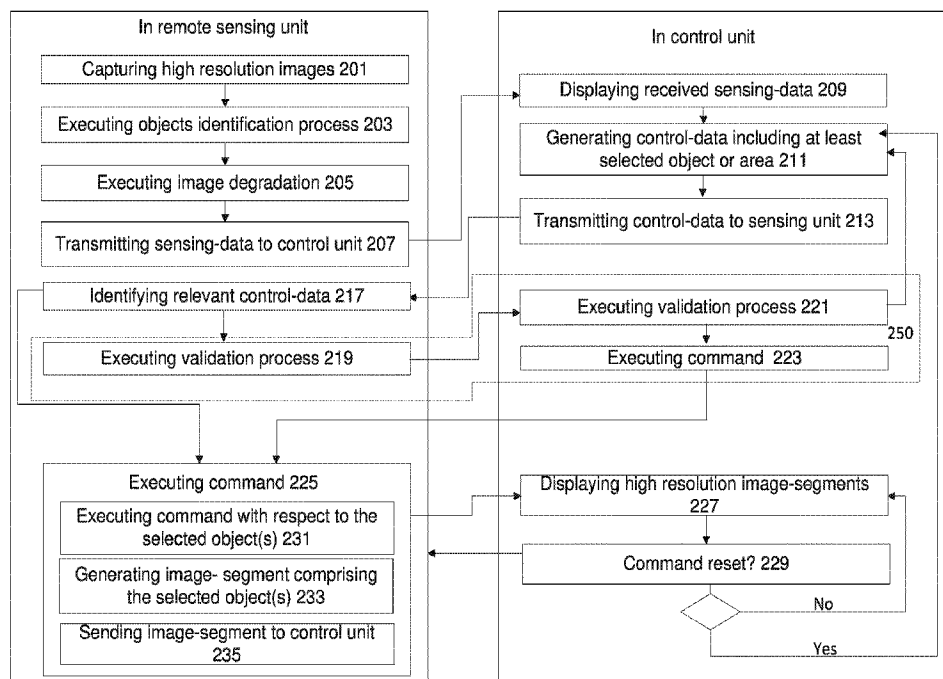




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(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

The presently disclosed subject matter includes a method and system configured for enabling using a high resolution imaging assembly for surveying large areas as well as for tracking objects within the surveyed area, notwithstanding the bandwidth limitation of the communication link.

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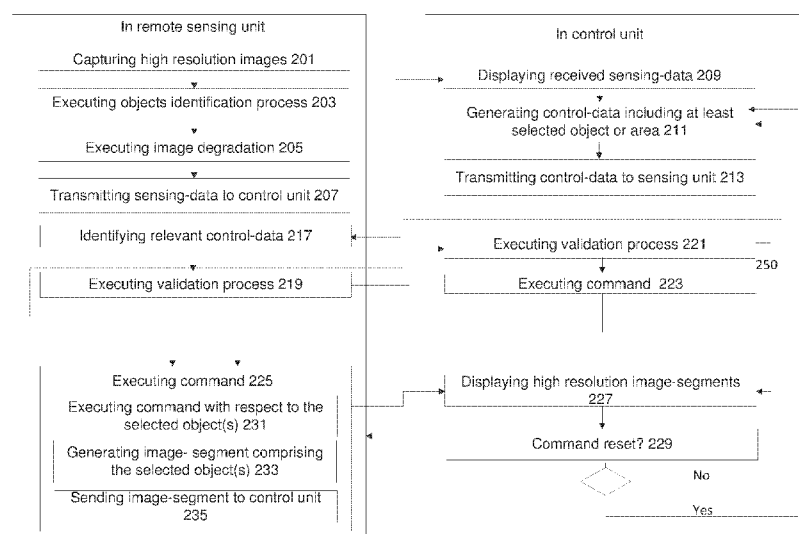


Fig. 2a

(57) Abstract: The presently disclosed subject matter includes a method and system configured for enabling using a high resolution imaging assembly for surveying large areas as well as for tracking objects within the surveyed area, notwithstanding the bandwidth limitation of the communication link.

## REMOTE DETECTING AND TRACKING OF OBJECTS

### FIELD

The presently disclosed subject matter relates to the remote tracking of objects by a sensing device.

### 5 BACKGROUND

In many applications, an operator of a remote surveillance system controls a remote image sensor via a communication link. Examples of such applications include traffic control, border control, search and rescue operations, land surveys, police surveillance, military applications, etc.

10 In general, a system for surveillance and remote tracking of objects (herein termed *surveillance system*) comprises a control unit at one location and a sensing unit at another location remote from the control unit, the control unit and sensing unit communicating over a communication link. The sensing unit, which comprises an image sensor, can be used for surveying a scene and transmitting sensing-data, which includes data that was acquired by the  
15 sensing unit or data generated by the sensing unit in relation to the acquired data (e.g. captured images, object-data characterizing identified objects in the captured images etc.) to the control unit. At the control unit the images can be displayed on a display for viewing by an operator. Furthermore, the sensing unit can be configured to locate and track a sighted object. The control unit provides to the sensing unit control-data, including for example, different types  
20 of commands, such as lock and track commands, zoom commands, centering commands, etc.

In some applications such as Terrain Dominance applications, it is desirable to capture large areas (e.g. of the ground) in a short time. One known solution involves using an imaging assembly suitably mounted onboard an aircraft, comprising a camera (CCD or CMOS) for capturing aerial images of ground terrain. The imaging assembly is configured with a motor for  
25 rotating an axis on which the camera is mounted, and for generating a sweeping back-and-forth motion shifting a field of view of the at least one camera. Multiple images of the ground terrain are captured and are synthetically combined into a single continuous image.

While this approach may provide imaging of a terrain area larger than the field of view (FOV) of the camera, it requires manufacturing a designated imaging assembly with a sweeping

mechanism, capturing multiple images, and using fusion algorithms for generating the complete single image.

## SUMMARY

In accordance with a broad aspect, there is provided a surveillance system, comprising a sensing unit configured to communicate over a communication link with a control unit, the sensing unit comprising a high-resolution imaging assembly operatively connected to a processor, the high-resolution imaging assembly being configured to capture a succession of high-resolution images comprising one or more elements; wherein a bandwidth of the communication link is not sufficiently large to allow transmission of the high-resolution images in a desired transmission rate; wherein the processor is configured to generate degraded images from respective images in the succession of high-resolution images and transmit successively sensing-data to the control unit, the sensing-data comprising the degraded images and data indicative of one or more elements in the degraded images, wherein degradation is adapted according to available bandwidth of the communication link; and wherein the processor is configured, responsive to control-data received from the control unit, indicative of at least one selected element, to: identify a location of the selected element in recently captured high-resolution images in the succession of high-resolution images; extract respective high-resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high-resolution images that comprises at least the selected element; and transmit successively the respective high-resolution image-segments to the control unit, wherein the high-resolution image-segments are adapted according to the available bandwidth of the communication link for enabling the image-segments to be communicated at a desired transmission rate.

In accordance with a further broad aspect, there is provided a method of surveying an area, using a sensing unit configured to communicate over a communication link with a control unit; the sensing unit comprises a high-resolution imaging assembly operatively connected to a processor; the method comprising: capturing a succession of high-resolution images comprising one or more elements, wherein a bandwidth of the communication link is not sufficiently large to allow transmission of the high-resolution images in a desired transmission rate; and with the processor, performing at least the following: generating degraded images from respective \_\_\_\_#

images in the succession of high-resolution images and transmit sensing-data to the control unit, the sensing-data comprising the degraded images and data indicative of at least one element in the degraded images, wherein degradation is adapted to available bandwidth of the communication link; responsive to control-data received from the control unit, indicative of at least one selected element: identifying a location of the selected element in recently captured high-resolution images in the succession of high-resolution images; extracting respective high-resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high-resolution images that comprises at least the selected element; and transmitting the respective high-resolution image-segments to the control unit, wherein the high-resolution image-segments are adapted according to the available bandwidth of the communication link for enabling the image-segments at the desired transmission rate.

The presently disclosed subject matter includes a remote sensing unit comprising a high resolution imaging assembly (otherwise known as "image forming system"). The high resolution imaging assembly comprises a high resolution sensor and a lens assembly with a suitably wide field of view (FOV) and suitable angular resolution for capturing wide angle and high resolution images. Nowadays, such high resolution sensors can comprise dozens of mega pixels (e.g. at least 25 mega pixels) and up to Giga pixels. The resolution of such cameras is bound to rise in the future as technology progresses. With today's technology, depending on the desired Ground Sample Distance (GSD), high resolution images can cover areas ranging from ten square kilometers and up to hundreds of square kilometers. These features are well suited for terrain dominance related applications which require achieving the ability to control an area using predominantly advanced remote-controlled technologies and autonomous means.

The high resolution imaging assembly disclosed herein can be suitably mounted on an airborne vehicle, or some other device located at a high vantage point, and used for capturing high resolution images of ground terrain while enabling to capture a large area in each single frame.

As mentioned above, the high resolution imaging assembly can be configured with a wide FOV and zoom capability to enable a control unit operator to operate

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the imaging assembly at various altitudes, and to select different GSDs to obtain different sizes of area coverage.

In some operational scenarios, bandwidth limitations of the communication link between the high resolution sensing unit and a respective control unit precludes  
5 a sufficiently fast transmission of the captured high resolution images due to their large size. For example, consider a video frame rate of 25 or 30 frames per second, and high resolution images of dozens of mega pixels or greater. Moreover, in a color video stream, every pixel has three bytes of color information, increasing the size of the transmitted data.

10 Communication systems available today are capable of transferring several megabits of information in one second, a transfer rate which is insufficient for transferring a high resolution image and/or video as disclosed above even after using high compressing methods. Furthermore, technological progress in the field of high definition optical sensors is currently faster than in the field of communication,  
15 therefore it is likely that this problem will become more dominant will intensify in the future.

The presently disclosed subject matter thus includes a method and system configured for enabling using a high resolution imaging assembly for surveying large areas as well as for tracking objects within the surveyed area, notwithstanding the  
20 bandwidth limitation of the communication link described above.

According to an aspect of the presently disclosed subject matter there is provided a surveillance system comprising: a sensing unit configured to communicate over a communication link with a control unit; the sensing unit comprises a high resolution imaging assembly operatively connected to at least one  
25 processor; the high resolution imaging assembly is configured to capture a succession of high resolution images; wherein a bandwidth of the communication link is not sufficiently large to allow transmission of the high resolution images in a desired transmission rate;

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the processor is configured to: generate degraded images from respective images in the succession of high resolution images; and transmit successively sensing-data to the control unit;

the sensing-data comprising the degraded images and data indicative of one  
5 or more objects of interest in the degraded images; wherein the degraded images are suitable to be transmitted over the communication link in the desired transmission rate ;

the processor is further configured, responsive to control-data received from the control unit, indicative of at least one selected element, to:

10 identify a location of the selected element in recently captured high resolution images in the succession of high resolution images; extract respective high-resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high resolution images, the image-segment comprising at least the selected element; and transmit successively the respective high-resolution image-segments to the control unit;  
15 wherein the high-resolution image-segments are suitable to be transmitted over the communication link in the desired transmission rate.

In addition to the above features, the method according to this aspect of the presently disclosed subject matter can optionally comprise one or more of features (i) to (xxii) below, in any desired combination or permutation:

20 **(i).** wherein the at least one processor is configured to identify one or more objects of interest in the high resolution images, assign a respective object-tag to the one or more objects of interest to yield one or more tagged-objects; wherein the sensing-data further comprises the object-tags.

**(ii).** wherein the control data further includes command instructions and  
25 wherein the at least one processor is configured to execute the command instructions only if the high-resolution image-segments are validated at the control unit.

(iii). wherein the at least one processor is further configured to successively transmit to the control unit, at a degraded frame rate, the succession of high resolution images.

(iv). wherein the control data further includes command instructions for  
5 executing a track command instructing to track one or more given objects; wherein the high-resolution image-segments are extracted from images in the succession of high resolution images according to the current location of the one or more given objects in the images from the succession of high resolution images.

(v). wherein the at least one processor is further configured to transmit  
10 successively to the control unit, both the degraded images and high resolution image-segments of respective high resolution captured images; wherein a degraded image and a high resolution image-segment generated from the same high resolution image are displayed as a merged image, wherein the image-segment is displayed in high resolution while the area surrounding the image-segment is  
15 displayed in degraded resolution; and wherein the location of the image-segment with respect to the degraded image is adapted according to a current location of a selected element.

(vi). wherein the at least one processor is further configured to transmit  
20 successively to the control unit, both the degraded images and high resolution image-segments of respective high resolution captured images; wherein each one of a degraded image and a high resolution image-segment generated from the same high resolution image are displayed separately on a different display device.

(vii). wherein the objects of interest are moving objects and the sensing unit is configured to identify one or more moving objects in the succession of high  
25 resolution images.

(viii). wherein the sensing unit further comprises a Video Motion Detection module configured to identify the one or more moving objects.

(ix). wherein the identification of a location of the selected element comprises:

determining whether the at least one selected element is a moving object or a stationary object; in case the at least one selected element is a moving object, obtaining from the control data an object-tag corresponding to the at least one  
5 selected object, and identifying the at least one selected object in the succession of high resolution images; in case the at least one selected element is a stationary object, obtaining from the control data an image or piece thereof, matching the image or part thereof to one or more recently captured high resolution images in the succession of high resolution images and identifying the at least one selected object  
10 in the succession of high resolution images.

(x). wherein a tagged-object is associated with its respective object-tag based on information indicative of a location of the tagged-object in the succession of images; wherein the sensing unit is further configured to trace the tagged-object, from an earlier image in the succession of images to a later image in the succession of  
15 images, thereby maintaining a given object-tag associated with a respective tagged-object along the succession of images.

(xi). wherein the sensing unit is configured to continuously send a stream of degraded images generated from the succession of high resolution images to the control unit.

20 (xii). wherein information with respect to the one or more objects and respective object-tags is stored in a data-repository associated with the sensing unit.

(xiii). wherein the system further comprises the control unit; the control unit being configured to: receive a degraded image from the sensing unit; display the degraded image on a display device; determine, responsive to selection of an object in the  
25 image, whether the selected object is a moving object or a stationary object;

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in case the selected object is a moving object, identifying an object-tag assigned to the selected object and generating control-data comprising the object-tag;

in case the selected object is a stationary object, generating control-data  
5 comprising the image or part thereof; and sending the control-data to the sensing unit.

(xiv). wherein the control unit is configured to display the object-tags over the degraded image.

(xv). wherein the control unit is configured to: successively receive, both the  
10 degraded images and high resolution image-segments of respective high resolution captured images; display the degraded image and a high resolution image-segment generated from the same high resolution image as a merged image, wherein the image-segment is displayed in high resolution while the area surrounding the image-segment is displayed in degraded resolution; and adapt the location of the image-segment with respect to the degraded image according to a current location of a  
15 selected element.

(xvi). wherein the system is configured to execute a command with respect to the selected object notwithstanding a time-delay between a time when the sensing unit acquires the image with the selected object, to a time when a corresponding  
20 command is received at the sensing unit with respect to the selected object.

(xvii). wherein the sensing unit is located on an airborne vehicle.

(xviii). wherein the high resolution images comprise between dozens of Mega pixels and up to Giga pixels and wherein video stream rate is characterized at a rate of at least 20 frames per second.

(xix). wherein the degraded image is characterized by degraded resolution as  
25 compared to the respective high resolution images.

(xx).Wherein the degraded images are characterized by degraded color information as compared to the respective high resolution images.

(xxi).wherein the desired transmission rate is video streaming transmission rate.

(xxii). Where the system further comprises a display unit operatively connected to the at least one processor; the display device comprising a scroller configured to enable an operator to jump between different elements which are displayed in the degraded images.

According to another aspect of the presently disclosed subject matter there is provided a method of surveying an area, using a sensing unit configured to communicate over a communication link with a control unit; the sensing unit comprising a high resolution imaging assembly operatively connected to at least one processor; the method comprising:

capturing a succession of high resolution images; wherein a bandwidth of the communication link is not sufficiently large to allow transmission of the high resolution images in a desired transmission rate;

with the help of the processor performing at least the following:

generating degraded images from respective images in the succession of high resolution images, where a degraded image is characterized by degraded resolution; and transmitting successively sensing-data to the control unit; the sensing-data comprises the degraded images and data indicative of one or more objects of interest in the degraded images; wherein the degraded images are suitable to be transmitted over the communication link in the desired transmission rate;

responsive to control-data received from the control unit, indicative of at least one selected element:

identifying a location of the selected element in recently captured high resolution images in the succession of high resolution images;

extracting respective high-resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high resolution images, the image-segment comprising at least the selected element; and

transmitting successively the respective high-resolution image-segments to  
5 the control unit; wherein the high-resolution image-segments are suitable to be transmitted over the communication link in the desired transmission rate.

According to another aspect of the presently disclosed subject matter there is provided a non-transitory program storage device readable by a computer, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the computer to perform a  
10 method of surveying an area; the method comprising:

obtaining a succession of high resolution images captured by a high resolution image assembly; generating degraded images from respective images in the succession of high resolution images, where a degraded image is characterized by degraded resolution; transmitting successively sensing-data to a remote  
15 computer over a communication link; the sensing-data comprising the degraded images and data indicative of one or more objects of interest in the degraded images; wherein the degraded images are suitable to be transmitted over the communication link in a desired transmission rate; responsive to control-data received from the remote computer, indicative of at least one selected element:

20 identifying a location of the selected element in recently captured high resolution images in the succession of high resolution images;

extracting respective high-resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high resolution images, the image-segment comprising at least the selected element; and

25 transmitting successively the respective high-resolution image-segments to the remote computer; wherein the high-resolution image-segments are suitable to be transmitted over the communication link in the desired transmission rate.

According to another aspect of the presently disclosed subject matter there is provided a control unit configured to communicate over a communication link with the sensing unit mentioned above with respect to the first aspect and as described further below;

5           The method, the computer storage device and the control unit, disclosed in accordance with the presently disclosed subject matter can optionally comprise one or more of features (i) to (xxii) listed above, mutatis mutandis, in any desired combination or permutation.

#### 10   **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

In order to understand the presently disclosed subject matter and to see how it may be carried out in practice, the subject matter will now be described, by way of non-limiting examples only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

15           **Fig. 1** is a functional block diagram schematically illustrating a surveillance system, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter;

**Fig. 2a** is a flowchart illustrating operations performed by a surveillance system, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter;

20           **Fig. 2b** is a flowchart illustrating operations performed during the data validation process, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter;

**Fig. 3** is a schematic illustration of a captured image demonstrating some principles, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter;

25           **Figs 4a** and **4b** are schematic illustrations of captured images demonstrating some principles, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter;

**Fig. 5** is a flowchart illustrating operations performed by a sensing unit, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter;

**Fig. 6** is a flowchart illustrating operations performed by a control unit, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter;

5        **Fig. 7** is a flowchart illustrating operations performed by a sensing unit, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter; and

**Figs. 8a-8c** are schematic illustrations exemplifying the tracking method of a stationary object, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter.

#### **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS**

10        Variants, examples, and preferred embodiments are described hereinbelow. In the drawings and descriptions set forth, identical reference numerals indicate those components that are common to different embodiments or configurations. Elements in the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale.

15        Unless specifically stated otherwise, as apparent from the following discussions, it is appreciated that throughout the specification discussions utilizing terms such as "generating", "transmitting", "identifying", "extracting" or the like, include action and/or processes of a computer that manipulate and/or transform data into other data, said data represented as physical quantities, e.g. such as electronic quantities, and/or said data representing the physical objects.

20        The term "computer" should be expansively construed to cover any kind of electronic device with data processing capabilities, including, by way of non-limiting example, a personal computer device, a server device, a computing system, a communication device, a processor (e.g. digital signal processor (DSP), a microcontroller, a field programmable gate array (FPGA), an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), etc.), any other electronic computing device,  
25        and or any combination thereof. Each one of the sensing unit and the control unit described

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herein with reference to **Fig. 1** include or is otherwise associated with one or more computers.

The operations in accordance with the teachings herein may be performed by a computer specially constructed for the desired purposes or by a general purpose  
5 computer specially configured for the desired purpose by a computer program stored in a computer readable storage medium.

As used herein, the phrase "for example," "such as", "for instance" and variants thereof describe non-limiting embodiments of the presently disclosed subject matter. Reference in the specification to "one case", "some cases", "other  
10 cases" or variants thereof means that a particular feature, structure or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment(s) is included in at least one embodiment of the presently disclosed subject matter. Thus the appearance of the phrase "one case", "some cases", "other cases" or variants thereof does not necessarily refer to the same embodiment(s).

15 It is appreciated that certain features of the presently disclosed subject matter, which are, for clarity, described in the context of separate embodiments, may also be provided in combination in a single embodiment. Conversely, various features of the presently disclosed subject matter, which are, for brevity, described in the context of a single embodiment, may also be provided separately or in any  
20 suitable sub-combination. For example, **Fig. 1** describes processing unit **150** configured to execute various image processing operations. Presenting a single processing unit is done for the sake of clarity and simplicity only and it should be clear to any person skill in the art that a plurality of separate processing units, each configured for executing different tasks, can be used as well.

25 In embodiments of the presently disclosed subject matter, fewer, more and/or different stages than those shown in **Figs. 2a, 2b, 5, 6** and **7** may be executed. In embodiments of the presently disclosed subject matter one or more stages illustrated in **Figs. 2** and **5** to **7** may be executed in a different order and/or one or

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more groups of stages may be executed simultaneously. **Fig. 1** illustrates a general schematic of the system architecture in accordance with an embodiment of the presently disclosed subject matter. Functional elements in **Fig. 1** can be made up of any combination of software and hardware and/or firmware that performs the functions as defined and explained herein. Functional elements in **Fig. 1** may be centralized in one location or dispersed over more than one location. In other embodiments of the presently disclosed subject matter, the system may comprise fewer, more, and/or different functional elements than those shown in **Fig. 1**.

The term "criterion" as used herein should be expansively construed to include any compound criterion, including, for example, several criteria and/or their logical combinations.

The term "successively transmitted", "successive transmission" "succession of data" or any variations thereof should be expansively construed to include the transmission of data over a communication link where a sequence of data (e.g. captured images) which is obtained at one location is transmitted to another location, such that the order in which the data was generated at one end can be reconstructed at the other end.

The term "images" should be expansively construed to cover any type of stills images or images combined into a video stream. These images can come from an electro-optic sensor which can provide for example, color optical images, black and white optical images, as well as images generated by any other types of imaging system.

Attention is now drawn to **Fig. 1** showing a functional block diagram schematically illustrating a surveillance system, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter. **Fig. 1** shows surveillance system **100** comprising sensing unit **110** and control unit **120** communicating over communication link **160**. Sensing unit **110** and control unit **120** can be located remotely from each other. For example, control unit **120** can be located on the ground while sensing unit **110** is

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located onboard an airborne vehicle or device such as a manned or unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), in a satellite, etc. In other examples, sensing unit **110** can be located at a remote location such as a manned or an unmanned ground vehicle, a manned or an unmanned vessel, a high pole etc. Communication between sensing unit **110** and control unit **120** can be facilitated for example, with the help of communication module **111** in sensing unit **110**, and communication module **121** in the control unit **120**. Communication between sensing unit **110** and control unit **120** can be realized by any suitable communication infrastructure and protocol known in the art.

According to the teaching disclosed herein, sensing unit **110** further comprises imaging assembly **113**, image processing unit **150** and data-repository **130**. Imaging assembly **113** comprises a high resolution sensor and a lens assembly with a suitably wide FOV and suitable angular resolution for capturing wide angle and high resolution images of a surveyed scene.

Image processing unit **150** is configured to execute various image processing operations including for example, object detection and tagging (e.g. with the help of object processing module **131**), image degradation (e.g. with the help of image degradation module **133**) and image-segmentation (e.g. with the help of image-segmentation module **135**). A more detailed description of the image processing operations is disclosed below in more detail. Image processing unit is configured as part of or operatively connected to at least one computer (comprising one or more computer processors **140** and computer memory) configured to execute the relevant operations.

Control unit **120** comprises display unit **123** comprising one or more display devices (e.g. LED screens) for displaying received sensing-data; input device(s) **127**, including for example, joystick, a mouse, a touch pad, touch screen or any other device enabling operator-interaction with control unit **120**; and object processing module **125** configured to enable identification and tracking of object of interests in the scene.

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Fig. 2a is a flowchart illustrating operations performed by a surveillance system 100, in accordance with an example of the presently disclosed subject matter. Operations described with reference to Fig. 2a as well as Figs. 2b, 5, 6 and 7 below, can be executed, for example, with the help of a surveillance system 5 configured according to the principles of system 100 described above with reference to Fig. 1. It is noted however that any description of operations which is made with reference to elements in Fig. 1 is done by way of example and for the purpose of illustration only and should not be construed as limiting in any way.

An imaging assembly acquires high resolution images of a surveyed scene 10 (block 201). The generated high resolution images are processed by image processing unit 150. According to one example image processing unit 150 is configured to execute an object identification process (block 203). During the object identification process, objects of interest are identified in the high resolution image of the surveyed scene. The identified objects of interest are tagged, each object of 15 interest with a respective object-tag enabling its identification.

The tagged-objects are traced from an earlier image to a later image along a succession of captured images, thereby maintaining each object-tag associated with its respective tagged-object along the succession of images and enabling to track tagged-objects from one image to the next along the succession of images. A more 20 detailed description of the object identification process is disclosed below with reference to Fig. 5.

It is noted that the term "object" as used herein should be broadly interpreted to include any type of identifiable object in an image of a scene or part thereof, including a specific type of object in an image of a scene (e.g. car, building, 25 aircraft etc.) as well as a discernible group of one or more pixels (e.g. a group of moving pixels or a group of pixels characterized by a discernible temperature or color with respect to the surrounding scene) or an area selected in an image of the surveyed scene. In the following description the term "element" is also likewise used

occasionally to refer collectively to objects or areas. An object-tag can be any number, name, character, insignia, icon etc. which can be assigned to an object and used for identifying the object.

In the following discussion an object assigned with a tag is referred to as a  
5 "tagged-object". The image, the object-tags of the tagged-objects, and possibly additional object-data can be stored in data-repository **130** (comprising for example some type of non-transitory computer memory). The term "object-data" includes various characteristics of objects, including for example, coordinates with respect to the acquired image and/or coordinates with respect to global position of the object,  
10 object's velocity, object's size, object's temperature, object's color, object's shape, correlation data and any information which may help in the identification of an object within a given image.

At block **205** an image degradation process is executed. To this end, image processing unit **150** can be further configured to process an originally captured high  
15 resolution image and generate a respective degraded image. Degradation is adapted according to the available bandwidth of the communication link for enabling transmission of the captured images to the control unit over the communication link at a sufficient rate. The original high resolution image can be degraded by implementing any one or more of available degradation methods. For example, the  
20 degradation process can be adapted to ensure that a sensing-data can reach the control unit at an acceptable rate for video streaming display (e.g. 25-30 FPS).

For example, the degradation process can include generating a degraded image which is characterized by degraded resolution compared to the originally captured high resolution image. Degradation is adapted for reducing the image  
25 resolution, and thus the image size, for enabling transmission of the captured images to the control unit over the communication link at a sufficient rate.

Alternatively or additionally, the degradation process can include degrading the frames' transmission rate. According to this approach, the high resolution image can be transmitted as a still image at a lower transmission rate (e.g. one frame every second or even slower, instead of 25 or 30 frames per second).

5 Further alternatively or additionally, the degradation process can include degrading the color information of the original high resolution image. According to this approach, the degraded image comprises fewer colors (e.g. black and white only) than those which are found in the original high-resolution image.

10 Notably, the degradation methods described herein are brought as non-limiting examples and additional degradation techniques are contemplated within the scope of the presently disclosed subject matter.

At block **207** sensing-data is transmitted to control unit **120** over a communication link. According to one example, sensing-data which is transmitted to control unit **120** includes the degraded image, one or more object-tags assigned to objects of interest identified in the captured image, and possibly also additional object-data with respect to the tagged-objects. The additional object-data can include for example, correlation data which enables to associate an object-tag with a respective object in an image in the succession of images (e.g. an image ID identifying each captured image and/or their respective coordinates in the image and their size). Notably, objects-tags can be sent in parallel to the degraded image, where the object-tags are associated with the respective tagged-objects at the control unit.

25 For the purpose of providing a continuous video feed of the surveyed scene, images can be continuously captured and processed at the sensing unit and the generated sensing-data can be continuously transmitted to the control unit.

At block **209** sensing-data is received at control unit **120** and can be displayed on one or more display devices in display unit **123**. Sensing-data can also be stored in data-repository **160**.

Notably, the image which is displayed on the control unit display is characterized by degraded resolution and therefore does not necessary provide a highly detailed and clear image of the surveyed scene. However, according to one example, the image degradation can be executed while maintaining a sufficient  
5 image resolution to allow an operator to identify the existence of objects within the image as well as to identify the types of objects which appear in the image.

Furthermore, according to another example, the object-tags can also be displayed over the degraded image to indicate the location of each respective object in the received image. Thus, objects of interest which appear in the displayed image  
10 can be recognized based on their associated object-tags, notwithstanding the reduced image resolution. Assuming for example a convoy of vehicles is traveling along a road, at least part of the vehicles in the convoy can be identified by respective object-tags which identify the entire convoy as a group of objects-tags advancing along the road.

15 **Fig. 3** is a schematic example of a captured image demonstrating a degraded image with a convoy of 3 vehicles traveling on a road. The object-tags assist in the identification and tracking of the vehicles in the displayed video stream. It should be noted that **Fig. 3** is merely an illustrative example and the actual image may be different e.g. the resolution of the image may be less degraded or more degraded  
20 than it appears in the illustration. As mentioned above, degradation rate depends, *inter alia*, on a desired transmission rate and on the available bandwidth of the communication link between units **110** and **120**.

Control-data can be generated at control unit **120** (block **211**). According to one example, a control unit operator can select one or more objects (hereinafter  
25 “selected object”) in an image displayed at control unit **120**. Alternatively or additionally, an operator can indicate or select an area of interest within the displayed image.

Optionally, display unit **123** can be configured to assist the operator to view and select elements in a displayed image. For example, display unit **123** can be configured with a designated scroller configured to enable scrolling between different elements in the displayed image. By scrolling the scroller, the focus is shifted from one element to next. Once an element is in focus, the operator can easily select that element e.g. by pressing a designated button or clicking the mouse.

The scroller can be implemented as a physical scrolling device such as a turning knob or wheel (e.g. a designated wheel or mouse wheel) where turning of the knob or wheel causes the focus to shift from one element to the next in the image. Alternatively or additionally, the scroller can be implemented as a virtual scroller implemented by software and displayed on the screen alongside the displayed images. For example, a scroll bar which can be moved with the help of the arrow keys in a keyboard or mouse cursor. Moving the scroll bar causes the focus of the focus to shift from one element to the next in the image.

The scroller can also include appropriate software configured to be responsive to interaction with the scroller and generate an indication showing which element is currently in focus and/or which elements has been selected. For example, an element in focus can be colored in a certain color or be marked by a square or circle surrounding the element. As the operator scrolls from one element to the next, the indication (e.g. specific coloring) is shifted from one element to the next to indicate which element is currently in focus.

Responsive to the operator selection, control-data is generated by control unit **120**. According to one example, control-data includes a selected object(s) or a selected area. According to another example, control-data may also include some type of command issued with respect to the selected object or selected area.

Different types of commands can be generated with respect to an object including for example, command to lock and track a selected object (e.g. moving object), command to zoom in on a selected object, command to mark a selected

object, command to obtain data with respect to a certain parameter (e.g. velocity) of a selected object, etc. An object can be selected by any way known in the art for example, by pointing or otherwise marking an object of interest with the help of an input device **127**.

5           Other types of commands which are not necessarily associated with an object can also be generated. For example, a virtual zoom command instructing sensing unit to transfer a selected area in the captured image with maximum quality, i.e. with no degradation on the video stream. A zoom command may include pointing instructions, indicating the desired area of interest and a zoom command instruction  
10   to zoom e.g. avoid degradation of the indicated area in the image.

A more detailed description of a command generation process according to an example of the presently disclosed subject matter is described below with reference to Fig. 6. The generated control-data is transmitted back to sensing unit **110** (block **213**).

15           The control-data is received by sensing unit **110** (block **215**) and the selected object(s) or area(s) are identified by sensing unit **110** in a more recently captured high resolution image (block **217**). In some examples the selected objects are identified in the most recently captured high resolution image that is available for processing at the time the control-data is received. Methods of identifying the  
20   selected elements (e.g. object(s) or area(s)) are discussed below.

Optionally, a data validation process **250** can be executed (process **250**). As the operator selection is done while viewing an image with degraded resolution, it is desirable to validate the selection in order to avoid selection errors (e.g. selecting the wrong object). Furthermore, the operator may wish to quickly examine different  
25   elements in the scene more closely. Thus the validation process provides the operator with opportunities to change the selection before executing commands.

Fig. **2b** is a flowchart illustrating operations performed by a surveillance system during a data validation process, according to examples of the presently

disclosed subject matter. During the validation process, the high resolution image is cropped to obtain a high resolution image-segment which comprises the selected object(s) or area (block **251**). The high resolution image-segment is then transmitted to control unit **120** (block **253**) where it is received and displayed (block **255**).

5     Notably, the size of the image-segment is selected to match a desired transmission rate and may depend on the available bandwidth of the communication link between units **110** and **120**. As mentioned above, for the purpose of providing a continuous video feed of the surveyed scene, image-segments are continuously generated and transmitted to the control unit.

10             The operator can then view the selected object(s) or selected area in the high resolution image-segment and examine the displayed information more closely. Due to the high resolution quality of the image-segment, it can be displayed on a suitably large display device for conveniently viewing the displayed information. It is then determined whether the displayed information meets the approval of the operator  
15     or not (block **257**).

           If the displayed information does not meet the operator's approval the process can be reset. In response, the operator can be allowed to re-select a different object(s) or area (return to block **211**). Optionally, responsive to a reset operation, a suitable command can be sent to sensing unit instructing to halt further  
20     generation and transmission of image-segments of the previously selected element.

           If, however, the operator determines that the information displayed in the image-segment meets with his approval, the image-segment can be validated (e.g. by a designated operation of the operator). Following validation, a respective command can be executed with respect the selected object(s) or area (block **223** in  
25     **Fig. 2**).

           In the event that a command has been issued earlier (e.g. during generation of the control-data at block **211**), the respective command instructions can be sent to the sensing unit and/or (if instructions have already been sent) executed at the

sensing unit. Otherwise, a command can be issued after validation of the displayed image-segment and then the respective command instructions can be sent to the sensing unit and executed. According to one example, the operator can validate the displayed image-segments by issuing a respective command or by sending  
5 instructions to the sensing unit to execute a previously issued command.

During execution of the command (block **225**) sensing unit **110** is configured to execute the command instructions with respect to the selected element(s) e.g. selected object(s) or area (block **231**). Sensing unit **110** is further configured to crop a succession of high resolution images as they are captured and generate image-  
10 segments comprising the selected elements (block **233**). The image-segments are successively transmitted to the control unit (block **235**) where they are displayed for viewing by the operator (block **227**).

Consider, for example, a lock and track command instructing sensing unit **110** to lock on a certain moving vehicle and track the vehicle as it travels. Optionally, if  
15 necessary, the image sensor is directed to point in the direction of the selected object (e.g. executing a centering command). The high resolution image is cropped to obtain a high resolution image-segment comprising the selected vehicle and possibly some of the area around the vehicle. The image-segment is then transmitted to the control unit where it is displayed on a display device. As the  
20 sensing unit continues to track the selected vehicle, it continues to generate and transmit to the control unit **120** image-segments comprising the selected vehicle (or vehicles).

As schematically demonstrated in **Figs 4a** and **4b**, according to one example, the original high resolution image can be segmented into a plurality of segments. As  
25 the vehicle travels, it may traverse different areas in the originally captured high resolution image. Sensing unit **110** can be configured to continuously track the moving vehicle and send to control unit different image-segments depending on the current location of the vehicle in the originally captured high resolution image. This

procedure allows sensing unit to utilize a high-resolution imaging assembly for tracking a moving object while reducing (and sometimes completely avoiding) the need to move the imaging assembly during tracking.

If an object(s) or area of interest moves (or is about to move) out of frame,  
5 the sensing unit is configured to reposition the sensor in order not to lose sight of the selected object(s) or area.

Likewise, in the event of a zoom command, instructing the sensing unit **110** to zoom on a selected object(s) (for example a stationary object) or a selected area, optionally, if necessary, the image sensor is directed to point in the direction of the  
10 selected object (e.g. for centering the selected object or area) and a desired zoom effect (either virtual (i.e. by avoiding degradation) or real (using zoom lens)) is provided by the image sensor. As before, the high resolution image is cropped to obtain a high resolution image-segment comprising the selected object (or area) and possibly some of the area around the object. The image-segment is then transmitted  
15 to the control unit where it is displayed on a display device. The sensing unit can continue to generate and transmit to the control unit **120** image-segments comprising the zoomed element.

At block **229**, the operator can reset the issued command (return to block **211**) and select a different object(s) or a different area.

20 According to another example, degraded image-segments and high resolution image-segments are merged and displayed as a single image. In the merged image, the image-segment is displayed in high resolution while the area surrounding the image-segment is displayed in degraded resolution. If the position of an object(s) of interest (or area of interest) changes with respect to the entire area  
25 which is being captured, the area of the image-segment which is displayed in high resolution format changes according to the object's movement.

As mentioned above, another optional solution to the problem of transmission bandwidth limit when using a high resolution imaging assembly is to

reduce the frame rate in which the images are being transmitted. According to this approach, images which are being transmitted are not necessarily degraded but rather the frame rate of image transmission over the communication link between the sensing unit and the control unit is adapted to the available bandwidth. The high resolution images (and the objects-tags) which are received at the control unit are displayed on a display device **123**. A display device suitable for displaying high resolution images can be used having a suitable pixel resolution and suitably large dimensions. The refresh rate of the displayed high resolution image is in correlation with the reduced frame rate, and, accordingly, it may not provide a complete video streaming effect.

According to a further example, both a high rate video streaming of degraded images and a reduced rate of high resolution images can be transmitted and displayed on the display unit **123**. In such cases, image degradation and reduced frame rate are adapted to enable the transmission of both types of images over the communication link. Display unit **123** may include at least one display device suitable for displaying the degraded video stream and at least one display device suitable for displaying high resolution images which are transmitted at a reduced rate. Object tags can be displayed in both type of images and assist in associating between objects which are seen in the two types of images.

One problem which is related to controlling an image sensor over a remote communication link pertains to a time-delay which exists between the time when the sensing unit acquires an image of an object, to when the image is displayed on the display located at the control unit, and further to the time the corresponding instructions are received at the sensing unit. Factors that can contribute to the delay include for example, signal processing, image compression/decompression, duration of the communication, and/or communication link bandwidth limitations. The accumulated delayed time can be from fractions of a second to several seconds.

Due to this time-delay, the location of the object as displayed on the display at the control unit is generally not the current location of the object. The location displayed on the display is the location of the object before the transfer of the sensing-data from the sensing unit to the control unit (e.g. x seconds ago). Additionally, by the time the sensing unit receives the control-data from the control unit and generates the instruction for the image sensor, an additional time-delay occurs, (e.g. an additional y seconds). Consequently, by the time image sensor is instructed to locate the object, the object may no longer be in the same location it was when the image was taken x + y seconds ago.

Clearly, this time-delay complicates the efforts to lock onto the object. The operator has to accurately estimate the expected location of the object at a time in the future when the instructions arrive at the sensing unit. Only then is the sensing unit directed to the calculated estimated location, and a lock and tracking operation can be initiated.

If the estimated location is not sufficiently accurate, the sensing unit will lock onto some other background object and the entire estimate, calculate and lock process has to be repeated. As such, the effect is a continuous feedback control loop with delay, a situation which is liable to suffer from overshoots and instability.

There are various methods which are known in the art which are directed to overcoming the aforementioned time delay problem. One solution to this problem is disclosed in US Patent 7184574. Another solution is disclosed in WO Publication 2014/111923 filed by the Applicant of the present application. In the following discussion the solution provided in WO Publication 2014/111923 is described in the context of the presently disclosed subject matter.

However, it is noted that the surveillance system disclosed herein may operate according to the principles of any one of the techniques directed for solving the time-delay problem and is not bound to one specific technique.

Fig. 5 is a flowchart illustrating operations performed by a sensing unit, according to an example of the presently disclosed subject matter. As described above with reference to blocks 201-203 in Fig. 2 high resolution images of a scene are captured by imaging assembly and undergo an object identification process for identifying an object of interest. Objects of interest can be defined according to different object parameters. According to one example, objects of interest include only moving objects. According to this example, during the object identification process, moving objects appearing within the captured images are identified. A respective object-tag is assigned to each one of part or all of the identified objects.

10 The object-tag uniquely identifies each assigned moving object.

Object processing module 151 in sensing unit 110 can be configured to execute the identification process which includes tagging of moving objects. Methods of identifying moving images in a stream of images are well known in the art. For example moving objects can be identified with the help of a Video Motion Detection (VMD) algorithm. To this end, object-processing module 151 can comprise or be otherwise operatively connected to a VMD module configured to implement a VMD algorithm and identify moving objects in the succession of images.

15

Optionally, every moving object which is identified in the acquired images is assigned with a respective object-tag. Alternatively, not all moving objects in a scene are tagged by object-processing module 151. Rather, specific objects of interest can be selected based on different parameters. For example, specific objects can be selected with the help of a computer program configured to select objects in a scene which match some criterion. To this end, sensing unit 110 can be optionally equipped with an automatic object recognition unit (AOR) 115.

20

According to the presently disclosed subject matter, AOR unit 115 is configured to select objects in a scene, to be tagged with respective object-tags, based on the characteristics of the objects. The AOR unit 115 can be preprogrammed with predefined characteristics and respective criterion for selecting of sought after

25

objects. Such characteristics and criterion can include for example, size of an object, velocity of an object, temperature emanating from an object, etc. Objects can also be screened, based on their dispersion across the image, for example, only a single object is tagged from among a plurality of identified objects within an acquired image, in case the objects are gathered together such that distance between the plurality of objects is less than a predefined distance. In the event that objects of interest include only moving object, screening can be implemented on identified moving object according to predefined characteristics. In the event that object of interest include also stationary objects, screening can be implemented on all object identified in the scene.

AOR unit **115** can be configured to obtain information indicative of moving objects in the succession of captured images (e.g. from the VMD module), analyze the received information, and determine the characteristics of moving objects in the images. AOR unit **115** can then determine whether these characteristics meet some type of predefined criterion and generate an indication accordingly. AOR unit **115** can be configured to transmit to object-tagging module **115** information indicating which of the moving objects comply with the predefined characteristics and criterion of the sought after objects. In turn, object-tagging module **115** can be configured to tag the moving object (or objects) indicated by AOR unit **115**.

The object-tags assigned to the moving objects in the acquired image and optionally also object-data, can be stored in a designated data repository (block **505**). For example, the data can be stored in a data structure which includes x, y coordinates indicating the position of a moving object within an acquired image *i* and an object-tag assigned to that object. Optionally, the acquired image can be stored as well, however this is not always necessary and in some cases previously captured images are discarded once a newer image is captured.

The position of a moving object in an earlier image is likely to change in later images due to movement of the object and/or movement of the sensing unit and/or

movement of the image sensor. To this end object-processing module **151** can be further configured to receive the images captured by imaging assembly **113** and trace the tagged-objects from an earlier image to a later image along the succession of captured images (block **507**), thereby maintaining each object-tag associated with  
5 its respective tagged-object along the succession of images and enabling to track tagged-objects from one image to the next along the succession of images.

For example, object procession unit **151** can be configured to trace each tagged-object from an earlier image to a later image in the succession of images captured by image sensor, and determine the position (e.g. x and y coordinates) of  
10 the moving object in the later image.

Methods for tracing objects from an earlier image to a later image along a succession of images are well known in the art and include for example the VMD algorithm which enables tracing moving objects as they are detected from one image to a sequential image. Other methods are based on center of gravity identification,  
15 edge detection, correlation etc. It is noted that as used herein the term "later" includes an image which is captured at a later time than an image captured at an earlier time (i.e. an earlier image). The term "later image" includes, but is not limited to, a consecutive image.

At block **509** it is determined whether the position of a tagged-object in the  
20 later image is different than the position of the object in the earlier image, and in case it is, the information indicating the position of the object is updated and the updated position of the object is associated with the respective object-tag (e.g. in data repository **130**). During the operation of imaging assembly **113** new moving objects, which enter the FOV of image sensor, are identified and assigned with  
25 respective object-tags.

As explained above, according to one example, the originally captured high resolution image undergoes a degrading process to obtain a degraded image characterized by reduced resolution (block **205**).

Sensing-data, including the degraded image and the object-tags assigned to moving objects in the degraded image, is successively transmitted (e.g. according to the order they are captured) to the control unit (block **207**).

As mentioned above, sensing-data can optionally also include object-data  
5 with respect to the tagged-objects, including for example coordinates indicating the location of each tagged-object within the acquired image, and possibly other characteristics of the tagged-objects (e.g. shape, size, temperature, velocity, color etc).

The description now turns to Fig. 6, which is a flowchart illustrating  
10 operations performed at the control unit, according to an example of the presently disclosed subject matter. Sensing-data generated at sensing unit **110** is received at the control unit (block **601**). The degraded images are displayed at the control unit. If one or more moving objects are identified and tagged, the object-tags are displayed over the images at the appropriate location, indicating the location of the respective  
15 objects in the displayed image.

The objects-tags can be associated with the respective objects in the succession of images based on the location of the objects in a respective image. Thus for example, sensing-data can include, for each high resolution captured image in a succession of images, a degraded image, one or more object-tags of respective  
20 moving objects in the image, and data indicative of the location of the tagged-objects in the image.

Responsive to one or more elements (object(s) or area(s)) being selected in the control unit, an object identification process is executed (block **211**). During the object identification process it is determined whether the selected element is  
25 moving or stationary (block **603**). According to one example, where only moving objects are tagged by the sensing unit, this can be accomplished based on whether the selected element is assigned with a respective object-tag or not. If it is, it is identified as a moving object and if not, it is identified as a stationary object.

-30-

Optionally, the sensing unit can be configured to assign a universal tag, indicating that a given object is in motion, to all identified moving objects. In such cases, it can be determined (e.g. with the help of object processing module **125**) whether a selected element is moving or stationary based on this universal tag. Alternatively or  
5 additionally, control unit **120** can comprise a VMD module for identifying moving objects.

Once it is determined whether the selected element is moving or stationary, a different approach is adopted for handling each type of object. At block **605**, in case it is determined that the selected element is a stationary object, the entire  
10 image in which the element was selected, is incorporated into the control-data. Alternatively, in order to reduce the size of the control-data, rather than using the entire image, a piece of the image surrounding the selected object is copied and incorporated into the control-data. The control-data can include, in addition to the copied piece of image or entire image, data indicative of the location (e.g. in x, y  
15 coordinates) of the selected element in the image. In case a piece of the image is used, coordinates, indicating the location of the selected object with respect to boundaries of the copied piece of the image, can be used.

Appropriate control-data is generated, including the entire image or the piece of the current image (block **607**). For example, in case an operator selects an object  
20 viewed in the degraded image, appropriate control-data can be generated in the control unit, where the control-data includes a piece of image extracted from the currently displayed degraded image and information indicative of the location of the selected object in the copied piece of image. The generated control-data is transmitted to sensing unit **110** (block **213**).

25 **Fig. 8a and Fig. 8c** are schematic illustrations exemplifying processing a tracking command made with respect to a stationary object, in accordance with the presently disclosed subject matter. **Fig. 8a** shows a scene being monitored by a sensing unit. The illustrated scene includes 3 buildings and a car. **Fig. 8b** shows image

I which is an example of an image (captured by the sensing unit) covering a portion of the scene which is being displayed at the control unit. Assuming an operator of the control unit wishes to view window **801** more closely (and possibly also to track the window), the operator selects window **801** in image I. In response to the  
5 operator's action, control unit **120** determines that the selected object is stationary and then extracts a piece of image I (**803**) which includes the selected window.

Control-data comprising image piece **803** along with information indicating the location of window **601** (e.g. x, y coordinates) within the image or within image-piece **803**, is generated. The coordinates of the window within the copied piece **803**  
10 can be calculated by subtracting the offset (*OS*) of the boundaries of image-piece **803** from the coordinates of the window with respect to image I.

Reverting to block **603** in Fig. 3, in case it is determined that the selected object is a moving object, an object-tag which was assigned by the sensing unit to the selected object is identified (block **611**). For example the sensing-data can  
15 include an image, one or more object-tags and the updated location of each of the respective tagged-objects within the image. This enables the control unit to associate between a selected object and its corresponding object-tag based on the location of the object within the image. In another example, object-tags can be incorporated as an overlay of the image such that object-tags can be associated to  
20 their respective objects within the image.

Control-data, including the object-tag of the selected object, is generated (block **613**). For example, in case an operator selects, in the degraded image, a moving vehicle he wished to inspect more closely, control-data including the object-tag of the selected object is generated at control unit **120** (e.g. with the help of  
25 tracking module **125**). The generated control-data is transmitted to the sensing unit (block **213**).

Reverting to Fig. 5 control-data generated at control unit **120** is received in sensing unit **110** (block **216**). Selected elements indicated in the control-data are

identified in an available image (block **217**). According to one example, the selected element(s) is identified in a most recent high resolution captured image available for processing. The identified elements are traced from one image to the next along the stream of captured high resolution images. A more detailed description of the object  
5 identification process is described below with reference to Fig. 7.

Optionally, a validation process is executed (block **219**) as described earlier with reference to Fig. **2b**. High resolution image-segments comprising the selected elements are generated and transmitted to the control unit. If the image-segments are approved during the validation process or if a validation process is not executed,  
10 an issued command is executed at the sensing unit and the relevant sensing-data received from the sensing unit is displayed at the control unit **227**. As explained above, the sensing-data can include high-resolution data segments with information pertaining to the executed command. Optionally, sensing-data can also include the entire high resolution images captured by the imaging assembly, which can be  
15 transmitted at a degraded transmission rate.

Fig. 7 is a flowchart illustrating a more detailed description of operations related to block **217** in Figs. 2 and 5, according to an example of the presently disclosed subject matter. According to some examples, operations described with reference to Fig. 7 can be executed by (remote) object processing module **151** or by  
20 some other processing unit specifically configured for tracking objects.

In response to received control-data, it is determined whether selected elements indicated in the incoming control-data are moving or stationary (block **701**). The received control-data includes either an object-tag (in case the control-data was generated with respect to a moving object) or a part of an image (in case  
25 the control-data was generated with respect to a stationary object). Determining whether the selected element in received control-data is moving or stationary can be based on the content of the control-data. For example, the control-data can include data indicating whether the respective selected object is stationary or in motion.

Alternatively, sensing unit **110** can be configured to determine whether the respective selected element is stationary or in motion based on whether the control-data includes an object-tag or a part of an image.

If the received control-data was generated with respect to a moving object,  
5 the sensing unit is configured to locate, in a latest available captured image, the object which is identified by the respective object-tag incorporated in the control-data (block **703**). According to one example, in order to identify the selected object in the latest available captured image, the sensing unit can be configured, to use the received object-tag, search data repository **130** for the object-tag, find the updated  
10 position of the respective tagged-object and use its most updated position in order to locate the tagged-object in the latest available captured image.

In response to control-data generated with respect to a stationary object, sensing unit **110** is configured to locate a selected stationary object, in the latest available captured image. The image or part thereof is extracted from the control-  
15 data of the received command. In case part of an image is received, the control-data can further include data indicating the location of the selected object in the image or the part thereof (e.g. coordinates of the object in the image or part thereof).

The image-piece (or in some cases the entire image) is matched to the most recently available captured image (block **705**) so that identical regions in the two  
20 images are overlapped and thus identified. This can be accomplished for example with the help of image registration techniques which are well known in the art.

After the image-piece and the most recently available image are matched, the selected object can then be located in the most recently available image at the point which overlaps with the location of the selected object indicated in the piece  
25 of copied image (block **707**).

Reverting to the example in Fig. **8a**, responsive to control-data received at sensing unit **110**, and assuming that the selected object was identified as a stationary object, sensing unit **110** locates image-piece **803** in the latest available captured

image (image II in Fig. 9c). Note, that the image II is different than image I as it covers a different region of the scene, however Image-piece **803** still overlaps image II. Once image-piece **803** is located in image II, the location of window **801** can be found within image II based on its location within image part **803**. It is noted that in some cases the piece of image (or entire image) received from with the control-data only partially overlaps the latest available captured image.

Thus, the surveillance system and method disclosed herein enables to lock and track an object selected in an image displayed at the control unit, notwithstanding a time-delay between the time the sensing unit acquired the image, to a time when the lock command is received from the control unit, at the sensing unit, with respect to the selected object.

Once the selected elements are identified, the process proceeds to execute operations according to either block **219** or block **225** as disclosed above.

It will also be understood that the system according to the presently disclosed subject matter may be a suitably programmed computer. Likewise, the presently disclosed subject matter contemplates a computer program being readable by a computer for executing the method of the presently disclosed subject matter. The presently disclosed subject matter further contemplates a machine-readable non-transitory memory tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine for executing the method of the presently disclosed subject matter.

It is to be understood that the presently disclosed subject matter is not limited in its application to the details set forth in the description contained herein or illustrated in the drawings. The presently disclosed subject matter is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Hence, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting. As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception upon which this disclosure is

based may readily be utilized as a basis for designing other structures, methods, and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present presently disclosed subject matter.

**CLAIMS**

1. A surveillance system, comprising a sensing unit configured to communicate over a communication link with a control unit, the sensing unit comprising a high-resolution imaging assembly operatively connected to a processor, the high-resolution imaging assembly being

configured to capture a succession of high-resolution images comprising one or more elements; wherein a bandwidth of the communication link is not sufficiently large to allow transmission of the high-resolution images in a desired transmission rate;

wherein the processor is configured to generate degraded images from respective images in the succession of high-resolution images and transmit successively sensing-data to the control unit, the sensing-data comprising the degraded images and data indicative of one or more elements in the degraded images, wherein degradation is adapted according to available bandwidth of the communication link; and

wherein the processor is configured, responsive to control-data received from the control unit, indicative of at least one selected element, to:

identify a location of the selected element in recently captured high-resolution images in the succession of high-resolution images;

extract respective high-resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high-resolution images that comprises at least the selected element; and

transmit successively the respective high-resolution image-segments to the control unit, wherein the high-resolution image-segments are adapted according to the available bandwidth of the communication link for enabling the image-segments to be communicated at a desired transmission rate.

2. The system according to claim 1, wherein the processor is configured to identify, from among the one or more elements, one or more objects of interest in the high-resolution images, assign a respective object-tag to the one or more objects of interest to yield one or more tagged-objects; and wherein the sensing-data further comprises the object-tags.

3. The system according to claim 1, wherein the control data comprises track command instructing to track one or more given objects from among the one or more elements and wherein the processor is configured, responsive to the track command, to extract the high-resolution image-segments validated at the control unit.

5

4. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the processor is configured to successively transmit to the control unit, at a degraded frame rate, the succession of high-resolution images.

10

5. The system according to claim 1, wherein the control data comprises command instructions for executing a track command instructing to track one or more given objects and wherein the high-resolution image-segments are extracted from images in the succession of high-resolution images according to a current location of the one or more given objects in the images from the succession of high-resolution images.

15

6. The system according to claim 5, wherein the processor is configured to transmit successively to the control unit, both the degraded images and high-resolution image-segments of respective high-resolution captured images, wherein a degraded image and a high-resolution image-segment generated from the same high-resolution image are displayed as a merged  
20 image, wherein the image-segment is displayed in high-resolution while an area surrounding the image-segment is displayed in degraded resolution, and wherein the location of the image-segment with respect to the degraded image is adapted according to a current location of a selected element.

25

7. The system according to claim 5, wherein the processor is configured to transmit successively to the control unit, both the degraded images and high-resolution image-segments of respective high-resolution captured images; wherein each one of a degraded image and a high-resolution image-segment generated from the same high-resolution image are displayed separately on a different display device.

8. The system according to claim 1 wherein the sensing unit is configured to identify one or more moving objects in the succession of high-resolution images.

5 9. The system according to claim 8 wherein the sensing unit further comprises a Video Motion Detection module configured to identify the one or more moving objects.

10. The system according to claim 2, wherein the identification of a location of the at least one selected element comprises: determining whether the at least one selected element is a  
10 moving object or a stationary object, in case the at least one selected element is a moving object, obtaining from the control data an object-tag corresponding to the at least one selected element, and identifying the at least one selected element in the succession of high-resolution images, in case the at least one selected element is a stationary object, obtaining from the control data an image or part thereof, matching the image or part thereof to one or more  
15 recently captured high-resolution images in the succession of high-resolution images and identifying the at least one selected element in the succession of high-resolution images.

11. The system according to any one of claims 2 to 10, wherein a tagged-object is associated with its respective object-tag based on information indicative of a location of the tagged-object  
20 in the succession of images; wherein the sensing unit is further configured to trace the tagged-object, from an earlier image in the succession of images, to a later image in the succession of images, thereby maintaining a given object-tag associated with a respective tagged-object along the succession of images.

25 12. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein the sensing unit is configured to continuously send a stream of degraded images generated from the succession of high-resolution images to the control unit.

13. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein information with respect to the one or more objects and respective object-tags is stored in a data-repository associated with the sensing unit.

5 14. The system according to any one of claims 2 to 13, comprising the control unit, the control unit being configured to: receive a degraded image from the sensing unit; display the degraded image on a display device; determine, responsive to selection of an object in the image, whether the selected object is a moving object or a stationary object, in case the selected object is a moving object, identifying an object-tag assigned to the selected object and  
10 generating control-data comprising the object-tag, in case the selected object is a stationary object, generating control-data comprising the image or part thereof; and sending the control-data to the sensing unit.

15 15. The system according to claim 14, wherein the control unit is configured to display the object-tags over the degraded image.

16. The system according to claim 14, wherein the control unit is configured to: successively receive both the degraded images and high-resolution image-segments of respective high-resolution captured images, display the degraded image and a high-resolution image-segment  
20 generated from the same high-resolution image as a merged image, wherein the image-segment is displayed in high-resolution while an area surrounding the image-segment is displayed in degraded resolution; and adapt the location of the image-segment with respect to the degraded image according to a current location of a selected element.

25 17. The system according to any one of claims 2 to 16 configured to execute a command with respect to the at least one selected element notwithstanding a time-delay between a time when the sensing unit acquires the image with the at least one selected element, to a time when a corresponding command is received at the sensing unit with respect to the at least one selected element.

18. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 17, wherein the sensing unit is located on an airborne vehicle.

5 19. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 18, wherein the high-resolution images comprise between dozens of Mega pixels and up to Giga pixels and wherein video stream rate is characterized by a rate of at least 20 frames per second.

20. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 19, wherein the degraded image is  
10 characterized by degraded resolution as compared to the respective high-resolution images.

21. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 20, wherein the degraded images are characterized by degraded color information as compared to the respective high-resolution images.

15

22. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 21, wherein the desired transmission rate is a video streaming rate.

23. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 22, comprising a display unit operatively  
20 connected to the processor, the display device comprising a scroller configured to enable an operator to jump between different elements which are displayed in the degraded images.

24. A method of surveying an area, using a sensing unit configured to communicate over a communication link with a control unit; the sensing unit comprises a high-resolution imaging  
25 assembly operatively connected to a processor; the method comprising:

capturing a succession of high-resolution images comprising one or more elements, wherein a bandwidth of the communication link is not sufficiently large to allow transmission of the high-resolution images in a desired transmission rate; and

with the processor, performing at least the following:

generating degraded images from respective images in the succession of high-resolution images and transmit sensing-data to the control unit, the sensing-data comprising the degraded images and data indicative of at least one element in the degraded images, wherein degradation is adapted to available bandwidth of the communication link;

5 responsive to control-data received from the control unit, indicative of at least one selected element:

identifying a location of the selected element in recently captured high-resolution images in the succession of high-resolution images;

10 extracting respective high-resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high-resolution images that comprises at least the selected element; and

transmitting the respective high-resolution image-segments to the control unit, wherein the high-resolution image-segments are adapted according to the available bandwidth of the communication link for enabling the image-segments at the desired transmission rate.

15 25. The method according to claim 24, comprising identifying from among the one or more elements, the high-resolution images, assigning a respective object-tag to the one or more elements to yield one or more respective tagged-objects, wherein the sensing-data comprises the object-tags.

20 26. The method according to claim 24, wherein the control data comprises command instructions and wherein the method comprises executing the command instructions only if the high-resolution image-segments are validated at the control unit.

25 27. The method according to any one of claims 24 to 26, comprising successively transmitting to control unit, in a degraded frame rate, the succession of high-resolution images.

28. The method according to claim 24, wherein the control data comprises command instructions for executing a track command instructing to track one or more given objects from among the one or more elements and wherein the method comprises extracting the high-

resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high-resolution images according to a current location of the one or more given objects in images from the succession of high-resolution images.

5 29. The method according to claim 28, comprising transmitting successively to the control unit, both the degraded images and high-resolution image-segments of respective high-resolution captured images, displaying as a merged image a degraded image and a high-resolution image-segment generated from the same high-resolution image, wherein the image-segment is displayed in high-resolution while the area surrounding the image-segment is  
10 displayed in degraded resolution, and adapting the location of the image-segment with respect to the degraded image according to a current location of a selected element.

30. The method according to claim 28, comprising transmitting successively to the control unit, both the degraded images and high-resolution image-segments of respective high-resolution captured images, and displaying each one of a degraded image and a high-resolution  
15 image-segment generated from the same high-resolution image, separately on a different display device.

31. The method according to claim 24, comprising identifying one or more moving objects  
20 in images in the succession of high-resolution images.

32. The method according to claim 25 wherein the identification of a location of the at least one selected element comprises determining whether the at least one selected element is a moving object or a stationary object, in case the at least one selected element is a moving  
25 object, obtaining from the control data an object-tag corresponding to the at least one selected element, and identifying the at least one selected element in the succession of high-resolution images, in case the at least one selected element is a stationary object, obtaining from the control data an image or part thereof, matching the image or part thereof to one or more

recently captured high-resolution images in the succession of high-resolution images, and identifying the at least one selected element in the succession of high-resolution images.

33. The method according to any one of claims 25 to 32 wherein a tagged-object is associated with its respective object-tag based on information indicative of a location of the tagged-object in the succession of images and wherein the method comprises tracing the tagged-object, from an earlier image in the succession of images to a later image in the succession of images for maintaining a given object-tag associated with a respective tagged-object along the succession of images.

34. The method according to any one of claims 25 to 33, comprising receiving a degraded image from the sensing unit, displaying the degraded image on a display device, determining, responsive to selection of an object in the image, whether the selected object is a moving object or a stationary object, in case the selected object is a moving object, identifying an object-tag assigned to the selected object, and generating control-data comprising the object-tag, in case the selected object is a stationary object, generating control-data comprising the image or part thereof, and sending the control-data to the sensing unit.

35. The method according to claim 34, comprising displaying the object-tags over the degraded image.

36. The method according to claim 34, comprising successively receiving, both the degraded images and high-resolution image-segments of respective high-resolution captured images, displaying the degraded image and a high-resolution image-segment generated from the same high-resolution image as a merged image, wherein the image-segment is displayed in high-resolution while the area surrounding the image-segment is displayed in degraded resolution, and adapting the location of the image-segment with respect to the degraded image according to a current location of a selected element.

37. The method according to claim 32, comprising executing a command with respect to the at least one selected element notwithstanding a time-delay between a time when the sensing unit acquires the image with the at least one selected element, to a time when a corresponding command is received at the sensing unit with respect to the at least one selected element.

5

38. The method according to any one of claim 24 to 37 wherein the degraded image is characterized by degraded resolution as compared to the respective high-resolution images.

39. The method according to any one of claims 24 to 37 wherein the degraded images are characterized by degraded color information as compared to the respective high-resolution images.

10

40. The method according to any one of claims 24 to 39 wherein the desired transmission rate is video streaming transmission rate.

15

41. A non-transitory program storage device readable by a computer, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the computer to perform method of surveying an area, the method comprising:

obtaining a succession of high-resolution images captured by a high-resolution image assembly;

20

generating degraded images from respective images in the succession of high-resolution images, transmitting successively sensing-data to a remote computer over a communication link, the sensing-data comprising the degraded images and data indicative of one or more elements of interest in the degraded images, wherein degradation is adapted to available bandwidth of the communication link;

25

responsive to control-data received from the remote computer, indicative of at least one selected element:

identifying a location of the selected element in recently captured high-resolution images in the succession of high-resolution images;

extracting respective high-resolution image-segments from images in the succession of high-resolution images that comprise at least the selected element; and

transmitting successively the respective high-resolution image-segments to the remote computer, wherein the high-resolution image-segments are adapted according to the available  
5 bandwidth of the communication link for enabling the image-segments to be communicated at a desired transmission rate.

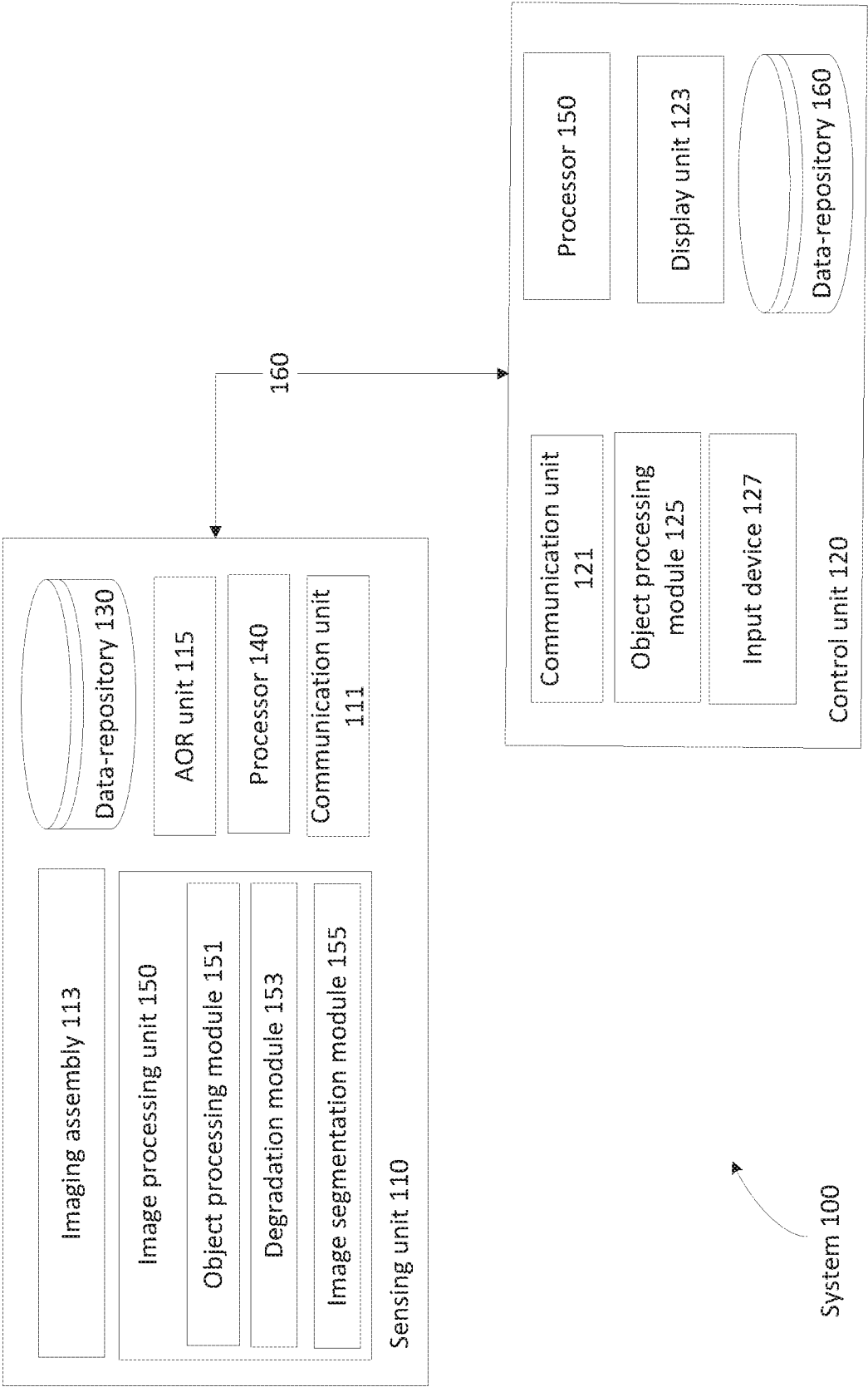


Fig. 1

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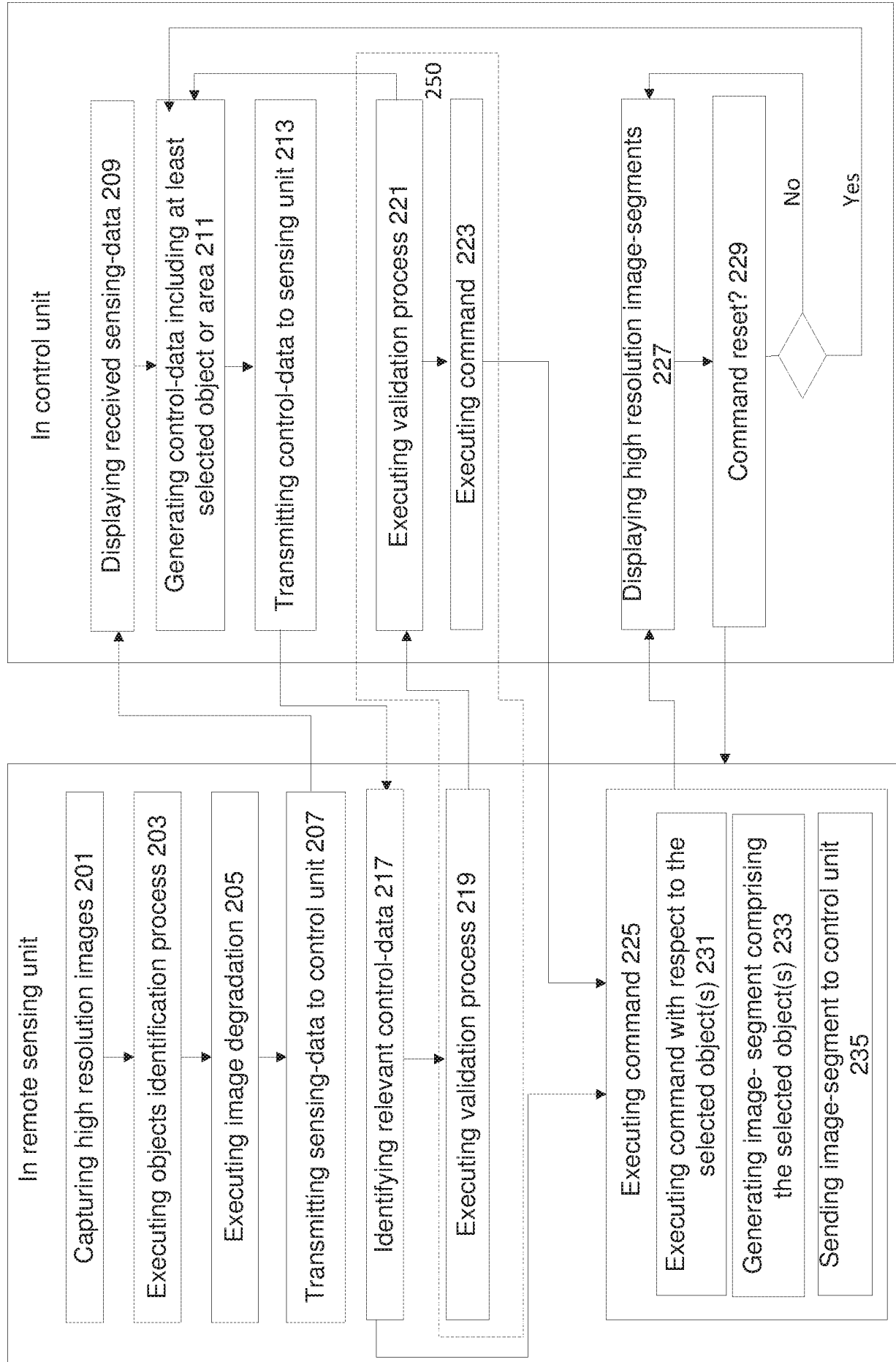


Fig. 2a

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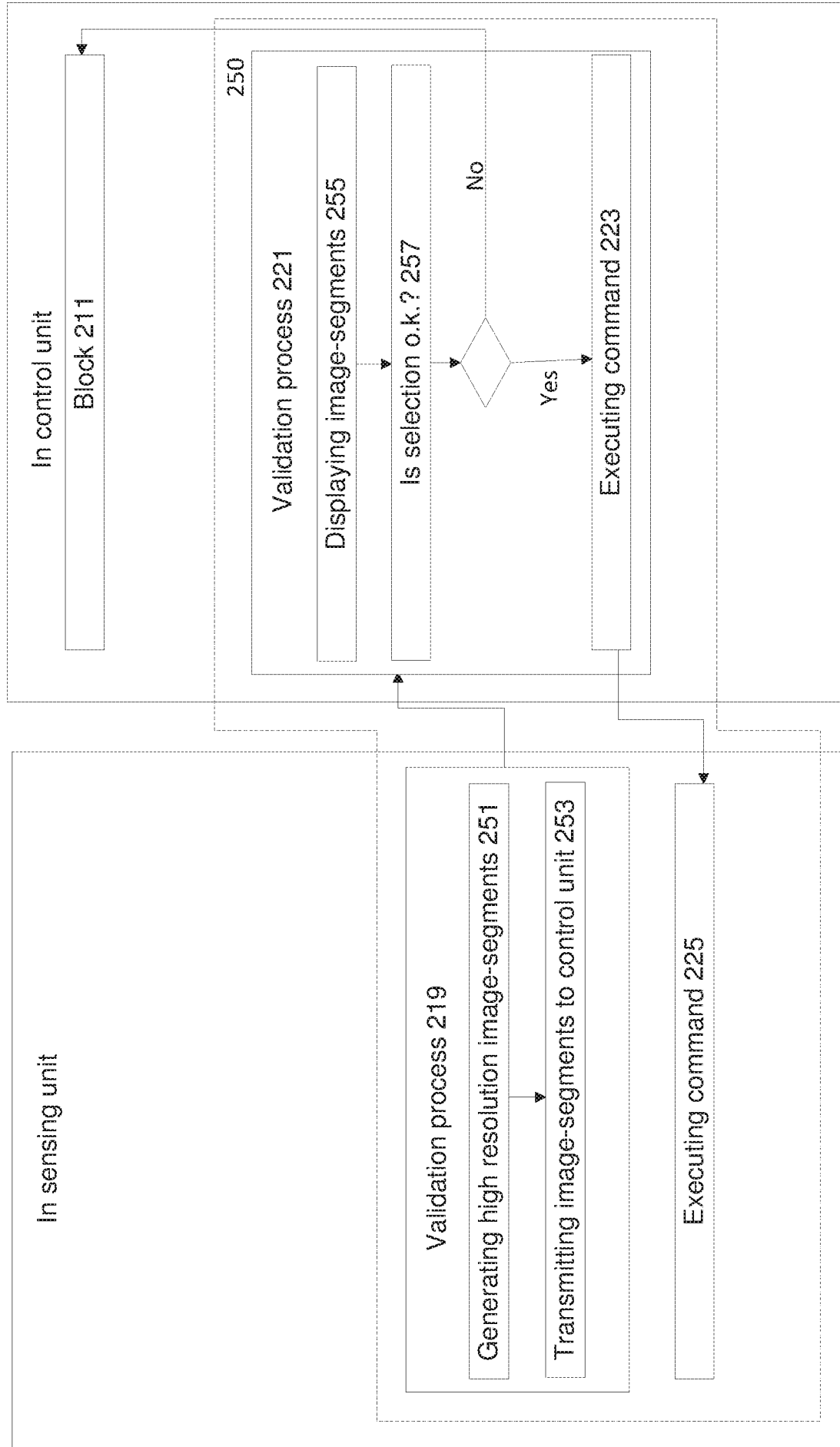


Fig. 2b

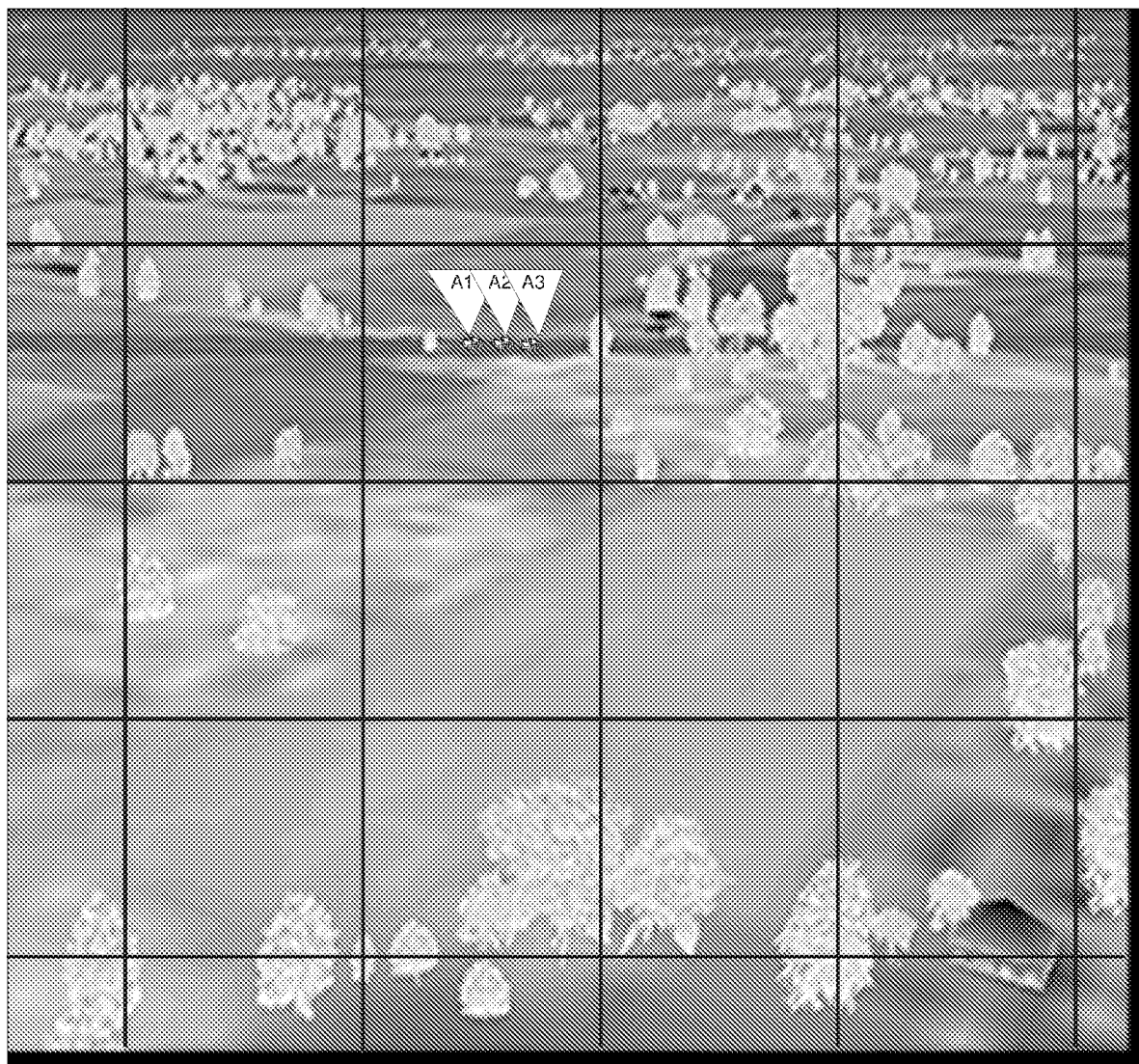


Fig. 3



Fig. 4a

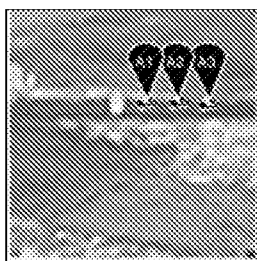


Fig. 4b

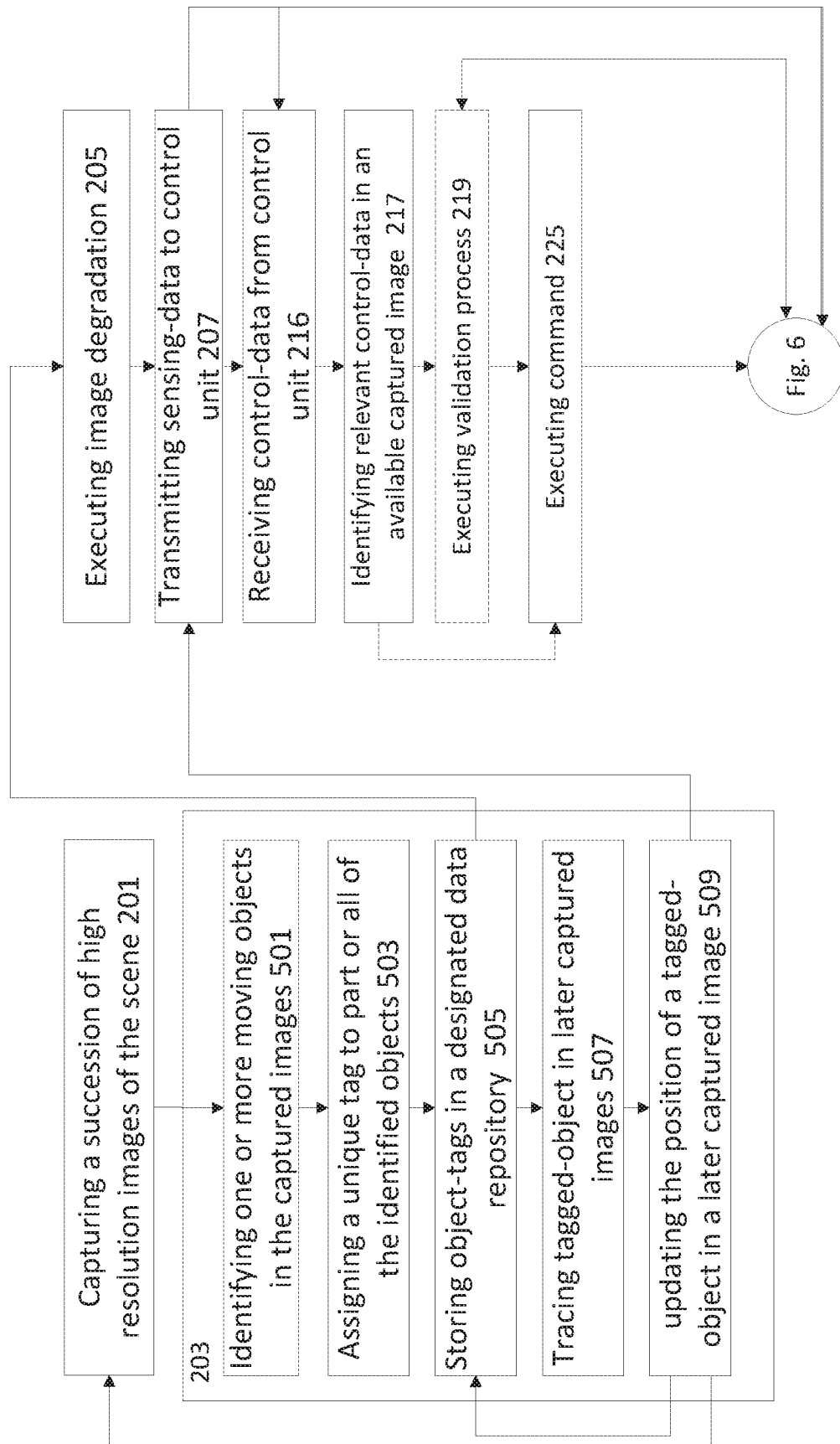


Fig. 5

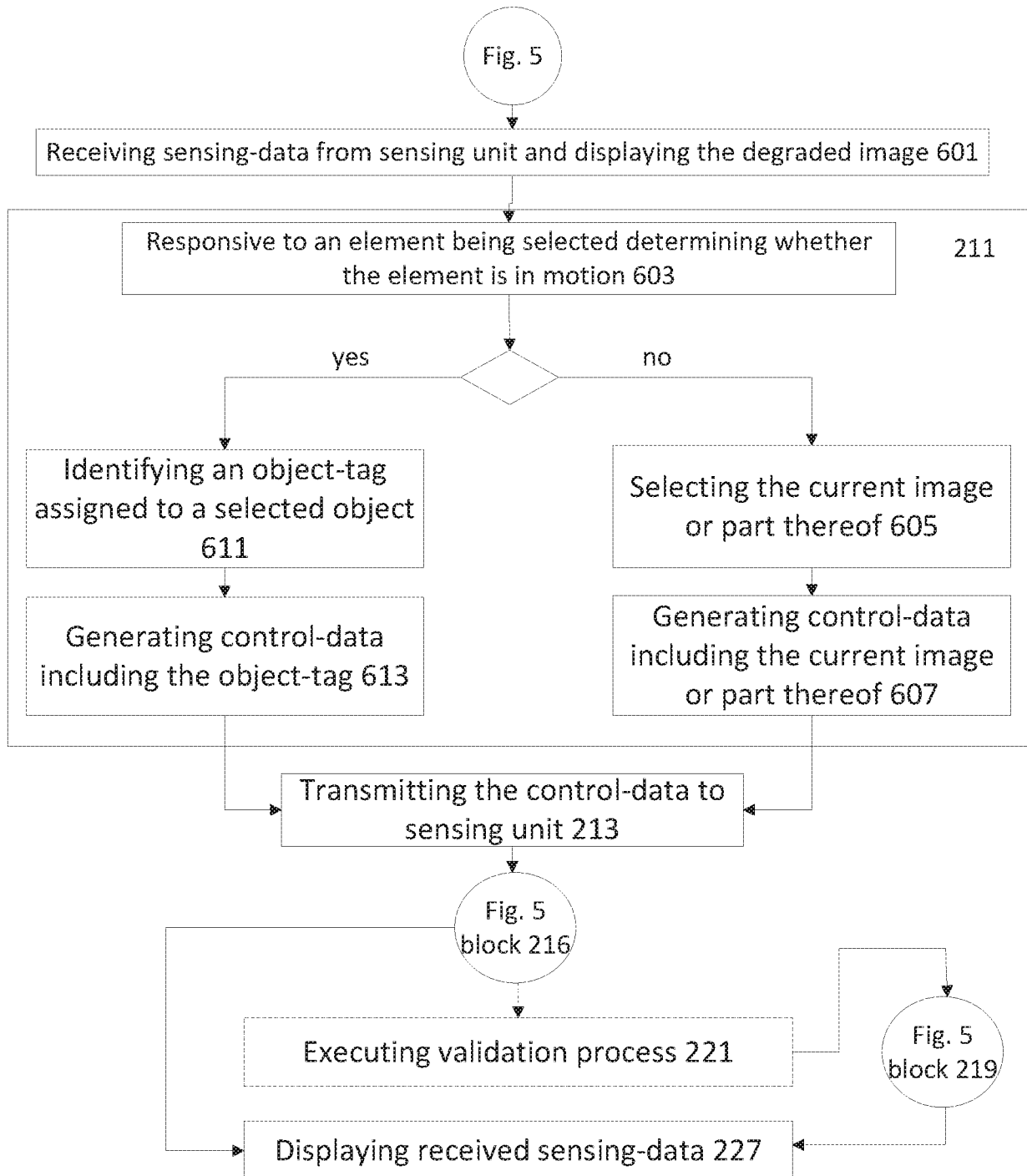


Fig. 6

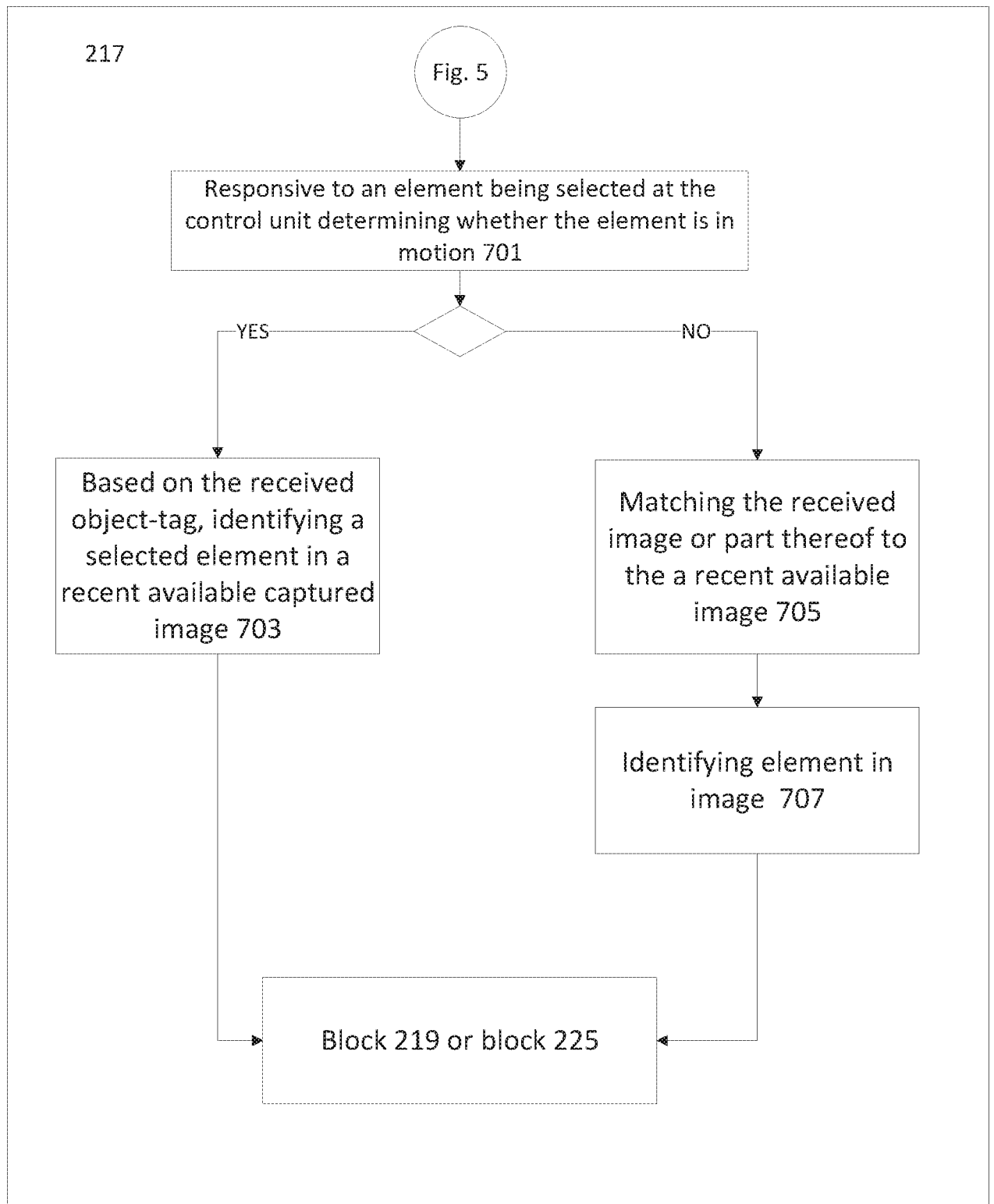
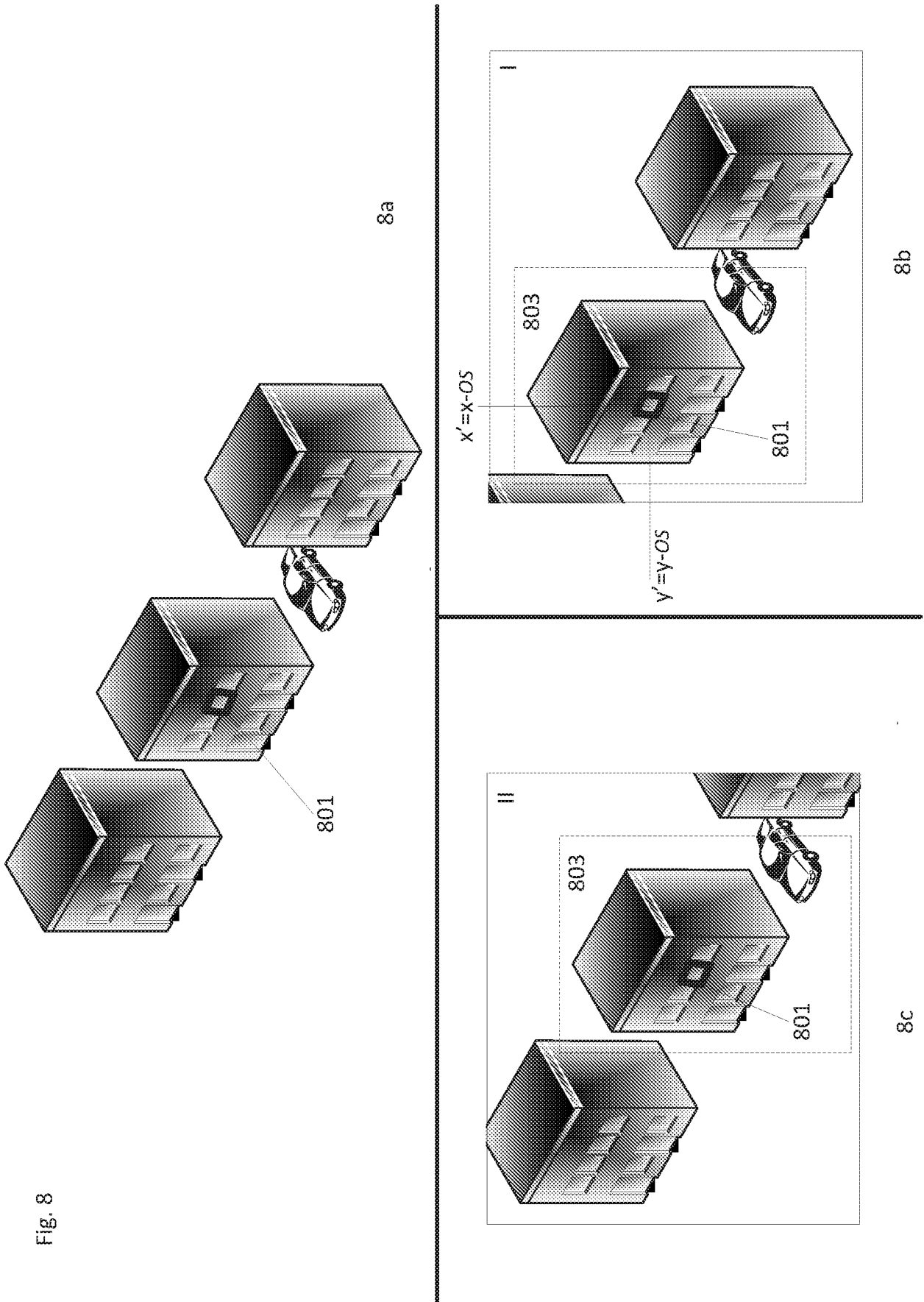


Fig. 7

00  
b2  
b6  
b7C



In remote sensing unit

Capturing high resolution images 201

Executing objects identification process 203

Executing image degradation 205

Transmitting sensing-data to control unit 207

Identifying relevant control-data 217

Executing validation process 219

Executing command 225

Executing command with respect to the selected object(s) 231

Generating image-segment comprising the selected object(s) 233

Sending image-segment to control unit 235

In control unit

Displaying received sensing-data 209

Generating control-data including at least selected object or area 211

Transmitting control-data to sensing unit 213

Executing validation process 221

Executing command 223

Displaying high resolution image-segments 227

Command reset? 229

No

Yes

250