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(54) **SHIPPING CONTAINER SEAL MONITORING DEVICE, SYSTEM AND METHOD**

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(60) Provisional application No. 60/855,090, filed on Oct. 27, 2006.

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E06B 7/16 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **49/14**; 49/475.1

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A container seal device is provided that comprises a seal device for a shipping container, comprising a first unit that is affixed to a shipping container. A control system is contained in the first unit containing a control system. A second unit is provided that is configured to engage with an element of a door of a shipping container to which the first unit is affixed and to electrically connect with the control system in the first unit. The control system in the first unit is configured to detect a breach of the second unit indicative of access being made to the shipping container.

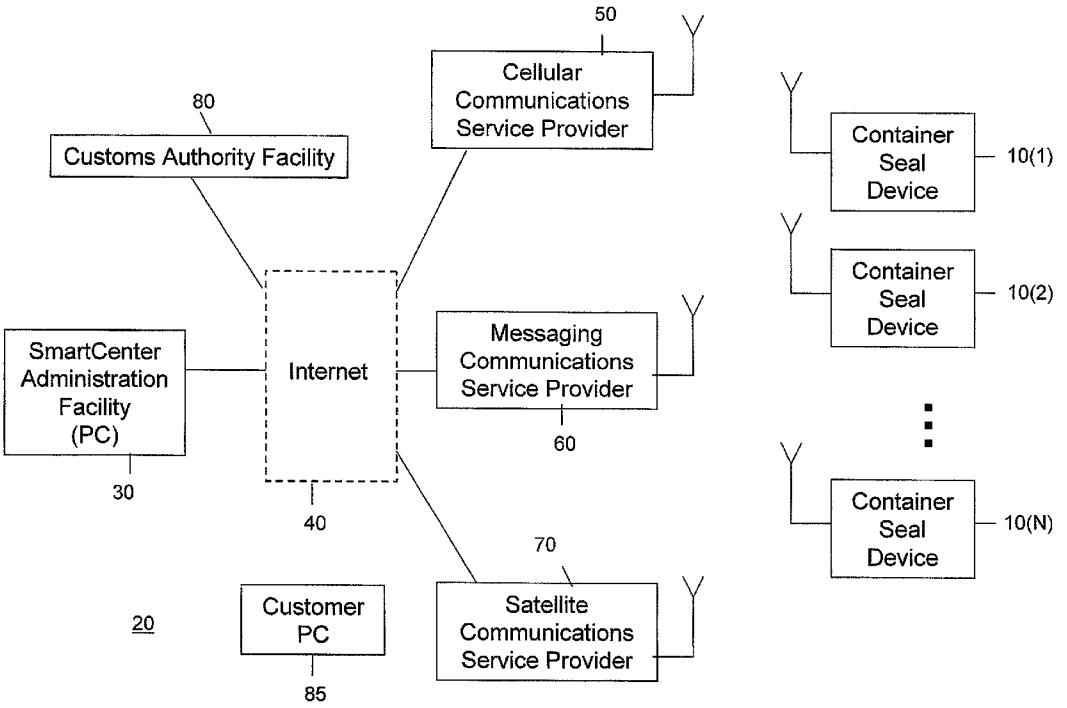


FIG. 1

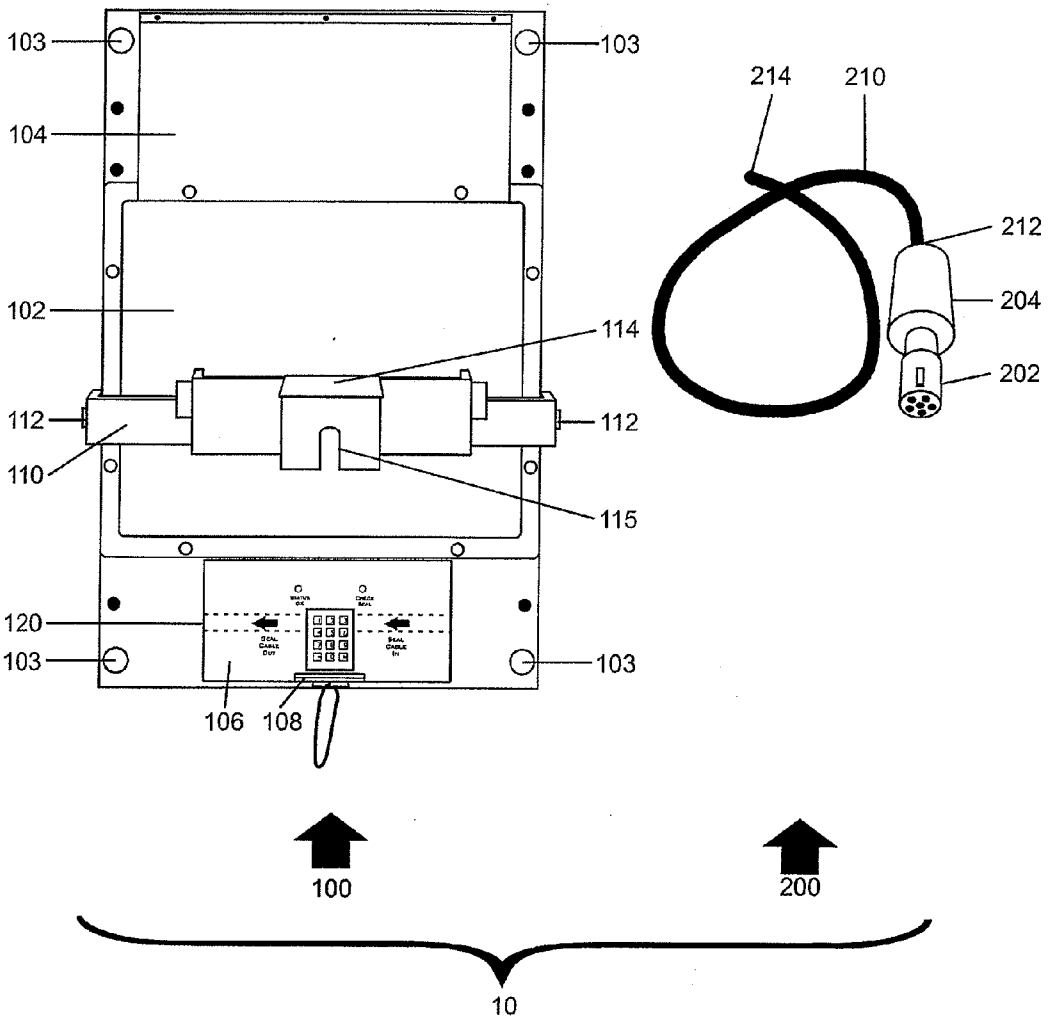

103
103
104
102
112
112
110
114
115
120
103
103
106
108
214
210
212
204
202
100
200
10

FIG. 2

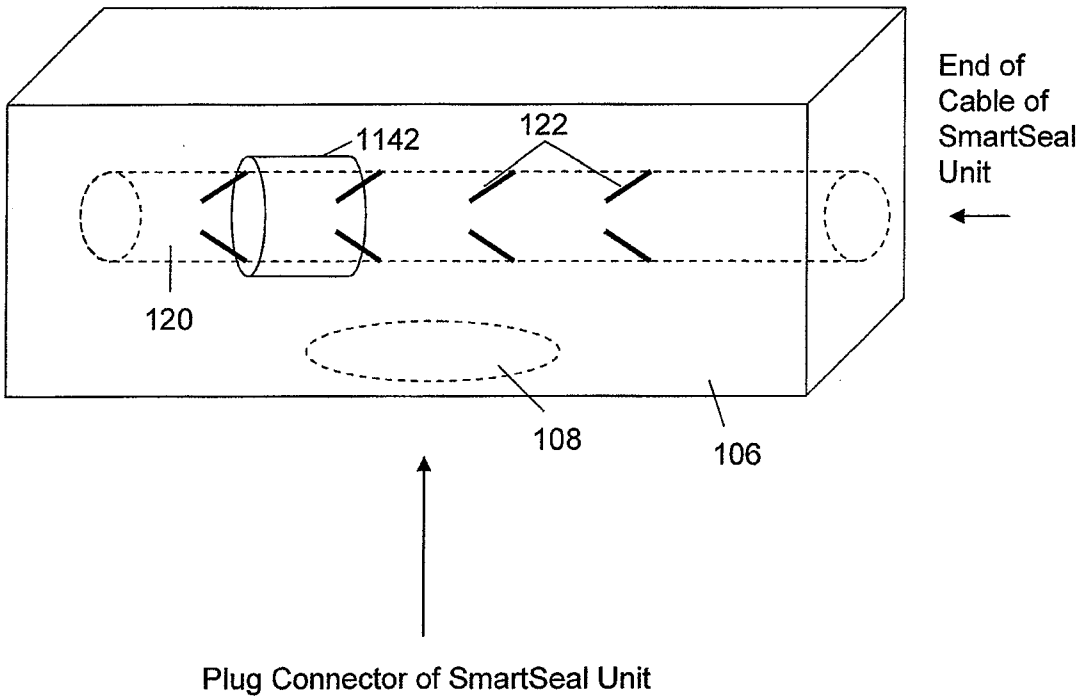

End of
Cable of
SmartSeal
Unit
1142
122
120
108
106
Plug Connector of SmartSeal Unit

FIG. 3

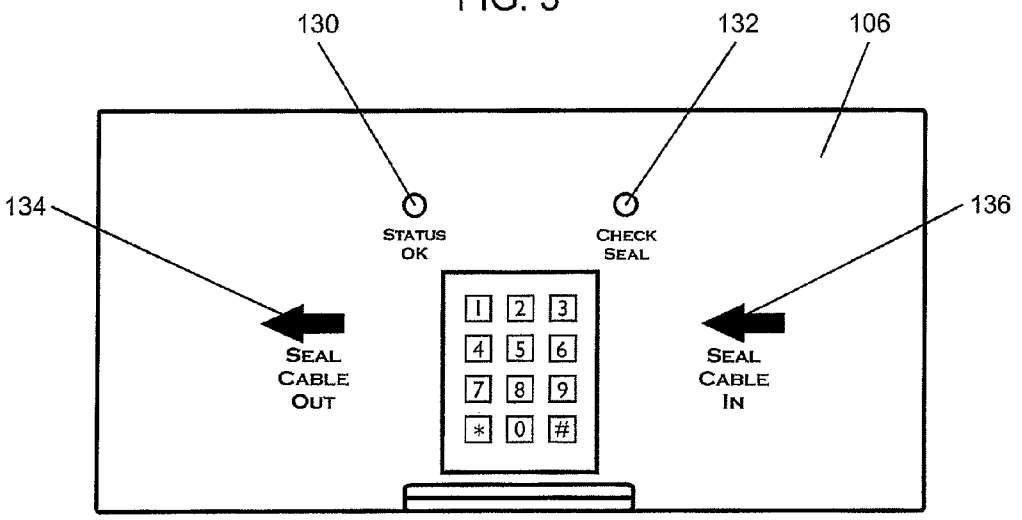

130
132
106
134
136
STATUS OK
CHECK SEAL
SEAL CABLE OUT
SEAL CABLE IN
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
* 0 #

FIG. 4

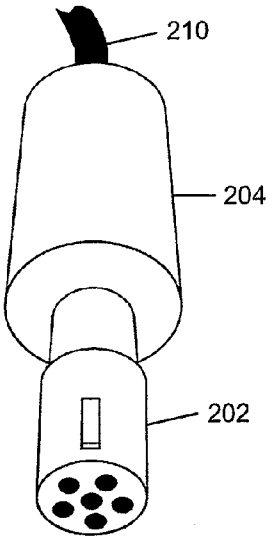

210
204
202

FIG. 5

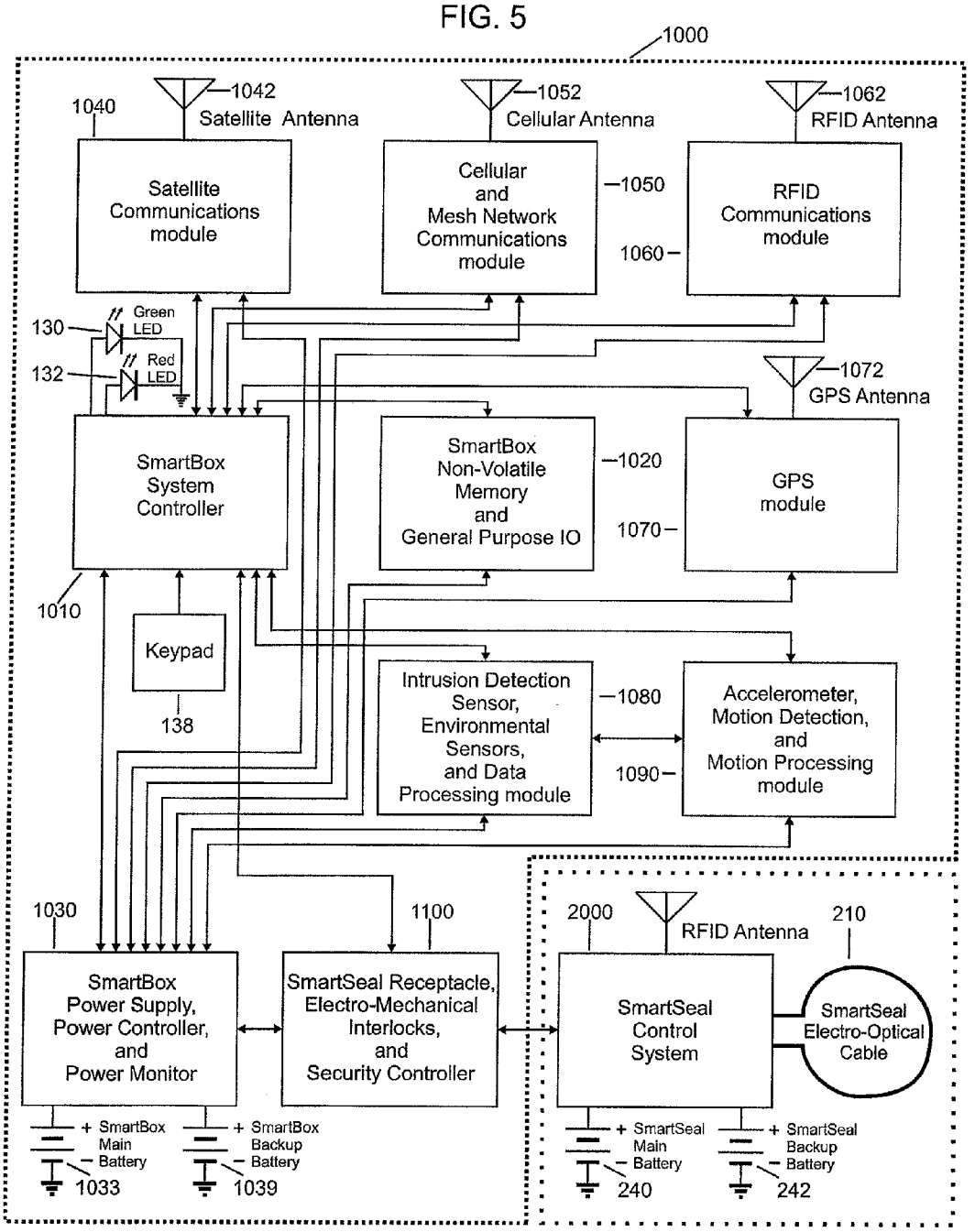

1000
1040
1042
Satellite Antenna
1052
Cellular Antenna
1062
RFID Antenna
Satellite Communications module
Cellular and Mesh Network Communications module
1050
RFID Communications module
1060
130
Green LED
132
Red LED
1072
GPS Antenna
SmartBox System Controller
SmartBox Non-Volatile Memory and General Purpose IO
1020
GPS module
1070
1010
Keypad
138
Intrusion Detection Sensor, Environmental Sensors, and Data Processing module
1080
Accelerometer, Motion Detection, and Motion Processing module
1090
1030
1100
2000
RFID Antenna
210
SmartBox Power Supply, Power Controller, and Power Monitor
SmartSeal Receptacle, Electro-Mechanical Interlocks, and Security Controller
SmartSeal Control System
SmartSeal Electro-Optical Cable
+ SmartBox Main Battery
1033
+ SmartBox Backup Battery
1039
+ SmartSeal Main Battery
240
+ SmartSeal Backup Battery
242

FIG. 6A

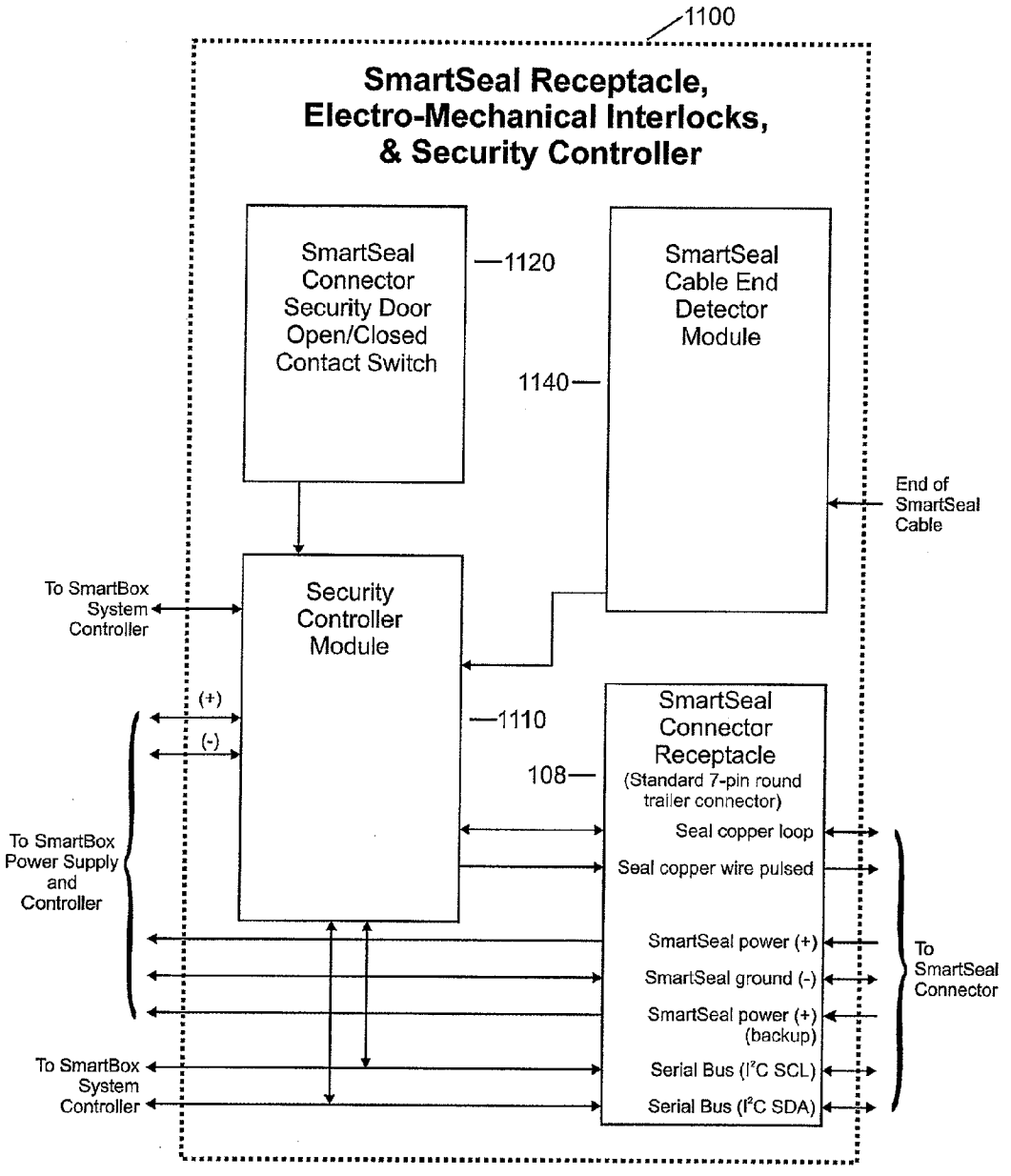

1100
SmartSeal Receptacle, Electro-Mechanical Interlocks, & Security Controller
SmartSeal Connector Security Door Open/Closed Contact Switch
1120
SmartSeal Cable End Detector Module
1140
End of SmartSeal Cable
To SmartBox System Controller
Security Controller Module
1110
(+)
(-)
SmartSeal Connector Receptacle
(Standard 7-pin round trailer connector)
108
To SmartBox Power Supply and Controller
Seal copper loop
Seal copper wire pulsed
SmartSeal power (+)
SmartSeal ground (-)
SmartSeal power (+) (backup)
Serial Bus (I²C SCL)
Serial Bus (I²C SDA)
To SmartSeal Connector
To SmartBox System Controller

FIG. 6B

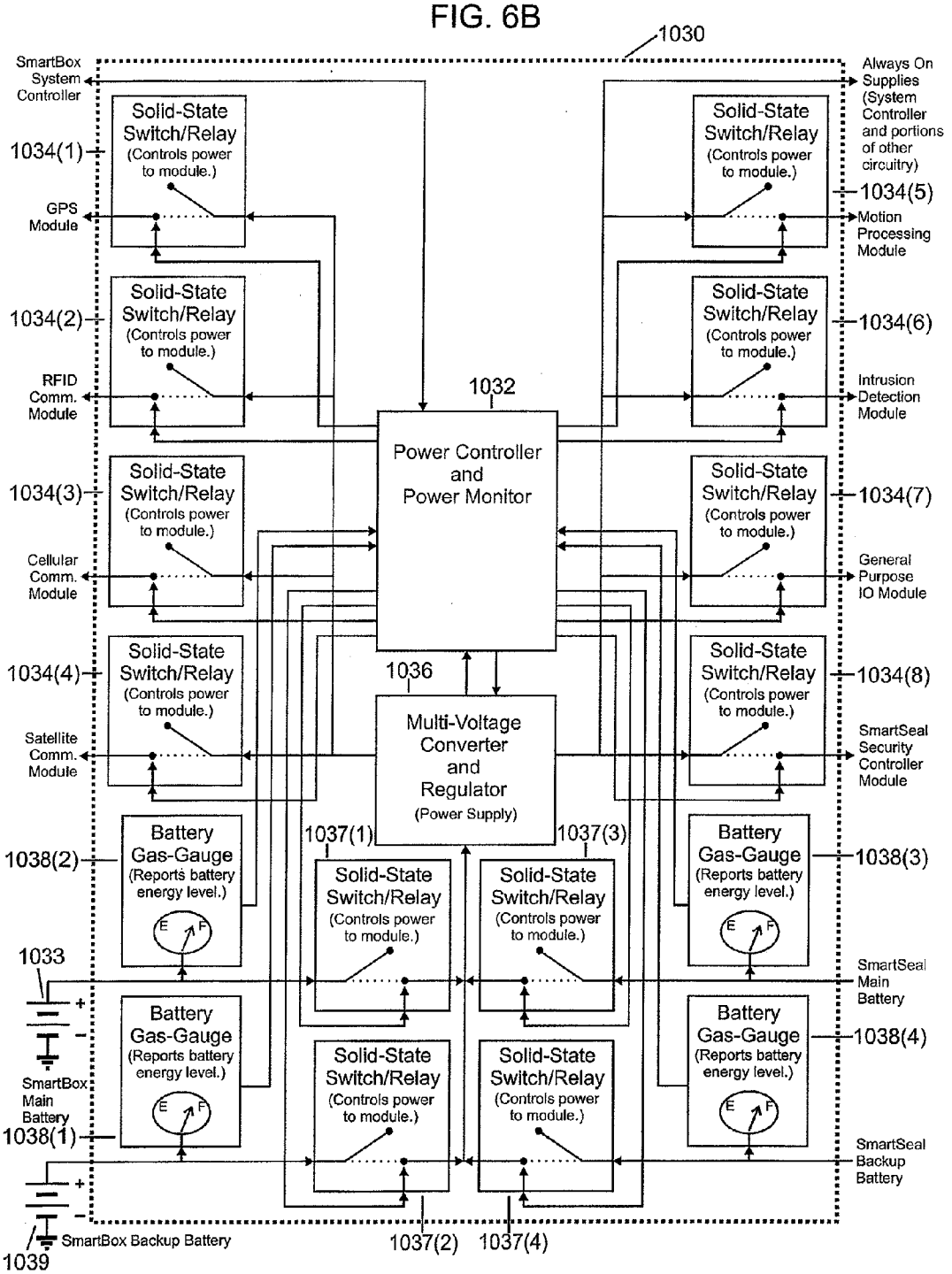

1030
SmartBox System Controller
Always On Supplies (System Controller and portions of other circuitry)
Solid-State Switch/Relay (Controls power to module.)
1034(1)
GPS Module
1034(5)
Motion Processing Module
1034(2)
RFID Comm. Module
1034(6)
Intrusion Detection Module
1032
Power Controller and Power Monitor
1034(3)
Cellular Comm. Module
1034(7)
General Purpose IO Module
1034(4)
Satellite Comm. Module
1034(8)
SmartSeal Security Controller Module
1036
Multi-Voltage Converter and Regulator (Power Supply)
Battery Gas-Gauge (Reports battery energy level.)
1038(2)
1037(1)
1037(3)
1038(3)
1033
SmartSeal Main Battery
1038(4)
SmartBox Main Battery
1038(1)
SmartSeal Backup Battery
SmartBox Backup Battery
1039
1037(2)
1037(4)

FIG. 7

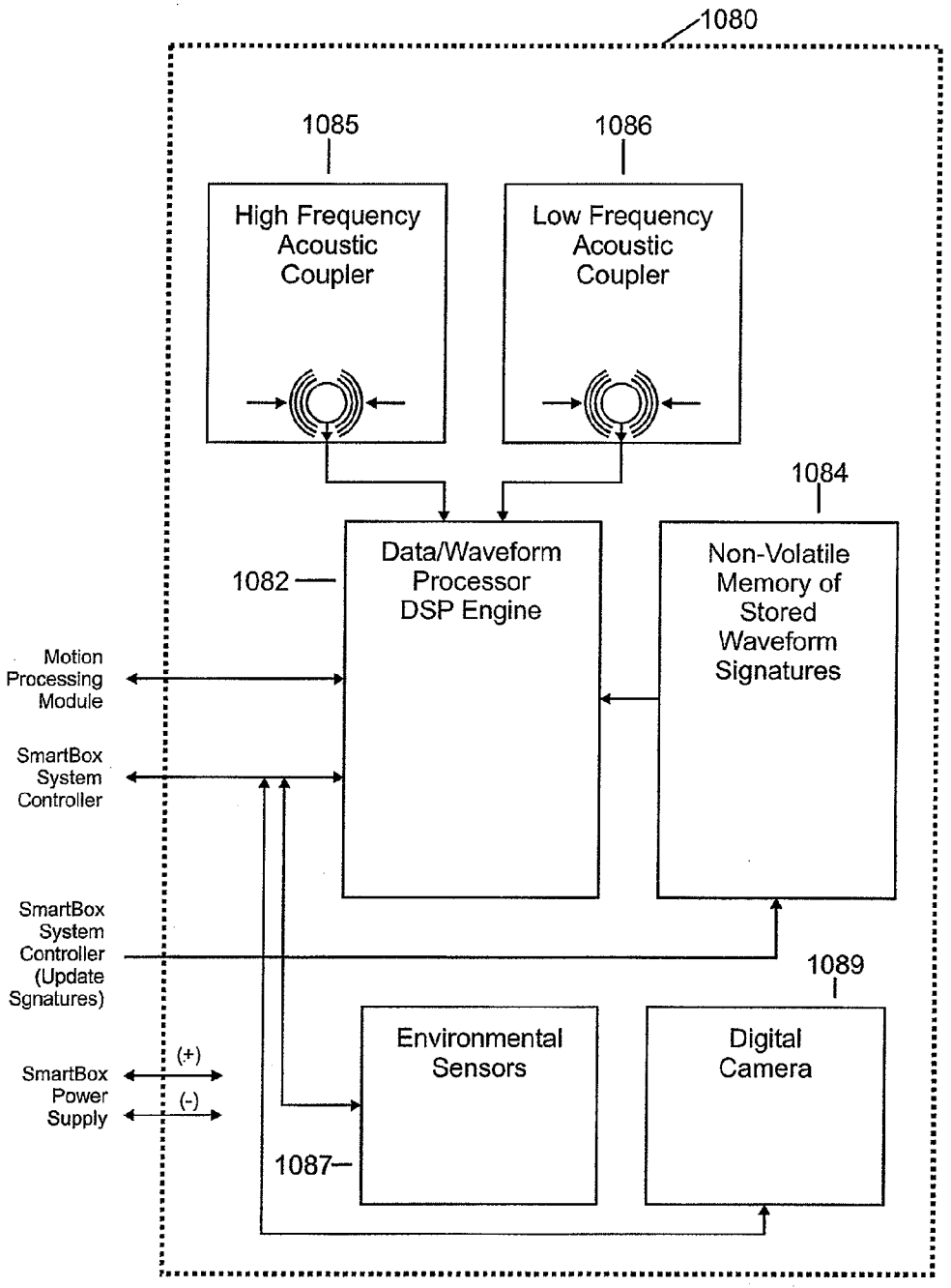

1080
1085
1086
High Frequency Acoustic Coupler
Low Frequency Acoustic Coupler
1084
1082
Data/Waveform Processor DSP Engine
Non-Volatile Memory of Stored Waveform Signatures
Motion Processing Module
SmartBox System Controller
SmartBox System Controller (Update Signatures)
1089
Environmental Sensors
Digital Camera
SmartBox Power Supply
(+)
(-)
1087

FIG. 8

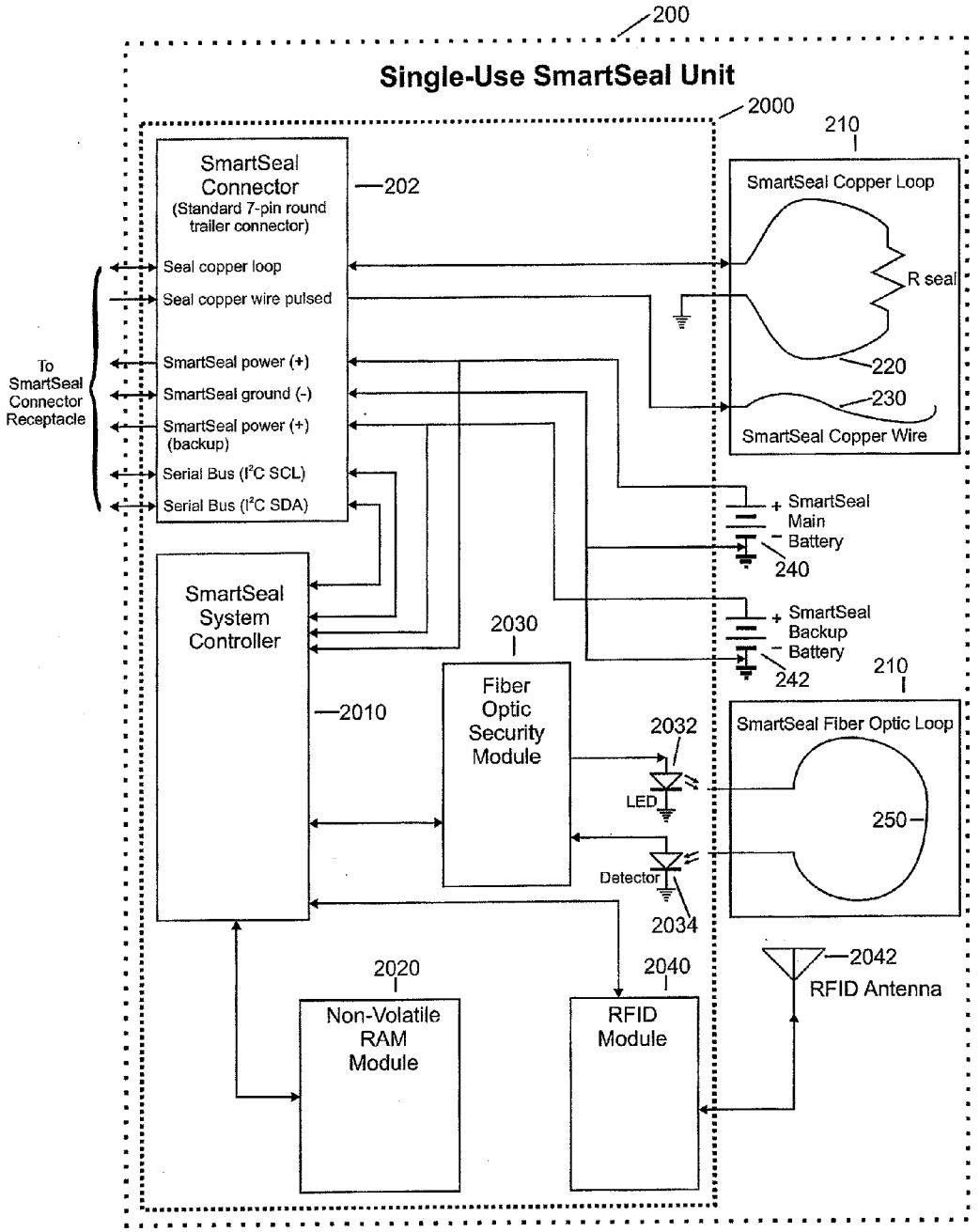

200
Single-Use SmartSeal Unit
2000
210
SmartSeal Connector
(Standard 7-pin round trailer connector)
202
Seal copper loop
Seal copper wire pulsed
SmartSeal power (+)
SmartSeal ground (-)
SmartSeal power (+) (backup)
Serial Bus (I²C SCL)
Serial Bus (I²C SDA)
To SmartSeal Connector Receptacle
SmartSeal Copper Loop
R seal
220
230
SmartSeal Copper Wire
+ SmartSeal Main Battery −
240
+ SmartSeal Backup Battery −
242
SmartSeal System Controller
2010
2030
Fiber Optic Security Module
2032
LED
Detector
2034
SmartSeal Fiber Optic Loop
250
2020
Non-Volatile RAM Module
2040
RFID Module
2042
RFID Antenna

FIG. 9

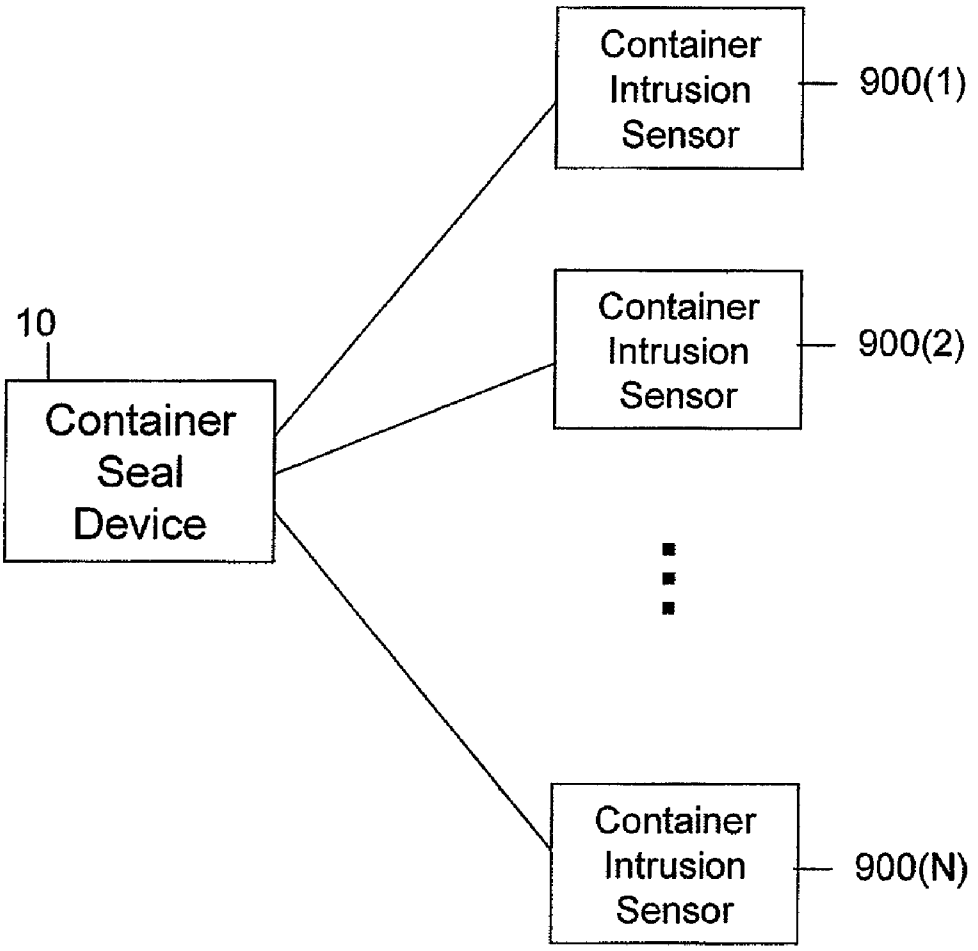

Container Intrusion Sensor
900(1)
Container Intrusion Sensor
900(2)
10
Container Seal Device
Container Intrusion Sensor
900(N)

FIG. 10

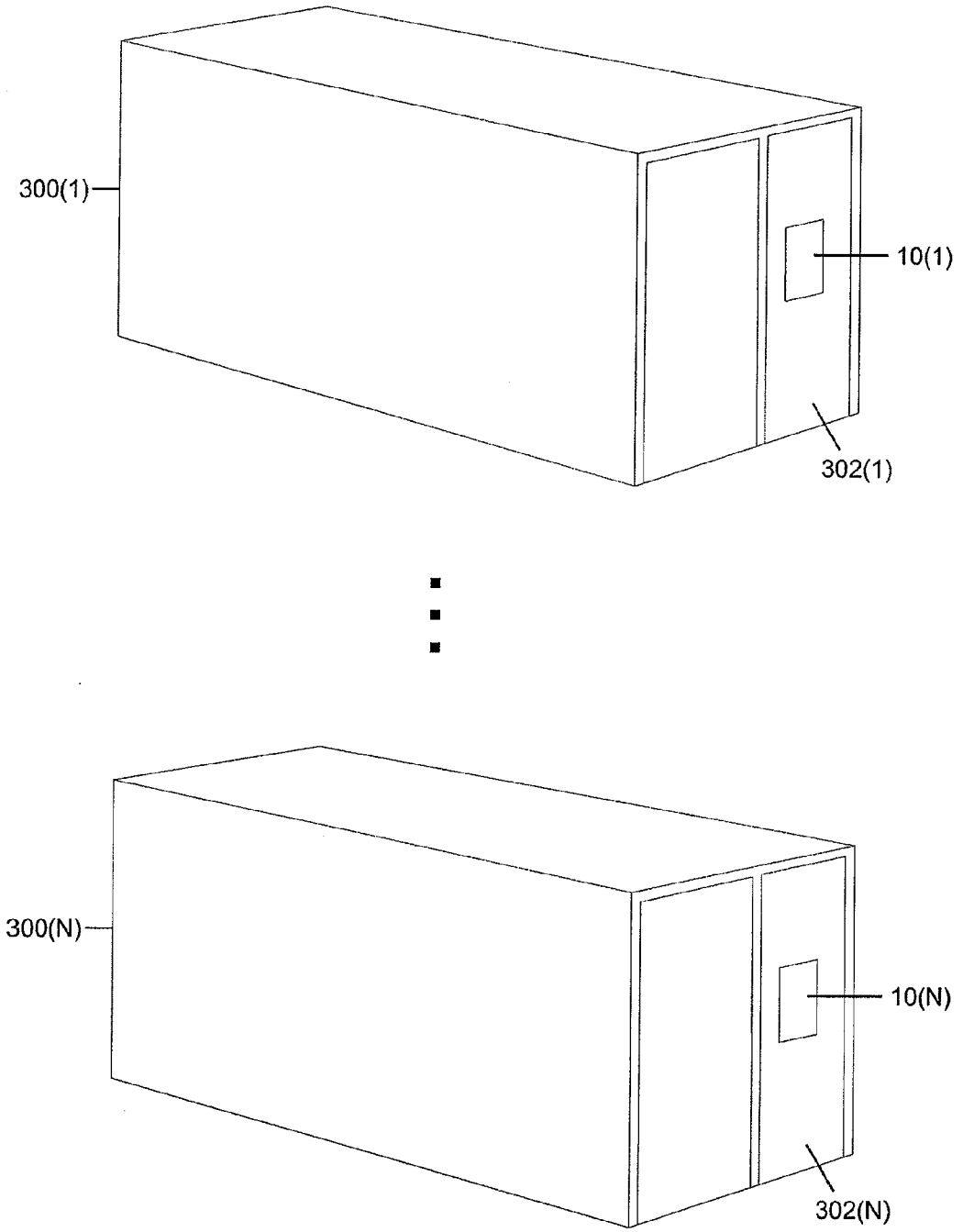


FIG. 11

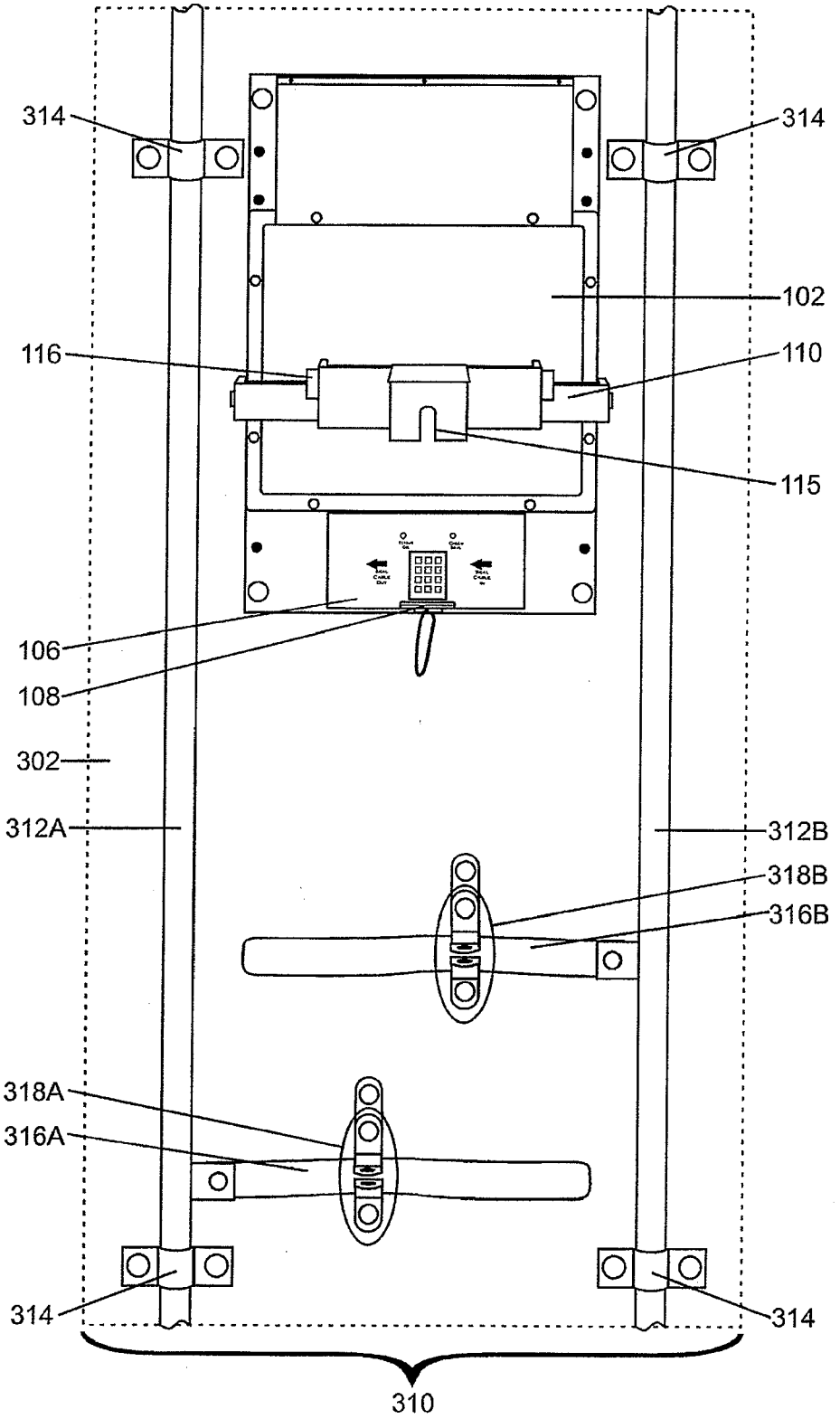

314
314
102
116
110
115
106
108
302
312A
312B
318B
316B
318A
316A
314
314
310

FIG. 12

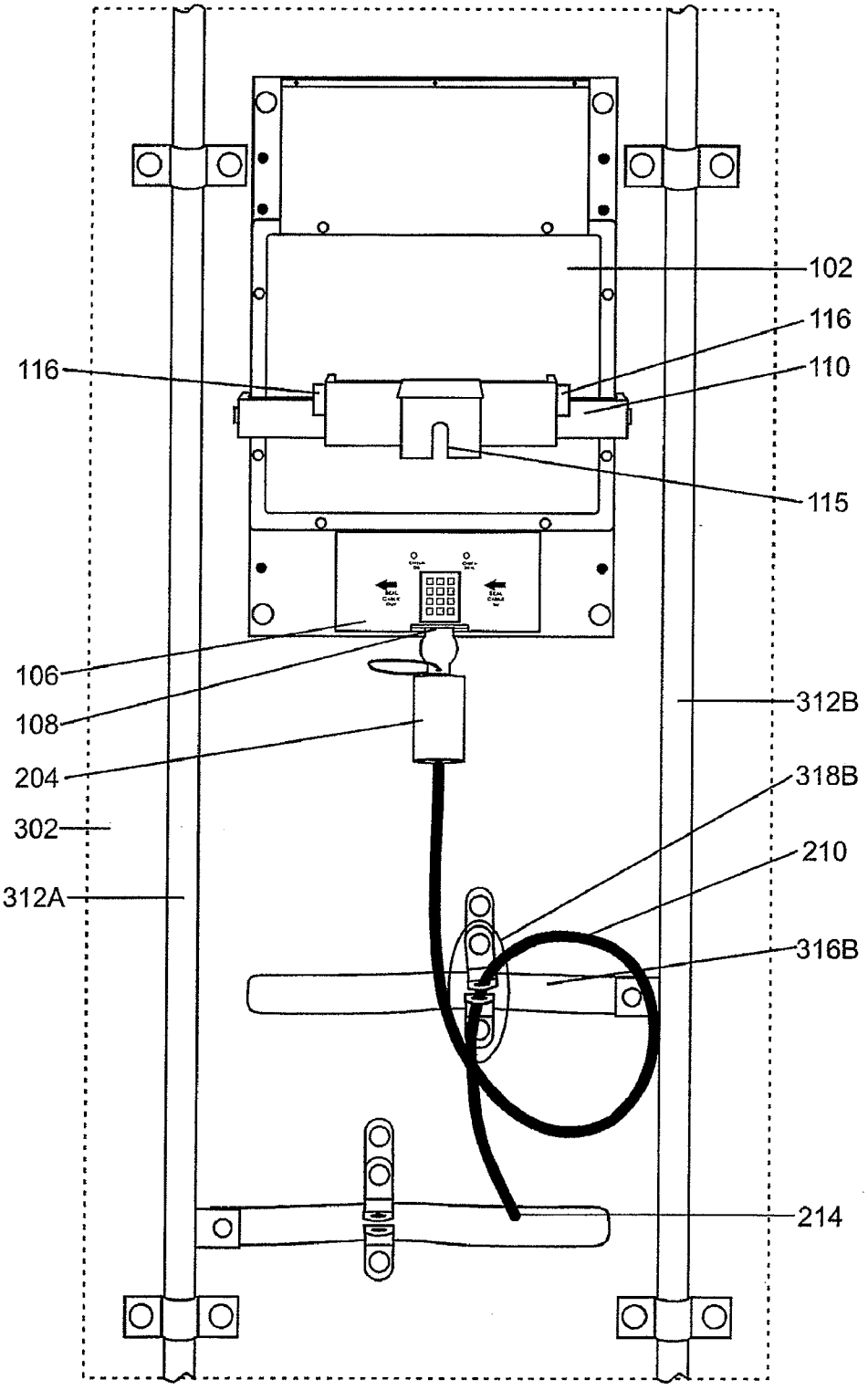


FIG. 13

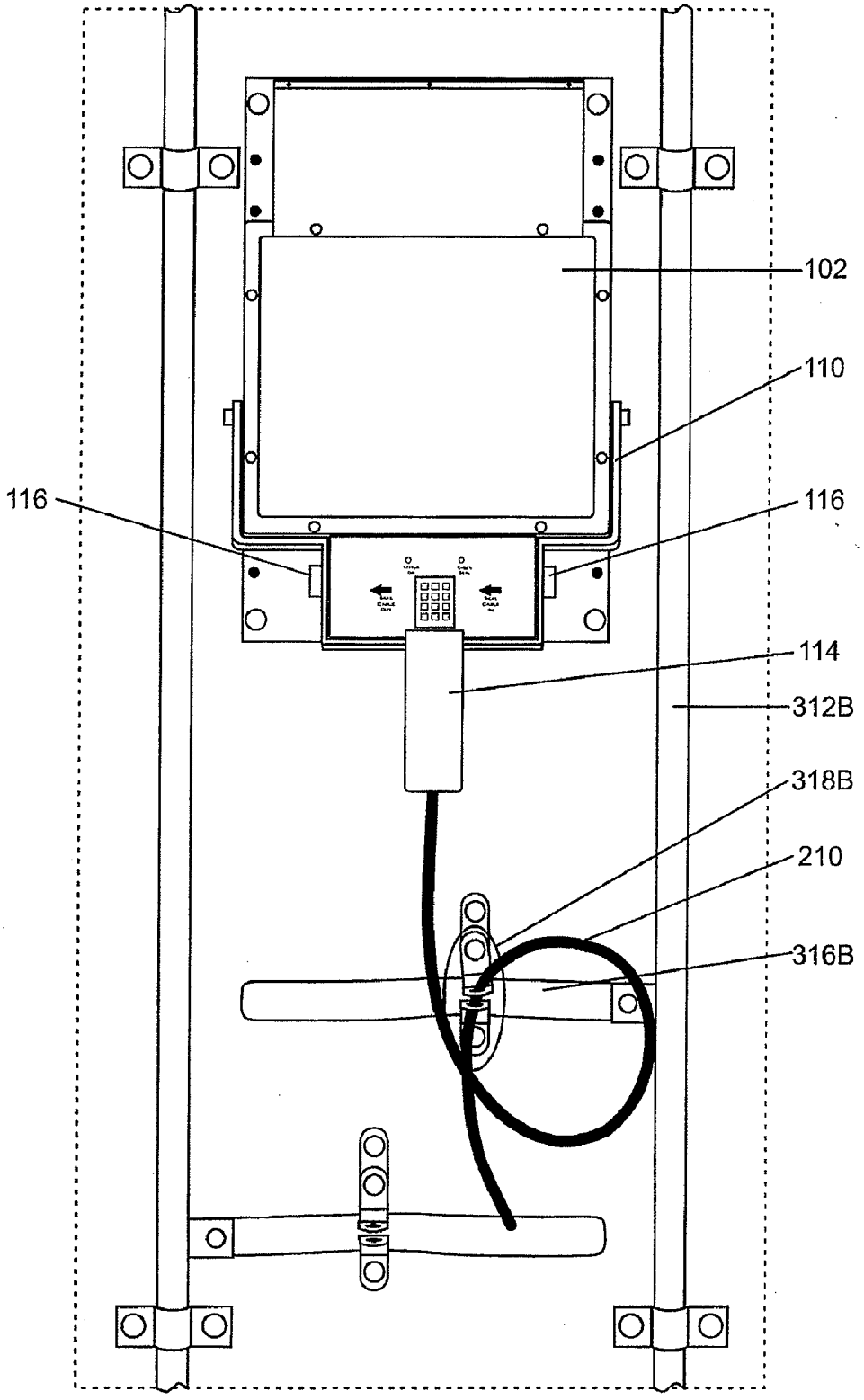


FIG. 14

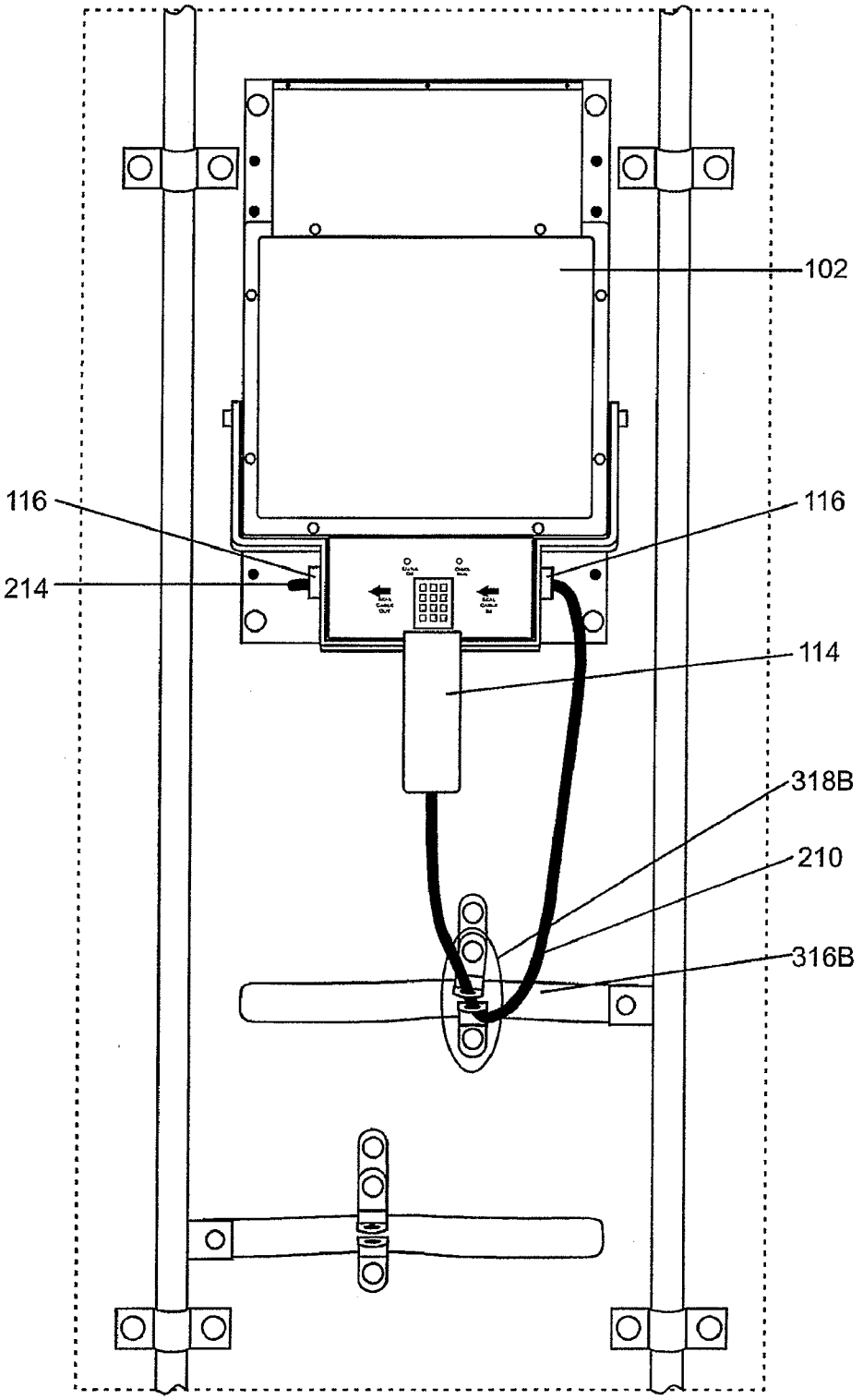


FIG. 15

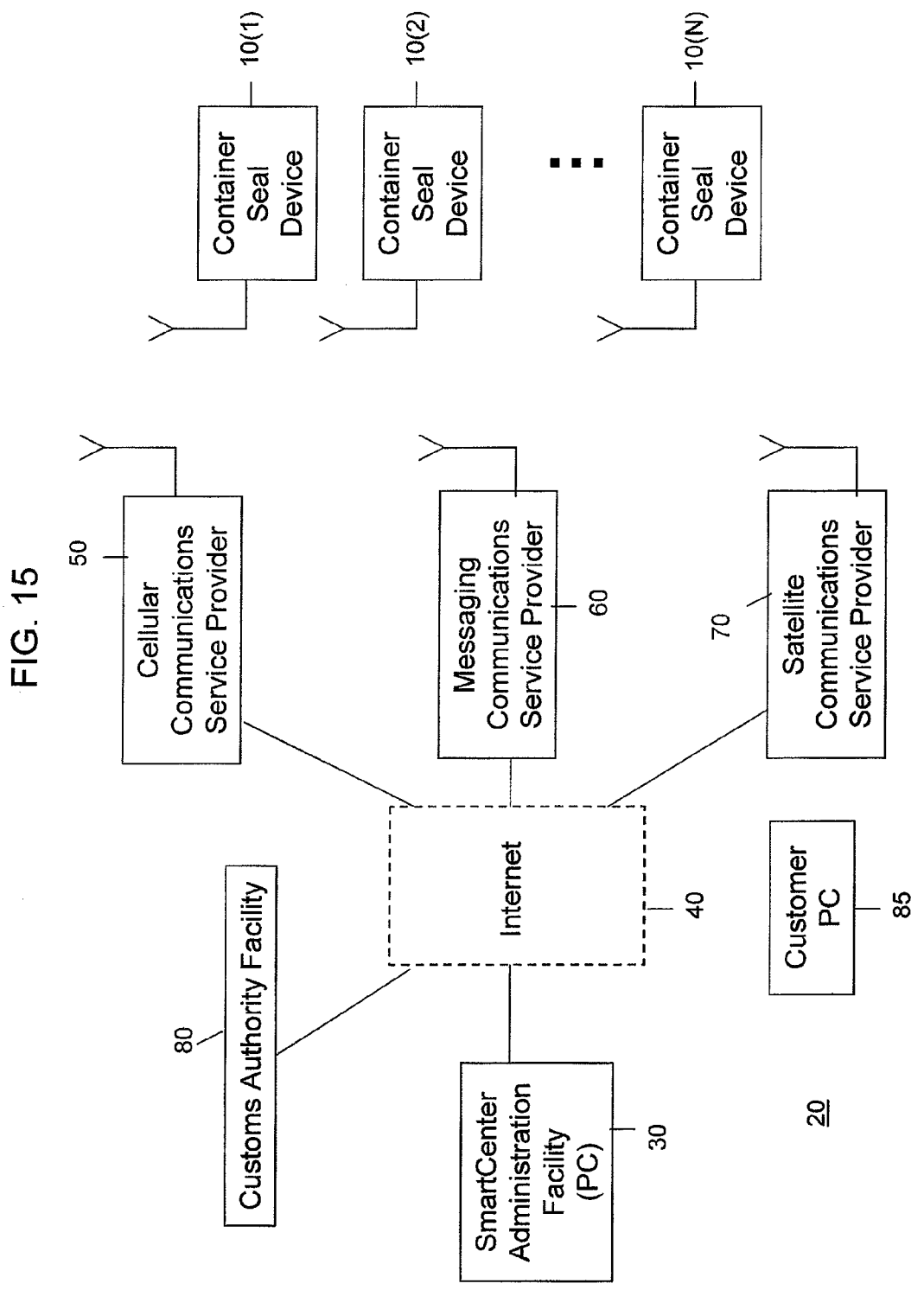

Container Seal Device
10(1)
Container Seal Device
10(2)
Container Seal Device
10(N)
Cellular Communications Service Provider
50
Messaging Communications Service Provider
60
Satellite Communications Service Provider
70
Internet
40
Customs Authority Facility
80
SmartCenter Administration Facility (PC)
30
Customer PC
85
20

FIG. 16A

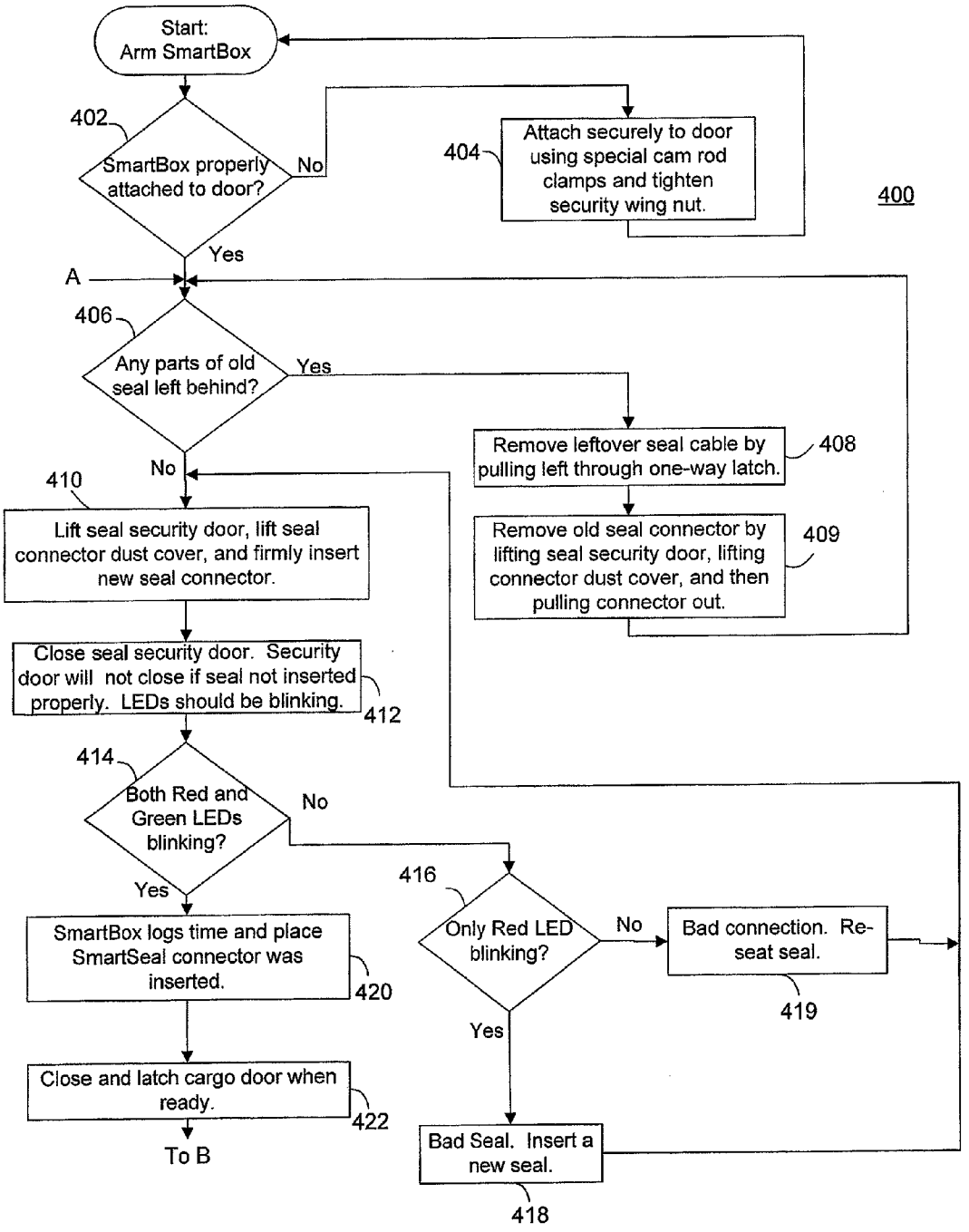

Start: Arm SmartBox
402
SmartBox properly attached to door?
No
404
Attach securely to door using special cam rod clamps and tighten security wing nut.
400
Yes
A
406
Any parts of old seal left behind?
Yes
Remove leftover seal cable by pulling left through one-way latch.
408
No
410
Lift seal security door, lift seal connector dust cover, and firmly insert new seal connector.
Remove old seal connector by lifting seal security door, lifting connector dust cover, and then pulling connector out.
409
Close seal security door. Security door will not close if seal not inserted properly. LEDs should be blinking.
412
414
Both Red and Green LEDs blinking?
No
Yes
416
Only Red LED blinking?
No
Bad connection. Re-seat seal.
419
Yes
SmartBox logs time and place SmartSeal connector was inserted.
420
Close and latch cargo door when ready.
422
To B
Bad Seal. Insert a new seal.
418

FIG. 16B

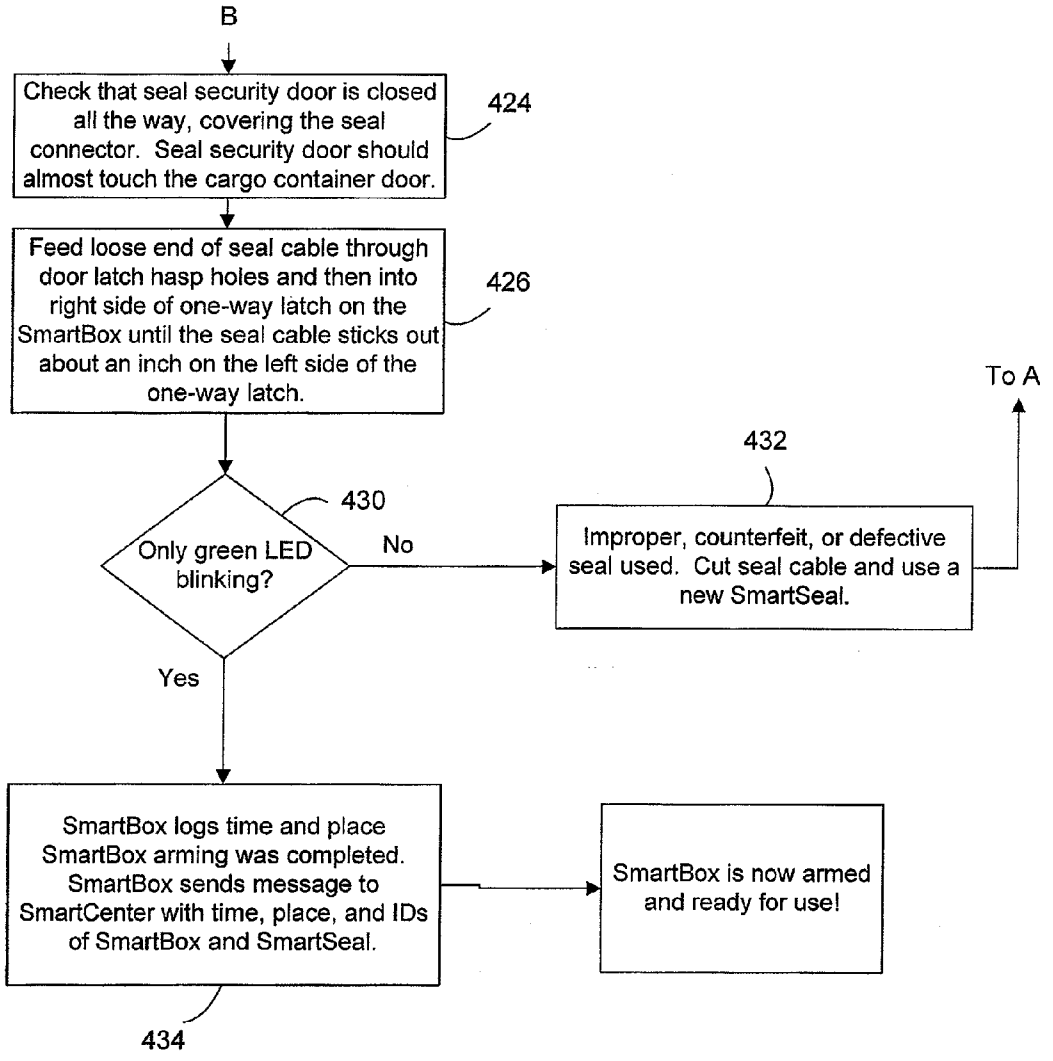

B
Check that seal security door is closed all the way, covering the seal connector. Seal security door should almost touch the cargo container door.
424
Feed loose end of seal cable through door latch hasp holes and then into right side of one-way latch on the SmartBox until the seal cable sticks out about an inch on the left side of the one-way latch.
426
To A
432
430
Only green LED blinking?
No
Improper, counterfeit, or defective seal used. Cut seal cable and use a new SmartSeal.
Yes
SmartBox logs time and place SmartBox arming was completed. SmartBox sends message to SmartCenter with time, place, and IDs of SmartBox and SmartSeal.
SmartBox is now armed and ready for use!
434

FIG. 17A

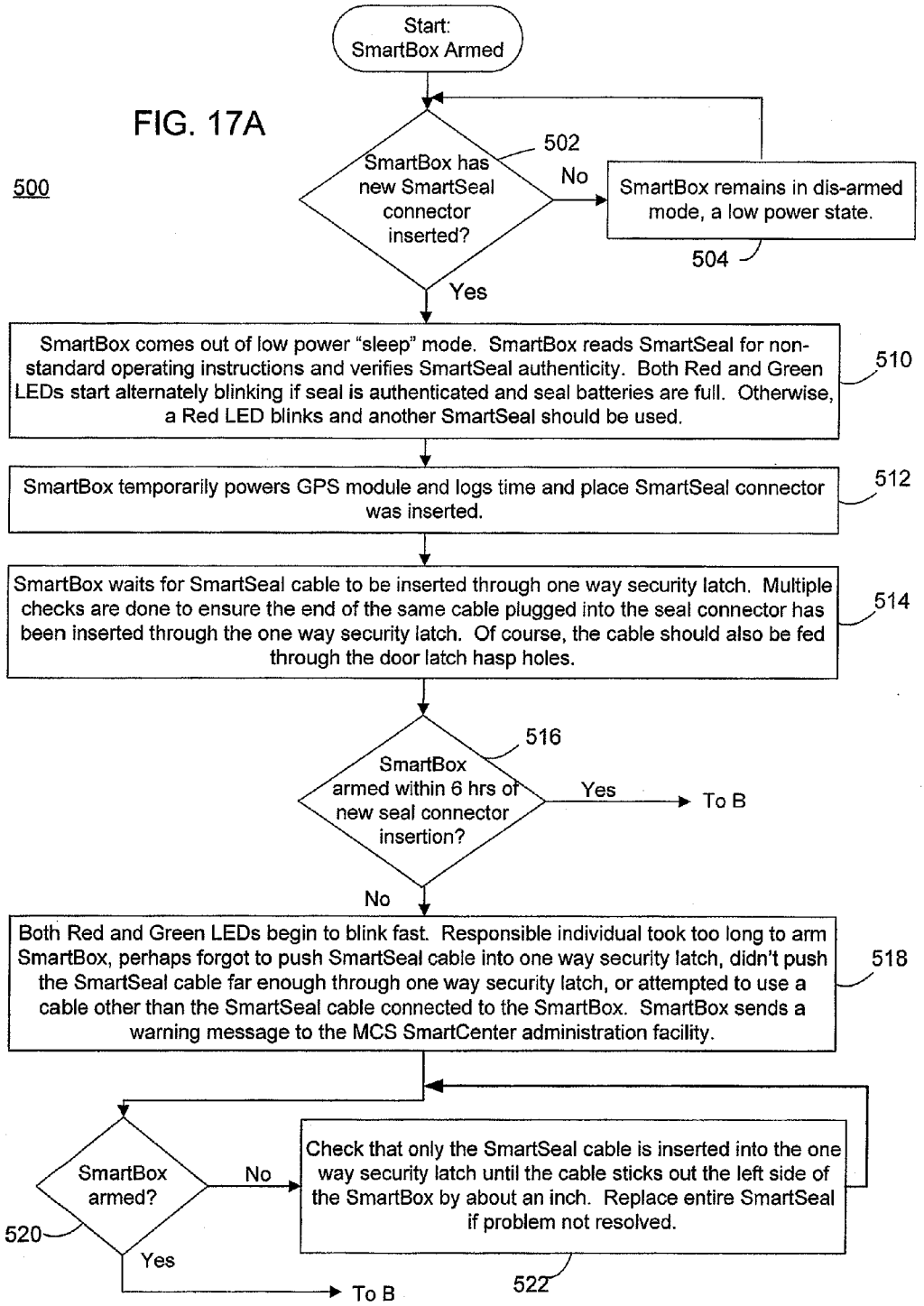

500
Start: SmartBox Armed
SmartBox has new SmartSeal connector inserted?
502
No
SmartBox remains in dis-armed mode, a low power state.
504
Yes
SmartBox comes out of low power "sleep" mode. SmartBox reads SmartSeal for non-standard operating instructions and verifies SmartSeal authenticity. Both Red and Green LEDs start alternately blinking if seal is authenticated and seal batteries are full. Otherwise, a Red LED blinks and another SmartSeal should be used.
510
SmartBox temporarily powers GPS module and logs time and place SmartSeal connector was inserted.
512
SmartBox waits for SmartSeal cable to be inserted through one way security latch. Multiple checks are done to ensure the end of the same cable plugged into the seal connector has been inserted through the one way security latch. Of course, the cable should also be fed through the door latch hasp holes.
514
SmartBox armed within 6 hrs of new seal connector insertion?
516
Yes
To B
No
Both Red and Green LEDs begin to blink fast. Responsible individual took too long to arm SmartBox, perhaps forgot to push SmartSeal cable into one way security latch, didn't push the SmartSeal cable far enough through one way security latch, or attempted to use a cable other than the SmartSeal cable connected to the SmartBox. SmartBox sends a warning message to the MCS SmartCenter administration facility.
518
SmartBox armed?
520
No
Check that only the SmartSeal cable is inserted into the one way security latch until the cable sticks out the left side of the SmartBox by about an inch. Replace entire SmartSeal if problem not resolved.
522
Yes
To B

FIG. 17B

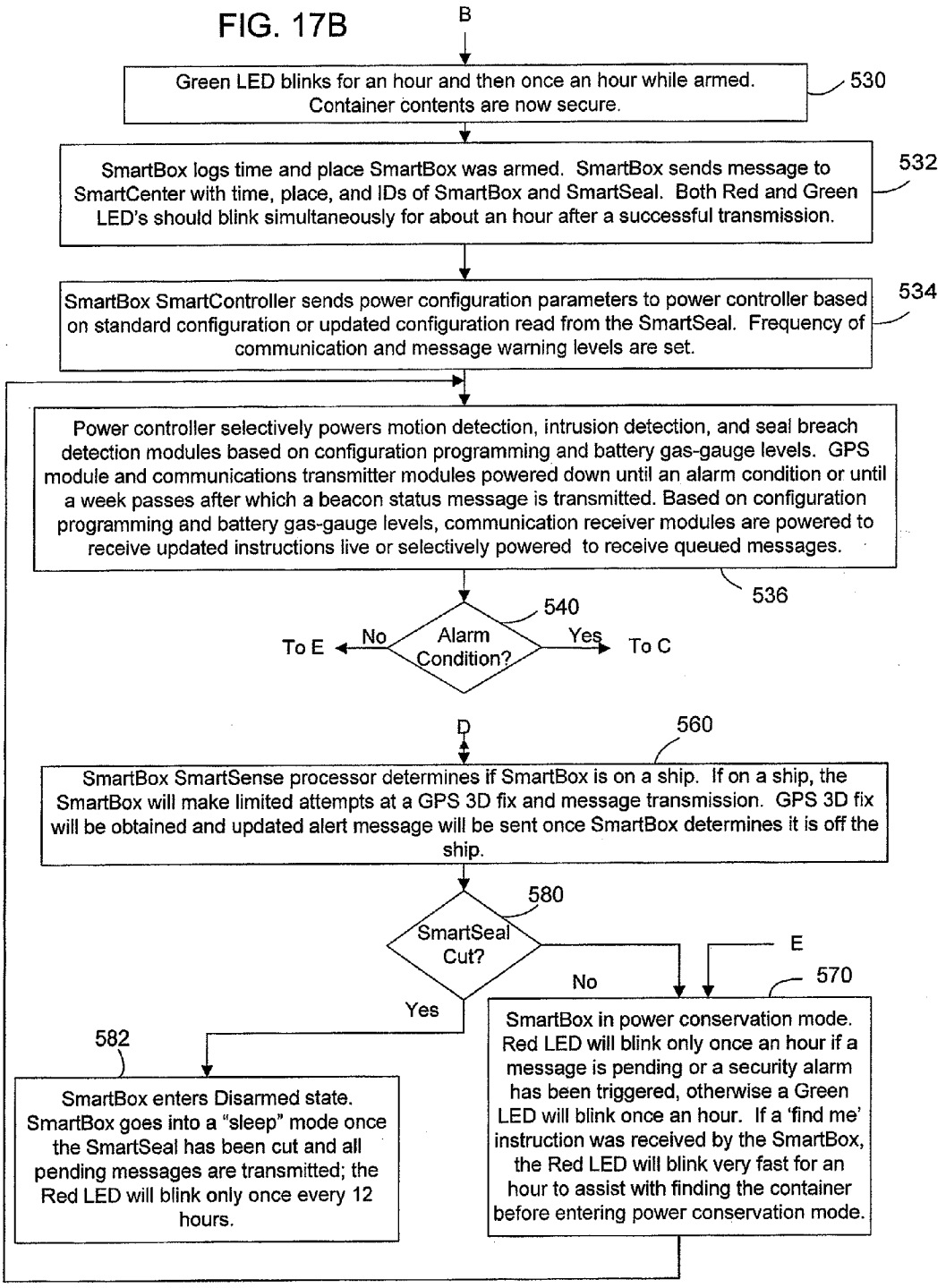

B
Green LED blinks for an hour and then once an hour while armed. Container contents are now secure.
530
SmartBox logs time and place SmartBox was armed. SmartBox sends message to SmartCenter with time, place, and IDs of SmartBox and SmartSeal. Both Red and Green LED's should blink simultaneously for about an hour after a successful transmission.
532
SmartBox SmartController sends power configuration parameters to power controller based on standard configuration or updated configuration read from the SmartSeal. Frequency of communication and message warning levels are set.
534
Power controller selectively powers motion detection, intrusion detection, and seal breach detection modules based on configuration programming and battery gas-gauge levels. GPS module and communications transmitter modules powered down until an alarm condition or until a week passes after which a beacon status message is transmitted. Based on configuration programming and battery gas-gauge levels, communication receiver modules are powered to receive updated instructions live or selectively powered to receive queued messages.
536
540
Alarm Condition?
No
To E
Yes
To C
D
560
SmartBox SmartSense processor determines if SmartBox is on a ship. If on a ship, the SmartBox will make limited attempts at a GPS 3D fix and message transmission. GPS 3D fix will be obtained and updated alert message will be sent once SmartBox determines it is off the ship.
580
SmartSeal Cut?
Yes
No
E
570
582
SmartBox enters Disarmed state. SmartBox goes into a "sleep" mode once the SmartSeal has been cut and all pending messages are transmitted; the Red LED will blink only once every 12 hours.
SmartBox in power conservation mode. Red LED will blink only once an hour if a message is pending or a security alarm has been triggered, otherwise a Green LED will blink once an hour. If a 'find me' instruction was received by the SmartBox, the Red LED will blink very fast for an hour to assist with finding the container before entering power conservation mode.

FIG. 17C

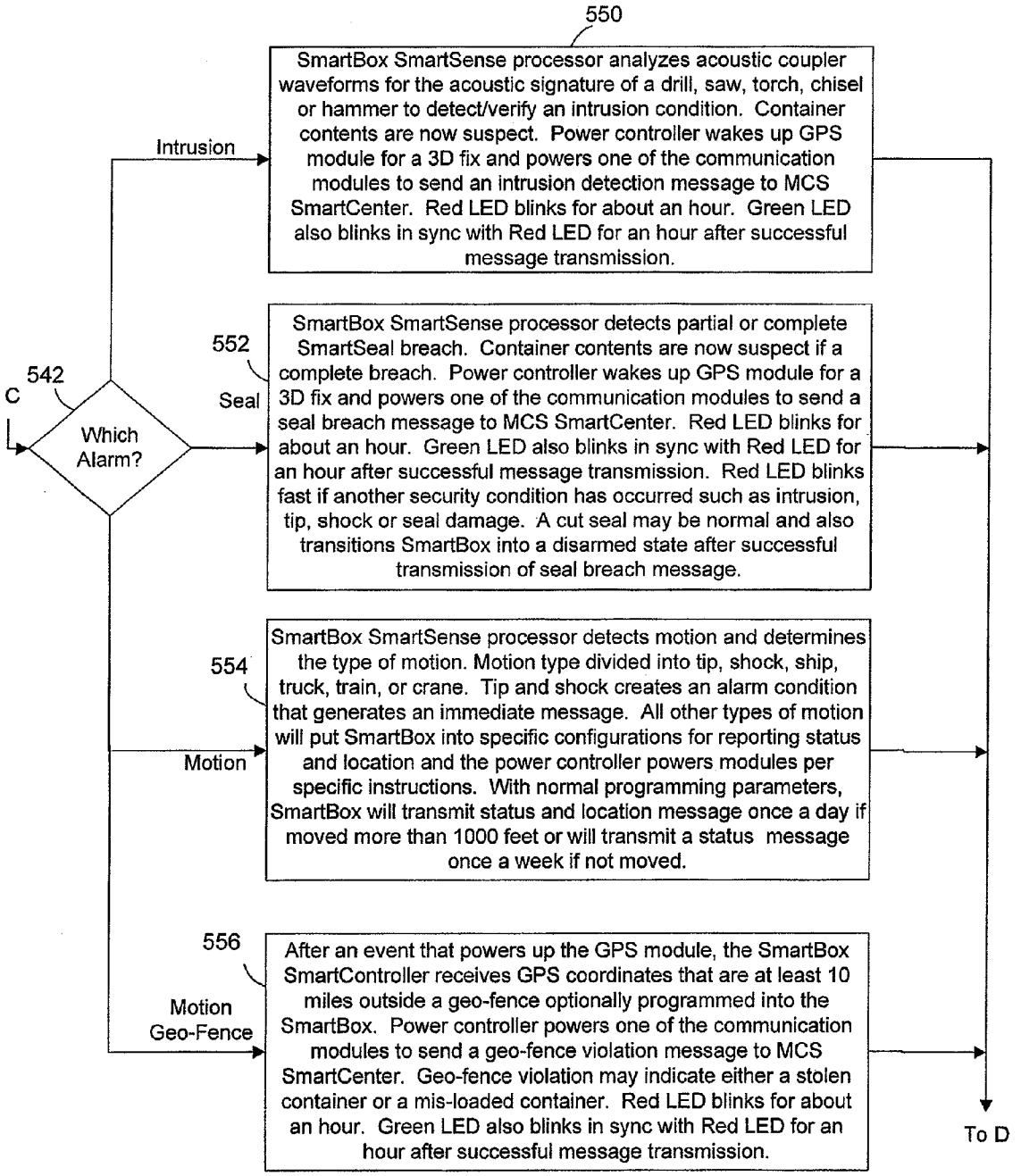

550
SmartBox SmartSense processor analyzes acoustic coupler waveforms for the acoustic signature of a drill, saw, torch, chisel or hammer to detect/verify an intrusion condition. Container contents are now suspect. Power controller wakes up GPS module for a 3D fix and powers one of the communication modules to send an intrusion detection message to MCS SmartCenter. Red LED blinks for about an hour. Green LED also blinks in sync with Red LED for an hour after successful message transmission.
Intrusion
552
Seal
SmartBox SmartSense processor detects partial or complete SmartSeal breach. Container contents are now suspect if a complete breach. Power controller wakes up GPS module for a 3D fix and powers one of the communication modules to send a seal breach message to MCS SmartCenter. Red LED blinks for about an hour. Green LED also blinks in sync with Red LED for an hour after successful message transmission. Red LED blinks fast if another security condition has occurred such as intrusion, tip, shock or seal damage. A cut seal may be normal and also transitions SmartBox into a disarmed state after successful transmission of seal breach message.
542
C
Which Alarm?
554
Motion
SmartBox SmartSense processor detects motion and determines the type of motion. Motion type divided into tip, shock, ship, truck, train, or crane. Tip and shock creates an alarm condition that generates an immediate message. All other types of motion will put SmartBox into specific configurations for reporting status and location and the power controller powers modules per specific instructions. With normal programming parameters, SmartBox will transmit status and location message once a day if moved more than 1000 feet or will transmit a status message once a week if not moved.
556
Motion Geo-Fence
After an event that powers up the GPS module, the SmartBox SmartController receives GPS coordinates that are at least 10 miles outside a geo-fence optionally programmed into the SmartBox. Power controller powers one of the communication modules to send a geo-fence violation message to MCS SmartCenter. Geo-fence violation may indicate either a stolen container or a mis-loaded container. Red LED blinks for about an hour. Green LED also blinks in sync with Red LED for an hour after successful message transmission.
To D

FIG. 18A

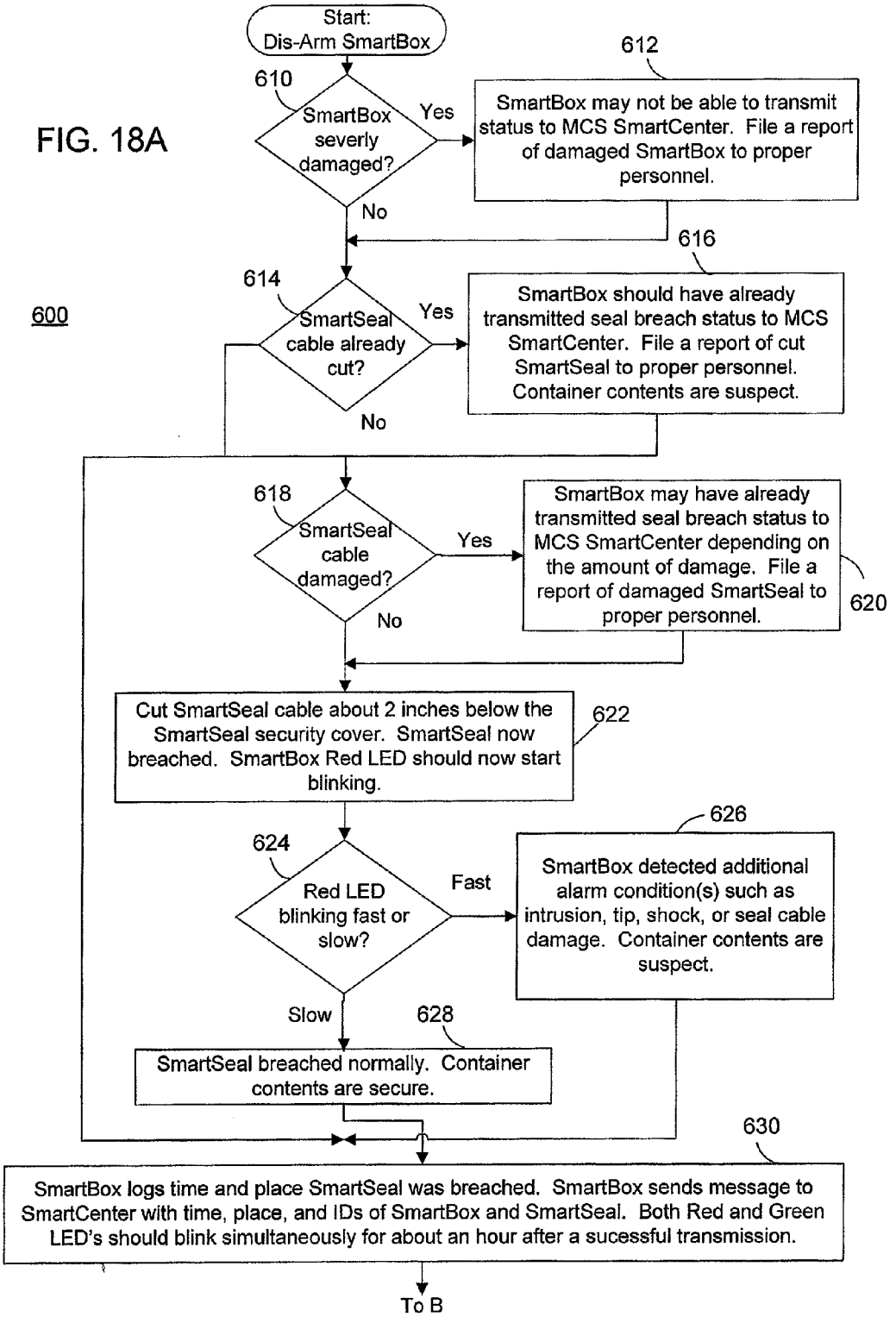

600
Start: Dis-Arm SmartBox
610
SmartBox severly damaged?
Yes
No
612
SmartBox may not be able to transmit status to MCS SmartCenter. File a report of damaged SmartBox to proper personnel.
614
SmartSeal cable already cut?
Yes
No
616
SmartBox should have already transmitted seal breach status to MCS SmartCenter. File a report of cut SmartSeal to proper personnel. Container contents are suspect.
618
SmartSeal cable damaged?
Yes
No
SmartBox may have already transmitted seal breach status to MCS SmartCenter depending on the amount of damage. File a report of damaged SmartSeal to proper personnel.
620
Cut SmartSeal cable about 2 inches below the SmartSeal security cover. SmartSeal now breached. SmartBox Red LED should now start blinking.
622
624
Red LED blinking fast or slow?
Fast
Slow
626
SmartBox detected additional alarm condition(s) such as intrusion, tip, shock, or seal cable damage. Container contents are suspect.
628
SmartSeal breached normally. Container contents are secure.
630
SmartBox logs time and place SmartSeal was breached. SmartBox sends message to SmartCenter with time, place, and IDs of SmartBox and SmartSeal. Both Red and Green LED's should blink simultaneously for about an hour after a sucessful transmission.
To B

FIG. 18B

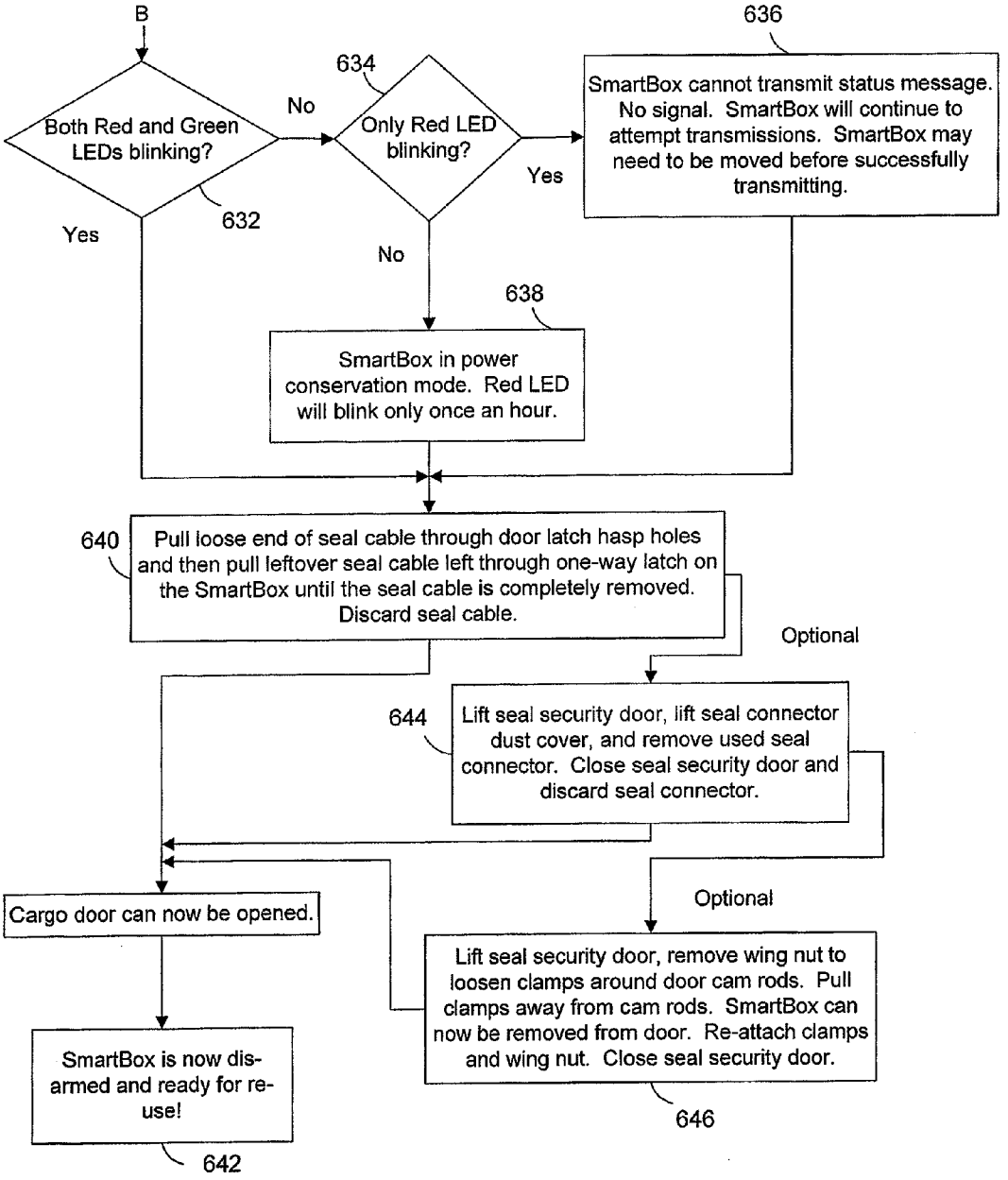

B
Both Red and Green LEDs blinking?
632
Yes
No
634
Only Red LED blinking?
Yes
No
636
SmartBox cannot transmit status message. No signal. SmartBox will continue to attempt transmissions. SmartBox may need to be moved before successfully transmitting.
638
SmartBox in power conservation mode. Red LED will blink only once an hour.
640
Pull loose end of seal cable through door latch hasp holes and then pull leftover seal cable left through one-way latch on the SmartBox until the seal cable is completely removed. Discard seal cable.
Optional
644
Lift seal security door, lift seal connector dust cover, and remove used seal connector. Close seal security door and discard seal connector.
Cargo door can now be opened.
Optional
Lift seal security door, remove wing nut to loosen clamps around door cam rods. Pull clamps away from cam rods. SmartBox can now be removed from door. Re-attach clamps and wing nut. Close seal security door.
646
SmartBox is now disarmed and ready for reuse!
642

FIG. 19A

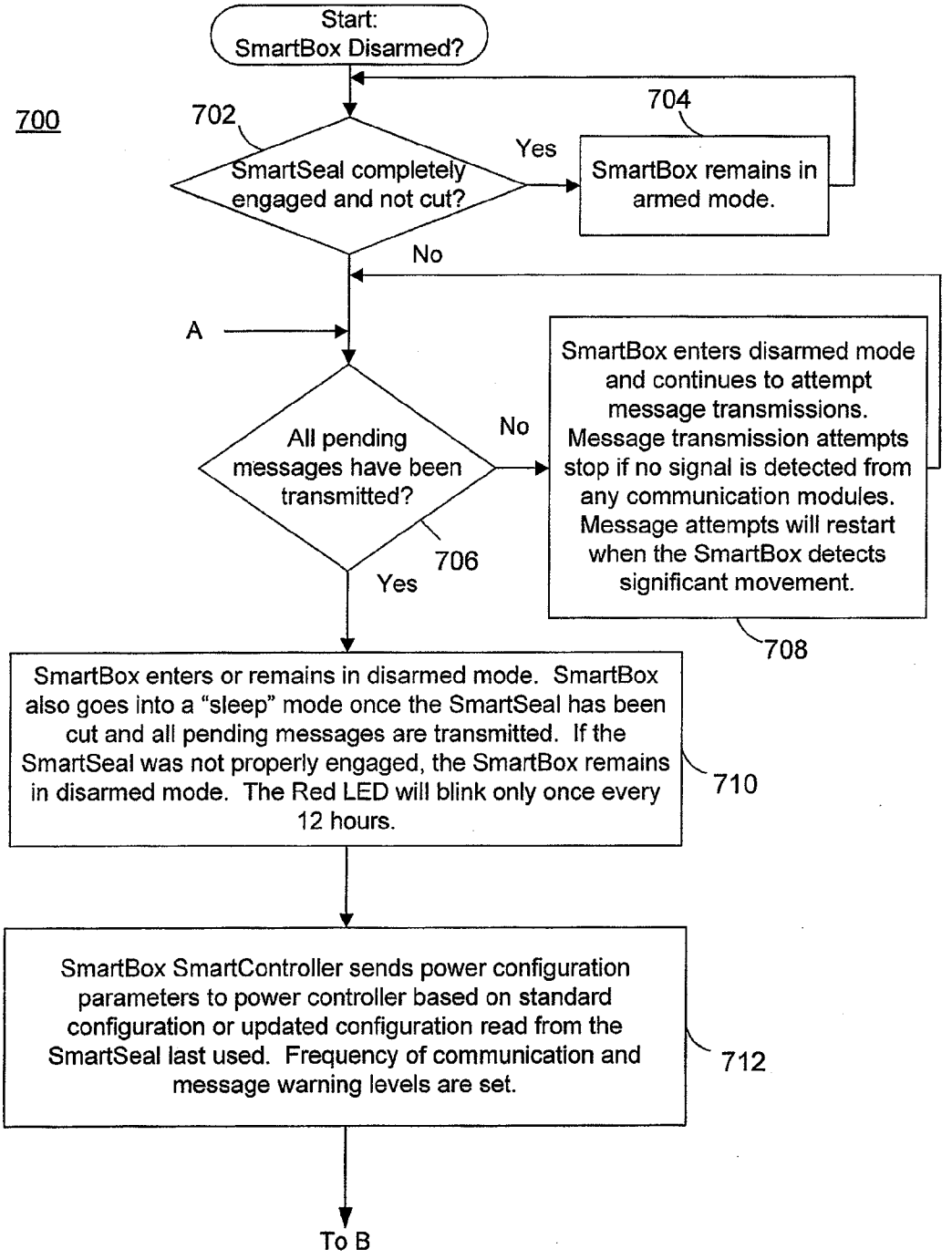

Start:
SmartBox Disarmed?
700
702
SmartSeal completely engaged and not cut?
Yes
704
SmartBox remains in armed mode.
No
A
All pending messages have been transmitted?
No
706
Yes
SmartBox enters disarmed mode and continues to attempt message transmissions. Message transmission attempts stop if no signal is detected from any communication modules. Message attempts will restart when the SmartBox detects significant movement.
708
SmartBox enters or remains in disarmed mode. SmartBox also goes into a "sleep" mode once the SmartSeal has been cut and all pending messages are transmitted. If the SmartSeal was not properly engaged, the SmartBox remains in disarmed mode. The Red LED will blink only once every 12 hours.
710
SmartBox SmartController sends power configuration parameters to power controller based on standard configuration or updated configuration read from the SmartSeal last used. Frequency of communication and message warning levels are set.
712
To B

FIG. 19B

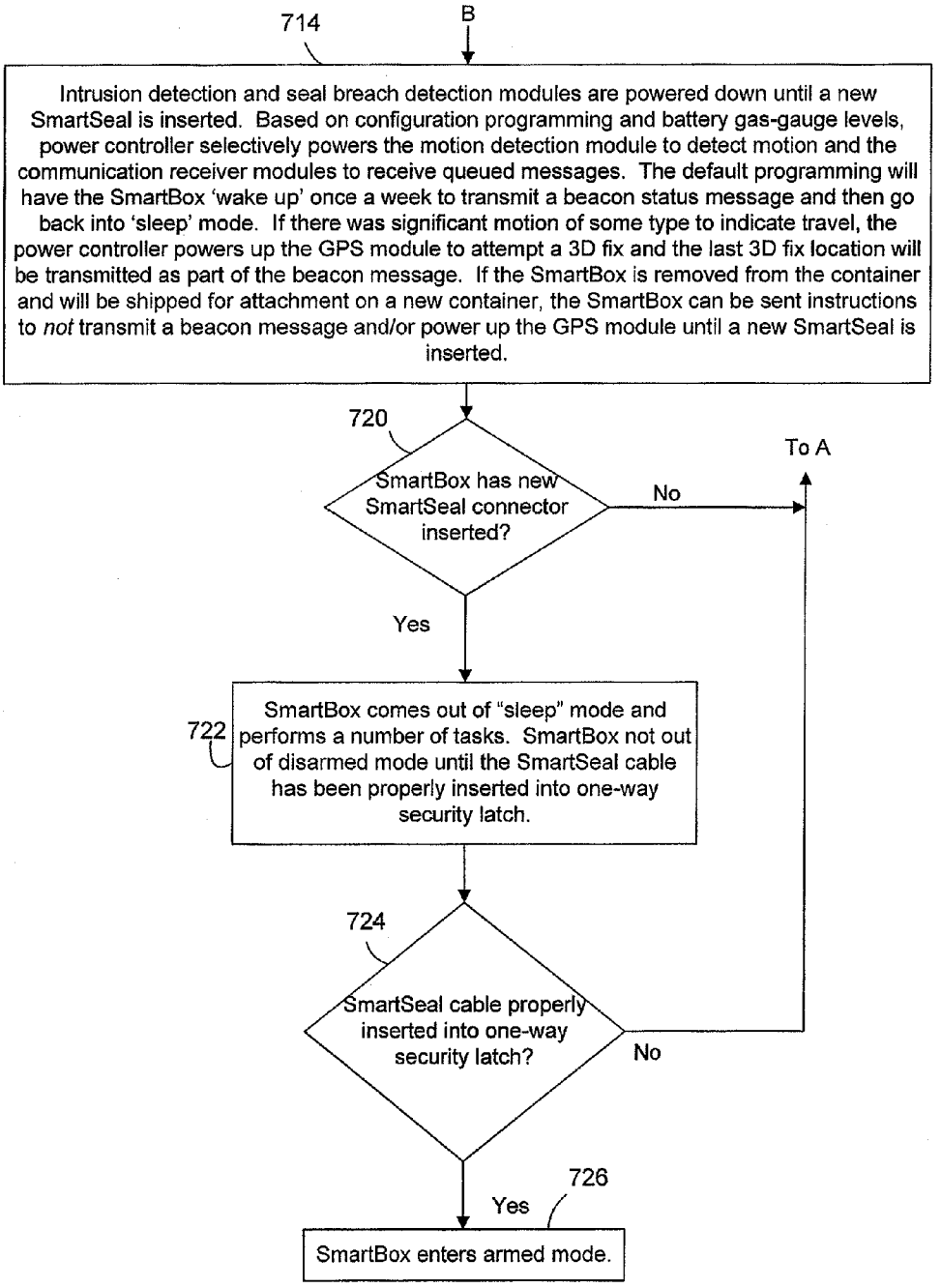

714
B
Intrusion detection and seal breach detection modules are powered down until a new SmartSeal is inserted. Based on configuration programming and battery gas-gauge levels, power controller selectively powers the motion detection module to detect motion and the communication receiver modules to receive queued messages. The default programming will have the SmartBox 'wake up' once a week to transmit a beacon status message and then go back into 'sleep' mode. If there was significant motion of some type to indicate travel, the power controller powers up the GPS module to attempt a 3D fix and the last 3D fix location will be transmitted as part of the beacon message. If the SmartBox is removed from the container and will be shipped for attachment on a new container, the SmartBox can be sent instructions to *not* transmit a beacon message and/or power up the GPS module until a new SmartSeal is inserted.
720
SmartBox has new SmartSeal connector inserted?
No
To A
Yes
722
SmartBox comes out of "sleep" mode and performs a number of tasks. SmartBox not out of disarmed mode until the SmartSeal cable has been properly inserted into one-way security latch.
724
SmartSeal cable properly inserted into one-way security latch?
No
Yes
726
SmartBox enters armed mode.

FIG. 20A

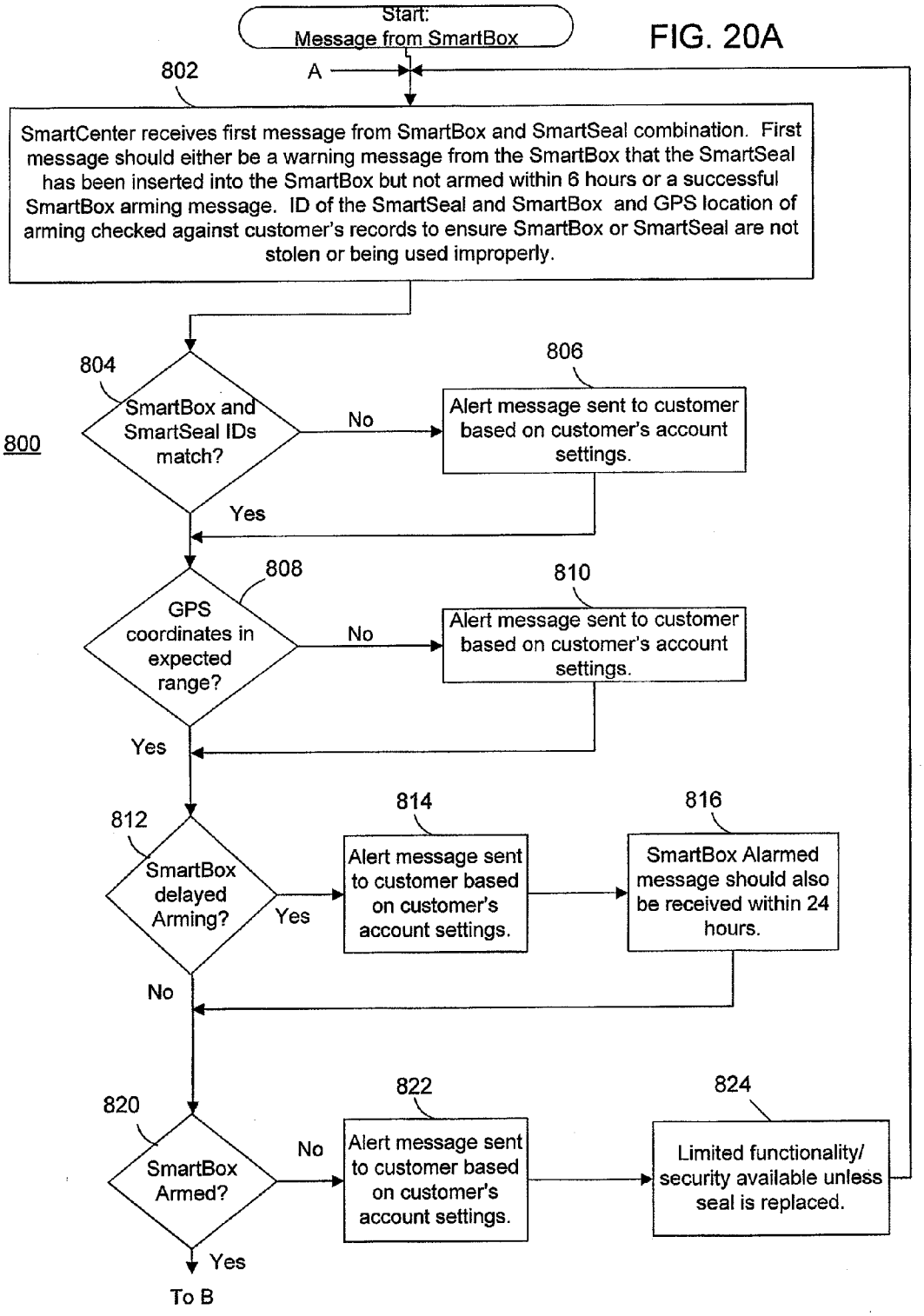

Start:
Message from SmartBox
A
802
SmartCenter receives first message from SmartBox and SmartSeal combination. First message should either be a warning message from the SmartBox that the SmartSeal has been inserted into the SmartBox but not armed within 6 hours or a successful SmartBox arming message. ID of the SmartSeal and SmartBox and GPS location of arming checked against customer's records to ensure SmartBox or SmartSeal are not stolen or being used improperly.
804
SmartBox and SmartSeal IDs match?
No
806
Alert message sent to customer based on customer's account settings.
800
Yes
808
GPS coordinates in expected range?
No
810
Alert message sent to customer based on customer's account settings.
Yes
812
SmartBox delayed Arming?
Yes
814
Alert message sent to customer based on customer's account settings.
816
SmartBox Alarmed message should also be received within 24 hours.
No
820
SmartBox Armed?
No
822
Alert message sent to customer based on customer's account settings.
824
Limited functionality/ security available unless seal is replaced.
Yes
To B

FIG. 20B

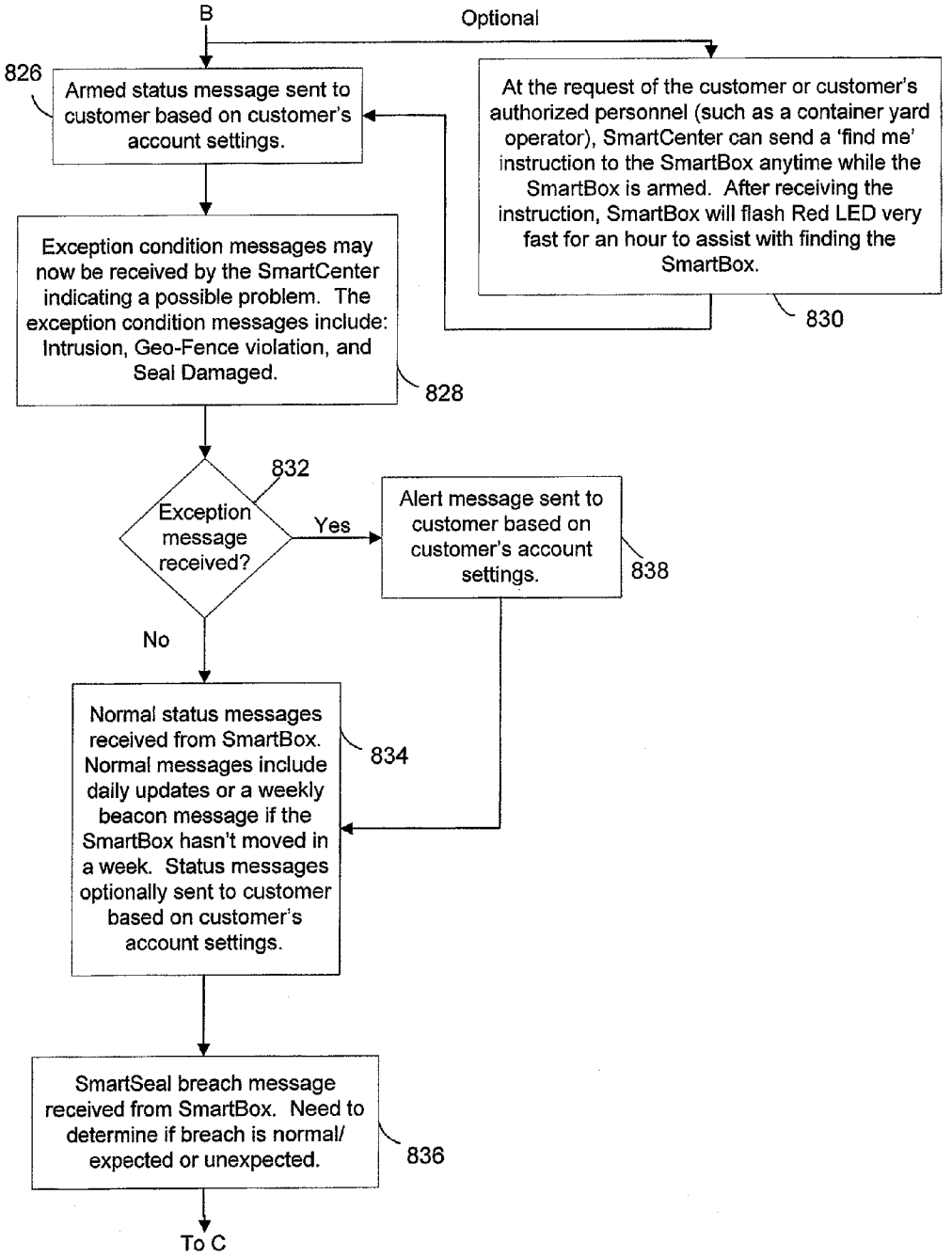
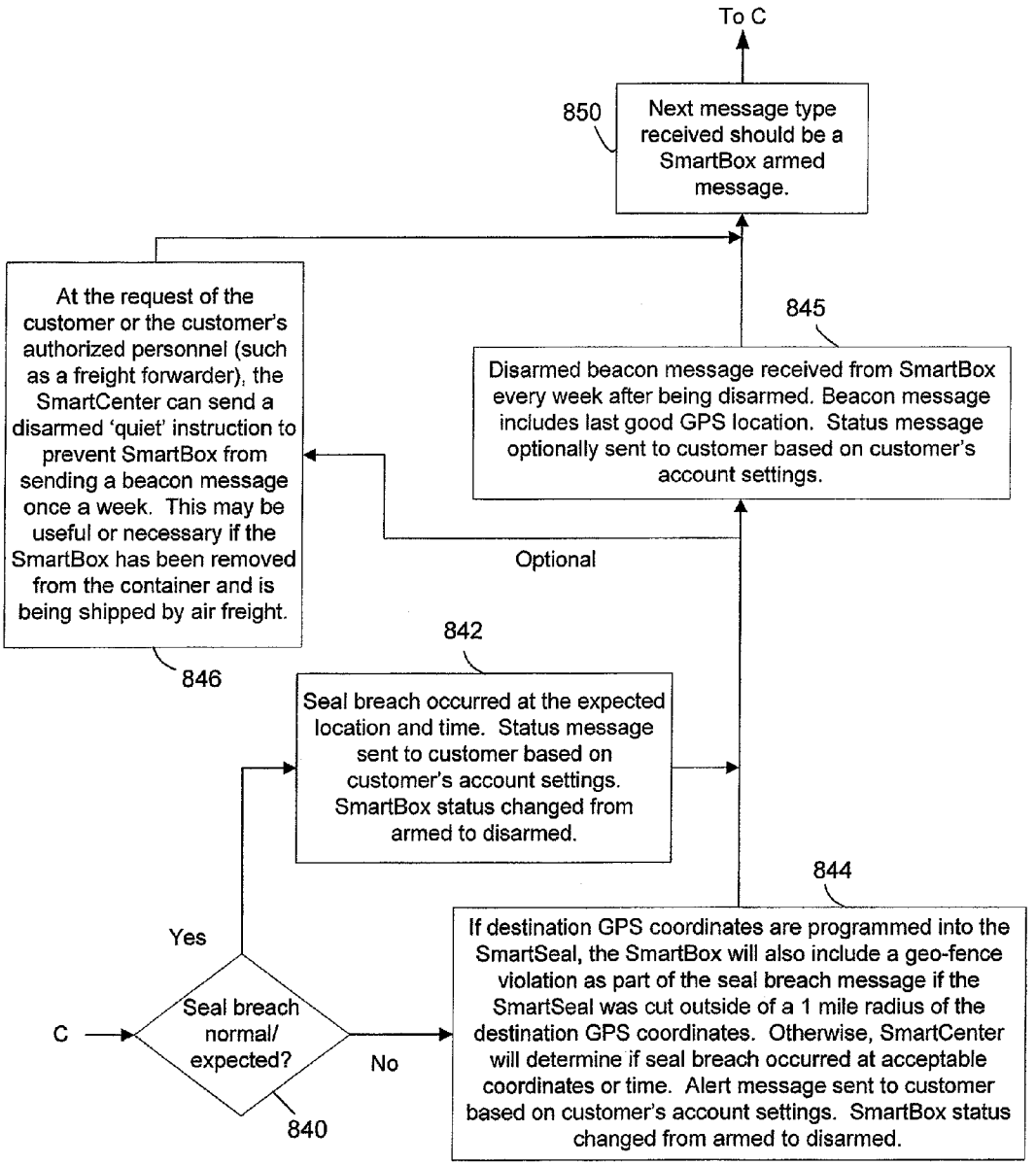

B
Optional
826
Armed status message sent to customer based on customer's account settings.
At the request of the customer or customer's authorized personnel (such as a container yard operator), SmartCenter can send a 'find me' instruction to the SmartBox anytime while the SmartBox is armed. After receiving the instruction, SmartBox will flash Red LED very fast for an hour to assist with finding the SmartBox.
830
Exception condition messages may now be received by the SmartCenter indicating a possible problem. The exception condition messages include: Intrusion, Geo-Fence violation, and Seal Damaged.
828
832
Exception message received?
Yes
Alert message sent to customer based on customer's account settings.
838
No
Normal status messages received from SmartBox. Normal messages include daily updates or a weekly beacon message if the SmartBox hasn't moved in a week. Status messages optionally sent to customer based on customer's account settings.
834
SmartSeal breach message received from SmartBox. Need to determine if breach is normal/ expected or unexpected.
836
To C

FIG. 20C


To C
850
Next message type received should be a SmartBox armed message.
845
Disarmed beacon message received from SmartBox every week after being disarmed. Beacon message includes last good GPS location. Status message optionally sent to customer based on customer's account settings.
Optional
At the request of the customer or the customer's authorized personnel (such as a freight forwarder), the SmartCenter can send a disarmed 'quiet' instruction to prevent SmartBox from sending a beacon message once a week. This may be useful or necessary if the SmartBox has been removed from the container and is being shipped by air freight.
846
842
Seal breach occurred at the expected location and time. Status message sent to customer based on customer's account settings. SmartBox status changed from armed to disarmed.
844
If destination GPS coordinates are programmed into the SmartSeal, the SmartBox will also include a geo-fence violation as part of the seal breach message if the SmartSeal was cut outside of a 1 mile radius of the destination GPS coordinates. Otherwise, SmartCenter will determine if seal breach occurred at acceptable coordinates or time. Alert message sent to customer based on customer's account settings. SmartBox status changed from armed to disarmed.
Yes
C
Seal breach normal/ expected?
No
840

SHIPPING CONTAINER SEAL MONITORING DEVICE, SYSTEM AND METHOD

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. Non-Provisional Application No. 11/926,669, filed Oct. 29, 2007, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/855,090, filed Oct. 27, 2006, the entirety of which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to monitoring shipping containers of the type used for worldwide containerized shipping and more particularly to a container seal device to retrofit to such containers. The present invention can also be applied to other types of shipping containers.

BACKGROUND

[0003] In the shipping industry, there is a need for security and logistics control to track shipping containers and other mobile assets worldwide. In particular, shipping containers are sealed at one location after they are loaded with cargo and then transported to another location where the cargo is unloaded. Shipping containers may also be subject to inspection by a Customs authority if the container is transported across country borders.

[0004] Concern for the safety of those involved in the shipping industry as well as the general public has resulting in a need for heightened security of shipping containers. The concern lies in whether a shipping container has been opened by an unauthorized party in order to take items from the container or place harmful items into the container. Thus, a solution is needed to track the status of shipping containers as well as determine whether the shipping container has been subjected to an unauthorized access or breach.

SUMMARY

[0005] Briefly, a container seal device is provided that comprises a seal device for a shipping container, comprising a first unit that is affixed to a shipping container. A control system is contained in the first unit. A second unit is provided that is configured to engage with an element of a door of a shipping container to which the first unit is affixed and to electrically connect with the control system in the first unit. The control system in the first unit is configured to detect a breach of the second unit indicative of access being made to the shipping container.

[0006] Objects and advantages of the present invention will become more readily apparent when reference is made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. **1** illustrates a container seal system comprising a SmartBox unit and a SmartSeal unit according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0008] FIG. **2** illustrates an internal view of a portion of the SmartBox unit according to an embodiment.

[0009] FIG. **3** illustrates a portion of the SmartBox unit that includes status indicators according to an embodiment.

[0010] FIG. **4** is an end perspective view of a portion of the SmartSeal unit according to an embodiment.

[0011] FIG. **5** is a block diagram of the SmartBox unit connected to a SmartSeal unit according to an embodiment.

[0012] FIG. **6**A is a block diagram of a receptacle and security controller module of the SmartBox unit according to an embodiment.

[0013] FIG. **6**B is a block diagram of a power controller and monitor module of the SmartBox unit according to an embodiment.

[0014] FIG. **7** is a block diagram of an intrusion sensor control module of the SmartBox unit according to an embodiment.

[0015] FIG. **8** is a block diagram of the SmartSeal unit according to an embodiment.

[0016] FIG. **9** is a block diagram showing the container seal system connected to one or more container intrusion sensor according to an embodiment.

[0017] FIG. **10** is a diagram showing multiple shipping containers to which a container seal system is attached according to an embodiment.

[0018] FIGS. **11-14** are diagrams illustrating installation and arming of a SmartBox unit with a SmartSeal unit according to an embodiment.

[0019] FIG. **15** illustrates a block diagram of a monitoring system that includes a SmartCenter administration facility and one or more container seal devices according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0020] FIGS. **16**A-**16**B depict a flow chart illustrating steps for arming a SmartBox unit according to an embodiment.

[0021] FIGS. **17**A-**17**C depict a flow chart illustrating operation of a SmartBox unit when in an armed state according to an embodiment.

[0022] FIGS. **18**A-**18**B depict a flow chart illustrating steps for disarming a SmartBox unit according to an embodiment.

[0023] FIGS. **19**A-**19**B depict a flow chart illustrating operation of a SmartBox unit when in a disarmed state according to an embodiment.

[0024] FIGS. **20**A-**20**C depict a flow chart illustrating operation of a SmartCenter administration facility according to an embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0025] Referring first to FIG. **1**, the container seal device according to the present invention is described. The container seal device is shown generally at reference numeral **10** and comprises a first unit **100**, also called a SmartBox unit, housing unit or a control box unit that is attached to the door of a cargo container to be sealed and a second unit **200**, also called a SmartSeal unit **200** or simply a seal unit. The SmartBox unit **100** serves as a means for housing a control system (as described hereinafter) and the SmartSeal Unit **200** serves as a means for engaging with an element of the door of a shipping container and for electrically connecting with the control system of the SmartBox unit **100**.

[0026] The SmartBox unit **100** is contained in a housing that may comprise several housing portions: housing portion **102**, housing portion **104** and housing portion **106**. These housing portions are assembled together and attached to a cargo container door by, for example screws or bolts shown at **103**. The housing portion **102** may contain antennas used by the SmartBox unit **100** for wirelessly communication. Thus, the housing portion **102** may be made of a strong plastic material that can protect the enclosed antennas from weather-

related conditions. The housing portion **104** may be used as to secure the housing portion **102** to the container door in a secure manner. Housing portion **106** is a strong metal housing that contains the electronic components of the SmartBox control system, described in detail hereinafter. There are status indicators on the housing portion **106** as shown in FIG. **1** (and FIG. **3**) and described in more detail hereinafter. In the housing portion **106** there is a SmartSeal unit connection port or receptacle pointing downward as shown at **108** that makes electrical connection with the SmartSeal unit **200** as described hereinafter.

[0027] There is a door member **110** that is connected at hinges **112** to the housing **102**. The door member **110** has an protective cover **114** that extends outward and is designed to align beneath the connection port **108** when the door member **110** is rotated downward into a closed position as described hereinafter. There is a slot **115** in the protective cover **114** to allow the protective cover to fit over the connector plug of the SmartSeal unit **200** as will become apparent hereinafter. There are also bushings **116** in the arms of the door member **110** that permit passage of the cable of the SmartSeal unit **200**, again as will become more apparent hereinafter.

[0028] Through the housing portion **106** there is a passageway **120** sized to receive a cable of the SmartSeal unit **200** as described hereinafter. There are holes on opposite faces of the housing portion that permit access to the passageway **120**. The passageway **120** is configured to allow insertion of the cable of the SmartSeal unit **200** in one direction but prevents withdrawal or removal of the cable. In this sense, the passageway **120** is a one-way passageway that serves as a one-way latch on the SmartSeal unit **200** cable. When the door member **110** is rotated to a closed position, the bushings **116** align with holes on opposite faces of the housing portion **106** that provide access to the passageway **120**. The passageway **120** is described in further detail hereinafter in connection with FIG. **2**.

[0029] Still referring to FIG. **1**, the SmartSeal unit **200** comprises an electrical plug connector **202**, a housing unit **204** that contains components that make up a control system for the SmartSeal unit **200** as well as one or more batteries, and an elongated cable **210**. The elongated cable **210** has a proximal end **212** that is connected into the housing unit **204** and a distal end **214** that is free. As described hereinafter, the elongated cable **210** contains one or more electrical conductors, one or more optical fibers and a steel cable for strength and resistance to cutting. The SmartSeal unit **200** may be a single or one-time use device as will become more apparent hereinafter. The cable **210** serves as an element, member or means to engage a portion of a door mechanism of a shipping container. It is only one example of an element or means to engage a portion of shipping container door mechanism. Other examples of such elements or means are described hereinafter.

[0030] The SmartBox unit **100** may be mounted to the outside of the container door to simplify electrical connection to the SmartSeal unit **200**, or inside the container door. For examples, holes may be drilled into the container door or the SmartBox unit **100** may be welded to the container door.

[0031] Turning to FIG, **2**, an internal view of the SmartBox unit **100** is shown behind the status panel **106**. As shown in FIG. **2**, the passageway **120** extends through a portion of the housing **102** that is behind the panel **106** and comprises clamp members **122**. The clamp members **122** are positioned and biased to permit insertion of the distal end **214** of the cable **210** of the SmartSeal unit **200** from the right side through to the left side of the housing **102**. The clamp members **122** prevent removal of the cable **210** of the SmartSeal unit **200** from the passageway **120** without cutting the cable **210** and thereby disarming the container seal device **10** as will become apparent hereinafter. FIG. **2** also shows the connector port **108** where the plug connector **202** of the SmartSeal unit **200** connects to the SmartBox unit **100** and a cable end detector module **1140** that detects the end of the cable of the SmartSeal unit **200** as described hereinafter in conjunction with FIG. **7**.

[0032] Referring to FIG. **3**, the status indicators on the housing portion **106** of the SmartBox unit **100** are further described. There are two visual indicators (e.g., light emitting diodes) **130** and **132** on the front face of the housing portion **106**. The indicator **130** may have a first color, e.g., green and the indicator **132** may have a second color, e.g., red. The indicator **130** is illuminated (constant or blinking) to indicate normal status conditions of the container seal device **10** and the indicator **132** is illuminated (constant or blinking) to indicate a problem (e.g., bad seal, etc.) with the container seal device **10**. The functions of the indicators **130** and **132** are described hereinafter in further detail. There are also textual and/or graphical elements **134** and **136** on the front face of the housing portion **106** to instruct or guide a user as to the direction to insert the distal end **214** of the cable **210** of the SmartSeal unit **200** into the passageway **120** of the SmartBox unit **100**.

[0033] FIG. **3** also illustrates an optional keypad **138** on the housing portion **106** that may be used to enter identification numbers in order to arm and/or disarm the SmartBox unit **100**. The keypad **138** is not a required component of the SmartBox unit **100**, but may be useful for certain applications as described hereinafter.

[0034] Referring now to FIG. **4**, the connector plug **202** and the housing unit **204** of the SmartSeal unit **200** are shown in more detail. The connector plug **202** may be any type of electrical connector that uses an industry standard (e.g., USB, PCI, Cardbus, etc.) or customized/proprietary connection technology. In the example shown in FIG. **4**, the connector plug **202** is a standard 7-hole round plug. These holes will receive pins of the connection port **108** in the SmartBox unit **100** (FIGS. **1** and **3**). It should be understood that the present invention is not limited to any particular connector structure.

[0035] The SmartBox Control System

[0036] Turning now to FIGS. **5**, **6**A, **6**B and **7** functional block diagrams of the control device **1000** for the SmartBox unit **100** are described. As shown in FIG. **5**, the SmartBox control device **1000** connects to the SmartSeal unit control system **2000** of the SmartSeal unit **200** via connector **202**. While the foregoing description alludes to a plurality of different modules that form the control system **1000** of the SmartSeal unit **100**, it should be understood that several or all of the various modules may be implemented on a single integrated circuit (IC) using "system on chip" semiconductor design and fabrication techniques now known or hereinafter developed. The same applies to the SmartSeal control system **2000**, described hereinafter in conjunction with FIG. **8**. In fact, such a single chip solution makes the electronics of the SmartBox unit **100** and SmartSeal unit **200** less expensive, more power efficient, and more secure from tampering.

[0037] The SmartBox control system **1000** comprises a system (main) controller **1010**, a non-volatile memory and general purpose input/output (I/O) block **1020**, and a power supply controller and monitor module **1030** associated with a

main battery **1033** and a backup battery **1039**. The system controller **1010** is a microprocessor or microcontroller (as available from Intel, Microchip or Motorola for example) that is programmed with software to perform the various SmartBox functions described herein. The non-volatile memory module **1020** comprises one or more memory devices (as available from Intel, Atmel or Microchip for example) to store various pieces of data, such as identifiers, status data, etc. The memory module **1020** stores one or more SmartBox identifiers, any special operating instructions for the SmartBox unit **100** as well as identification and status information received from a SmartSeal unit **200** connected to the SmartBox unit **100**. The power supply controller and monitor module **1030** delivers power to all of the modules of the SmartBox control device **1010** as needed and manages other power conservation and consumption functions described herein. The batteries **1033** and **1039** may be any suitable (rechargeable or non-rechargeable battery), such as those available under the Eveready, Duracell or Rayovac brands. There are certain advantages that can be achieved when one or both of the batteries **1033** or **1039** is rechargeable, as described hereinafter. In addition, the batteries **1033** and **1039** may actually be embodied by a plurality of battery units to provide the required voltages and electrical capacities.

[0038] Status of the container seal device **10** is delivered via the visual indicators (LEDs) **130** and **132** by way of control signals generated by the system controller **1010**. Any LED may be suitable for purposes of indicators **130** and **132** of the present invention, such as those available from Hewlett-Packard or Fairchild Semiconductor. The SmartBox unit **100** may have one or more communication capabilities and to this end the SmartBox control device **1000** may comprise a satellite communications module **1040** with an associated antenna **1042**, a cellular and mesh network communications module **1050** and an associated antenna **1052**, an radio frequency identifications (RFID) communications module **1060** and associated antenna **1062**, and a global positioning systems (GPS) module **1070** and associated antenna **1072**. For example, the GPS module **1070** is a GPS chip (or chipset) available from UBlox, Tremble, Motorola or Garmin, for example. Each of these modules is connected to the system controller **1010** to receive and transmit information. The RFID module **1060** may respond to requests from an RFID reader to transmit stored data representing the SmartBox identifier and/or a SmartSeal unit **200** identifier for the SmartSeal unit **200** connected to the SmartBox unit **100**. The uses of these various communication modules are described in more detail hereinafter.

[0039] The GPS module **1070** allows the SmartBox unit **100** to tap into a satellite navigation system in order to determine its geographic location. GPS positioning may be performed in the SmartBox unit **100** even when the SmartBox unit is not armed with a SmartSeal unit **200**. The cellular and mesh network communications module **1050** may have capabilities to communicate information over a wide-area communication protocol such as ReFLEX, the Blackberry two-way messaging system, GSM, or any other two-way wireless messaging or communication protocol now known or hereinafter developed. Thus, the GPS module **1070** serves as a means for determining a (geographical position) of the SmartBox unit **100**, and the communications module **1050** serves as a means for wireless communicating information stored in the control system of the SmartBox unit **100** to a remote location. Direct user input to the SmartBox unit **100** may be provided by way of the keypad **138** that is connected to the system controller **1010**.

[0040] The memory module **1020** stores GPS position, date and time information for the life of the SmartBox unit **100**, in addition to the SmartBox identifier(s), SmartSeal unit **200** identifiers of an attached SmartSeal unit **200** unit and related SmartSeal unit **200** status information. The memory module **1020** may be encased in a steel ball which acts as a protective mechanism in case of vandalism or catastrophic damage to SmartBox control device **1000**. Upon recovery of the steel ball, the data stored in the memory module **1020** can be retrieved.

[0041] There is an intrusion detection sensor, environmental sensors a data processing module **1080** that is connected to the system controller **1010** and an accelerometer motion detection and processing module **1090** also connected to the system controller. The module **1080** collects data from one or more container intrusion sensors (see FIG. **9**) and processes the data produced by these sensors for analysis by the system controller **1010**. Examples of container intrusion sensors are described in more detail hereinafter. The accelerometer motion detection and processing module **1090** comprises an accelerometer sensor and a processor that analyzes output of the accelerometer sensor to generate data indicative of whether and what type of motion the SmartBox unit **100** is subjected to. This data is supplied to the system controller **1010** for analysis. Finally, there is a SmartSeal unit **200** receptacle and security controller **1100** that manages communications of status and control signals to and from the SmartSeal unit **200**.

[0042] The various antennas **1042**, **1052**, **1062** and **1072** shown in FIG. **5** make up what is referred to herein as an antenna module. The antenna module is mounted on the outside of the container or behind a non-conductive window so that the antennas are not totally enclosed by metal. The remaining components of the SmartBox control device **1000** may be mounted on either the inside or outside of the container. If mounted on the outside, these components may be combined with the antenna module into a single assembly. If mounted inside, these components are less vulnerable but an electrical connection with the antenna module needs to be made through the container shell or wall. A give-away locking nut may be used on the inside of the door. Also, if portions of the SmartBox control device **1000** are mounted inside the container, they may be packaged such that the resulting assembly can mount within a door corrugation because shippers depend on the exact inside container dimensions to be available for their goods. In either case, the components of the SmartBox control system (other than the antennas) may be suspended and protected by a non-conductive electronic potting material.

[0043] Conformal coating may applied to the circuit board (s) on which the various components of the SmartBox control device **1000** are mounted to seal the components and the circuit boards from moisture and temperature related complications or to create an electronic sealant.

[0044] As explained above in connection with FIG. **1**, the antennas of the SmartBox control system may be mounted within a plastic casing designed to protect the enclosed antennas from weather-related conditions and industrial temperatures ranging from −40° C. to 85° C. The remaining components of the SmartBox control device **1000** may be placed inside the same casing, or within a separate casing or housing

portion, e.g., housing portion **106**. The antenna module casing **102** is sealed, airtight and waterproof.

[0045] Turning to FIG. **6**A, the SmartSeal unit **200** receptacle and security controller module **1100** of the SmartBox control device **100** is described in more detail. The module **1100** comprises a security controller **1110**, a SmartSeal unit **200** connector security door open/close contact switch **1120**, the SmartSeal unit connector receptacle **108** and a SmartSeal cable end detector **1140**. The security controller **1110** is connected to a SmartSeal connector security door switch **1120**, to the SmartSeal connector receptacle **108** and to the SmartSeal cable end detector **1140**. The security controller **1110** determines whether a SmartSeal cable **210** is still in tact and whether the protective door **110** is closed based on the status of the switch **1120**. The SmartSeal connector security door switch **1120** is a switch that is provided on the SmartBox unit **100** to monitor whether the door member **110** (FIG. **1**) is in a closed position. The switch **1120** may be activated by a cam provided on one of the hinges **112** (FIG. **1**).

[0046] The SmartSeal connector receptacle **108** is the same connection receptacle referred above in connection with FIG. **1**. For example, the receptacle **108** may be a standard **7**-pin round trailer connector. Two of the pins of receptacle **108** are used for the copper conductors of the SmartSeal cable **210** (SmartSeal unit loop out, SmartSeal unit loop in, SmartSeal unit wire pulsed) and three of the pins are used for supplying power to the SmartBox unit **100** (SmartBox power (+), SmartBox ground (−), SmartBox power (+) backup). The remaining 2 pins are used as a serial data bus to communicate with the SmartSeal unit **200** using a serial data communication standard such as I^2C.

[0047] The cable end detector **1140** may comprise a capacitively coupled voltage pickup device that surrounds the SmartSeal cable **210** when it is inserted through the one-way passageway **120** in the housing portion **106** of the SmartBox unit **100**. The cable end detector module **1140** detects the presence (and absence) of the SmartSeal cable **210** in the SmartBox unit **100**. Operation of the security controller **1110** and the cable end detector module **1140** are described in more detail hereinafter in conjunction with FIG. **8**.

[0048] At time of manufacture, the SmartBox unit **100** is assigned a unique SmartBox identifier or address that is stored in the memory module **1020**. This SmartBox identifier may be entered into a central database maintained at an administration facility, together with relevant container specification data, as described hereinafter. Proprietary or open software (or firmware) executed by the system controller **1010** provides the SmartBox unit with intelligence and logical interpretation capabilities. The software may process commands and execute algorithms based on whatever data is provided. The software will also execute algorithms to determine what actions are to be taken, such as best alternative communication method. For example, the system controller **1010**, under control of the software, may determine the best alternative communication method available at the location of the SmartBox unit **100** and format data for transmission to an administration facility, as well as generate trip related unique identifiers (PINs). The software also prepares the SmartBox unit for downloading data into the SmartBox control device **1000** (such as configuration information and software updates) from the administration facility.

[0049] Upon installation of the SmartBox unit **100** to a cargo container or other asset to be tracked, the unique identifier of both the SmartBox unit **100** and a unique identifier of the asset are used to establish a relationship to one another. At this time, customer specific data may be loaded into the SmartBox unit **100** that is centrally managed by the administration facility. The SmartBox unit **100** may perform several self-monitoring tests throughout its life, such as power supply level checking, GPS position checking, real-time clock synchronization and two-way wireless communications checking. The SmartBox unit stores this and other data to its onboard non-volatile memory module **1020**. This information is also transmitted to the administration facility for administration and end-user analysis. All data transmitted to or from the Smart Box unit **100** may be encrypted.

[0050] Turning to FIG. **6**B, the module **1030** is described in further detail. The module **1030** comprises a power controller and power monitor block **1032**, a plurality of switches or relays **1034**(**1**) to **1034**(**8**) that control power to power consuming blocks in the SmartBox unit **100** or SmartSeal unit, a voltage converter and regulator **1036**, a plurality switches or relays **1037**(**1**) to **1037**(**4**) that control which power source is used to supply power to the various power consuming blocks and a plurality of battery level detectors **1038**(**1**) to **1038**(**4**) that are used to monitor the power remaining in the batteries in the SmartBox unit **100** and SmartSeal unit **200**.

[0051] The power controller and power monitor block **1032** supplies power status information to the SmartBox system controller **1010** and implements a power control algorithm under control of the SmartBox system controller **1010**. The power controller and monitor **1032** receives power level inputs from the various level detectors **1038**(**1**) to **1038**(**4**) and also controls the voltage converter and regulator **1036** to generate the appropriate voltages needed by the various power consumer blocks. The power controller and monitor **1032** sends control signals, in response to commands from the SmartBox system controller **1010** to select ones of the switches **1034**(**1**) to **1034**(**8**) to supply power to the various power consumer blocks. Similarly, the power controller and monitor block **1032** is responsive to commands from the SmartBox system controller **1010** to determine which of the batteries (main or backup) of the SmartBox unit **100** and/or batteries (main or backup) of the SmartSeal unit **200** are used to supply power to a power consumer block at any particular time.

[0052] Turning to FIG. **7**, the module **1080** of the SmartBox unit **100** is described. The module **1080** comprises a processor **1082**, a memory **1084**, acoustic (sensors) couplers **105** and **1086**, and environmental sensors **1087**. The acoustic coupler **1085** is a high frequency acoustic coupler that converts relatively high frequency vibrations and "noise" into electrical signals and supplies those signals to the processor **1082**. The acoustic coupler **1086** is a low frequency acoustic coupler that converts relatively low frequency vibrations and "noise" into electrical signals and supplies those signals to the processor **1082**. The acoustic couplers **1085** and **1086** may be mounted or otherwise acoustically coupled to a wall of the container on the inside or outside of the container. In fact, the simple presence of the acoustic couplers **1085** and **1086** in the SmartBox unit **100** itself may provide a sufficient coupling to the container wall. The acoustic couplers **1085** and **1086** are provided to determine whether there is a intrusion into the container. The memory **1084** stores signatures of noise sources for use by the processor **1082** in analyzing the signals supplied by the acoustic couplers **1085** and **1086**. For example, the memory **1084** may store signatures of drilling, sawing, air hammering, chains banging, impact, etc., that are

indicative of a potential intrusion into the container. The processor **1082** analyzes the signals supplied by the acoustic couplers **1085** and **1086** to determine or identify the sources of detected vibrations by comparing the waveforms of those signals against the library of stored signatures. In this way, the processor **1082** may determine if a detected vibration or noise source is acceptable or problematic, i.e., indicative of an intrusion into the container. When analyzing these signals, the processor **1082** may take into account motion of the container (on a truck, ship, etc.) based on information supplied to the processor **1082** from the module **1090**. Under some circumstances, the processor **1082** may assist the module **1090** in determining the type of motion to which the SmartBox unit **100** is subjected.

[0053] In addition, there are other environmental sensors **1087** that may be provided as part of the module **1080** and connected to the processor **1082**. For example, environmental sensors may include temperature sensors, pressure sensors, light sensors (inside the container), etc. Further still, the module **1080** may include a digital camera **1089** that is controlled by the system controller **1010**. The digital camera **1089** may be positioned on the SmartBox unit **100** in a location that can capture photographic images (and/or audio) of a person that is arming and/or disarming the SmartBox unit **100**, as well as of a person who is tampering with the SmartBox unit **100** or the container door itself. The image data captured by the digital camera **1089** is supplied to the system controller **1010** for storage in the memory **1020** and optionally for transmission to the SmartCenter facility. Photographs are useful in criminal investigations. The digital camera **1089** may be an inexpensive wide-angle electronic camera, of the type used in cell phones, and aimed so as to photograph persons sealing the container or breaking the SmartSeal unit **200**. Said another way, the digital camera is positioned in the SmartBox unit **100** so as to capture images of a person attempting access into the container through the container door or interacting with (attempting operation or tampering of) the SmartBox unit **100** or SmartSeal unit **200** much like the recording camera used in banking automated teller machines (ATMs).

[0054] The functions of the intrusion sensor module **1080** as part of the SmartBox unit **100** are described in more detail hereinafter.

[0055] The SmartSeal Control System

[0056] Turning now to FIG. **8** (with reference to FIG. **6**A as well), a functional block diagram for the SmartSeal control system **2000** is now described. The SmartSeal control system **2000** comprises the SmartSeal connector plug **202**, a SmartSeal system controller **2010**, a non-volatile random access memory (RAM) module **2020**, a fiber optic security module **2030** and a RFID module **2040**. The SmartSeal connector plug **202** is complementary to the SmartSeal unit connector receptacle **108** shown in FIG. **5** to make electrical connection to the SmartBox unit **100**. The connector **202** is connected to a copper wire loop **220** contained in the SmartSeal cable **210** having an effective resistance Rseal, to a SmartSeal copper wire **230** also contained in the SmartSeal cable **210**, to a main battery **240** and to a backup battery **242**.

[0057] The SmartSeal system controller **2010** is connected to the connector **202**, to the non-volatile RAM module **2020**, fiber optic security module **2030** and RFID module **2040**. The SmartSeal system controller **2010** communicates with the SmartBox system controller **1010** over the I^2C serial data bus referred to above. The SmartSeal system controller **2010** uploads to the SmartBox system controller **1010** a SmartSeal identifier (stored in the RAM module **2020**), data indicating the status of the SmartSeal unit **200** (e.g., status of the SmartSeal cable **210**, etc.), and any other special instructions that have been programmed into the RAM module **2020**. Conversely, the SmartSeal system controller **2010** downloads from the SmartBox system controller **1010** a SmartBox identifier(s) (stored in the memory **1020** of the SmartBox control device **1000**) and other SmartBox status information supplied by the SmartBox controller **1010**. This downloaded information from the SmartBox control device **1000** may be stored in the RAM **2020**. The SmartSeal system controller **2010** also controls the power to the modules of the SmartSeal control system **2000** so that the modules are powered either from the main battery **240** or the backup battery **242**.

[0058] The RAM module **2020** stores the SmartSeal unit **200** identifier(s) that is/are assigned to the SmartSeal unit **200**, the downloaded information from the SmartBox control device **1000**, the SmartSeal unit **200** status information and any special operating instructions that have been programmed into the SmartSeal unit **200** unit **100**.

[0059] The fiber optic security module **2030** is a circuit that is connected to a light source, e.g., an LED, **2032** and to a photodetector or photosensor **2034**. The light source **2032** is coupled to one end of a fiber optic loop **250** that is contained in the SmartSeal unit **200** cable **210**. The fiber optic security module **2030** generates control signals to cause the light source **2032** generate a pattern of light pulses that travel through the fiber optic loop **250** and are detected by the photodetector **2034**. The fiber optic security module **2030** can detect if the fiber optic loop is broken or breached by analyzing the output of the detector **2034** to determine whether or not the detector **2034** continues to detect the pattern of light pulses supplied by the light source **2032** at the other end of the loop **250**.

[0060] A primary function of the seal mechanism of this SmartSeal unit is to detect breaches of its physical SmartSeal unit **200** component, whether authorized or unauthorized, and transmit an alarm by radio. A record of the breach is also placed in non-volatile memory within the SmartBox unit **100**.

[0061] The device **10** was created to address some concerns associated with other electronic seals/system. One significant issue with other seal systems is false positives where the seal/system triggers a breach message for some reason and the seal was actually mechanically not breached. The second scenario is the opposite where a real breach occurs and the seal/system does not report the problem probably because the seal security was too easily bypassed. For cable systems, a very common failure occurs when the cable is chafed by one of the sharp edges during container transport that leads to failures of both types, but more commonly generates false positives.

[0062] According to one example implementation, the device SmartSeal unit **200** may have three independent seal breach tests.

[0063] The copper loop **220** is, for example, a twisted copper pair similar to that used in a CATS wire used for computer networking. In this twisted pair configuration, the pair of wires of the loop **220** has a characteristic resistance/impedance that can be easily measured when pulsing the pair of wires. Cutting the pair of wires of the loop **220** creates an 'open' electrical condition but also changes the impedance Rseal of the loop **220**. Therefore, if someone or something attempts to 'alligator clip' two wire sections (created by cutting the loop **220**) back together, it would be almost impos-

sible to get the impedance back to its original (and known) value. Thus, the twisted pair of wires of the loop **220** offer a high degree of tamper proof reliability. The security controller **1110** in the SmartBox unit checks for an 'open' condition as well as a measure of the impedance of the twisted copper pair of loop **220**. The SmartBox unit **100** directly monitors the characteristics of the twisted pair copper loop **220** done so even if the electronics in the SmartSeal unit **200** is somehow damaged, the integrity of the SmartSeal unit can be verified. The SmartBox unit also checks the single strand of copper wire **230**. Thus, there are two verifiable ways to check the integrity of the SmartSeal unit **200** even if the SmartSeal unit electronics are completely inoperable. Furthermore, the SmartBox unit **100** checks for the insertion of the SmartSeal unit **200** by checking both the change in battery levels from the SmartSeal battery gas gauges (FIG. **7**) and by a change in impedance on the copper loop pin of the connector receptacle **202**. In this way, the SmartBox unit **100** can determine that there is a SmartSeal unit **100** inserted even if the batteries of the SmartSeal unit **100** are somehow completely dead.

[0064] The single copper wire **230** runs as a single wire through substantially the entire length of the cable **210**. The security controller **1110** generates a unique time-varying pulse train (at a relatively a small voltage) that is applied to the wire **230** so that the wire **230** acts like a broadcast antenna to broadcast the pulse train ultimately for detection by the SmartSeal cable end detector module **1140**. After the SmartSeal connector **202** is inserted into the receptacle **108** of the SmartBox unit **100** and the end **214** of the cable **210** has been put through the one-way security passage latch **120** of the SmartBox unit **100**, the capacitive/voltage pickup of the cable end detector module **1140** should detect the time varying pulse train sent through the wire **230** to ensure that arming of the SmartBox unit **100** is completed and that the wire connected into the SmartBox unit **100** at the SmartSeal connector **108** is the same wire that is in the cable **210** that passes through the one way secure latch **120** because this would only be the case if the pulse train detected by the cable end detector **1140** is substantially the same as the pulse train applied to the wire **230** by the security controller module **110**. Using a single wire consumes less power when pulsed than the twisted pair, but a single wire can be cut and patched with an alligator clip. Therefore, the security controller **1110** also supplies a pulse train at a slower rate to the twisted pair wire of loop **220** since a twisted pair cannot be easily bypassed. The capacitive voltage pickup device of the cable end detector **1140** will also detect the pulses through the twisted pair wire of loop **220**. As a further variation, the single wire **230** may be used as an antenna that is referenced against the twisted pair wire of loop **220**. Further still, the single wire **220** may be configured to be a backup/covert antenna for the cellular and RFID communications modules of the SmartBox unit **100**.

[0065] As described above, cable end detector module **1140** is provided to ensure that the cable **210** plugged into the SmartSeal connector **108** of a SmartSeal unit **200** is the same cable that is pushed through the one-way secure latch **120** of the SmartBox unit **100**. Otherwise, if a simple device such as a switch on the latch determines if something was merely pushed through the latch, any piece of cable could be pushed through the one way latch and there would be no way for the SmartBox unit **100** to verify that the cable pushed through the one way latch was indeed the right SmartSeal cable. Thus, the cable end detector module **1140** checks to make sure the 'loop' is closed. Also, because the pattern pulsed on the copper wires varies with time, there is no way to mimic of fake that same pattern with a different seal or some other form of pattern generator. The security controller **1110** in the SmartBox unit **100** compares the pattern sent out on the copper wires to the pattern received by the cable end detector module **1140** and the two patterns should be substantially the same, otherwise an alert is generated indicating that a possible breach condition has occurred.

[0066] As one example, the cable end detector module **1140** may be a conductive tube in which the cable **210** is inserted. The voltage pulsed onto the wire **230** is capacitively coupled to the conductive tube. A field effect transistor (FET) may be connected to the conductive tube to pickup the modulated voltage (pulse train) and to set an interrupt to the security controller module **1110**. Another example is to use a coil rather than a conductive tube. Referring back to FIG. **2**, the conductive tube or coil is shown at reference numeral **1142** arranged around the passage **120**.

[0067] Where there are multiple means of detecting a breach (such as the wire and optical fiber described above), whether in the physical SmartSeal unit **200** or from container intrusion sensors their respective alarm signals may either be ORed together for high security or ANDed together to minimize false alarms, or the choice may programmed into the SmartBox unit **100**.

[0068] In general, detecting a SmartSeal unit **200** breach with light or electrical interruption involves the continual expenditure of battery power. Another, entirely mechanical, approach involves pressurizing a shackle. A shackle is ideally a hardened steel bolt, manufactured to be hollow and filled with very high pressure air, and sealed. Any attempt to grind, cut, or break the shackle will release the pressure. The presence of pressure is monitored without expending electrical power as follows. A pressure-release valve on the end of the bolt is inserted into the SmartBox unit **100**, not unlike the valve on an automobile tire. The pressure is so high that the valve will not open even under the force of a spring-loaded pin in the SmartBox unit **100**. When the bolt is cut, however, the pressure is released and the spring-loaded pin can then move, actuating electrical contacts which wake up the SmartBox unit **100**. Unlike a tire valve, the valve contemplated here would be used only once and hence could be manufactured for zero leakage.

[0069] The RFID module **2040** may have active RFID capabilities in order to transmit status information of the SmartSeal unit **200** unit and/or associated SmartBox unit (including SmartSeal unit **200** and SmartBox identifier(s)), as well as receive instructions from an RFID reader device. There is an RFID antenna **2042** connected to the RFID module **2040**. As an example, the RFID module **2040** and antenna **2042** (as well as the RFID module **1060** and antenna **1062** in the SmartBox control device **1000**) may be embodied in a single chip or chipset solution, such as those available from Sokyman and other similar RFID chip manufacturers. Furthermore, the RFID module **2040** may read whether or not the SmartSeal unit **200** is connected to the SmartBox unit **100**.

[0070] The SmartBox unit **100** acts as a docking base for the SmartSeal unit **200**. The SmartSeal unit **200** mechanism of this invention is inserted into a receptacle integral with the SmartBox unit **100**. The battery power supply **240** in the SmartSeal unit **200** may recharge the batteries **1033** and/or **1039** in the SmartBox unit **100** when the SmartSeal unit **200** is connected to the SmartBox unit **100**. Furthermore, the battery power supply **240** in the SmartSeal unit **100** may serve

as the primary power source of the SmartBox unit **100** as well once the device **10** is armed, and until such time that the SmartSeal unit **200** is removed from the SmartBox unit **100**. The SmartBox unit **100** and the SmartSeal unit **200** may communicate with each other on a continuous basis and perform checks such as resistance continuity checking and SmartSeal unit **200** integrity.

[0071] In one embodiment, the SmartBox unit **100**/SmartSeal unit **200** unit (when connected to each other) may initiate the generation of two secret PINs using a random number generator process executed by the SmartBox system controller **1010**. One PIN may be assigned to Customs authorities for cargo inspection purposes. The other PIN may be assigned to owner or agent of cargo in the corresponding container; this PIN would be used to engage the release (disarm) function of the SmartSeal unit **200**. The PINs may be electronically and randomly generated and kept confidential. They would be sent only to the owner/agent of the cargo and can be used to issue a controlled authorized release of goods once they have received payment and/or upon arrival of cargo to the appropriate GPS coordinates.

[0072] The SmartSeal unit **200** physically activates the SmartBox unit **100**. As explained above, each SmartSeal unit **200** has a unique identifier stored in it that is read by the SmartBox unit **100** during the seal arming process. There may be different types of categories of SmartSeal units **200**, wherein each type of SmartSeal unit **200** performs specific functions and may be distinguished from other types of SmartSeal units by a color-coding scheme. The RAM module **2020** in the SmartSeal unit **200** stores data that identifies the type of SmartSeal unit **200** and the various functions which that type of SmartSeal unit **200** is programmed to perform at the time of manufacturing. For example, the four different types of SmartSeal units are as: (1) Shipping; (2) Empty Container; (3) Customs; and (5) Test.

[0073] The Shipping type SmartSeal unit may have a yellow coloring on a portion thereof and is configured to provide immediate notification of power-up, breach and authorized openings of the associated container. The Test type of SmartSeal unit may have a blue coloring on a portion thereof and is configured to perform diagnostic checks of the SmartBox unit **100** and to confirm a successful test by flashing the Status Ok LED on SmartBox unit **100**. The Customs type SmartSeal unit may have a red coloring on a portion thereof and is configured to allow re-sealing of a container after inspection by Customs authorities. The Empty Container SmartSeal unit may have a green color on a portion thereof and is configured to allow for an empty cargo container to be monitored while sitting idle or in motion.

[0074] Further, the SmartSeal unit **200** may have multiple identifiers. A first identifier is fixed and visible on the SmartSeal unit **200** and a second identifier the other is electronic (stored in the SmartSeal unit) and kept confidential. Other identifiers may be randomly generated for use by Customs authorities and in which case only the Customs authority have access to these identifiers.

[0075] An auxiliary locking mechanism may optionally be provided. This locking mechanism may comprise a steel bar locking device that secures the container door from unauthorized openings by controlling the spring-loaded release mechanically, based on customer's configured instructions. This locking mechanism is located inside of the back of the container door. In order to deactivate this device, one would need to be in the container to release the inner locking mechanism. The SmartBox unit **100** provides the signal to release the auxiliary locking mechanism.

[0076] One consideration is providing power to the SmartBox unit **100**, which is permanently or temporarily attached to a container, over the estimated eight-year life of the container. There are several potential sources of power for the SmartBox unit **100**. The preferred solution involves using multiple ones of these sources according to the container's environment and the ever-changing state of the art in battery technology. Examples of sources are non-rechargeable batteries in the SmartBox unit **100** with eight-year shelf lives; rechargeable batteries in the SmartBox unit **100** recharged by fresh batteries in each disposable SmartSeal unit **200**, a solar panel on or near the SmartBox unit **100** similar to those used on a calculator, power system of the ship, truck, crane or train transporting the container and/or a generator in the SmartBox unit **100** powered by the swaying and rocking motions imparted to the container by the ship, truck, crane or train transporting the container, similar to a "self-winding watch". With regard to "the self-winding watch" power recharging concept, it is noted that a container is not making money when it is stationary and therefore containers are in motion most of the time.

[0077] When the term "battery" is used in the singular herein, it is to be understood that multiple commercially battery units may actually be provided and connected in series, parallel, or through electronics (e.g. voltage regulator) in a given design. All battery units may not be the same type in order to achieve performance specifications not available from any single type. For example, the SmartSeal unit **200** may use four AA alkaline batteries and one AA Lithium battery. One battery type is capable of high peak power, whereas the other has higher total energy storage.

[0078] Still another consideration regarding power is conservation. Except for possible pressurization/evacuation of the container, the largest consumer of power is outgoing radio communication, particularly to a satellite communication system. Other communication modalities require less power. Thus, in one embodiment, the SmartBox unit **100** makes an intelligent selection of the communication modality. At any given time one or more modes may be unusable due to transmission conditions. The SmartBox unit **100** tries each communication modality in increasing order of power, but may alter that order based on additional knowledge. For example, when the container is at sea cellular telephone communications is unlikely to work. Using GPS information, the SmartBox unit **100** can reasonably estimate what modalities will be usable. Additionally, information may be downloaded to the SmartBox unit **100** to aid in the determination. In the hold of a ship, a local radio relay (if available) may be the only working modality. Further still, in the situation where there are multiple relatively closely located SmartBox units on containers, the SmartBox units may be operable as a so-called mesh network, where a SmartBox on one container exchanges information with a SmartBox on another container, and so on, until a path out to a useful communications modality is found.

[0079] Tamper sensors and GPS positioning are also consumers of power. The need for these activities varies with environment. For example, at sea the container is safest and thus the intrusion sensing functions and GPS fixes can be infrequent. Conversely, the container is least safe when it is parked in an isolated area. One important invention herein is the use of an accelerometer module **1090** in the SmartBox

unit **100** for multiple purposes. The accelerometer module **1090** can identify when the SmartBox (attached to a container) is absolutely stationary, whereas the rocking motions of boats, trucks, or trains each have unique acceleration signatures identifiable by data processing. The accelerometer module **1090** can also identify unauthorized moving of the container in a yard or dropping of the container.

[0080] In addition to GPS positioning, there are terrestrial means to provide or aid in location fixes, such as LORAN and WAAS and the SmartBox unit **100** may utilize these services if and as appropriate.

[0081] As is known in the art, radio communications is only as good as the antenna(s) used to transmit and receive signals. The SmartBox unit may employ multiple communication modalities, including but not limited to GPS, WAAS, LORAN, cellular radio, paging, two-way satellite, mesh networks, and local radio relay, as described above. The optimum antenna for each of these modalities is, in general, different. One option is to use separate commercially available antenna assemblies for each modality as shown in FIG. **5**. These antenna assemblies may include preamplifiers or other electronics associated with the antenna function. Alternatively, various antennas may share components and elements and be optimized for their environment. For example, the SmartSeal cable **210** (or a rigid bolt) may be used as an antenna or backup antenna for at least one communication modality.

[0082] Container Intrusion Sensors

[0083] Turning to FIG. **9**, a further embodiment of the invention is described. As explained above in connection with FIG. **7**, the SmartBox unit **100** may receive input from sensors mounted on or in the container to monitor for intrusions into the container. FIG. **9** more generally shows how any one or more of a plurality of intrusion container sensors **900**(**1**) to **900**(N) may be coupled to the container seal monitoring device **10** (SmartBox/SmartSeal combination) to monitor for intrusion of the container. The sensors **900**(**1**)-**900**(N) may be positioned to face inside the container to detect one or more of distance, temperature, humidity, biological hazards, nuclear radiation hazards, pressure, weight, acoustic energy (i.e., the acoustic couplers **1085** and **1086** shown in FIG. **7**), light (using photodetectors), impact (i.e., using the acoustic couplers **1085** and **1086**), etc. A number of sensory devices may be used for scintillation purposes when appropriate.

[0084] The sensors may also detect for an unacceptable condition that is not necessarily an intrusion per se. Examples of unacceptable conditions include, without limitation, the presence of a designated chemical substance (e.g. an explosive), excess temperature, or radioactivity within the container or an indication the container has been dropped.

[0085] Yet another adverse event is a breach of the container at a point other than its normal SmartSeal unit **200**, for example, by sawing or melting an unauthorized access hole into the container. Detection of unauthorized access holes is expected to be government mandated. Detecting unauthorized access holes may be achieved as follows:

[0086] Detection of unauthorized access holes by means of light. Shipping containers are typically light-tight except for the vents. If the vents are replaced with special light-excluding vents, the inside of the container becomes pitch-black. Highly sensitive semiconductor light sensors (photodiodes) are available that could detect such conditions. One or more such sensors would be mounted on the SmartBox unit **100** facing inward to the interior of the container. Light from the sun, moonlight, a streetlight, or small flashlight would render even a small hole detectable. Furthermore, the sensitivity spectrum of the photodiode could include the illuminators (infrared) of night-vision apparatus.

[0087] Detection of unauthorized access holes by means of conducted sound. Sawing, drilling, grinding, or even cutting torches create loud sounds carried throughout the container shell or wall are detected by one or both of the acoustic couplers **1085** and **1086** processed to detect vibrations indicative of a breach into the container. Miscellaneous objects, such as chains, normally hit container walls creating loud sounds in the shell. However the sounds they produce are of short duration compared to what is needed to make a hole. It is duration that would be the major discriminator against false alarms in the processor of the module **1080** in the SmartBox unit **100**.

[0088] Detection of unauthorized access holes by means of pressure changes. The inside of the container is maintained at a slight vacuum, e.g. 0.1 PSI below atmospheric pressure. A slight negative pressure can be maintained more easily than a positive one because container doors open outward and a negative pressure would therefore hold them tightly closed. Any attempt to make a hole in the container, even a relatively small one, will release the vacuum and trip a pressure-sensing alarm. This scheme involves modification to the container to prevent leakage. The container vents are replaced with vents that freely vent overpressure but do not vent underpressure until an underpressure threshold, for example 0.15 PSI, is reached. Containers currently have water-tight seals around the doors. Those seals are replaced with a more expensive air-tight seals that can withstand small dents without leaking. A pump within or controlled by the SmartBox unit **100** maintains the vacuum. Surprisingly little energy is required to do this, energy that can be supplied by battery. For example, lowering the pressure of a 40'×8'×8' container by 0.1 PSI requires removing only 17 cubic feet of air from the container at an energy cost of 170 Joules (ignoring pump inefficiency). One high-capacity D battery is rated at 80,000 Joules. How often this must be done depends on residual leakage and ambient temperature fluctuations.

[0089] The most likely time for tampering of the container is not on shipboard or in container docks or yards which are heavily guarded and monitored, and increasingly so. The greatest danger is when a container is at a remote location on land. One defense against this is the SmartBox unit **100** history log of GPS location, time, seal/unseal event with photographic imaging, unusual acceleration event, etc. This log maintained in the memory of the SmartBox and uploaded to the SmartCenter facility. The SmartCenter facility may also interrogate the SmartBox unit **100**, instruct it to change its behavior (e.g., take more frequent GPS fixes in a suspicious location) and download software updates to it.

[0090] FIG. **10** illustrates how the container seal device **10** is deployed for use according to an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. **10** shows a plurality of cargo containers **300** (**1**) to **300**(N). Each cargo container **300**(**1**) to **300**(N) has a door **302** that permits access to the contents of the container. The container seal device **10** is deployed on the outside wall of the (e.g., right) container door **302**. The SmartBox **100** is on the right door since the left door cannot be opened unless the right door is opened first. Mechanically, there are two plates welded to the left side of the right door that extend over the left door which prevent the left door from being opened unless the right door has opened a certain amount, e.g., 8-10

inches. Thus, one instance of the container seal system shown at **10**(**1**) is deployed on container **300**(**1**), and so on, up to an Nth instance of the container seal system shown at **10**(N) on container **300**(N). Each instance of the container seal system comprises a SmartBox unit **100** affixed (either permanently or temporarily) to the outside of a wall of a container and a SmartSeal unit **200**. The containers **300**(**1**) to **300**(N) may be transported on a transport vehicle (e.g., boat, plane, train, truck, etc.) together or separately. There are certain operational features of the container seal device **10** that can be achieved when there are multiple container seal systems **10**(**1**) to **10**(N) in proximity to each other as will be described hereinafter.

[0091] Referring now to FIGS. **11-14**, the physical steps of arming the container seal device **10** according to the embodiments of the present invention are now described. FIG. **11** shows that the SmartBox unit **100** is bolted to the outside of a container door wall **302** of a cargo container. It should be understood that the SmartBox unit **100** may be attached in other ways, such as by welding, screws, etc., and the mounting mechanism may permanently or temporarily (readily removable, but still secure) attach the SmartBox unit to the container door. The SmartBox unit **100** may be mounted at a position on the container door wall **302** between the door handle mechanism **310** comprising elongated bars **312**A and **312**B that pass through hinge brackets **314**. There are door handles **316**A and **316**B connected to elongated bars **312**A and **312**B, respectively. Door handle **316**A is used to rotate the elongated bar **312**A and door handle **316**B is used to rotate the elongated bar **312**B, and in so doing the container door **302** is opened (or closed). There is a hasp pair (loops or rings) **318**A associated with door handle **316**A and hasp pair **318**B associated with door handle **316**B. When the container door **302** is in a closed position as shown in FIG. **11**, the hasps in each hasp pair is aligned with each other. In FIG. **11**, the SmartBox unit **100** is ready to be armed. The door member **110** is opened, allowing access to the connection port **108** on the SmartBox unit **100**.

[0092] Referring now to FIG. **12**, with the container door **302** in the closed position, connector plug **202** of the SmartSeal unit **200** is inserted into the connection port **108** of the SmartBox unit **100** to establish an electrical connection between the SmartSeal unit **200** and the SmartBox **100**. Next, the distal end **214** of the cable **210** is inserted through the hasps of the hasp pair **318**B associated with door handle **316**B.

[0093] Turning to FIG. **13**, next the door member **110** of the SmartBox unit **100** is rotated downward to a closed position so that the protective cover **114** covers the housing unit **204** and connector plug **202** of the SmartSeal unit **200**. In the closed position, the bushings **116** on the arms of the door member **110** are aligned with holes on opposite sides of the housing **102** that provide access to the passageway **120**. The SmartBox unit **200** is now ready to receive the cable **210** of the SmartSeal unit **200**.

[0094] Moving now to FIG. **14**, the distal end **214** of the cable **210** is inserted through the bushing **116** on the right arm of the door member **110** and into a hole on the right side of the housing **102**. The cable **210** is pushed through the passageway until it comes out through the hole on the left side of the housing **102** and through the bushing **116** on the left arm of the door member **110**. The cable **210** cannot be pulled out of the SmartBox unit **100** without cutting it. That is, the cable **210** can be pulled further to the left through the passageway **120** of the SmartBox unit **100**, but cannot be pulled to the right out of the SmartBox unit **100**. Thus, at this point, if other conditions permit as described hereinafter, the container seal device **10** is armed. The container door **302** cannot be opened without rotating the door handle **316**B which would cause the cable **210** to be physically compromised or broken, causing the container seal device **10** to generate an alert as described further hereinafter. The one-way passageway **120** in the housing **102** will grip the cable **210** of the SmartSeal unit **200** unit and thereby prevent the door handle **316**B from being opened. In addition, the door member **110** cannot be lifted and rotated to an open position because the cable **210** passes through the bushings **116** on the arms of the door member **110**. Thus, if any of these operations are attempted with enough force, the cable **210** will break and the SmartBox unit **100** will detect that event and generate an alarm.

[0095] When a container **300** to which the container seal device **10** is deployed reaches its destination, or is inspected by a customs official, the container door **302** is opened by cutting the cable **210**, pulling one section of the cable **210** out of the container door hasps **318**B and the remaining section of the cable **210** out of one-way passageway **120** of the SmartBox unit. The door **302** may then be opened, door member **110** opened (rotated upward) thereby raising the protective cover **114** to remove and discard the remainder of disposable cable **210**.

[0096] Container Tracking and Monitoring

[0097] Turning to FIG. **15**, a cargo container monitoring and tracking system **20** is shown which employs one or several container seal systems **10**(**1**) to **10**(N), each for a corresponding cargo container. A SmartCenter administration facility **30** is provided that communicates with the container seal devices **10**(**1**) to **10**(N). The SmartCenter administration facility may comprise a computer, such as a personal computer (PC) or server computer and generally it is at a remote location from the container seal devices **10**(**1**) to **10**(N). Indeed, the SmartCenter facility **30** may be located any place where there is connectivity to the Internet. The SmartCenter facility **30** connects to the Internet **40** through any suitable network interface (not shown). Also connected to the Internet **40** are routing servers for one or more of cellular communications service provider **50**, two-way messaging communication service provider **60** (e.g., Blackberry™ or other comparable two-way email or messaging services) and satellite communications service provider **70**. The SmartCenter facility **30** may communicate with the container seal monitoring systems **10**(**1**) to **10**(N) through any one or more of the wireless communication services shown in FIG. **15**, or any other suitable wireless communication service now known or hereinafter developed. In addition, a customs authority facility (PC or server computer) **80** may communicate with data tracked by the SmartCenter administration facility **30** or directly with container seal systems **10**(**1**) to **10**(N).

[0098] The SmartCenter facility **30** executes a container monitoring software application that may be, in one embodiment, a web-based application. The container monitoring software allows an authorized end user to view, configure and analyze tracking and security components and store and/or retrieve this information from a central database. Using this application, an end-user can perform the functions including: purchasing hardware components, managing company information, setting up users and assigning them a function/security access level, tracking assets in containers, viewing security status of assets, generating reports, building customized

reports, building notification lists for breach and event triggered actions, assigning a broker or insurance agent, and submitting technical support questions. This software application may be designed with standard interfaces for customer use (where appropriate), and application use to interface with other software packages for security, encryption or mapping purposes.

[0099] In one embodiment, customers may log onto a website maintained by the SmartCenter facility **30** to gain controlled access to information pertaining to the customer's shipping containers. This is shown in FIG. **15** where a customer at a PC may log into a website maintained by the SmartCenter facility in order to access data pertaining to shipping containers that are being tracked by the SmartCenter facility. In this way, a customer may authorize the SmartCenter facility to send a command to a container seal device to disarm the device and thereby permit authorized access to one of the customer's shipping containers. Alternatively, the customer may select parameters under which the SmartCenter or the SmartBox itself will automatically disarm a container seal device, such as when the container seal device reports that it has been transported to a certain geographical location, etc.

[0100] As indicated above, the central monitoring software of the administration facility **30** stores data concerning cargo containers and their associated container seal systems in a central database. The central database may be a relational database that houses various tables of information containing tracking, security, user and company configured information. Tables may be related to one another using standard database techniques depending on the relationship—one to one, or one to many. Indexes, triggers and other standard database techniques may be used to partition data in such a way that customers will only see their own data. That is, the SmartCenter facility **30** stores data containing identifiers of the SmartBox units **100** and SmartSeal units **200**, and user party identifiers (customer identifiers) that are associated with certain SmartBox units and SmartSeal units.

[0101] Examples of data related to cargo and container seal systems that may be monitored, tracked and stored by the SmartCenter facility **30** include security status, GPS position, time and date, acceleration profiles, radioactive and nuclear matter integrity in real-time, etc.

[0102] With reference to the flow chart of FIGS. **16**A and **16**B, arming procedure **400** of the container seal device **10** is described. Some of the operations shown in FIGS. **16**A and **16**B are performed by a user and others are performed by the SmartBox system controller **1010** shown in FIGS. **5**. At **402** and **404**, the SmartBox unit **100** is attached to a door of a cargo container as described above in connection with FIG. **11**, if the SmartBox unit **100** is not already attached to the container door. At **406**, a user determines whether there are parts of a previously used SmartSeal unit **200** left behind in the SmartBox unit **100**. If so, then these parts are removed as indicated at **408** and **409**. Once any old SmartSeal unit parts are removed (if any), then at **410** a user lifts the protective door member **110** (FIGS. **1** and **11**) and inserts the connector **202** of a SmartSeal unit **200** into the SmartSeal connector of the SmartBox unit **100**. The user then closes the protective (security) door **110** at **412**. The protective door **110** will not close if the SmartSeal unit is not inserted properly. On the other hand, if the SmartSeal unit is inserted properly, the visual indicators **130** and **132** will both be blinking. At **414**, if a user determines that both visual indicators **130** and **132** are not blinking, then the process proceeds to **416** and **418** to resolve whether the cause is a bad SmartSeal unit **200** or a bad connection of the SmartSeal unit **200** into the SmartBox unit **200**.

[0103] Once a user determines that both visual indicators **130** and **132** are blinking, then at **420**, the SmartBox system controller in the SmartBox unit **100** logs the time that, and position (e.g., GPS position) where, the SmartSeal unit **200** was inserted. At this point, at **422** a user may close and latch the cargo container door when ready to seal the cargo container. At **424**, the user checks the SmartBox unit **100** to be sure the protective door **110** is completely closed and then at **426** the user feeds the free end of the SmartSeal cable **210** through the door latch hasp holes and then into the right hole into the one-way passageway (latch) **120** in the SmartBox unit **100** until the cable **210** sticks out a certain distance from the left hole of the one-way passageway **120**.

[0104] At **430**, the user determines whether only the visual indicator **130** is blinking. If so, then the SmartBox system controller in the SmartBox unit **100** logs the time and place associated with completion of the arming process. The SmartBox unit **100** transmits a message to the SmartCenter facility indicating the time and place associated with arming completion and the identifiers of the SmartBox unit **100** and SmartSeal unit **200** inserted therein. If at **430** the user determines that the visual indicator **130** is not blinking, then the SmartSeal unit is determined to be defective, counterfeit or otherwise improper and the cable **210** is cut and the process repeated from **406**.

[0105] Turning to FIGS. **17**A, **17**B and **17**C, monitoring operations shown at **500** performed by the SmartBox unit **100** once it is armed are now described. At **502** and **504**, the SmartBox maintains a low power mode until a SmartSeal unit **200** is inserted. At **510**, the SmartBox unit wakes up, configures itself and generates controls to the indicators **130** and **132** depending on authentication of the SmartSeal unit **200**, etc. At **512**, the SmartBox unit powers up the GPS module **1070** and determines its position (and/or the time) when the SmartSeal unit is inserted into the SmartSeal connector **108**, and logs this information in the memory **1020**. At **514**, the SmartBox waits for the end of the SmartSeal cable **210** to be inserted through the one-way passageway **120** and then verifies whether the end of the cable **210** inserted through the one-way passageway is a cable that belongs to the SmartSeal unit **200** which has been plugged into the connector **108**.

[0106] As shown at **516**, a predetermined period of time is allotted for determining whether the SmartBox is armed with the new SmartSeal unit **200** that has been inserted. If not, then the process proceeds to **518**, **520** and **522** until the SmartBox is armed. Once the SmartBox unit is armed, then at **530** the process proceeds where the SmartBox system controller **1010** controls the indicator **130** to blink for a period of time as stated at **530**. At **532**, the SmartBox logs the time and position of arming of the SmartBox and transmits an arming message to the SmartCenter administration facility. Power configuration of the SmartBox unit occurs at **534**.

[0107] At **536**, the power controller module **1030** selectively powers up the various sensors in modules **1080**, **1090** and **1100** to detect for motion, intrusion, and SmartSeal breach based on stored configuration parameters and battery levels.

[0108] When an alarm condition is detected at **540**, the nature of the alarm is determined at **542** and then one of the several actions at **550**, **552**, **554** and **556** are performed

depending on the nature of the alarm. Thereafter, at **560**, the module **1090** determines whether the SmartBox is on a ship and if so makes limited attempts to obtain a GPS position and transmit a message to the SmartCenter administration facility representative thereof.

[0109] At **580**, the system controller **1010** determines whether the SmartSeal cable has been cut. If the SmartSeal cable has been cut, the SmartBox goes into a disarmed state and then into a sleep mode after it transmits any pending messages to the SmartCenter.

[0110] If the SmartSeal cable has not been cut, then the process goes to **570** where the SmartBox unit goes into a power conservation mode, and thereafter to **536** for cycling through the various sensor functions.

[0111] Turning to FIGS. **18**A and **18**B, a procedure **600** is described for disarming an armed SmartBox unit **100**. Steps **610** and **612** are for the situation when the SmartBox unit **100** has suffered severe damage. Steps **614** and **616** deal with the situation when the SmartSeal cable **210** has already been cut. Steps **618** and **620** deal with the situation when the SmartSeal cable **210** has been damaged.

[0112] Assuming none of the situations above are present at the time it is desired to disarm the SmartBox unit **100**, at **622** the SmartSeal cable **210** is cut, for example, at approximately two inches below the protective cover **114** of the door member **110**. When the SmartSeal cable **210** is cut, the SmartBox controller **1010** will detect this event and control the visual indicator **132** on the SmartBox to start blinking (either at a fast rate or slow rate). At **624**, the user determines whether the visual indicator **132** is blinking fast or slow. If the indicator **132** is blinking fast, then at **626** the SmartBox unit **100** had detected an alarm condition such as an intrusion of the container, a tipping of the container, and shock to the container or damage to the SmartSeal cable of the SmartSeal unit **200**. As such, the contents of the cargo container are suspect. On the other hand, if the indicator **132** is blinking slowly, then at **628**, the SmartSeal unit has been disarmed (breached) normally and the contents of the cargo container are deemed to be secure.

[0113] Next, at **630**, the SmartBox unit **100** logs the time and place associated with disarming of the device **10** and transmits a message to the SmartCenter facility indicating that information together with the identifiers of the SmartBox unit **100** and SmartSeal unit **200**. The SmartBox system controller **1010** will control both indicators **130** and **132** to blink for a fixed period of time, e.g., one hour, after the successful transmission of the disarming confirmation message to the SmartCenter facility. Thus, if the SmartBox unit **100** was not able to successfully transmit the disarming confirmation message, the SmartBox unit will control only the indicator **132** to blink.

[0114] At **632**, the user determines whether both indicators **130** and **132** are blinking. If not, and only indicator **132** is blinking at **634**, then at **636** the SmartBox unit **100** was not able to successfully transmit the disarming confirmation message and will continue attempting to transmit the disarming confirmation message. The user may be instructed to move the SmartBox unit to a different position in order to transmit the disarming message.

[0115] If neither indicator is blinking as determined at **634**, then the SmartBox unit **100** is in a power conservation mode and the indicator **132** is controlled to blink at a very slow rate, e.g., once per hour.

[0116] When both indicators **130** and **132** are blinking (indicating a successful disarming confirmation message transmission), at **640** the user may pull the loose ends of the SmartSeal cable from the SmartBox and hasps of the cargo door and discard the SmartSeal unit **200**. At **642**, the cargo container door can then be opened. At this point, the SmartBox unit **100** is disarmed and ready for re-use with a new SmartSeal unit **200**.

[0117] Optional steps after the SmartSeal unit **200** is removed from the SmartBox **100** may be performed as shown at **644** and **646**.

[0118] Turning to FIGS. **19**A and **19**B, the operation **700** of the SmartBox unit **100** after it has been disarmed are now described. At **702** and **704**, the SmartBox unit **100** is still armed because the SmartSeal unit **200** is still engaged and the cable **210** has not been cut. However, once the SmartSeal cable has been cut and the SmartSeal unit removed from the SmartBox unit **100**, the SmartBox unit **100** determines whether all pending messages queued up by the SmartBox system controller **1010** have been successfully transmitted. If not, then attempts to transmit those messages are made at **708**.

[0119] Otherwise, if the SmartBox unit has successfully transmitted all of its pending messages, then at **710** the SmartBox unit enters or remains in the disarmed state or mode. At **712**, the SmartBox system controller **1010** configures the power control parameters of the SmartBox. Other communication and message warning parameters are set as well. At **714**, the SmartBox controller powers down the intrusion detection module **1080** and the SmartSeal receptacle and security controller **1100** until a SmartSeal unit **200** is inserted into the SmartBox **100**.

[0120] When a new SmartSeal unit **200** is inserted into the SmartBox **100** at **720**, the SmartBox system controller **1010** wakes up and performs various configuration and test tasks to prepare the SmartBox unit to become armed through the necessary action shown at **724** to ultimately enter the armed state or mode at **726**.

[0121] FIGS. **20**A, **20**B and **20**C shows a flow chart that depict operations **800** of the SmartCenter administration facility according to an embodiment of the present invention. At **802**, the SmartCenter receives messages from a container seal device **10** (SmartBox/SmartSeal combination) including arming status as well as GPS position and identifiers of the SmartBox and SmartSeal units. The SmartCenter then checks these identifiers against records in its data base to verify that the particular SmartBox and SmartSeal units are being used properly.

[0122] At **804** and **806**, if it is determined that the SmartBox and SmartSeal identifiers do not match data in the database as being associated with a customer account settings, etc., an alert message is sent to the customer to which those identifiers are assigned. The message may be sent by any of a variety of means including email, wireless messaging, telephone call, etc. A similar analysis is made at **808** and **810** with respect to the GPS position for the SmartBox and SmartSeal units.

[0123] At **812** it is determined whether the predetermined time period has expired before the SmartBox is armed and if so an alert message is sent to the customer at **814**. The SmartCenter will monitor for reception of an alarm message from the SmartBox unit at **816**.

[0124] At **820**, it is determined whether the SmartBox is armed and if not then at **822** an alert message is sent to the customer and at **824** only minimal functions can be performed with the SmartBox unit.

[0125] On the other hand, if the SmartCenter receives an arming message from the SmartBox is armed, then at **826** the SmartCenter sends an armed status message to the customer, At **828**, the SmartCenter may receive alarm messages from the SmartBox and if a message is received at **832**, then at **838** the SmartCenter sends an alert message to the customer. An optional feature is shown at **830** where the customer may send a "find me" command to the SmartCenter, after which the SmartCenter will send a "find me" command to the SmartBox to trigger the SmartBox indicators to blink for a certain period of time to assist a user in finding the SmartBox. If no alarm or exception message is received from the SmartBox, then normal status messages are received from the SmartBox at **834**, some of which may be relayed to the customer according to customer account settings.

[0126] When SmartSeal breach message is received from a SmartBox at **836**, the SmartCenter determines at **840** whether the breach is normal or expected. If the breach is normal or expected in terms of time and place of the breach, then at **842** the SmartCenter sends a status message to the customer and the SmartBox changes its status from armed to disarmed. If the breach is not normal or expected in terms of time and/or place of the breach, the SmartCenter performs some analysis as set forth at **844** and sends an alert message to the customer accordingly.

[0127] Next, at **845**, the SmartCenter will receive a disarmed beacon message from the SmartBox periodically after it has been disarmed. Thereafter, at **850**, the next message received from the SmartBox should be a SmartBox armed message. At **846**, an optional function may be performed whereby the SmartCenter sends a disarmed "quiet" instruction to the SmartBox to prevent it from sending a beacon message.

[0128] Possible Variations and Modifications to the Container Seal System

[0129] One alternative embodiment is for the disposable SmartSeal unit **200** to be a single unit comprising a hardened steel bolt or shaft (e.g., approximately 6" long) with a battery pack securely mounted to one end. The battery pack contains five AA-size batteries mounted around the end of the bolt. The SmartSeal unit **200** also contains an electrically readable ID number, also printed on its outside. To seal the container, the shipper holds the SmartSeal unit **200** by the battery-pack end in one hand and, in a single motion, passes the bolt through the hasps and handle on the container door and on into a protrusion from the SmartBox unit **100** until a positive "click" is felt. To remove the SmartSeal unit **200** and open the container, the hardened bolt is cut with bolt cutters between the hasps and the SmartBox unit **100** and the battery end discarded. The small remaining piece of the hardened bolt is flicked out with one finger and also discarded. The SmartBox unit is then ready to be sealed again as required. This embodiment may be simpler than existing, non-electronic, seals which come in two pieces and require two hands to join the two pieces.

[0130] Illustrative And Non-Limiting Example Of Use Of The Container Seal System

[0131] The following is a description of how this technology solutions described herein may apply in a real-world intermodal example.

[0132] A shipping line (such as Maersk and, NYK or CSX) or a container leasing company purchases and schedules installation of the SmartBox units **100** to its fleet of cargo containers. A field installation engineer installs the device by drilling any necessary holes in the container door, securing the SmartBox unit **100** to the container door with appropriate with give-away locking nuts, welding, or other tamper-resistant means. The SmartCenter administration facility activates the SmartBox unit **100** and builds the relationship of the SmartBox unit **100** and the container in the central database. If the container to be sealed is an empty container, then an Empty-type Smart Seal unit **200** is passed between the container door closure locking hasps and connected to the SmartBox unit **100**. The container is now tracked and secure. The container seal device **10** comprised of the SmartBox unit **100**/SmartSeal unit **200** sends notification of an armed container to the SmartCenter administration facility. The software at the SmartCenter facility issues the shipping line or leasing company a personal identification number (PIN) for control, armament, disarmament and data access. The shipping line can now access, monitor and insure their asset's security and monitoring information from any Internet-ready device by using a web browser to access the SmartCenter facility functions and enter their assigned user ID and PIN.

[0133] Next, a customer contacts the shipping line and indicates to the shipping line a need for movement of cargo. The shipping line user can log into the SmartCenter administration facility via the Internet and enter the GPS coordinates (or other geographical position identifier) of the customer's location, or instruct for the SmartCenter facility to send an alert message to the customer or trucking line to contact the shipping line upon arrival of the cargo at the customer's location. The shipping line loads a SmartBox unit **100**—equipped container with the desired cargo and inserts a SmartSeal unit **200** to the SmartBox unit **100** to seal the container. If the shipping vehicle is a truck, a SmartBox unit **100** may also be installed on the truck itself for tracking and monitoring purposes. The container is ultimately transported to the customer's designated delivery location for cargo loading. Upon arrival to the customer's delivery destination (also identified by the GPS coordinates or geographical position information supplied to the SmartCenter facility), the SmartCenter facility transmits a disarm message (described above) to the SmartBox unit **100**, which in response activates the indicator **130** on the SmartBox unit **100** to show that the SmartSeal unit **200** can be safely removed.

[0134] If an Empty-type SmartSeal unit **200** was used to seal the container for transport to the customer's designated location, then the SmartSeal unit **200** is removed (and in so doing destroying it) and the customer can then load their cargo into the container and reseal the container with a Shipping-type SmartSeal unit **200** unit and the SmartBox unit **100** on the container will send an "armed" notification back to the SmartCenter facility which is in response generates a new PIN and sends the new PIN to customer. The customer can then input new destination GPS coordinates for disarming of the SmartBox unit at the proper destination, and/or make additional manual arrangements with the receiver. The container then starts its journey to its destination using a best way of travel pre-negotiated by the customer and shipping line (rail, sea, air and/or truck).

[0135] On the other hand, if cargo was already loaded into the shipping container for delivery to the customer's designated destination, then a Shipping-type SmartSeal unit **200** would have been used with the SmartBox unit **100** to seal the container. The Shipping-type SmartSeal unit **200** is then disarmed subject to the container reaching the designated destination, etc.

[0136] Now assume a breach occurs during transport of the container due to an unauthorized party removing the SmartSeal unit **200** unit from the container. The SmartBox unit **100**, in response to detecting the breach, immediately activates the appropriate communication module to send a breach notification, GPS coordinates of the breach, and a date/time stamp to the SmartCenter facility. The software at the SmartCenter facility logs this information to its database and notifies the designated parties (i.e., employees of the shipping company) of the breach. The shipping company is then responsible for taking the appropriate action—including re-sealing the container with another Shipping-type SmartSeal unit **200** if the container is carrying cargo.

[0137] During the journey, the container may reach a Customs authority operation if the container crosses a country border, and the Customers authority may select the container for inspection. The Customs authority may communicate with the SmartCenter facility advising it that it wishes to disarm the SmartBox unit **100** on the container in order to inspect the container. The Customs authority will send an appropriate identification number that the SmartCenter evaluates and authorizes before permitting the disarming procedure. If the Customs authority identification number is authorized, the SmartCenter facility transmits a disarm message to the SmartBox unit **100** for storage in the non-volatile memory of the SmartBox unit **100**. In response to receiving the disarm message from the SmartCenter facility, the SmartBox unit **100** activates the indicator **130** for a period of time to indicate that the SmartSeal unit **200** can safely be removed. This disarming process is an example of an expected/normal disarming (authorized breach). When the Customs authority has completed its inspection, a new Customs-type SmartSeal unit **200** is connected to the SmartBox unit **100** and this information is once again logged in the database of the SmartCenter facility. The container then goes about its journey until it reaches the customer's designated destination (receiver location). The SmartBox unit **100** is disarmed upon reaching the proper destination similar to that described above.

[0138] Another way to arm and disarm a SmartBox unit is via the keypad **138** shown in FIG. **3**. A numeric (or alphanumeric) identifier (arming code) may be generated by the SmartCenter facility and transmitted (via the Internet) to an entity that is to arm a particular SmartBox unit **100**. In use, a person enters the arming code into keypad **138** (before or after) a SmartSeal unit **200** has been properly inserted and connected into the SmartBox unit **200**. The SmartCenter facility may generate the arming code such that it is unique to the particular SmartBox unit **100** and SmartSeal unit **200**, and cannot be used to arm any other units. Similarly, the SmartCenter facility may generate a disarming code that is transmitted to an entity that is to disarm a particular SmartBox unit **100** in order to gain authorized access to a container to which the SmartBox unit **100** is affixed. A person enters the disarming code into the keypad **138** (before or after) the cable **210** of the SmartSeal unit **200** is cut and removed from the SmartBox unit **200**. A disarming confirmation message is transmitted only if the proper disarming code was entered into the SmartBox unit to confirm an authorized disarm (breach). If no code is entered or an incorrect code is entered, then the SmartBox unit **100** would transmit an alert message to the SmartCenter facility indicating that an unauthorized breach has occurred by way of an incorrect or (no) disarming code.

[0139] The container seal device and container monitoring system described herein may support any industry or asset requiring security or logistics tracking. Complete installation of the container seal device takes less than a half hour. The installer may configure all permanent information such as container title, number, and all container specifications, as well as notification information. Once the container is loaded, it is secured using the SmartSeal unit and is ready to begin container tracking, monitoring security status, and controlling authorized access. Access to location information of a container is available at any time by accessing the SmartCenter administration facility.

[0140] The SmartBox unit stores data for all authorized openings (arm/disarm), breaches, other detected events, as well as location coordinates for several years worth of operation. This information is date and time stamped and the history is accessible to designated users by logging in the SmartCenter facility. In the event of catastrophic damage to the SmartBox unit, information which had not yet been transmitted to the SmartCenter may be recovered from the memory in the SmartBox unit.

[0141] This end-to-end solution provides many benefits for all types of users throughout the supply chain, such as:

[0142] Real-time container tracking. Track container(s) location and history of where the container is and has been at any time by web-based access to the SmartCenter facility.

[0143] Real-time security monitoring. Monitor the security status of container(s) at any time via the SmartCenter facility.

[0144] Real-time breach notification. Receive immediate digital notification of any breach or unauthorized activity.

[0145] Control authorized access. Disarm the SmartSeal unit **200** unit to allow authorized access to a container.

[0146] The system and methods described herein may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. The foregoing embodiments are therefore to be considered in all respects illustrative and not meant to be limiting.

What is claimed is:

1. A seal device for a shipping container, comprising:

a first unit that is affixed to a shipping container, the first unit containing a control system; and

a second unit that is configured to engage with an element of a door of a shipping container to which the first unit is affixed and to electrically connect with the control system in the first unit;

wherein the control system in the first unit is configured to detect a breach of the second unit indicative of access being made to the shipping container.

2. The device of claim **1**, wherein the first unit comprises an electrical connector and the second unit comprises an electrical connector that mates with the electrical connector of the first unit.

3. The device of claim **2**, wherein the control system of the first unit comprises a main controller that detects when the second unit is electrically connected to the first unit and establishes an armed state during which the main controller monitors conditions of the second unit to detect a breach of the second unit that is indicative of access to the shipping container to which the first unit is attached.

4. The device of claim **3**, wherein the second unit comprises a cable comprising a first end and a second end, wherein the first end of the cable is connected to the electrical connector of the second unit, and the first unit comprises a housing that contains the control system and comprises passageway that is configured to permit the second end of the cable to pass through but which prevents the cable from being

withdrawn from the passageway once it has been inserted without cutting the cable, and wherein the main controller establishes the armed state once the cable has been inserted into the passageway.

5. The device of claim **4**, wherein the cable comprises one or more conductors and/or optical fibers, and the main controller monitors the one or more conductors and/or optical fibers to detect when the cable is cut.

6. The device of claim **3**, wherein the control system of the first unit comprises global positioning system (GPS) device that receives global positioning signals in order to determine a position of the shipping container to which the first unit is affixed, and one or more communication modules capable of wireless communication for transmitting the position of the shipping container.

7. The device of claim **6**, and further comprising at least one sensor that is coupled to the main controller in the first unit and which detects a condition indicative of a intrusion into the shipping container.

8. The device of claim **6**, wherein the at least one sensor comprises an acoustic sensor that monitors vibrations in a wall of the shipping container.

9. A container monitoring system comprising an administration facility and the seal device of claim **6**, wherein the administration facility communicates with the seal device in order to track conditions of the seal device including the geographical position of the seal device and occurrence of a breach of the second unit during the armed state.

10. The system of claim **9**, wherein the main controller in the first unit generates a disarming confirmation message for transmission via one of the communication modules to the administration facility upon determining that the seal device has been breached at a geographical position where a breach of the seal device is authorized.

11. The system of claim **9**, wherein the administration facility transmits a disarm message to the first unit, and wherein the main controller of the first unit is responsive to the disarm message to activate a visual indicator on the first unit.

12. The system of claim **11**, wherein the memory of the second unit stores data indicating which of a plurality of function types the seal device is to perform when the second unit is electrically connected to the first unit, and wherein the main controller in the first unit generates one or more disarm identifiers for the seal device depending on the function type the seal device is configured to perform.

13. The device of claim **1**, wherein the second unit is configured for a single use and is disposable after the single use.

14. The device of claim **1**, and further comprising a digital camera coupled to the main controller of the first unit, wherein the digital camera is positioned in the first unit so as to capture images of a person attempting access into the container through the container door or interacting with the first unit or second unit.

15. An apparatus, comprising:

a housing unit that is configured to attach to a shipping container, wherein the housing unit contains a control system comprising one or more wireless communication modules;

a seal unit comprising an engaging member that is configured to engage with a portion of a door mechanism of a shipping container to which the housing unit housing is attached, and an electrical connector attached to the engaging element and configured to electrically connect to the control system in the housing unit;

wherein the control system in the control unit housing detects a breach of the seal unit that is indicative of access being made to the shipping container and transmits a message indicating the breach via the one or more wireless communication modules.

16. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the control system of the housing unit comprises a main controller that establishes an armed state when the seal unit electrically connects to the control unit and thereafter monitors conditions of the seal unit to detect a breach of the seal unit indicative of access to the shipping container.

17. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the seal unit comprises a power source that supplies electrical power to the control system when connected thereto.

18. The apparatus of claim **17**, wherein housing unit comprises a power source to power the control system when the seal unit is not electrically connected to the control system, and wherein the power source of the control system is rechargeable by said power source in the seal unit when the seal unit is electrically connected thereto.

19. An apparatus comprising:

first means for housing a control system and for attaching to a door of a shipping container, wherein the first means comprises means for determining a position of the first means and means for wireless communicating information stored in the control system of the first means to a remote location;

second means for engaging with an element of the door of a shipping container and for electrically connecting with the control system of the first means;

wherein the control system in the first means being configured to detect a breach of the second means indicative of access being the shipping container.

20. The apparatus of claim **19**, and further comprising means for sensing an intrusion into the shipping container, and wherein said control system generates a message for transmission to a remote location via said means for wireless communicating.

21. The apparatus of claim **19**, wherein said first means further comprises means for capturing a digital image outside of said first means of a person attempting access into the container or interacting with said apparatus.

22. The apparatus of claim **19**, wherein the second means comprises an elongated cable and one or more electrical conductors and/or optical fibers contained in the elongated cable, and wherein the control system monitors a signal representing a characteristic of the one or more electrical conductors and/or optical fibers to detect said beach.

23. The apparatus of claim **19**, wherein said control system stores an identifier assigned to said first means and said second means comprises a memory that stores an identifier assigned to said second means.

24. A container monitoring system comprising an administrative facility and the apparatus of claim **19**, wherein the administration facility communicates with the apparatus in order to track conditions of the apparatus including the geographical position of the apparatus and occurrence of said breach.

25. The system of claim **24**, wherein the administration facility stores data containing identifiers for the first means and for the second means, and user party identifiers that are associated with said identifiers for the first means and the second means.

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