SENTINEL/GUARD FOR PROTECTING A PREDEFINED GAMING AREA

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ABSTRACT

Certain embodiments provide systems and methods for monitoring and authorizing communication and activity in a gaming environment. Certain embodiments provide a system for electronic gaming and monitoring. The system includes an electronic gaming chip capable of being activated or inactivated based at least in part on a command received at the chip. The chip stores value and identification information and provides the value and identification information when authorized as activated. The system further includes a sentinel monitoring communication in a certain monitored area and authorizing activation and use of the chip based on the identification information. Additionally, the system includes a table intelligence facilitating game play using the chip based on authorized received from the sentinel.
Figure 2

200

210 Establish a monitored area using a plurality of sentinels.

220 Transmitting chip identification information to table intelligence.

230 Send a request to a sentinel for chip authorization.

240 Authorize the chip.

250 Use the chip at a table controlled by the table intelligence.
SENTINEL/GUARD FOR PROTECTING A PREDEFINED GAMING AREA

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/857,828 filed on Nov. 10, 2006, entitled “Sentinel/Guard for Protecting a Predefined Gaming Area,” which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention generally prevents wireless information from affecting electronic gaming devices within a predefined gaming area. A purpose of the prevention is to protect or secure the area from unwanted information, instructions or commands which may activate electrical devices within the area or provide data on the state or operation of those devices.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Transmission of electronic signals in a gaming environment is becoming increasingly commonplace. Transmission of electronic signals invites greater opportunities for interference and tampering in a gaming environment which is intended to be highly regulated and secure.

[0004] Casinos utilize chips, such as poker-style chips, to represent a player’s funds. Electronic chips may be used to provide greater flexibility, as well as greater capacity to track and relay information, for casinos, players, and manufacturers alike.

[0005] Electronic gaming chips having an adjustable display which may include value may provide such flexibility but introduce an element of gaming system vulnerability to outside attack or interference which cannot be remedied using current systems and methods.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] Certain embodiments provide systems and methods for monitoring and authorizing communication and activity in a gaming environment.

[0007] Certain embodiments provide a system for electronic gaming and monitoring. The system includes an electronic gaming chip capable of being activated or inactivated based at least in part on a command received at the chip. The chip stores value and identification information and provides the value and identification information when activated. The system further includes a sentinel monitoring communication in a certain monitored area and authorizing activation and use of the chip based on the identification information. Additionally, the system includes a table intelligence facilitating game play using the chip based on authorized received from the sentinel.

[0008] Certain embodiments provide a method for monitoring and authorizing electronic transmissions in a gaming environment including at least one electronic gaming chip, at least one sentinel adapted to monitor and authorize communication in a monitored area of the gaming environment, and at least one table intelligence adapted to facilitate game play using the at least one electronic gaming chip. The method includes monitoring communication in a certain monitored area and receiving an identification signal from an electronic gaming chip at a sentinel. The identification signal includes value and identification information for the electronic gaming chip. The method also includes identifying the electronic gaming chip based on the identification information and verifying the value for the electronic gaming chip. The method further includes authorizing activation and use of the electronic gaming chip for game play with a table having compatible intelligence.

[0009] Certain embodiments provide a system for monitoring and regulating electronic devices in a gaming environment. The system includes a sentinel including a processor, a memory, a transmitter and a receiver. The sentinel is adapted to 1) monitor communication in a certain area of the gaming environment; 2) identify an electronic gaming device based on identification information included in a received identification signal; and 3) authorize activation and use of the electronic gaming device based on the identification information. The sentinel generates an authorization signal to enable the activation and use.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is a diagram of a casino floor having gaming machines networked to a central computer, and a bar coded player tracking module.

[0011] FIG. 2 illustrates a flow diagram for a method for providing data security in a predefined gaming area in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

[0012] The foregoing summary, as well as the following detailed description of certain embodiments of the present invention, will be better understood when read in conjunction with the appended drawings. For the purpose of illustrating the invention, certain embodiments are shown in the drawings. It should be understood, however, that the present invention is not limited to the arrangements and instrumentality shown in the attached drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN EMBODIMENTS

[0013] Certain embodiments of the present invention provide a “sentinel” which stands guard and monitors data coming into or leaving a particular area. Certain embodiments prevent wireless data transmissions from affecting electronic gaming devices within a predefined gaming area. Certain embodiments protect or secure an area in a gaming environment from unwanted information, instructions, commands, and/or intrusions which may activate electrical devices within the area, affect operation of those devices, and/or intercept transmissions to and/or from the electrical devices, for example.

[0014] Referring to FIG. 1, a particular localized area is shown in box 11. Two sentinels 13, 15 monitor area 11. A “smart” gaming chip 17 (e.g., a chip or other token including a processor and/or other circuitry for data transmission, reception and/or processing, such as an electronic poker chip) sends particular formatted data to table intelligence, diagrammatically shown at 19, 21, 23 (e.g., via wireless data transmission). Table intelligence 19, 21, 23 may include a processor and/or other processing circuitry, one or more memories storing at least game play information, a communication mechanism such as an antenna, receiver, transmitter, transceiver, and/or other transmission/reception device, and/or the like. Data transmitted along transmission path 25 is encrypted such that table intelligence 19 recognizes the smart chip 17, and may change the value of chip 17 as play progresses.
An unauthorized person cannot send information into localized area in order to affect table intelligence or chip. When chip receives data, as for example from table intelligence, chip will, in turn, send a request to Sentinel for authorization. Sentinel will authorize the particular signal that was received by chip. Thus, an unauthorized person outside of area, when sending information in an attempt to control or change chip, will be stopped by action of Sentinel. The Sentinel will only authorize data coming from table intelligence to chip. The Sentinel may authorize data and/or otherwise enable a chip based on a signal transmitted to the chip, a field generated to activate the chip, etc. In certain embodiments, Sentinels may generate a field to block and/or interfere with other signals in the area, for example.

Chip may be used on any one of the tables managed by intelligence. For example, contains a database of the identities of chips which may be used on any of the three tables. Sentinels monitor signals transmitted from table intelligence, identifying the play at the tables and the chips involved.

In certain embodiments, Sentinels include a processor, memory, and a communication mechanism such as an antenna, receiver, transmitter, transceiver, and/or other transmission/reception device. Sentinels communicate with chip, table intelligence, and/or other external system (e.g., cage and/or a remote server) to verify chip authenticity and/or value, for example.

For example, Sentinels are able to sense a chip moving into and out of area. The chip is carried by a player indicated at 29. If desired, Sentinels may be programmed to generate a jamming signal that is focused so as to jam any electrical signals entering and/or leaving area.

When a player moves outside of area, indicated by path, Sentinel, for example, places a value of the chip carried by the player into the player’s account in a database, and erases the value held by the chip or else turns the chip “off.”

In certain embodiments, table intelligence includes a processor, memory, and a communication mechanism such as an antenna, receiver, transmitter, transceiver, and/or other transmission/reception device. Table intelligence communicate with chip, table sentinels, and/or other external system to verify chip authenticity and/or value, configure table game play, provide player tracking information, etc.

For example, table intelligence changes the value or display of a particular chip during play at the table. Table intelligence sends a signal for chip value change to the chip which in turn is sent to Sentinel to authorize the signal. Sentinel confirms or authorizes the signal to allow chip to respond and change its value.

Additionally, when player walks into area along path, Sentinels communicate with a chip in the possession of player. Sentinel, for example, may sense the chip’s presence and perform a number of functions. For example, Sentinel may have previously turned chip “off,” effectively putting the chip to sleep. When the chip now returns to area, an electrical signal from Sentinel turns the chip back on permitting it to play on any of the three tables in the area. Once the chip moves into area, it is turned on and begins to listen for a value signal on a very low power scheme.

When turned on, chip provides a visual indicator, for example, an ink color, which indicates the chip is active and the value of the chip. Alternatively, a display mechanism on the chip may display its value. Alternatively, a table (such as a gaming table, gaming terminal, other gaming device, and/or other table) may determine and indicate the value of the chip. As the chip is placed onto the table, the table lights up a $10 display, for example, indicating the value of the chip.

In addition, in certain embodiments, a cage located on the casino or other gaming floor has a database for identifying all chip numbers that are usable on the floor. The cage is linked to the database in order to retrieve the value of each chip. In other embodiments, a chip identification database is located remotely and is in communication with the cage computer, sentinels, and/or table intelligence.

In addition, in certain embodiments, a central system located on the casino or other gaming floor has a database for authenticating chip and other game play information usable on the floor. The central system may include and/or be linked to the database in order to retrieve the value of each chip, for example. In other embodiments, the central system may be located remotely and be in communication with the cage computer, sentinels, and/or table intelligence.

Referring to FIG. 1, a portable table may be moved into and out of area. Portable table may be a notebook or pad that provides a game display, as an example. When portable table resides inside area, it operates properly. Portable table may be moved to, for example, the swimming pool area and continue to operate correctly. However, if the table is moved outside of Sentinels, where the player leaves the casino, Sentinels will turn off table.

Each of the tables may have a location sensor, a GPS, to monitor locations of the tables. If a table is removed from a particular designated area, the table is taken or removed from the trusted table list. Alternatively, an alarm may be sent that the table is no longer able to be activated. To reactivate the table, the table must be taken to security. When the table leaves the area, Sentinels will turn the table off as well as notify the central database that the table has left the area. Alternatively, the table itself may identify its location and send a signal to a Sentinel when it determines that it is leaving the area.

In certain embodiments, the table may be a portable table or tablet for use in wireless gaming within a gaming environment, such as a casino. The table or tablet may be carried to a plurality of locations and/or adjacent to the gaming environment, as for example, the swimming pool area, allowing the player to participate in live table games occurring on the casino floor or else allowing the player to play non-table games. In certain embodiments, a tablet includes a two-way communication device allowing the player of the tablet to participate in a live casino game. The tablet establishes an identification number for the tablet, for example, so that wager and win information may be accounted. The player’s personal identification number is
downloaded to the tablet by the casino. The tablet may be authorized to participate only within a predefined distance from a defined geographical area. When the tablet moves outside of the area, some parts of the tablet are deactivated by Sentinels 39, 41. In certain embodiments, the tablet display screen remains active so that a message may be sent to the player that the tablet has moved outside of the area. A check is performed at the tablet to approve its activity. Its geographic location may disqualify the tablet from further play, for example.

Chips 17, sentinels 13, 15, 39, 41, and table intelligence 19, 21, 23 may also operate in conjunction with one or more gaming devices. For example, one or more sentinels 13, 15 and/or table intelligence 19, 21, 23 may be incorporated into and/or associated with one or more gaming devices. Gaming devices may be any electronic gaming machine (EGM) such as a slot machine, fruit machine, video Poker machine, Keno or Bingo machine, or any other electronic gaming device or terminal. Gaming devices may also include a live table game such as BlackJack, Pai Gow, or Baccarat, a multi-terminal gaming machine such as multi-terminal roulette, Sik Bo, Poker, dice game, and others that may be interfaced with a player tracking module and slot accounting system. As an example, a gaming table layout may be embodied as a video display. Thus gaming devices as used herein includes gaming tables as well, and are not limited to any specific kind of gaming device. Sentinels(s) and/or table intelligence incorporated in and/or associated with gaming device(s) may serve to activate, update, and/or deactivate chips within a given area, for example. In certain embodiments, chips may serve as tokens or credits for use with electronic gaming devices, for example.

In certain embodiments, chips 17 may be implemented as an electronic chip with a display surface, such as a liquid crystal display (LCD), light emitting diode (LED) display, electronic ink (e-ink) display, or micro-mirror display surface, and/or other morphable surface responsive to a field or pulse, for example. For example, an image, monetary or credit value, color, indicator, and/or other design may be altered on the chip 17.

In certain embodiments, the chip 17 is adapted to provide a display to a player. For example, the chip surface 17 may display an image of the player on the chip 17. As another example, the chip surface 17 may display advertising text, pictures, and/or video. As another example, the chip surface 17 may display an image, logo, casino or company name. As another example, the chip surface 17 may display a color, pattern, number, identification number, name, initials, and/or custom symbol representing the player. As another example, the chip surface 17 may indicate the value of the chip 17. Alternatively and/or in addition, the chip 17 may communicate with table intelligence to display chip value on a table display. As another example, the display may remind a player to play when it is the player's turn in a game, provide help to the player such as a suggest play or move, and/or display rules. For example, a player's chips 17 may flash when it is the player's turn to play while sitting at an electronic gaming table. As another example, the chip 17 may display the rules of the game that the player is standing closest to.

The chip 17 may be adapted to communicate. For example, the chip 17 may be adapted to communicate with a casino system such as an accounting system, a player tracking system, or a chip management system. As another example, the chip 17 may be adapted to communicate with another chip 17. The chip 17 may be adapted to communicate wirelessly, for example. For example, a wireless signal may be transmitted with a particular chip identifier. The processor 120 may receive the signal and compare the chip identifier to an identifier of the chip 100. For example, each chip 100 may have a unique identifier. When a sentinel, table intelligence, and/or other processor detects that the transmitted chip identifier matches the chip identifier of the chip 17, the chip 17 may be activated, the chip 17 may be deactivated, the value of the chip 17 may be changed, etc.

FIG. 2 illustrates a flow diagram for a method 200 for providing data security in a predefined gaming area in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. At step 210, a monitored area is established using a plurality of sentinels. For example, sentinel devices form a border around a gaming area within which signals are monitored to, for example, identify and authorize chips in play. Sentinel devices may be configured to help ensure unauthorized signals are not broadcast to and/or from the monitored area to interfere with game play, chip identification, etc., and/or illegally monitor gaming activity, for example.

At step 220, within the monitored area, a chip transmits identification information to table intelligence. For example, a chip including a radio frequency identification (RFID) circuit responds to a table intelligence reader at a gaming table to provide identification information.

At step 230, a request is sent to a sentinel for chip authorization. For example, a chip identifier contained in an RFID response from the chip may be transmitted to a sentinel for authentication or verification of the chip identifier. The sentinel may include and/or be in communication with a database of chip identifiers and/or algorithm(s) to authenticate or verify chip identity and authorize use of the chip in the monitored area, for example. In certain embodiments, the chip may communicate with the sentinel to request authorization. In other embodiments, the table intelligence makes the authorization request of the sentinel.

At step 240, the sentinel authorizes the chip. For example, if the sentinel verifies the chip identifier and determines that the chip value is correct and is approved for use in the monitored area, the sentinel may authorize the chip for use with the table intelligence. In certain embodiments, the sentinel authorizes the chip to communicate with the table intelligence. In certain embodiments, the sentinel authorizes the table intelligence to communicate with the chip.

At step 250, the chip is used at a table controlled by the table intelligence. For example, the table intelligence and sentinel allow a player to use the chip to wager at a table and/or other game in the monitored area.

One or more of the steps of the method 200 may be implemented alone or in combination in hardware, firmware, and/or as a set of instructions in software, for example. Certain embodiments may be provided as a set of instructions residing on a computer-readable medium, such as a memory, hard disk, DVD, or CD, for execution on a general purpose computer or other processing device.

Certain embodiments of the present invention may omit one or more of these steps and/or perform the steps in a different order than the order listed. For example, some steps may not be performed in certain embodiments of the
present invention. As a further example, certain steps may be performed in a different temporal order, including simultaneously, than listed above.

[0040] The sentinel system described above may be used in conjunction with a variety of gaming systems/environments. The gaming system can take a number of different forms. In a first form, a stand alone gaming machine is provided wherein all or most components required for implementing the game are present in a player operable gaming machine. In a second form, a distributed architecture is provided wherein some of the components required for implementing the game are present in a player operable gaming machine and some of the components required for implementing the game are located remotely relative to the gaming machine. For example, a “thick client” architecture may be used wherein part of the game is executed on a player operable gaming machine and part of the game is executed remotely, such as by a gaming server; or a “thin client” architecture may be used wherein most of the game is executed remotely such as by a gaming server and a player operable gaming machine is used only to display audible and/or visible gaming information to the player and receive gaming inputs from the player.

[0041] However, it will be understood that other arrangements are envisioned. For example, an architecture may be provided wherein a gaming machine is networked to a gaming server and the respective functions of the gaming machine and the gaming server are selectively modifiable. For example, the gaming system may operate in stand alone gaming machine mode, “thick client” mode or “thin client” mode depending on the game being played, operating conditions, and so on. Other variations will be apparent to persons skilled in the art.

[0042] In a thick client embodiment, a game server implements part of the game played by a player using a gaming machine and the gaming machine implements part of the game. With this embodiment, as both the game server and the gaming machine implement part of the game, they collectively provide a game controller. A database management server may manage storage of sentinel and chip information, game programs and/or associated data for downloading or access by the gaming devices in a database. Typically, if the gaming system enables players to participate in a Jackpot game, a Jackpot server will be provided to monitor and carry out the Jackpot game.

[0043] In a thin client embodiment, the gaming server implements most or all of the game played by a player using a gaming machine and the gaming machine essentially provides only the player interface. With this embodiment, the game server provides the game controller. The gaming machine will receive player instructions, and pass the instructions to the game server which will process them and return game play outcomes to the gaming machine for display. In a thin client embodiment, the gaming machines can be computer terminals, e.g., PCs running software that provides a player interface operable using standard computer input and output components.

[0044] Servers may also be provided to assist in the administration of the gaming system, including for example a gaming floor management server and a licensing server to monitor the use of licenses relating to particular games. An administrator terminal is provided to allow an administrator to monitor the network and the devices connected to the network.

[0045] The gaming system may communicate with other gaming systems, other local networks such as a corporate network, and/or a wide area network such as the Internet, for example through a firewall.

[0046] Persons skilled in the art will appreciate that in accordance with known techniques, functionality at the server side of the network may be distributed over a plurality of different computers. For example, elements may be run as a single “engine” on one server or a separate server may be provided. For example, the game server could run a random number generator engine. Alternatively, a separate random number generator server could be provided.

[0047] The components, elements, and/or functionality of the system(s) described above may be implemented alone or in combination in various forms in hardware, firmware, and/or as a set of instructions in software, for example. Certain embodiments may be provided as a set of instructions residing on a computer-readable medium, such as a memory or hard disk, for execution on a general purpose computer or other processing device.

[0048] Several embodiments are described above with reference to drawings. These drawings illustrate certain details of specific embodiments that implement the systems and methods and programs of the present invention. However, describing the invention with drawings should not be construed as imposing on the invention any limitations associated with features shown in the drawings. The present invention contemplates methods, systems and program products on any machine-readable media for accomplishing its operations. As noted above, the embodiments of the present invention may be implemented using an existing computer processor, or by a special purpose computer processor incorporated for this or another purpose or by a hardwired system.

[0049] As noted above, certain embodiments within the scope of the present invention include program products comprising machine-readable media for carrying or having machine-executable instructions or data structures stored thereon. Such machine-readable media can be any available media that can be accessed by a general purpose or special purpose computer or other machine with a processor. By way of example, such machine-readable media may comprise RAM, ROM, PROM, EPROM, EEPROM, Flash, CD-ROM or other optical disk storage, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can be used to carry or store desired program code in the form of machine-executable instructions or data structures which can be accessed by a general purpose or special purpose computer or other machine with a processor. When information is transferred or provided over a network or another communications connection (either hardwired, wireless, or a combination of hardwired or wireless) to a machine, the machine properly views the connection as a machine-readable medium. Thus, any such a connection is properly termed a machine-readable medium. Combinations of the above are also included within the scope of machine-readable media. Machine-executable instructions comprise, for example, instructions and data which cause a general purpose computer, special purpose computer, or special purpose processing machines to perform a certain function or group of functions.

[0050] Certain embodiments of the invention are described in the general context of method steps which may be implemented in one embodiment by a program product
including machine-executable instructions, such as program code, for example in the form of program modules executed by machines in networked environments. Generally, program modules include routines, programs, objects, components, data structures, etc., that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. Machine-executable instructions, associated data structures, and program modules represent examples of program code for executing steps of the methods disclosed herein. The particular sequence of such executable instructions or associated data structures represent examples of corresponding acts for implementing the functions described in such steps.

Certain embodiments of the present invention may be practiced in a networked environment using logical connections to one or more remote computers having processors. Logical connections may include a local area network (LAN) and a wide area network (WAN) that are presented here by way of example and not limitation. Such networking environments are commonplace in office-wide or enterprise-wide computer networks, intranets and the Internet and may use a wide variety of different communication protocols. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that such network computing environments will typically encompass many types of computer system configurations, including personal computers, hand-held devices, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable consumer electronics, network computers, minicomputers, mainframe computers, and the like. Embodiments of the invention may also be practiced in distributed computing environments where tasks are performed by local and remote processing devices that are linked (either by hardwired links, wireless links, or by a combination of hardwired or wireless links) through a communications network. In a distributed computing environment, program modules may be located in both local and remote memory storage devices.

An exemplary system for implementing the overall system or portions of certain embodiments of the invention might include a general purpose computing device in the form of a computer, including a processing unit, a system memory, and a system bus that couples various system components including the system memory to the processing unit. The system memory may include read only memory (ROM) and random access memory (RAM). The computer may also include a magnetic hard disk drive for reading from and writing to a magnetic hard disk, a magnetic disk drive for reading from or writing to a removable magnetic disk, and an optical disk drive for reading from or writing to a removable optical disk such as a CD ROM or other optical media. The drives and their associated machine-readable media provide nonvolatile storage of machine-executable instructions, data structures, program modules and other data for the computer.

The foregoing description of embodiments of the invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed, and modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings or may be acquired from practice of the invention. The embodiments were chosen and described in order to explain the principles of the invention and its practical application to enable one skilled in the art to utilize the invention in various embodiments and with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the embodiments disclosed herein may be applied to the formation of a variety of gaming systems. Certain features of the embodiments of the claimed subject matter have been illustrated as described herein; however, many modifications, substitutions, changes and equivalents will now occur to those skilled in the art. Additionally, while several functional blocks and relations between them have been described in detail, it is contemplated by those of skill in the art that several of the operations may be performed without the use of the others, or additional functions or relationships between functions may be established and still be in accordance with the claimed subject matter. It is, therefore, to be understood that the appended claims are intended to cover all such modifications and changes as fall within the true spirit of the embodiments of the claimed subject matter.

While certain embodiments of the present invention have been described, it should be understood that these embodiments are subject to many modifications and changes without departing from the spirit and scope of the appended claims. For example, it will be understood that the invention disclosed and defined in this specification extends to all alternative combinations of two or more of the individual features mentioned or evident from the text or drawings. All of these different combinations constitute various alternative aspects of the invention. It will also be understood that the term “comprises” (or its grammatical variants) as used in this specification is equivalent to the term “includes” and should not be taken as excluding the presence of other elements or features.

1. A system for electronic gaming and monitoring, said system comprising:
   an electronic gaming chip capable of being activated or inactivated based at least in part on a command received at said chip, said chip storing value and identification information and providing said value and identification information when authorized as activated;
   a sentinel monitoring communication in a certain monitored area and authorizing activation and use of said chip based on said identification information; and
   a table intelligence facilitating game play using said chip based on authorized received from said sentinel.

2. The system of claim 1, further comprising a database including chip identification information for use by the sentinel in verifying and authorizing the chip.

3. The system of claim 1, further comprising a portable gaming table providing mobile game play to a user, said portable gaming table storing identification information and providing said identification information for mobile game play when authorized by said sentinel.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein said chip comprises a morphable chip including a processor, a memory, and a morphable surface having at least one alterable characteristic.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said sentinel turns said chip on within said monitored area and off when said chip leaves said monitored area.

6. The system of claim 3, wherein said sentinel turns said portable gaming table on within said monitored area and off when said portable gaming table leaves said monitored area.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein said sentinel blocks data transmissions entering said monitored area that originate outside of said monitored area.
8. A method for monitoring and authorizing electronic transmissions in a gaming environment including at least one electronic gaming chip, at least one sentinel adapted to monitor and authorize communication in a monitored area of the gaming environment, and at least one table intelligence adapted to facilitate game play using the at least one electronic gaming chip, said method comprising:
monitoring communication in a certain monitored area;
receiving an identification signal from an electronic gaming chip at a sentinel, said identification signal comprising value and identification information for said electronic gaming chip;
identifying said electronic gaming chip based on said identification information;
verifying said value for said electronic gaming chip;
authorizing activation and use of said electronic gaming chip for game play with a table intelligence.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein said authorizing step turns said chip on within said monitored area and off when said chip leaves said monitored area.
10. The method of claim 8, further comprising blocking data transmissions entering said monitored area that originate outside of said monitored area.
11. The method of claim 8, further comprising updating said value associated with said chip based on authorization from said sentinel.
12. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
receiving a communication from said electronic gaming chip at said table intelligence; and
transmitting, from said table intelligence, a request for identification and authorization of said electronic gaming chip by said sentinel.
13. The method of claim 8, further comprising authorizing, by said sentinel, activation of a portable gaming table providing mobile game play to a user in conjunction with said table intelligence, said portable gaming table storing identification information and providing said identification information for mobile game play when authorized by said sentinel.
14. The method of claim 13, wherein said sentinel turns said portable gaming table on within said monitored area and off when said portable gaming table leaves said monitored area.
15. A system for monitoring and regulating electronic devices in a gaming environment, said system comprising:
a sentinel including a processor, a memory, a transmitter and a receiver, said sentinel adapted to 1) monitor communication in a certain area of the gaming environment; 2) identify an electronic gaming device based on identification information included in a received identification signal; and 3) authorize activation and use of said electronic gaming device based on said identification information, said sentinel generating an authorization signal to enable said activation and use.
16. The system of claim 15, wherein said sentinel comprises an electronic gaming chip.
17. The system of claim 15, wherein said sentinel comprises an electronic, portable gaming tablet.
18. The system of claim 15, wherein the transmitter and receiver of said sentinel are combined as a transceiver.
19. The system of claim 15, further comprising a plurality of sentinels.
20. The system of claim 15, further comprising a cage computer in communication with said sentinel, said cage computer including a database having identification information for use in identifying said electronic gaming device.
21. The system of claim 15, further comprising a remote computer in communication with said sentinel, said remote computer including a database having identification information for use in identifying said electronic gaming device.
22. The system of claim 15, wherein said certain area of the gaming environment comprises a casino gaming area.
23. The system of claim 15, wherein said certain area of the gaming environment comprises at least one of a poolside area and a dining area.
24. The system of claim 15, wherein said sentinel generates at least one of a field and a signal to interfere with unauthorized transmissions in said certain area.
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