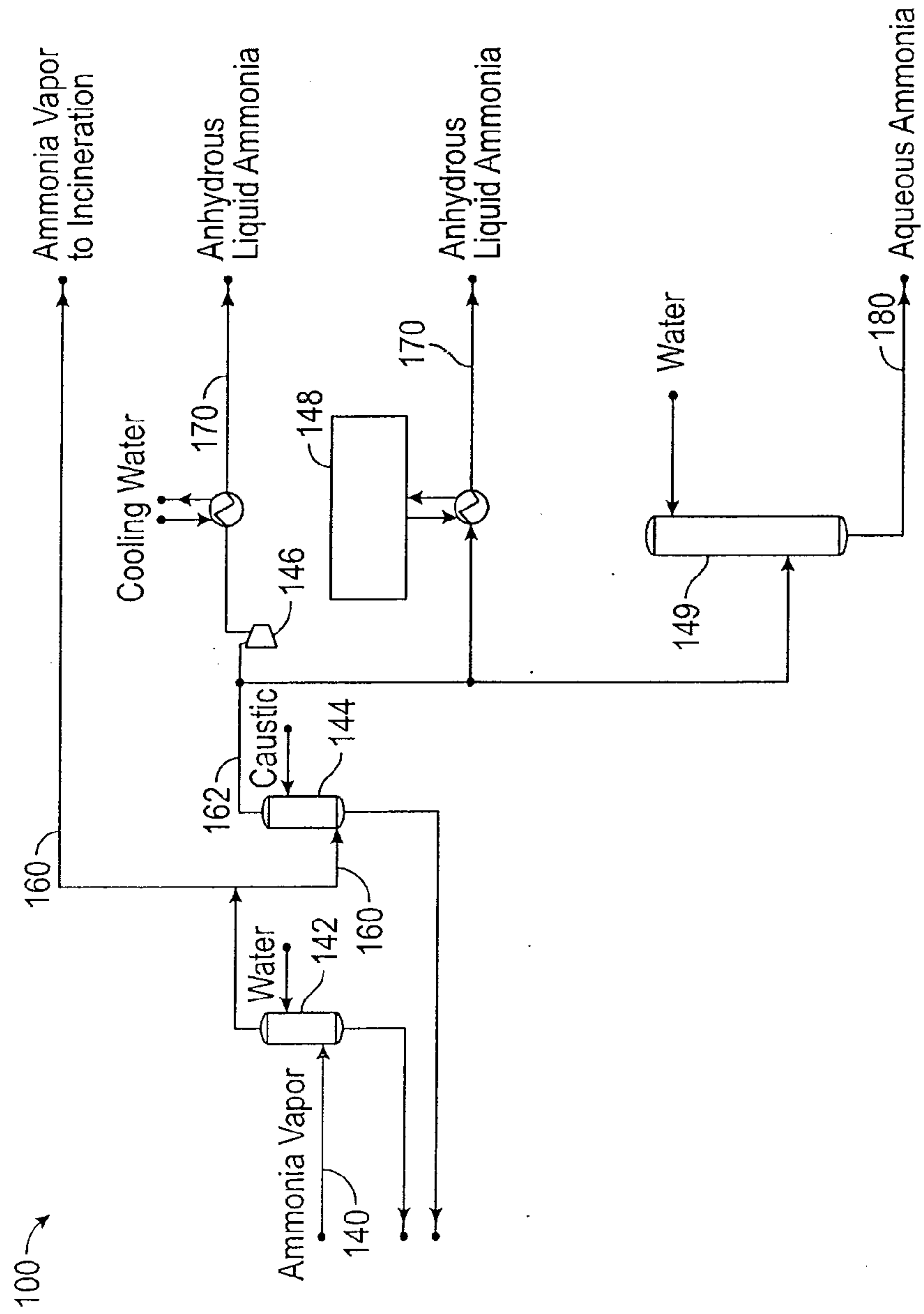


FIG. 1B PRIOR ART

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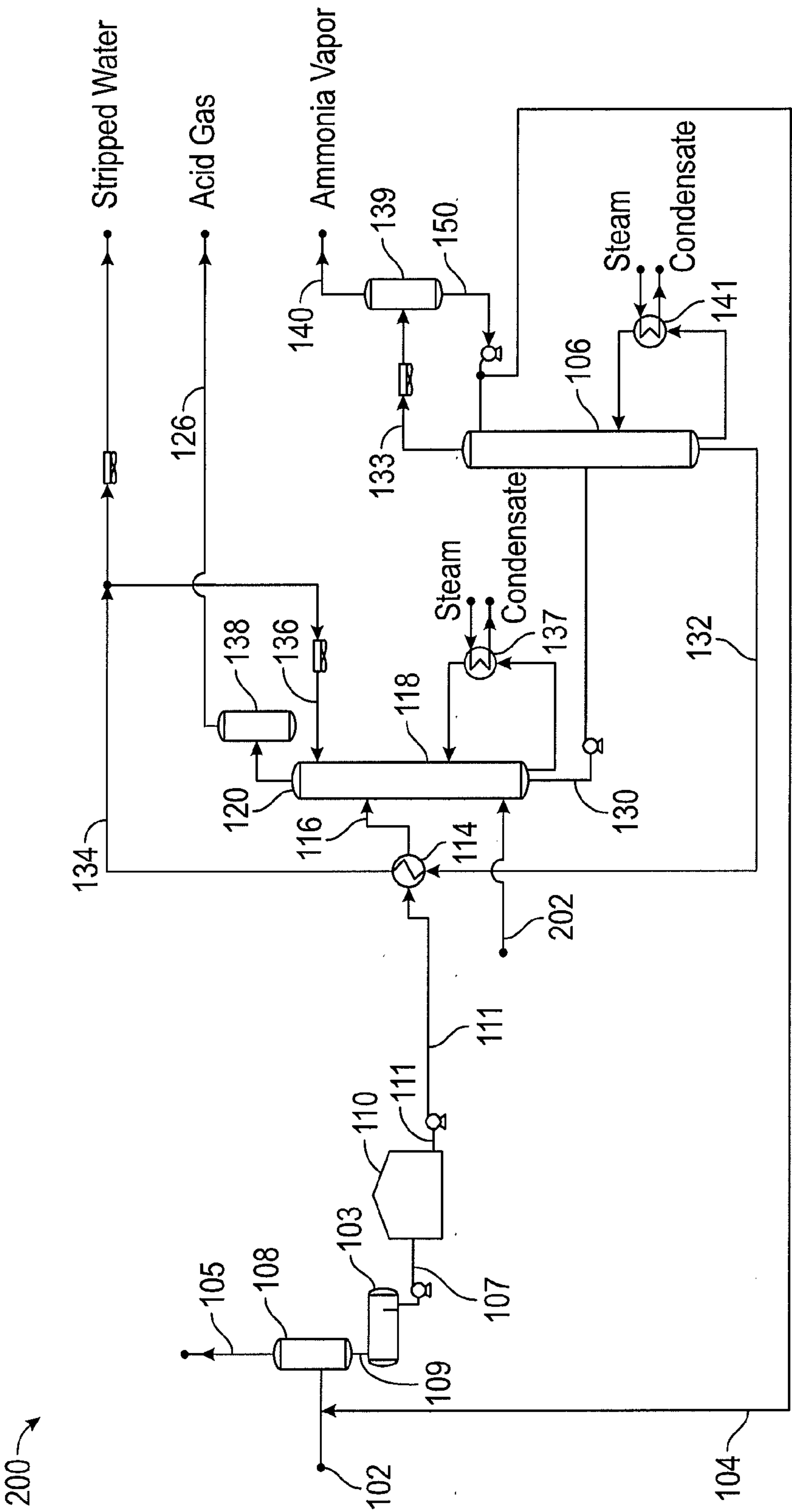


FIG. 2

