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Henry et al.

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(54) **PORTABLE GLOVEBOX AND FILTRATION SYSTEM**

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**⁷ **G01M 3/26**; G01M 3/28;
G01M 3/32

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **73/40**; 73/49.3

(58) **Field of Search** 73/40, 49.3, 52

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A portable containment system includes a glovebox apparatus, a self-contained filter unit, and removable conduits extending therebetween. The glovebox apparatus includes a first module for releasably covering a first sidewall opening. The first module, which has body and flange portions, has a storage position where the body portion is positioned through the first sidewall opening into the glovebox interior and an operative position where the body portion is positioned exterior of the glovebox. The glovebox apparatus includes second modules for releasably covering a second sidewall opening where the second modules are smaller than the first sidewall opening for inserting the second modules into the interior of the glovebox for storage. The filter unit includes a plurality of gas filters, an air pump, and detectors for monitoring the air flow through the system.

7 Claims, 15 Drawing Sheets

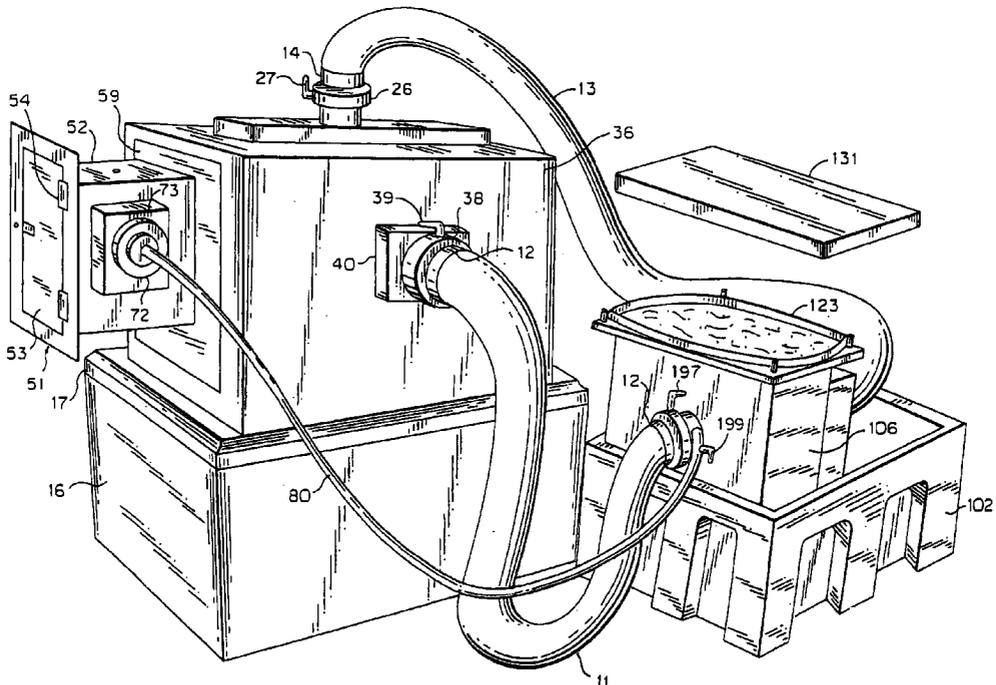


FIG. 1

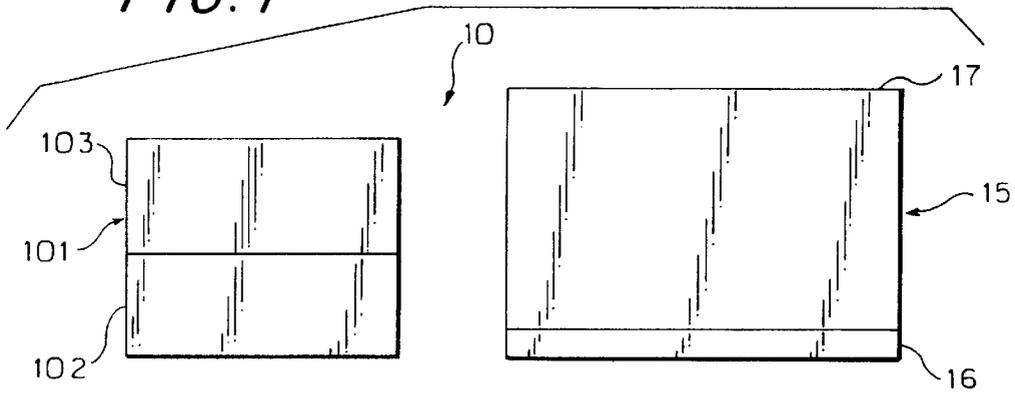
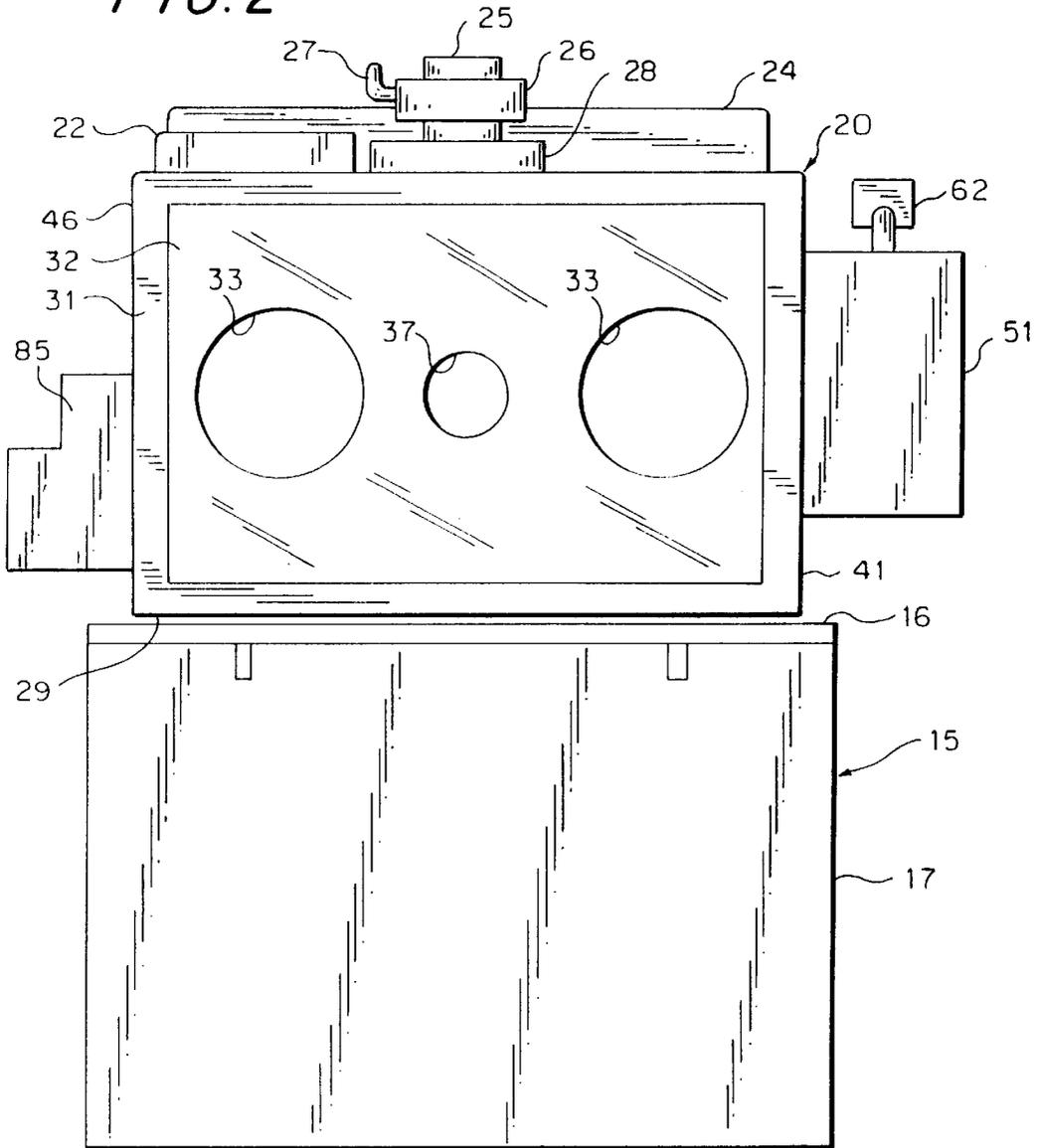


FIG. 2



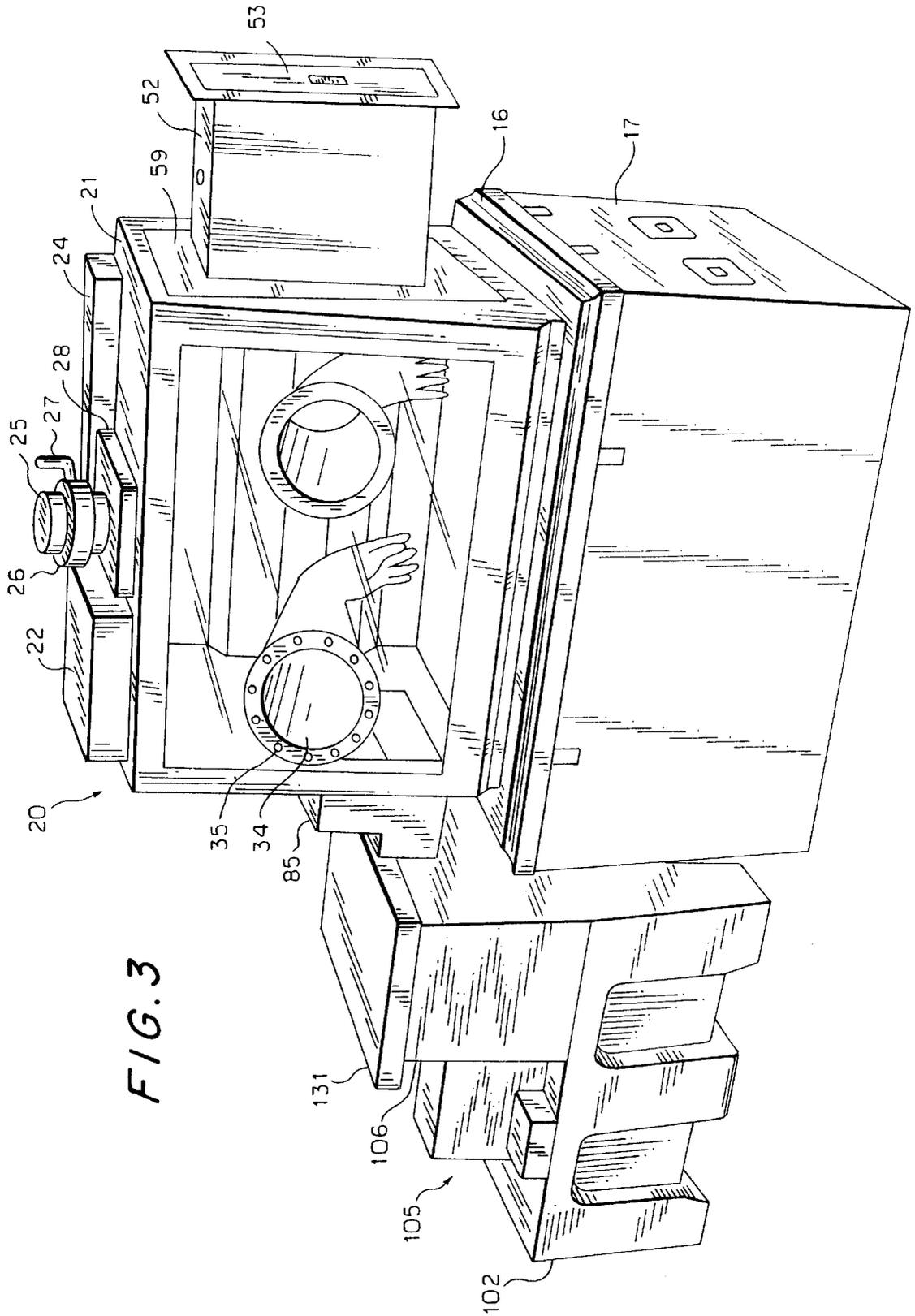


FIG. 3

FIG. 4

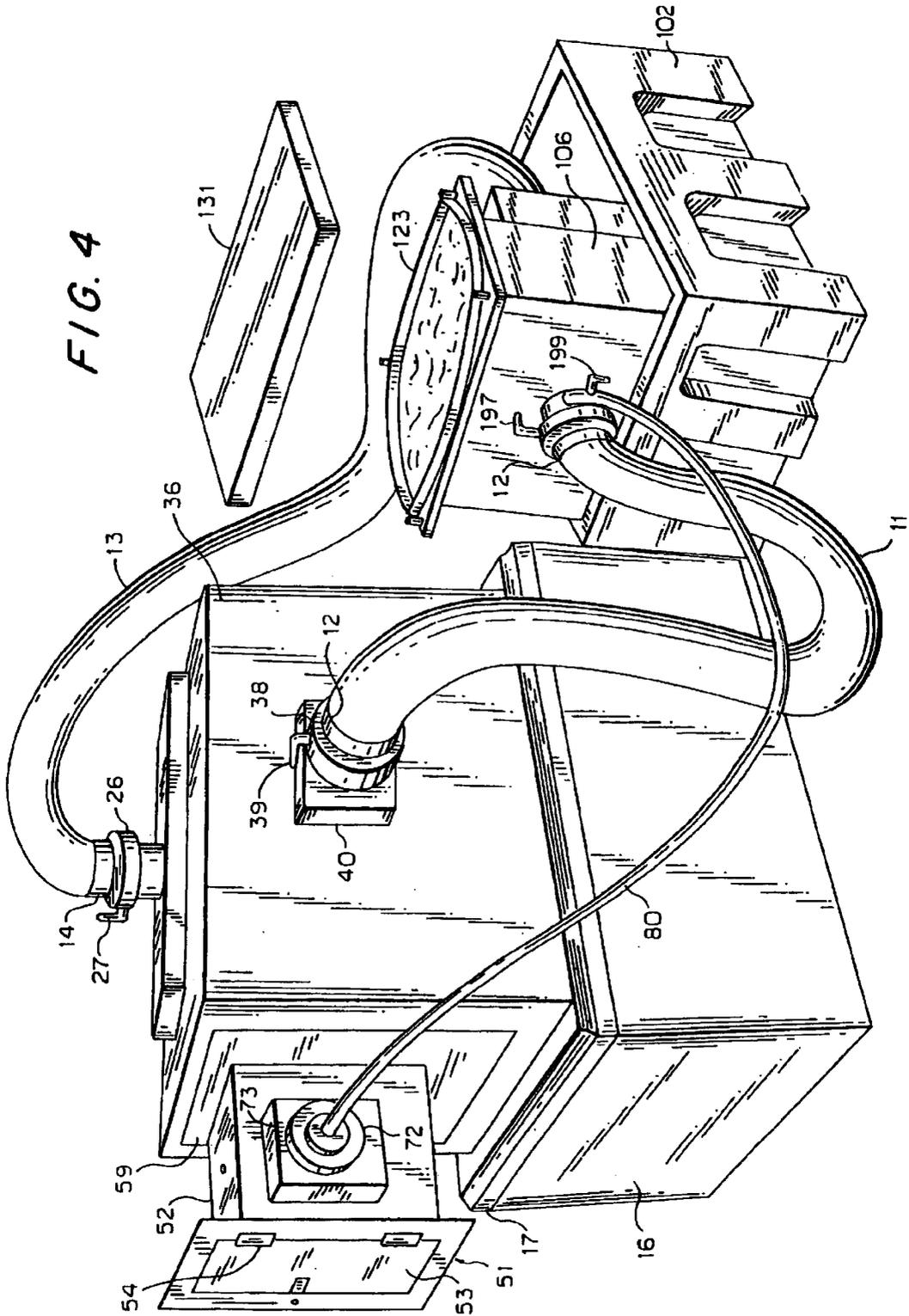


FIG. 5

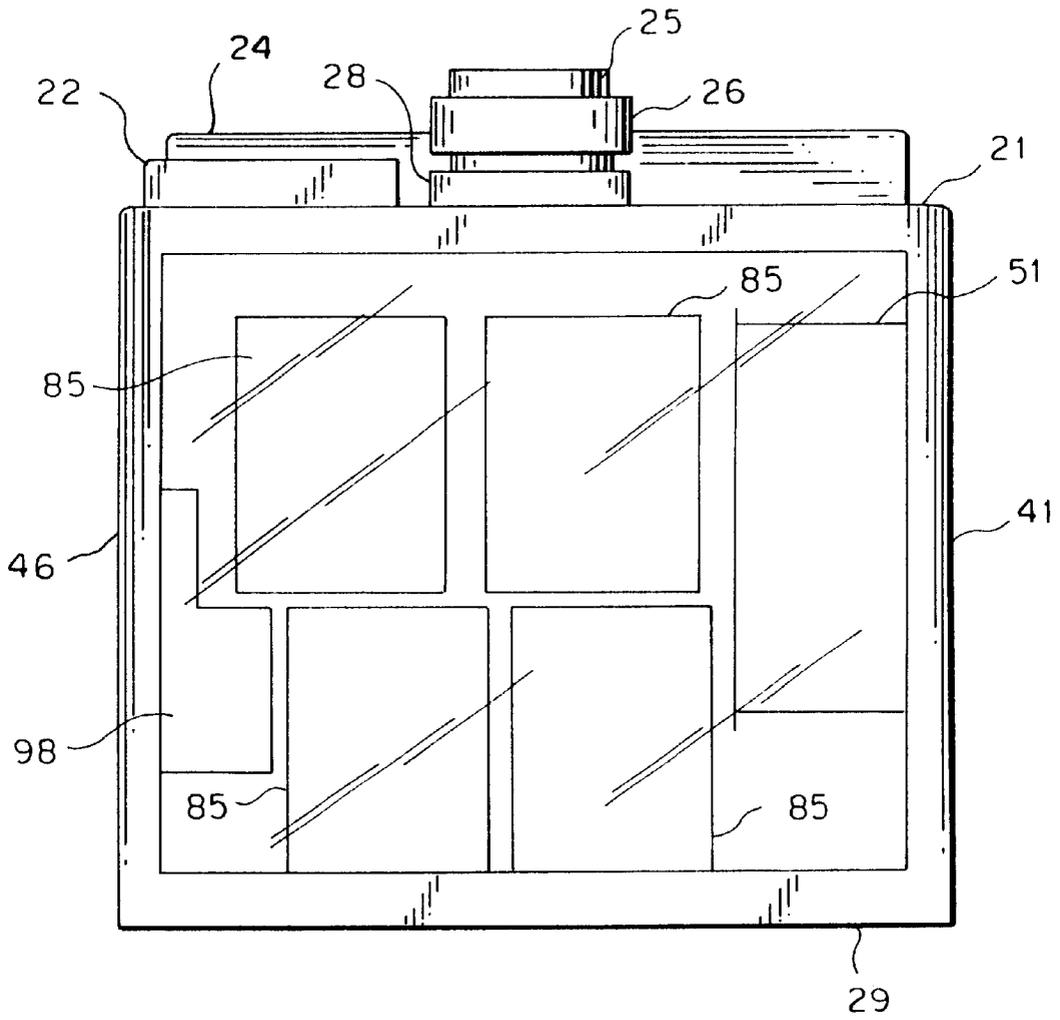


FIG. 6

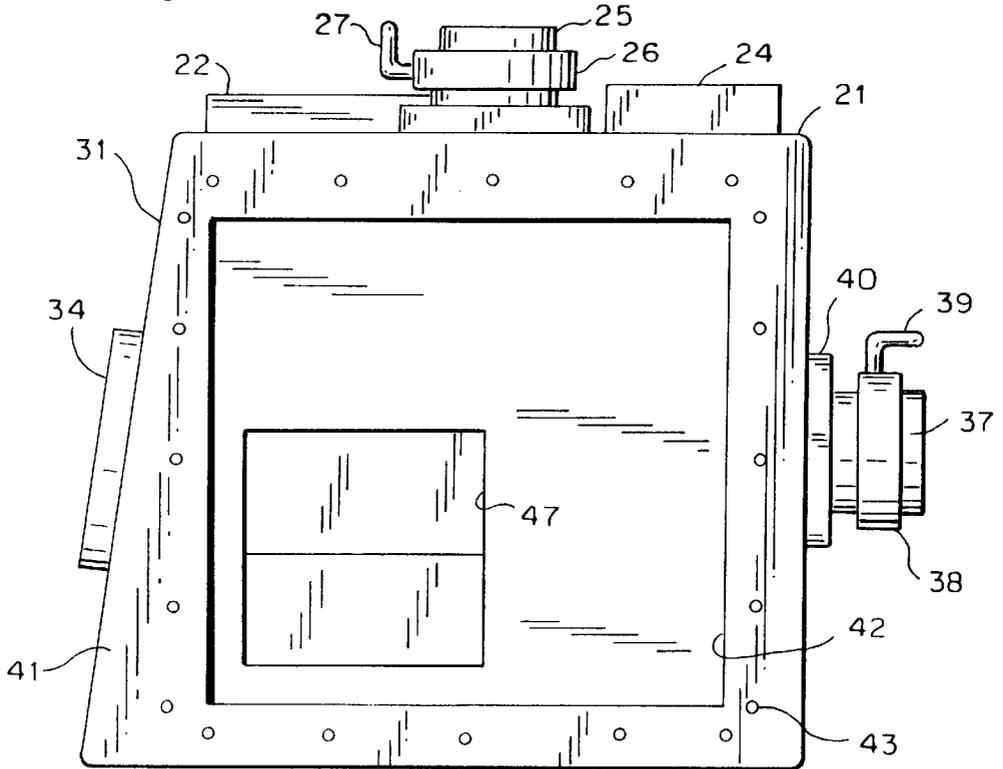
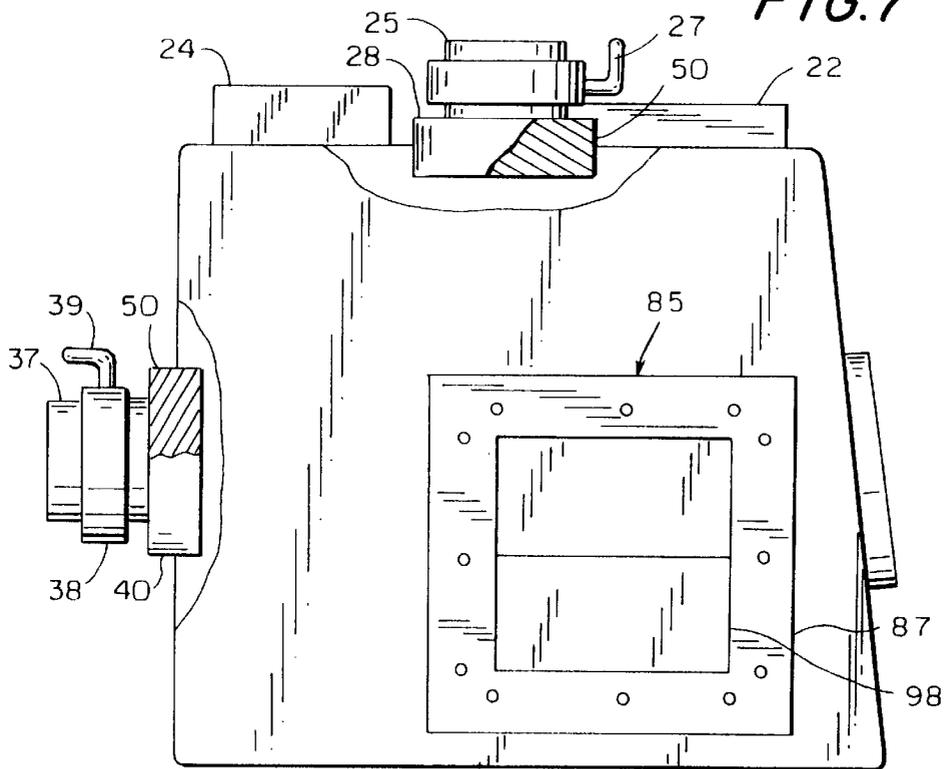


FIG. 7



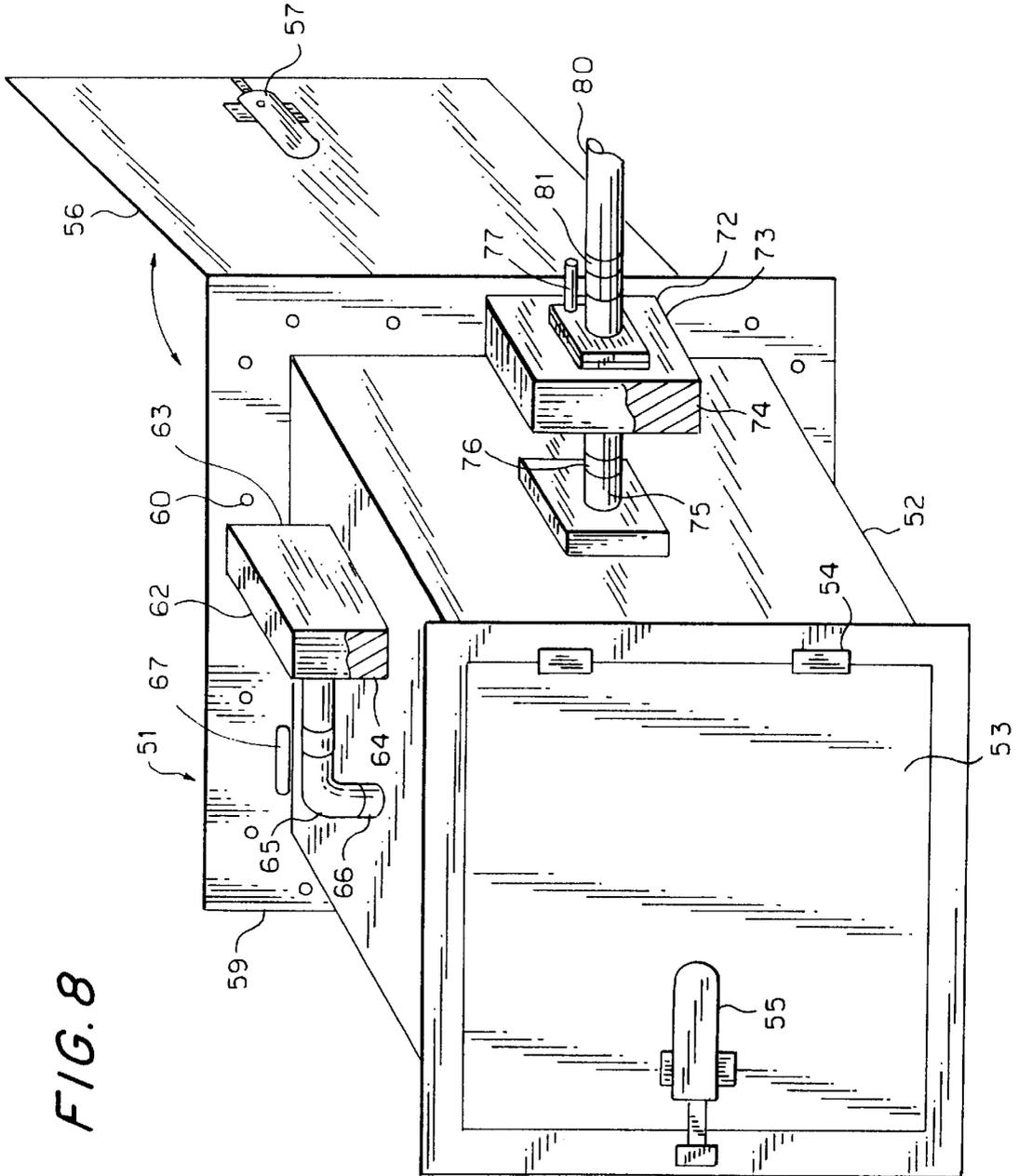


FIG. 8

FIG. 9A

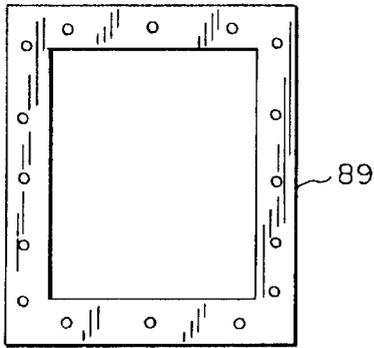


FIG. 9B

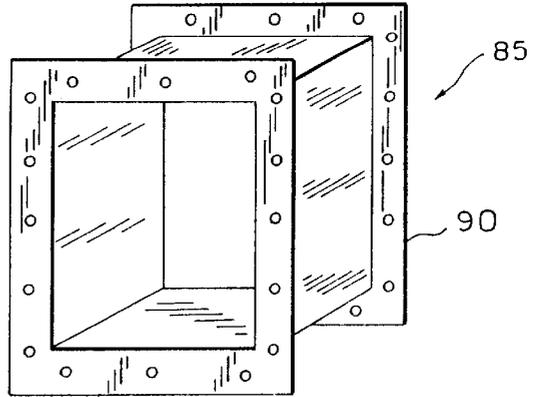


FIG. 9C

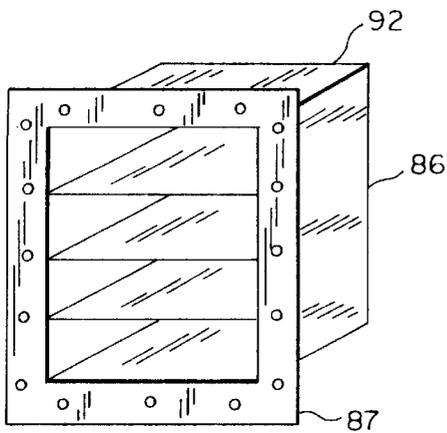


FIG. 9D

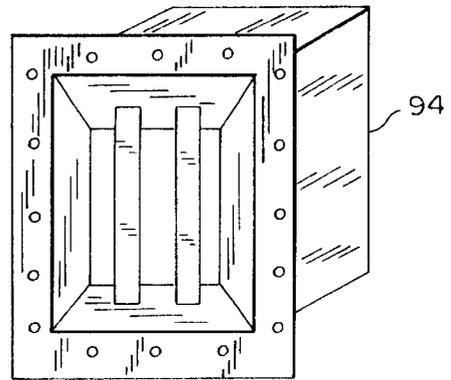


FIG. 9E

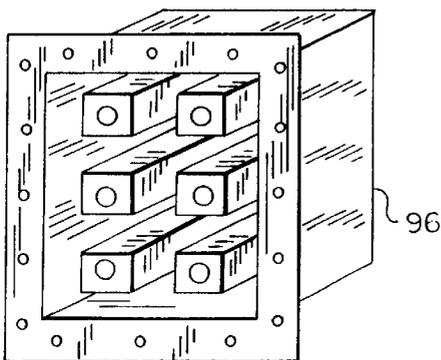
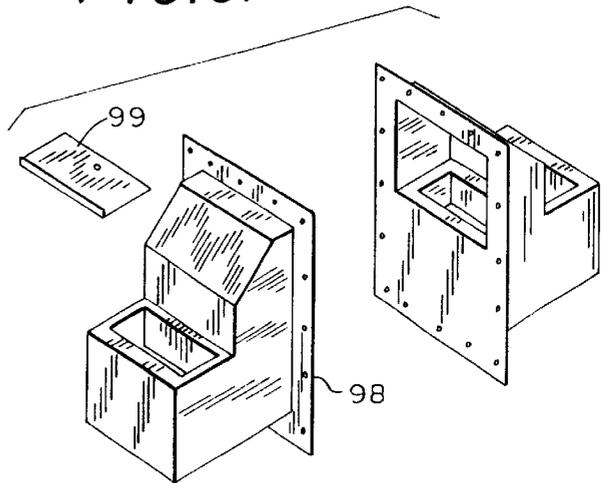


FIG. 9F



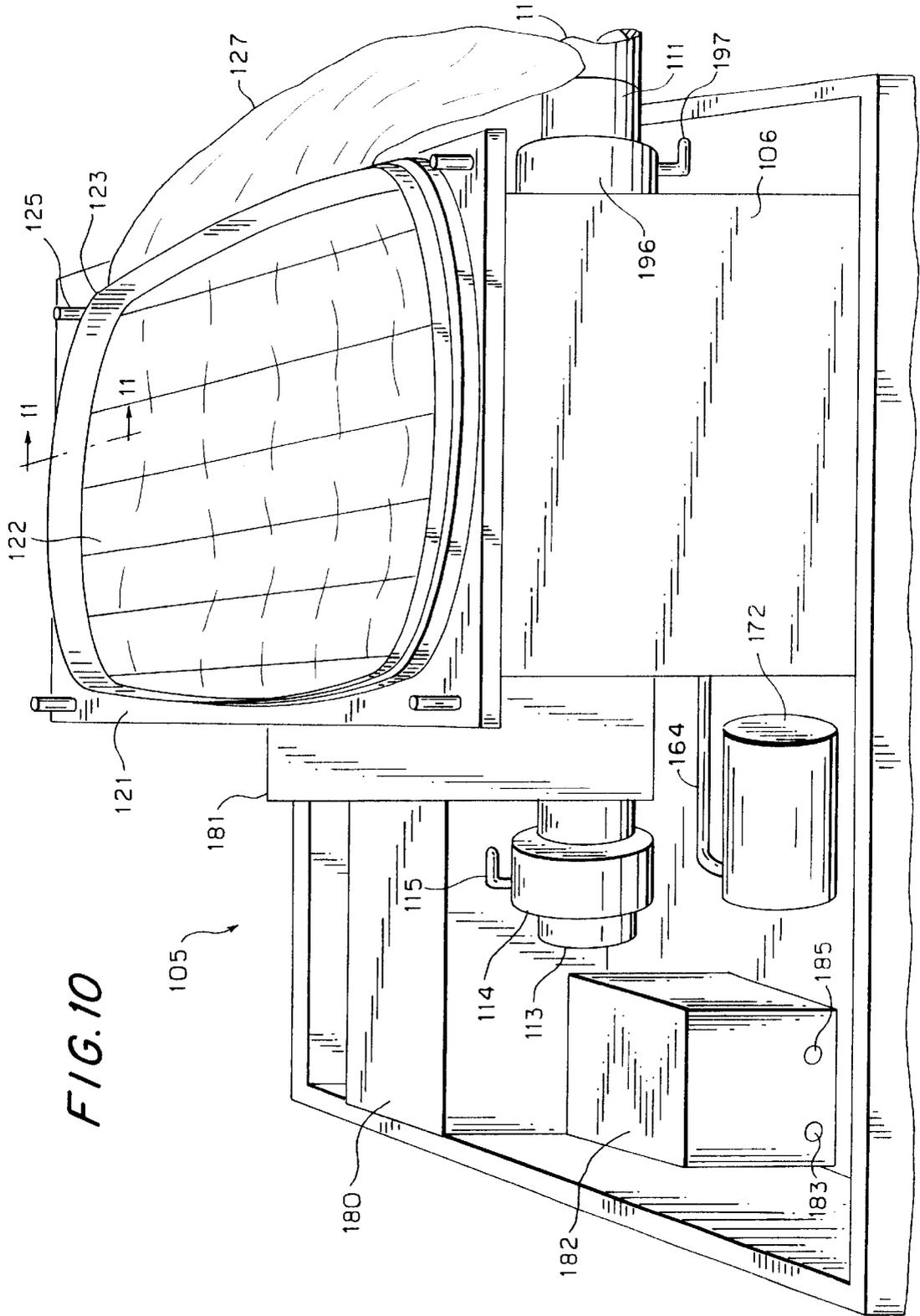


FIG. 10

FIG. 11

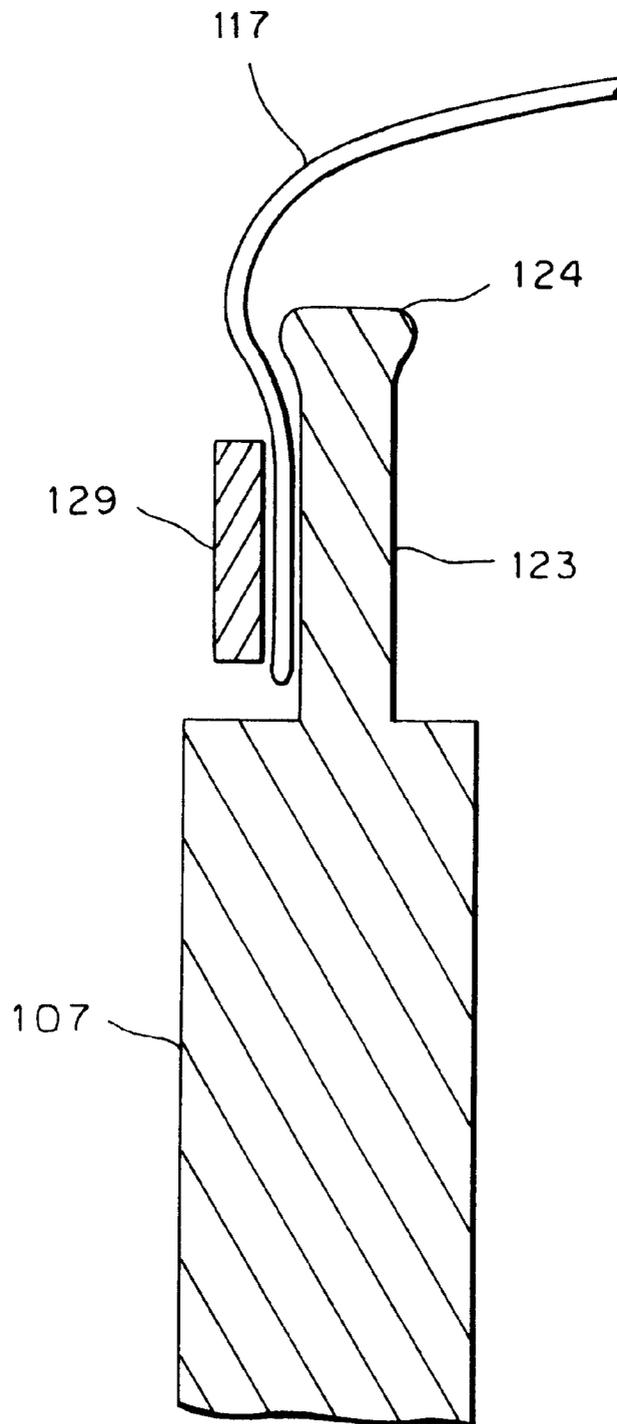


FIG. 12

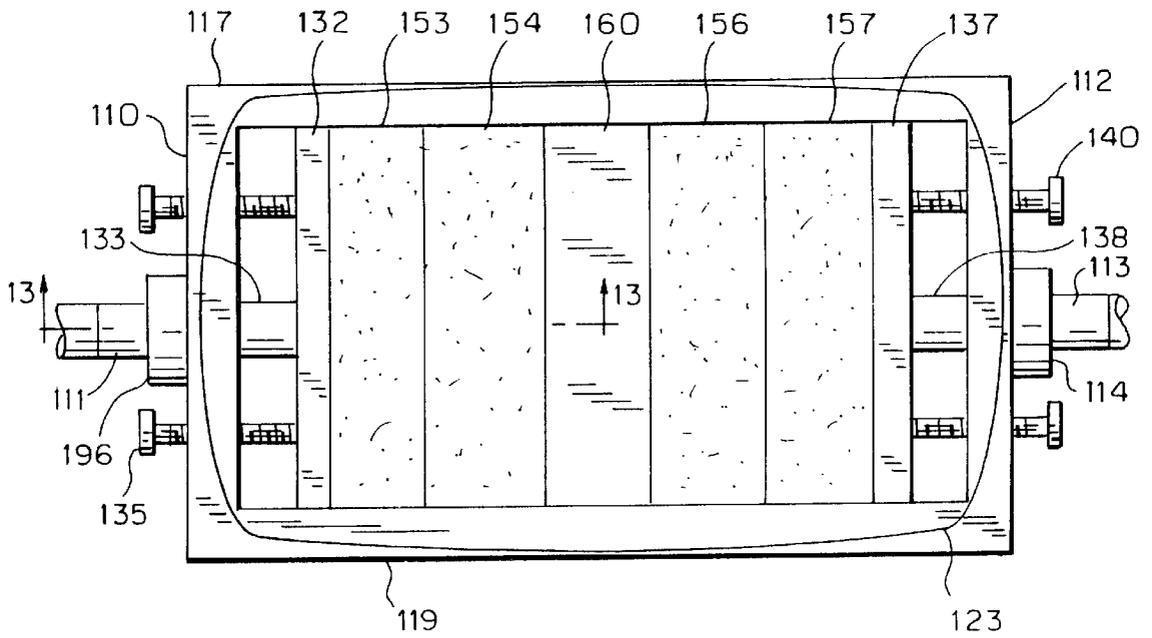


FIG. 13

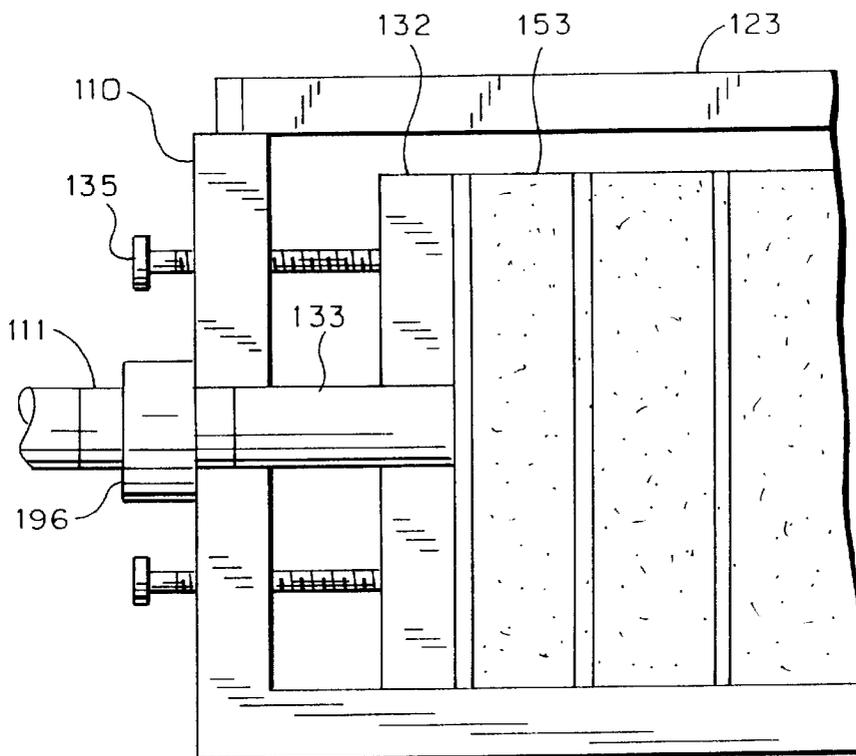


FIG. 14

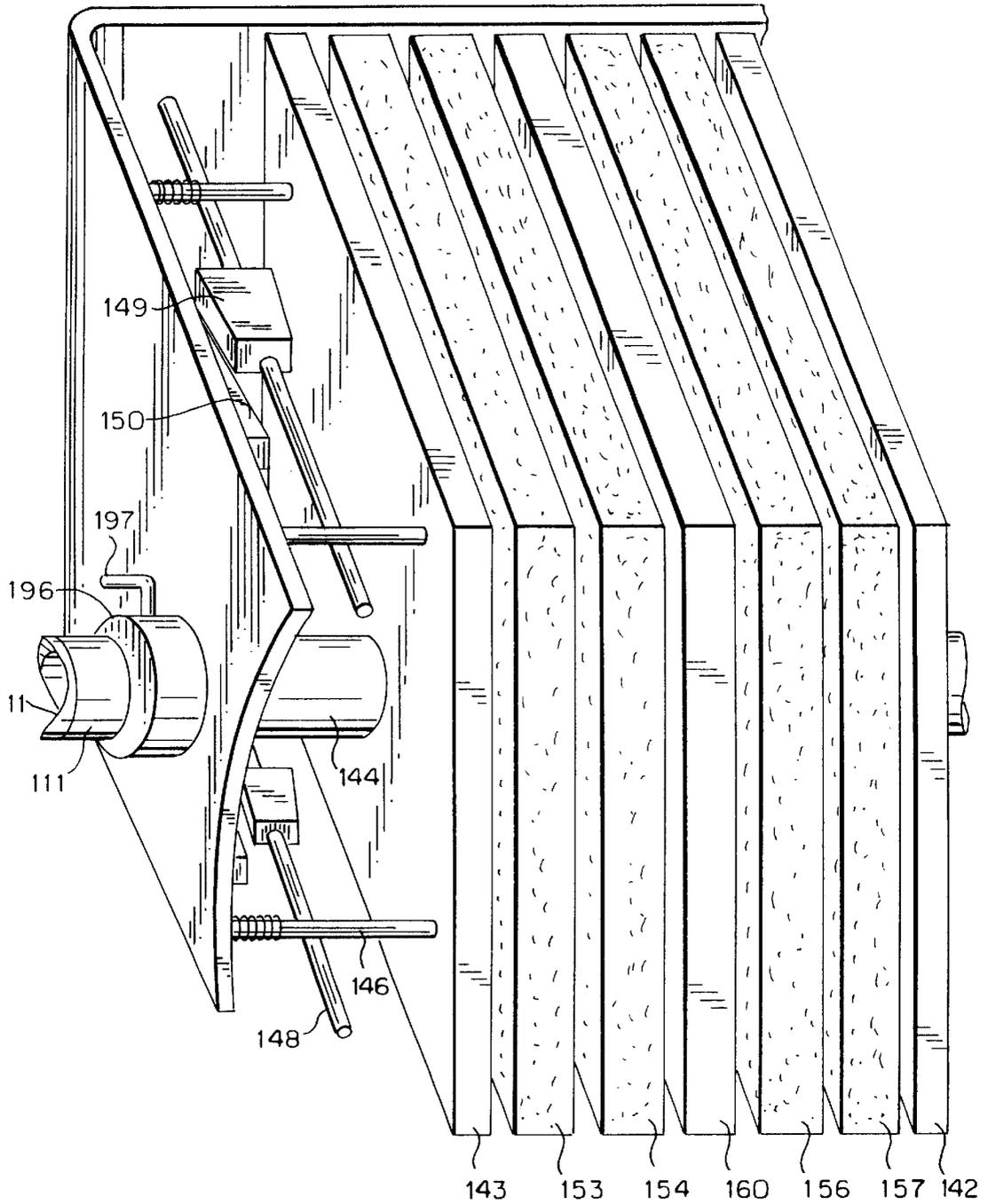
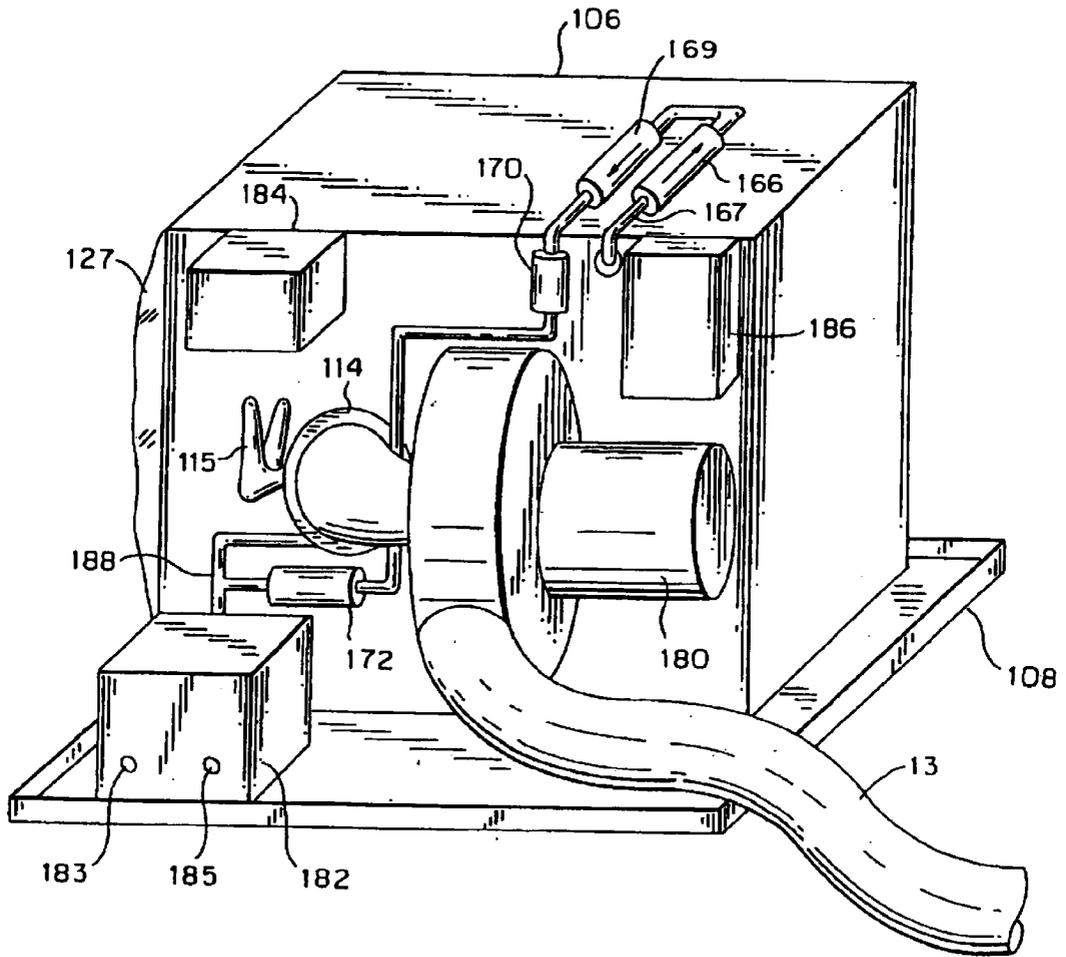


FIG. 15



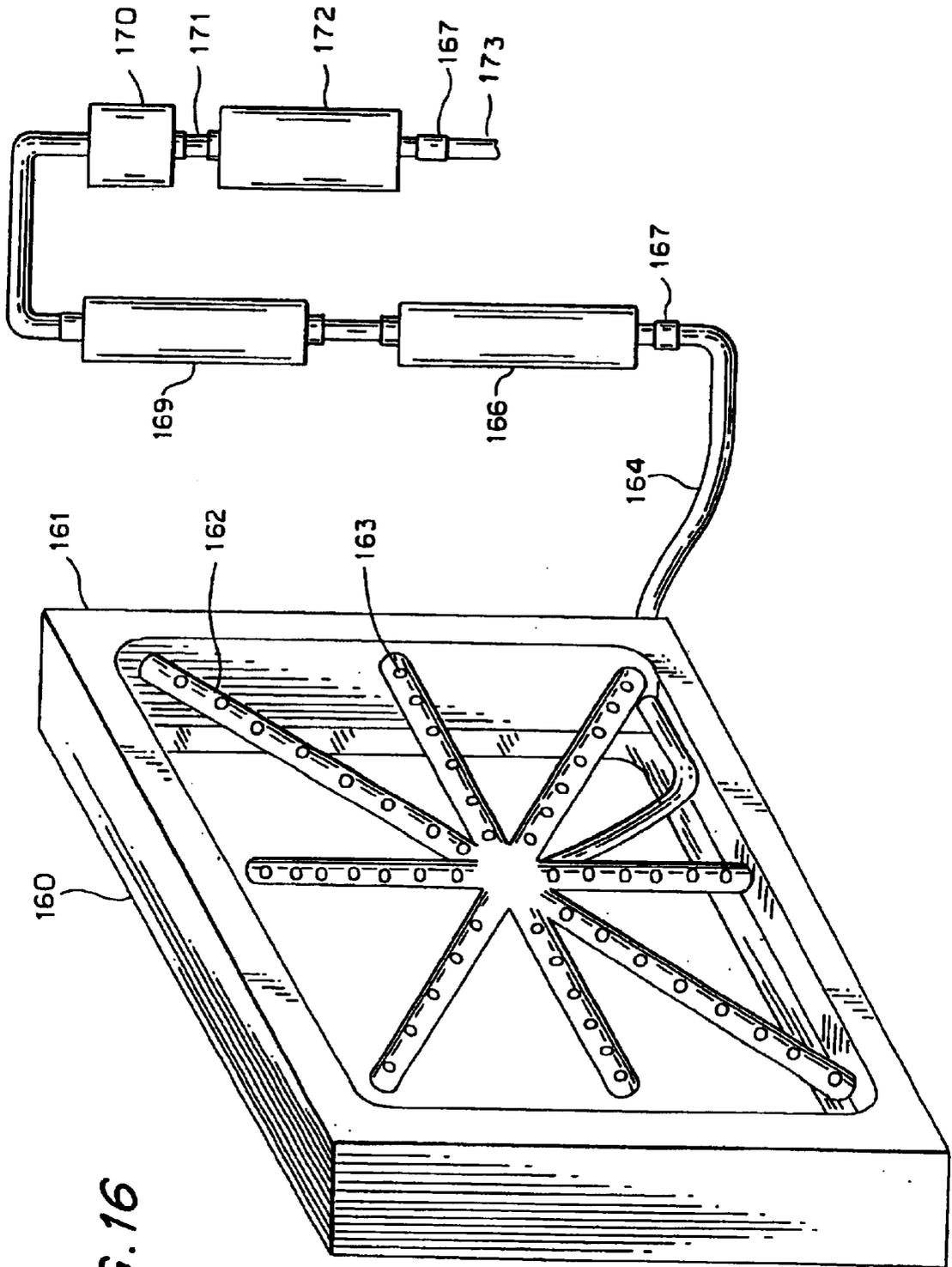


FIG. 16

FIG. 17

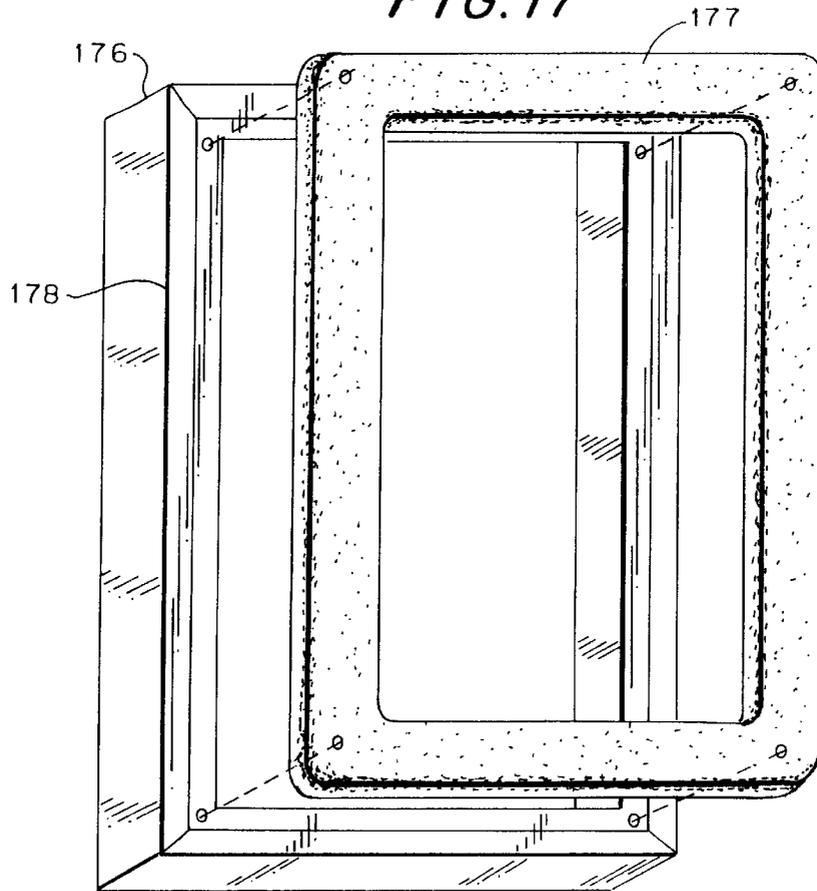


FIG. 20

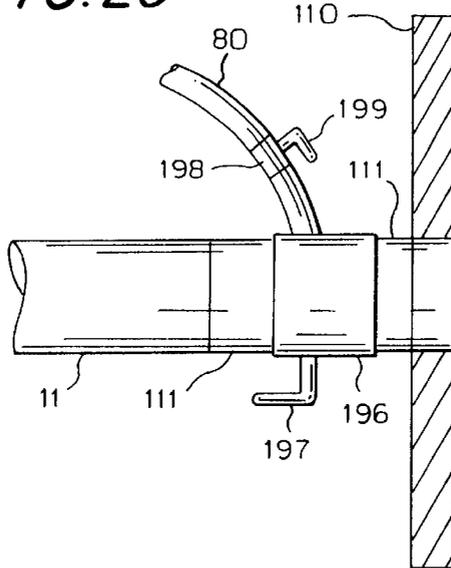


FIG. 18

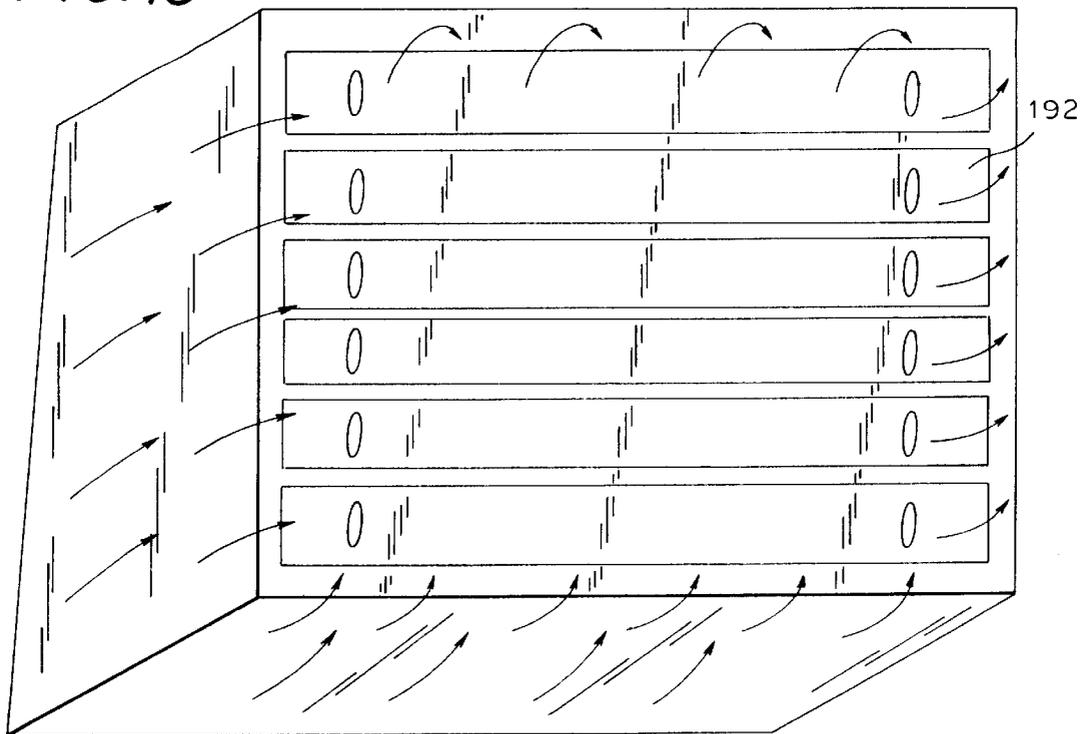
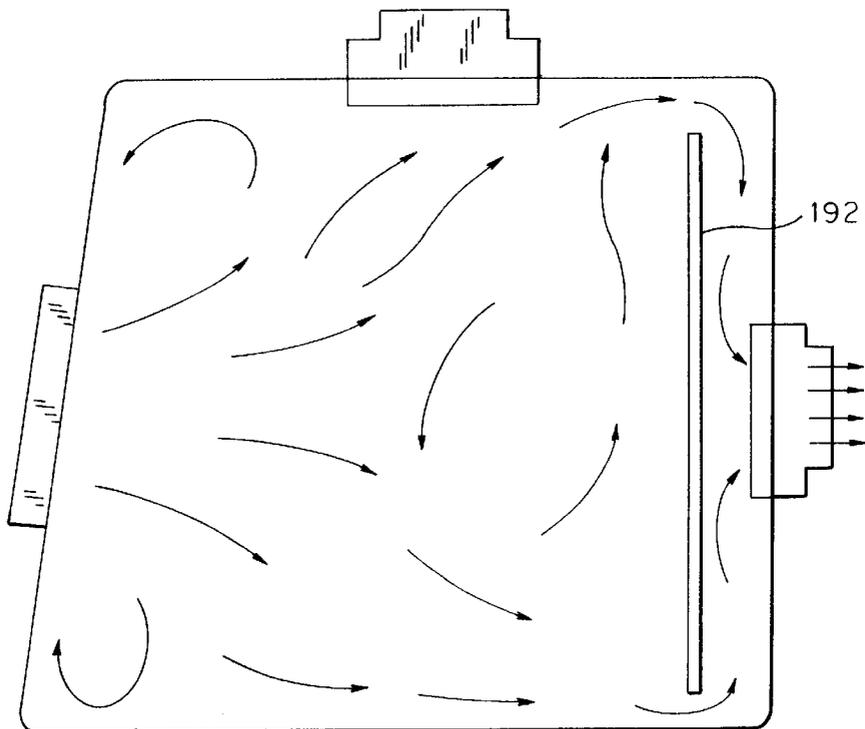


FIG. 19



PORTABLE GLOVEBOX AND FILTRATION SYSTEM

This application is a division of Application Ser. No. 09/777,483, filed Feb. 6, 2001, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,428,122. 5

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention generally relates to environmental containment equipment, and more particularly, to portable containment equipment that can be safely and readily deployed at remote locations. 10

Environmental accidents, toxic chemical spills, and testing to support treaty verification inspections are examples of situations where chemical and biological testing may be required at remote sites. Investigators at these sites often perform tests and acquire evidence with limited reliable information on the makeup or concentrations of the possible hazardous substances. At these sites, many tests are performed in the open air, or with improvised engineering controls, thereby relying on wind direction and individual physical protection for their own safety. The availability of safe, reliable, and efficient containment vessels, such as glove boxes and fume hoods, for conducting on-site environmental tests would help to protect the investigators and preserve the evidentiary value of the collected materials and the on-site tests. 15 20

Examples of gloveboxes, fume hoods, chemical analyzer cabinets, containment vessels, isolation housings, and related enclosures are set forth in U.S. Pat. No. 3,777,736 (Van Der Waaij, et. al.); U.S. Pat. No. 3,926,597 and U.S. Pat. No. 4,548,627 (Landy); U.S. Pat. No. 4,495,146 (Gheri); U.S. Pat. No. 4,662,231 (Schaarschmidt); U.S. Pat. No. 4,704,951 (Pruchon); U.S. Pat. No. 4,838,098 and U.S. Pat. No. 4,909,065 (Barney); and U.S. Pat. No. 5,083,558 (Thomas). Further examples are set forth in U.S. Pat. No. 5,087,360 (Wright); U.S. Pat. No. 5,247,547 and U.S. Pat. No. 6,017,376 (Doig); U.S. Pat. No. 5,257,957 (Diccianni); U.S. Pat. No. 5,517,427 and U.S. Pat. No. 5,537,336 (Joyce); U.S. Pat. No. 5,558,112 (Strieter); U.S. Pat. No. 5,713,791 (Long); U.S. Pat. No. 5,716,525 (Nickerson); and U.S. Pat. No. 5,730,765 (Henry, et. al.), which is assigned to the U.S. Army. 25 30 35 40

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a portable containment system consisting of a modular glovebox apparatus and self-contained filter system that can be readily transported and deployed. 45

The modular glovebox apparatus includes a storage container for the glovebox for storing the glovebox when not in use. When the modular glovebox apparatus has been moved to an intended site, the glovebox is deployed by opening the storage container. The storage container comprises a base section and a removable cover, wherein the base section has upper and lower surfaces and the glovebox is mounted on the upper surface of the base. The cover has a top portion and sidewalls depending therefrom to define an opening at the bottom of the cover. 50 55

The glovebox unit has top and bottom surfaces, front and rear walls, and first and second sidewalls, wherein the sidewalls have openings formed therein for access to the interior of the glovebox. The glovebox includes a first module releasably secured to the first sidewall of the glovebox for covering the opening in the first sidewall and for providing a means for introducing items into and removing items from the interior of the glovebox, wherein the first 60 65

module has a body portion and a flange extending therefrom for surrounding and sealing the opening in the first sidewall. When not in use, the first module has a storage position where the body portion of the first module is positioned in the interior of the glovebox through the opening in the first sidewall and where the flange is secured to the first sidewall. When the glovebox is in use, the first module has an operative position where the body portion is positioned exterior of the glovebox and the flange is secured to the first sidewall. The glovebox also includes a second module releasably secured to the second sidewall of the glovebox for covering the opening in the second sidewall, wherein the second module is selected from the group of a dunk tank, a shelf, a light unit, or other equipment. The opening in the first sidewall is larger than the opening in the second sidewall and the second modules have dimensions which are less than the dimensions of the opening in the first sidewall for inserting the second modules through the opening in the first sidewall into the interior of the glovebox for storage when the glovebox is not in use. 60

The containment system also includes a filter or filtration system having a filter unit for holding a plurality of gas filters; an outlet conduit extending between and releasably connected to the glovebox and the filter unit; an inlet conduit extending between and releasably connected to the glovebox and the filter unit; and a pump means connected to the filter unit for circulating gas from the glovebox, into the outlet conduit, through the filter unit, and into the inlet conduit. The filter unit includes a housing comprising a bottom surface, a first end wall, a second end wall, sidewalls extending therebetween, and a top surface which has a central opening formed therein. A first moveable plate means is positioned within the interior of the housing adjacent to the first end wall, wherein the first moveable plate means has a duct formed therethrough. A first adjustment means is connected to the first end wall and the first moveable plate means for moving the first moveable plate means relative to the first end wall. A first flexible conduit means is connected to and extends between a passage in the first end wall and a duct in the first moveable plate means for carrying gas from the outlet conduit of the glovebox, through the first end wall, and through the first moveable plate means. A second moveable plate means is positioned within the interior of the housing adjacent to the second end wall; wherein the second moveable plate means has a duct formed therethrough. A second adjustment means is connected to the second end wall and the second moveable plate means for moving the second moveable plate means relative to the second end wall. A second flexible conduit means is connected to and extends between a passage in the second end wall and the duct in the second moveable plate means for carrying gas from the second moveable plate means, through the second end wall, and into the inlet conduit for the glovebox. Filter units are positioned in the housing between the first and second moveable plate means, and the first and second adjustment means are utilized to move the first and second moveable plate means towards each other to clamp the filter elements therebetween. Bag means are releasably secured around the central opening of the housing for sealing the opening of the housing. 60 65

The containment system, which includes a modular glovebox, a filter unit, conduit means connecting the glovebox to the filter unit, air pressure detectors connected to the glovebox and the filter unit, pump means for circulating air through the containment system, and alarm means, provides a method of detecting leaks in the system, whereupon air pressures are measured in the glovebox and the filter unit

and the difference in air pressures in the glovebox and the filter unit is determined. An alarm is activated if the difference in air pressures exceeds a predetermined value. Preferably, measurements of the air pressure and air flow in the filtration unit are taken at the filter elements. An alarm can also be activated where the change in measured air flow during a time period exceeds a predetermined value. When an alarm is activated or for servicing and storage, the various valve means connected to the glovebox, filter system, and conduits can be closed to isolate the components of the system.

The particular arrangement of the glovebox and the first and second modules provides a method for compact and organized storage of the components wherein the first module is first disconnected from the glovebox. Then the second modules are inserted through the first opening of the glovebox into the interior of the glovebox for storing the second modules therein. The first module then repositioned to a storage position where the body portion of the first module is inserted into the interior of the glovebox, and the flange of the first module is then secured to the glovebox.

Accordingly, one object of the present invention is to provide a portable containment system that can be readily transported and deployed at remote locations.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a containment system of efficient design that includes a self-contained glovebox and a filter system with replaceable filter elements.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a modular containment system that can be efficiently adapted for different requirements.

These, together with still other objects of the invention, along with the various features that characterize the invention, are pointed out with particularity in the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent upon reading the following detailed description with reference to the attached drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a view of the containers for an environmental containment system;

FIG. 2 is a front view of a glovebox deployed for use and mounted on a storage container;

FIG. 3 is a front perspective view of a glovebox and filtration system;

FIG. 4 is a rear perspective view of a glovebox and filtration system assembled for use;

FIG. 5 is a front view of a glovebox arranged for storage;

FIG. 6 is a view of one side of a glovebox;

FIG. 7 is a view of another side of a glovebox;

FIG. 8 is a view of a modular device for introducing items into a glovebox;

FIGS. 9A-9F are views of different modules for the glovebox;

FIG. 10 is a perspective view of the filtration system;

FIG. 11 is a sectional view off FIG. 10, taken along lines 11-11;

FIG. 12 is a top view of one means for compressing the filters in the filter unit;

FIG. 13 is a sectional view taken along lines 13-13 of FIG. 12;

FIG. 14 is a perspective view of another means for compressing the filters in the filter unit;

FIG. 15 is a perspective view of another arrangement of the filter unit;

FIG. 16 is a perspective depiction of a filter element test assembly;

FIG. 17 is a perspective sectional view of the construction of a filter element;

FIG. 18 is a perspective view of the glovebox deployed for use as a fume hood with a depiction of the air flow patterns therein;

FIG. 19 is a side view of the interior of the glovebox deployed for use as a fume hood depicting the air flow patterns therein; and

FIG. 20 is a view of the conduits that extend from the glovebox and the first module connected together at the filter unit.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to FIG. 1, there is generally shown a self-contained portable containment system 10, comprising a first storage container 15, which holds an isolation chamber or glovebox 20, and a second storage container 101, which holds a filtration or filter system 105. The first storage container 15 comprises a base section 16 and an upper section or cover 17. FIG. 2 illustrates a deployed position where the cover 17 has been lifted off the glovebox unit 20 and then the glovebox 20 and the base 16 have been mounted on the cover 17. As shown in FIG. 1, the second storage container 101 comprises a lower section 102 and a removable upper section 103. During use, the filtration system 105 can remain supported within the lower section 102, as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4. Storage of the glovebox and the filtration system in portable containers allows the devices to be transported to remote locations in a safe and efficient manner.

FIGS. 1 through 8 generally depict an arrangement showing how the containment system 10 could be deployed for use, where the glovebox 20 and base 16 are mounted on the cover 17, and where the filtration system 105 is mounted in the lower section 102 of the second storage container 101. Detachable conduits 11 and 13 are used to connect the glovebox 20 to the filtration system 105. In the embodiment of FIG. 4, conduits 11 and 13 are provided with readily detachable fittings 12 and 14.

As further depicted in FIGS. 1 through 8, the glovebox 20 generally comprises an enclosure having top and bottom surfaces 21, 29, front and rear walls 31, 36, and first and second sidewalls 41, 46, wherein the sidewalls have openings 42, 47 formed therein for access to the interior of the glovebox 20. FIGS. 4, 6, and 7 depict outlet or exhaust passages 37 formed in the rear wall 36 of the glovebox 20 for the removal of gas from the interior of the glovebox. A valve device 38 having a control lever 39, such as a butterfly valve or a slide valve, is provided to selectively open and close the outlet passages 37. As depicted in FIG. 7, a casing 40 is formed around the outlet passage 37 for holding removable filters 50, preferably HEPA filters, that are inserted into the casing from the interior of the glovebox 20. The front wall 31 of the glovebox is constructed of a clear panel of glass or plastic 32 that has two gloveports 33 formed in the panel for receiving gloves 34 which are attached to the clear glass or plastic panel 32 with fastening elements 35, as shown in FIG. 3. The top surface 21 of the

glovebox 20 is provided with a control panel 22, a light unit 24 that illuminates the interior of the glovebox, and an inlet passage 25 for introducing air into the interior of the glovebox. The inlet passage 25 also includes a valve device 26 and a control lever 27, such as a butterfly valve or a slide valve, to selectively open and close the valve. Surrounding the inlet passage 25 is a casing 28 for holding a filter 50, preferably a HEPA filter, that is inserted into the casing 28 from the interior of the glovebox.

FIG. 8 depicts a first module means, preferably in the form of a double door module 51, that is removably secured to the first sidewall 41 of the glovebox 20 for covering the opening 42 in the first sidewall and for providing a means for introducing items into and removing items from the interior of the glovebox. Generally, the first module means, such as a pass-through or double door module 51, comprise a body portion 52 and a flange means or flange 59 extending therefrom for surrounding and sealing the opening 42 in the first sidewall 41. When not in use, the double door module 51 has a storage position where the body portion 52 of the device is positioned within the interior of the glovebox through the opening 42 in the first sidewall, as generally depicted in FIG. 5, and where the flange 59 is then secured to the first sidewall 41, as generally depicted in FIG. 5. FIG. 5 also depicts an arrangement where other modular devices are stored within the glovebox. After the glovebox 20 is withdrawn from the storage container, the flange 59 of the double door device 51 is disconnected from the sidewall 41 and the body portion 52 is withdrawn from the interior of the glovebox. Then, the other modules are withdrawn from the interior of the glovebox. The double door module 51 is then moved to an operative position where the body portion 52 is positioned exterior of the glovebox and the flange 59 is connected to the first sidewall 41. Openings or holes 60 in the flange 59 are fitted over studs 43 projecting from the first sidewall 41 and nuts are screwed onto the studs 43 used to create an airtight seal between the first sidewall 41 and the flange 59.

The double door device 51 includes an entrance or outer door 53, attached with hinge elements 54 as shown in FIGS. 4 and 8, and an inner or exit door 56 attached to the body or box portion 52 so that when items are to be inserted into the interior of the glovebox, the entrance door 53 is opened to insert an item into the double door device and the inner door 56 is then opened to move the item into the interior of the glovebox only after the entrance door 53 is closed. Manual latch devices 55, 57 are provided on the outer and inner doors 53, 56. Air filters devices 62, 72 can be connected to the double door device 51 for filtering air drawn into the glovebox. As shown in FIG. 8, a first air filter device 62 includes a casing 63 for holding a filter element 64, such as a HEPA filter, an inlet hose 65 connecting the casing to the double door device 51, a shut off valve 67, and connection fittings 66 for allowing the inlet hose and the casing to be disconnected from the double door device. A lower or second air filter device 72 includes a casing 73 for holding a filter element 74, such as a HEPA filter, an inlet hose 75 connecting the casing 73 to the rear portion of the double door device 51, a shut off valve 77, and connection fittings 76 for allowing the inlet hose 75 and the casing 73 to be disconnected from the double door device. A flexible outlet hose 80, which is provided with connection fittings 81, is removably connected to the shut off valve 77, connection fittings 81, and the filtration system for conveying air from the double door device 51, through the outlet hose 86, and into the filtration system 105.

As indicated above, the glovebox 20 also functions as a storage receptacle for different second module means 85 that

are designed to be releasably attached to the second sidewall 46 of the glovebox 20 for covering the opening 47. The second module means are selected from the group of a flat panel 89, an extension duct 90 for joining adjacent gloveboxes, a shelf unit 92, a UV light unit 94, a self contained power supply 96, and a dunk tank 98, as shown in FIGS. 9A through 9E, respectively. Generally, each of the second module means includes a body portion 86 and a flange portion 87. The opening 42 in the first sidewall 41 is larger than the opening 47 in the second sidewall 46 and the second module means 85 have body and flange dimensions which are smaller than the dimensions of the opening 42 in the first sidewall 41 of the glovebox 20. This allows the second module means to be inserted through the opening 42 in the first sidewall 41 into the interior of the glovebox for storage when the glovebox is not in use. FIG. 5 depicts the situation where several of the second module means have been inserted into the interior of the glovebox for storage. The panel 89 shown in FIG. 9A may be used to cover or seal the opening 47 in the second sidewall 46 during storage.

The filtration system apparatus 105 of and FIG. 3, 4, 10 through 17 generally includes a filter unit or housing 106 for holding a plurality of air filters, a first or inlet conduit 111 secured to the filter unit 106 and releasably connected to the outlet conduit 11 from the glovebox, and a second or outlet conduit 113 secured to the filter unit 106 and releasably connected to the inlet conduit 13 for the glovebox. Also included in the filtration system 105 is a pump means, such as a Dayton direct drive blower from Granger, which is connected to the filter unit 106 for pumping and circulating gas from the glovebox 20, into the outlet conduit 11 from the glovebox, through the filter unit 106, and back into the inlet conduit 13 for the glovebox. The filtration system 105 further includes control means that include common Dwyer gauges 184, LED indicators, piezo-electric alarms 183 and vacuum pumps 172, such as shown in fees FIGS. 10, 15, and 16 for monitoring, controlling, and testing the operation of the containment system. The inlet and outlet conduits 111, 113 of the filter unit 106 preferably include shut off valves 114, 196 having control levers 115, 197 such as a butterfly or a slide valve. This permits efficient control of the air flow and circulation through the containment system and allows the filtration system to be closed off and detached from the glovebox for servicing or for sealing the filtration system during shipment and storage.

The filter units of FIG. 10 through 17 generally comprise a housing 107 having a bottom surface 108, a first end wall 110, a second end wall 112, sidewalls extending therebetween 117, 119, and a top or exposed surface 121 which has a central opening 122 formed therein. The first and second end walls 110, 112 have passages formed therein for receiving the inlet and outlet conduits or ducts 111, 113 for the filter unit 106. As shown in FIGS. 10, 11, and 13, the top or exposed surface portion 121 of the filter unit is provided with an upstanding circumferential flange 123 that surrounds the opening 122 and forms a means for receiving a flexible bag 127 for covering the opening. The bag 127 is then clamped or sealed to the circumferential flange 123 with a band 129 of metal or plastic. Also shown in FIG. 10 are posts 125 which serve as rests or stops for a cover 131 of metal or hard plastic, as partially shown in FIG. 11, that may be lowered to engage the lip 124 of the circumferential flange 123 to form an additional seal for the opening.

In the embodiment of FIGS. 12 and 13, filter units are compressed to maintain an air seal at the joints between the individual filters that have been inserted into the opening 122 in the housing 107. This is accomplished with a first

moveable plate means **132** positioned within the interior of the housing adjacent to the first end wall **110**, wherein the first moveable plate means has a passage formed therethrough. A first adjustment means, preferably in the form of threaded adjusting elements **135**, are connected to the first end wall **110** and the first moveable plate means **132** for moving the first moveable plate means relative to the first end wall. A first flexible pipe means **133** is connected to and extends between the inlet tube or conduit **111** in the first end wall **110** and the passage in the first moveable plate means **132** for carrying air from the first end wall to the first moveable plate means. A second moveable plate means **137** is positioned within the interior of the housing adjacent to the second end wall **112** of the filter housing **107**, wherein the second moveable plate means has a duct or passage formed therethrough. A second adjustment means **140** is connected to the second end wall **112** and the second moveable plate means **137** for moving the second moveable plate means relative to the second end wall of the filter housing for cooperating with the first moveable plate means for clamping the filter elements there between. A second flexible pipe means **138** is connected to and extends between the passage in the second moveable plate means **137** and the duct **113** in the second end wall **112** for carrying gas from the second moveable plate means, through the second end wall, and into the outlet conduit. Filter units are positioned in the housing between the first and second moveable plate means and the first and second adjustment means are utilized to move the first and second moveable plate means towards each other to clamp the filter elements therebetween.

FIG. **14** depicts another arrangement for clamping the filter elements. The filter elements are clamped between a moveable plate means or moveable plate **143** and either a fixed plate means **142** or end wall **112**. While only a single moveable clamping arrangement is shown, two moveable clamping plates could be also be used. The mechanism comprises spring-biased horizontal rods **146**, which are connected to an end wall **110** of the housing and the moveable plate member **143**, and threaded, transverse adjustment bars **148** that are connected to the horizontal rods **146** and the sidewalls **117**, **119** of the housing. Attached to the horizontal rods and the adjustment bars are the blocks **149**, **150** or camming surfaces, which move to engage each other as the adjustment bars are rotated, and which operate to compress the filter elements between the moveable plate means and the fixed plate means. A flexible conduit **144** is connected to the moveable plate means **143** and the conduit **11**.

A preferred arrangement of filters is shown in FIGS. **10** through **14** where, as referenced from the inlet conduit, a HEPA filter is normally positioned as the first filter **153** in arrangement for blocking particulates such as biological aerosols. The next filter in the arrangement normally comprises a carbon filter **154** for absorbing gasses such as toxic fumes. Then a spacer panel **160** is used which, as depicted in FIG. **16**, normally contains test equipment for collecting gasses that have passed through the first carbon filter and for testing the continuity of the system. Downstream of the spacer is a second carbon filter **156** for trapping errant gasses that have escaped the other filters. The last filter **157** in the arrangement is a second HEPA filter for trapping any remaining particulates that may have been shed by the carbon filters in the system.

The spacer panel assembly of FIG. **16** normally functions as a test means for testing the operability of the filter system and for detecting any malfunctions during operation. The spacer panel **160** comprises a circumferential housing **161**

and a plurality of tubes **162** radiating outwardly from the center of the spacer panel, wherein the tubes have perforations **163** for receiving air passing through the spacer panel. A small tube **164**, which is connected to the center of the perforated tubes, is connected to a sorbent trap **166** for removing organic molecules. Shut-off valves **167** are provided in the tubing to permit the removal of the sorbent trap from the system. Downstream of the sorbent trap is a charcoal filter **169** to collect errant gasses and a flowmeter **170** for determining the flowrate and pressures within the filter system. Additional shut-off valves may be provided to permit separate removal of the components. Downstream of the flowmeter **170** is a small pump **172**, such as a Thomas vacuum/pressure pump from Granger, for continuously drawing the air in the filter system into the perforated tubes, through the sorbent trap, flowmeter and pump, whereupon it is returned to the input of the filter system through a return line or tubing **188**. The sorbent trap, such as made of Tenax, can be removed and tested to determine the presence of any contaminants and to determine if the primary carbon filter has failed. A charcoal filter **169** is placed in-line with the sorbent trap **166** to purify the vacuumed air.

A filter cover or framing for the filter materials is generally shown in FIG. **17**. The cover for the filter materials comprises a rigid circumferential frame **176** of plastic or metal for receiving the filter materials and circumferential plates **177** that are attached to the circumferential frame to form a rigid structure. Gasket materials **178** are circumferentially placed around the periphery of the circumferential frame and the circumferential plates to form a tight seal when the filter elements are clamped within the filter housing.

Use of a bag means **127** that is secured and clamped over an opening **122** in the filter housing **107** constitutes one protective measure that can be employed to capture and restrain any contaminants in the event of a failure of one or more of the filter elements. Thus, if there is a failure or leak in one or more of the filter elements, the bag **127** is designed to contain any harmful substances. To remove the filter elements from the housing, the clamping plates in the housing **107** are retracted to release the clamping pressure on the filter elements and the filter elements are then drawn into the bag while the bag is still clamped to the flange **123**. After the filter elements have been placed in the bag **127**, the bag can be sealed with tie elements before the bag is detached from the circumferential flange **123**. To protect new filter elements, the new filter elements can likewise be stored and sealed within a bag until needed. To replace the filter elements, the mouth of the replacement bag will be initially mounted around and clamped to the circumferential flange **123**. Then, a tie element will be removed from around the mouth of the bag and the filter elements can be placed into the filter housing **107**. A cover **131** for the filter housing comprises a possible additional means of protection. After the bag has been installed on the circumferential flange of the housing, a cover **131** can be reinstalled and clamped over the circumferential flange. As shown in FIG. **11**, the upper portion or lip of the circumferential flange may have a widened portion or lip **124** to form a wider seal with the cover **131**.

FIG. **20** shows an arrangement of the conduits **11** and **80** connected together at the inlet for the filtration unit. Conduit **11** is provided with a valve **196** that has a control lever **197** for shutting off the flow of air through the conduit **11** to the filtration unit. The conduit **80** can be detached from the conduit at the valve **196** to facilitate disassembly of the containment system. The larger conduit **11** is also provided

with a valve **198** having a control lever **199** capable of being removed from the inlet conduit for the filtration unit.

For many applications, the glovebox and the filtration system must be certified, which requires the operator to perform a series of tests to ensure that the system is operational and safe for use. A certification process normally requires that there are no leaks in any of the HEPA or other filters that would let particulates flow through and out of the system. Additionally, the filters must trap all the extraneous organic compounds from the air stream and keep them within the system during operations even when the blower motor is not operating.

Within the glovebox, the air enters through an initial HEPA filter. This ensures that no contaminate particulates are entering the system. This initial or primary HEPA filter is certified by placing a small battery powered particle counter inside the main enclosure. The particle count should be at or near zero after a five-minute period. The same process is used to certify the airlock HEPA filter attached to the double door airlock. A secondary HEPA at the rear of the primary enclosure is required to trap all particulates that may have entered the system. It is checked by connecting the battery powered particle counter to a small valve that is positioned on the intake side of the filter unit, prior to or upstream of the cutoff valve on the filter unit. Replacement HEPA filters, which are usually stored in sealed packaging, are normally tested before insertion into the glovebox casing.

In certifying the containment system, one factor is that the glovebox and the filter system should be airtight. In certifying the glovebox, the blower motor **180** is turned on and a manometer or digital magnihelic and a mechanical magnihelic, such as a standard Dwyer gauge, on blower motor and the glovebox are used to measure the pressure differential within the glovebox. Both measurements should agree. The gauges are redundant so that at least one will continue to operate if the other one fails. The pressure in the glovebox is then brought up to two (2) inches of water mined gauge (wg), and the inlet and outlet shut-off valves **26**, **38** are closed. The glovebox should now be sealed and it should remain airtight as measured by visual inspection of the pressure gauge measurements for a predetermined period of time.

Certification that the filter system is airtight involves a similar process. With the blower motor **180** operating, the intake valves **196**, **198** for the filter unit **106** are closed forcing a vacuum to occur within the filter plenum, which comprises the compressed region that includes the HEPA, carbon, spacer, carbon, and post filters. The magnihelic gauge **184** on the filter unit will normally rise to about five (5) inches of wg in measuring the differential pressures inside and outside of the filter unit. The outlet or effluent valve **114** is then closed and the blower motor **180** is turned off. The readings on the magnihelic gauge **184** should remain the same for a predetermined period of time, such as on the order of about ten (10) minutes, for the system to be certified.

With the system in operation, a common Dwyer photohelic **182** is used to measure the actual flow of air through the system, as opposed to the air pressure within the system, and it is connected to an audible alarm **183** and light array **185**. This is used to notify the user when the motor blower is no longer functioning and that operations within the glovebox should be terminated. At this point the influent and effluent valves **26**, **38** for the glovebox and filter valves **114**, **196**, and **198** would be closed to prevent compounds from leaving the controlled environment.

Additionally, an independent air sampling system is provided to capture gasses that have broken through the primary carbon filters. The air sampling system on the filter unit comprises an air pump **172** such as a Thomas vacuum pump, tubing **188**, flow meter **170** with a valve **171**, a small charcoal filter **169**, solid organic trapping medium **166**, shut-off valve **167**, and a sampling tube unit. This sampling system is used to test for possible breakthrough of the first or primary carbon filter **153** by gasses which were released from testing conducted in the glovebox. After operations have been completed and before the glovebox is prepared for storage, the sorbent tube **166** is removed from the sampling line and thermally desorbed in to a Gas Chromatograph and Mass Selective or Flame Photometric Detector. A positive reading would indicate that the primary filter would have to be replaced with a new filter. Normally, the secondary carbon filter would be repositioned as the primary filter and the new filter element would be positioned as the secondary filter.

The double door airlock device is a removable module that bolts to the side of the glovebox. It contains two doors and an air exchange system. The doors are intended to maintain the pressure within the glovebox when only one is open at a time and the chamber within serves as an isolation region for a sample entering or leaving the main glovebox. While contaminated objects are decontaminated prior to their passing out of the main glovebox, there is a possibility of toxic fumes entering the double-door airlock once it is opened. By use of the shut-off valves and the HEPA filters for filtering the influent and effluent air streams the double-door module can be cleansed. Closing of the influent valve of the glovebox will cause more air to flow through the HEPA filters attached to the double-door module and the conduit **80**.

The glovebox may be provided with baffle means in the form of adjustable elongated plates **192** secured to the rear wall of the glovebox with fastening elements for controlling the flow and circulation of air within the glovebox. As generally depicted in the air flow patterns of FIG. **10**, the baffles help to direct the air flow to circulate, scour or remove air in the different regions of the interior of the glovebox.

The glovebox is also capable of being operated as a fume hood. In this mode, the gloves are normally removed from the front plate, allowing free access to the interior of the glovebox. The influent valve on the glovebox is closed and the air now enters only through the glove ports. The speed of the blower motor is controlled by a variable speed motor controller, such as a Leeson adjustable AC motor controller, to increase the airflow. Due to very little pressure differential between the inside and outside of the glovebox, the digital magnihelic cannot function in this mode. Actual air flow is indicated by a standard Dwyer photohelic on the filter unit.

Before being deployed, the glovebox **20** and filtration system **105** should be pressure tested to detect leaks in the systems. A visual check of the glovebox and filtration systems would include a check that the doors **53**, **56** of the first module means or pass-through double door device **51** are closed; that the dunk tank **98** is filled with fluid and the lid **99** is secured; that shut-off valves **67**, **77** for the first and second air filter devices **62**, **72** are closed; that the gloves **34** are in place; and that the inlet valve **26** for the glovebox **20** is closed. The blower motor **180** and fan **181** for the filtration system are turned on to develop a negative pressure within the glovebox of about negative two (2) w.g., as measured by a magnehelic device contained in the control panel **22**. When the proper pressure is achieved, the outlet valve **38** is closed

and the blower motor **180** is turned off. The pressure within the glovebox **20** is monitored at one (1) minute intervals until the pressure within the glovebox decays to about 75% of the initial value. The temperature and barometric pressure are then measured.

Initial operation of the glovebox **20** and filtration system **105** for conducting tests comprises closing the doors **53**, **56** of the first module means or pass-through double door device **51**; closing the shut-off valves **67**, **77** for the first and second air filter devices **62**, **72** of the first module means **51**; closing the inlet valve **26** for the glovebox **20**; and operating the blower motor **180** and fan **181** to develop a negative pressure within the glovebox **20**. Then, outer door **53** is opened to insert the item to be tested into the first module means **51**. After the outer door **53** is closed, the shut off valves **67**, **77** are opened to draw air into the first module means **51**, and then the inner door **56** of the first module means **51** can be opened to bring the item into the interior of the glovebox. When tests are conducted in the interior of the glovebox, the fumes given off are drawn from the glovebox **20**, through the outlet **37** and conduit **11**, and into inlet conduit **111** of the filtration system **105**. After being drawn through the filter elements **153**, **154**, **156**, and **157**, where flumes and other substances are removed, the blower motor **180** and fan **181** pump the air through conduit **13** and inlet valve **26** into the interior of the glovebox **20**.

Initial operation of the glovebox **20** and filtration system **105** for conducting tests comprises closing the doors **53**, **56** of the first module means or pass-through double door device **51**; closing the shut-off valves **67**, **77** for the first and second air filter devices **62**, **72** of the first module means **51**; closing the inlet valve **26** for the glovebox **20**; and operating the blower motor **180** and fan **181** to develop a negative pressure within the glovebox **20**. Then, outer door **53** is opened to insert the item to be tested into the first module means **51**. After the outer door **53** is closed, the shut off valves **67**, **77** are opened to draw air into the first module means **51**, and then the inner door **56** of the first module means **51** can be opened to bring the item into the interior of the glovebox. When tests are conducted in the interior of the glovebox, the fumes given off are drawn from the glovebox **20**, through the outlet **37** and conduit **11**, and into inlet conduit **111** of the filtration system **105**. After being drawn through the filter elements **153**, **154**, **156**, **157**, and **165**, where fumes and other substances are removed, the blower motor **180** and fan **181** pump the air through conduit **13** and inlet valve **26** into the interior of the glovebox **20**.

It should be understood that the foregoing description is only illustrative of the invention and that various alternatives and modifications can be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the principles and concepts of the invention. Accordingly, the present invention is intended to encompass all such alternatives, modifications, and variations which fall within the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for detecting leakage of air from a containment system it including a glovebox, an air filtration unit containing filter elements for filtering air received from the glovebox, a first conduit for conveying air from the glovebox to the air filtration unit, a second conduit for conveying the filtered air from the air filtration unit to the glovebox, a pump means for circulating air between the glovebox and the air filtration unit, air pressure detectors connected to the glovebox and the air filtration unit, and alarm means for indicating a leakage of air from the containment system, comprising the steps of:

measuring the air pressure in the glovebox with the air pressure detectors;

measuring the air pressure in the air filtration unit with the air pressure detectors;

detecting the difference in air pressures in the glovebox and the air filtration unit; and

activating the alarm means if the detected difference in air pressures exceeds a predetermined value.

2. The method according to claim 1 where a gas pressure detector is connected to the filter elements of the air filtration unit and the air pressure in the air filtration unit is measured at the filter elements.

3. The method according to claim 1 where an air flow meter is connected to the filter elements of the air filtration unit and further comprising the steps of:

measuring the air flow through the air filtration unit;

recording the measured air flow; and

activating the alarm means if the change in the recorded air flows in a predetermined period of time exceeds a predetermined value.

4. A method for monitoring the air flow through an air containment system including a glovebox, an air filtration unit containing an air flow meter and filter elements for filtering air received from the glovebox, a first conduit for conveying air from the glovebox to the air filtration unit, a second conduit for conveying the filtered air from the air filtration unit to the glovebox, a pump means for circulating air between the glovebox and the air filtration unit, air pressure detectors connected to the glovebox and the air filtration unit, and alarm means for indicating a leakage of air from the containment system, comprising the steps of:

measuring the air flow through the air filtration unit;

recording the measured air flow; and

activating the alarm means if the change in the recorded air flows during a predetermined period of time exceeds a predetermined value.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the steps of: measuring the air pressure in the glovebox with the air pressure detectors;

measuring the air pressure in the air filtration unit with the air pressure detectors;

detecting the difference in air pressures in the glovebox and the air filtration unit; and

activating the alarm means if the detected difference in air pressures exceeds a predetermined value.

6. The method according to claim 5, where a gas pressure detector is connected to the filter elements of the air filtration unit and the air pressure in the air filtration unit is measured at the filter elements.

7. A method for detecting leakage of air from a containment system including a glovebox, an air filtration unit containing filter elements for filtering air received from the glovebox, a first conduit for conveying air from the glovebox to the air filtration unit, a second conduit for conveying the filtered air from the air filtration unit to the glovebox, a pump means for circulating air between the glovebox and the air filtration unit, air pressure detectors connected to the glovebox and the air filtration unit, and alarm means for indicating a leakage of air from the containment system, and valve means connected to the first and second conduits for controlling the flow of air therethrough comprising the steps of:

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measuring the air pressure in the glovebox with the air pressure detectors;
measuring the air pressure in the air filtration unit with the air pressure detectors;
detecting the difference in air pressures in the glovebox and the air filtration unit; and

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activating the alarm means if the detected difference in air pressures exceeds a predetermined value for stopping the pump means and closing the valve means to isolate the flow of air in the glovebox and the air filtration unit.

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