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Plotke

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(54) **OBJECT DETECTION AND LOCATION SYSTEM**

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U.S. Cl.

USPC **382/103**; 382/104; 382/106; 348/143; 348/148; 348/149; 348/152; 348/157

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

None
See application file for complete search history.

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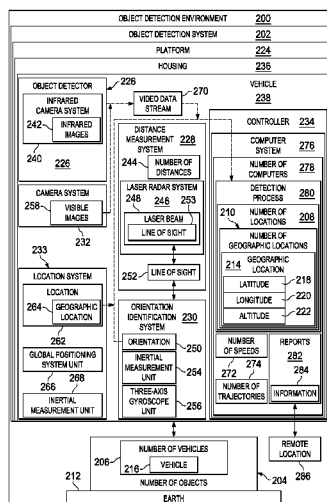
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method and apparatus for detecting objects. An object detector associated with a platform and configured to detect a number of objects is used to monitor for the number of objects. In response to detecting the number of objects, a number of distances to the number of objects detected by the object detector are measured using a distance measurement system. A number of geographic locations for the number of objects is identified using the number of distances, a location of the platform, and an orientation of the distance measurement system.

19 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



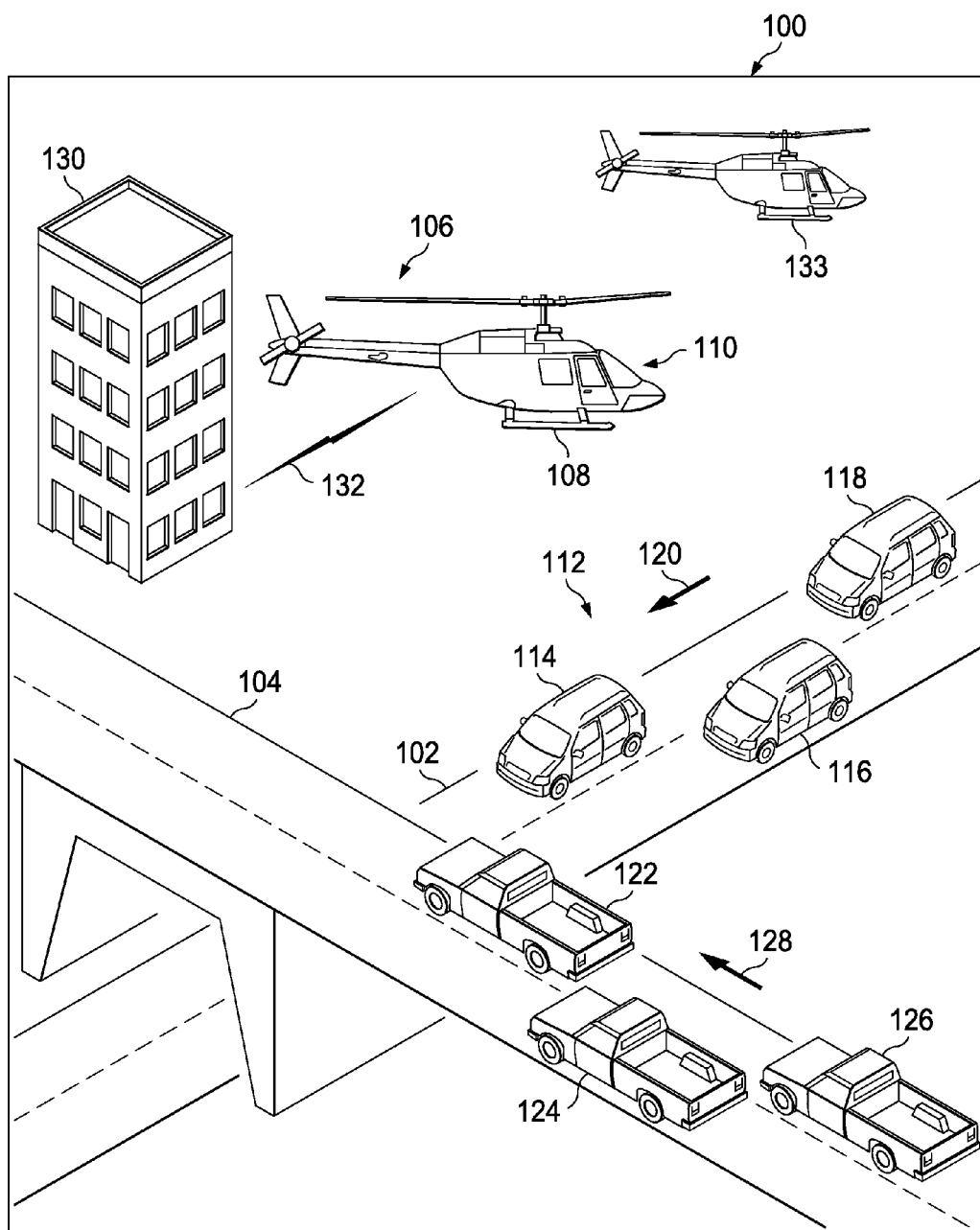
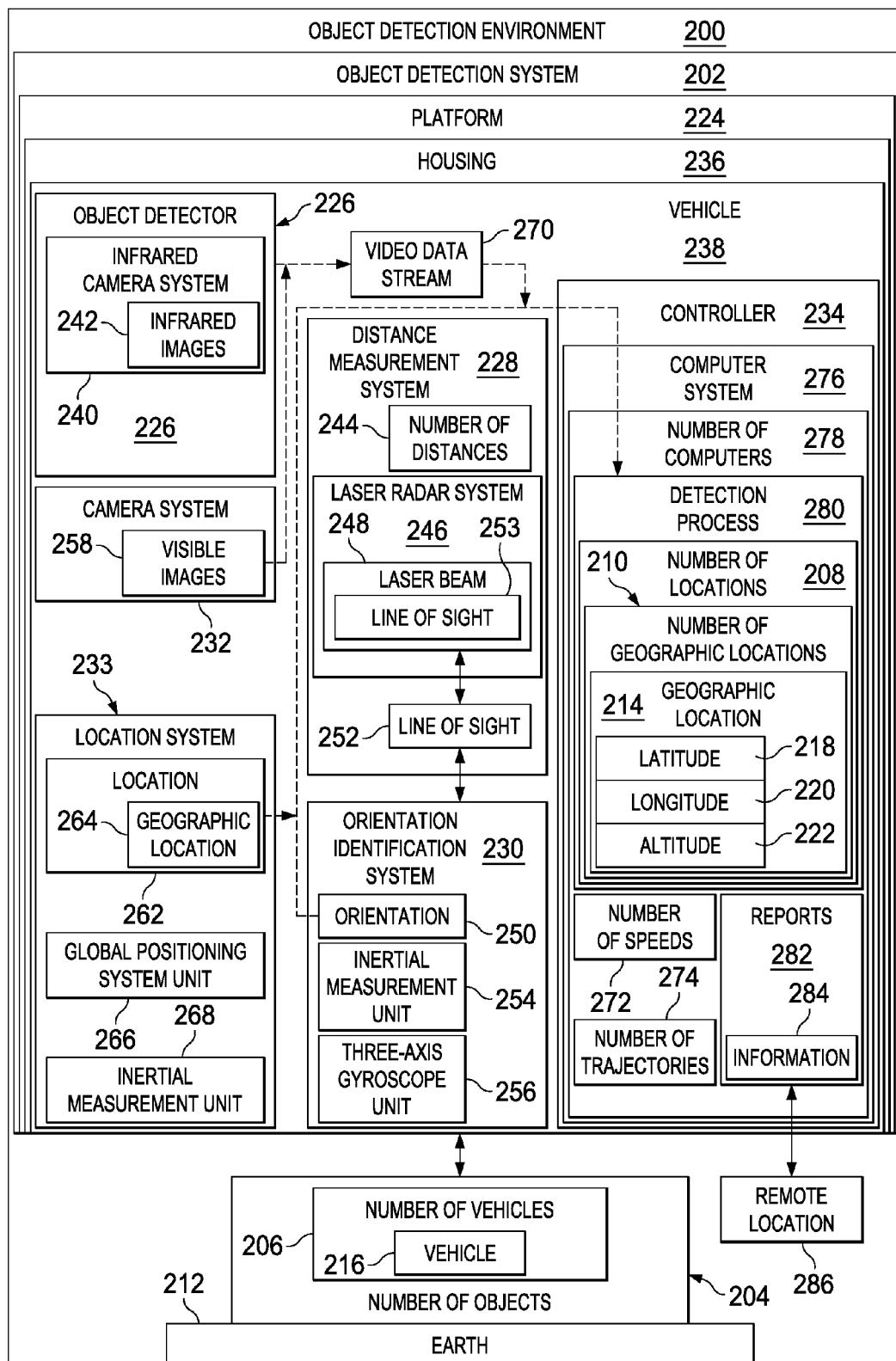
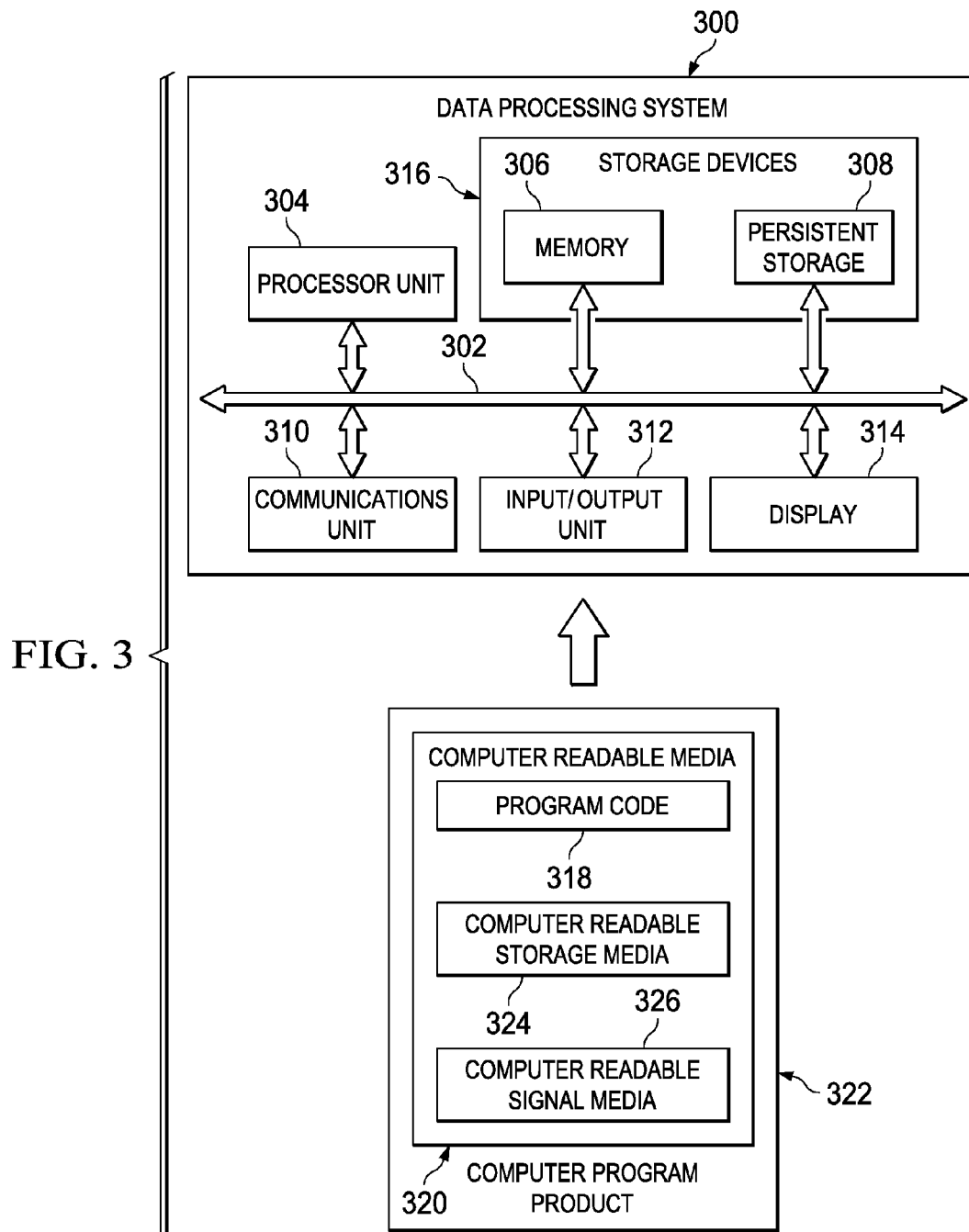


FIG. 1

FIG. 2





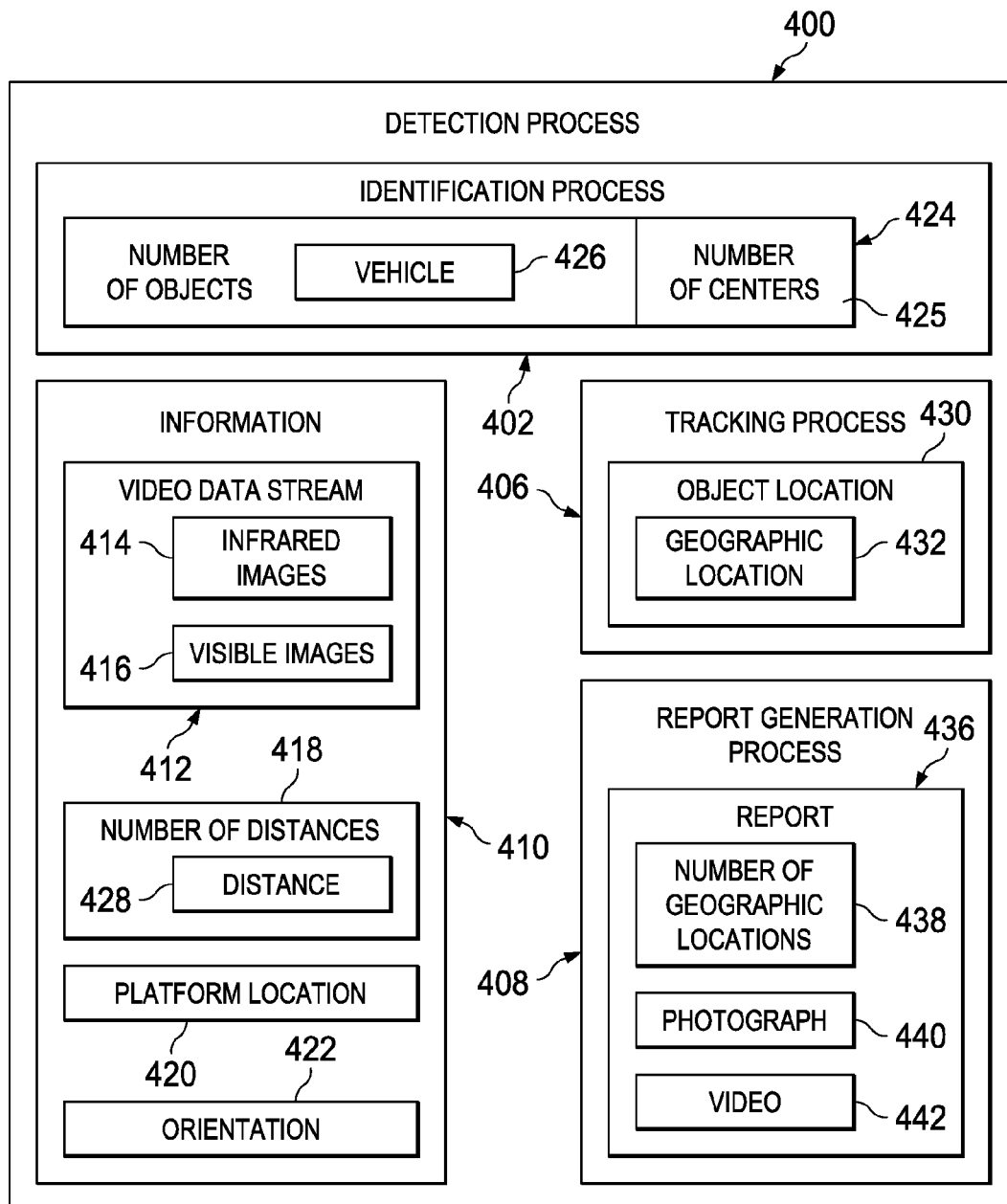


FIG. 4

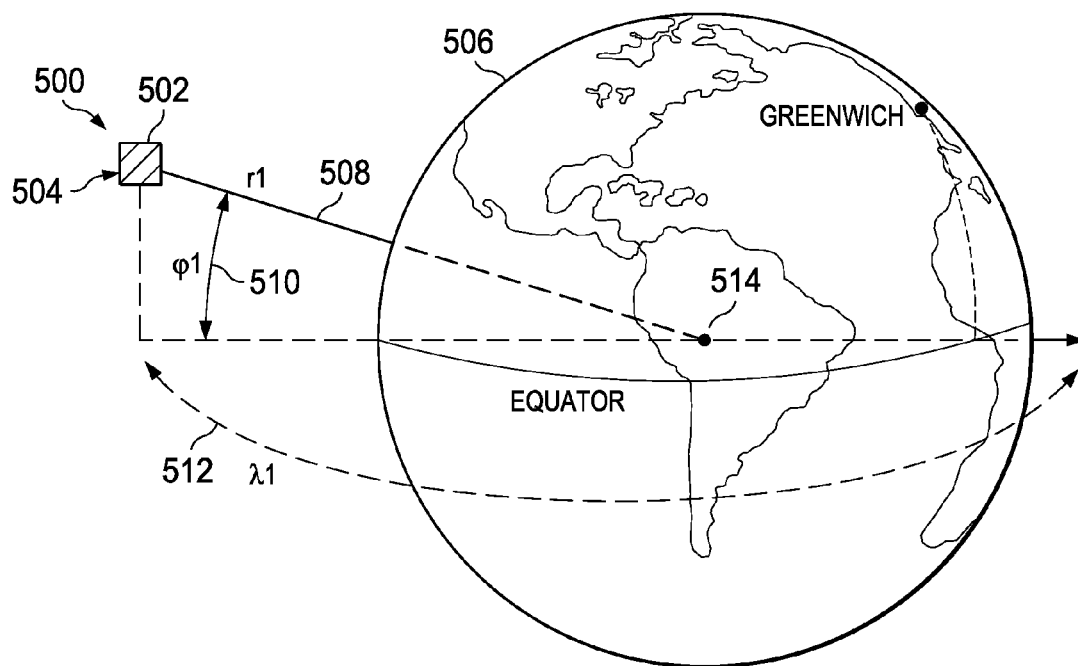


FIG. 5

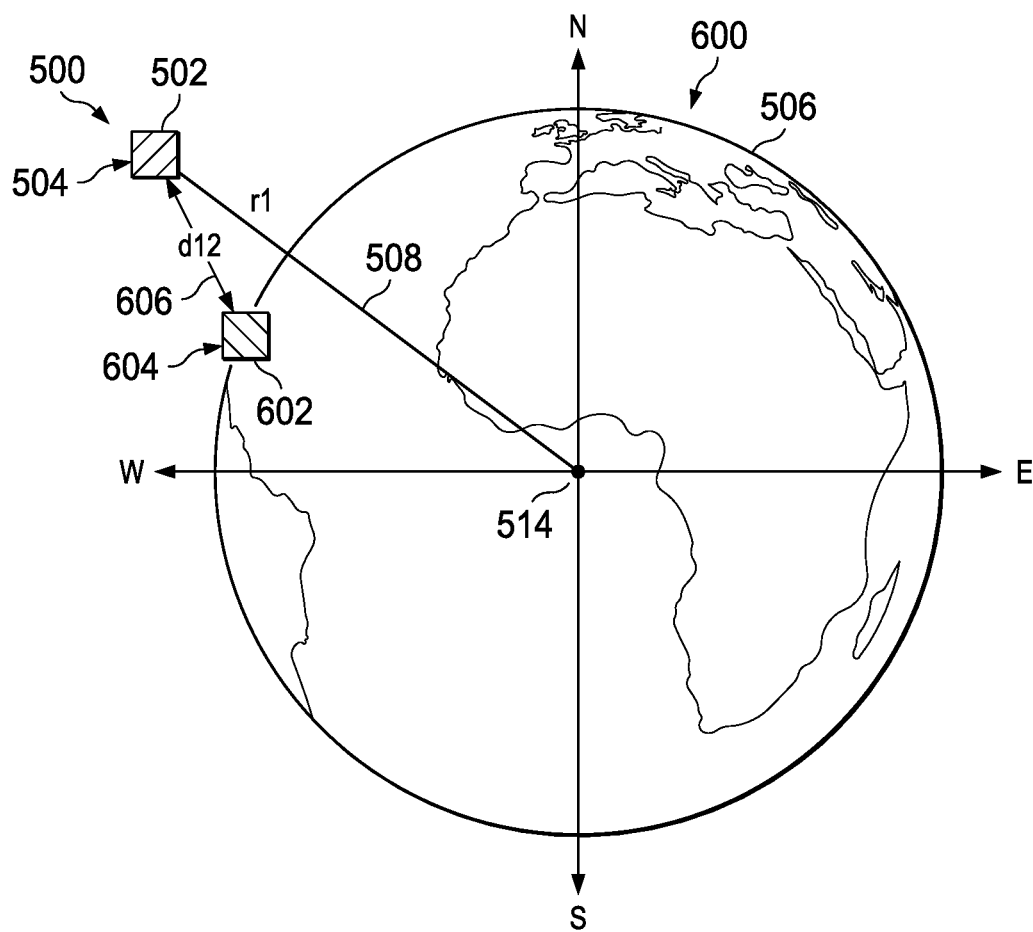


FIG. 6

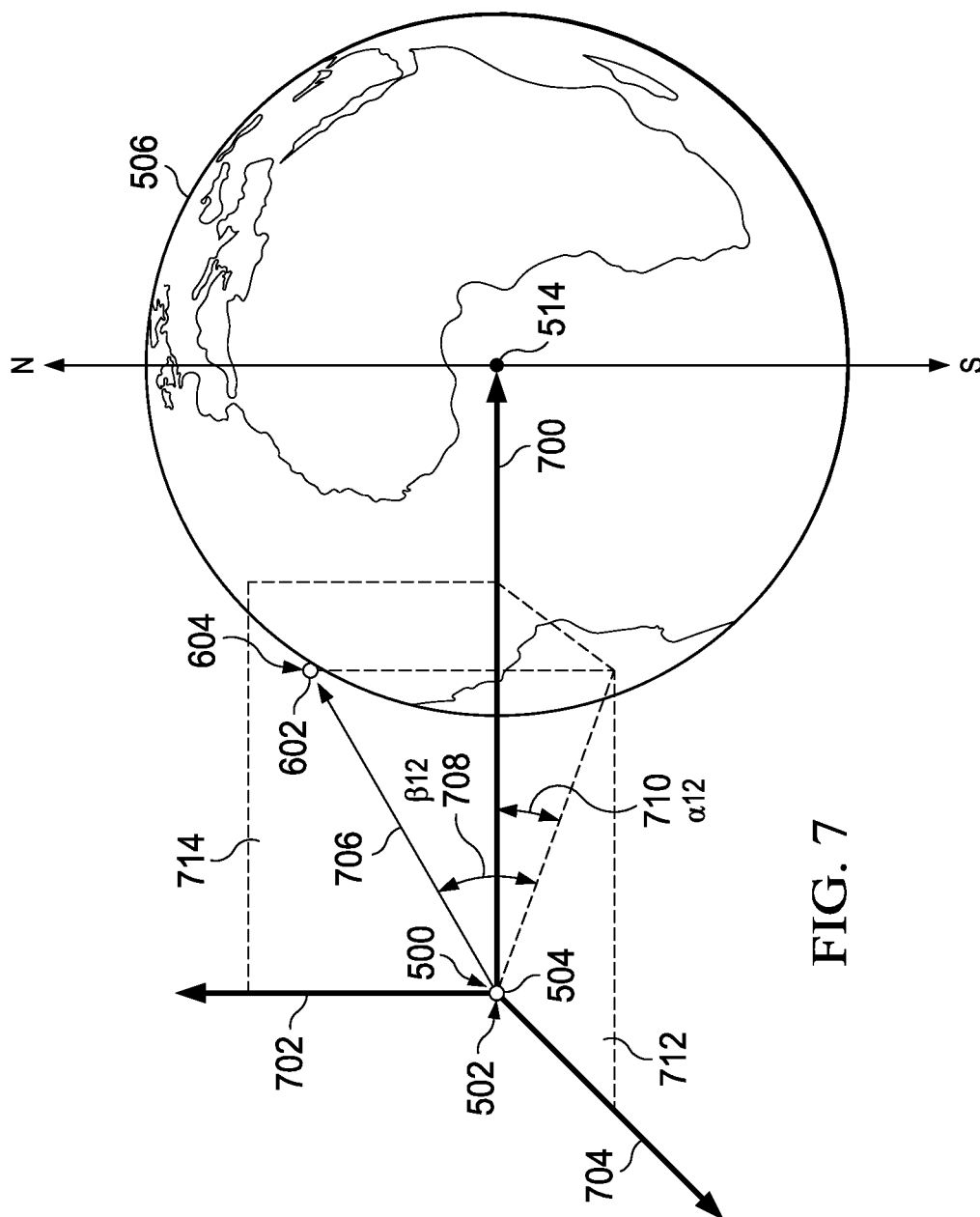


FIG. 7

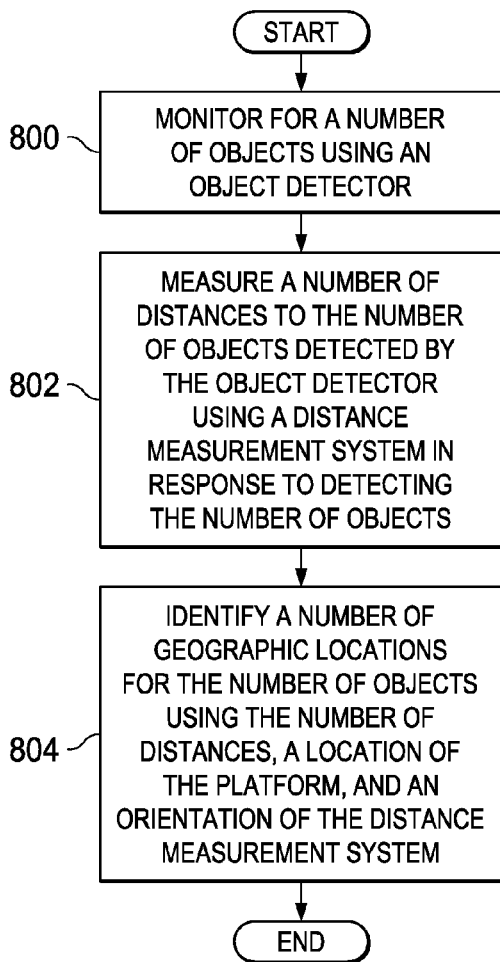


FIG. 8

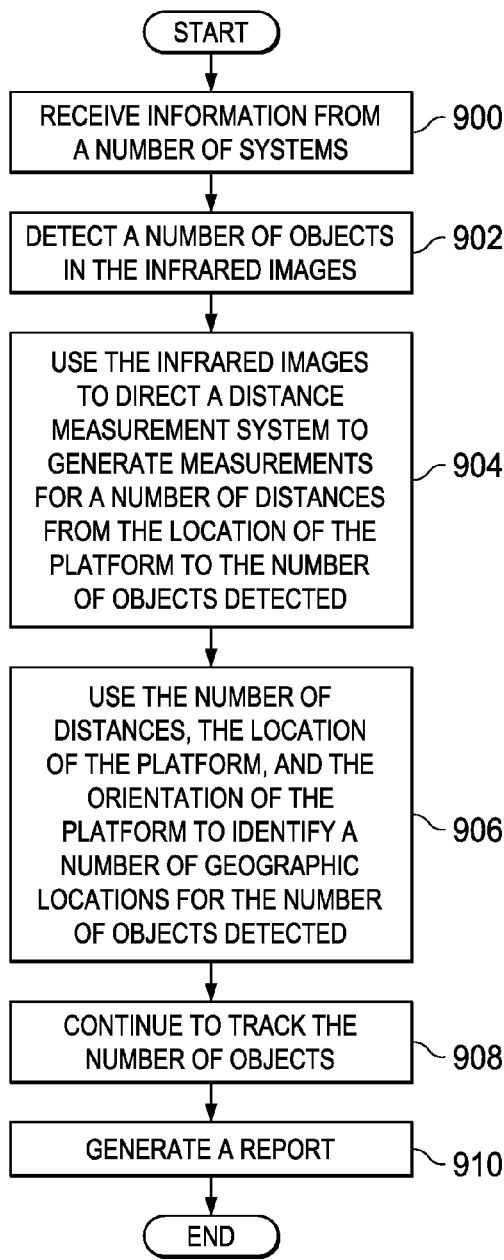


FIG. 9

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OBJECT DETECTION AND LOCATION SYSTEM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Field

The present disclosure relates generally to detecting objects and, in particular, to detecting and locating moving vehicles. Still more particularly, the present disclosure relates to a method and apparatus for detecting and locating multiple vehicles simultaneously.

2. Background

Detecting and locating objects is a process that is commonly used in many different situations. For example, with respect to traffic, vehicles moving faster than a posted speed limit may be detected. Often times, law enforcement officers and other personnel may use radar systems to determine the speeds of vehicles. If a vehicle is going faster than a posted speed limit, the law enforcement personnel may issue a ticket or citation to the driver of the vehicle. In some cases, automated systems are used to identify and generate tickets for vehicles moving faster than a posted speed limit. These systems employ cameras and/or radar systems to identify the speed of vehicles and to obtain images to identify vehicles for which tickets should be generated.

As another example, with search and rescue operations or border control, personnel detect objects in the form of people. When an object of interest is detected, the location of the object is made and the object also may be tracked as part of the detection process. In many cases, it is desirable to track multiple objects at the same time.

Some systems for tracking objects, such as people, place detection systems at different locations. For example, a detector may include a microphone to detect an acoustic event such as a footstep of a human or movement of a vehicle on the ground. Through the placement of microphones in different locations, the movement of the person or vehicle can be detected or tracked over areas in which the microphones are located.

Other systems involve using cameras to obtain images. These images are analyzed to identify objects of interest. The locations of the objects of interest are identified based on the locations of the cameras. With these types of systems, the cameras are placed in known locations. As a result, when objects of interest are identified, the approximate locations of those objects of interest can be identified.

Although these types of systems are useful, these currently used systems for detecting objects of interest are limited in usefulness. For example, these systems are required to be in a fixed position. If a detection system is moved from one location to another location, the location is then recorded. Otherwise, the location of the object detected cannot be accurately identified. Further, the accuracy of the identification of locations of objects also is an approximate identification. The location is based on the location of the detection systems and not the location of the objects of interest themselves.

Therefore, it would be advantageous to have a method and apparatus that takes into account one or more of the issues discussed above, as well as possibly other issues.

SUMMARY

In one advantageous embodiment, an apparatus comprises a platform and an object detector, a distance measurement system, a location system, an orientation identification system, and a controller associated with the platform. The object detector is configured to detect a number of objects. The

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distance measurement system is configured to measure a number of distances to the number of objects detected by the object detector. The location system is configured to identify a location of the platform. The orientation identification system is configured to identify an orientation of the distance measurement system. The controller is configured to identify a number of geographic locations for the number of objects using the number of distances, the location of the platform, and the orientation of the distance measurement system.

In another advantageous embodiment, a method is provided for detecting objects. An object detector associated with a platform and configured to detect a number of objects is used to monitor the number of objects. In response to detecting the number of objects, a number of distances to the number of objects detected by the object detector are measured using a distance measurement system. A number of geographic locations for the number of objects is identified using the number of distances, a location of the platform, and an orientation of the distance measurement system.

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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

FIG. 1 is an illustration of an object detection environment in accordance with an advantageous embodiment;

FIG. 2 is an illustration of an object detection environment in accordance with an advantageous embodiment;

FIG. 3 is an illustration of a data processing system in accordance with an advantageous embodiment;

FIG. 4 is an illustration of a detection process in accordance with an advantageous embodiment;

FIG. 5 is an illustration of an object detection system in accordance with an advantageous embodiment;

FIG. 6 is an illustration of an object detection environment in accordance with an advantageous embodiment;

FIG. 7 is an illustration of an object detection environment in accordance with an advantageous embodiment;

FIG. 8 is an illustration of a flowchart of a process for detecting objects in accordance with an advantageous embodiment; and

FIG. 9 is an illustration of a flowchart of a process for detecting objects in accordance with an advantageous embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The different advantageous embodiments recognize and take into account a number of different considerations. For example, the different advantageous embodiments recognize and take into account that currently used detection systems are only capable of detecting approximate locations of objects. The detection systems identify the locations of objects as the location of the detection systems.

The different advantageous embodiments recognize and take into account that, in some cases, it may be more desirable

to have a more accurate identification of a location of an object. Further, the different advantageous embodiments also recognize and take into account that the location of an object may be desirable with respect to a geographic location. For example, in a search and rescue operation, it may be desirable to identify people using longitude, latitude, and altitude information. In this manner, rescue operations may be more quickly directed to the locations of the people needing assistance.

The different advantageous embodiments also recognize and take into account that it may be desirable to have a detection system that is capable of detecting and tracking objects in a platform that moves. For example, the different advantageous embodiments recognize and take into account that it may be desirable to have a camera system that can be used in a ground vehicle, a helicopter, an unmanned aerial vehicle, or some other platform that may move.

Thus, the different advantageous embodiments provide a method and apparatus for detecting objects. The detection of objects may include tracking the objects after they have been identified as being present.

In one advantageous embodiment, an apparatus may comprise a platform, an object detection system, a distance measurement system, an orientation identification system, and a controller. The object detection system is configured to detect a number of objects. The distance measurement system is configured to measure a number of distances to the number of objects detected by the object detection system. The location system is configured to identify the location of platform. The orientation identification system is configured to identify an orientation of the distance measurement system. The controller is configured to identify a number of geographic locations for the number of objects using the number of distances, the location of the platform, and the orientation of the distance measurement system.

Turning now to FIG. 1, an illustration of an object detection environment is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. In this illustrative example, object detection environment 100 includes road 102, and road 104. In this illustrative example, object detection system 106 is associated with helicopter 108. In this example, helicopter 108 is hovering in position 110.

As depicted, oncoming traffic 112 includes vehicle 114, vehicle 116, and vehicle 118. In this illustrative example, these vehicles are traveling in the direction of arrow 120. Additionally, vehicle 122, vehicle 124, and vehicle 126 are traveling on road 104 in the direction of arrow 128. Object detection system 106 is configured to detect vehicles 114, 116, 118, 122, 124, and 126 as they travel on road 104 and road 102.

Object detection system 106 is configured to identify a geographic location of these vehicles. In other words, object detection system 106 is configured to identify the location of these vehicles with respect to a particular position on the earth. For example, object detection system 106 is capable of identifying the latitude, longitude, and altitude of vehicles 114, 116, 118, 122, 124, and 126.

This information may be sent to remote location 130 for further processing over wireless communications link 132. Remote location 130 may be, for example, without limitation, a law enforcement agency, a third party contractor, transportation authority, or some other suitable location or organization. In these illustrative examples, helicopter 108 may move from position 110 to different positions to detect these and other objects. Even with the movement of helicopter 108, object detection system 106 is configured to identify a geographic location of the different vehicles.

Further, object detection system 106 also may be used to identify objects that may be traveling in the air, rather than on the ground, such as helicopter 133. In addition, object detection system 106 also may be used to identify geographic locations for stationary objects, such as remote location 130.

The illustration of object detection environment 100 in FIG. 1 is not meant to imply physical or architectural limitations to the manner in which different advantageous embodiments may be implemented. This illustration is presented to provide one manner in which an object detection system may be implemented.

With reference now to FIG. 2, an illustration of an object detection environment is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. Object detection environment 100 in FIG. 1 is an example of one implementation for object detection environment 200 in FIG. 2.

In this illustrative example, object detection system 202 is used to detect number of objects 204. In these illustrative examples, number of objects 204 takes the form of number of vehicles 206. Object detection system 202 detects each of number of vehicles 206 at substantially the same time. In particular, object detection system 202 identifies number of locations 208 for number of vehicles 206.

In these illustrative examples, number of locations 208 is number of geographic locations 210 for number of objects 204 on earth 212. For example, object detection system 202 identifies geographic location 214 in number of geographic locations 210 for vehicle 216 on earth 212.

Geographic location 214 comprises latitude 218, longitude 220, and altitude 222. Of course, any reference system or coordinate system may be used to identify geographic location 214 of vehicle 216. For example, a Cartesian coordinate system, a stereographic coordinate system, or some other suitable type of coordinate system may be used to identify geographic location 214 of vehicle 216.

In this illustrative example, object detection system 202 includes platform 224, object detector 226, distance measurement system 228, orientation identification system 230, camera system 232, location system 233, and controller 234. Object detector 226, distance measurement system 228, orientation identification system 230, camera system 232, and controller 234 are associated with platform 224 in these examples.

Platform 224 may take a number of different forms. For example, platform 224 may be housing 236. Housing 236 may be associated or connected to another platform, such as a vehicle or building. A first component, such as housing 236, may be considered to be associated with a second component, such as another platform, by being secured to the second component, bonded to the second component, fastened to the second component, and/or connected to the second component in some other suitable manner. The first component also may be connected to the second component using a third component. The first component may also be considered to be associated with the second component by being formed as part of and/or an extension of the second component.

In other illustrative examples, platform 224 may be vehicle 238. For example, vehicle 238 may be a helicopter, an airplane, a truck, a car, or some other suitable type of vehicle. With this type of implementation, object detector 226, distance measurement system 228, orientation identification system 230, camera system 232, and controller 234 may be integrated as part of vehicle 238.

In these illustrative examples, object detector 226 is configured to detect number of objects 204. Object detector 226 may take the form of infrared camera system 240. Infrared

camera system 240 generates infrared images 242. Infrared images 242 show heat detected by infrared camera system 240.

Distance measurement system 228 is configured to measure number of distances 244 to number of objects 204. In other words, distance measurement system 228 measures the distance from object detection system 202 to each of number of objects 204. In these illustrative examples, distance measurement system 228 may take a number of different forms. For example, distance measurement system 228 may be laser radar system 246.

Laser radar system 246 may have a wavelength that is detectable by infrared camera system 240 in these examples. In other words, laser radar system 246 may be detected in infrared images 242. For example, laser radar system 246 may generate laser beam 248. Laser beam 248 may project light on number of objects 204 that is detectable by infrared camera system 240 in these illustrative examples. In other words, this light may be detected in infrared images 242. Further, depending on the location of where this light is detected in infrared images 242, the direction in which laser beam 248 is pointed may be adjusted.

Orientation identification system 230 is configured to identify orientation 250 of object detection system 202. Orientation 250 may include for example, without limitation, a pitch, a roll, and a yaw for object detection system 202 with respect to axis 251. Axis 251 is an axis through object detection system 202 and the center of the Earth. In some cases, orientation 250 may include an attitude for object detection system 202.

Orientation 250 may be used to identify line of sight 252 for object detection system 202. Line of sight 252 is the line through the direction in which the object detection system 202 is pointed. Further, laser radar system 246 may identify line of sight 253 for laser beam 248 with respect to line of sight 252 for object detection system 202.

In these illustrative examples, orientation identification system 230 may take a number of different forms. For example, orientation identification system 230 may take the form of inertial measurement unit 254, three-axis gyroscope unit 256, or other suitable types of systems that provide orientation 250. For example, orientation identification system 230 may include a compass.

Camera system 232 generates visible images 258 of number of objects 204. Visible images 258 are images that represent what is seen by a person in these illustrative examples. These images may be used for further analysis of number of objects 204.

Location system 233 is configured to provide location 262 of platform 224. In these examples, location 262 takes the form of geographic location 264. Location system 233 may be implemented in a number of different ways. For example, location system 233 may take the form of global positioning system unit 266, inertial measurement unit 268, or some other suitable system that is capable of providing location 262 for platform 224.

Controller 234 is configured to detect number of objects 204. In these illustrative examples, infrared images 242 and visible images 258 are sent in video data stream 270. With respect to number of objects 204 that are detected using video data stream 270, controller 234 is configured to identify number of geographic locations 210 using number of distances 244, location 262 of platform 224, and orientation 250 of distance measurement system 228.

Additionally, controller 234 also may be configured to identify at least one of number of speeds 272 for number of

objects 204, number of trajectories 274 for number of objects 204 and other desired information with respect to number of objects 204.

In these illustrative examples, controller 234 may take a number of different forms. For example, controller 234 may be computer system 276. Computer system 276 may be comprised of number of computers 278. In these illustrative examples, detection process 280 runs on controller 234 to cause controller 234 to perform the different operations for detecting number of objects 204. In these illustrative examples, controller 234 may generate reports 282. These reports contain information 284 about number of objects 204. Reports 282 may be sent to remote location 286 for further processing.

The illustration of FIG. 2 is not meant to imply physical or architectural limitations to the manner in which different advantageous embodiments may be implemented. Other components in addition to or in place of the ones illustrated may be used. Some components may be unnecessary in some advantageous embodiments. Also, the blocks are presented to illustrate some functional components. One or more of these blocks may be combined and/or divided into different blocks when implemented in different advantageous embodiments.

For example, in some illustrative examples, number of objects 204 may not be vehicles. Number of objects 204 may include any object capable of having an infrared signature. An object may be capable of having an infrared signature by having a temperature that is different than a temperature of the ambient environment around the object. For example, number of objects 204 may include a stationary object, a moving object, a vehicle, a person, an aircraft, an unmanned aerial vehicle, a satellite, a surface ship, a tank, a missile, a building, a dam, an animal, a fire, and an explosion.

In some illustrative examples, geographic location 264 may be implemented using other coordinate systems other than latitude, longitude, and altitude. For example, polar coordinates with elevation may be used. In still other illustrative examples, the coordinate system may be any coordinate system that relates an object to other objects. For example, the coordinate system may be a reference point with respect to a ship. The coordinates may identify locations of people and/or other objects on or around the ship. In still other illustrative examples, the coordinate system may be used to identify the locations of objects relative to a moon or a planet.

Additionally, in other illustrative examples, platform 224 may take the form of a stationary or mobile platform. For example, platform 224 may be a pole, building, bridge, dam, or some other suitable type of structure onto which object detection system 202 may be mounted. Further, in still other illustrative examples, object detection system 202 may include a platform with a two-axis gimbal mechanism that allows object detector 226 to rotate over 4 pi steradians.

Turning now to FIG. 3, an illustration of a data processing system is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. Data processing system 300 in FIG. 3 is an example of a data processing system that may be used to implement one or more computers in computer system 276. In this illustrative example, data processing system 300 includes communications fabric 302, which provides communications between processor unit 304, memory 306, persistent storage 308, communications unit 310, input/output (I/O) unit 312, and display 314.

Processor unit 304 serves to execute instructions for software that may be loaded into memory 306. Processor unit 304 may be a number of processors, a multi-processor core, or some other type of processor, depending on the particular implementation. A number, as used herein with reference to

an item, means one or more items. Further, processor unit **304** may be implemented using a number of heterogeneous processor systems in which a main processor is present with secondary processors on a single chip. As another illustrative example, processor unit **304** may be a symmetric multi-processor system containing multiple processors of the same type.

Memory **306** and persistent storage **308** are examples of storage devices **316**. A storage device is any piece of hardware that is capable of storing information, such as, for example, without limitation, data, program code in functional form, and/or other suitable information either on a temporary basis and/or a permanent basis. Storage devices **316** may also be referred to as computer readable storage devices in these examples. Memory **306**, in these examples, may be, for example, a random access memory or any other suitable volatile or non-volatile storage device. Persistent storage **308** may take various forms, depending on the particular implementation.

For example, persistent storage **308** may contain one or more components or devices. For example, persistent storage **308** may be a hard drive, a flash memory, a rewritable optical disk, a rewritable magnetic tape, or some combination of the above. The media used by persistent storage **308** also may be removable. For example, a removable hard drive may be used for persistent storage **308**.

Communications unit **310**, in these examples, provides for communications with other data processing systems or devices. In these examples, communications unit **310** is a network interface card. Communications unit **310** may provide communications through the use of either or both physical and wireless communications links.

Input/output unit **312** allows for input and output of data with other devices that may be connected to data processing system **300**. For example, input/output unit **312** may provide a connection for user input through a keyboard, a mouse, and/or some other suitable input device. Further, input/output unit **312** may send output to a printer. Display **314** provides a mechanism to display information to a user.

Instructions for the operating system, applications, and/or programs may be located in storage devices **316**, which are in communication with processor unit **304** through communications fabric **302**. In these illustrative examples, the instructions are in a functional form on persistent storage **308**. These instructions may be loaded into memory **306** for execution by processor unit **304**. The processes of the different embodiments may be performed by processor unit **304** using computer implemented instructions, which may be located in a memory, such as memory **306**.

These instructions are referred to as program code, computer usable program code, or computer readable program code that may be read and executed by a processor in processor unit **304**. The program code in the different embodiments may be embodied on different physical or computer readable storage media, such as memory **306** or persistent storage **308**.

Program code **318** is located in a functional form on computer readable media **320** that is selectively removable and may be loaded onto or transferred to data processing system **300** for execution by processor unit **304**. Program code **318** and computer readable media **320** form computer program product **322** in these examples. In one example, computer readable media **320** may be computer readable storage media **324** or computer readable signal media **326**.

Computer readable storage media **324** may include, for example, an optical or magnetic disk that is inserted or placed into a drive or other device that is part of persistent storage **308** for transfer onto a storage device, such as a hard drive,

that is part of persistent storage **308**. Computer readable storage media **324** also may take the form of a persistent storage, such as a hard drive, a thumb drive, or a flash memory, that is connected to data processing system **300**. In some instances, computer readable storage media **324** may not be removable from data processing system **300**. In these illustrative examples, computer readable storage media **324** is a non-transitory computer readable storage medium.

Alternatively, program code **318** may be transferred to data processing system **300** using computer readable signal media **326**. Computer readable signal media **326** may be, for example, a propagated data signal containing program code **318**. For example, computer readable signal media **326** may be an electromagnetic signal, an optical signal, and/or any other suitable type of signal. These signals may be transmitted over communications links, such as wireless communications links, optical fiber cable, coaxial cable, a wire, and/or any other suitable type of communications link. In other words, the communications link and/or the connection may be physical or wireless in the illustrative examples.

In some advantageous embodiments, program code **318** may be downloaded over a network to persistent storage **308** from another device or data processing system through computer readable signal media **326** for use within data processing system **300**. For instance, program code stored in a computer readable storage medium in a server data processing system may be downloaded over a network from the server to data processing system **300**. The data processing system providing program code **318** may be a server computer, a client computer, or some other device capable of storing and transmitting program code **318**.

The different components illustrated for data processing system **300** are not meant to provide architectural limitations to the manner in which different embodiments may be implemented. The different advantageous embodiments may be implemented in a data processing system including components in addition to or in place of those illustrated for data processing system **300**. Other components shown in FIG. **3** can be varied from the illustrative examples shown. The different embodiments may be implemented using any hardware device or system capable of running program code. As one example, the data processing system may include organic components integrated with inorganic components and/or may be comprised entirely of organic components excluding a human being. For example, a storage device may be comprised of an organic semiconductor.

In another illustrative example, processor unit **304** may take the form of a hardware unit that has circuits that are manufactured or configured for a particular use. This type of hardware may perform operations without needing program code to be loaded into a memory from a storage device to be configured to perform the operations.

For example, when processor unit **304** takes the form of a hardware unit, processor unit **304** may be a circuit system, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a programmable logic device, or some other suitable type of hardware configured to perform a number of operations. With a programmable logic device, the device is configured to perform the number of operations. The device may be reconfigured at a later time or may be permanently configured to perform the number of operations. Examples of programmable logic devices include, for example, a programmable logic array, programmable array logic, a field programmable logic array, a field programmable gate array, and other suitable hardware devices. With this type of implementation, program code **318** may be omitted because the processes for the different embodiments are implemented in a hardware unit.

In still another illustrative example, processor unit **304** may be implemented using a combination of processors found in computers and hardware units. Processor unit **304** may have a number of hardware units and a number of processors that are configured to run program code **318**. With this depicted example, some of the processes may be implemented in the number of hardware units, while other processes may be implemented in the number of processors.

As another example, a storage device in data processing system **300** is any hardware apparatus that may store data. Memory **306**, persistent storage **308**, and computer readable media **320** are examples of storage devices in a tangible form.

In another example, a bus system may be used to implement communications fabric **302** and may be comprised of one or more buses, such as a system bus or an input/output bus. Of course, the bus system may be implemented using any suitable type of architecture that provides for a transfer of data between different components or devices attached to the bus system. Additionally, a communications unit may include one or more devices used to transmit and receive data, such as a modem or a network adapter. Further, a memory may be, for example, memory **306**, or a cache, such as found in an interface and memory controller hub that may be present in communications fabric **302**.

With reference now to FIG. 4, an illustration of a detection process is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. In this illustrative example, detection process **400** is an example of one implementation for detection process **280** in FIG. 2. In this illustrative example, detection process **400** includes a number of different processes. For example, detection process **400** includes identification process **402**, tracking process **406**, and report generation process **408**.

Detection process **400** receives information **410**. In these depicted examples, information **410** includes video data stream **412** which has infrared images **414** and visible images **416**. Information **410** also includes number of distances **418**, platform location **420**, and orientation **422**.

Identification process **402** uses infrared images **414** to detect number of objects **424**. In these examples, number of objects **424** includes vehicle **426**. Further, infrared images **414** may be used by identification process **402** to identify number of centers **425** for number of objects **424** in infrared images **414**. In some cases, number of centers **425** for number of objects **424** may be referred to as a number of centroids.

Additionally, infrared images **414** are used by tracking process **406** to track vehicle **426** in number of objects **424**. In these examples, infrared images **414** also may be used to direct a distance measurement system, such as distance measurement system **228** in FIG. 2, to generate a measurement of number of distances **418** for number of objects **424**. Number of distances **418** includes a measure of the distance from the platform in which detection process **400** is located to the center in number of centers **425** for each object in number of objects **424** detected by detection process **400**. For example, distance **428** in number of distances **418** is a measurement of the distance between the platform in which detection process **400** is located and vehicle **426**.

In this illustrative example, platform location **420** is the location of the platform in which detection process **400** is located. Platform location **420** may be generated by, for example, location system **233** in FIG. 2. Orientation **422** is the orientation of the distance measurement system associated with the platform in which detection process **400** is located. Orientation **422** may be generated by, for example, orientation identification system **230** in FIG. 2.

Tracking process **406** identifies object location **430** of vehicle **426** using distance **428**, platform location **420**, and orientation **422**. In these illustrative examples, object location **430** is geographic location **432** for vehicle **426**. Geographic location **432** includes a latitude, longitude, and altitude for vehicle **426**. In other illustrative examples, geographic location **432** may use a different coordinate system, such as a Cartesian coordinate system, a stereographic coordinate system, or a polar coordinate system with an elevation.

Further, in these depicted examples, tracking process **406** may use infrared images **414** to detect the distance measurement system in infrared images **414**. For example, when the distance measurement system is a laser radar system, tracking process **406** may detect the light projected onto vehicle **426** in infrared images **414** from the laser beam generated by the laser radar system.

Detection of the distance measurement system in infrared images **414** may be used to guide a movement of the distance measurement system. For example, tracking process **406** may determine that the light from the laser beam detected in infrared images **414** is not on vehicle **426**. Detection process **400** may send commands to the distance measurement system to guide movement of the distance measurement system such that the laser beam is directed onto vehicle **426**.

In these illustrative examples, report generation process **408** generates report **436**. Report **436** includes number of geographic locations **438** for each of number of objects **424** that are identified by identification process **402**. Number of geographic locations **438** is the number of geographic locations identified for number of objects **424** by tracking process **406**. In this manner, tracking process **406** tracks number of objects **424**.

As one illustrative example, report **436** includes geographic location **432** for vehicle **426** identified by identification process **402** and tracked by tracking process **406**. Additionally, report **436** also may include photograph **440** and video **442** of number of objects **424**.

Photograph **440** may be processed to include portions of desired information. For example, if detection process **400** is used in a speed enforcement implementation, the photograph may be cropped to include only a vehicle that has been identified as exceeding a speed threshold.

In yet other illustrative examples, adjustments may be made to a visible image in visible images **416** to identify vehicle **426** in at least one of photograph **440** and video **442**. Vehicle **426** may be identified in photograph **440** and/or video **442** using a marker. This marker may be, for example, without limitation, an illumination of a pixel in a photograph, a text label, a tag, a symbol, and/or some other suitable type of marker. When appropriate, report **436** may be sent to a remote location for processing.

With reference now to FIG. 5, an illustration of an object detection system is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. In this illustrative example, object detection system **500** is an example of one implementation for object detection system **202** in FIG. 2. Object detection system **500** is associated with platform **502** in this example. Platform **502** may be an aircraft, an unmanned aerial vehicle, a spacecraft, a space station, a satellite, or some other suitable type of platform in this example.

As depicted, platform **502** has location **504** above Earth **506**. Location **504** may be identified using, for example, location system **233** in FIG. 2. In this illustrative example, location **504** includes distance **508**, latitudinal location **510**, and longitudinal location **512** for platform **502** and object detection system **500**.

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Distance **508** is the distance from center **514** of Earth **506** to object detection system **500** and platform **502**. Latitudinal location **510** is the location of object detection system **500** in degrees latitude. Longitudinal location **512** is the location of object detection system **500** in degrees longitude.

In this illustrative example, object detection system **500** has a line of sight that is pointed at center **514** of Earth **506**. Of course in other illustrative examples, the line of sight for object detection system **500** may be offset from an axis going through object detection system **500** and center **514** of Earth **506**.

With reference now to FIG. 6, an illustration of an object detection environment is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. In this illustrative example, object detection environment **600** is an example of one implementation for object detection environment **200** in FIG. 2. Object detection environment **600** includes object detection system **500** from FIG. 5 and object **602**.

As depicted, object detection system **500** associated with platform **502** has location **504** above Earth **506**. Location **504** includes distance **508**, latitudinal location **510**, and longitudinal location **512** in FIG. 5. Distance **508** may be seen in this illustrative example. Latitudinal location **510** and longitudinal location **512** may not be shown in this figure.

In this illustrative example, object **602** has location **604** on Earth **506**. Distance **606** is the distance between object **602** and object detection system **500**.

With reference now to FIG. 7, an illustration of an object detection environment is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. In this illustrative example, object detection environment **600** is depicted from a different perspective view as compared to the view for object detection environment **600** depicted in FIG. 6.

Location **504** of object detection system **500** and platform **502** is a location above Earth **506** in this example. Object **602** is in location **604** on Earth **506**. As depicted, axis **700** is an axis through location **504** of object detection system **500** and through center **514** of Earth **506**. Axis **702** is an axis parallel to the lines of longitude and pointing North in this illustrative example. Axis **704** is an axis parallel to the lines of latitude and pointed East in this illustrative example.

As depicted, object detection system **500** has line of sight **706** pointed towards object **602**. Object detection system **500** is configured to measure elevation angle **708** and azimuth angle **710**. Elevation angle **708** is measured with respect to line of sight **706** and plane **712** formed by axis **700** and axis **704**. Azimuth angle **710** is measured with respect to line of sight **706** and plane **714** formed by axis **700** and axis **702**.

In the different advantageous embodiments, a tracking process, such as tracking process **406** in FIG. 4 may be used to identify location **604** of object **602**. For example, distance **508** in FIG. 5 of object detection system **500** associated with platform **502** may be about 1.071 kilometers above sea level. Distance **508** is r_1 . Sea level is about 6378.1 kilometers such that distance **508**, r_1 , is about 6379.171 kilometers. Latitudinal location **510** in FIG. 5 is about 34.05222 degrees North latitude. Latitudinal location **510** is ϕ_1 . Longitudinal location **512** in FIG. 5 is about -118.24278 degrees West longitude. Longitudinal location **512** is λ_1 .

Object detection system **500** may be configured to use the values for distance **508**, latitudinal location **510**, and longitudinal location **512**, distance **606**, elevation angle **708**, and azimuth angle **710** to identify location **604** of object **602**. Distance **606**, elevation angle **708**, and azimuth angle **710** are identified as follows:

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d_{12} =10.072 kilometers,
 β_{12} =73.925 degrees, and
 α_{12} =83.852 degrees,

where d_{12} is distance **606**, β_{12} is elevation angle **708**, and α_{12} is azimuth angle **712**. Distance **606** may be measured using a distance measurement system, such as distance measurement system **228** in FIG. 2.

These values may be used to perform the following calculations:

$$x_1 = r_1 = 6.379 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km.}$$

$$y_1 = 0 \cdot \text{m}$$

$$z_1 = 0 \cdot \text{m}$$

$$z_2 = \sqrt{\frac{d_{12}^2 \cdot \tan(\beta_{12})^2}{(1 + \tan(\alpha_{12})^2 + \tan(\beta_{12})^2)}}.$$

$$\text{if } (\beta_{12} < 0 \cdot \text{deg}, -1, 1) = 3.509 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$x_2 = x_1 - \left| \frac{z_2}{\tan(\beta_{12})} \right|.$$

$$\text{if } (|\alpha_{12}| > 90 \cdot \text{deg}, -1, 1) = 6.378 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$y_2 = -\left(\left| \frac{z_2 \cdot \tan(\alpha_{12})}{\tan(\beta_{12})} \right| \text{ if } (\alpha_{12} < 0 \cdot \text{deg}, -1, 1) \right) = -9.387 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$r_2 = \sqrt{x_2^2 + y_2^2} = 6.378 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$\phi_2 = \phi_1 + \text{atan}\left(\frac{y_2}{x_2}\right) = 34.084 \cdot \text{deg}$$

$$yy_2 = y_2 = -9.387 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$xx_2 = r_2 \cdot \cos(\phi_2) = 5.283 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$zz_2 = r_2 \cdot \sin(\phi_2) = 3.574 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$rr_2 = \sqrt{xx_2^2 + yy_2^2} = 5.283 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$\lambda_2 = \lambda_1 + \text{atan}\left(\frac{yy_2}{xx_2}\right) = -118.345 \cdot \text{deg}$$

$$x_2 = rr_2 \cdot \cos(\lambda_2) = -2.508 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$y_2 = rr_2 \cdot \sin(\lambda_2) = -4.649 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$z_2 = zz_2 = 3.574 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$r_2 = \sqrt{x_2^2 + y_2^2 + z_2^2} = 6.378 \times 10^3 \cdot \text{km}$$

$$\phi_2 = \text{asin}\left(\frac{z_2}{r_2}\right) = 34.084 \cdot \text{deg.}$$

Using the above calculations, the location of object **602** may be identified as follows:

r_2 =6.378×10³ kilometers,
 ϕ_2 =34.084 degrees, and
 λ_2 =-118.345 degrees,

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where r_2 is the distance from object 602 to center 514 of Earth 506, ϕ_2 is location 604 of object 602 in latitude, and λ_2 is location 604 of object 602 in longitude.

With reference now to FIG. 8, an illustration of a flowchart of a process for detecting objects is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. The process illustrated in FIG. 8 may be implemented using object detection system 202 in FIG. 2.

The process begins by monitoring for a number of objects using an object detector (operation 800). The object detector is configured to detect a number of objects. For example, the object detector may be an infrared camera system, such as infrared camera system 240 in FIG. 2, configured to generate infrared images in which objects may be detected.

Further, the object detector is associated with a platform. The platform may be selected from one of a housing, a mobile platform, a stationary platform, a land-based structure, an aquatic-based structure, a space-based structure, an aircraft, a surface ship, a tank, a personnel carrier, a train, a spacecraft, a space station, a satellite, a submarine, an automobile, a power plant, a bridge, a dam, a manufacturing facility, a building, or some other suitable type of platform.

Thereafter, the process measures a number of distances to the number of objects detected by the object detector using a distance measurement system in response to detecting the number of objects (operation 802). The distance measurement system may be a laser radar system, such as laser radar system 246 in FIG. 2.

Next, the process identifies a number of geographic locations for the number of objects using the number of distances, a location of the platform, and an orientation of the distance measurement system (operation 804), with the process terminating thereafter. The geographic locations may include a latitude, a longitude, and an altitude for the number of objects.

With reference now to FIG. 9, an illustration of a flowchart of a process for detecting objects is depicted in accordance with an advantageous embodiment. The process illustrated in FIG. 9 may be implemented using detection process 400 in FIG. 4.

The process begins by receiving information from a number of systems (operation 900). The number of systems may include an object detector, a camera system, and an orientation identification system. The information received includes a video data stream, a location of the platform on which the detection process is located, and an orientation of the platform on which the detection process is located. The video data stream includes infrared images and visible images.

The process then detects a number of objects in the infrared images (operation 902). Next, the process uses the infrared images to direct a distance measurement system to generate measurements for a number of distances from the location of the platform to the number of objects detected (operation 904). Thereafter, the process uses the number of distances, the location of the platform, and the orientation of the platform to identify a number of geographic locations for the number of objects detected (operation 906). The process then continues to track the number of objects (operation 908).

Thereafter, the process generates a report (operation 910), with the process terminating thereafter. The report may be generated while the detection process tracks the number of objects as the number of objects move and/or the platform on which the detection process is located moves. In other illustrative examples, the report may be generated once the number of objects can no longer be detected in the infrared images received.

The report may include the number of geographical locations. Further, the report may also include a photograph and/

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or video. In some illustrative examples, the number of objects may be identified in the photograph and/or video using a marker.

The flowcharts and block diagrams in the different depicted embodiments illustrate the architecture, functionality, and operation of some possible implementations of apparatus and methods in different illustrative embodiments. In this regard, each block in the flowchart or block diagrams may represent a module, segment, function, and/or a portion of an operation or step. In some alternative implementations, the function or functions noted in the block may occur out of the order noted in the figures. For example, in some cases, two blocks shown in succession may be executed substantially concurrently, or the blocks may sometimes be executed in the reverse order, depending upon the functionality involved. Also, other blocks may be added in addition to the illustrated blocks in a flowchart or block diagram.

Thus, the different advantageous embodiments provide a method and apparatus for detecting objects. The detection of objects may include tracking the objects after they have been identified as being present.

In one advantageous embodiment, an apparatus may comprise a platform, an object detection system, a distance measurement system, an orientation identification system, and a controller. The object detection system is configured to detect a number of objects. The distance measurement system is configured to measure a number of distances to the number of objects detected by the object detection system. The location system is configured to identify the location of the platform. The orientation identification system is configured to identify an orientation of the distance measurement system. The controller is configured to identify a number of geographic locations for the number of objects using the number of distances, the location of the platform, and the orientation of the distance measurement system.

The different advantageous embodiments can take the form of an entirely hardware embodiment, an entirely software embodiment, or an embodiment containing both hardware and software elements. Some embodiments are implemented in software, which includes but is not limited to forms, such as, for example, firmware, resident software, and microcode.

Furthermore, the different embodiments can take the form of a computer program product accessible from a computer-usable or computer-readable medium providing program code for use by or in connection with a computer or any device or system that executes instructions. For the purposes of this disclosure, a computer-usable or computer readable medium can generally be any tangible apparatus that can contain, store, communicate, propagate, or transport the program for use by or in connection with the instruction execution system, apparatus, or device.

The computer usable or computer readable medium can be, for example, without limitation an electronic, magnetic, optical, electromagnetic, infrared, or semiconductor system, or a propagation medium. Non-limiting examples of a computer-readable medium include a semiconductor or solid state memory, magnetic tape, a removable computer diskette, a random access memory (RAM), a read-only memory (ROM), a rigid magnetic disk, and an optical disk. Optical disks may include compact disk—read only memory (CD-ROM), compact disk—read/write (CD-R/W) and DVD.

Further, a computer-usable or computer-readable medium may contain or store a computer readable or usable program code such that when the computer readable or usable program code is executed on a computer, the execution of this computer readable or usable program code causes the computer to

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transmit another computer readable or usable program code over a communications link. This communications link may use a medium that is, for example without limitation, physical or wireless.

A data processing system suitable for storing and/or 5
executing computer readable or computer usable program code will include one or more processors coupled directly or indirectly to memory elements through a communications fabric, such as a system bus. The memory elements may include local memory employed during actual execution of the program code, bulk storage, and cache memories which provide temporary storage of at least some computer readable or computer usable program code to reduce the number of times code may be retrieved from bulk storage during execution of the code.

Input/output or I/O devices can be coupled to the system either directly or through intervening I/O controllers. These devices may include, for example, without limitation to keyboards, touch screen displays, and pointing devices. Different communications adapters may also be coupled to the system 20
to enable the data processing system to become coupled to other data processing systems or remote printers or storage devices through intervening private or public networks. Modems and network adapters are just a few non-limiting examples of the currently available types of communications adapters.

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

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:

a platform;

an object detector associated with the platform and configured to detect a number of objects;

a distance measurement system associated with the platform and configured to measure a number of distances to the number of objects detected by the object detector;

a location system associated with the platform and configured to identify a location of the platform;

an orientation identification system associated with the platform and configured to identify an orientation of the distance measurement system; and

a controller associated with the platform and configured to identify a number of geographic locations for the number of objects using the number of distances, the location of the platform, and the orientation of the distance measurement system,

wherein the controller is configured to identify a center for each object in the number of objects to form a number of centers and direct the distance measurement system to measure the number of distances to the number of centers for the number of objects,

wherein the geographic location for each object is identified based on the controller measuring

an elevation angle measured with respect to a line of sight between the location of the platform and each object and a first plane formed by a first axis defined

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through the location of the platform and the center of the earth, and a second axis orthogonal to the first axis and being parallel to a line of latitude, and

an azimuth angle measured with respect to the line of sight between the location of the platform and a second plane formed by the first axis and a third axis orthogonal to the first axis and being parallel to a line of longitude.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:

a camera system configured to generate images of the number of objects that are visible to a person.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller is configured to identify a number of speeds for the number of objects and a number of trajectories for the number of objects.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the object detector is configured to track the number of objects.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the object detector is configured to generate an image with the number of objects and the controller is configured to identify the number of objects from the image.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller is configured to generate the number of geographic locations for the number of objects using the number of distances to the number of objects, the location of the platform, and a number of lines of sight to the number of objects.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the number of lines of sight is identified using the orientation of the distance measurement unit.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the object detector comprises:

an infrared camera system.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the distance measurement system comprises:

a laser radar system.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the orientation identification system comprises at least one of an inertial measurement unit, a compass, and a gyroscope.

11. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the location system comprises at least one of a global positioning system unit and an inertial measurement unit.

12. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the platform is selected from one of a housing, a mobile platform, a stationary platform, a land-based structure, an aquatic-based structure, a space-based structure, an aircraft, a surface ship, a tank, a personnel carrier, a train, a spacecraft, a space station, a satellite, a submarine, an automobile, a power plant, a bridge, a dam, a manufacturing facility, and a building.

13. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein an object in the number of objects is selected from one of a stationary object, a moving object, a vehicle, a person, an aircraft, a satellite, a surface ship, a tank, a missile, a building, a dam, an animal, a fire, and an explosion.

14. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller is selected from one of a processor unit and a computer system.

15. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the location of the platform being calculated by the location system based on a distance from the center of the earth to the platform, a latitudinal location of the platform in degrees latitude, and a longitudinal location of the platform in degrees longitude.

16. A method for detecting objects, the method comprising:

monitoring for a number of objects using an object detector associated with a platform and configured to detect the number of objects;

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responsive to detecting the number of objects, measuring a number of distances to the number of objects detected by the object detector using a distance measurement system;

identifying a number of geographic locations for the number of objects using the number of distances, a location of the platform, and an orientation of the distance measurement system, wherein the geographic location for each object is identified based on measuring an elevation angle measured with respect to a line of sight between the location of the platform and each object and a first plane formed by a first axis defined through the location of the platform and the center of the earth, and a second axis orthogonal to the first axis and being parallel to a line of latitude, and an azimuth angle measured with respect to the line of sight between the location of the platform and a sec-

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ond plane formed by the first axis and a third axis orthogonal to the first axis and being parallel to a line of longitude; and

identifying a number of speeds for the number of objects and a number of trajectories for the number of objects.

17. The method of claim **16** further comprising: identifying the location of the platform.

18. The method of claim **16** further comprising: identifying the orientation of the distance measurement system.

19. The method of claim **16** further comprising: determining the location of the platform based on a distance from the center of the earth to the platform, a latitudinal location of the platform in degrees latitude, and a longitudinal location of the platform in degrees longitude.

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