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(54) **COMMUNICATION DEVICE WITH
MULTIPLE DETACHABLE
COMMUNICATION MODULES**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04M 1/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **455/575.2; 455/575.1;**
455/573

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 455/41.2,
455/41.3, 575.2, 575.1, 550.1, 557, 90.3,
455/572, 573

See application file for complete search history.

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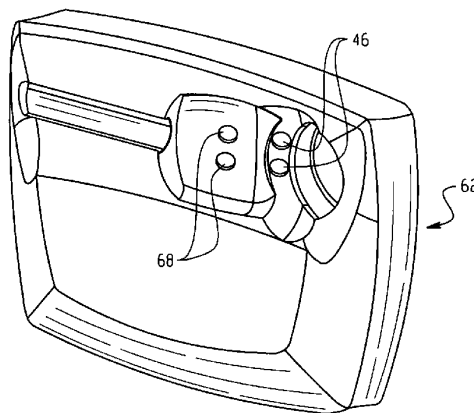
Primary Examiner—Lewis West

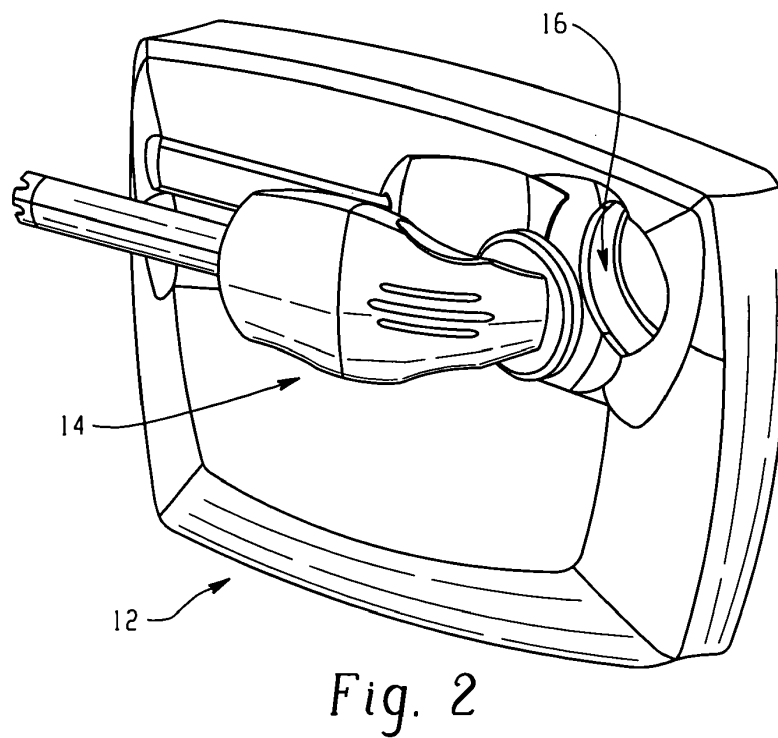
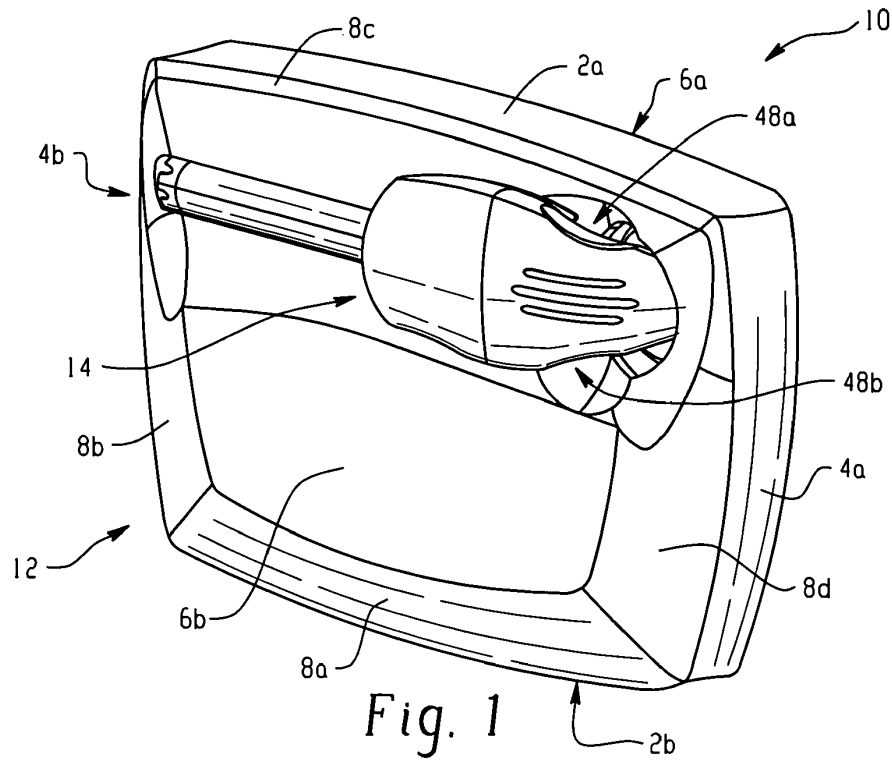
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A communication device having multiple detachable communication modules includes a first communication module and a second communication module. The first communication module is configured to receive RF signals from a wireless network. The second communication module may be physically attached to the first communication module and is coupled to the first communication module by a wireless link. The second communication module is configured to receive the RF signals from the first communication module over the wireless link and to convert the RF signals into an audible signal. In addition, the second communication module is physically dimensioned so that it may be fitted into or onto an ear of a communication device user.

8 Claims, 12 Drawing Sheets





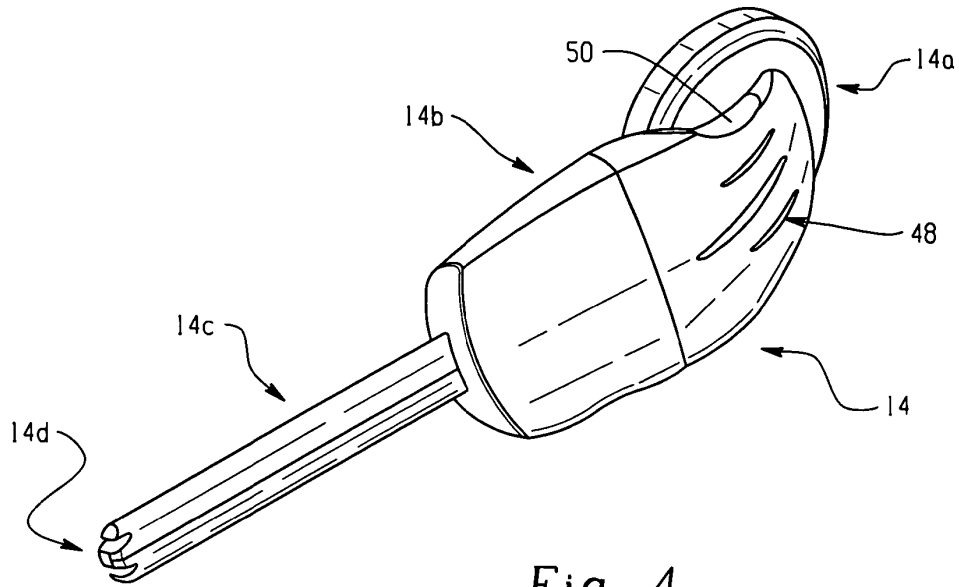


Fig. 4

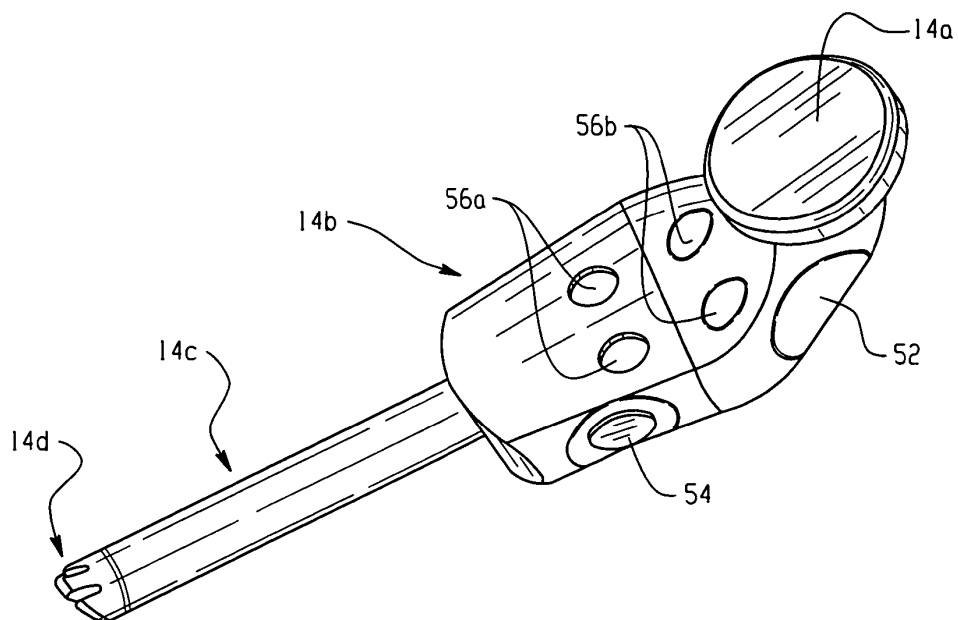


Fig. 5

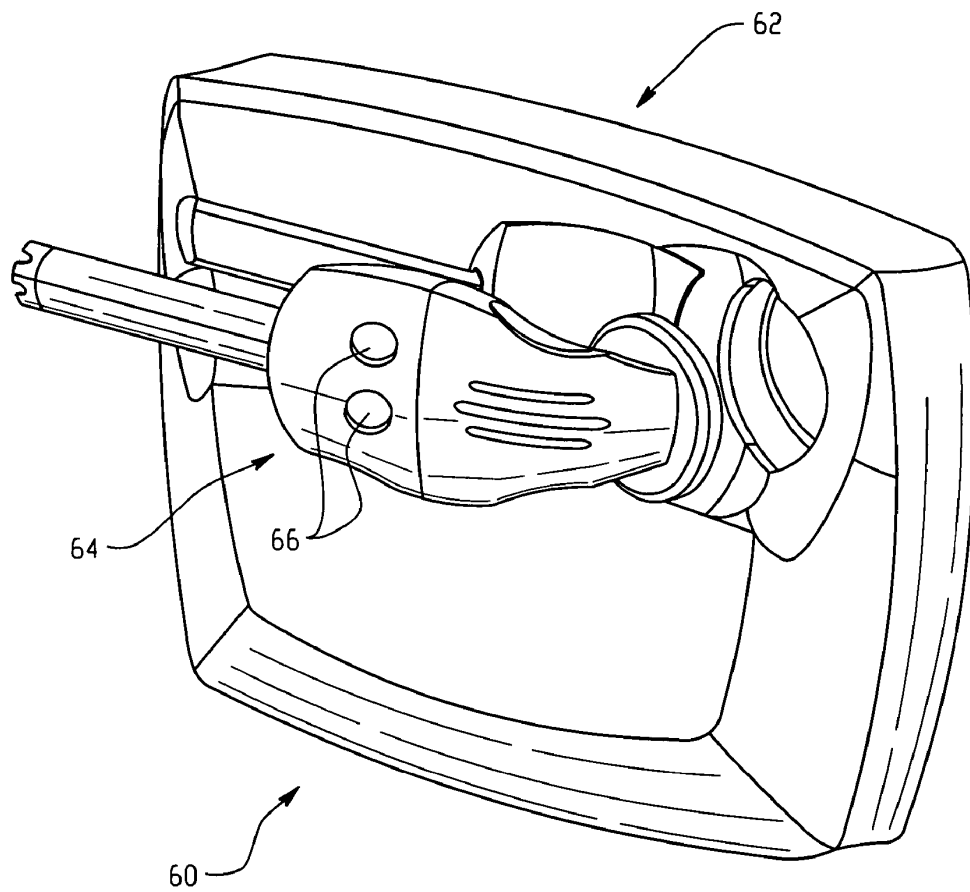


Fig. 6

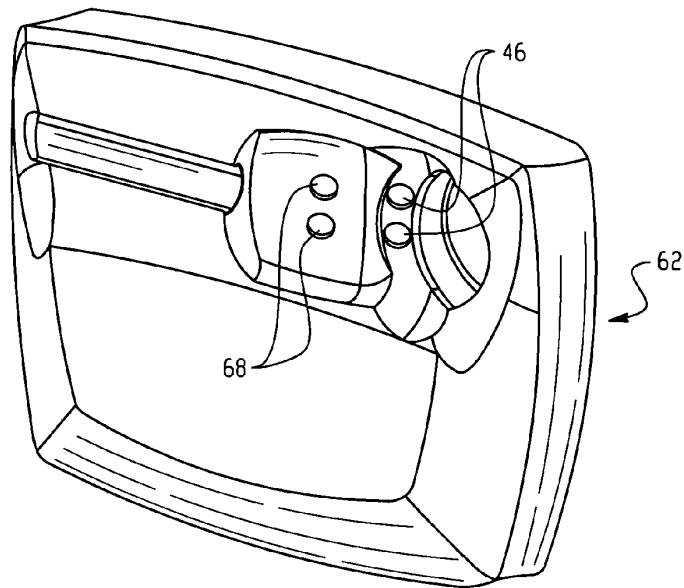


Fig. 7

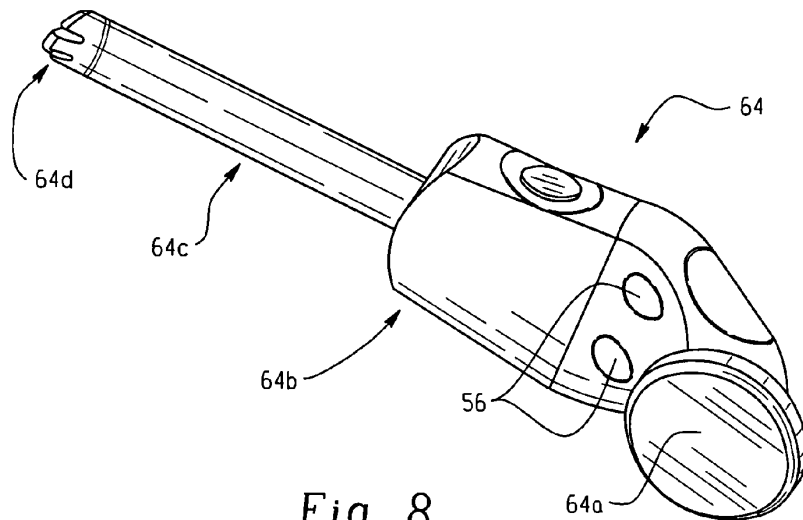


Fig. 8

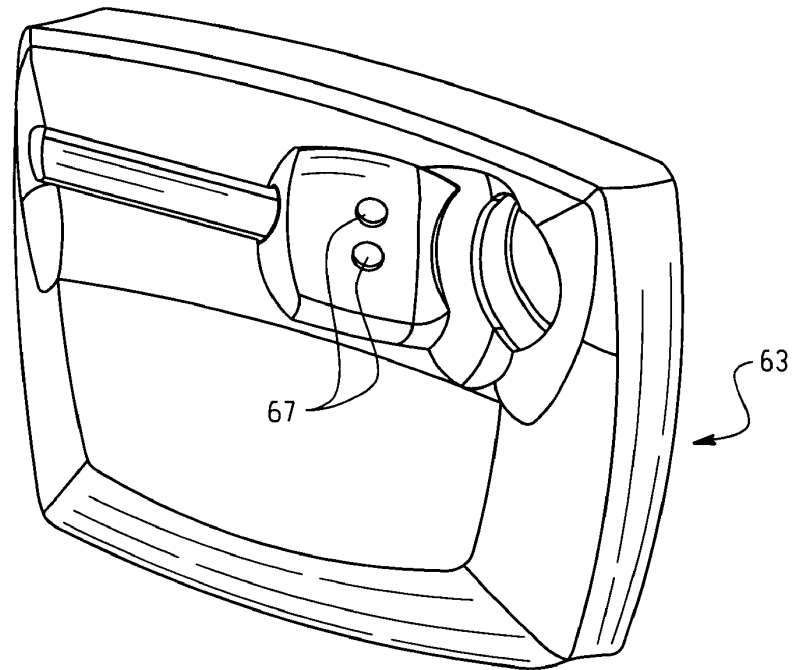


Fig. 9

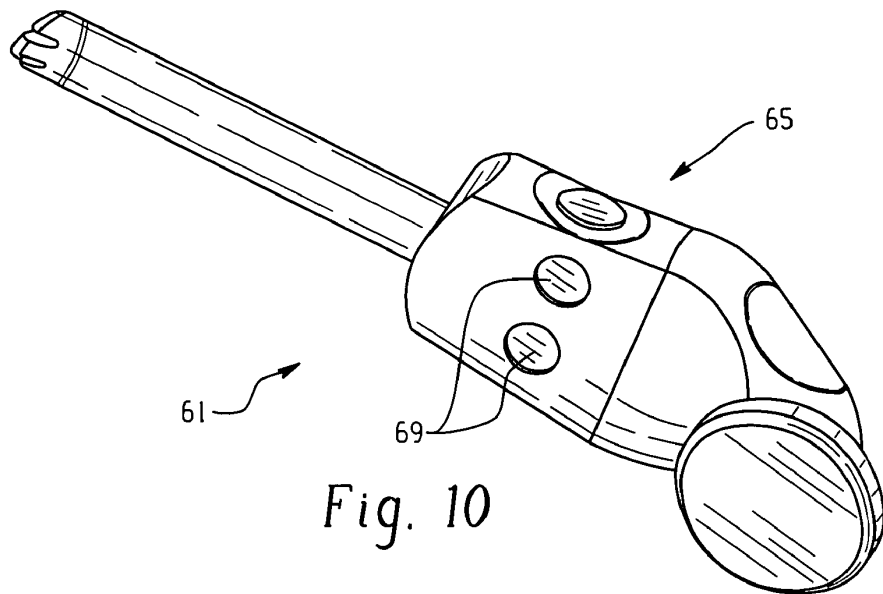


Fig. 10

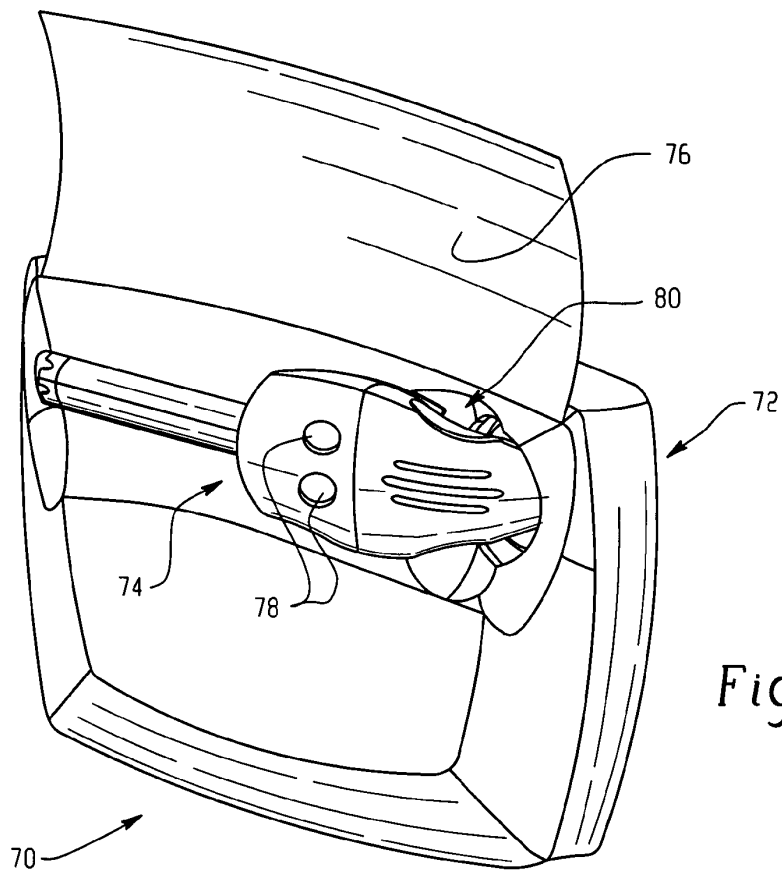


Fig. 11

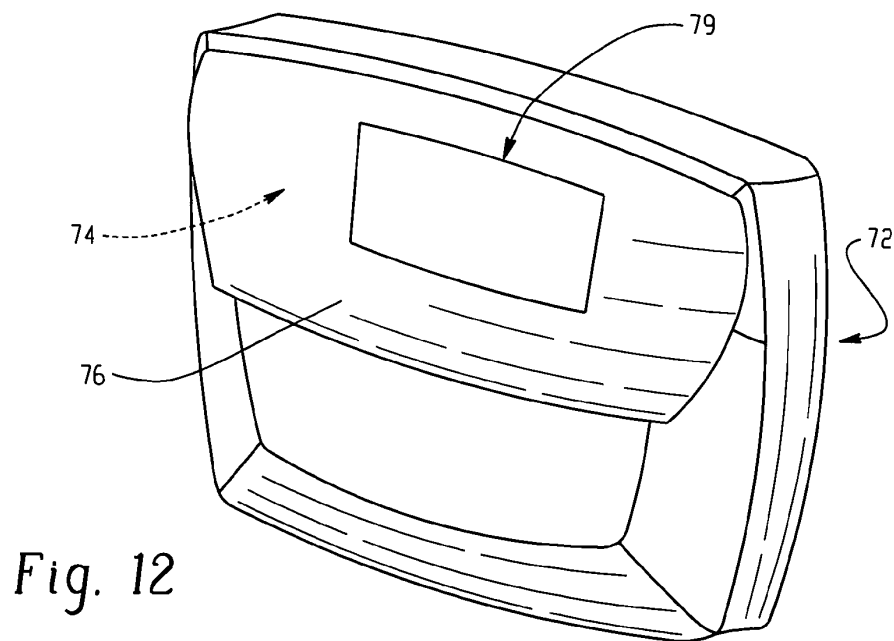


Fig. 12

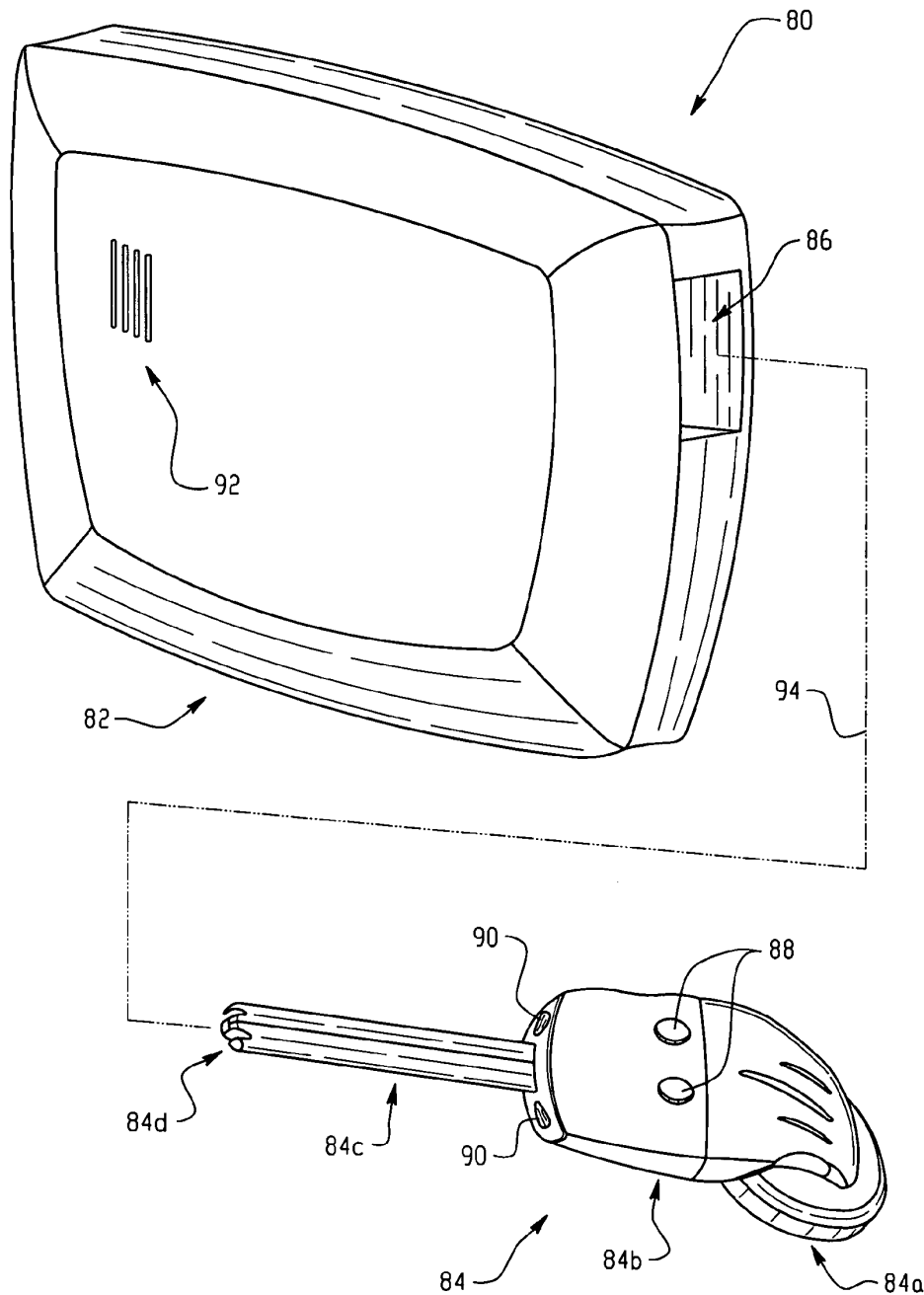
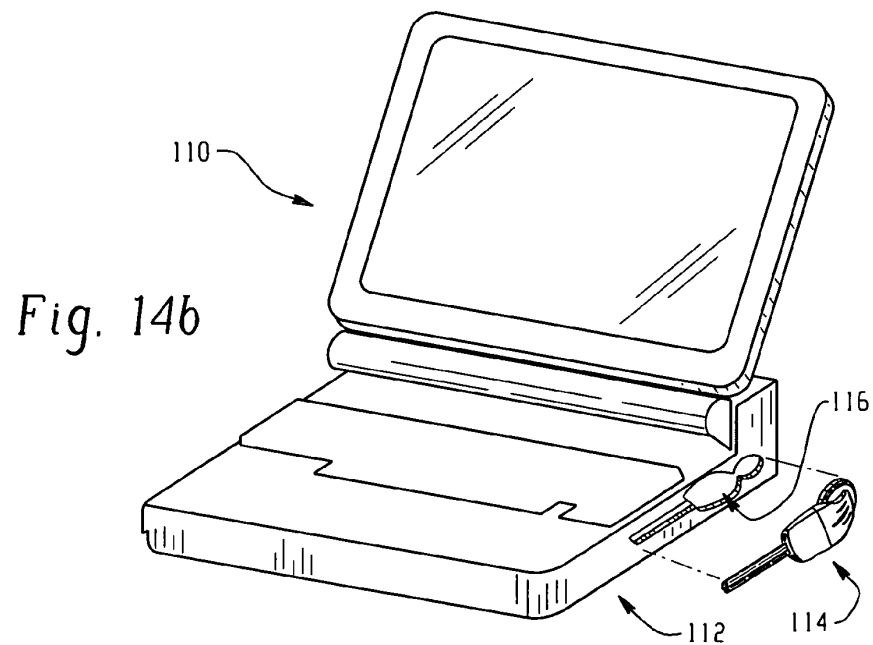
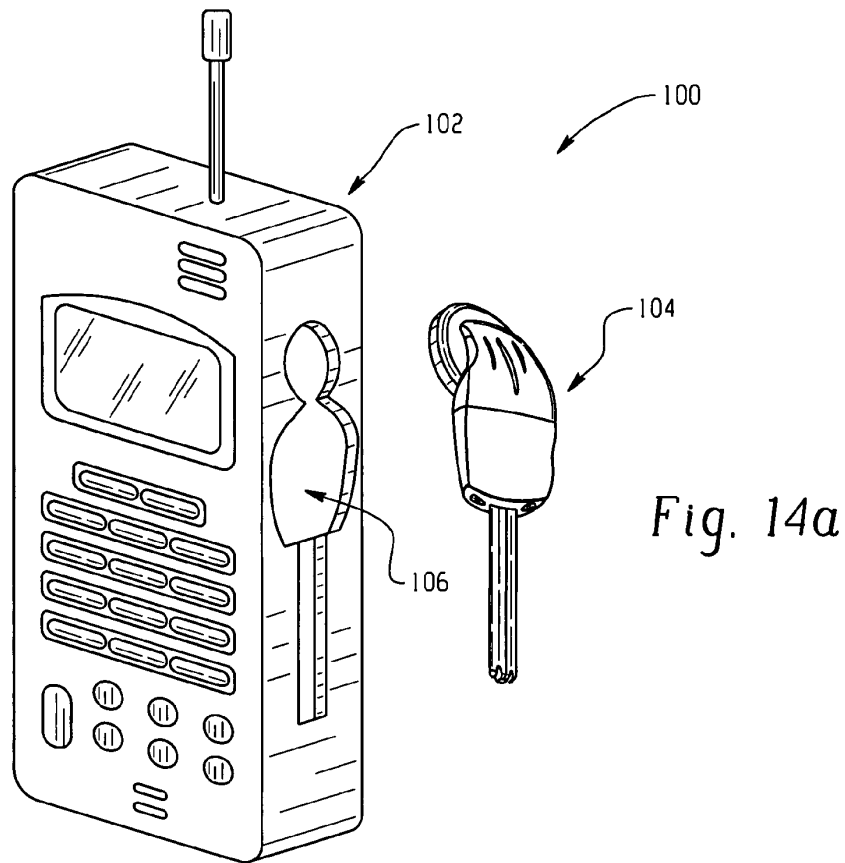


Fig. 13



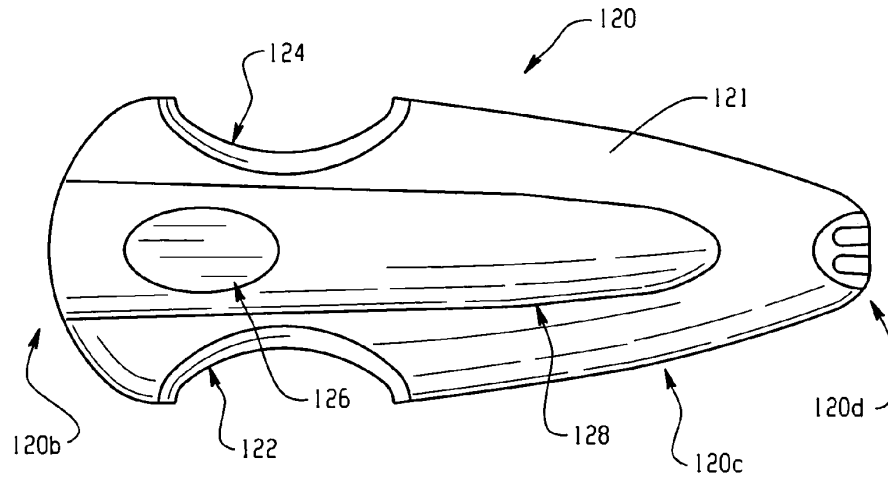


Fig. 15a

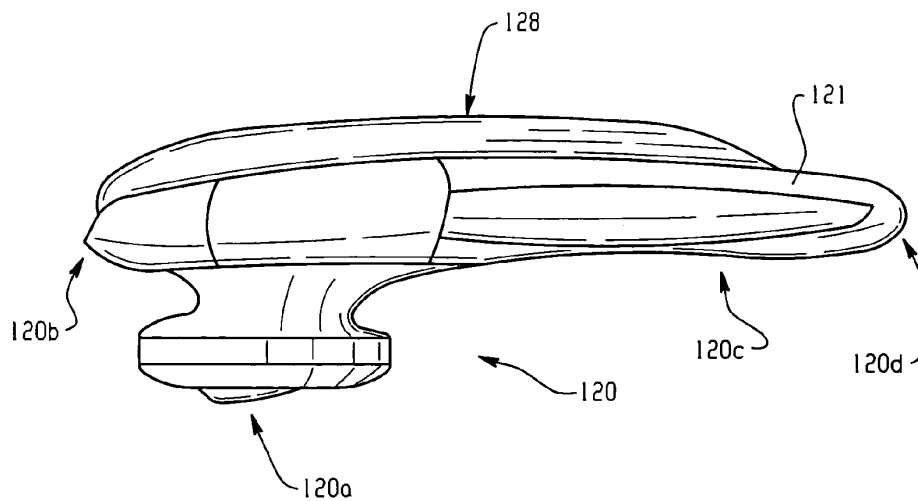


Fig. 15b

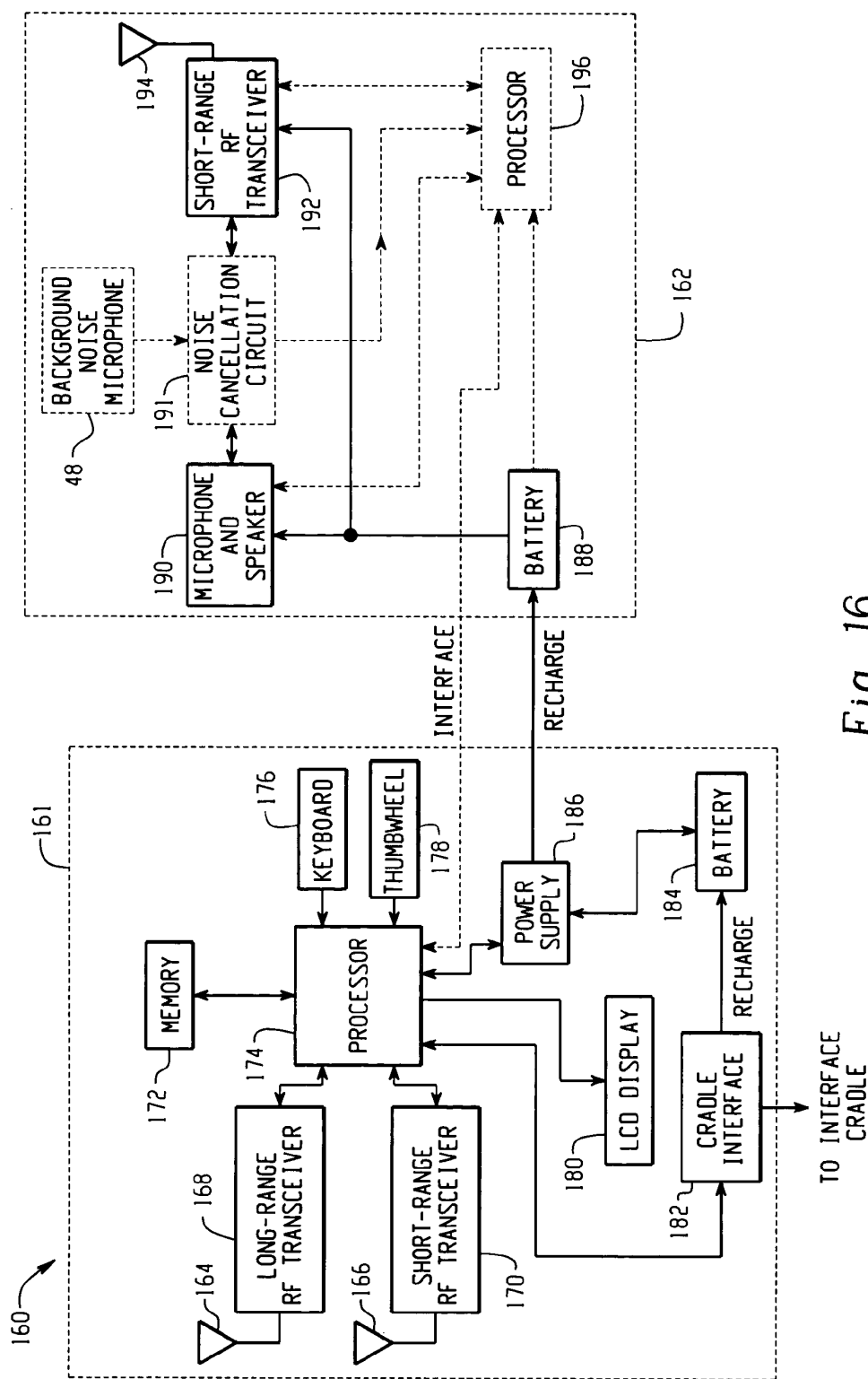
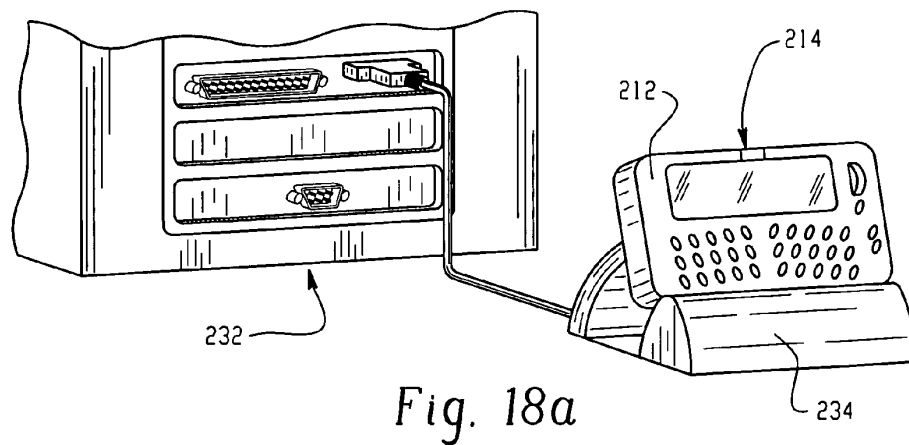
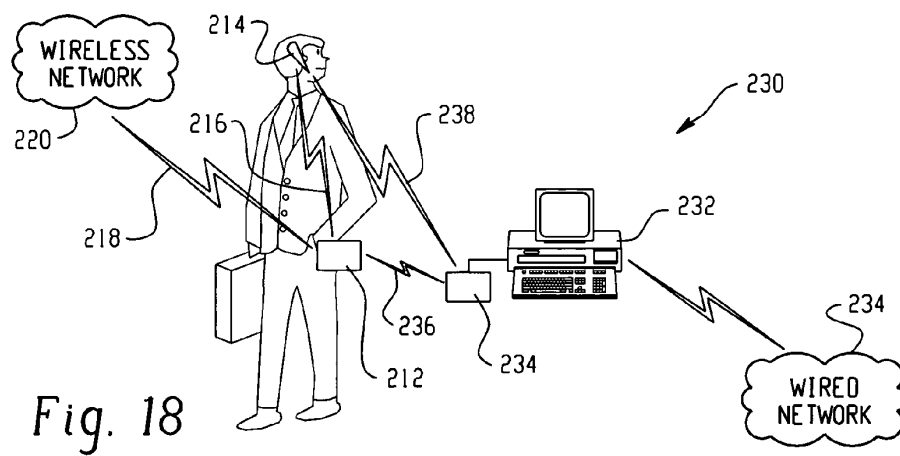
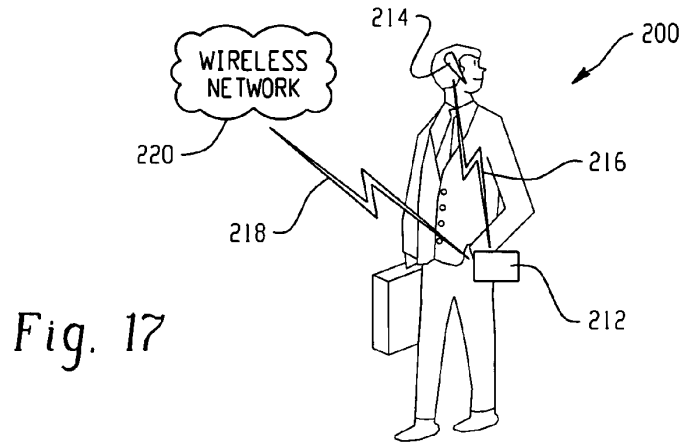


Fig. 16



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COMMUNICATION DEVICE WITH MULTIPLE DETACHABLE COMMUNICATION MODULES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims priority from and is related to the following prior application: "Communication Device With Multiple Detachable Communication Modules," U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/246,533, filed Nov. 7, 2000. This prior application, including the entire written description and drawing figures, is hereby incorporated into the present application by reference.

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to communication devices in general, and particularly to wireless communication devices having multiple detachable communication modules.

2. Description of the Related Art

There has been a proliferation of wireless mobile communication devices in recent years in the field of telecommunications. Devices such as cordless and cellular telephones, pagers, wireless modems, wireless email devices, personal digital assistants (PDAs) with communications functions, and other mobile communication devices are becoming commonplace. Known communication devices, however, are typically single-element or single-module designs. In order to enable hands-free operation of such single-module communication devices, specialized additional equipment is typically required. For example, a wired headset is often available for known communication devices that typically connects to the communication device through an electrical jack or plug. Another common hands-free accessory available for cellular telephones is a docking cradle, which is typically intending for mounting the communication device in a vehicle.

SUMMARY

A communication device having multiple detachable communication modules includes a first communication module and a second communication module. The first communication module is configured to receive RF signals from a wireless network. The second communication module may be physically attached to the first communication module and is coupled to the first communication module by a wireless link. The second communication module is configured to receive the RF signals from the first communication module over the wireless link and to convert the RF signals into an audible signal. In addition, the second communication module is physically dimensioned so that it may be fitted into or onto an ear of a communication device user.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a bottom perspective view of an exemplary communication device having a first communication module and a second detachable communication module for insertion into the communication device user's ear;

FIG. 2 is another bottom perspective view of the exemplary communication device shown in FIG. 1, in which the second communication module has been removed from the first communication module;

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FIG. 3 provides a more detailed view of the cavity in the housing of the first communication module;

FIG. 4 is a top perspective view of the second communication module shown in FIGS. 1 and 2;

FIG. 5 is a bottom perspective view of the second communication module that shows additional exemplary features, including a power switch and charging terminals;

FIG. 6 is a bottom perspective view of the communication device showing operative-mode connection terminals on the second communication module;

FIG. 7 is a bottom perspective view of the first communication module showing both operative-mode connection terminals and inoperative-mode connection terminals;

FIG. 8 is a bottom perspective view of the second communication module showing inoperative-mode connection terminals;

FIG. 9 is a bottom perspective view of the first communication module showing the multifunctional connection terminals;

FIG. 10 is a bottom perspective view of the second communication module showing a set of charging terminals;

FIG. 11 is a bottom perspective view of an exemplary communication device having a first and second communication module, in which the first communication module includes a protective movable door;

FIG. 12 shows a movable door that is molded or otherwise worked to bear an emblem, a logo, a user identifier or the like;

FIG. 13 shows another exemplary communication device in which a first communication module includes a substantially enclosed cavity into which a second communication module is mounted;

FIGS. 14a and 14b respectively show exemplary embodiments in which the first communication module is a cellular telephone and a laptop computer or PDA;

FIG. 15a shows a top perspective view of an alternative second communication module;

FIG. 15b shows a side perspective view of the alternative second communication module;

FIG. 16 is an exemplary electrical block diagram of the multi-module communication devices shown in FIGS. 1-15;

FIG. 17 illustrates one contemplated implementation of the communication device described above;

FIG. 18 illustrates a further embodiment of a communication device that includes wireless communication between the device modules and a third module, such as an RF interface cradle; and

FIG. 18a is a more detailed illustration of the third module shown in FIG. 18.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to the drawing figures, FIG. 1 is a bottom perspective view of an exemplary communication device 10 having a first communication module 12 and a second detachable communication module 14 for insertion into the communication device user's ear. The first communication module 12 includes a housing with substantially parallel and planar opposite top and bottom walls 2a and 2b, substantially parallel and planar opposite side walls 4a and 4b, and substantially parallel and planar opposite front and back walls 6a and 6b. The back wall 6b preferably includes beveled surfaces 8a-8d located along the edges where the back wall 6b adjoins the top, bottom and side walls 2a, 2b, 4a and 4b, but may also be planar, joining the top, bottom and side walls 2a, 2b, 4a and 4b at substantially right angles. The top wall 2a, bottom wall 2b and side walls 4a and 4b are

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preferably slightly curved, but may also be planar. The specific shapes of the housing walls are dependent upon the requirements of the first communication module 12, as will become apparent from the following description.

FIG. 2 is another bottom perspective view of the exemplary communication device 10 shown in FIG. 1, in which the second communication module 14 has been removed from the first communication module 12. The housing of the first communication module 12 preferably includes a cavity 16 in which the second communication module may be detachably mounted.

FIG. 3 provides a more detailed view of the cavity 16 in the housing of the first communication module 12. The cavity 16 preferably includes a plurality of subcavities that are shaped to accommodate the second communication module 12, each of which may be a different size, shape and depth. For instance, the exemplary cavity shown in FIG. 3 includes three subcavities: a substantially circular subcavity 18 having a first depth, a first rectangular cavity 20 having a second depth, and a second rectangular cavity 22 having a third depth. The cavity 16 also preferably includes a plurality of surfaces 24, 26b, 28 and 30 that provide smooth transitions between the subcavities 18, 20 and 22, and a plurality of surfaces 26a, 26c, 32, 34, 36a, 36b, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46a and 46b that are preferably contoured and sized primarily to produce a desired physical appearance when the second communication module 14 is mounted as in FIG. 1.

The surfaces of the cavity 16 preferably also provide for retention of the second communication module 14 within the cavity 16. Surfaces 36a and 36b and/or surfaces 46a and 46b may, for example, be contoured to engage the sides of the second communication module 14 in order to frictionally hold it within the cavity 16. In another embodiment, surfaces in or adjacent to the cavity 16 may include retention means, such as nubs or protrusions, that engage detents in corresponding parts of the second communication module 14, or vice versa, to detachably hold the second communication module 14 within the cavity 16. In yet another embodiment, other retention means, such as springs or otherwise elastically-biased protrusions or hooks, may be included on the first or second communication module that cooperate with appropriate mating retention means on the other of the first or second communication module. Alternatively, additional means to maintain the device in an assembled position, such as a movable clip arrangement, could be mounted on the first communication module 12.

In order to remove the second communication module 14 from the cavity 16, the surfaces 26a, 26b and 26c are preferably contoured to provide spaces 48a and 48b (shown in FIG. 1) that enable a communication device user to grasp the sides of the second communication module 14. In addition, the second communication module 14 preferably includes depressions 50 and 52 (shown in FIGS. 4 and 5) that enable the communication device user to easily grip the module 14 while it is within the cavity 16. Preferably, the retention means described above are adapted to apply sufficient force to retain the second communication module 14 in a mounted position, while allowing a communication device user to easily remove the second communication module 14 for use.

FIG. 4 is a top perspective view of the second communication module 14 shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. The second communication module 14 is preferably a voice communication device that includes a speaker 14a, a main body 14b, a boom 14c and a microphone 14d. Operationally, the speaker 14a is placed in the ear of a communication device user with the boom 14c extending towards the user's mouth.

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To avoid rotational movement of the second communication module 14 while the speaker 14a is in the user's ear, the center of gravity of the module 14 should preferably be as close to the speaker 14a as possible. Thus, any relatively heavy components located inside the main body portion 14b should preferably be located adjacent the speaker 14a. In this manner, moments about the speaker are minimized, and the second communication module 14 should remain substantially stationary while the speaker is in the communication device user's ear.

Optimally, the length of the boom portion 14c should be maximized such that the microphone 14d is located in the proximity of the communication device user's mouth when the module 14 is in use. The moment about the speaker 14a, however, increases in proportion to the length of the boom 14c. Thus, in order to maintain stability, the length of the boom 14c may not be sufficient to position the microphone 14d adjacent to a user's mouth. The microphone 14d will, therefore, likely receive not only a user's speech, but also undesired noise signals from a multitude of sources, such as other speakers in the vicinity or car engine noise. In order to reduce this background noise, the second communication module preferably includes a noise cancellation circuit with a background noise microphone 48 as shown in FIG. 4. The background noise microphone 48 preferably detects background noise signals which are then subtracted from the corrupted speech received by the microphone 14d in the noise cancellation circuit. In this manner, a higher quality speech signal is provided.

FIG. 5 is a bottom perspective view of the second communication module 14 that shows additional exemplary features, including a power switch 54 and charging terminals 56. The power switch 54 is preferably a pushbutton switch that turns the second communication module 14 on and off, enabling the communication device user to limit power consumption while the module 14 is not in use. In a preferred embodiment, the second communication module 14 is also configured to turn on automatically when removed from its assembled position within the first communication module 12, and to turn off automatically when replaced in its mounted position. In this preferred embodiment, the power switch 54 may be used to turn off the second communication module 13 without returning it to its mounted position. In other embodiments, the second communication module 14 may also include other switched functions, such as a mute function, controlled by one or more additional switches located on the first and/or second module. For example, a mute function may operate to disable the microphone 14d and the background noise microphone 48 without ending a communication function such as a voice call.

The charging terminals 56 on the second communication module 14 preferably mate with corresponding charging terminals 46 on the first communication module 12 shown in FIG. 3. Also shown in FIGS. 3 and 5 are alternative locations 46a and 56a for the respective charging terminals. The second communication module 14 preferably includes a rechargeable power source that is recharged by the first communication module 12 through the charging terminals 46 and 56 while the second communication module is in its fully mounted position as shown in FIG. 1. The charging terminals 46 on the first communication module 12 are preferably coupled to an internal power source through appropriate conversion and control circuitry in order to provide a charge to an additional power source in the second communication module.

In addition, the charging terminals 46 and 56 preferably include appropriate structures or arrangements to prevent

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discharging of the respective power sources or damage to internal components caused by external contact with the terminals. For example, the charging terminals 56 may be recessed below the surface of the main body 14b of the second communication module 14 in order to reduce the likelihood of external contact with the charging terminals 56, resulting in a short-circuit. In such an embodiment, the charging terminals 46 on the first communication module 12 may protrude from the surface 26b in order to make contact with recessed charging terminals 56 in the second communication module 14.

With reference to FIG. 3, the first communication module 12 may include either a non-rechargeable power source such as one or more alkaline batteries, or a rechargeable source. In devices where the first communication module 12 includes a rechargeable power supply, the power supply is preferably recharged through an operative connection to a recharging device, such as a cradle or holding unit. The device 10 could also be adapted to receive a connector jack or plug from a more common wall-mounted type charger device.

With reference again to FIG. 5, the second communication module 14 preferably includes a rechargeable power source that is charged through the recharging terminals 46 and 56 described above. It should be understood, however, that the second communication module 14 may alternatively include a single use power source, such as a non-rechargeable battery, making charging terminals 46 and 56 unnecessary.

FIGS. 6-8 show an alternative communication device 60 embodiment in which a second communication module 64 may be mounted to a first communication module 62 in either an operative or inoperative position. FIG. 6 is a bottom perspective view of the communication device 60 showing operative-mode connection terminals 66 on the second communication module 64. FIG. 7 is a bottom perspective view of the first communication module 62 showing both operative-mode connection terminals 68 and inoperative-mode connection terminals 46. FIG. 8 is a bottom perspective view of the second communication module 64 showing inoperative-mode connection terminals 56.

When the second communication module 64 is mounted in an inoperative assembled position, the inoperative-mode terminals 46 in the first communication module 62 are electrically connected with the inoperative-mode terminals 56 on a front wall 64b of the second communication module 64, as shown in FIG. 8. In the inoperative assembled position, the inoperative-mode terminals 46 and 56 preferably operate as described above to charge a power source in the second communication module 64.

When the second communication module 64 is mounted in an operative assembled position, the operative-mode connection terminals 68 in the cavity of the first communication module 62, shown in FIG. 7, are electrically connected with the operative-mode connection terminals 66 on a back wall of a main body portion of the second communication module 64 shown in FIG. 6. In this operative assembled position, the speaker 64a and microphone 64d, shown in FIG. 8 face away from the cavity and are accessible for use by a user of the communication device. In addition, the operative-mode terminals 66 and 68 provide for simultaneous charging and use of the second communication module 64. For instance, the operative-mode terminals 66 and 68 may provide for operation of the second communication module 64 from the power source of the first communication module 62, while simultaneously charging the power source of the second communication module 64.

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The operative assembled position of the second communication module 64 thus provides for use of the second communication module 64 when its power source is incapable of supplying sufficient power, and thereby avoids recharge down time.

Any of the retaining means discussed above could be used to mount the second module 64 in the operative position. For example, a friction fit between the main body 64b of the second communication module 64 and the corresponding cavity in the first communication module 62 will preferably retain the second module 64 in its assembled inoperative position. The main body 64b, or at least a part thereof, could then be fabricated such that the back portion, in which terminals 66 are positioned, and the front portion are substantially symmetric. The second communication module 64 may then be retained in either its operative or inoperative assembled position within the cavity in the first communication module 62. A similar arrangement could alternatively be implemented based on friction fit retention of the boom portion 64c of the second communication module 64.

FIGS. 9 and 10 show another embodiment 61 of a communication device in which a second communication module 65 may be mounted to a first communication module 63 in either an operative or inoperative position, and the first communication module 63 utilizes only one set of multifunctional connection terminals 67. FIG. 9 is a bottom perspective view of the first communication module 63 showing the multifunctional connection terminals 67. FIG. 10 is a bottom perspective view of the second communication module 65 showing a set of charging terminals 69. One function of the connection terminals 67 on the first communication module 63 may be to cooperate with the charging terminals 69 positioned on the second communication module 65 in order to supply power to a rechargeable power source in the second communication module 65 while it is mounted in the inoperative position. In addition, the multifunctional connection terminals 67 may also contact a second set of terminals on the top face of the second communication module 65 (as shown in FIG. 6) when the second communication module 65 is mounted in its operative assembled position. The multifunctional connection terminals 67 may then provide for simultaneous charging and use of the second communication module 65 while it is mounted in its operative position.

FIG. 11 is a bottom perspective view of an exemplary communication device 70 having a first and second communication module 72 and 74, in which the first communication module includes a protective movable door 76. The protective movable door 76 is preferably fabricated from the same or similar material as the housing of the first communication module 72, and is positioned on a surface adjacent the cavity in which the second communication module 74 is mounted in its inoperative assembled position. The door 76 is normally in a closed position protecting the second communication module 74 and connection terminals 78 (if present), and is movable to allow detachment of the second communication module 74 from the first communication module 72. Then, when the second communication module 74 is detached from the first communication module 72, the door 76 may be moved to its closed position to substantially cover the cavity 80 in the first communication module 72.

The door 76 may be attached to the first communication module 72 through any appropriate hinge arrangement, and is preferably biased toward its open and closed positions. For instance, if an over-center spring or elastic biasing hinge arrangement is utilized, the door 76 is preferably biased toward its open position when the door 76 is opened beyond

some point in its range of motion, and is otherwise biased toward its closed position. In addition, the door **76** may also include a fastening means or locking mechanism for maintaining the door in its closed position. Other specific ranges of motion are also contemplated in accordance with this aspect of the invention, including but not limited to a downwardly or sideways swinging door or a similar sliding door or covering panel.

Although intended primarily for protecting the second module **74** when it is mounted on the first module **72**, the door **76** may also serve a decorative purpose. If fabricated from the same material as the housing of the first module **72**, which is typically opaque, the door may, for example, be molded or otherwise worked to bear an emblem, a logo, a user identifier or the like, as shown at **79** in FIG. **12**. Alternatively, the door **76** may be fabricated from a transparent material and adapted to receive a decorative member such as a photograph, allowing a user to customize the appearance of the communication device according to personal taste and preference.

FIG. **13** shows another exemplary communication device **80** in which a first communication module **82** includes a substantially enclosed cavity **86** into which a second communication module **84** is mounted. Preferably, the second communication module **84** is mounted by sliding it into the cavity **86** in a direction indicated by the dotted line **94**. The first communication module **82** and second communication module **84** preferably include suitable retaining means for removably holding the second communication module **84** within the cavity **86**.

The communication modules **82** and **84** may be adapted for operation in accordance with any of the embodiments described above. For instance, if the device **80** provides for an operative assembled position of the second communication module **13**, then an opening **92**, preferably comprising a series of slits as shown in FIG. **13**, may be provided at an appropriate position in a wall of the housing of first communication module **82**. Preferably, the slits are positioned to correspond to the position of a microphone **84d** when the second communication module **84** is in its operative assembled position. Depending on the particular operative assembled position of the second communication module **84**, a further opening similar to opening **92** could be provided for a speaker **84a**. Alternatively, the operative assembled position could be designed such that the speaker **84a** remains outside the cavity **86**.

In addition, a set of contact terminals **88** on the second communication module **84** may cooperate with suitably located terminals inside cavity **86** to provide for recharging of a power source in the second module **84** and/or powering the second module **84** from the power source in the first module **82**. In an alternative embodiment, a set of female terminals **90** may be located at a bottom edge of the main body **84b** of the second communication module **84** that engage and electrically connect to corresponding male terminals inside the cavity **86**.

Each of the above exemplary embodiments include a general first communication module. This first communication module may, for example be a handheld electronic device as disclosed in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/106,585, which is hereby incorporated into the present Application by reference. It should be understood, however, that the first communication module is not limited to such a handheld electronic device. For instance, FIGS. **14a** and **14b** respectively show exemplary embodiments **100** and **110** in which the first communication module is a cellular telephone **102** and a laptop computer or PDA **112**. In FIG. **14a**,

a second communication module **104** is removably assembled in a cavity **106** in the cellular telephone **102**. Similarly, the laptop computer or PDA **112** shown in FIG. **14b** includes a mounting location **116** in which a second communication module **114** may be attached. Any of the above terminal and mounting arrangements, including, for example, a protective door or an enclosed cavity in which the second communication modules **104** or **114** would be slidably mounted, are also contemplated for the devices **100** and **110**.

FIGS. **15a** and **15b** show one alternative design **120** for the second communication module. FIG. **15a** shows a top perspective view of the alternative second communication module **120**. FIG. **15b** shows a side perspective view of the alternative second communication module **120**. The alternative communication module **120** preferably includes a housing **128**, a speaker **120a**, a microphone **120d** and a switch **126**. The housing **121** preferably includes a substantially oval-shaped top profile, and indentations **122** and **124** that define handles by which a user may grasp and hold the second communication module **120**. In addition, the housing **121** preferably has a main body portion with two sections: an upper section **120b** that lies substantially to one side of the speaker **120a**; and a lower section **120c** that lies substantially on the opposite side of the speaker **120a**. The microphone **120d** is preferably located at a distal end of the lower section **120c**. The switch **126** is preferably located on a top portion of the housing **121** and operates similarly to the switch **54** shown in FIG. **5**. The module may also include an additional microphone adapted to receive background noise for use in executing noise cancellation operations for the desired but corrupted voice or audio signals received at microphone **120d**.

Like the second communication modules described above, the alternative module **120** communicates via a wireless link with an associated first communication module and is designed to provide for hands-free operation. The speaker **120a** is placed in a user's ear such that body section **120c** and thus microphone **120d** extend toward the user's mouth. Extension of the upper and lower main body sections **120b** and **120c** on opposite sides of the speaker **120a** allows for effective weight balancing. A further feature of the alternative second communication module **120** involves a raised portion **128** that overlies the upper and lower main body sections **120b** and **120c**. The raised portion **128** is preferably a removable cover member that provides simple access to manufacturer-selected internal components, such as a single-use replaceable battery, for service or installation by a user.

FIG. **16** is an exemplary electrical block diagram **160** of the multi-module communication devices shown in FIGS. **1-15**. Another type of communication device that could be modified for use with this system is described in co-pending U.S. patent applications Ser. Nos. 09/106,585, 09/344,432, 09/543,231, 09/634,774 and 09/663,972. These applications, which are co-owned with the present application, are hereby incorporated herein by reference. The communication devices described in these applications include only a single wireless RF component for communicating over a single communication path to a long-range wireless network. The devices shown in FIGS. **1-15** are similar to these devices in that they can communicate over a long-range wireless network, but also preferably include an RF interface for communicating over a short-range wireless network or link.

The communication devices **160** shown in FIGS. **1-15** preferably comprise a first communication module **161** and a second communication module **162**. The first communi-

cation module **161** preferably includes a pair of antennas **164, 166** (although a single antenna structure could be used), a processor **174**, a memory **172**, an LCD display **180**, at least one rechargeable battery **184**, a long-range RF transceiver **168**, one or more short-range RF transceivers **170**, a power supply and recharging circuit **186**, a cradle interface circuit **182**, and one or more input devices, including, preferably, a keyboard **176** such as described in the above mentioned co-pending applications and a thumbwheel **178**. The first communication module **161** may also include a pressure-sensitive writing tablet.

The input devices **176, 178** on the first communication module **161** are preferably used to respond to and generate messages, such as email messages. The first communication module **161** preferably interfaces with a belt-worn holster for receiving the first communication module **161** and securing it to a user's belt. The long-range RF transceiver **168** is used to send and receive information from the long-range wireless network, and the one or more short-range RF transceivers **170** are used to send and receive information from the second communication module **162**, and possibly from other local devices such as an RF interface cradle.

The second communication module **162** is preferably an RF-enabled ear-piece that may be connected to (both mechanically and electrically) the first communication module **161** as described above. The second communication module **162** preferably includes a microphone and a speaker **190**, a short-range wireless transceiver **192**, an antenna **194**, a rechargeable battery **188**, and possibly an integral processor **196**. The second communication module **162** may also include a background noise microphone **48** and a noise cancellation circuit **191** as described above with reference to FIG. 4. When the second communication module **162** is placed into the first communication module **161**, a shared secret can be exchanged between the two wireless components of the communication device **160** so that any communications between the first and second communication modules **161/162** may be encrypted. Also, the rechargeable battery **188** of the second module **162** may be recharged by the battery **184** of the first communication module **161** through power supply recharging circuitry **186** when the two modules are in electrical contact.

In other embodiments, the communication device **160** may include a camera component for displaying or sending video images to the communication device user, or could include sensory circuits for monitoring the communication device user's vital information such as pulse and blood pressure. In these embodiments a nurse or doctor in a hospital floor could wear the first component, while the second might be in a patient's room monitoring some vital statistics. The short-range communication in this example might reach several hundred feet and several second components might be communicating to a single first component. This information could then be relayed on from the first component worn by the nurse or doctor to a central nursing station for all nurses on duty to see and monitor.

FIG. 17 illustrates one contemplated implementation **200** of the communication device described above, wherein **212** denotes the first communication module and **214** is the second communication module. In this system **200**, the first communication module **212** and second communication module **214** incorporate compatible short-range communication systems. This allows wireless communications between the first and second modules **212** and **214** over a short-range RF link **216**. The first communication module **212** is also designed for communication over a wireless link

218 with a long-range wireless communication network **220**. In this implementation **200**, the first communication module **21** is preferably a mobile communication device such as a cellular telephone, a two-way pager or communications-enabled PDA, which would normally be carried by users in or on a belt clip or holder, or in a briefcase or purse.

The second communication module **214** is preferably a relatively low cost item, such that a user of a multiple-module device could purchase and suitably configure several second communication modules **214** for use with a single first communication module **212**. The different second communication modules **214** could preferably be purchased "off-the-shelf" and then configured, for example, through an over-the-air registration process executed under user control of the first communication module **212**.

The basic system **200** could be expanded in accordance with a further embodiment shown in FIG. 18 to include wireless communication between the device modules **212** and **214** and a third module **234**, such as an RF interface cradle. If the first communication module **212** includes a rechargeable power source, then the third module **234** may be a docking station or cradle into or upon which the first module may be removably placed in order to recharge its power source. If the second communication module **214** is also powered by a rechargeable source, then the second module **214** may also be recharged by mounting the fully assembled multiple-module communication device on the third module **234**. A more detailed illustration of the third module **234** is shown in FIG. 18a.

The third module **234** is preferably adapted for short-range communications with either the first communication module **21** over the a short range RF link **236**, the second communication module **214** over another short range RF link **238**, or both. Many possible uses of such the additional short range RF links **236** and **238** are possible. For instance, the third module **234** may be connected to a desktop computer **232** as shown in FIGS. 18 and 18a to expand the capabilities and potential applications of multiple module communication devices. The wireless links **236** and **238** may then be used to carry data and audio signals between the user and the computer **232**, as well as any wired network **234** and associated components to which the computer is connected. Although shown as separate components in FIGS. 18 and 18a, the third module **234** could alternatively be integrated into the computer **232**.

Communication between the multiple-module device **212/214** and the computer **232** provides for countless possible functionality options, such as simple paging and other notification, remote- and voice-activated computer and peripheral control and wireless file or information downloading and uploading. This system may also be further expanded to include network communications between the first and second communication modules **212** and **214** and wired network **234** through the PC **232** to incorporate connectivity via small pico-cell networks. In such an implementation, each third module **234** connected to a corporate or other local area network such as the wired network **234**, could be adapted to perform pico-cell base station functions. Each such "base station" third module **232** could, for example, then be configured for short-range communication with the first and/or second communication modules **212** and **214** of all multiple-module communication devices issued to corporate employees. For communications between corporate users within the range of the pico-cell network, all device functions may then be performed without using the long-range wireless network **220**, potentially generating significant cost savings. A further extension of

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the communication systems according to the above embodiments could be a personal area network (PAN).

Many different possibilities for inter-module communications features are also possible. For instance, if the first communication module **212** is a cellular telephone, then the second communication module **214** may provide a hands-free means for a user to answer and participate in a voice call received at the cellular telephone. If the modules were adapted for voice control, a cellular user may preferably initiate a telephone call, add a telephone number to a stored number list, cause the telephone to enter a locked mode, or control execution of other functions by the first module by simply speaking into the microphone of the second communication module **214**.

If the first communication module **212** is enabled for data communication, then the second communication module **214** may expand its functionality. For instance, if the first communication module **212** is based on a data communication device, such as a two-way pager or a wireless modem in a laptop computer, then the addition of the second communication module **214** will enable voice communications in a device which was previously enabled only for data communication. A multiple-module communication device in accordance with this aspect of the invention can provide simultaneous voice and data communications. For example, a user that is participating in a voice communication using the second communication module **214** would preferably be able to simultaneously transmit data to the other party to the call through the first communication module **212**.

The embodiments described herein are examples of structures, systems or methods having elements corresponding to the elements of the invention recited in the claims. This written description may enable those skilled in the art to make and use embodiments having alternative elements that likewise correspond to the elements of the invention recited in the claims. The intended scope of the invention thus includes other structures, systems or methods that do not differ from the literal language of the claims, and further includes other structures, systems or methods with insubstantial differences from the literal language of the claims.

We claim:

1. A communication device, comprising:

- a first communication module comprising a housing with a cavity defined therein and a set of charging terminals located within the cavity, wherein the charging terminals are coupled to a power source; and
- a second communication module comprising an outer housing, a speaker attached to the outer housing and physically dimensioned to be fitted into an ear of a communication device user, a microphone attached to the outer housing and positioned to extend substantially towards the communication device user's mouth when the speaker is fitted into the ear of the communication device user, a rechargeable power source, and a set of terminals attached to a bottom surface of the outer housing and coupled to the rechargeable power source,

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wherein the second communication module is physically dimensioned to be detachably mounted within the cavity of the first communication module such that the terminals on the second communication module are physically and mechanically coupled to the charging terminals while the second communication module is mounted within the cavity in order to charge the rechargeable power source;

wherein the second communication module further comprises a set of operational terminals attached to a surface of the outer housing and coupled to the rechargeable power source, wherein the second communication module may be mounted in the cavity of the first communication module in either an inoperative position in which the charging terminals in the cavity are coupled to the terminals attached to the bottom surface of the outer housing, or an operative position in which the charging terminals in the cavity are coupled to the operational terminals attached to the top surface of the outer housing.

2. The communication device of claim 1, wherein terminals are recessed below a surface of the outer housing of the second communication module.

3. The communication device of claim 2, wherein the charging terminals located within the cavity of the first communication module protrude from a surface of the cavity in order to physically contact the recessed terminals in the second communication module.

4. The communication device of claim 1, wherein the power source coupled to the charging terminals in the first communication module is a power supply circuit coupled to a rechargeable power source.

5. The communication device of claim 1, wherein the power source coupled to the charging terminals in the first communication module is a power supply circuit coupled to a non-rechargeable power source.

6. The communication device of claim 1, wherein the first communication module further comprises a second set of charging terminals, wherein the second set of charging terminals are coupled to the operational terminals of the second communication module while the second communication module is mounted in the operative position.

7. The communication device of claim 1, wherein the power source in the first communication module is a rechargeable power source, and wherein the first communication module is configured to be electrically and mechanically coupled to a third module in order to charge the rechargeable power source.

8. The communication device of claim 1, wherein the cavity in the first communication module is substantially enclosed such that the second communication module is detachably mounted within the cavity by sliding the second communication module lengthwise into the cavity.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 7,313,423 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 10/416322
DATED : December 25, 2007
INVENTOR(S) : Griffin et al.

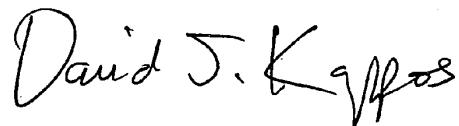
Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 11, line 52, please replace "device use's mouth" with -- device user's mouth --
Column 12, line 10, please replace "attached to a to" with -- attached to a top --

Signed and Sealed this

Eleventh Day of May, 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Kappos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D' and a stylized 'K'.

David J. Kappos
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office