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- (71) Applicant: **THE BOEING COMPANY** [US/US]; 100 North Riverside Plaza, Chicago, Illinois 60606-2016 (US).
- (72) Inventors: **MATSEN, Marc Rollo**; 100 North Riverside Plaza, Chicago, Illinois 60606 (US). **MILLER, Robert James**; 100 North Riverside Plaza, Chicago, Illinois 60606 (US). **DYKSTRA, William C.**; 100 Riverside Plaza, Chicago, Illinois 60606 (US).
- (74) Agents: **SLENKER, Robert E.** et al.; The Boeing Company, P.O. Box 2515, MC 110-SD54, Seal Beach, California 90740-1515 (US).

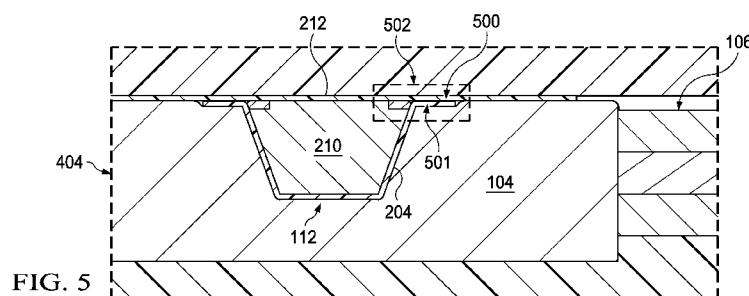
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(54) Title: INDUCTION WELDING SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: A method and apparatus (100) for performing induction welding. A number of protective layers (602, 604) are positioned between a susceptor layer (600) and at least one of a plurality of workpieces (204, 212) at a weld location. An undesired current path is prevented from forming at the weld location during induction heating of the plurality of workpieces (204, 212) by the number of protective layers (602, 604).

INDUCTION WELDING SYSTEM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5 Induction welding is a type of welding that uses electromagnetic radiation to heat a workpiece. Typically, an induction welding system includes one or more induction coils that are energized with a radio frequency electric current, which in turn, generates a high-frequency electromagnetic field. This electromagnetic field may heat the workpiece.

10 When the workpiece is electrically conductive, the heating may take the form of resistive heating that occurs due to induced currents, referred to as eddy currents. When the workpiece is a ferromagnetic workpiece, the heating may be caused by hysteresis. In particular, the electromagnetic field may cause repeated distortions of the magnetic domains of the ferromagnetic workpiece. Typically, a combination of these
15 two effects is involved in the heating of a workpiece.

In some cases, susceptors may be used to inductively weld materials together. As used herein, a “susceptor” is an object comprised of a compound that is capable of absorbing the electromagnetic energy generated by an induction coil. In response to absorbing this electromagnetic energy, the compound is heated and then loses this heat
20 to materials surrounding the compound through thermal conduction. A susceptor may take the form of, for example, without limitation, a susceptor wire.

Susceptors may be used to inductively weld materials such as, for example, without limitation, nonmagnetic materials, electrically insulated materials, magnetic materials, electrically conductive materials, composite materials, metallic materials,
25 nonmetallic materials, other types of materials, or some combination thereof.

Susceptors may be used to inductively weld materials together without requiring that a current path travel through the materials being welded together.

However, in some situations, when using susceptor wires and large induction coils in the form of solenoids to perform induction welding, undesirable current paths
30 may be formed. These current paths may cause portions of a workpiece that were not intended to be heated to become hot. In some cases, these current paths may cause portions of a workpiece to become overheated. This overheating may cause undesired inconsistencies to develop in and/or on the workpiece. For example, a portion of a

workpiece that is overheated may burn. Therefore, it would be desirable to have a method and apparatus that take into account at least some of the issues discussed above, as well as other possible issues.

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SUMMARY

In one illustrative embodiment, an apparatus comprises a susceptor layer comprised of a number of susceptors and a number of protective layers. The number of protective layers is positioned between the susceptor layer and at least one of a plurality of workpieces at a weld location. The number of protective layers is configured to prevent an undesired current path from forming at the weld location during induction heating of the plurality of workpieces using the number of susceptors.

In another illustrative embodiment, an induction welding system comprises an induction heating system, a retaining structure, and a number of weld stack-ups. The retaining structure is configured to retain a first workpiece and a second workpiece configured to be induction-welded to the first workpiece at a number of weld locations. Each weld stack-up in the number of weld stack-up is configured to be positioned at a corresponding weld location in the number of weld locations to prevent an undesired current path from forming at the corresponding weld location during induction heating of the first workpiece and the second workpiece by the induction heating system.

In yet another illustrative embodiment, a method for performing induction welding is provided. A number of protective layers are positioned between a susceptor layer and at least one of a plurality of workpieces at a weld location. An undesired current path is prevented from forming at the weld location during induction heating of the plurality of workpieces by the number of protective layers.

The features and functions can be achieved independently in various embodiments of the present disclosure or may be combined in yet other embodiments in which further details can be seen with reference to the following description and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed characteristic of the illustrative embodiments are set forth in the appended claims. The illustrative embodiments, however, as well as a preferred mode of use, further objectives and features thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is an illustration of a partially assembled induction welding system in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 2 is an illustration of a retaining structure of an induction welding system retaining a number of stiffeners and a skin that are to be induction-welded in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 3 is an illustration of a fully assembled induction welding system in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 4 is an illustration of a cross-sectional view of the fully assembled induction welding system in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 5 is an enlarged view of a weld location between a stiffener and a skin in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 6 is an enlarged view of a weld stack-up in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 7 is an illustration of a final welded stiffener-skin assembly in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 8 is an illustration of a manufacturing environment in the form of a block diagram in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 9 is an illustration of a process for performing induction welding in the form of a flowchart in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 10 is an illustration of a process for performing induction welding of a skin to a stiffener in the form of a flowchart in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 11 is an illustration of an aircraft manufacturing and service method in the form of a flowchart in accordance with an illustrative embodiment; and

Figure 12 is an illustration of an aircraft in the form of a block diagram in accordance with an illustrative embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account different considerations. For example, the illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account that it may be desirable to have a method and apparatus for interrupting undesired current paths that may form during induction welding and/or preventing the formation of these undesired current paths. The illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account that one or more fiberglass layers may be capable of interrupting these types of current paths. Thus, the illustrative embodiments provide a method and apparatus for performing induction welding.

Referring now to the figures and, in particular, with reference to **Figure 1**, an illustration of a partially assembled induction welding system is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In this illustrative example, induction welding system **100** may include first base **102** and retaining structure **104**.

As depicted, retaining structure **104** may hold object **106**. Object **106** may be configured for use in forming stiffeners. For example, object **106** may have hollow portions **108**, **110**, and **112**. Each of these hollow portions may be configured to receive a stiffener. In particular, each of these hollow portions may have a shape configured to substantially conform to the outer shape of the stiffener to be placed within the hollow portion. In some cases, object **106** may be referred to as a caul.

In this illustrative example, first base **102** may include ceramic tool **114** and induction coils **116**. Ceramic tool **114** and induction coils **116** may be used to perform the induction welding. Induction coils **116** may take the form of solenoidal coils, also referred to as solenoids, in this illustrative example.

With reference now to **Figure 2**, an illustration of retaining structure **104** of induction welding system **100** from **Figure 1** retaining a number of stiffeners and a skin that are to be induction-welded is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In this illustrative example, stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** have been placed within hollow portions **108**, **110**, and **112**, from **Figure 1**, respectively, of object **106**.

Stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** may be hat stiffeners in this illustrative example. In this manner, each of stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** may be shaped like a hat.

Further, tools **206**, **208**, and **210** may be placed within stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204**, respectively, to help these stiffeners retain their shape during the induction welding

processing. In some illustrative examples, tools **206**, **208**, and **210** may be referred to as dies.

As depicted, skin **212** has been placed over stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** and tools, **206**, **208**, and **210**. Induction welding system **100** may be used to weld skin **212** to stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204**.

In this illustrative example, skin **212** and stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** may be comprised of one or more thermoplastic materials. For example, without limitation, skin **212** and stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** may be comprised of a fiber-reinforced composite material.

A plurality of weld stack-ups (not shown) may be placed on stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** prior to skin **212** being placed over the stiffeners. These weld stack-ups may be placed at locations on the stiffeners that are to be induction-welded to skin **212**. An illustration of one of these weld stack-ups may be depicted in **Figures 5-6**.

With reference now to **Figure 3**, an illustration of a fully assembled induction welding system **100** is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In this illustrative example, second base **300** has been positioned over retaining structure **104** from **Figure 1** such that induction welding system **100** may be fully assembled. Second base **300** may include ceramic tool **302** and induction coils **304**, similar to ceramic tool **114** and induction coils **116** of first base **102**.

Induction coils **116** and induction coils **304** may be energized with a radio frequency electric current. The frequency of this radio frequency electric current may be greater than about 30 kilohertz (kHz). Energizing these induction coils with this type of current may generate an electromagnetic field of electromagnetic energy that allows stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** to be induction-welded to skin **212**.

With reference now to **Figure 4**, an illustration of a cross-sectional view of the fully assembled induction welding system **100** is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In this illustrative example, a cross-sectional view of induction welding system **100** from **Figure 3** is depicted with respect to lines **4-4**.

In this illustrative example, wires **400** and wires **402** may be seen connecting induction coils **116** to induction coils **304**. In this manner, a radio frequency electric current may be used to energize induction coils **116** and induction coils **304**.

A weld stack-up may be positioned between stiffener **204** and skin **212** in section **404**. An enlarged view of section **404** may be seen in **Figure 5** below.

With reference now to **Figure 5**, an illustration of an enlarged view of a weld location between stiffener **204** and skin **212** is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. As depicted, weld stack-up **500** may be positioned between stiffener **204** and skin **212** at weld location **501**. Weld location **501** may be one of the locations at which stiffener **204** is designated to be induction-welded to skin **212**. Weld location **501** may be within section **502**. An enlarged view of section **502** may be depicted in **Figure 6** below.

With reference now to **Figure 6**, an illustration of an enlarged view of weld stack-up **500** from **Figure 5** is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. As depicted, weld stack-up **500** may include susceptor layer **600**, first protective layer **602**, and second protective layer **604**.

Susceptor layer **600** may be comprised of plurality of susceptor wires **606** embedded within weld layer **608**. Weld layer **608** may be comprised of a material configured to allow skin **212** to be induction-welded to stiffener **204**. In this illustrative example, weld layer **608** may take the form of a resin layer. For example, weld layer **608** may be comprised of the same resin material present in stiffener **204** and skin **212**.

First protective layer **602** may be positioned between susceptor layer **600** and skin **212**. In this manner, first protective layer **602** may contact surface **610** of skin **212**. Second protective layer **604** may be positioned between susceptor layer **600** and stiffener **204**. In this manner, second protective layer **604** may contact surface **612** of stiffener **204**.

First protective layer **602** and second protective layer **604** may be comprised of materials configured to prevent electric current from flowing between skin **212** and stiffener **204**. In particular, first protective layer **602** and second protective layer **604** may be comprised of materials configured to prevent current from being transmitted from plurality of susceptor wires **606** to the fibers in skin **212** and/or the fibers in stiffener **204** and from being transmitted between skin **212** and stiffener **204**.

Further, first protective layer **602** and second protective layer **604** may be comprised of materials configured to allow first protective layer **602** to be welded to skin **212** and weld layer **608** and second protective layer **604** to be welded to stiffener **204** and weld layer **608**. In this manner, skin **212** may be welded to stiffener **204** at weld location **501** without any undesired current paths between susceptor layer **600** and skin

212, between susceptor layer **600** and stiffener **204**, or between skin **212** and stiffener **204** forming.

With reference now to **Figure 7**, an illustration of a final welded stiffener-skin assembly is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In this illustrative example, stiffeners **200**, **202**, and **204** have been induction-welded to skin **212** to form welded stiffener-skin assembly **700**. Once welded stiffener-skin assembly **700** has been formed, tools **206**, **208**, and **210** may be removed by sliding the tools out of welded stiffener-skin assembly **700** in the direction of arrow **702**.

The illustrations of induction welding system **100** in **Figures 1-4**, weld location **501** and weld stack-up **500** in **Figures 5-6**, and welded stiffener-skin assembly **700** in **Figure 7** are not meant to imply physical or architectural limitations to the manner in which an illustrative embodiment may be implemented. Other components in addition to or in place of the ones illustrated may be used. Some components may be optional.

The different components shown in **Figures 1-7** may be illustrative examples of how components shown in block form in **Figure 8** below can be implemented as physical structures. Additionally, some of the components in **Figures 1-7** may be combined with components in **Figure 8**, used with components in **Figure 8**, or a combination of the two.

With reference now to **Figure 8**, an illustration of a manufacturing environment in the form of a block diagram is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In this illustrative example, manufacturing environment **800** may be an example of an environment in which induction welding system **802** may be used. Induction welding system **100** in **Figures 1-4** may be an example of one manner in which induction welding system **802** may be implemented.

As depicted, induction welding system **802** may include induction heating system **804** and retaining structure **806**. Induction heating system **804** may be configured to heat plurality of workpieces **805** that are to be induction-welded. Induction heating system **804** may be comprised of any number of components configured to provide induction-based heating of plurality of workpieces **805**. First base **102** comprising ceramic tool **114** and induction coils **116** in **Figures 1-4** and second base **300** comprising ceramic tool **302** and induction coils **304** in **Figures 3-4**, as well as wires **400** and wires **402** in **Figure 4** may be an example of one implementation for induction heating system **804**.

Further, retaining structure **104** in **Figure 1** may be an example of one manner in which retaining structure **806** may be implemented. Retaining structure **806** may be configured to hold plurality of workpieces **805** that are to be induction-welded. In one illustrative example, plurality of workpieces **805** may include first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**.

Retaining structure **806** may be configured to retain first workpiece **808** that is to be induction-welded to second workpiece **812**. Skin **212** and stiffener **204** from **Figures 2-7** may be examples of implementations for first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**, respectively.

First workpiece **808** may be comprised of first thermoplastic material **810**. Second workpiece **812** may be configured to be induction-welded to first workpiece **808** at a number of weld locations. For example, second workpiece **812** may be configured to be induction-welded to first workpiece **808** at weld location **814**. Second workpiece **812** may be comprised of second thermoplastic material **816**.

Depending on the implementation, first thermoplastic material **810** may be a same material as or a different material from second thermoplastic material **816**. Each of these thermoplastic materials may be comprised of one or more materials configured to become soft, pliable, or moldable in response to heat. For example, first thermoplastic material **810** and second thermoplastic material **816** may be comprised of at least one of a composite material, a fiber-reinforced composite material, an elastomeric material, or some other type of material.

As used herein, the phrase “at least one of,” when used with a list of items, means different combinations of one or more of the listed items may be used and only one of the items in the list may be needed. The item may be a particular object, thing, or category. In other words, “at least one of” means any combination of items or number of items may be used from the list, but not all of the items in the list may be required.

For example, “at least one of item A, item B, and item C” may mean item A; item A and item B; item B; item A, item B, and item C; or item B and item C. In some cases, “at least one of item A, item B, and item C” may mean, for example, without limitation, two of item A, one of item B, and ten of item C; four of item B and seven of item C; or some other suitable combination.

A number of weld stack-ups may be used for induction-welding of first workpiece **808** to second workpiece **812** at a number of weld locations. For example, each weld stack-up in the number of weld stack-ups may be configured to be positioned at a corresponding weld location in the number of weld locations to prevent an undesired current path from forming at the corresponding weld location during induction heating of first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**.

In one illustrative example, weld stack-up **818** may be positioned at weld location **814** between first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**. Weld stack-up **818** may be comprised of susceptor layer **820** and number of protective layers **821**. Number of protective layers **821** may be configured to be positioned between susceptor layer **820** and at least one of plurality of workpieces **805**.

In one illustrative example, number of protective layers **821** may include first protective layer **822** and second protective layer **824**. Susceptor layer **600**, first protective layer **602**, and second protective layer **604** in **Figure 6** may be examples of implementations for susceptor layer **820**, first protective layer **822**, and second protective layer **824**, respectively.

Susceptor layer **820** may be configured to absorb the electromagnetic energy produced by the electromagnetic field generated using induction heating system **804**. In some cases, susceptor layer **820** may be considered part of induction heating system **804**.

As depicted, susceptor layer **820** may be comprised of number of susceptors **826**. As used herein, a "number of" items may include one or more items. In this manner, number of susceptors **826** may include one or more susceptors. A "susceptor," as used herein, may be any object configured to absorb electromagnetic energy and convert electromagnetic energy into thermal energy, or heat. A susceptor may take a number of different forms. For example, without limitation, a susceptor in number of susceptors **826** may be implemented in the form of a wire, a rod, a filament, a plate, a strip, a sheet, or some other object having some other type of shape. Further, a susceptor may be comprised of any number of materials.

In this illustrative example, a susceptor in number of susceptors **826** may be comprised of at least one of a magnetically permeable material, a ceramic material, a metal material, or some other type of material. A magnetically permeable material may be comprised of any number of materials configured to generate heat in response to

interacting with an electromagnetic flux field. The magnetically permeable material may be comprised of at least one of an alloy, a cobalt, an iron alloy, a nickel and iron alloy, an iron and silicon alloy, an amorphous magnetic alloy, a crystalline magnetic alloy, or some other type of material.

5 Number of susceptors **826** may be embedded within, placed on top of, weaved in and out of, and/or associated with weld layer **828** in some other manner. In one illustrative example, number of susceptors **826** may take the form of number of susceptor wires **827**. Plurality of susceptor wires **606** and weld layer **608** in **Figure 6** may be examples of implementations for number of susceptor wires **827** and weld layer
10 **828**.

Each of number of susceptors **826** may be configured to absorb electromagnetic energy, become hot, and then dissipate heat to materials surrounding the susceptor wire. In particular, number of susceptors **826** may dissipate heat into at least one of weld layer **828**, first protective layer **822**, second protective layer **824**, first workpiece
15 **808**, and second workpiece **812** in response to absorption of the electromagnetic energy by number of susceptors **826**. In this illustrative example, number of susceptors **826** may be a number of smart susceptors, which may be implemented in the form of a number of smart susceptor wires. In other words, each susceptor in number of susceptors **826** may be configured to intrinsically level off at a selected temperature.

20 In particular, smart susceptors may be configured to generate heat up to at least a selected weld temperature. This selected weld temperature may be the temperature needed for welding to occur between first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**. A smart susceptor may be formed such that the magnetic properties of the smart susceptor change at a particular temperature, which may be referred to as the Curie
25 temperature or the Curie point. The smart susceptor may be unable to increase in temperature much beyond the Curie temperature. In this illustrative example, each smart susceptor may be formed such that the Curie temperature for the smart susceptor is at least the selected weld temperature. Further, each smart susceptor may be formed such that the smart susceptor heats up to the Curie temperature at a desired
30 rate.

In this manner, smart susceptor wires may be substantially self-controlling. In other words, the temperature to which a smart susceptor is heated may be self-limiting based on the selection of the Curie temperature for that smart susceptor.

[0001] Weld layer **828** may be configured for use in welding first protective layer **822** to second protective layer **824**. Weld layer **828** may be comprised of a thermoplastic material.

[0002] First protective layer **822** may be positioned between susceptor layer **820** and first workpiece **808**. Second protective layer **824** may be positioned between susceptor layer **820** and second workpiece **812**. First protective layer **822** may be configured for use in welding weld layer **828** to first workpiece **808**. Second protective layer **824** may be configured for use in welding weld layer **828** to second workpiece **812**. In this manner, first workpiece **808** may be welded to second workpiece **812**.

[0003] First protective layer **822** and second protective layer **824** may be comprised of one or more materials configured to prevent electric current from flowing between first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**. At least one of first protective layer **822** and second protective layer **824** may be used to prevent an undesired current path from forming at weld location **814** during induction heating of first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**.

[0004] In particular, at least one of first protective layer **822** and second protective layer **824** may be used to prevent number of susceptors **826** in susceptor layer **820** from transmitting electric current to any conductive material that may be present within first workpiece **808** and/or within second workpiece **812**, thereby forming a current path between first workpiece **808** and within second workpiece **812**. Further, at least one of first protective layer **822** and second protective layer **824** may be configured to prevent electric current from being directly transmitted between first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**.

[0005] For example, without limitation, first protective layer **822** and second protective layer **824** may be comprised of at least one of a fiberglass material, a resin material, or some other type of material. First protective layer **822** and second protective layer **824** may be comprised of a thermoplastic material such that these layers may be welded to weld layer **828**, and first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**, respectively, but may not be comprised of any material configured to conduct electric current.

In this manner, the undesired effects that may be caused by overheating of first workpiece **808** and/or second workpiece **812** at weld location **814** due to undesired

current paths may be prevented. Weld stack-up **818** may allow induction welding at weld location **814** but may protect first workpiece **808** and second workpiece **812**.

The illustration of manufacturing environment **800** and induction welding system **802** in **Figure 8** is not meant to imply physical or architectural limitations to the manner in which an illustrative embodiment may be implemented. Other components in addition to or in place of the ones illustrated may be used. Some components may be optional. Also, the blocks are presented to illustrate some functional components. One or more of these blocks may be combined, divided, or combined and divided into different blocks when implemented in an illustrative embodiment.

With reference now to **Figure 9**, an illustration of a process for performing induction welding is depicted in the form of a flowchart in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The process described in **Figure 9** may be implemented using weld stack-up **818** described in **Figure 8**.

The process may begin by positioning a number of protective layers between a susceptor layer and at least one of a plurality of workpieces at a weld location (operation **900**). Thereafter, an undesired current path may be prevented, by the number of protective layers, from forming at the weld location during induction heating of the plurality of workpieces (operation **902**), with the process terminating thereafter.

[0006] In one illustrative example, operation **900** may include positioning a first protective layer between a susceptor layer and a first workpiece at a weld location and positioning a second protective layer between the susceptor layer and a second workpiece at the weld location. Operation **902** may include preventing an undesired current path from forming at the weld location during induction heating of the first workpiece and the second workpiece by at least one of the first protective layer and the second protective layer.

[0007] With reference now to **Figure 10**, an illustration of a process for performing induction welding of a skin to a stiffener is depicted in the form of a flowchart in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The process illustrated in **Figure 10** may be implemented using induction welding system **802** in **Figure 8**.

[0008] The process may begin by retaining a stiffener using a retaining structure (operation **1000**). A weld stack-up comprised of a susceptor layer positioned between a first protective layer and a second protective layer may be placed on the stiffener at a weld location at which the stiffener is to be induction-welded to a skin (operation **1002**).

[0009] Next, the skin is placed over the stiffener (operation **1004**). An induction heating system is used to inductively heat at least one of a weld layer in the susceptor layer, the first protective layer, the second protective layer, the stiffener, and the skin using a number of susceptors embedded in the weld layer to cause welding of the first workpiece to the second workpiece at the weld location (operation **1006**).

[0010] A flow of electric current between the susceptor layer and the skin and between the susceptor layer and the stiffener may be prevented by the first protective layer and the second protective layer, respectively, during induction heating of the weld layer (operation **1008**), with the process terminating thereafter. In this manner, undesired effects may be prevented.

Illustrative embodiments of the disclosure may be described in the context of aircraft manufacturing and service method **1100** as shown in **Figure 11** and aircraft **1200** as shown in **Figure 12**. Turning first to **Figure 11**, an illustration of an aircraft manufacturing and service method is depicted in the form of a flowchart in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. During pre-production, aircraft manufacturing and service method **1100** may include specification and design **1102** of aircraft **1200** in **Figure 12** and material procurement **1104**.

During production, component and subassembly manufacturing **1106** and system integration **1108** of aircraft **1200** in **Figure 12** takes place. Thereafter, aircraft **1200** in **Figure 12** may go through certification and delivery **1110** in order to be placed in service **1112**. While in service **1112** by a customer, aircraft **1200** in **Figure 12** is scheduled for routine maintenance and service **1114**, which may include modification, reconfiguration, refurbishment, and other maintenance or service.

Each of the processes of aircraft manufacturing and service method **1100** may be performed or carried out by a system integrator, a third party, and/or an operator. In these examples, the operator may be a customer. For the purposes of this description, a system integrator may include, without limitation, any number of aircraft manufacturers and major-system subcontractors; a third party may include, without limitation, any number of vendors, subcontractors, and suppliers; and an operator may be an airline, a leasing company, a military entity, a service organization, and so on.

With reference now to **Figure 12**, an illustration of an aircraft is depicted in the form of a block diagram in which an illustrative embodiment may be implemented. In this example, aircraft **1200** is produced by aircraft manufacturing and service method

1100 in **Figure 11** and may include airframe **1202** with plurality of systems **1204** and interior **1206**. Examples of systems **1204** include one or more of propulsion system **1208**, electrical system **1210**, hydraulic system **1212**, and environmental system **1214**. Any number of other systems may be included. Although an aerospace example is shown, different illustrative embodiments may be applied to other industries, such as the automotive industry.

[0011] Apparatuses and methods embodied herein may be employed during at least one of the stages of aircraft manufacturing and service method **1100** in **Figure 11**. In particular, weld stack-ups, implemented in a manner similar to weld stack-up **818** from **Figure 8**, may be used during any one of the stages of aircraft manufacturing and service method **1100**. For example, without limitation, weld stack-up **818** from **Figure 8** may be used during a welding operation performed during at least one of component and subassembly manufacturing **1106**, system integration **1108**, routine maintenance and service **1114**, or some other stage of aircraft manufacturing and service method **1100**.

[0012] In one illustrative example, components or subassemblies produced in component and subassembly manufacturing **1106** in **Figure 11** may be fabricated or manufactured in a manner similar to components or subassemblies produced while aircraft **1200** is in service **1112** in **Figure 11**. As yet another example, one or more apparatus embodiments, method embodiments, or a combination thereof may be utilized during production stages, such as component and subassembly manufacturing **1106** and system integration **1108** in **Figure 11**. One or more apparatus embodiments, method embodiments, or a combination thereof may be utilized while aircraft **1200** is in service **1112** and/or during maintenance and service **1114** in **Figure 11**. The use of a number of the different illustrative embodiments may substantially expedite the assembly of and/or reduce the cost of aircraft **1200**.

[0013] The flowcharts and block diagrams in the different depicted embodiments illustrate the architecture, functionality, and operation of some possible implementations of apparatuses and methods in an illustrative embodiment. In this regard, each block in the flowcharts or block diagrams may represent a module, a segment, a function, and/or a portion of an operation or step.

In some alternative implementations of an illustrative embodiment, the function or functions noted in the blocks may occur out of the order noted in the figures. For

example, in some cases, two blocks shown in succession may be executed substantially concurrently, or the blocks may sometimes be performed in the reverse order, depending upon the functionality involved. Also, other blocks may be added in addition to the illustrated blocks in a flowchart or block diagram.

5 The description of the different illustrative embodiments has been presented for purposes of illustration and description, and is not intended to be exhaustive or limited to the embodiments in the form disclosed. Many modifications and variations will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. Further, different illustrative embodiments may provide different features as compared to other desirable embodiments. The
10 embodiment or embodiments selected are chosen and described in order to best explain the principles of the embodiments, the practical application, and to enable others of ordinary skill in the art to understand the disclosure for various embodiments with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. Further, the disclosure comprises embodiments according to the following clauses:

15 Clause 1. An apparatus comprising:

 a susceptor layer comprised of a number of susceptors; and

 a number of protective layers positioned between the susceptor layer and at least one of a plurality of workpieces at a weld location, wherein the number of protective
20 layers is configured to prevent an undesired current path from forming at the weld location during induction heating of the plurality of workpieces using the number of susceptors.

25 Clause 5. The apparatus of Clause 1, wherein the plurality of workpieces includes a first workpiece and a second workpiece and wherein the number of protective layers includes a first protective layer positioned between the susceptor layer and the first workpiece at the weld location and a second protective layer positioned between the susceptor layer and the second workpiece at the weld location.

30 Clause 7. The apparatus of Clause 5, wherein the first workpiece is a skin and the second workpiece is a stiffener.

Clause 8. The apparatus of Clause 5, wherein the first workpiece is comprised of a first thermoplastic material and the second workpiece is comprised of a second thermoplastic material.

5 Clause 9. The apparatus of Clause 8, wherein the first thermoplastic material is a same material as the second thermoplastic material.

Clause 10. The apparatus of clause 5, wherein the first protective layer and the second protective layer are comprised of a thermoplastic material selected from one of
10 a fiberglass material or a resin material.

Clause 12. The apparatus of clause 11, wherein the weld stack-up is configured for use within an induction welding system.

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. An apparatus comprising:
a susceptor layer comprised of a number of susceptors; and
a number of protective layers positioned between the susceptor layer and at least
one of a plurality of workpieces at a weld location, wherein the number of protective
layers is configured to prevent an undesired current path from forming at the weld
10 location during induction heating of the plurality of workpieces using the number of
susceptors.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the susceptor layer further comprises:
a weld layer configured to be welded to the number of protective layers, wherein
15 the number of susceptors is a number of susceptor wires embedded in the weld layer.
3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the weld layer is comprised of a thermoplastic
material.
- 20 4. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the number of susceptor wires is a number of
smart susceptor wires.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the plurality of workpieces includes a first
workpiece and a second workpiece and wherein the number of protective layers
25 includes a first protective layer positioned between the susceptor layer and the first
workpiece at the weld location and a second protective layer positioned between the
susceptor layer and the second workpiece at the weld location.
6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the first protective layer and the second
30 protective layer are comprised of a number of materials configured to prevent electric
current from flowing between the susceptor layer and the first workpiece and between
the susceptor layer and the second workpiece.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the susceptor layer and the number of protective layers form a weld stack-up for use in welding a first workpiece to a second workpiece at the weld location.

5 8. An induction welding system comprising:
an induction heating system;

a retaining structure configured to retain a first workpiece and a second workpiece configured to be induction-welded to the first workpiece at a number of weld locations; and

10 a number of weld stack-ups in which each weld stack-up in the number of weld stack-ups is configured to be positioned at a corresponding weld location in the number of weld locations to prevent an undesired current path from forming at the corresponding weld location during induction heating of the first workpiece and the second workpiece by the induction heating system.

15 9. The induction welding system of claim 8, wherein a weld stack-up in the number of weld stack-ups positioned at a weld location in the number of weld locations comprises:

a susceptor layer;

20 a first protective layer positioned between the susceptor layer and the first workpiece at the weld location; and

a second protective layer positioned between the susceptor layer and the second workpiece at the weld location, wherein the first protective layer and the second protective layer are configured to prevent the undesired current path from forming at the weld location during the induction heating.

25 10. A method for performing induction welding, the method comprising:

positioning a number of protective layers between a susceptor layer and at least one of a plurality of workpieces at a weld location; and

30 preventing, by the number of protective layers, an undesired current path from forming at the weld location during induction heating of the plurality of workpieces.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein positioning the number of protective layers comprises:

positioning a first protective layer between the susceptor layer and a first workpiece in the plurality of workpieces at the weld location, wherein the first workpiece is comprised of a first thermoplastic material; and

positioning a second protective layer between the susceptor layer and a second workpiece in the plurality of workpieces at the weld location, wherein the second workpiece is comprised of a second thermoplastic material.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising:

inductively heating at least one of a weld layer in the susceptor layer, the first protective layer, the second protective layer, the first workpiece, and the second workpiece using a number of susceptors embedded in the weld layer to cause welding of the first workpiece to the second workpiece at the weld location.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein inductively heating the at least one of the weld layer in the susceptor layer, the first protective layer, the second protective layer, the first workpiece, and the second workpiece using the number of susceptors comprises:

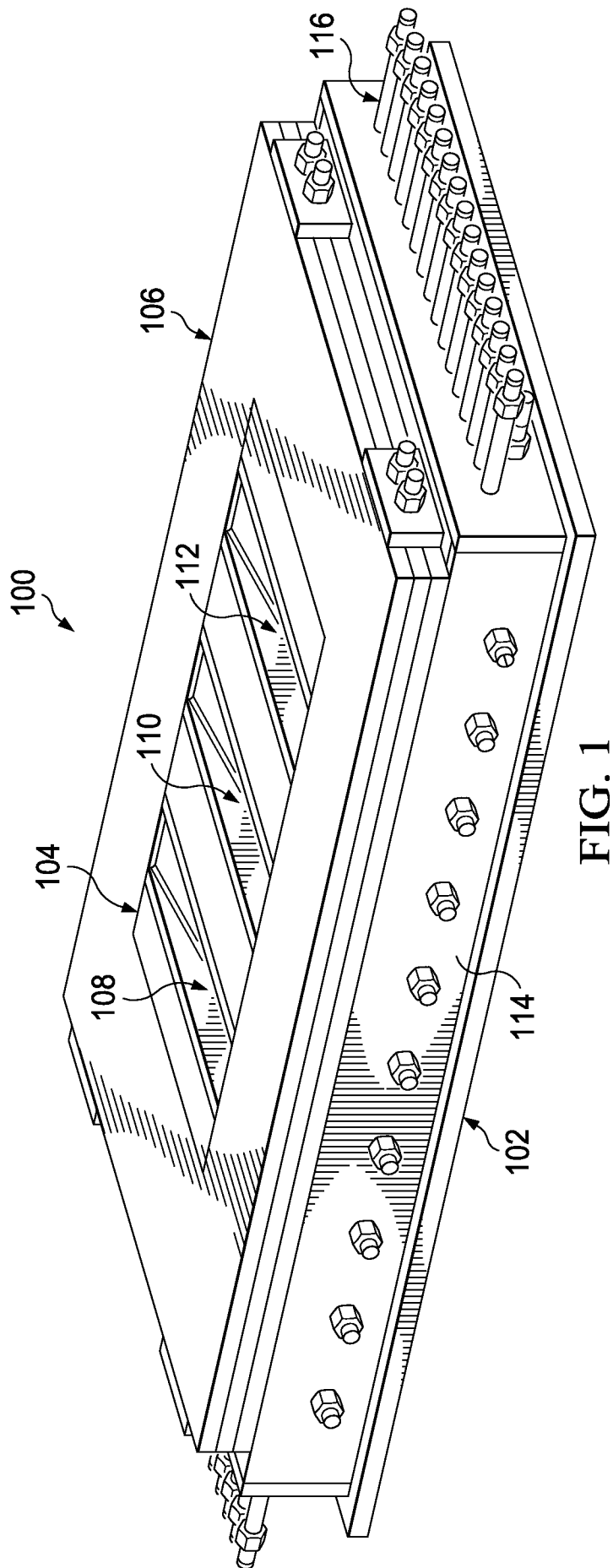
energizing induction coils using a radio frequency electric current to generate an electromagnetic field of electromagnetic energy that is absorbed by the number of susceptors.

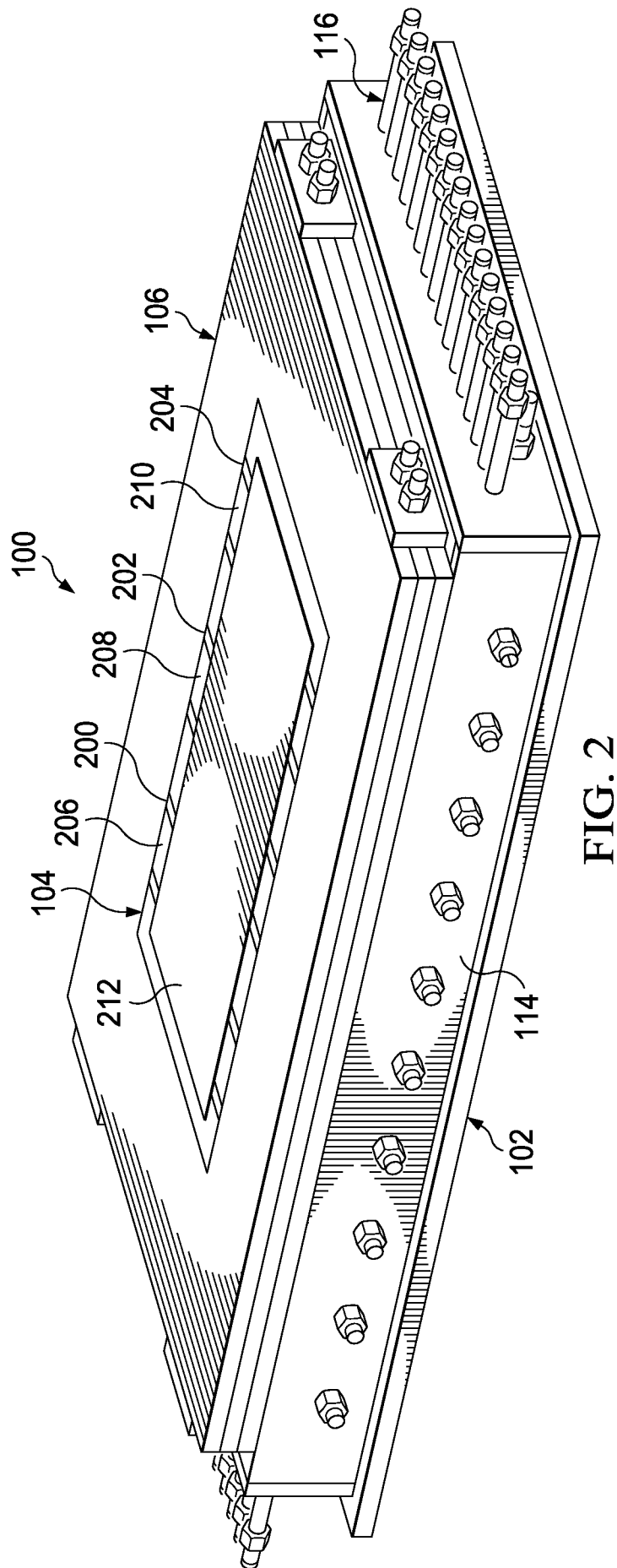
14. The method of claim 13 further comprising:

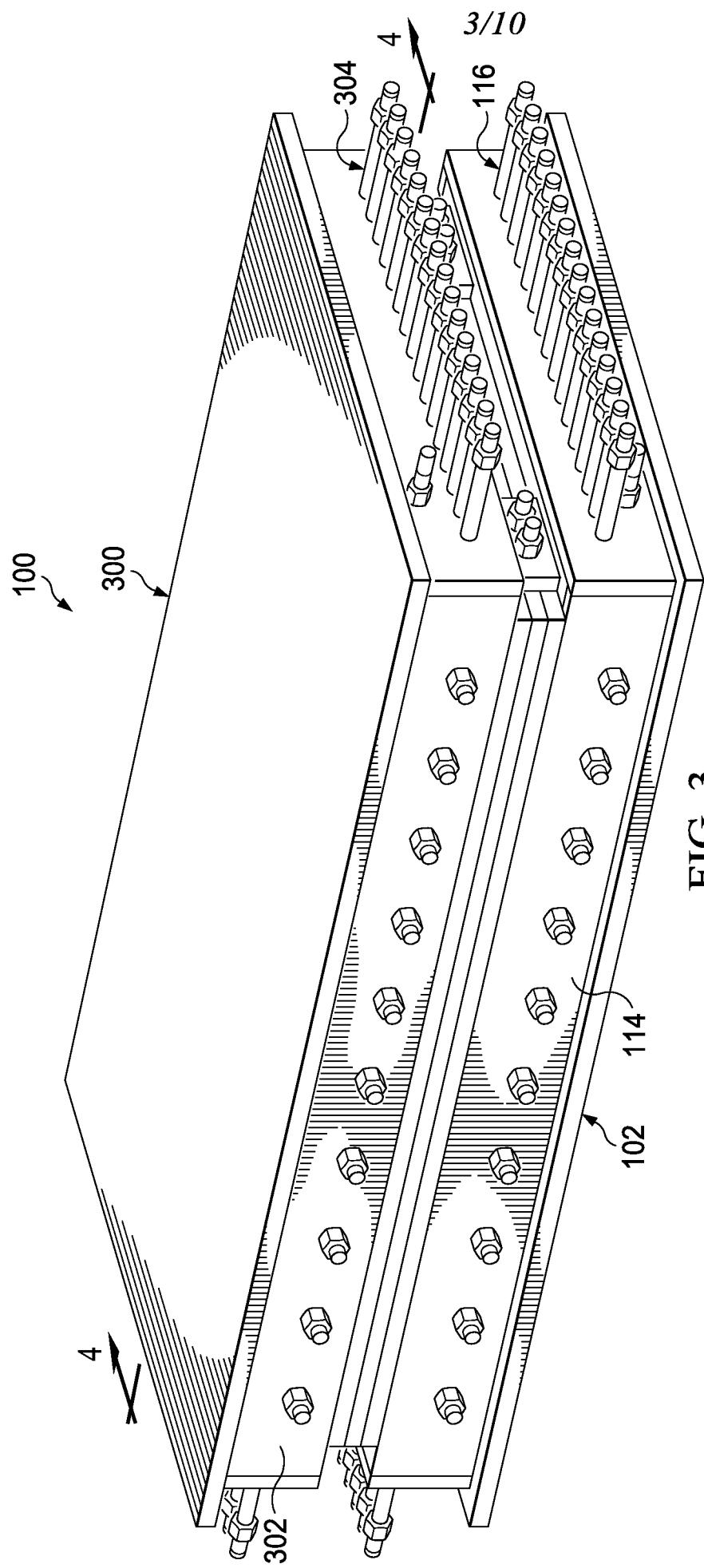
dissipating heat from the number of susceptors into the at least one of the weld layer in the susceptor layer, the first protective layer, the second protective layer, the first workpiece, and the second workpiece in response to absorption of the electromagnetic energy by the number of susceptors to cause induction welding of the first workpiece to the second workpiece.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein preventing, by the number of protective layers, the undesired current path from forming at the weld location during the induction heating of the first workpiece and the second workpiece comprises:

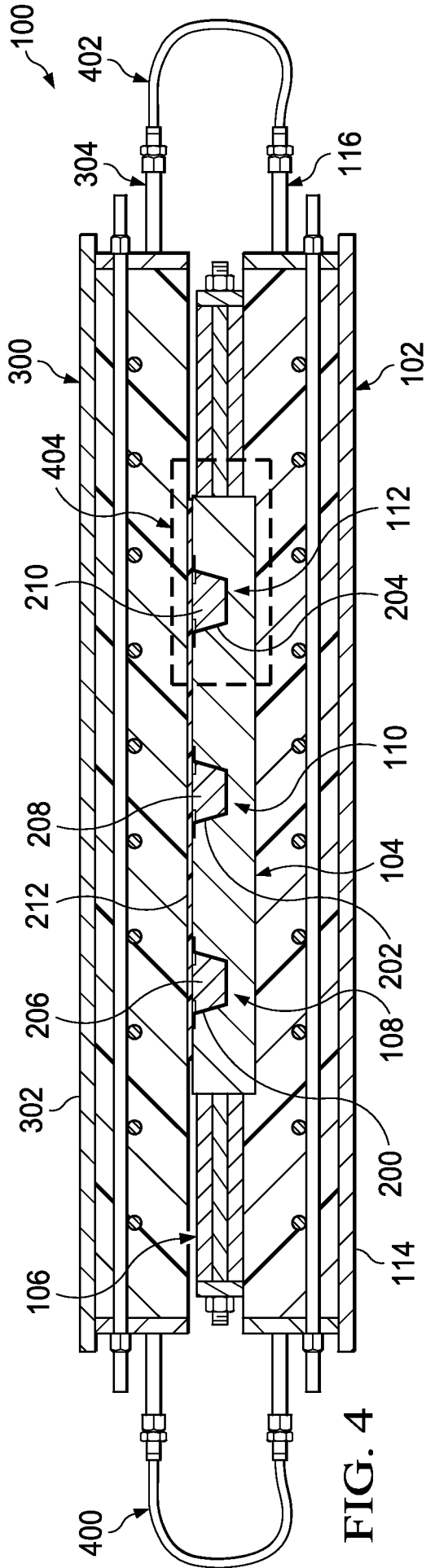
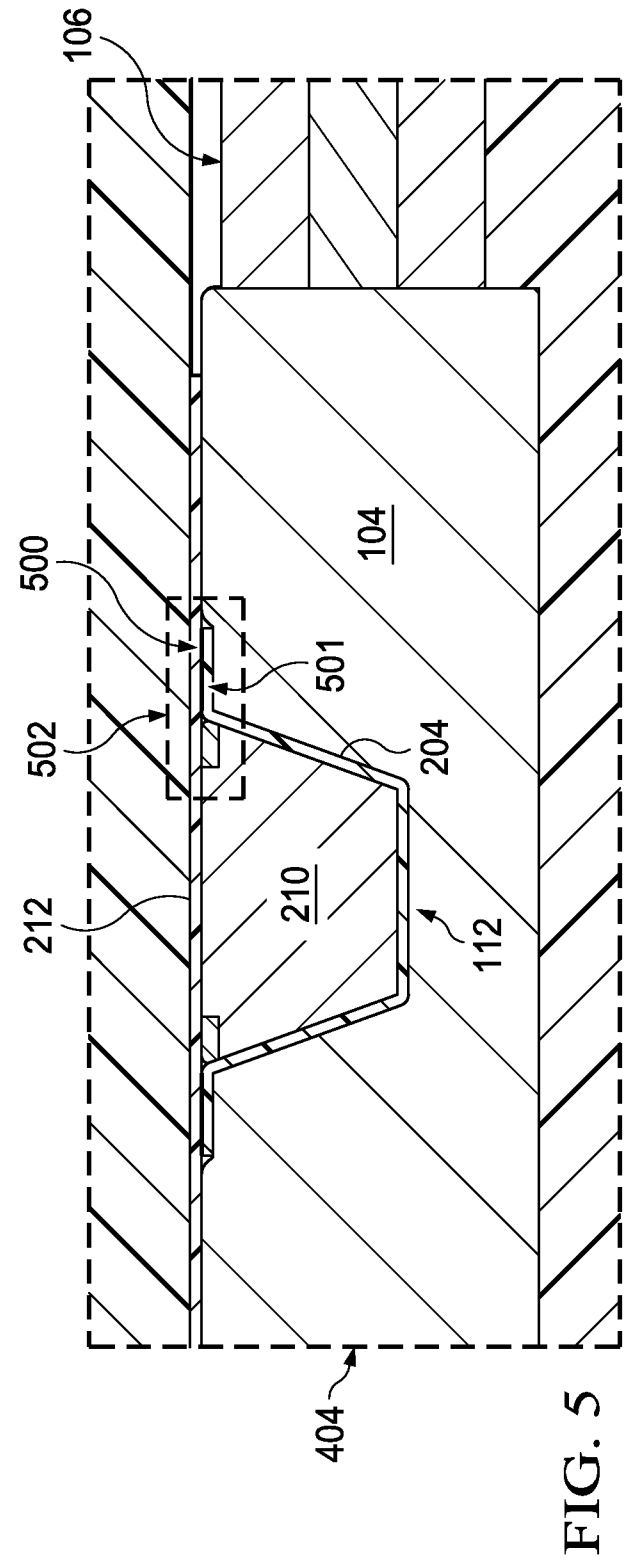
preventing an electric current from flowing between the susceptor layer and the first workpiece and between the susceptor layer and the second workpiece using the first protective layer and the second protective layer.

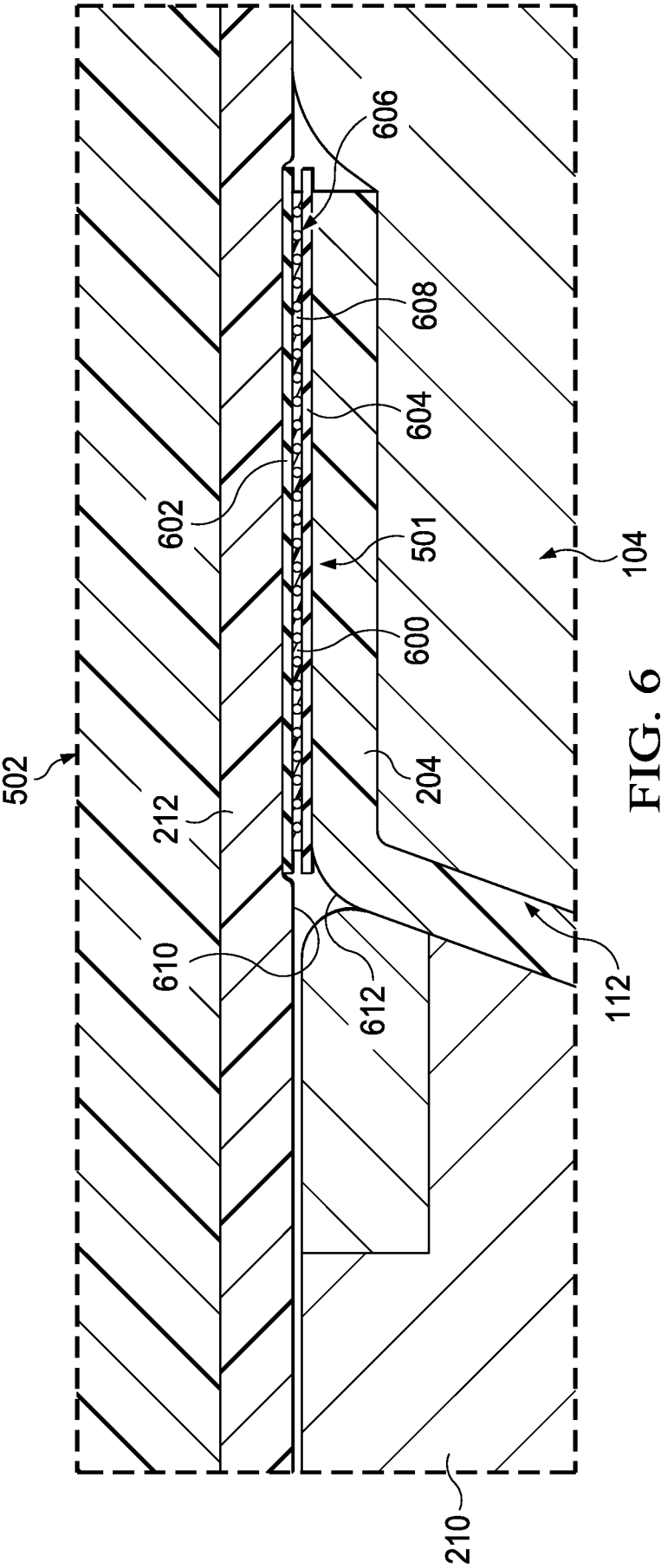






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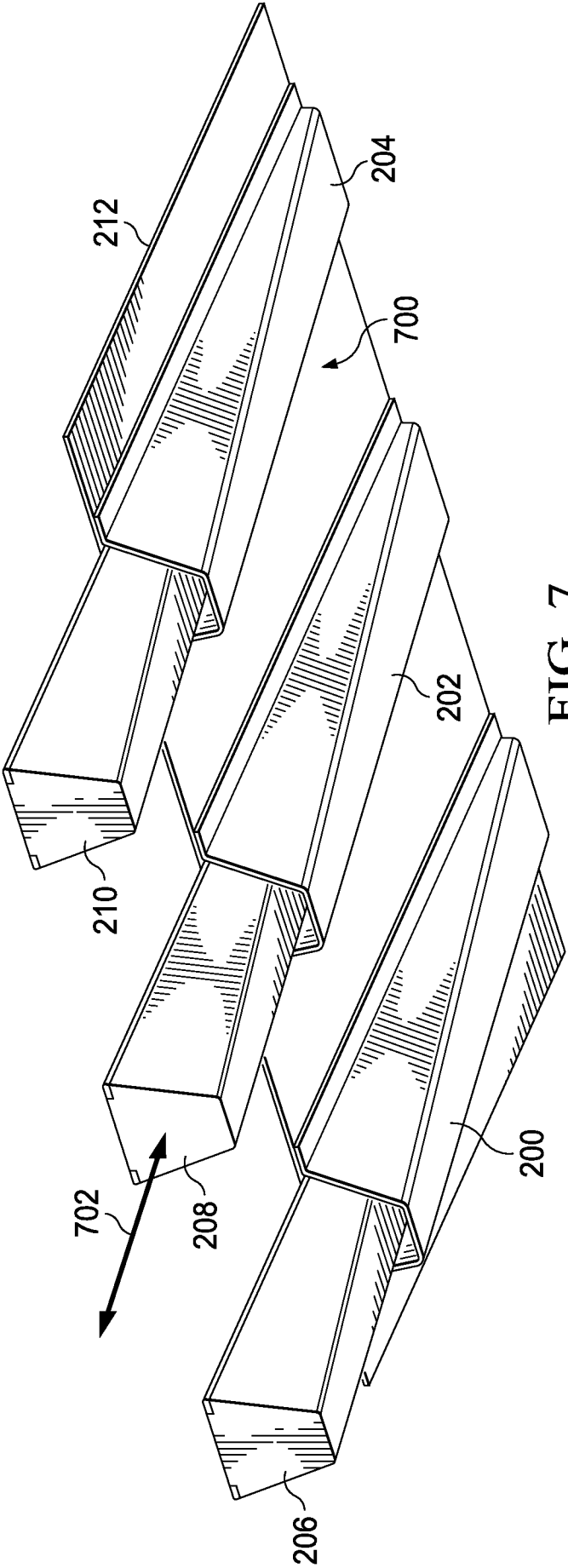


FIG. 7

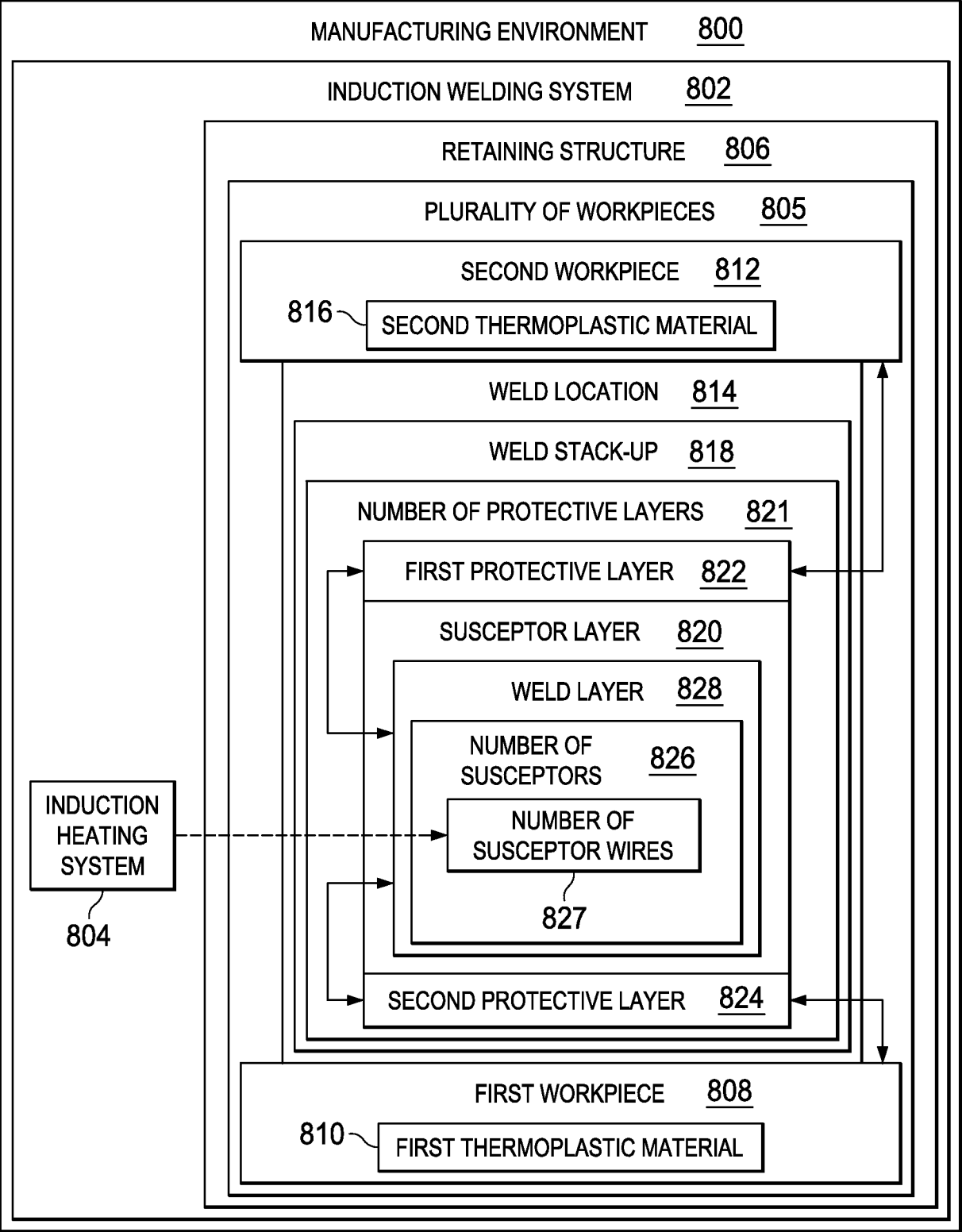


FIG. 8

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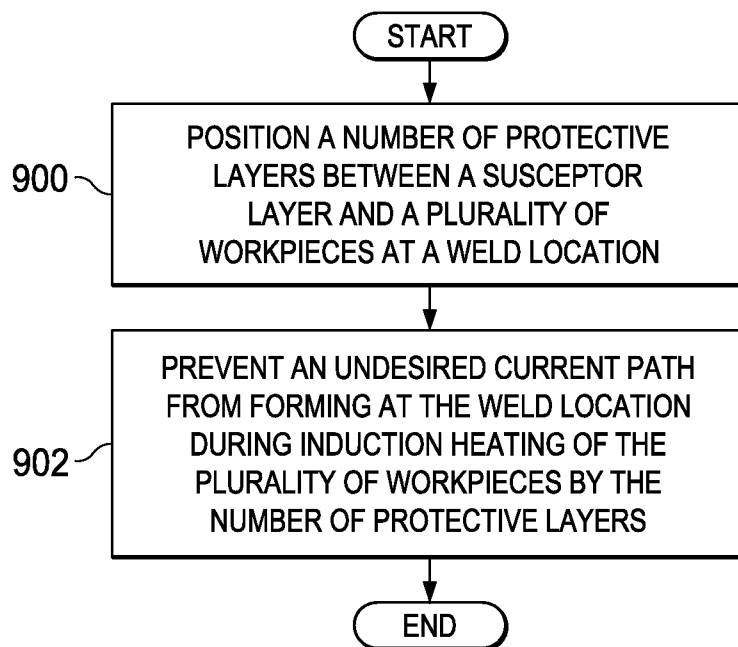


FIG. 9

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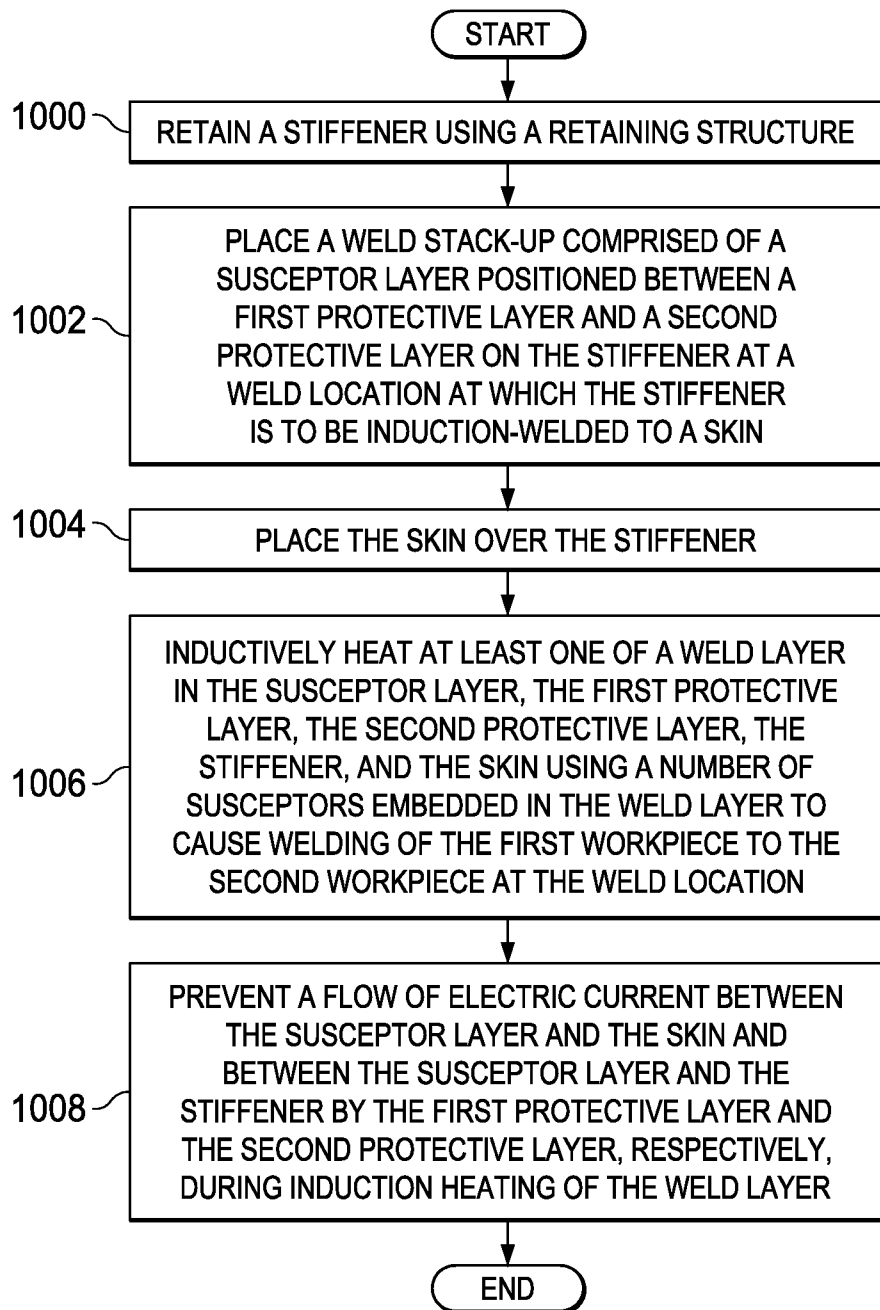


FIG. 10

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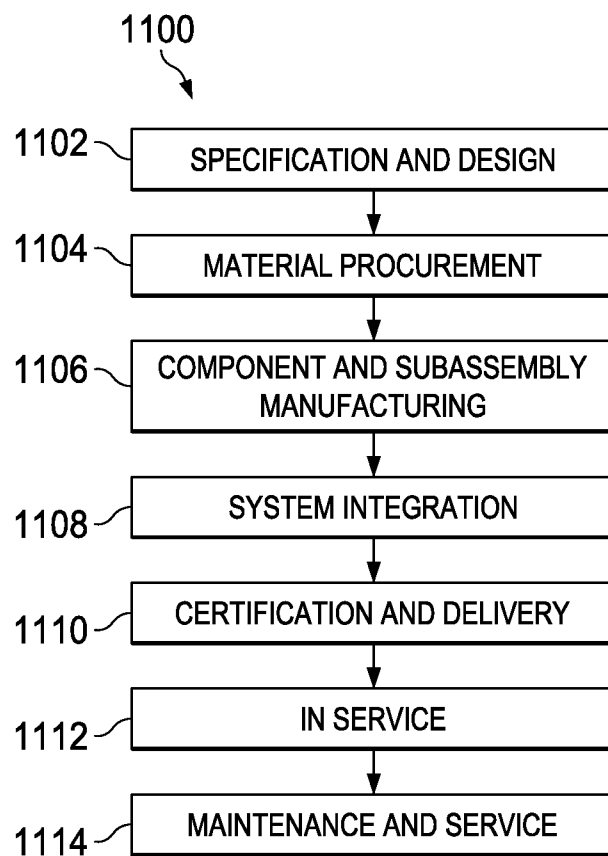


FIG. 11

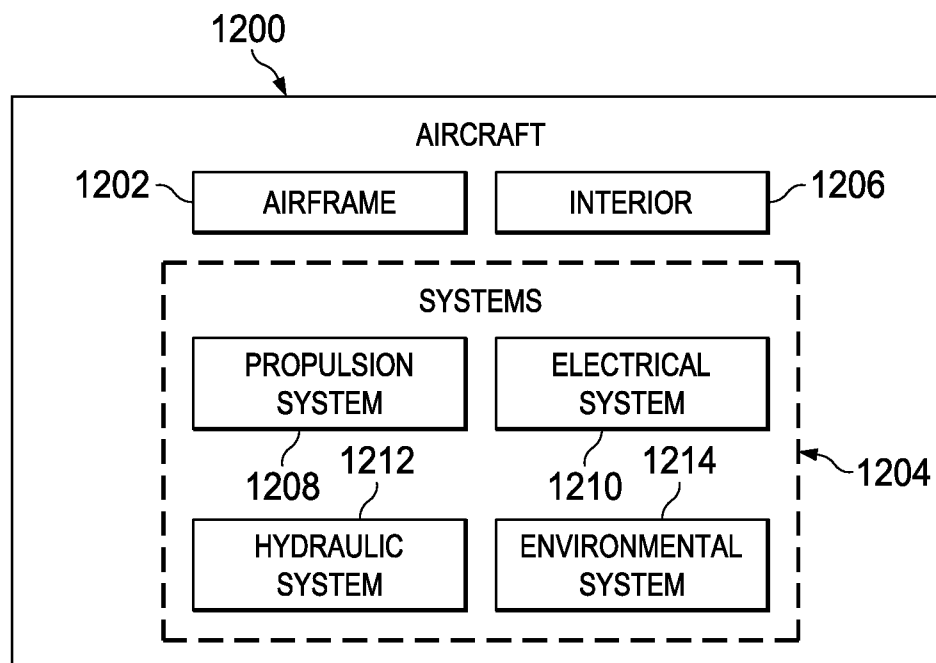


FIG. 12

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2014/041169

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. B29C65/36
ADD.

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

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
B29C B29L

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

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

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 96/40487 A1 (BOEING CO [US]) 19 December 1996 (1996-12-19) the whole document	1-15
X	US 4 029 837 A (LEATHERMAN ALFRED F) 14 June 1977 (1977-06-14) the whole document	1-15
A	US 5 500 511 A (HANSEN KARL A [US] ET AL) 19 March 1996 (1996-03-19) the whole document	1-15
A	US 5 935 475 A (SCOLES ROGER W [US] ET AL) 10 August 1999 (1999-08-10) the whole document	1-15



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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

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

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

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

13 October 2014

Date of mailing of the international search report

22/10/2014

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Peña, Alejandro

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/US2014/041169

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