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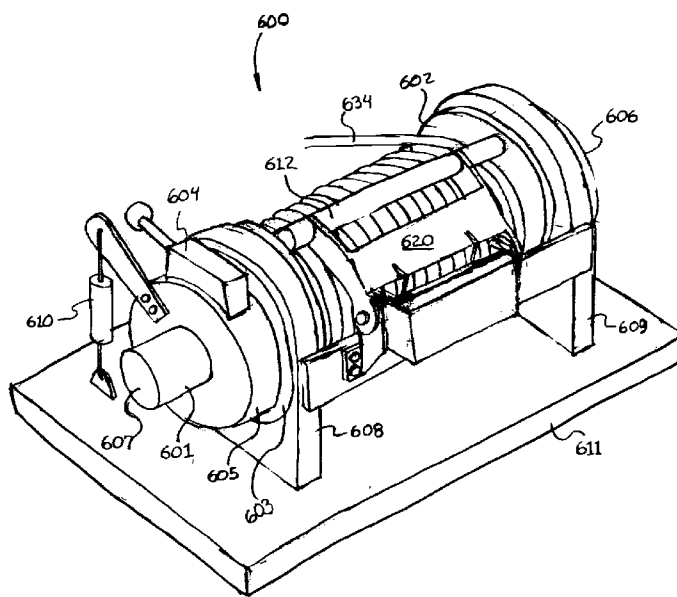
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MEASURING WINCH LINE PULL



(57) Abstract: A control system for determining a line pull of a winch (600). The system comprises a first sensor (610) configured to measure a torque generated by the winch to retract a cable (634) and a second sensor (612) configured to measure a number of layers of the cable retracted by the winch, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto a drum (602). The system further comprises a monitoring circuit (500, 580) coupled to the first and second sensors, wherein the monitoring circuit is configured to determine the line pull of the winch based on the torque generated by the winch and the number of layers of cable retracted onto the container.

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MEASURING WINCH LINE PULL

REFERENCES

[0001] This is a continuation-in-part of application Serial No. 11/263,067 filed on October 31, 2005, and entitled "System for Monitoring Load and Angle for Mobile Lift Device," which is a continuation-in-part of application Serial No. 11/244,414 filed on October 5, 2005, and entitled "Mobile Lift Device."

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to the field of winching devices. More specifically, the present invention relates to measuring the forces from winching devices necessary to manipulate a load.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Various types of winches are used in conjunction with mobile lift devices to engage and support loads in a wide variety of environments. The primary purpose of many mobile lift devices is to move a load from a first position to a second position, whether by sliding or lifting the load. In particular, mobile lift devices may be used for hoisting, towing, and/or manipulating a load, such as a disabled vehicle, a container, or any other type of load. Mobile lift devices incorporating a load moving device, such as wreckers having a rotatable boom assembly, generally include devices for stabilizing the mobile lift device during operation of the load moving device. In using a winch in conjunction with a mobile lift device, it is typically useful to monitor the line pull of the winch while manipulating the load. However, in certain cases, it is difficult to determine the line pull of a winch when multiple winches are being used to manipulate the load (e.g., one winch is being used to tie-off the load moving device and another winch is being used to recover the load). It would be advantageous to develop a monitoring system for determining a line pull of a winch when the load moving device is engaging a load.

[0004] Accordingly, there is a need for an improved mobile lift device having a monitoring system for monitoring the line pull of a winch. There is also a need for an improved mobile lift device having one or more sensors coupled to a monitoring system, in order to generate a signal representative of a torque generated by a motor of the winch,

in order to retract the cable onto a drum of the winch. There is also a need for an improved mobile lift device having one or more sensors coupled to a monitoring system, in order to generate a signal representative of a number of layers of the cable retracted onto the drum, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto the drum. There is also a need for an improved mobile lift device having a load moving device with one or more sheaves supported at the distal end of the load moving rotatable in at least two axis. There is also a need for an improved mobile lift device having a load moving device that is coupled to a rotator to permit the load moving device to rotate about at least two axis relative to the mobile lift device.

[0005] It would be desirable to provide a monitoring system for a mobile lift device that provides one or more of these or other advantageous features as may be apparent to those reviewing this disclosure. The teachings disclosed extend to those embodiments which fall within the scope of the appended claims, regardless of whether they accomplish one or more of the above-mentioned needs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] One embodiment of the invention pertains to a control system for determining a line pull of a winch. The system comprises a first sensor configured to measure a torque generated by the winch to retract a cable and a second sensor configured to measure a number of layers of the cable retracted by the winch, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto a container. The system further comprises a monitoring circuit coupled to the first and second sensors, wherein the monitoring circuit is configured to determine the line pull of the winch based on the torque generated by the winch and the number of layers of cable retracted onto the container.

[0007] Another embodiment of the invention pertains a method for determining a line pull of a winch, such that the winch includes a motor and a drum coupled to the motor. The steps of the method comprise calculating a torque generated by the motor of the winch, measuring a number of layers of a cable retracted by the winch onto a container, wherein the retracting of the cable creates one or more layers of the cable on the container; and determining the line pull of the winch based on the torque and the number of layers of the cable retracted onto the container.

[0008] Another embodiment of the invention pertains a method for determining a line pull of a winch, the winch including a drum and a motor, such that the winch is coupled to a cable, wherein the cable is configured to retract onto the drum, creating one or more layers of cable on the drum. The motor of the winch is configured to generate a torque to manipulate a load via the cable. The steps of the method comprise measuring the torque generated by the motor to manipulate the load and calculating a force based on the measured torque. The steps further comprise determining a number of layers of the cable retracted onto the drum, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto the drum, and calculating a cable radius of the number of layers of cable retracted onto the drum. The steps further comprise determining the line pull of the winch based on the measured torque generated by the motor and the cable radius, and displaying the line pull to an output device.

[0009] Another embodiment of the invention pertains to a mobile lift device, comprising a chassis for movement over a surface, a rotator supported by the chassis, a boom coupled to the rotator to permit the boom to pivot about at least two axes relative to the chassis, and a first sheave supported at the distal end of the boom, wherein the sheave rotatably supported to rotate about at least two axes relative to the boom. The device further comprises a first winch supported at the rotator, the winch including a motor for and a drum couple to the motor and a cable supported by the first winch and the first sheave. The device further comprises a first sensor configured to measure a torque generated by the motor to retract the cable onto the drum and a second sensor configured to measure a number of layers of the cable retracted onto the drum, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto the drum. The device further comprises a monitoring circuit coupled to the first and second sensors, the monitoring circuit being configured to calculate the line pull of the winch based on the torque generated by the motor and the number of layers of cable retracted onto the drum.

[0010] Another embodiment of the invention pertains to a monitoring system for determining a line pull of a winch coupled to a load moving device. The winch has at least one cable attached to a load to lift or slide the load, wherein the winch includes a motor for generating a torque and a drum coupled to the motor to house the cable. The system comprises a first sensor configured to generate a first signal representative of the torque generated by the motor to retract the cable onto the drum and a second sensor configured

to generate a second signal representative of a number of layers of the cable retracted onto the drum, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto the drum. The system further comprises a monitoring circuit coupled to the first and second sensors, wherein the monitoring circuit is configured to determine the line pull of the winch based on the generated force and a cable radius, such that the cable radius is calculated by the radius of the number of layers of cable retracted onto the drum.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of a mobile lift device according to an exemplary embodiment.

[0012] FIGURE 2 is another perspective view of the mobile lift device shown in FIGURE 1.

[0013] FIGURE 3 is another perspective view of the mobile lift device shown in FIGURE 1.

[0014] FIGURE 4 is side view of the mobile lift device shown in FIGURE 1.

[0015] FIGURE 5 is a top view of the mobile lift device shown in FIGURE 1.

[0016] FIGURE 6 is a rear view of the mobile lift device shown in FIGURE 1.

[0017] FIGURE 6a is a partial detailed view of a front outrigger system shown in FIGURE 6.

[0018] FIGURE 6b is a partial detailed view of a front outrigger system shown according to another exemplary embodiment.

[0019] FIGURE 7 is perspective view of a distal end of a boom assembly according to an exemplary embodiment.

[0020] FIGURE 8 is a detailed view of the front outrigger system shown in FIGURE 6.

[0021] FIGURE 9 is a cross-sectional view of the front outrigger system shown in FIGURE 8.

[0022] FIGURE 10 is a block diagram of an embodiment of a monitoring system suitable for use with the mobile lift device shown in FIGURE 1.

[0023] FIGURE 11 is a perspective view of a winch.

[0024] FIGURE 12 is a perspective view of a cable follower coupled to a winch.

[0025] FIGURE 13 is a rotated cross-sectional view of a winch.

[0026] FIGURE 14 is a block diagram of an embodiment of a monitoring system for providing a line pull measurement suitable for use with the mobile lift device shown in FIGURE 1.

[0027] FIGURE 15 is a detailed block diagram of an embodiment of the line pull processor shown in FIGURE 14.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0028] FIGURES 1 through 6 show one nonexclusive exemplary embodiment of a mobile lift device (e.g., rotator, recovery vehicle, tow truck, crane, etc.) shown as a wrecker 100. Wrecker 100 is a heavy-duty wrecker having a load moving device (e.g., an extensible and rotatable boom assembly 114, etc.) configured to engage and support a load. For example, the load moving device may be capable of hoisting, towing, and/or manipulating a disabled vehicle (e.g., an overturned truck, etc.), a container, and/or any other type of load. To assist in stabilizing the wrecker 100 (e.g., prevent the wrecker 100 from tipping or becoming otherwise unbalanced, etc.) when a load is engaged and/or when the load moving device is positioned such that the stability of the wrecker 100 is threatened, the wrecker 100 includes one or more systems for stabilizing the wrecker 100. For example, the wrecker 100 includes a front outrigger system 300 (shown in FIGURE 3) and/or a rear outrigger system 400.

[0029] It should be understood that, although the systems for stabilizing the mobile lift device (e.g., the front outrigger system 300, the rear outrigger system 400, etc.) will be described in detail herein with reference to the wrecker 100, one or more of the systems for stabilizing the mobile lift device disclosed herein may be applied to, and find utility in, other types of mobile lift devices as well. For example, one or more of the systems for stabilizing the mobile lift device may be suitable for use with mobile cranes, backhoes, bucket trucks, emergency response vehicles (e.g., firefighting vehicles having extensible

ladders, etc.), or any other mobile lift device having a boom-like mechanism configured to support a load.

[0030] Referring first to FIGURE 4, the wrecker 100 is shown as generally including a platform or chassis 110 functioning as a support structure for the components of the wrecker 100 and is typically in the form of a frame assembly. According to an exemplary embodiment, the chassis 110 generally includes first and second frame members (not shown) that are arranged as two generally parallel chassis rails extending in a fore and aft direction between a first end 115 (a forward portion of the wrecker 100) and a second end 116 (a rearward portion of the wrecker 100). The first and second frame members are configured as elongated structural or supportive members (e.g., a beam, channel, tubing, extrusion, etc.). The first and second frame members are spaced apart laterally and define a void or cavity (not shown). The cavity, which generally constitutes the centerline of the wrecker 100, may provide an area for effectively concealing or otherwise mounting certain components of the wrecker 100 (e.g., the underlift system 200, etc.).

[0031] A plurality of drive wheels 118 are rotatably coupled to the chassis 110. The number and/or configuration of the wheels 118 may vary depending on the embodiment. According to the embodiment illustrated, the wrecker 100 utilizes twelve wheels 118 (two tandem wheel sets 120 at the second end 116 of the wrecker 100, one wheel set 122 at the first end 115 of the wrecker 100, and one wheel set 124 substantially centered along the chassis 110 in the fore and aft direction). In this configuration, the wheel set 122 at the first end 115 is steerable while the wheels sets 120 are configured to be driven by a drive apparatus. According to various exemplary embodiments, the wrecker 100 may have any number of wheel configurations including, but not limited to, four, eight, or eighteen wheels.

[0032] The wrecker 100 is further shown as including an occupant compartment or cab 126 supported by the chassis 110 that includes an enclosure or area capable of receiving a human operator or driver. The cab 126 is carried and/or supported at the first end 115 of the chassis 110 and includes controls associated with the manipulation of the wrecker 100 (e.g., steering controls, throttle controls, etc.) and optionally may include controls for the load moving device, the monitoring system 500, the boom assembly 114, the front outrigger system 300, the rear outrigger system 400, and/or the underlift system 200.

[0033] Referring to FIGURES 1 through 3, mounted to the chassis 110 is a sub-frame assembly 128. According to an exemplary embodiment, the sub-frame assembly 128 generally includes first and second frame members 130 that are arranged as two generally parallel rails extending in a fore and aft direction between an area behind the cab 126 and the second end 116 of the wrecker 100. The first and second frame members 130 are configured as elongated structural or supportive members (e.g., a beam, channel, tubing, extrusion, etc.) and are generally fixed to the first and second frame members of the chassis 110. According to an exemplary embodiment, the first and second frame members 130 are formed of a higher strength steel than conventionally used for wrecker sub-frames. According to a preferred embodiment, the first and second frame members 130 are formed of a steel having a strength of approximately 130,000 pounds square inch (psi). Forming the first and second frame members 130 of such a material allows the overall weight of the wrecker 100 to be reduced. Preferably, other substantial components of the wrecker 100, including but not limited to the boom assembly 114, the underlift system 200, the front outrigger system 300, and the rear outrigger system 400, are formed of the same material. According to various alternative embodiments, the first and second frame members 130 and/or other components of the wrecker 100 may be formed of any other suitable material.

[0034] Each frame member 130 of the sub-frame assembly 128 is shown as including one or more support brackets 132 outwardly extending in a direction substantially perpendicular to the frame members 130. The support brackets 132 can be used to support body panels (not shown), for example by inserting the body panels over the support brackets 132 and coupling the body panels thereto. Such body panels may include one or more storage compartments for retaining accessories, tools, and/or supplies. The support brackets 132 can also be used to support a user interface system having controls associated with the manipulation of one or more features (e.g., the load moving device, the underlift system, the outriggers, and/or the rear stakes, etc.) of the wrecker 100.

[0035] The load moving device is generally mounted on the sub-frame assembly 128 and supported by the chassis 110. According to the exemplary embodiment illustrated, the load moving device is in the form of an extensible and rotatable boom assembly 114. The boom assembly 114 is configured to support a load bearing cable having an engaging device (e.g., a hook, etc.) coupled thereto. The boom assembly 114 generally is mounted to a turntable or turret 134, a first or base boom section 136, one or more telescopically

extensible boom sections (shown as a second boom section 138 and a third boom section 140), a first actuator device 142 for adjusting the angle of the base boom section 136 relative to the chassis 110, and one or more second actuator devices (not shown) for extending and retracting the one or more telescopically extensible boom sections relative to the base boom section 136.

[0036] The turret 134 supports the boom sections 136-140 and is mounted on the sub-frame assembly 128 in a manner that allows for the rotational (e.g., swinging, etc.) movement of the boom section 136-140 about a vertical axis relative to the chassis 110. The turret 134 can be rotated relative to the sub-frame assembly 128 by a rotational actuator or drive mechanism (e.g., a rack and pinion mechanism, a motor driven gear mechanism, etc.), not shown, to rotate the boom sections 136-140 about the vertical axis. According to an exemplary embodiment, the turret 134 is configured to rotate a full 360 degrees about the vertical axis relative to the chassis 110. According to other exemplary embodiments, the turret 134 may be configured to rotate about the vertical axis within any of a number predetermined ranges. For example, it may be desirable to limit rotation of the turret 134 to less than 360 degrees because the configuration of the cab 126, or some other vehicle component, may interfere with a complete rotation of 360 degrees.

[0037] A bottom end 143 of the first boom section 136 is pivotally coupled to the turret 134 about a pivot shaft 144. The first boom section 136 is movable about the pivot shaft 144 between an elevated use or load engaging position (shown in FIGURE 3) and a retracted stowed or transport position (shown in FIGURE 1). According to an exemplary embodiment, the base boom section 136 is capable of elevating to a maximum angle of approximately 50 degrees relative to the chassis 114 (see FIGURE 4) and may be stopped at any angle within such range during operation. According to various exemplary embodiments, the base boom section 136 may be capable of elevating to a maximum angle greater than or less than 50 degrees.

[0038] Elevation of the base boom section 136 is achieved using the first actuator device 142. According to the embodiment illustrated, the first actuator device 142 is a hydraulic actuator device. For example, as shown in FIGURES 3 and 6, the first actuator device 142 comprises a pair of hydraulic cylinders disposed on opposite sides of the base boom section 136. Each hydraulic cylinder has a first end 146 pivotally coupled to the turret 134 about a pivot shaft 148 and a second end 150 pivotally coupled to the first boom section

136 about a pivot shaft 152. Although two hydraulic cylinders are shown in the FIGURES, according to various exemplary embodiments, a single hydraulic cylinder may be used, or any number greater than two. It should further be noted that the first actuator device 142 is not limited to hydraulic actuator devices and can be any other type of actuator capable of producing mechanical energy for exerting forces suitable to support the load acting on the load moving device. For example, the first actuator device 142 can be pneumatic, electrical, and/or any other suitable actuator device.

[0039] The base boom section 136 is preferably a tubular member having a second end 154 configured to receive a first end 156 of the second boom section 138. Similarly, a second end 158 of the second boom section 138 is configured to receive a first end 160 of the third boom section 140. The second and third boom sections 138 and 140 are configured for telescopic extension and retraction relative to the base boom section 136. The telescopic extension and retraction of the second and third boom sections 138 and 140 is achieved using one or more of the second actuator devices (not shown). According to an exemplary embodiment, hydraulic cylinders contained within the base boom section 136 and the second boom section 138 provide for the telescopic extension and retraction of the second and third boom sections 138 and 140. Although a three stage extensible boom assembly 114 (i.e., a boom assembly having three boom sections) is shown, in other exemplary embodiments the boom assembly 114 may include any number of boom sections (e.g., one, four, etc.). Regardless of the number of boom sections, the free end or end-most portion of the furthest boom section, for purposes of this disclosure, is referred to as a distal end 162.

[0040] Referring to FIGURE 7, the distal end 162 of the furthest boom section (e.g., the third boom section 140, etc.) includes a boom tip 164 carrying one or more rotatable sheaves (shown as a first sheave 166 and a second sheave 167). According to the embodiment illustrated, the first sheave 166 and the second sheave are carried by the boom tip 164. The first sheave 166 is positioned proximate to the second sheave 166 and spaced apart in a lateral direction. A separate load bearing cable 168 passes over each of the sheaves 166 and 167 and supports a hook 170 (shown in FIGURE 4) or other grasping element used for engaging the load. Each of the sheaves 166 and 167 are shown as having a shield 169 to assist in guiding the load bearing cable 168 as it passes over the respective sheave 166 and 167. A pair of winches 171 (shown in FIGURE 3) are included for

operative movement of each load bearing cable 168. The sheaves 166 and 167 are preferably configured to rotate about at least two axes relative to the boom, but alternatively may be configured to rotate about only a single axis. According to the embodiment illustrated, the sheaves 166 and 167 are configured to rotate about a first axis defined by a pivot shaft 172 and a second axis defined by a pivot shaft 174. In such an embodiment, the first axis of rotation is substantially perpendicular to the second axis of rotation. In addition, the first axis of the first sheave 166 may be concentrically aligned with the first axis of the second sheave 167 or offset from the first axis of the second sheave 167.

[0041] Referring further to FIGURES 1 through 3, the wrecker 100 further comprises a wheel lift or underlift system 200 for lifting and towing a vehicle by engaging the frame and/or one or more wheels of the vehicle to be towed. The underlift system 200 is provided at the second end 116 of the chassis 110 and is movable between a retracted stowed position (shown in FIGURE 1) and an extended use position (not shown). According to the embodiment illustrated, the underlift system 200 generally includes a supporting member 202 pivotally coupled at its front end 204 by a pivot shaft 206 to the chassis 110 or the sub-frame assembly 128. An actuator device is provided for rotating the supporting member 202 about the pivot shaft 206 between the use position and the stowed position. As shown, the actuator device comprises a hydraulic cylinder 208 pivotally coupled at a first end 210 to the chassis 110 and pivotally coupled at a second end 212 to the supporting member 202.

[0042] The underlift system 200 further includes a bracket 214 coupled to an opposite end of the supporting member 202. The bracket 214 is pivotally coupled to the supporting member 202 and is fixedly coupled to a first or base boom section 216. Pivotally coupling the bracket 214 to the supporting member 202 allows the base boom section 216 to be pivotally supported relative to the supporting member 202 thereby allowing the base boom section 216 to move between a stowed position, wherein the base boom section 216 is substantially parallel with the second end of the supporting member 202, and a use position, wherein the base boom section 216 is substantially perpendicular to the second end of the supporting member 202.

[0043] One or more extension boom sections (shown as a second boom section 218) are telescopically extendable, for example via hydraulic cylinders, from the base boom section

216. A cross bar member 220 is pivotally mounted at its center 222 to a distal end of the outermost extension boom section (e.g., the second boom section 218, etc.). The cross bar member 220 includes ends 224 and 226 which may be configured to engage the frame of the vehicle to be carried and/or which may be configured to receive a vehicle engaging mechanism (not shown) for engaging the frame and/or wheels of a vehicle being carried, such as a wheel cradle.

[0044] The underlift system 200 is further shown as including a winch 228 supported at the front end 204 of the supporting member 202. The winch 228 controls the movement of a cable (not shown) extending from the winch 228 to a rotatable sheave 230. A free end of the cable is configured to support a grasping element (e.g., a hook, etc.) that may assist in the recovery of a vehicle being towed.

[0045] The wrecker 100 is further shown as including a front outrigger system 300 for stabilizing the wrecker 100 during operation of the boom assembly 114, particularly when operation of the boom assembly 114 is outwardly of a side of the wrecker 100. The outrigger system 300 generally includes two outriggers (shown as a first outrigger 302 and a second outrigger 304) which are extensible from a right side 117 (i.e., passenger's side) and a left side 119 (i.e., driver's side) of the wrecker 100 respectively. The first outrigger 302 and the second outrigger 304 are selectively movable between a retracted stowed or transport position (shown in FIGURE 1) and an extended use or stabilizing position (shown in FIGURE 3). An intermediate position of the outriggers 302 and 304 is shown in FIGURE 2. The outriggers 302 and 304 are coupled such that the outriggers 302 and 304 extend across the chassis 110 (e.g., across the underside or bottom of the chassis 110, etc.) so that when deployed, the outriggers 302 and 304 angle or slope downward from the chassis 110 and assume a criss-cross or X-like configuration (shown in FIGURE 6).

[0046] With the first and second outriggers 302 and 304 in the extended position, the outrigger system 300 provides a wider base or stance for stabilizing the wrecker 100. The outrigger system 300 is capable of stabilizing the wrecker 100 in a lateral direction as well as a fore and aft direction. The stabilizing position achieved by the outrigger system 300, in comparison to the stabilizing position achieved by front outrigger systems conventionally used on wreckers which typically comprise a first support member outwardly extending from a side of the wrecker in a horizontal direction and a second support member extending downward in a vertical direction from a free end of the first

support member, advantageously reduces the profile of the outrigger system 300 in an area surrounding the wrecker 100. This reduced profile allows personnel to move more efficiently around the wrecker 100 when the first and second outriggers 302 and 304 are extended.

[0047] FIGURE 5 is a top view of the wrecker 100 and shows the first outrigger 302 being positioned adjacent to and forward of the second outrigger 304. Positioning the first outrigger 302 adjacent to the second outrigger 304 may assist in stabilizing the wrecker in a fore and aft direction by providing additional rigidity to the outriggers. According to various alternative embodiments, the first outrigger 302 may be spaced apart from the second outrigger 304 in the fore and aft direction and/or may be positioned rearward of the second outrigger 304. FIGURE 5 also shows the wrecker 100 as including two pairs of front outriggers along the chassis 110, a first pair 306 positioned forward of the turret 134 and a second pair 308 positioned rearward of the turret 134. Such positioning provides improved stability in comparison to using a single pair of outriggers. According to various alternative embodiments, any number of outriggers may be provided, at any of a number of positions, along the chassis 110 for stabilizing the wrecker 100.

[0048] The configuration of the first and second outriggers 302 and 304 is substantially identical except that they outwardly extend from opposite sides of the wrecker 100. Accordingly, for brevity, only the configuration of the second outrigger 304 is described in detail herein. Referring to FIGURES 1 through 3, the second outrigger 304 generally includes an outrigger housing 310, a base support member 312, one or more extensible support members (shown as a first extension member 314 and a second extension member 316), a ground engaging portion 318, a first actuator device 320 for adjusting the angle of the base support member 312 relative to the chassis 110, and one or more second actuator devices (not shown) for extending and/or retracting the first extension member 314 and the second extension member 316. As will be later be described in detail, the outrigger system 300 may optionally include a locking device 350 for positively locking an extensible support member relative to the base support member 312 when in an extended position, such as a fully extended position, to prevent the extensible support member from inadvertently retracting or collapsing when a load is being engaged.

[0049] The outrigger housing 310 is mounted on the sub-frame assembly 128 and extends laterally above and around the chassis 110 between a first end 322 and a second

end 324. The outrigger housing 310 is fixedly coupled to the sub-frame assembly 128 via a welding operation, a mechanical fastener (e.g., bolts, etc.), and/or any other suitable coupling technique. According to an exemplary embodiment, the outrigger housing 310 of the second outrigger 304 is further coupled to the outrigger housing of the first outrigger 302.

[0050] A first end 326 of the base support member 312 is coupled to the second end 324 of the outrigger housing 310 adjacent to a side of the wrecker 100 opposite to the side from which a second end 328 of the base support member 312 is to extend. According to the embodiment illustrated, the first end 326 of the base support member 312 is pivotally coupled to the second end 324 of the outrigger housing 310 about a pivot shaft 330. The base support member 312 extends laterally beneath the chassis 110 with the first end 326 provided on one side of the chassis 110 and the second end 328 provided on an opposite side of the chassis 110. Having the base support member 312 extend beneath the chassis 110 from one side of the chassis 110 to the other side of the chassis 110 increases the overall length of the outrigger system thereby providing improved stability.

[0051] The base support member 312 is movable about the pivot shaft 330 between a stowed position wherein the base support member 312 is substantially perpendicular to the chassis 110 and a stabilizing position wherein the base support member 312 is provided at an angle relative to the chassis 110 (e.g., angled or sloped downward from the chassis, etc.). According to an exemplary embodiment, the base support member 312 is capable of being moved to a position wherein the base support member 312 forms an angle with a ground surface that is between approximately 5 degrees and approximately 20 degrees. According to various exemplary embodiments, the base support member 312 may be capable of achieving other angles relative to a ground surface that are less than 5 degrees and/or greater than 20 degrees.

[0052] The orientation of the base support member 312 is achieved using the first actuator device 320. According to the embodiment illustrated, the first actuator device 320 is a hydraulic actuator device. For example, the first actuator device 320 is shown as a hydraulic cylinder having a first end 332 pivotally coupled to the first end 322 of the outrigger housing 310 about a pivot shaft 334 and a second end 336 pivotally coupled to the second end 328 of the base support member 312 about a pivot shaft 338. Although a single hydraulic cylinder is shown in the FIGURES, according to another exemplary

embodiment, a multiple hydraulic cylinders may be used. It should further be noted that the first actuator device 320 is not limited to a hydraulic actuator device and can be any other type of actuator capable of producing mechanical energy for exerting forces suitable to moving the base support member 312 and supporting the load acting on the outrigger system 300 when engaging the ground and at least partially supporting the weight of the wrecker 100. For example, the first actuator device 320 can be pneumatic, electrical, and/or any other suitable actuator device.

[0053] The base support member 312 is preferably a tubular member and the second end 328 is configured to receive a first end of the first extensible member 314. Similarly, a second end 340 of the first extensible member 314 is configured to receive a first end of second extensible member 316. The first and second extensible members 314 and 316 are configured for telescopic extension and retraction relative to the base support member 312. The telescopic extension and retraction of the first and second extensible members 314 and 316 is achieved using one or more actuator devices (not shown). According to an exemplary embodiment, the support members each have a rectangular cross-section and hydraulic cylinders contained within the base support member 312 and the first extension member 314 provide the telescopic extension and retraction of the first and second extensible members 314 and 316. Although a three stage extensible outrigger system 300 (i.e., an outrigger system having three support members), in other exemplary embodiments the outrigger system 300 may include any number of support members (e.g., one, four, etc.).

[0054] For purposes of this disclosure, the free end or end-most portion of the furthest support member is referred to as a distal end 342. The distal end 342 of the furthest support member (e.g., the second extensible support member 316, etc.) includes a pivot shaft 344 for pivotally coupling the ground engaging portion 318 to the second outrigger 304. Pivotally coupling the ground engaging portion 318 to the distal end 342 allows the ground engaging portion 318 to provide a stable footing on uneven surfaces. The ground engaging portion 318 may optionally include a structure to facilitate engaging a surface and thereby reduce the likelihood that the wrecker 100 will undesirably slide or otherwise move in a lateral direction during operation of the boom assembly 114. For example, the ground engaging portion 318 may include one or more projections (e.g., teeth, spikes, etc.) configured to penetrate the surface for providing greater stability. It should also be noted

that each of the first and second outriggers 302 and 304 may be operated independently of each other in such a manner that the wrecker 100 may be stabilized even when positioned on an uneven or otherwise non-uniform surface.

[0055] Referring to FIGURES 6 through 6b, the outrigger system 300 further includes the locking device 350 for selectively locking the telescoping support members in an extended position to prevent the support members from inadvertently collapsing or retracting when under a load. Before the boom assembly 114 is to engage a load, the first and second outriggers 302 and 304 are typically moved to an extended position wherein the extensible support members 314 and 316 are fully extended relative to the base support member 312. In the fully extended stabilizing position, the first actuator device 320 and the second actuator device of the outrigger system 300 are generally capable of exerting sufficient force to at least partially elevate the wrecker 100 and to maintain the wrecker 100 in such a position as the boom assembly 114 engages a load. However, to positively lock the support members in the fully extended position and thereby reduce the likelihood that the first and second outriggers 302 and 304 will inadvertently retract from an extended position, the locking device 350 is provided.

[0056] According to an exemplary embodiment, the locking device 350 comprises an aperture 352 extending at least partially through the extensible support member and a locking pin 354 (shown in FIGURE 5) configured to be selectively inserted into the aperture 352 to positively lock the extensible support member in an extended position. According to the embodiment illustrated, an aperture 352 is provided on both the first extensible support member 314 and the second extensible support member 316. Insertion of the locking pin 354 in the aperture 352 formed in the first extensible support member 314 prevents the first extensible support member 314 from retracting relative to the base support member 312. Insertion of the locking pin 354 in the aperture 352 formed in the second extensible support member 316 prevents the second extensible support member 316 from retracting relative to the first extensible support member 314.

[0057] According to an exemplary embodiment, the apertures 352 are located near the first ends of the first and second extensible support members 314 and 316 and become accessible when the second outrigger 304 is in a fully extended position. According to various alternative embodiments, any number of apertures 352 may be located anywhere along the second outrigger 304. When the apertures 352 are accessible, a pair of locking

pins 354 may be inserted to the apertures 352. A portion of the locking pins 354 outwardly extend from the side of the extensible support members to prevent the extensible support members from moving to the retracted position. According to another exemplary embodiment, as shown in FIGURE 6b, the aperture 352 may be located such that it extends through both the outer support member (e.g., the base support member 312, etc.) and the inner support member (e.g., the first extensible support member 314, etc.). According to a further exemplary embodiment, a plurality of apertures 352 may be provided along the second outrigger 304 for allowing the second outrigger 304 to be selectively locked in positions other than a fully extended position.

[0058] Referring to FIGURES 8 and 9, the outrigger system 300 further includes a means for providing equal load distribution between the second end 328 of the base support member 312 and the first end of the extensible member 314 and between the second end 340 of the extensible member 314 and the first end of the extensible member 316. Referring particularly to FIGURE 8, the outrigger system 300 is shown as including a first pair of rocker pads 18 and a second pair of rocker pads 19. The rocker pads 18 provide equal load distribution between the second end 328 of the base support member 312 and the first end of the extensible member 314, while the rocker pads 19 provide equal load distribution between the second end 340 of the extensible member 314 and the first end of the extensible member 316.

[0059] Referring to FIGURE 9, the rocker pads 18 and 19 are shown as being positioned adjacent to an inner sidewall of the base support member 312 and the extensible member 314 respectively. The rocker pads 18 and 19 are configured to move in conjunction with the extensible member 314 and the extensible member 316. A plate provided within the extensible members 314 and 316 has a profile configured to receive a top profile of the rocker pads 18 and 19. According to an exemplary embodiment, the rocker pads 18 and 19 are semi-circular members having a flat surface configured to slidably engage the base support member 312 and the extensible member 314 respectively. The rocker pads 18 and 19 are maintained in a position adjacent to an inner side wall of the base support member 312 and the extensible member 314 respectively by retaining plates shown in FIGURE 9.

[0060] As can be appreciated, as the extensible members 314 and 316 are extended, the clearance angles between the outrigger support members varies. The addition of the rocker pads 18 and 19 may assist in providing equal load distribution by compensating for

these variations. The rocker pads 18 and 19 may also compensate for irregularities attributable to fabrication.

[0061] The wrecker 100 is further shown as including a rear outrigger system 400, which is commonly referred to by persons skilled in the art as the rear spades. The rear outrigger system 400 is supported at the second end 116 of the chassis 110 and is configured to extend outwardly from the second end 116 and engage a surface for providing additional support and stabilization of the wrecker 100 during operation of the boom assembly 114. Referring to FIGURES 1 and 2, the rear outrigger system 400 generally includes two outriggers (shown as a first outrigger 402 and a second outrigger 404) each comprising a base section 406 fixedly coupled to the sub-frame assembly 128, an extensible section 408 received within the base section 406, an actuator device (not shown) for moving the extensible section 408 telescopically within the base section 406 between a retracted stowed or transport position (shown in FIGURE 1) and an extended use or stabilizing position (shown in FIGURE 2), and a ground engaging foot 410 provided at a free end of the extensible section 408 and configured to engage a surface.

[0062] According to the embodiment illustrated, the base section 406 is mounted to the sub-frame 128 at an angle relative to the chassis 110 such that the extensible section 408 extends away from the second end 116 of the wrecker 100 when moving towards the stabilizing position. By extending away from the second end 116, as opposed to moving substantially perpendicular to the chassis 110, the rear outrigger system 400 achieves a wider base or stance for stabilizing the wrecker 100 during operation of the boom assembly 114.

[0063] FIGURE 10 is a block diagram of an embodiment of monitoring system 500 of wrecker 100. Monitoring system 500 comprises a plurality of sensors used to monitor the stability of wrecker 100 while manipulating a load. Monitoring system 500 further comprises a monitoring circuit 521, where monitoring circuit 521 further includes programmable digital processor 523. Programmable digital processor 523 monitors signals representative of the forces exerted on load bearing cable 168 and determines if the forces are sufficient to compromise the stability or structure of wrecker 100, based on the representative signals generated by the plurality of sensors. Programmable digital processor 523 comprises load angle vector processor 531, cylinder force processor 533, and cylinder moment arm processor 535.

[0064] Referring to FIGURE 10, a first cable angle sensor 501 is shown that preferably generates a signal representative of the angle of load bearing cable 168, relative to the position of boom assembly 114 in a first axis. A second cable angle sensor 503 generates a signal representative of a second angle of load bearing cable 168 relative to boom assembly 114 in a second axis. The first and second cable angle sensors (501, 503) are preferably coupled to load angle vector processor 531, of programmable digital processor 523, for transmitting signals representative of the angle of load bearing cable 168. The first and second cable angle sensors (501, 503) preferably include potentiometers and/or encoders (not shown), which are configured to measure the angle of load bearing cable 168 relative to the longitudinal axis of boom assembly 114 and angle concentric to the longitudinal axis. An alternate embodiment of first and second cable angle sensors (501, 503) preferably includes low-g (i.e., gravitational force) accelerometers (not shown), which are further configured to measure the angle of load bearing cable 168. Although two cable angle sensors are shown in FIGURE 10, according to another exemplary embodiment, more than two cable angle sensors may be used to measure the angle of load bearing cable 168, particularly in a third or fourth axis.

[0065] A first axis boom angle sensor 505 is coupled to load angle vector processor 531, of programmable digital processor 523, wherein first axis boom angle sensor 505 generates a signal representative of the first axis angle, which is the angle of boom assembly 114 relative to chassis 110, along the first axis (i.e., vertical axis). The axis angle signal generated by the first axis boom angle sensor 505 is transmitted to load angle vector processor 531, of programmable digital processor 523, in order to generate the force signal representative of the force exerted on load bearing cable 168 and boom assembly 114. The first axis boom angle sensor 505 may further include potentiometers and/or encoders (not shown), which are configured to measure the angle of boom assembly 114 relative to a horizontal plane.

[0066] Parts of line input 509 is shown coupled to load angle vector processor 531, of programmable digital processor 523. Parts of line input 509 is preferably used to determine the line pull and the tension on load bearing cable 168. Parts of line input 509, boom angle sensor 505, and cable angle sensors (501, 503) are coupled to monitoring circuit 521 by load angle vector processor 531 in programmable digital processor 523. Load angle vector processor 531 uses the signals coupled thereto to calculate the load angle vector on boom sheaves 166 and 167.

[0067] Boom-lift pressure sensors 511 and 513 are coupled to monitoring circuit 521 for measuring the pressure of actuator device 142. In one embodiment, a piston-side pressure sensor 511 and a rod-side pressure sensor 513 of actuator device 142, for adjusting base boom section 136 (i.e., pair of hydraulic boom lift cylinders), are coupled to cylinder force processor 533 of monitoring circuit 521. Pressure sensors 511 and 513 measure the pressure at the piston-side and rod-side of actuator device 142, respectively. Cylinder force of actuator device 142 may preferably be measured as a function of cylinder pressure and area. Cylinder force processor 533 uses signals from pressure sensors 511 and 513 to calculate the cylinder force on actuator device 142. In an exemplary embodiment, cylinder force is preferably calculated by determining the difference in force between the piston-side force and the rod-side force of actuator device 142.

[0068] Machine geometry data 527 and boom length sensor 515 are coupled to cylinder moment arm processor 535 of programmable digital processor 523. Machine geometry data 527 comprises the geometry of winches 171 and actuator device 142 relative to boom assembly 114. Boom length sensor 515 is configured to generate a signal representative of the extension of boom assembly 114. Further, a force signal may be calculated from the representative signals generated by length sensor 515 and first axis boom angle sensor 505. Cylinder moment arm processor 535 processes signals from machine geometry data 527 and boom length sensor 515 to calculate the lift cylinder moment arm, the horizontal weight of boom assembly 114, and the center of gravity proximate to a pivot pin of boom assembly 114.

[0069] Outrigger system 300 assists in stabilizing wrecker 100 as boom assembly 114 manipulates a load. Outrigger cylinder pressure sensors 545 and 547 are coupled to monitoring circuit 521 for measuring the pressure of actuator device 320 of outrigger system 300. In one embodiment, piston-side pressure sensor 545 and rod-side pressure sensor 547 of actuator device 320, for adjusting base support member 312 (i.e., pair of hydraulic outrigger support cylinders), are coupled to cylinder force processor 533 of monitoring circuit 521. Pressure sensors 545 and 547 measure the pressure at the piston-side and rod-side of actuator device 320, respectively. Cylinder force processor 533 uses signals from pressure sensors 545 and 547 to calculate the cylinder force on actuator device 320. In an exemplary embodiment, cylinder force can be calculated by determining the difference in force between the piston-side force and the rod-side force of actuator device 320.

[0070] Outrigger extension sensor 549 is also coupled to cylinder moment arm processor 535 of programmable digital processor 523. Outrigger extension sensor 549 is configured to generate a signal representative of the extension of outrigger base support member 312 and one or more extensible support members (shown as a first extension member 314 and a second extension member 316 in FIGURES 3 and 6). Outrigger extension sensor 549 preferably includes a cable reel with at least one potentiometer to measure the amount of extension of outrigger base support member 312 and extensible support members 314 and 316 from actuator device 320. Further, a force signal may be calculated from the representative signals generated by outrigger extension sensor 549 and the angular orientation of base support member 312. Cylinder moment arm processor 535 processes signals from machine geometry data 527 and outrigger extension sensor 549 to calculate the outrigger support cylinder moment arm proximate to a pivot shaft 338 of outrigger base support member 312.

[0071] Turret 134 (shown in FIGURE 4) is configured to rotate a full 360 degrees about the vertical axis relative to the chassis 110. Turret slew angle sensor 525 generates a signal representative of the angle of rotation of turret 134 to data processor 537 of monitoring circuit 521. Load chart data 529 is also coupled to data processor 537. Load chart data 529 comprises a matrix of load data for determining compatible angles and lengths for boom assembly 114 for manipulating a given load. Data processor 537 uses the signals from turret slew angle sensor 525 and load chart data 529 to select the appropriate load chart and calculate the allowable load for wrecker 100. Chassis tilt sensor 551 is further coupled to data processor 537, such that chassis tilt sensor 551 provides an angular orientation of chassis 110 relative to the ground surface.

[0072] Programmable digital processor 523 performs various calculations to assist in determining the actual force exerted on load bearing cable 168. Cable load processor 539 is configured to receive the outputs of programmable digital processor 523. Cable load processor 539 is further configured to use the signals from programmable digital processor 523 to determine the actual load on load bearing cable 168 by totaling the moments about pivot pin of boom assembly 114. Cable load processor 539 and data processor 537 are preferably coupled to comparator circuit 541. Comparator circuit 541 is configured to compare the actual calculated load generated by cable load processor 539 to the allowable load generated by data processor 537. In one embodiment, comparator circuit 541 will provide notification to the operator, by way of output signal 543, when the

actual load reaches or exceeds a predetermined threshold with reference to the allowable load value. In yet another embodiment, monitoring circuit 521 will provide a lockout feature, wherein monitoring circuit 521 preferably disables manipulation of boom assembly 114 when the actual load reaches or exceeds a predetermined threshold value. In such an embodiment, monitoring circuit 521 preferably disables certain substantial components of the wrecker 100 which may compromise the vehicle's stability, including, but not limited to, boom assembly 114 and winch 171. Upon reaching a predetermined threshold value, monitoring circuit 521 preferably disables the telescopic extension of boom assembly 114 or the elevation of boom assembly 114, which is controlled by a hydraulic fluid control of actuator device 142, in order to stabilize wrecker 100. Monitoring circuit 521 also preferably disables retraction of load bearing cable 168 by winch 171 upon reaching a predetermined threshold value with reference to the allowable load value of load bearing cable 168 and boom assembly 114.

[0073] Referring now to FIGURES 11-13, a perspective view of a winch 600 configured to manipulate a load is shown. Winch 600 comprises mounting structures 608 and 609 to stabilize a winch 600 to a base 611. Winch 600 further comprises motor 601 and drum 602. Motor 601 is configured to generate a force to extend or retract a cable 634 for manipulating a load. Coupling 626 is configured to be positioned between motor 601 and brake 603 (as shown in FIGURES 11 and 13). Drum 602 is coupled to motor 601 by mounting structures 608 and 609. Drum 602 is configured to house a cable for manipulating a load. Preferably, the cable is housed or wrapped onto drum 602. Drum 602 may also house brake 603 which is configured to control the force generated by motor 601. Winch 600 further comprises rotating joint 628, wherein the joint 628 is configured to provide a coupling with drum 602. Adjacent to motor 601 on the winch 600, a clutch 604 is positioned to interact with a gear set 605. Winch 600 is mounted on base 611 by mounting structure 608 and 609. FIGURE 11 also shows a first sensor 610 which is coupled between winch base 611 and a plate on the motor/brake side 607 of winch 600. First sensor 610 is configured to measure the torque generated by motor 601. In another embodiment first sensor 610 may be configured to measure the force generated by motor 601. A second sensor 612 (also shown in FIGURE 12) is preferably coupled to cable follower 620 in order to determine the number of layers of cable on drum 602 of winch 600. Second sensor 612 is configured to generate a signal representative of the number of layers of cable retracted onto drum 602 such that each layer of the cable forms a single

wrap of the cable onto the drum 602. A cable radius 632 (see FIGURE 13) may be calculated based on the number of layers of cable on drum 602, in addition to the cable size/dimensions and the drum size/dimensions. In one embodiment, the size of the cable 634 and drum 602 may be characterized by any known dimensions.

[0074] Referring to FIGURE 13, a cross-sectional view of a winch 600 configured to manipulate a load is shown. Winch 600 further comprises drum support bearing 622 for providing support to the drum with respect to mounting structures 608 and 609. Speed reducer 624 is configured to control the rate of rotation of drum 602 as cable 634 is being retracted onto drum 602. First sensor 610 is configured to be coupled to base 611 and winch 600 to measure the torque generated. Moment arm 636 is shown to exhibit the perpendicular distance from the axis of rotation of drum 602.

[0075] FIGURE 14 is a broad diagram of an embodiment of a monitoring system for providing a line pull measurement suitable for use with the mobile lift device shown in FIGURE 1. The embodiment shown in FIGURE 14 may be configured as a standalone monitoring system to provide only a line pull measurement to a system user however it may preferably be used in conjunction with a load monitoring system as disclosed in relation to parts line sensor 509 of monitoring system 500 in FIGURE 10 as further shown in FIGURE 14. FIGURE 14 is an exemplary embodiment of FIGURE 10 further including a force sensor 570, a cable layer sensor 572 and a line pull processor 580. As shown in greater detail in FIGURE 15, force sensor 570 measures the force generated by motor 601. In one embodiment of the invention, the force measured by force sensor 570 may be translated or converted to a torque measurement by multiplying the force measured by the moment arm of the sensor to the center of winch 600. However, the torque may be measured or otherwise determined by any past, present, or future method of determining torque, such as by a sensor for measuring the torque value. The center of winch 600 being further defined to mean the central region of a plate on the motor/brake input side as shown in FIGURE 11. Force sensor 570 may be configured to limit rotation of the interfacing services of the motor/brake side and the frame structure 608 of winch 600 by reacting to the torque created by motor 601. Accordingly, this limitation may be accomplished by introducing a sliding fit or a bearing at the interfaces of the motor/brake and the frame. Further, the motor side of the winch may preferably be restrained from actual movement with the use of restraints, such as shoulder bolts or other such devices

including snap rings, collars, etc. Cable layer sensor 572 is preferably coupled with a cable follower of winch 600. Cable layer sensor 572 determines the number of layers of the cable on drum 602 of winch 600. In one embodiment, a corresponding signal may be directed to cable radius processor 582 in order to calculate the cable radius at the drum from a signal generated by cable layer sensor 572. In one embodiment, the cable radius may be defined as a measurement from the cylindrical center of drum 602 to the outermost layer of the cable minus the radius of drum 602. The representative signals from torque processor 581 and cable radius processor 582 may be fed into data processor 583 in order to calculate a line pull measurement of a cable. In another embodiment of the invention, sensors 570 and 572 collectively and sensor 509 may be configured to perform collaborative analysis of the line pull measurement, in order to ensure accuracy in the line pull measurement. Data processor 583 is configured to output the line pull measurement to a user display such as that described in relation to monitoring system 500. In an alternative embodiment, a user may automatically or manually perform data entry including the cable radius, when known to the user.

[0076] It is important to note that the construction and arrangement of the mobile lift system and the monitoring system as shown in the various exemplary embodiments are illustrative only. Although only a few embodiments of the present inventions have been described in detail in this disclosure, those skilled in the art who review this disclosure will readily appreciate that many modifications are possible (e.g., variations in sizes, dimensions, structures, shapes and proportions of the various elements, values of parameters, mounting arrangements, use of materials, colors, orientations, etc.) without materially departing from the novel teachings and advantages of the subject matter recited in the claims. For example, elements shown as integrally formed may be constructed of multiple parts or elements, elements shown as multiple parts may be integrally formed, the position of elements may be reversed or otherwise varied, and the nature or number of discrete elements or positions may be altered or varied. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of the present invention as defined in the appended claims. The order or sequence of any process or method steps may be varied or re-sequenced according to alternative embodiments. Other substitutions, modifications, changes and omissions may be made in the design, operating conditions and arrangement of the exemplary embodiments without departing from the scope of the present inventions as expressed in the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A control system for determining a line pull of a winch, the control system comprising:
 - a first sensor configured to measure a torque generated by the winch to retract a cable;
 - a second sensor configured to measure a number of layers of the cable retracted by the winch, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto a container; and
 - a monitoring circuit coupled to the first and second sensors, the monitoring circuit being configured to calculate the line pull of the winch based on the torque generated by the winch and the number of layers of the cable retracted onto the container.
2. The control system of claim 1, wherein the monitoring circuit is configured to calculate a force based on the torque generated by the winch.
3. The control system of claim 1, wherein the system is configured to calculate a cable radius based on the number of layers of the cable retracted onto the container.
4. The control system of claim 1, wherein the monitoring system is configured to display the line pull to an output device.
5. The control system of claim 1, wherein the monitoring circuit includes a programmed digital processor.
6. The control system of claim 5, wherein the first sensor includes a force transducer.
7. The control system of claim 5, wherein the second sensor includes a position transducer.
8. The control system of claim 1, wherein the winch further includes a planetary gear set.

9. The control system of claim 1, wherein the winch further includes a motor, the motor being configured to generate the force to retract the cable onto the container.

10. The control system of claim 1, wherein the container comprises a drum.

11. A method for determining a line pull of a winch, the winch including a motor, the steps of the method comprising:
5 determining a torque generated by the motor of the winch;
measuring a number of layers of a cable retracted by the winch onto a container, wherein retracting the cable creates one or more layers of the cable on the container; and
10 calculating the line pull of the winch.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the line pull is calculated based on the torque and the number of layers of the cable retracted onto the container.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein a cable radius is calculated based on the number of layers of the cable retracted onto the container.

14. The method of claim 11, further comprising displaying the line pull to an output device.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein the winch includes a body coupled to the motor, the motor being configured to generate a force to manipulate a load, the force being measured at a position between the body and the motor.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the force is calculated based on the torque generated by the motor.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the torque generated by the motor is measured by a force transducer.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the torque generated by the motor is measured by an encoder.

19. A method for determining a line pull of a winch, the winch including a drum and a motor, the winch being coupled to a cable, wherein the cable is configured to

retract onto the drum, creating one or more layers of cable on the drum, the motor of the winch generating a torque to manipulate a load via the cable, the steps of the method comprising:

- 5 measuring the torque generated by the motor to manipulate the load;
 calculating a force based on the measured torque;
 determining a number of layers of the cable retracted onto the drum,
wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto the drum;
 calculating a cable radius of the number of layers of cable retracted onto the
drum;
10 determining the line pull of the winch based on the measured torque
generated by the motor and the cable radius; and
 displaying the line pull to an output device.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the winch further includes a winch body
coupled to the motor, such that the torque generated by the motor is measured at a position
15 between the body and the motor.

21. The method of claim 19, wherein the torque generated by the motor is
measured by a force transducer.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein the torque generated by the motor is
measured by an encoder.

20 23. A mobile lift device, comprising:
 a chassis for movement over a surface;
 a rotator supported by the chassis;
 a boom coupled to the rotator to permit the boom to pivot about at least two
axes relative to the chassis;
25 a first sheave supported at the distal end of the boom, the sheave rotatably
supported to rotate about at least two axes relative to the boom;
 a first winch supported at the rotator, the winch including a motor and a
drum coupled to the motor;
 a cable supported by the first winch and the first sheave;
30 a first sensor configured to measure a torque generated by the motor to
retract the cable onto the drum;

a second sensor configured to measure a number of layers of the cable retracted onto the drum, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto the drum; and

5 a monitoring circuit coupled to the first and second sensors, the monitoring circuit being configured to calculate the line pull of the winch based on the torque generated by the motor and the number of layers of cable retracted onto the drum.

24. The mobile lift device of claim 23, wherein the monitoring circuit is configured to calculate a force based on the torque generated by the motor.

10 25. The mobile lift device of claim 23, wherein the monitoring system is configured to display the line pull to an output device.

26. The mobile lift device of claim 23, wherein the monitoring circuit includes a programmed digital processor.

27. The mobile lift device of claim 26, wherein the first sensor includes a force transducer.

15 28. The mobile lift device of claim 26, wherein the second sensor includes a position transducer.

29. The mobile lift device of claim 23, wherein the winch further includes a planetary gear set.

20 30. A system for determining a line pull of a winch, the winch having at least one cable attached to a load to lift or slide the load, the winch including a motor for generating a torque and a drum coupled to the motor to house the cable, the system comprising:

a first sensor configured to generate a first signal representative of the torque generated by the motor to retract the cable onto the drum;

25 a second sensor configured to generate a second signal representative of a number of layers of the cable retracted onto the drum, wherein a layer of the cable is formed by a single wrap of the cable onto the drum; and

a monitoring circuit coupled to the first and second sensors, the monitoring circuit being configured to determine the line pull of the winch based on the

generated torque and a cable radius, wherein the cable radius is calculated based on the radius of the number of layers of cable retracted onto the drum.

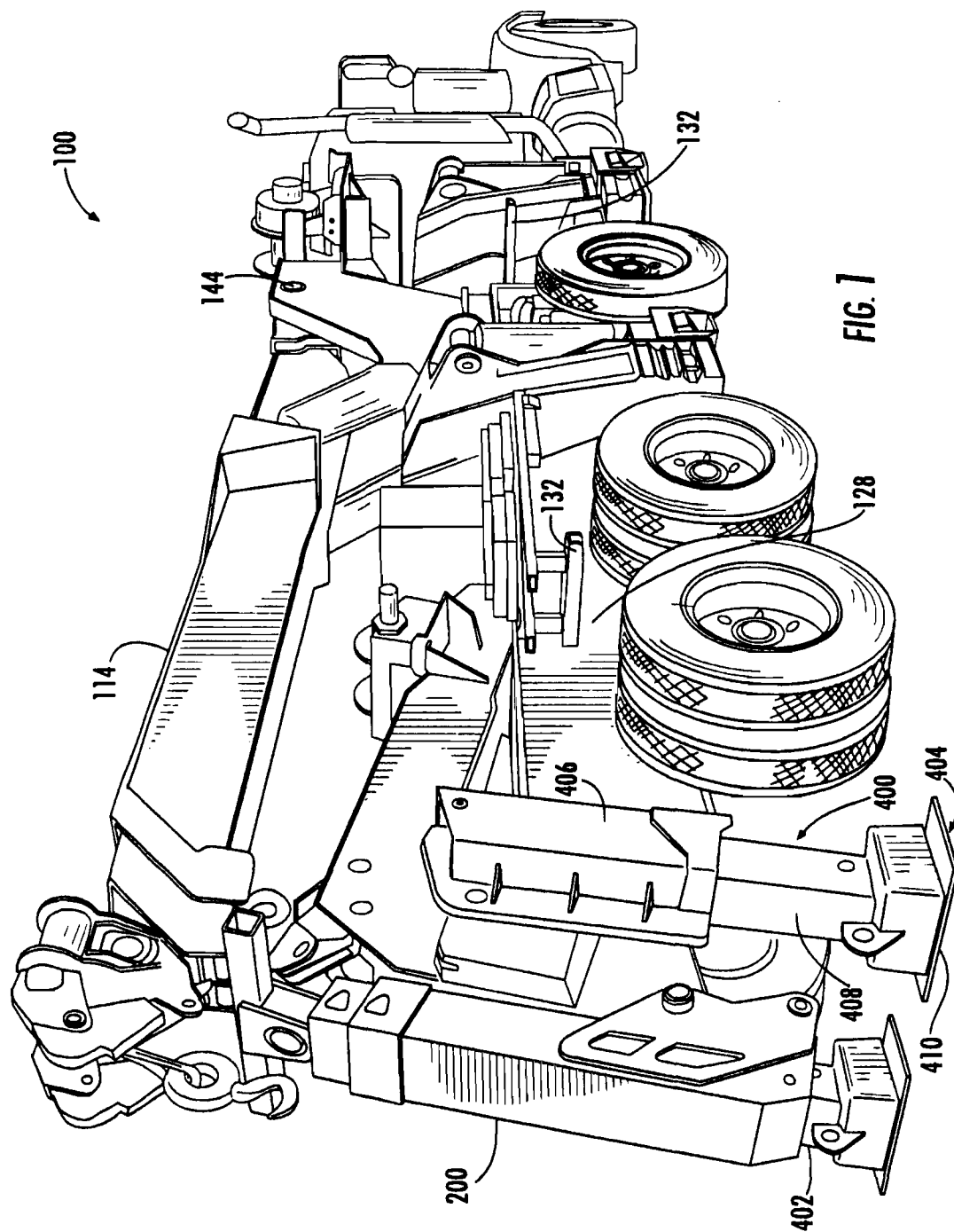
31. The system of claim 30, wherein the monitoring circuit is configured to calculate a force based on the torque generated by the motor.

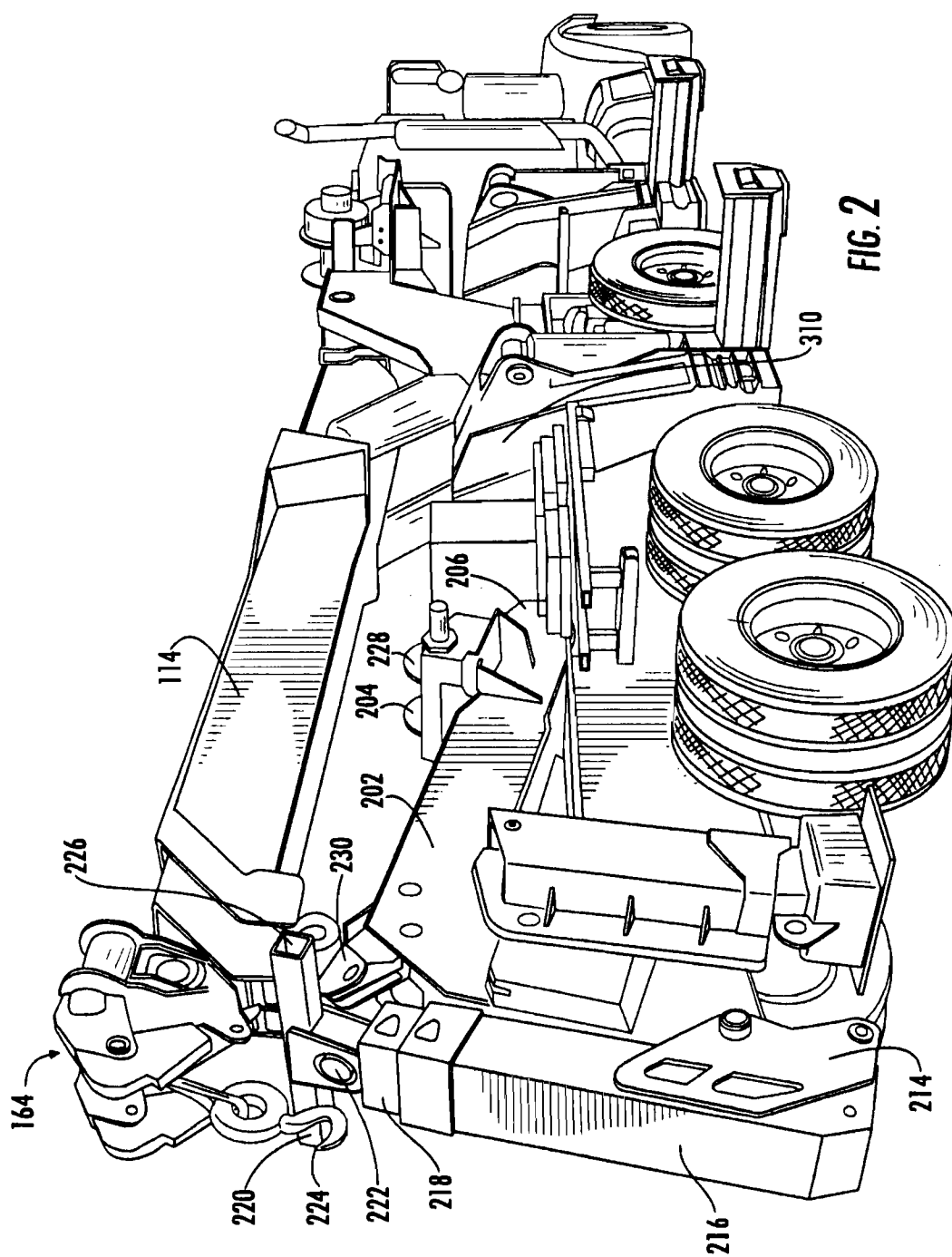
5 32. The system of claim 30, wherein the monitoring system is configured to display the line pull to an output device.

33. The system of claim 30, wherein the monitoring circuit includes a programmed digital processor.

10 34. The system of claim 33, wherein the first sensor includes a force transducer.

35. The system of claim 33, wherein the second sensor includes a position transducer.





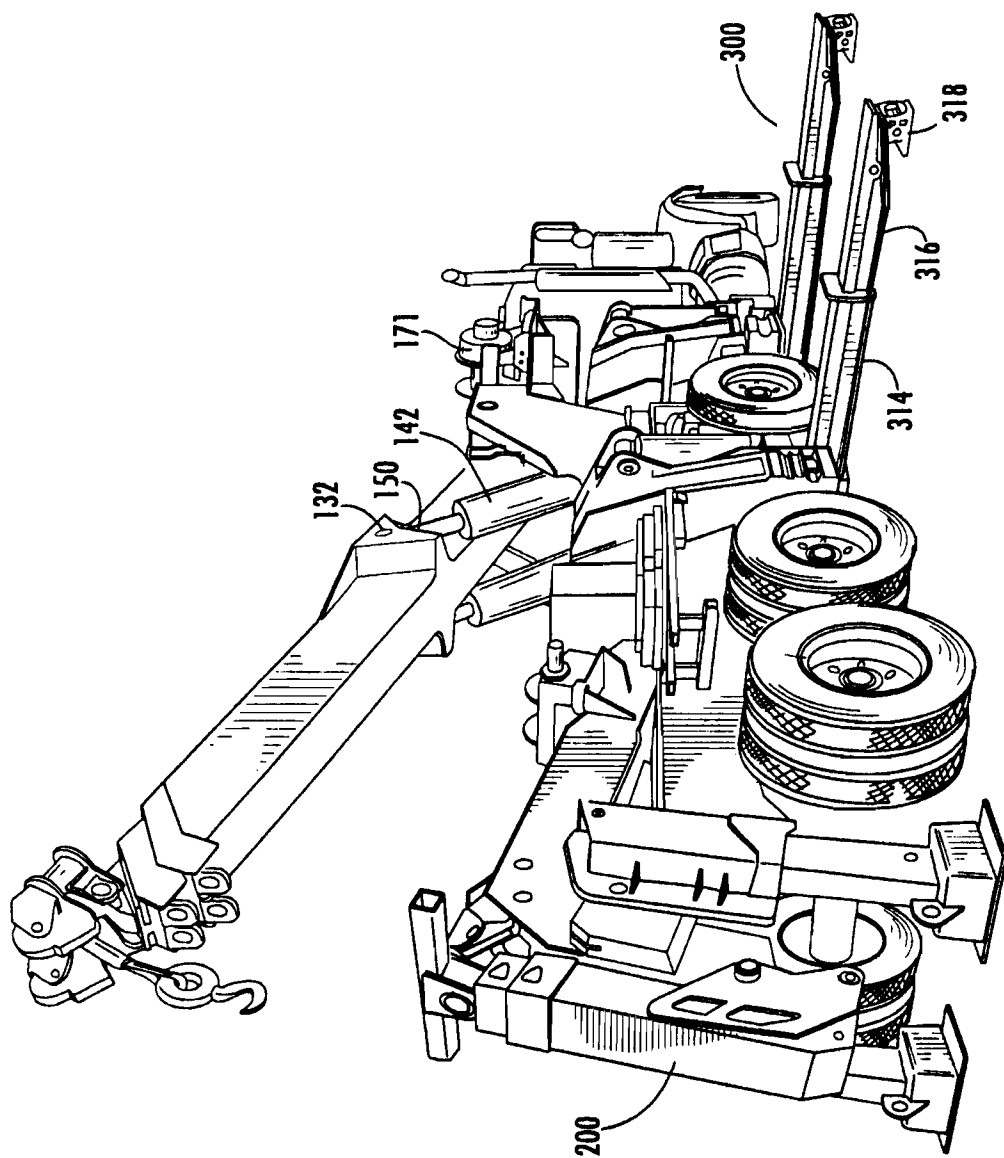
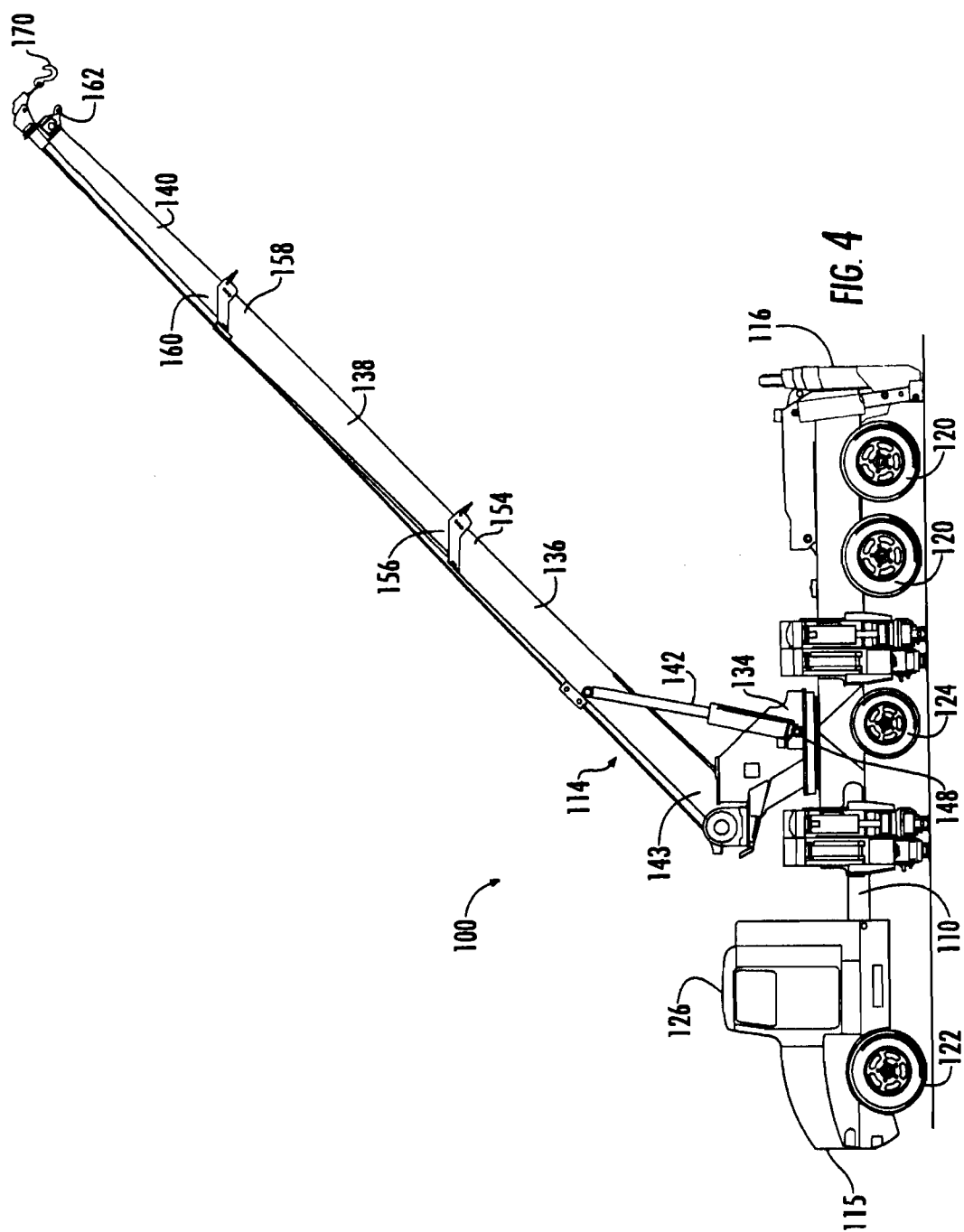
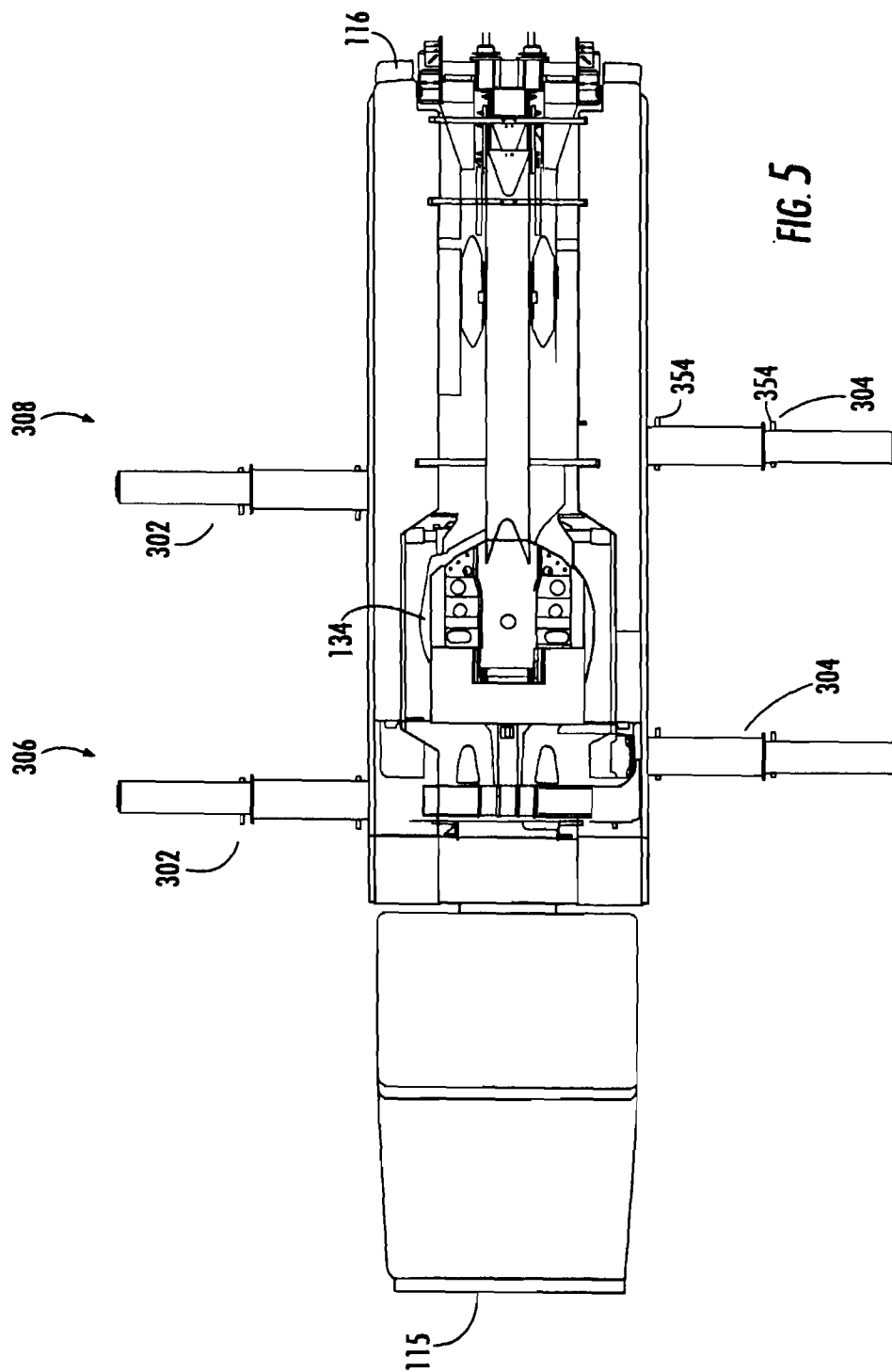


FIG. 3





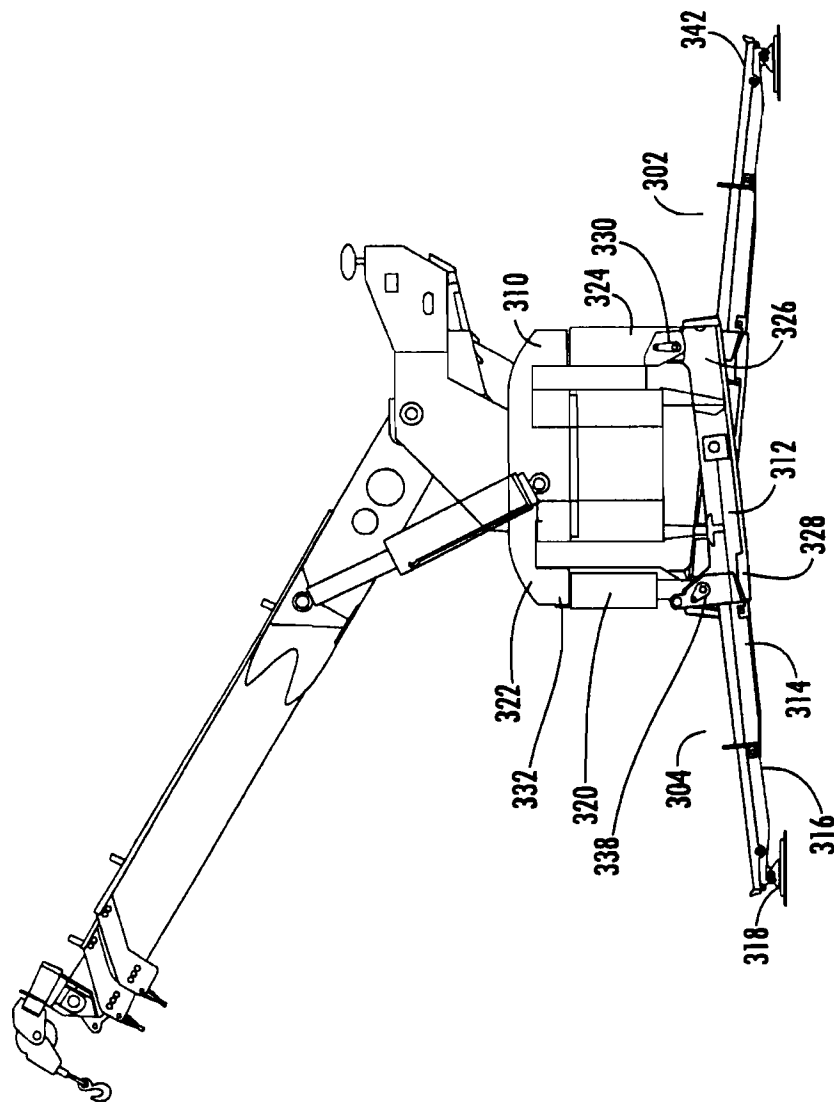


FIG. 6

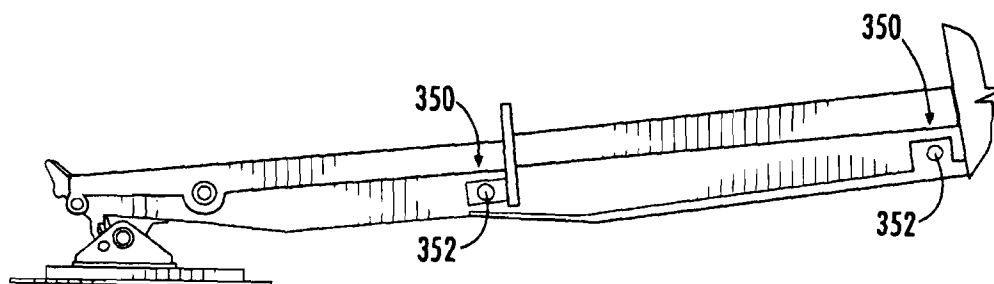


FIG. 6A

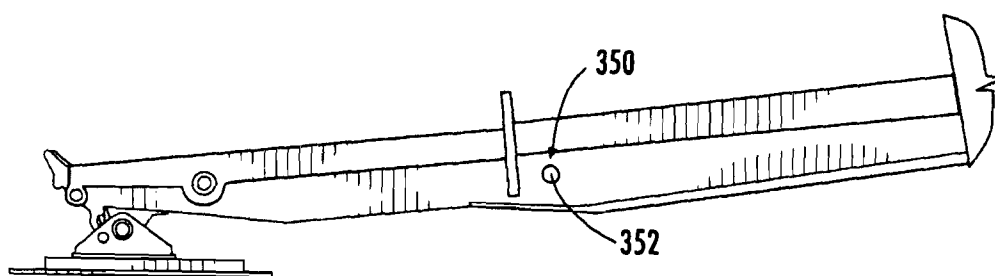


FIG. 6B

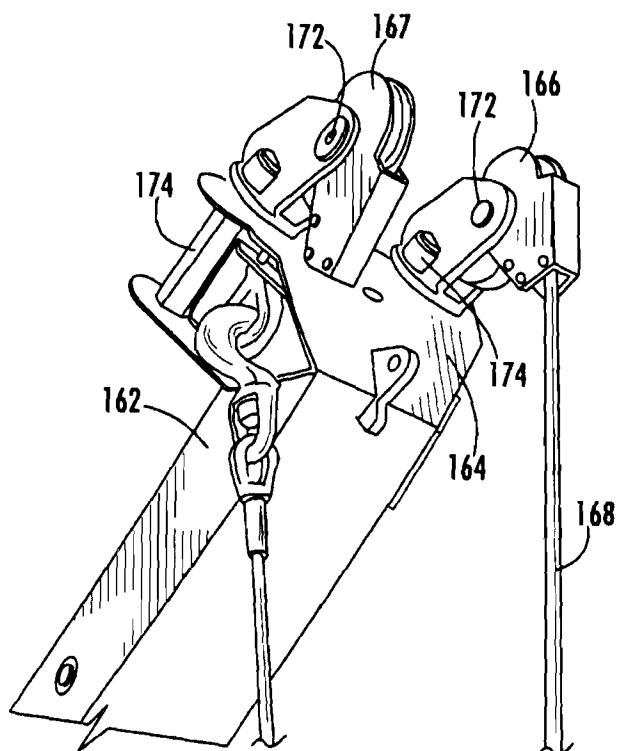
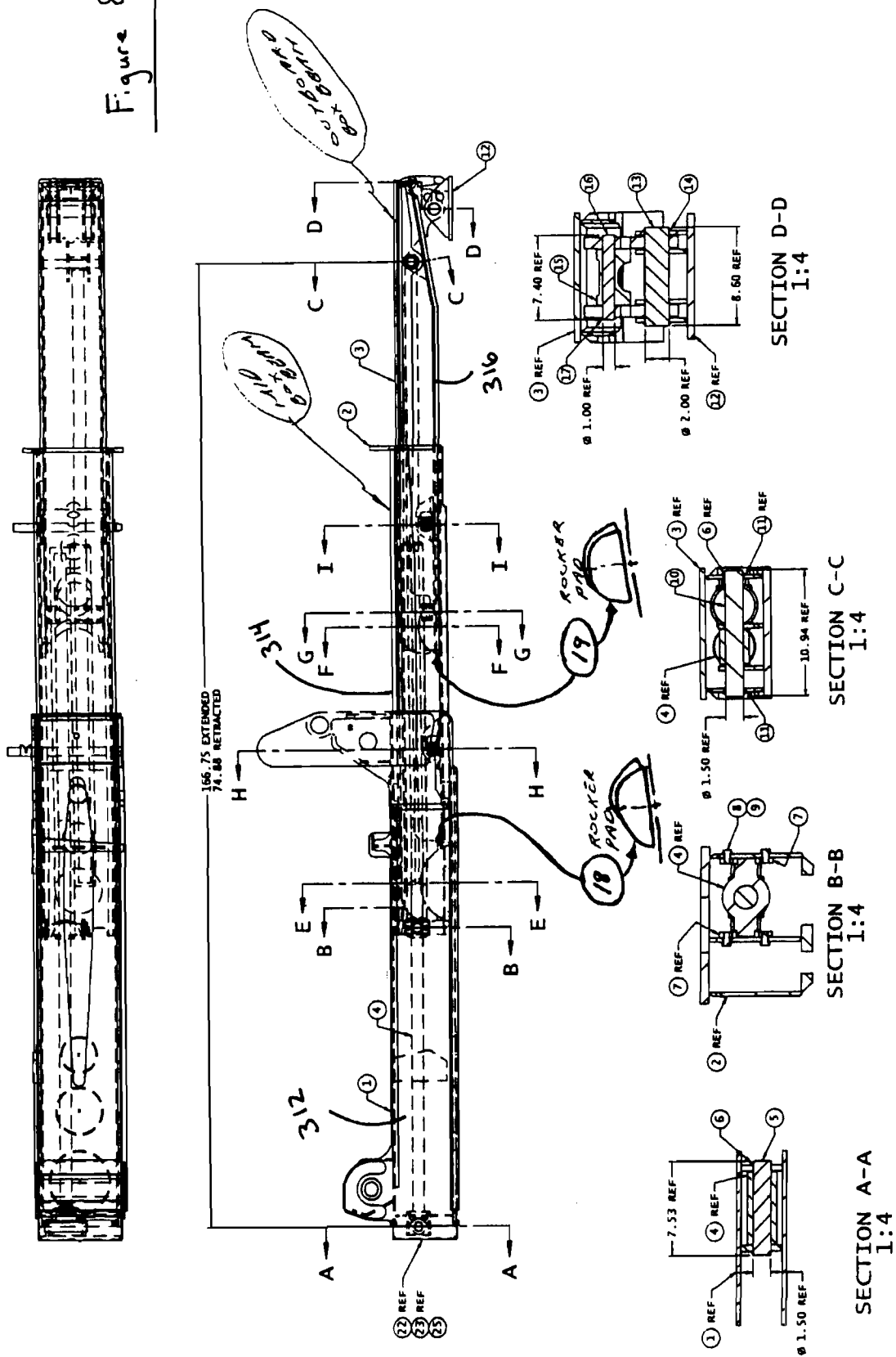


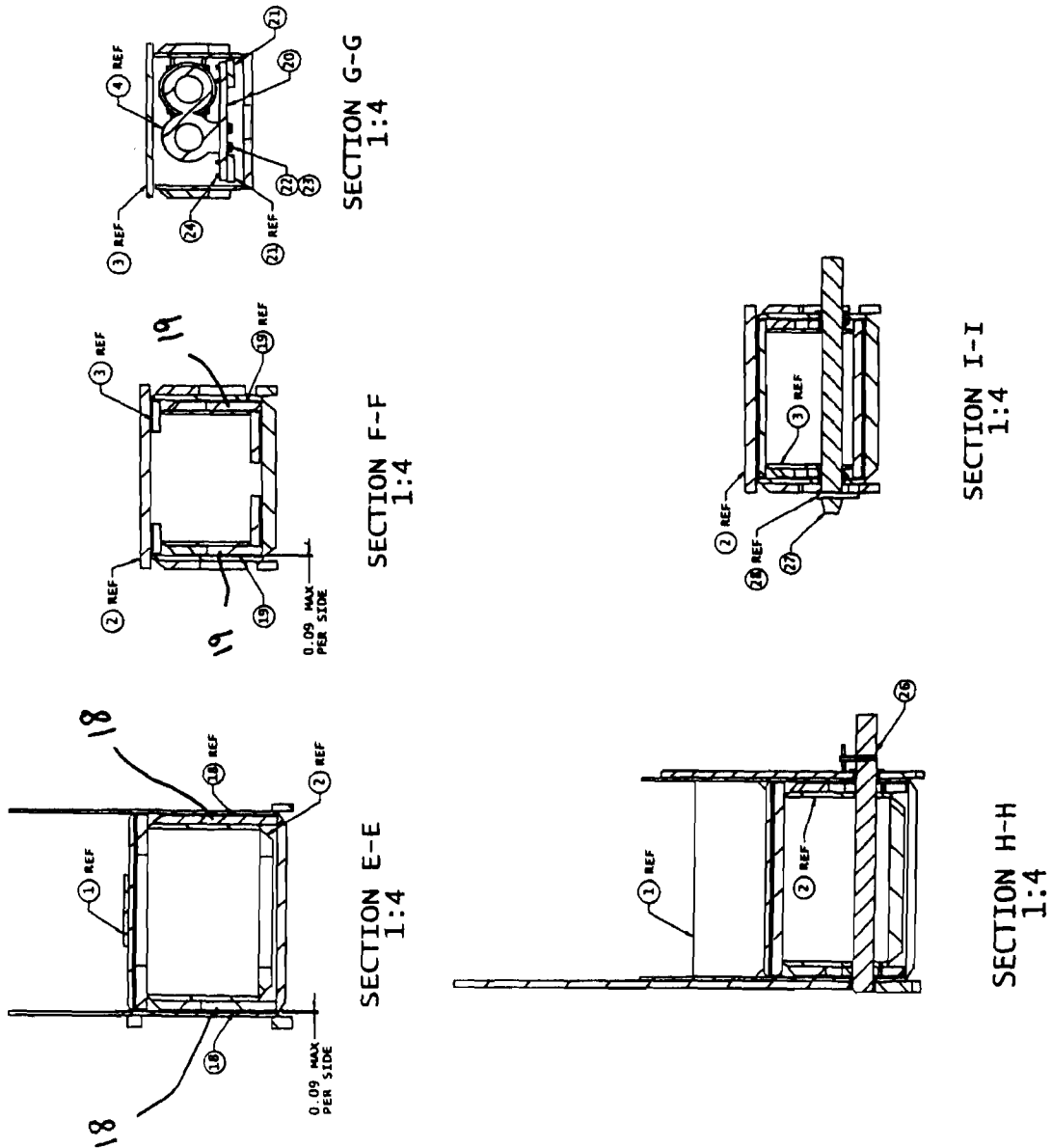
FIG. 7

Figure 8



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Figure 9



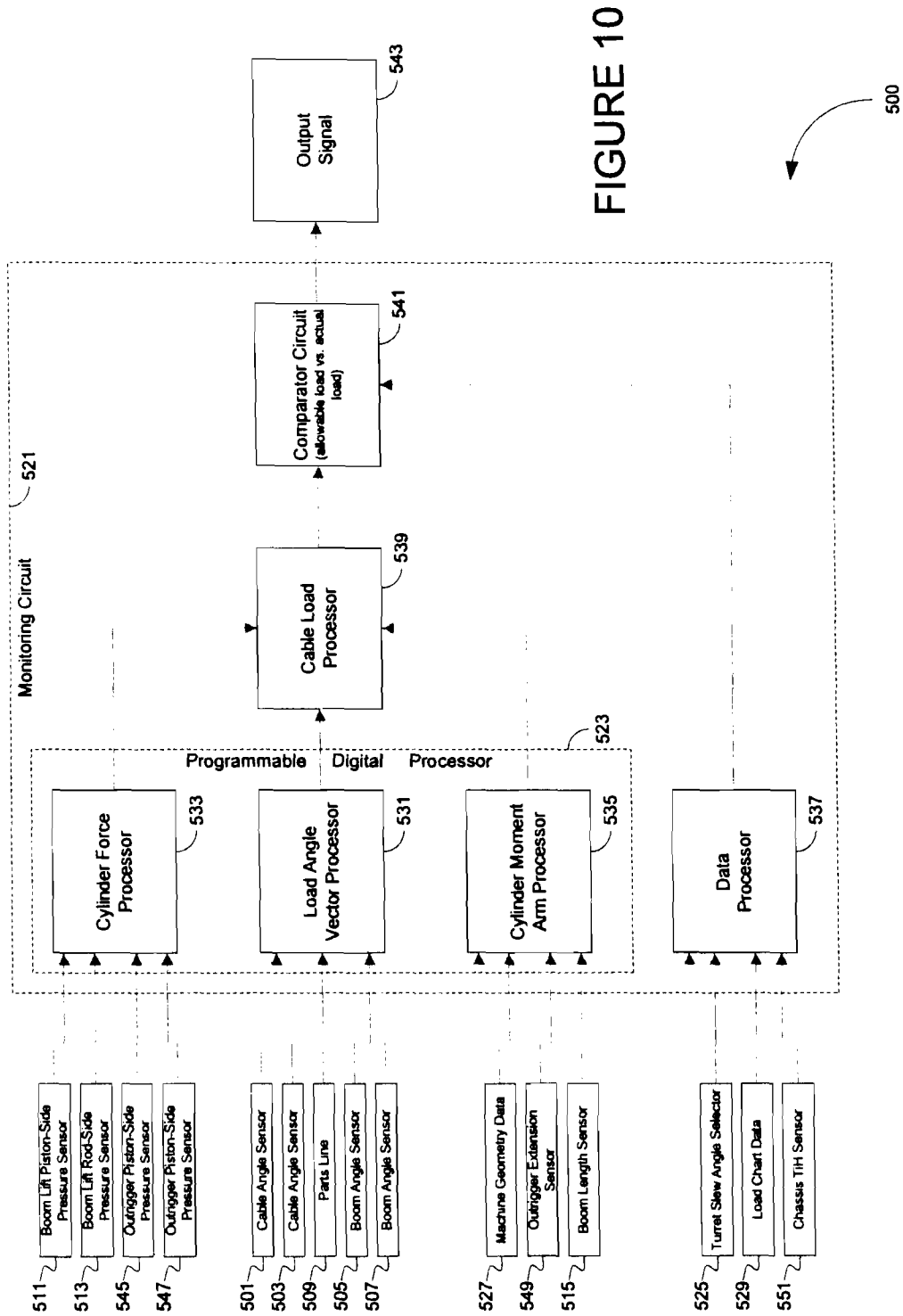
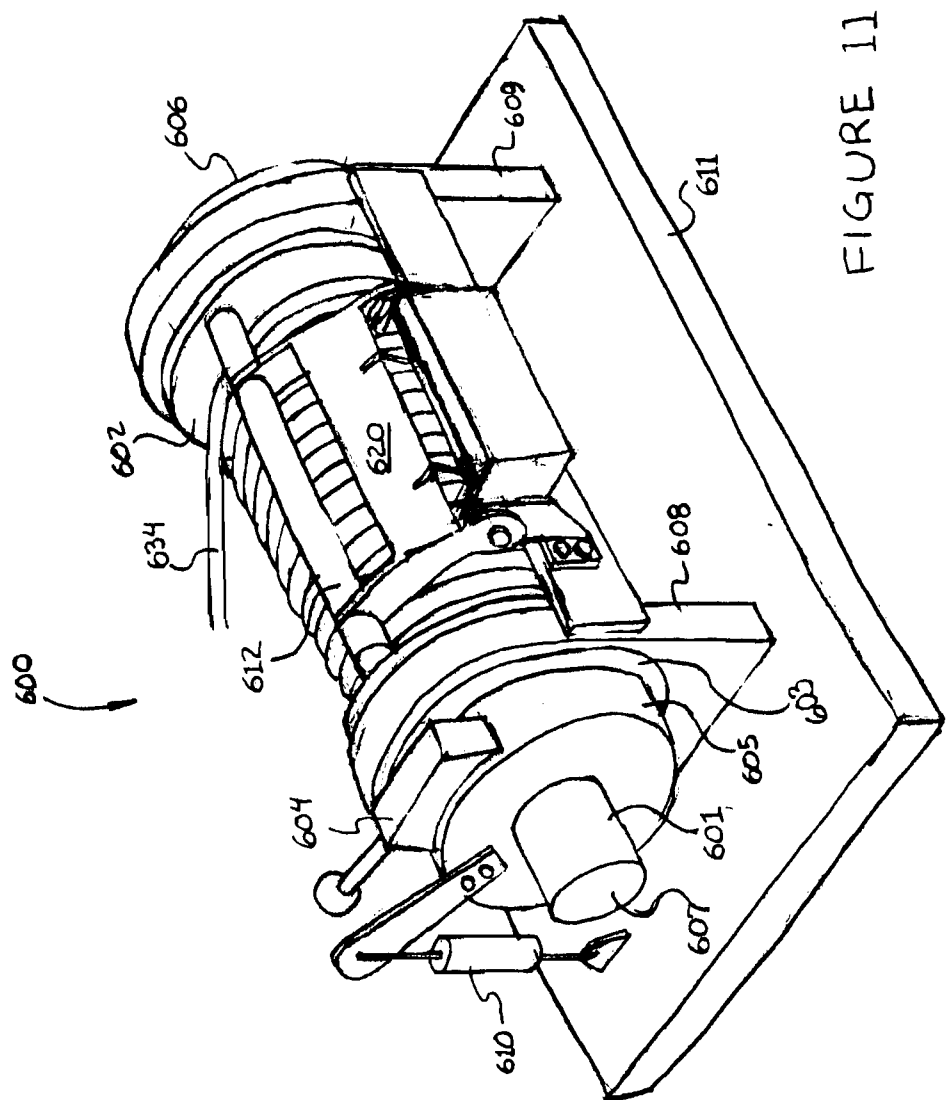


FIGURE 10



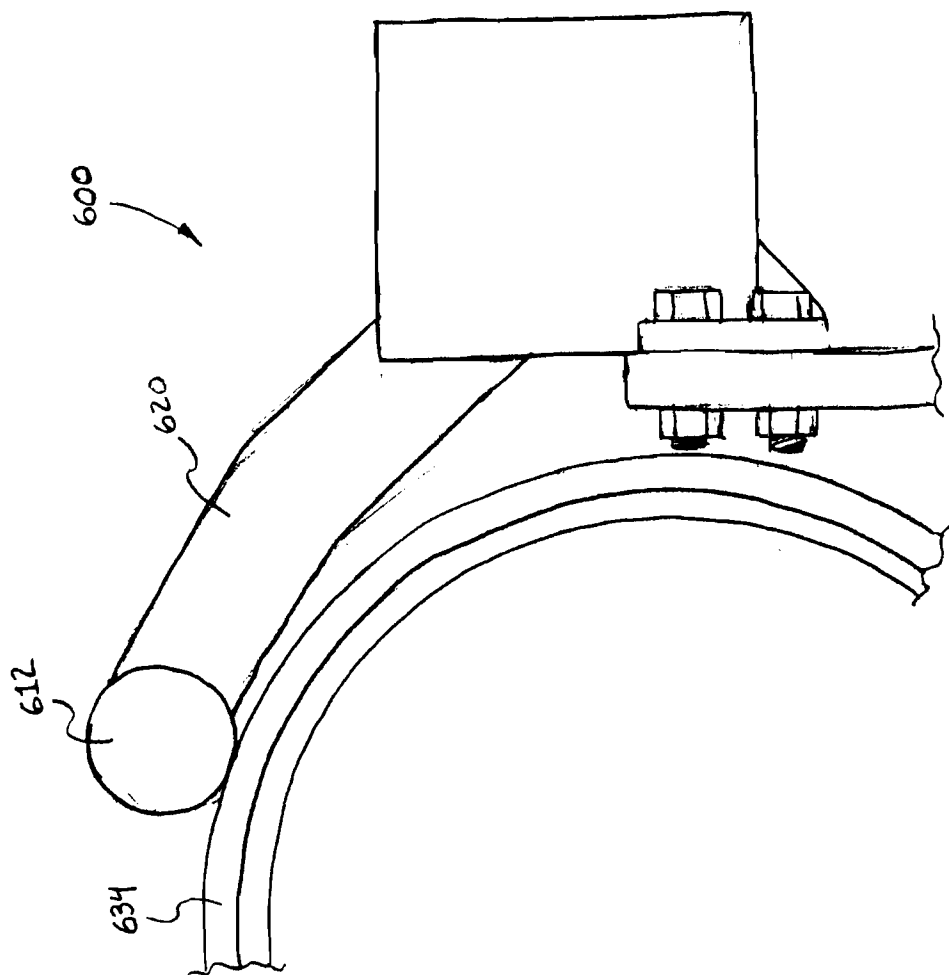


FIGURE 12

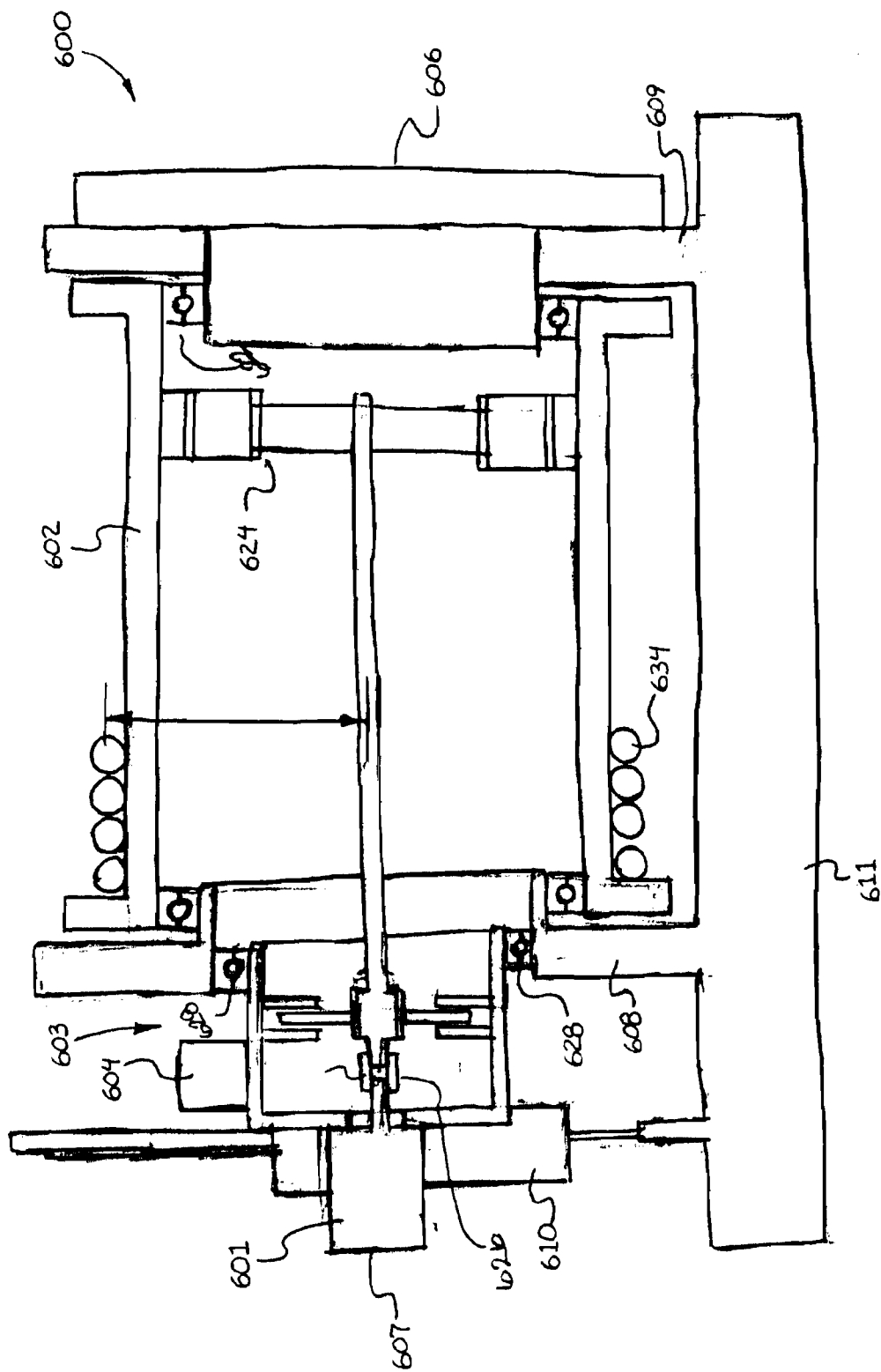


FIGURE 13

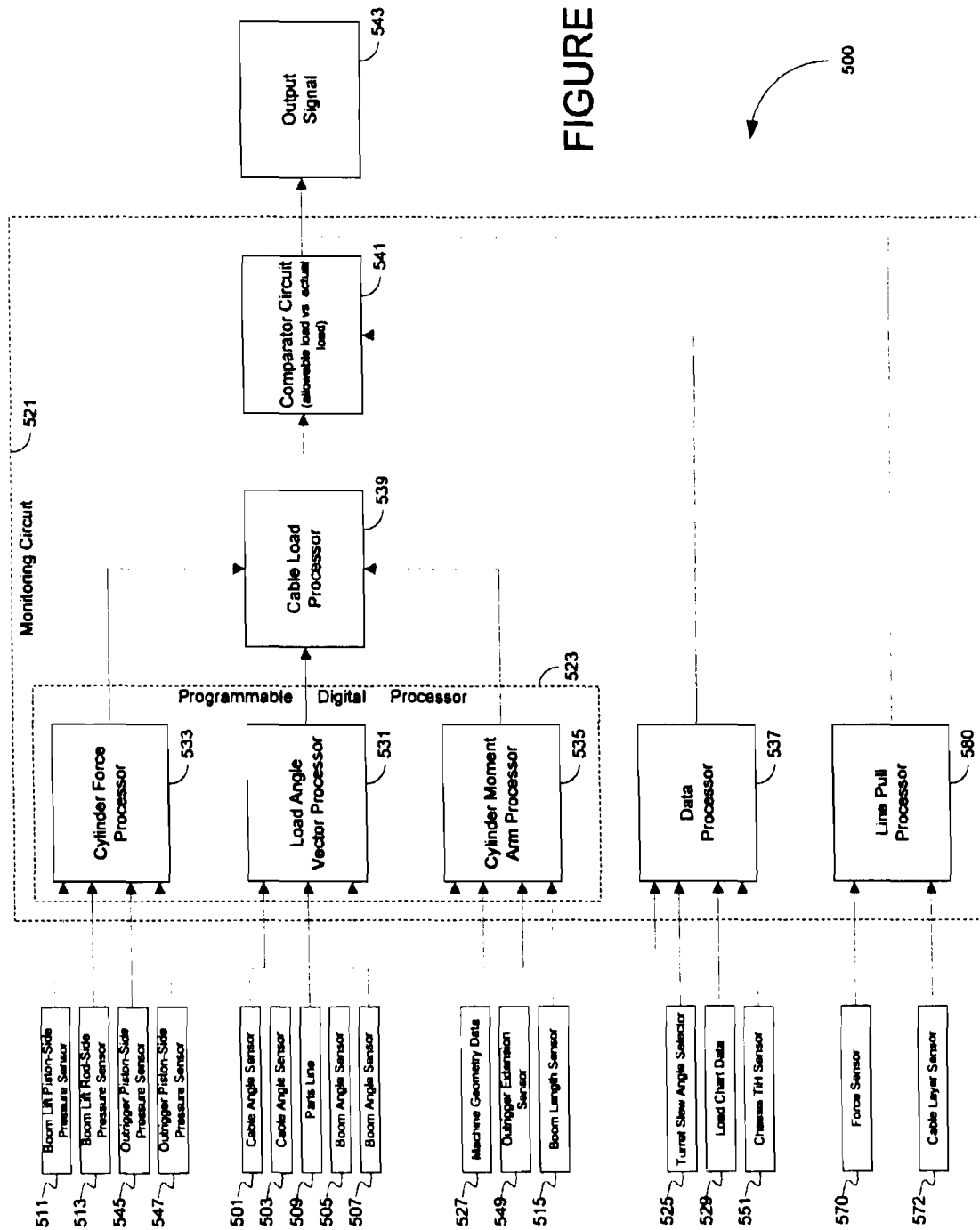


FIGURE 14

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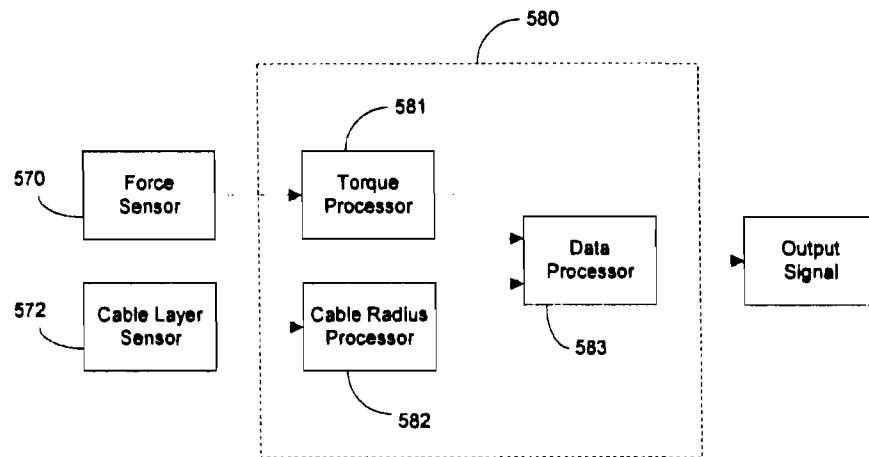


FIGURE 15

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2007/080854

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. B66C23/66 B66C23/90 B66D1/46 B66D1/58

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)
B66C B66D

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 practical, search terms used)

EPO-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	WO 00/66479 A (VARCO INT [US]) 9 November 2000 (2000-11-09)	1-7,9, 10, 12-22, 30-35 23-29
Y	abstract page 9, line 13 - page 12, line 19 figures 3,4,8	
X	US 2005/072965 A1 (SANDERS MARK E [US] ET AL) 7 April 2005 (2005-04-07)	1-5, 7-14,19 29
Y	abstract paragraph [0030] - paragraph [0036] paragraph [0052] figures 1-3	
X	EP 1 103 511 A (LIEBHERR WERK EHINGEN [DE]) 30 May 2001 (2001-05-30) the whole document	1-3,5-7, 9-13
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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☒ See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

29 January 2008

Date of mailing of the international search report

06/02/2008

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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C(Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	EP 1 120 376 A (MACMOTER SPA [IT]) 1 August 2001 (2001-08-01) abstract figures -----	23-29

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Information on patent family members

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