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(54) **APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR DETERMINING LOCATION AND TRACKING COORDINATES OF A TRACKING DEVICE**

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(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **340/539.13**

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See application file for complete search history.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

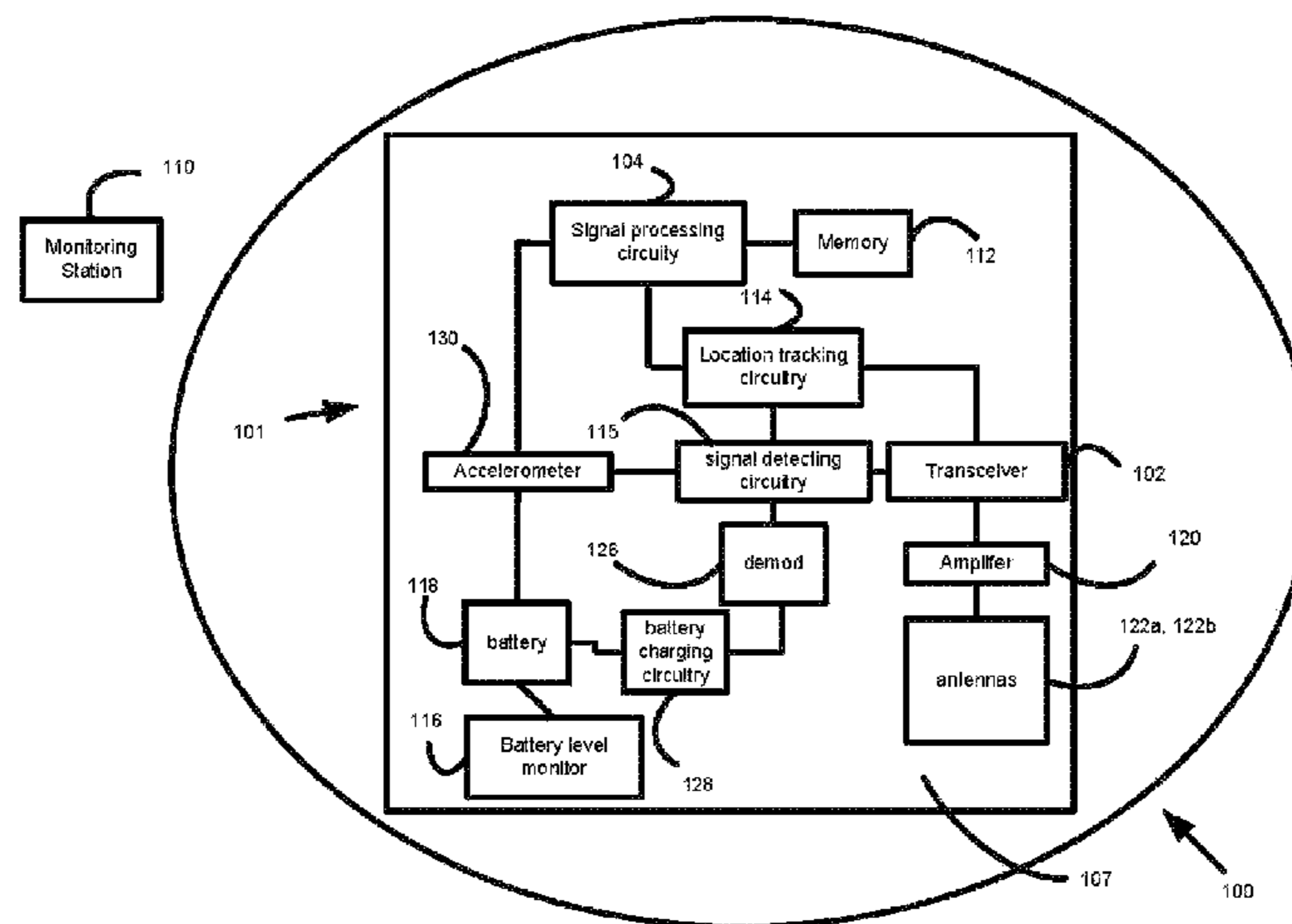
A device and method to monitor location coordinates of an electronic tracking device are disclosed here. The device includes transceiver circuitry to receive at least one portion of a receive communication signal comprising location coordinates information; accelerometer circuitry to measure displacements of the portable electronic tracking device; a battery power monitor configured to activate and deactivate at least one portion of signaling circuitry; and processor circuitry configured to process the displacements. The method includes receiving at least one portion of a receive communication signal comprising location coordinates information; measuring displacements of a portable electronic tracking device; activating and deactivating at least one portion of signaling circuitry; and processing the at least one portion of the receive communication signal.

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20 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



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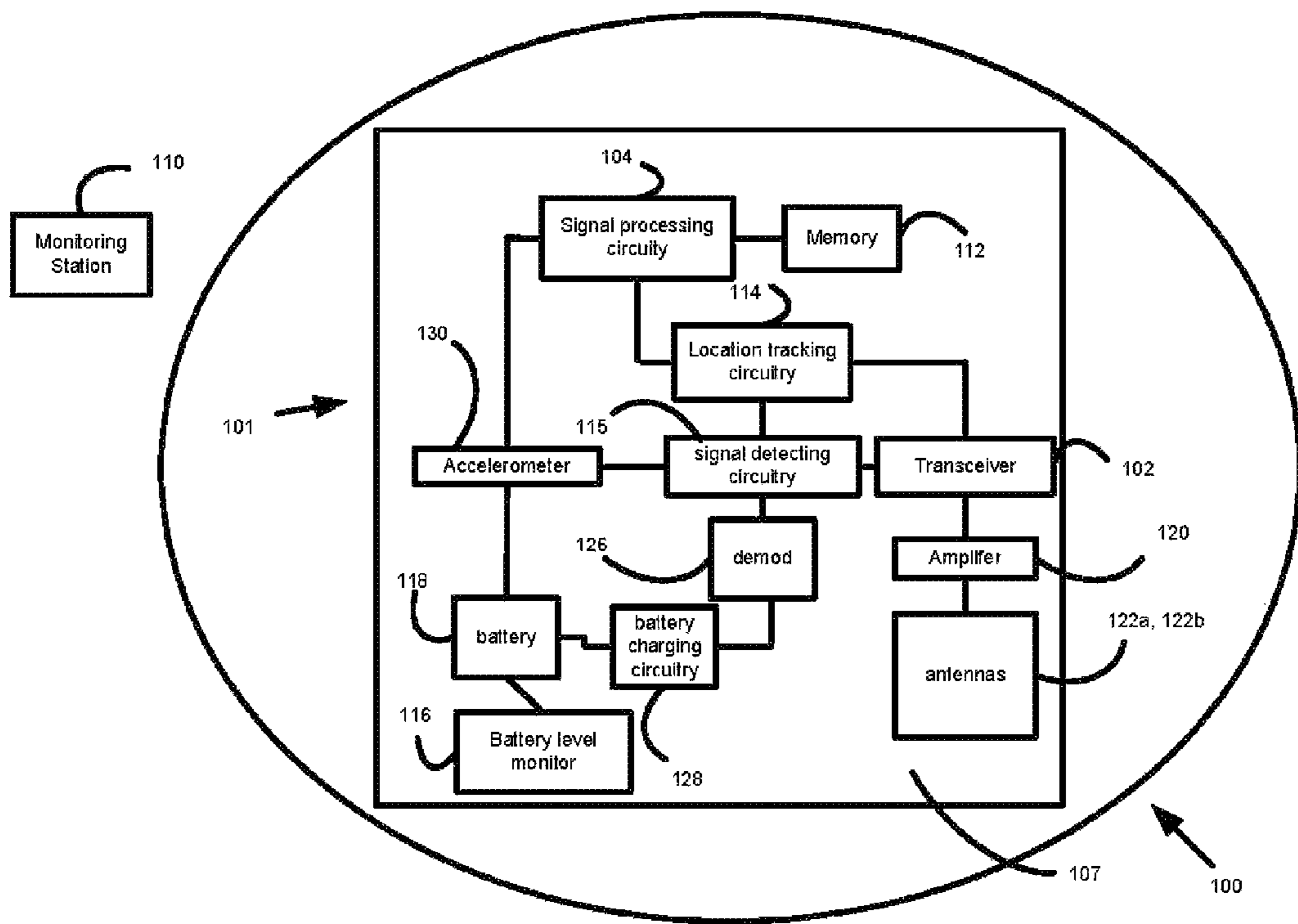


Figure 1

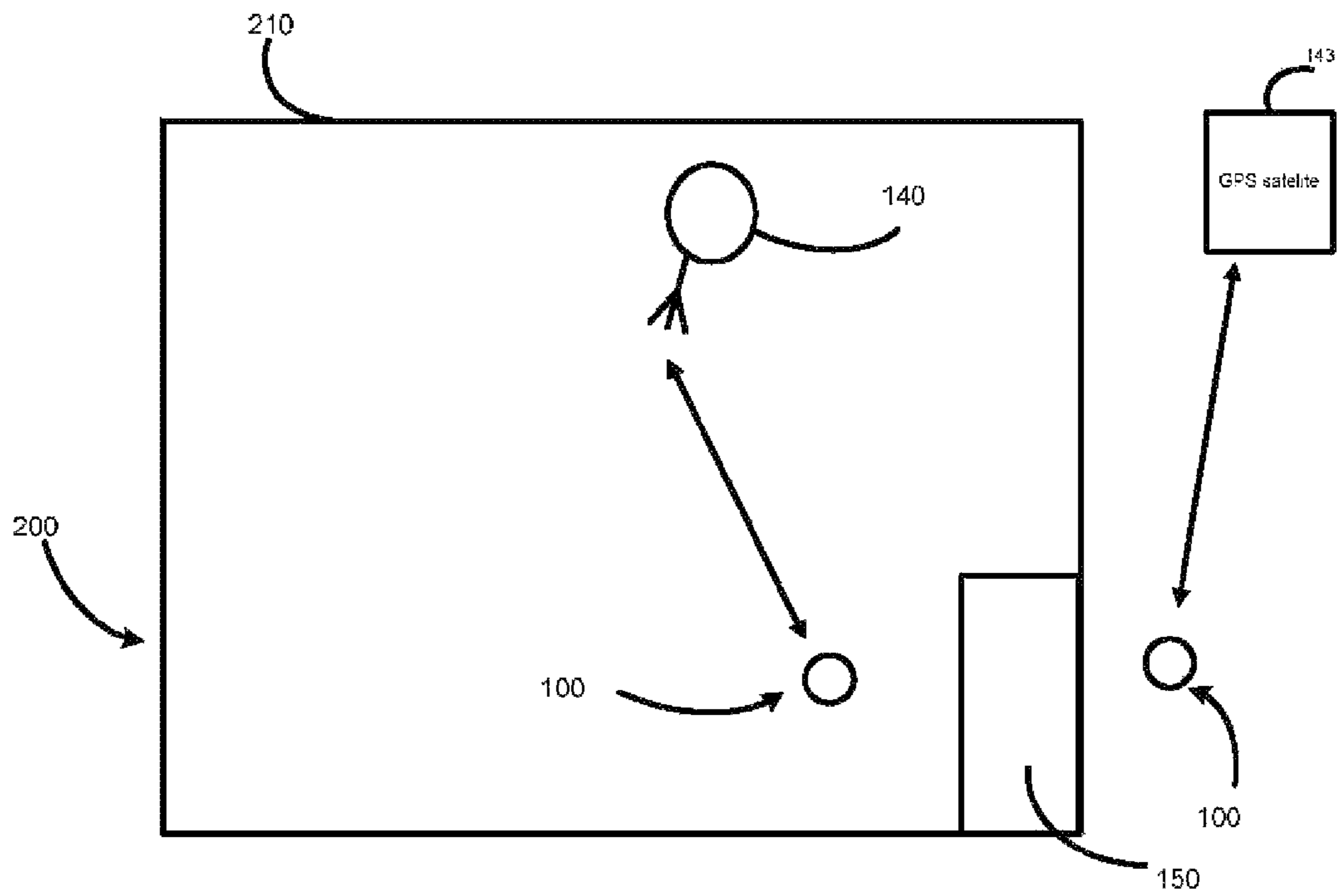


Figure 2

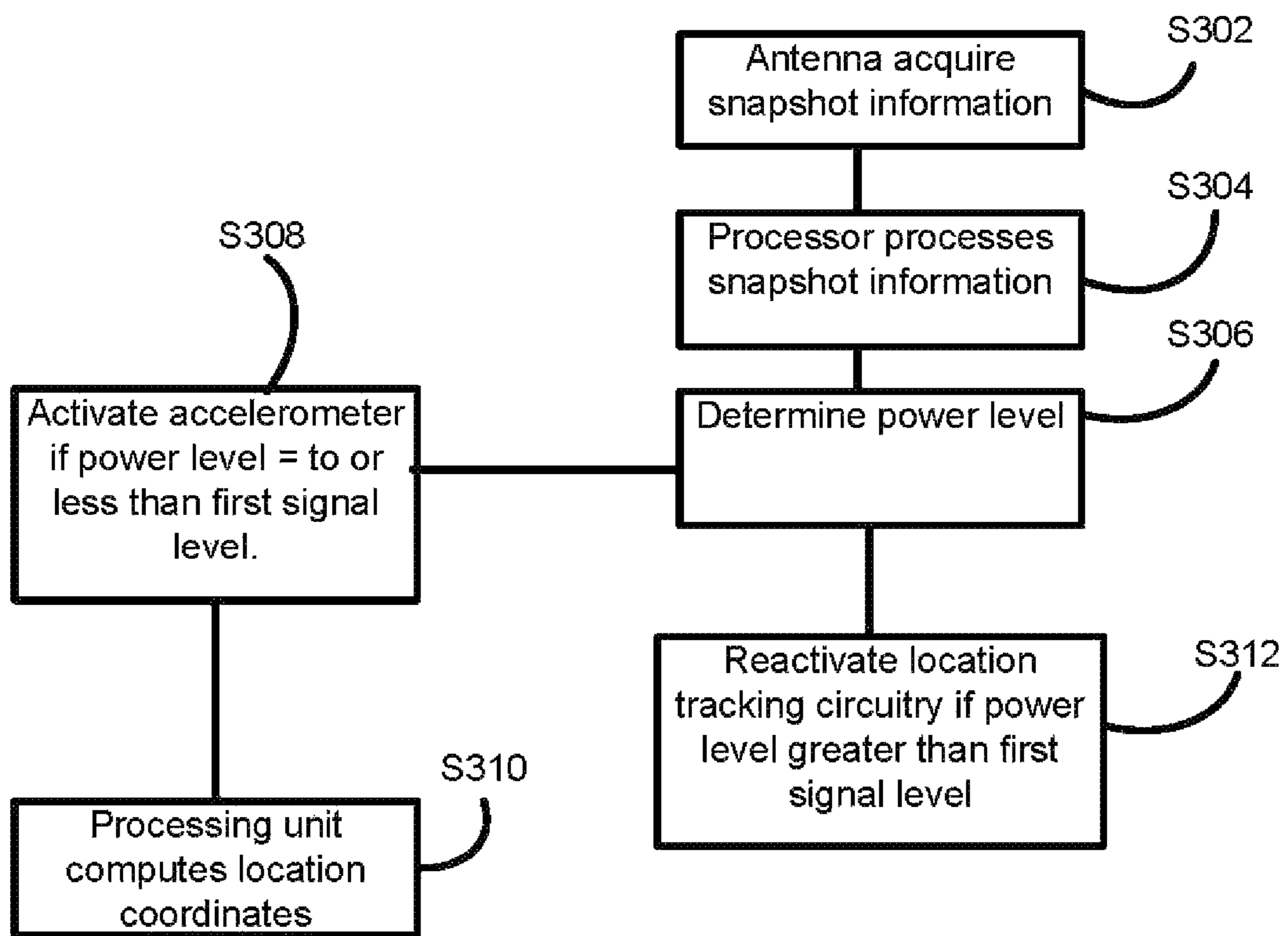


Figure 3

**APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR
DETERMINING LOCATION AND TRACKING
COORDINATES OF A TRACKING DEVICE**

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a Divisional of, claims priority to, and incorporates herein in its entirety U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/969,905 filed Jan. 6, 2008.

This application also incorporates by reference in their entirety: U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/753,979 filed on May 25, 2007, entitled "Apparatus and Method for Providing Location Information on Individuals and Objects Using Tracking Devices"; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/933,024 filed on Oct. 31, 2007, entitled "Apparatus and Method for Manufacturing an Electronic Package"; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/784,400 filed on Apr. 5, 2007, entitled "Communication System and Method Including Dual Mode Capability"; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/784,318 filed on Apr. 5, 2007, entitled "Communication System and Method Including Communication Billing Options"; and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/935,901 filed on Nov. 6, 2007, entitled "System and Method for Creating and Managing a Personalized Web Interface for Monitoring Location Information on Individuals and Objects Using Tracking Devices."

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates generally to the field of location and tracking communication systems. More particularly, the present invention relates in one embodiment to an accelerometer incorporated as part of portable electronic tracking device for individuals and objects to improve monitoring by a wireless location and tracking system and/or wireless communication system (WCS).

2. Description of Related Technology

Accelerometers are conventionally integrated into electronics systems that are part of a vehicle, vessel, and airplane to detect, measure, and monitor deflections, vibrations, and acceleration. Accelerometers, for example, may include one or more Micro Electro-Mechanical System (MEMS) devices. In particular, MEMS devices include one or more suspended cantilever beams (e.g., single-axis, dual-axis, and three-axis models), as well as deflection sensing circuitry. Accelerometers are utilized by a multitude of electronics manufacturers.

For instance, electronics gaming manufacturers exploit an accelerometer's deflection sensing capability, for instance, to measure device tilt and control game functionality. In another instance, consumer electronics manufacturers, e.g., Apple, Ericsson, and Nike, incorporate accelerometers in personal electronic devices, e.g., Apple iPhone, to provide a changeable screen display orientation that toggles between portrait and landscape layout window settings; to manage human inputs through a human interface, e.g., Apple iPod® touch screen interface; and to measure game movement and tilt, e.g., Wii gaming remotes. Still others including automobile electronics circuitry manufacturers utilize MEMS accelerometers to initiate airbag deployment in accordance with a detected collision severity level by measuring negative vehicle acceleration.

Other electronics manufacturer products, e.g., Nokia 5500 sport, count step motions using a 3D accelerometer, and translate user information via user's taps or shaking motion to select song titles and to enable mp3 player track switching. In another instance, portable or laptop computers include hard-

disk drives integrated with an accelerometer to detect displacement or falling incidents. For instance, when a hard-disk accelerometer detects a low-g condition, e.g., indicating free-fall and expected shock, a hard-disk write feature may be temporarily disabled to avoid accidental data overwriting and prevent stored data corruption. After free-fall and expected shock, the hard-disk write feature is enabled to allow data to be written to one or more hard-disk tracks. Still others including medical product manufacturers utilize accelerometers to measure depth of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) chest compressions. Sportswear manufacturers, e.g., Nike sports watches and footwear, incorporate accelerometers to feedback speed and distance to a runner via a connected iPod® Nano.

Still others including manufacturers of conventional inertial navigation systems deploy one or more accelerometers as part of, for instance, on-board electronics of a vehicle, vessel, train and/or airplane. In addition to accelerometer measurements, conventional inertial navigation systems integrate one or more gyroscopes with the on-board electronics to assist tracking including performing various measurements, e.g., tilt, angle, and roll. More specifically, gyroscopes measure angular velocity, for instance, of a vehicle, vessel, train, and/or airplane in an inertial reference frame. The inertial reference frame, provided, for instance, by a human operator, a GPS receiver, or position and velocity measurements from one or more motion sensors.

More specifically, integration of measured inertial accelerations commences with, for instance, original velocity, for instance, of a vehicle, vessel, train, and/or airplane to yield updated inertial system velocities. Another integration of updated inertial system velocities yields an updated inertial system orientate, e.g., tilt, angle, and roll, within a system limited positioning accuracy. In one instance to improve positioning accuracy, conventional inertial navigation systems utilize GPS system outputs. In another instance to improve positioning accuracy, conventional inertial navigation systems intermittently reset to zero inertial tracking velocity, for instance, by stopping the inertial navigation system. In yet other examples, control theory and Kalman filtering provide a framework to combine motion sensor information in attempts to improve positional accuracy of the updated inertial system orientation.

Potential drawbacks of many conventional inertial navigation systems include electrical and mechanical hardware occupying a large real estate footprint and requiring complex electronic measurement and control circuitry with limited applicability to changed environmental conditions. Furthermore, many conventional inertial navigation system calculations are prone to accumulated acceleration and velocity measurement errors. For instance, many conventional inertial navigations accelerations and velocity measurement errors are on the order of 0.6 nautical miles per hour in position and tenths of a degree per hour in orientation.

In contrast to conventional inertial navigation systems, a conventional Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system uses Global Positioning Signals (GPS) to monitor and track location coordinates communicated between location coordinates monitoring satellites and an individual or an object having a GPS transceiver. In this system, GPS monitoring of location coordinates is practical when a GPS transceiver receives at least a minimal GPS signal level. However, a minimal GPS signal level may not be detectable when an individual or object is not located in a skyward position. For instance, when an individual or object carrying a GPS transceiver enters a covered structure, e.g., a garage, a parking structure, or a large building, GPS satellite communication signals may be

obstructed or partially blocked, hindering tracking and monitoring capability. Not only is a GPS transceiver receiving a weak GPS signal, but also the GPS transceiver is depleting battery power in failed attempts to acquire communications signals from one or more location coordinates monitoring satellites, e.g., GPS satellites, or out-of-range location coordinates reference towers. Furthermore, weak GPS communication signals may introduce errors in location coordinates information.

In summary, electronic tracking device and methodology is needed that provides additional advantages over conventional systems such as improved power management, e.g., efficient use of battery power, and provide other improvements including supplementing conventional electronic tracking device monitoring, e.g., increased measurement accuracy of location coordinates of objects and individuals traveling into and/or through a structure, e.g., a partially covered building, a parking structure, or a substantially enclosed structure, such as a basement or a storage area in a high-rise office building.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In a first aspect of the present invention, a portable electronic apparatus for a tracking device is disclosed. The electronic apparatus includes a transceiver, an accelerometer, and an antenna. The antenna is disposed on the tracking device. The antenna is configured to communicate signal strength to a signal processor associated with the tracking device. In one variant, responsive to the signal strength, a battery management module (e.g., battery monitor) controls electronic components associated with the tracking device. In one variant, an accelerometer performs an acceleration measurement. In one variant, prior or nearby location coordinates associated with the tracking device are utilized or assist to compute current location coordinates information of the tracking device.

In a second aspect of the present invention, a method is disclosed to communicate location coordinates of a first, tracking device. In this method, a transceiver communicates measured signal strength. In response to measured signal strength level, a power management circuitry (e.g., battery monitor) controls power levels associated with the first tracking device to reduce or increase power consumption of a transceiver and its associated circuitry. In one variant, a user defines a first signal level, e.g., a threshold level, to commence accelerometer measurements. In one variant, if a first signal level is detected, an accelerometer measures displacement from prior location coordinates of the first tracking device. In another variant, if a first signal level is detected, an accelerometer measures relative displacement from prior location coordinates of a second tracking device. In yet another variant, if a first signal level is detected, the relative displacement is utilized to compute current location coordinates information of the first tracking device. In another variant, the accelerometer may be activated to measure impacts of an object or an individual to determine if the object or individual may be medical attention (e.g., be injured).

These and other embodiments, aspects, advantages, and features of the present invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows, and in part will become apparent to those skilled in the art by reference to the following description of the invention and referenced drawings or by practice of the invention. The aspects, advantages and features of the invention are realized and attained by means of the instrumentalities, procedures, and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 illustrates a schematic of an electronic tracking device in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 illustrates a location tracking system associated with the electronic tracking device and the wireless network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 illustrates a flow diagram to manage and control circuitry associated with the electronic tracking device of FIGS. 1 and 2 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Reference is now made to the drawings wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout.

As used herein, the terms “location coordinates” refer without limitation to any set or partial set of integer, real and/or complex location data or information such as longitudinal, latitudinal, and elevational positional coordinates.

As used herein, the terms “tracking device” and “electronic tracking device” refer to without, limitation, to any hybrid electronic circuit, integrated circuit (IC), chip, chip set, system-on-a-chip, microwave integrated circuit (MIC), Monolithic Microwave Integrated Circuit (MMIC), low noise amplifier, power amplifier, transceiver, receiver, transmitter and Application Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC) that may be constructed and/or fabricated. The chip or IC may be constructed (“fabricated”) on a small rectangle (a “die”) cut from, for example, a Silicon (or special applications, Sapphire), Gallium Arsenide, or Indium Phosphide wafer. The IC may be classified, for example, into analogue, digital, or hybrid (both analogue and digital on the same chip and or analog-to-digital converter). Digital integrated circuits may contain anything from one to millions of logic gates, invertors, and, or, nand, and nor gates, flipflops, multiplexors, etc. on a few square millimeters. The small size of these circuits allows high speed, low power dissipation, and reduced manufacturing cost compared with board-level integration.

As used herein, the terms “data transfer”, “tracking and location system”, “location and tracking system”, “location tracking system”, and “positioning system,” refer to without limitation to any system, that transfers and/or determines location coordinates using one or more devices, such as Global Positioning System (GPS).

As used herein, the terms “Global Positioning System” refer to without limitation to any services, methods or devices that utilize GPS technology to determine position of a GPS receiver based on measuring a signal transfer time of signals communicated between satellites having known positions and the GPS receiver. A signal transfer time is proportional, to a distance of a respective satellite from the GPS receiver. The distance between a satellite and a GPS receiver may be converted, utilizing signal propagation velocity, into a respective signal transfer time. The positional information of the GPS receiver is calculated based on distance calculations from at least four satellites to determine positional information of the GPS receiver.

As used herein, the terms “wireless network” refers to, without limitation, any digital, analog, microwave, and millimeter wave communication networks that transfer signals from one location to another location, such as, but not limited to IEEE 802.11g, Bluetooth, WiMax, IS-95, GSM, IS-95, CGM, CDMA, wCDMA, PDC, UMTS, TDMA, and FDMA, or combinations thereof.

Major Features

In one aspect, the present invention discloses an apparatus and method, to provide an improved capability electronic tracking device. In one embodiment, the device provides electronic circuitry including an accelerometer to measure location coordinates without requiring GPS signaling. In this embodiment, location coordinates of an electronic tracking device are measured when the electronic tracking device is located in a partially enclosed structure, e.g., a building or parking lot, up to a fully enclosed structure. In one embodiment, the electronic tracking device conserves battery power when the device is partially or fully blocked access to location coordinates from one or more GPS satellites, e.g., a primary location tracking system. In yet another embodiment, accelerometer measures force applied to the electronic tracking device and provides an alert, message to a guardian or other responsible person. In one embodiment, the alert message includes location coordinates of the electronic tracking device and other information, e.g., magnitude or nature of force, as well as possibility of injury of an object or individual having the electronic tracking device. As described throughout the following specification, the present invention generally provides a portable electronic device configuration for locating and tracking an individual or an object.

Exemplary Apparatus

Referring now to FIGS. 1-2 exemplary embodiments of the electronic tracking device of the invention are described in detail. Please note that the following discussions of electronics and components for an electronic tracking device to monitor and locate individuals are non-limiting; thus, the present invention may be useful in other electronic signal transferring and communication applications, such as electronic modules included in items such as: watches, calculators, clocks, computer keyboards, computer mice, and/or mobile phones to locate and track trajectory of movement and current location of these items within boundaries of or proximity to a room, building, city, state, and country.

Furthermore, it will be appreciated that while described primarily in the context of tracking individuals or objects, at least portions of the apparatus and methods described herein may be used in other applications, such as, utilized, without limitation, for control systems that monitor components such as transducers, sensors, and electrical, and/or optical components that are part of an assembly line process. Moreover, it will be recognized that the present invention may find utility beyond purely tracking and monitoring concerns. Myriad of other functions will be recognized by those of ordinary skill in the art given the present disclosure.

Electronic Tracking Device

Referring to FIG. 1, tracking device **100** contains various electronic components **101** such as transceiver **102**, signal processing circuitry **104** (e.g., a microprocessor or other signal logic circuitry), and accelerometer **130**. In one non-limiting example, the electronic components **101** are disposed, deposited, or mounted, on a substrate **107** (e.g., Printed Circuit Board (PCB)). The PCB **107**, for example, may be manufactured from: polyacrylic (PA), polycarbonate (PC), composite material, and acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene (ABS) substrates, blends or combinations thereof, or the like (as described in more detail, in incorporated by reference U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/933,024 filed on Oct. 31, 2007). The signal processing circuitry **104**, in one example, associated with the tracking device **100** configured to store a first identification code, produce a second identification code, determine location coordinates, and generate a positioning signal that contains location data (as described in more detail in incorporated by reference U.S. patent application Ser. No.

11/753,979 filed on May 25, 2007). For instance, the location data includes longitudinal, latitudinal, and elevational position of a tracking device, current address or recent address of the tracking device, a nearby landmark to the tracking device, and the like. In one example, electronic tracking device **100** is portable and mobile and fits easily within a compact volume, such as standard pocket of an individual's shirt having approximate dimensions of 1.5 inch by 2.5 inch by 1.0 inch. In yet another example, electronic tracking device **100** may be one integrated circuit having dimensionality in the mm range in all directions (or even smaller).

In one embodiment, location tracking circuitry **114**, calculates location data received and sends the data to signal processing circuitry **104**. Memory **112** stores operating software and data, for instance, communicated to and from signal processing circuit **104** and/or location tracking circuitry **114**, e.g., GPS logic circuitry. In one embodiment, a signal detecting circuitry **115** detects and measures signal power level. In another embodiment, the signal processing circuitry **104** processes and measures signal power level. Battery level detection circuitry (e.g., battery level monitor **116**) detects a battery level of battery **118**, which contains one or more individual units or a plurality of units grouped as a single unit.

In one non-limiting example, antennas **122a**, **122b** electrically couple to transceiver **102**. In one variant, transceiver **102** includes one integrated circuit or, in another embodiment, may be multiple individual circuits or integrated circuits. Transceiver **102** communicates a signal including location data between tracking device **100** and the monitoring station **110**, for example, by any of the following including: wireless network, wireless data transfer station, wired telephone, and Internet channel. A demodulator circuit **126** extracts baseband signals, for instance at 100 KHz, including tracking device configuration and software updates, as well as converts a low-frequency AC signal to a DC voltage level. The DC voltage level, in one example, is supplied to battery charging circuitry **128** to recharge a battery level of the battery **118**. In one embodiment, a user of monitoring station **110**, e.g., a mobile personal digital assistant, mobile phone, or the like, by listening (or downloading) one or more advertisements to reduce and/or shift, usage charges to another user, account, or database (as described in more detail in previous incorporated by reference U.S. patent application Ser. Nos. 11/784,400 and 11/784,318 each filed on Apr. 5, 2007).

In another embodiment, an accelerometer **130**, for example, a dual-axis accelerometer **130**, e.g. ADXL320 integrated circuit manufactured by Analog Devices having two substantially orthogonal beams, may be utilized. The data sheet ADXH320L from Analog Devices is incorporated by reference. In one embodiment, the accelerometer **130** activates upon one or more designated antenna(s), e.g., antennas **122a**, **122b**, detecting a first signal level, e.g., a low signal level or threshold value, as specified by, for instance, a user or system administrator. In one variant of this embodiment, electrical circuitry associated with GPS signal acquisition, e.g., all or a portion of amplifier block **120**, may be, for instance, placed on standby or in a sleep mode. In another embodiment, the accelerometer **130** remains in a standby mode until, for instance, a system administrator, a specified time period, or a user activates the accelerometer **130**. In one embodiment, the amplifier block **120** includes multiple electronic functions and blocks including a low noise amplifier, a power amplifier, a RF power switch, or the like, placed in a sleep or standby mode, for instance, to conserve a battery level of the battery **118**.

In another variant of this embodiment, circuitry, such as amplifier block **120** or location tracking circuitry **114**, may be

placed in a sleep or standby mode to conserve a battery level of the battery **118**. In one variant, the tracking device **100** periodically checks availability of GPS signal, e.g., performs a GPS signal acquisition to determine if a receive communication signal is above a first signal level. Referring to embodiment depicted in FIG. 2, electronic tracking device **100** exits an opening **150** in partially enclosed structure **210**; thus, electronic tracking device **100** may resume GPS signal acquisition using GPS satellite **143** (e.g., in response to a periodic check by the tracking device **100** of a receive communication signal level above a first signal level).

In one embodiment, system administrator selects a signal noise bandwidth, e.g., within a range of 3 to 500 Hz, of the accelerator **130** to measure dynamic acceleration (e.g., due to vibration forces applied, to electronic tracking device **100**). In another embodiment, system administrator selects a signal noise bandwidth, e.g., within a range of 3 to 500 Hz, to measure static acceleration (due to gravitational forces applied to electronic tracking device **100**). In particular, external forces on electronic tracking device **100** cause, for example, internal structural movements, e.g., deflection of dual-axis beams, of the accelerometer **130**. The deflection of dual-axis beams generates differential voltage(s).

Differential voltage(s) are proportional to acceleration measurements, e.g., discrete acceleration measurements, of electronic tracking device **100**, for instance in x, y, and z directions. Differential voltage(s), in one instance, are relative to, for instance, last known GPS location coordinates of electronic tracking device **100**. By performing electronic device proximity measurements, e.g., measuring acceleration vectors of electronic tracking device **100** at time intervals, e.g., T1, T2, T3 . . . TN, monitoring station **110** computes electronic tracking device velocity at time intervals, e.g., T1, T2, T3 . . . TN. In one embodiment, time intervals, e.g., T1, T2, and T3 . . . TN are measured in accordance with instructions by a system administrator or user. In one embodiment, time intervals are selected within a range of one micro-second to several minutes.

In one embodiment, the monitoring station **110** performs an integration of the acceleration measurements as a function of time to compute electronic tracking device velocity at time intervals, e.g., T1, T2, and T3 . . . TN. By referencing prior location coordinates, e.g., last known accurate location data of the electronic tracking device **100** or last known location data of nearby electronic tracking device (e.g., second tracking device **101** in proximity to electronic tracking device **100**), monitoring station **110** computes a current location of electronic tracking device **100** utilizing electronic tracking device velocity computations. Advantageously, monitoring station **110**, in an above described embodiment, uses above described device proximity measurements to monitor current location data of electronic tracking device **100** without connectivity to receive communication signals from GPS satellites.

In one embodiment, the monitoring station **110** may include a mobile phone having connectivity to wireless network **140** electrically coupled to electronic tracking device **100** (FIG. 2). In this variant, the wireless network **140** resides or circulates within at least a portion of a semi-enclosed, partially-enclosed, or fully enclosed structure, e.g., building, parking structure, closet, storage room, or the like (e.g., structure **210** in FIG. 2). Furthermore, in one embodiment, the present invention conserves battery power by placing on standby, low power mode, or disabling entirely GPS signal, acquisition, circuitry and other associated devices, e.g., all or a portion of amplifier block **120** including power amplifiers, LNAs, switches, and the like. Furthermore, during supple-

mental location coordinates tracking, e.g., electronic device proximity measurements, the transceiver circuitry (e.g., transceiver **102**, location tracking circuitry **114**, and signal, processing circuitry **104**) consumes reduced battery power for GPS circuitry while the electronic tracking device **100** communicates displacement vectors (e.g., differential location coordinates) to monitoring station **110** (e.g., a mobile phone, a personal digital assistant) through a wireless network **140**. As described above, when GPS signaling is not practicable, electronic device proximity measurements provide differential location coordinate information to calculate current location coordinate information.

In one embodiment, accelerometer, e.g., accelerometer **130**, determines if electronic tracking device **100** in a stationary position for a period, for instance, designated by system administrator or user. For example, electronic tracking device **100** may be, for example, located on a counter top, within, a pocket of clothing, or in suitcase, not being moved, or not currently in use. Continuing with this embodiment, electronic tracking device **100** communicates a code, e.g., a stationary acknowledgement code, to communication network, e.g., wireless network **140**. In one variant, when or if monitoring station **110** requests location data through communication network, electronic tracking device **100** determines whether it is located in a stationary or substantially stationary position and electronic tracking device **100** communicates its last-known location to the monitoring station **110** without accessing or requiring GPS signaling or active GPS circuitry, e.g., location tracking circuitry **114**. Advantageously, in this embodiment, when electronic tracking device **100** does not utilize and require GPS circuitry, e.g., location tracking circuitry **114**, or functionality, the power resources are preserved of battery **118** in contrast to many conventional GPS communication systems, which continue powering-on GPS circuitry. In one embodiment, electronic tracking device **130** associated with a person or object remains at a substantially stationary position approximately one-fourth to one-third of a calendar day; thus, this feature of not accessing GPS circuitry preserves battery power.

In another embodiment, an accelerometer, such as accelerometer **130**, detects tapping against electronic tracking device **100**. For instance, upon wake-up, user prompt, system, administrator prompt, or active, accelerometer **130** detects a person or object tapping a sequence on electronic tracking device **100**. In one embodiment, electronic tracking device **100** includes digital signal programming circuitry (such as of signal, processing circuitry **104**). The digital signal programming circuitry recognizes programmed motions received by accelerometer, such as accelerometer **130**, and transmits an alert message to the monitoring station **110** upon receiving a recognized motion pattern. For example, electronic tracking device **100** may be programmed to recognize an "SOS tap cadence". Thus, it electronic tracking device **100** is repeatedly tapped, for instance, in a "dot-dot-dot, dash-dash-dash, dot-dot-dot" pattern, signal processing circuitry **104** recognizes a motion pattern and transmit an alert message to wireless network **114** to monitoring station **110**. In one instance, alert message may be associated with a distress pattern and may require an appropriate response. In one variant, the accelerometer may recognize when an object or individual spins or turns motion of electronic tracking device **100**. Continuing with this embodiment, signal processing circuitry **104** recognizes programmed motions, and transceiver **102** transmits an alert message to wireless network **114** associated with programmed motions. In another variant, electronic tracking device **100** is programmed to recognize other motion patterns, such as when it is tumbled or flipped. Depending upon

duration, time, or cadence of these movements or motion patterns, electronic tracking device **100** communicates an alert message to the wireless network **114**. In one variant, wireless network **114** performs an appropriate action, such as communicating information signal to monitoring station **110**.

In another example, physical impacts on electronic tracking device **100** are measured to determine if an individual or object may be injured. In one embodiment, magnitude of displacement vectors may be measured by one or more accelerometers, such as accelerometer **130**, disposed at various inclinations and orientations, e.g., disposed substantially orthogonal to one another. Continuing with this embodiment, when a measured physical impact is above a predetermined level, an object or individual associated with electronic tracking device **100** may have suffered a fall or be in need of medical attention. In one variant of this embodiment, a user (e.g., a system administrator, or person located in a contact book) at monitoring station **110** becomes alerted, e.g., by text message, email, or voice mail (as more fully described in previously incorporated by reference U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/935,901 filed on Nov. 6, 2007, entitled "System and Method for Creating and Managing a Personalized Web Interface for Monitoring Location Information on Individuals and Objects Using Tracking Devices"). In one variant of this embodiment, if a user does not affirmatively respond, another individual, guardian, medical personnel, or law enforcement officer is contacted by monitoring station **110** (as more fully described in Ser. No. 11/935,901). In yet another variant of this embodiment, monitoring station **110** continues to contact individuals until the alert message is affirmatively answered.

Battery Conservation

Referring to FIG. 3, a flow chart **300** illustrates battery conservation for electronic tracking device **100** as described in FIGS. 1, 2 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In step **302**, antenna **122a** associated with electronic tracking device **100** acquires a snapshot of receive communication signal including location coordinates data. In step **304**, processing unit **104** processes the snapshot of receive communication signal including location coordinates data. In step **306**, processing unit **104** determines a power level of receive communication signal.

In step **308**, accelerometer **130** activates if a power level of the receive communication signal is insufficient for processing. In one variant of step **308**, accelerometer **130** measures acceleration of electronic tracking device **100** at time intervals, e.g., T1, T2, T3 . . . TN.

In step **310**, processing unit **104** computes current location coordinates using acceleration measurements. In step **312**, all or a portion of amplifier block **120** and associated circuitry, e.g., location tracking circuitry, are activated at selected time intervals to determine if receive communication signal is of sufficient signal strength. In one variation of step **312**, upon determining receive communication signal of sufficient signal strength, location tracking circuitry **114** are activated, and processing unit **104** determines location coordinates from the receive communication signal. In another variation of step **312**, upon determining receive communication signal of sufficient signal strength, accelerometer **130** is deactivated and location tracking circuitry **114** are activated, and processing unit **104** determines location coordinates from the receive communication signal.

It is noted that many variations of the methods described above may be utilized consistent with the present invention. Specifically, certain steps are optional and may be performed or deleted as desired. Similarly, other steps (such as additional data sampling, processing, filtration, calibration, or mathematical analysis for example) may be added to the foregoing

embodiments. Additionally, the order of performance of certain steps may be permuted, or performed in parallel (or series) if desired. Hence, the foregoing embodiments are merely illustrative of the broader methods of the invention disclosed herein.

While the above detailed description has shown, described, and pointed out novel features of the invention as applied to various embodiments, it will be understood that various omissions, substitutions and changes in the form and details of the device or process illustrated may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. The foregoing description is of the best mode presently contemplated of carrying out the invention. This description is in no way meant to be limiting, but rather should be taken as illustrative of the general principles of the invention. The scope of the invention should be determined with reference to the claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A portable electronic tracking device to monitor location coordinates of one or more individuals and objects, the device comprising:

transceiver circuitry to receive at least one portion of a receive communication signal comprising location coordinates information;

accelerometer circuitry to measure displacements of the portable electronic tracking device, wherein the displacements comprise movements of an object or individual associated with the device;

a battery power monitor configured to activate and deactivate at least one portion of signaling circuitry in response to the accelerometer circuitry detecting a substantially stationary position of the electronic tracking device since last known location coordinate measurement; and

processor circuitry configured to process the displacements, to associate the displacements with a specified pattern, and to generate an alert message in response to the specified pattern.

2. The device of claim 1, wherein the accelerometer comprises a multi-beam structure having at least one beam, of the multi-beam structure comprising a directional orientation substantially orthogonal to at least one other beam of the multi-beam structure.

3. The device of claim 1, wherein the processor circuitry is further configured to compute the location coordinates of the device from the at least one portion of the receive communication signal and the displacements of the electronic tracking device.

4. The device of claim 1, wherein the displacements are transmitted to a monitoring station to determine current location coordinates information of the portable electronic tracking device based in part on the displacements and at least one of last known location coordinates of the electronic tracking device, last known location coordinates of another electronic tracking device, and landmark location coordinates.

5. The device of claim 1, wherein the battery power monitor is configured to deactivate at least one portion of the signaling circuitry when the accelerometer circuitry detects a substantially stationary position of the electronic tracking device.

6. The device of claim 1, wherein the battery power monitor is configured to activate at least one portion of the signaling circuitry when the accelerometer circuitry detects that the electronic tracking device is not in a substantially stationary position.

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7. The device of claim 1, wherein the transceiver is configured to receive the at least one portion of the receive communication signal from a GPS satellite and from a wireless communication network.

8. The device of claim 1, wherein the accelerometer is configured to measure a physical impact to the device.

9. The device of claim 8, wherein a user is alerted of the physical impact based in part on a magnitude value of the physical impact.

10. The device of claim 9, wherein the accelerometer is further configured to measure a pattern or characteristic of physical impacts to the device.

11. A method to monitor location coordinates of one or more individuals or objects, the method comprising:

receiving at transceiver circuitry of a portable electronic tracking device at least one portion of a receive communication signal comprising location coordinates information;

measuring displacements of the portable electronic tracking device, wherein the displacements comprise movements of an object or individual associated with the device;

associating the displacements with a specified pattern and generating an alert message in response to the specified pattern;

activating and deactivating at least one portion of signaling circuitry in response to detecting a substantially stationary position of the electronic tracking device since last known location coordinate measurement; and

processing the at least one portion of the receive communication signal using processor circuitry.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising computing the location coordinates of the portable electronic tracking device from the at least one portion of the receive communication signal and the displacements of the portable electronic tracking device.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the displacements are transmitted to a monitoring station to determine current location coordinates information of the electronic tracking device based in part on the displacements and at least one of last known location coordinates of the electronic tracking device,

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last known location coordinates of another electronic tracking device, and landmark location coordinates.

14. The method of claim 11, further comprising calculating location data based on at least one of the at least one portion of the receive communication signal and the displacements.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein at least one portion of the signaling circuitry is deactivated when a substantially stationary position of the electronic tracking device is detected.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein at least one portion of the signaling circuitry is activated when the electronic tracking device is detected to not be in a substantially stationary position.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein the at least one portion of the receive communication signal is received from a GPS satellite or from a wireless communication network.

18. The method of claim 11, further comprising measuring a physical impact to the electronic tracking device.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein a user is alerted of the physical impacts based in part on a magnitude value of the physical impact.

20. A portable electronic tracking device to monitor location coordinates of one or more individuals and objects, the device comprising:

transceiver circuitry to receive at least one portion of a receive communication signal comprising location coordinates information;

accelerometer circuitry to measure displacements of the portable electronic tracking device and to measure a pattern or characteristic of physical impacts to the device;

a battery power monitor configured to activate and deactivate at least one portion of signaling circuitry in response to the accelerometer circuitry detecting a substantially stationary position of the electronic tracking device since last known location coordinate measurement; and

processor circuitry configured to process the displacements.

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