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(54) **STORAGE DEVICES FOR BOATS**

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B63B 17/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **114/343**; 224/406

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 114/343; 224/406; 383/23
See application file for complete search history.

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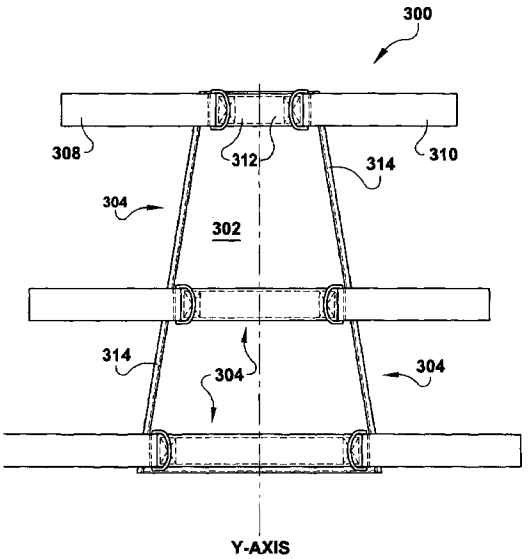
(57) **ABSTRACT**

Various embodiments of storage devices for a boat are provided. One embodiment is a storage device for removably attaching to a t-top on a boat and for storing items. One such storage device comprises: a frame comprising marine fabric having an opening to a storage area defined by the frame for receiving an item; an access flap for enabling a user to access the storage area, the access flap comprising marine fabric attached to a top portion of the frame and extending over the opening to a bottom portion of the frame for securing the access flap to the bottom portion of the frame; and a plurality of straps attached to the bottom portion of the frame for providing support from underneath the frame when it is attached to a t-top on a boat, each of the plurality of straps having a first end for attaching to a first horizontal structure of the t-top and a second end for attaching to a second horizontal structure of the t-top.

10 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



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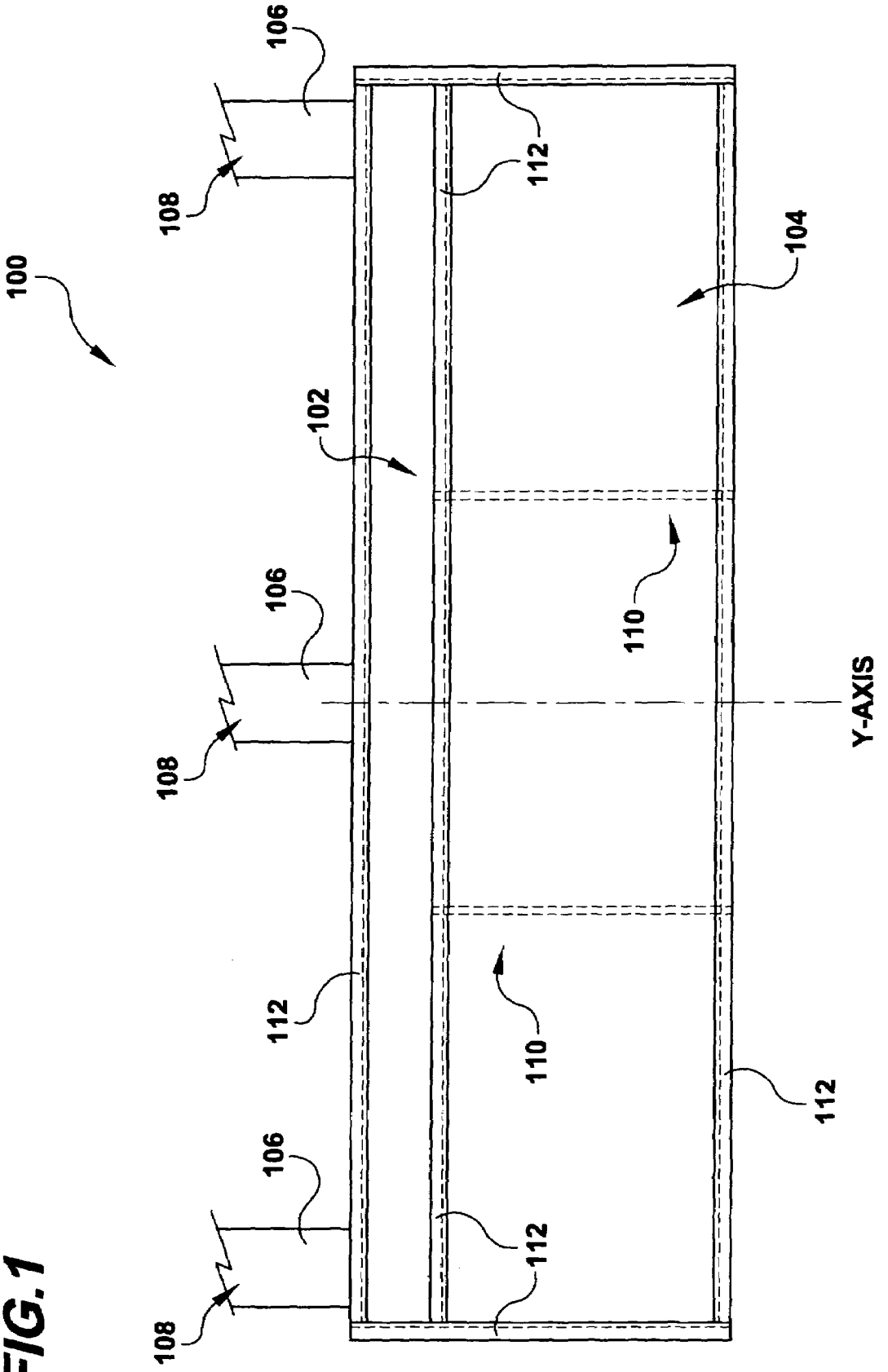


FIG.1

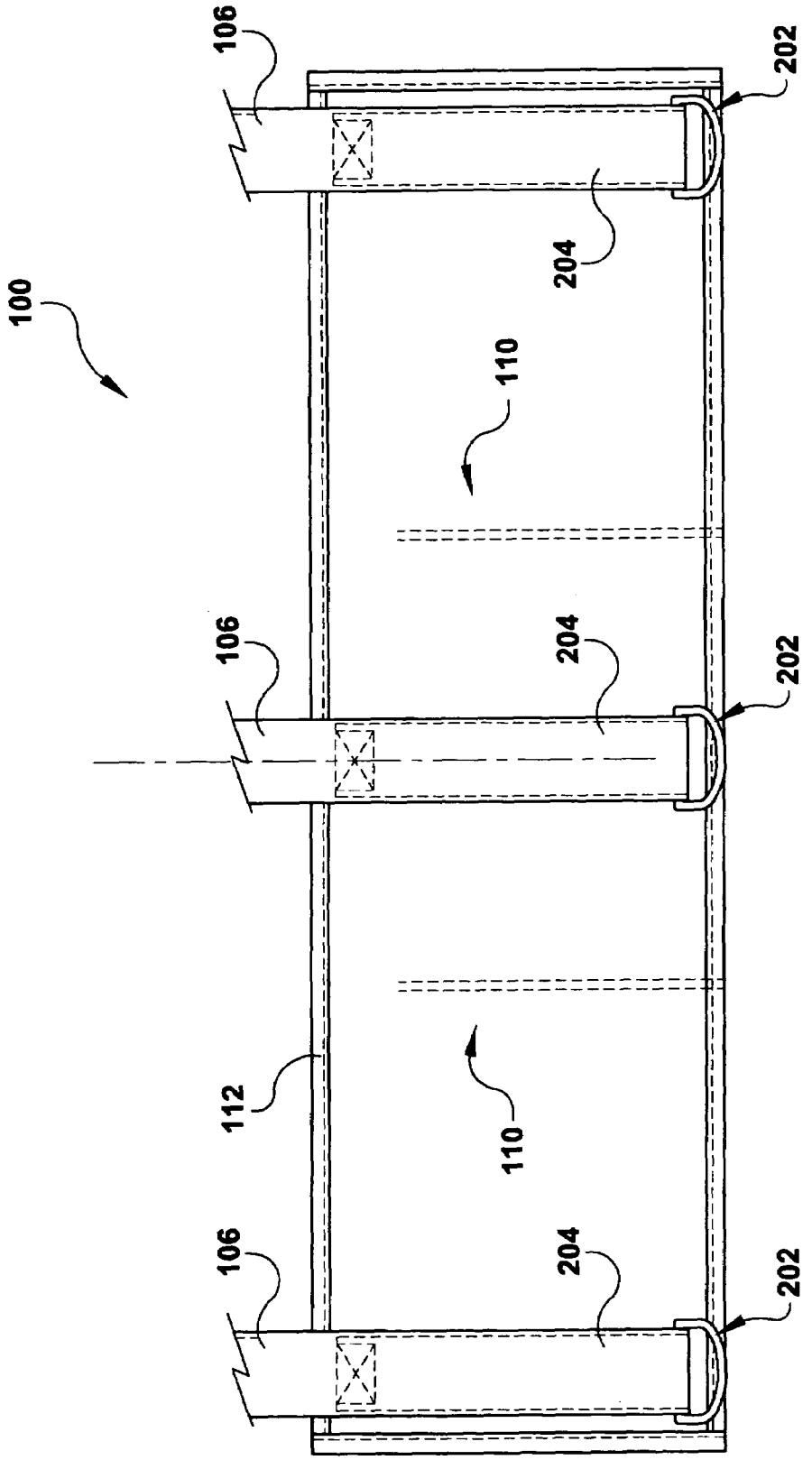


FIG.2

FIG.4

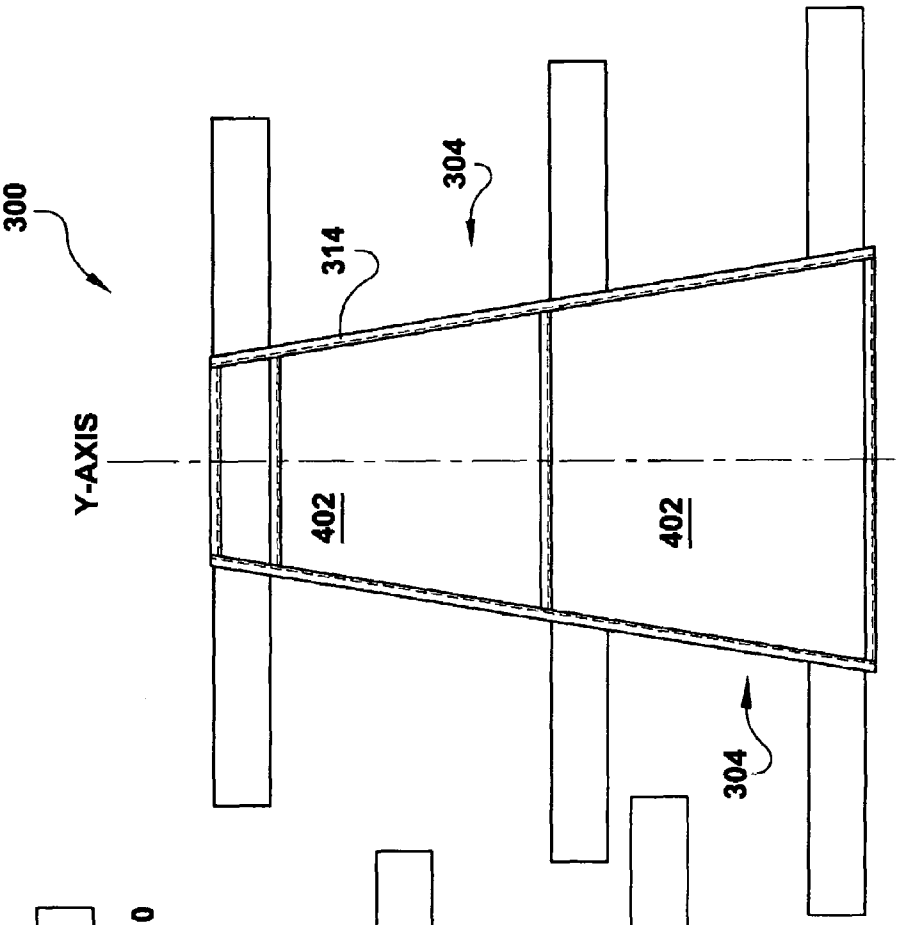
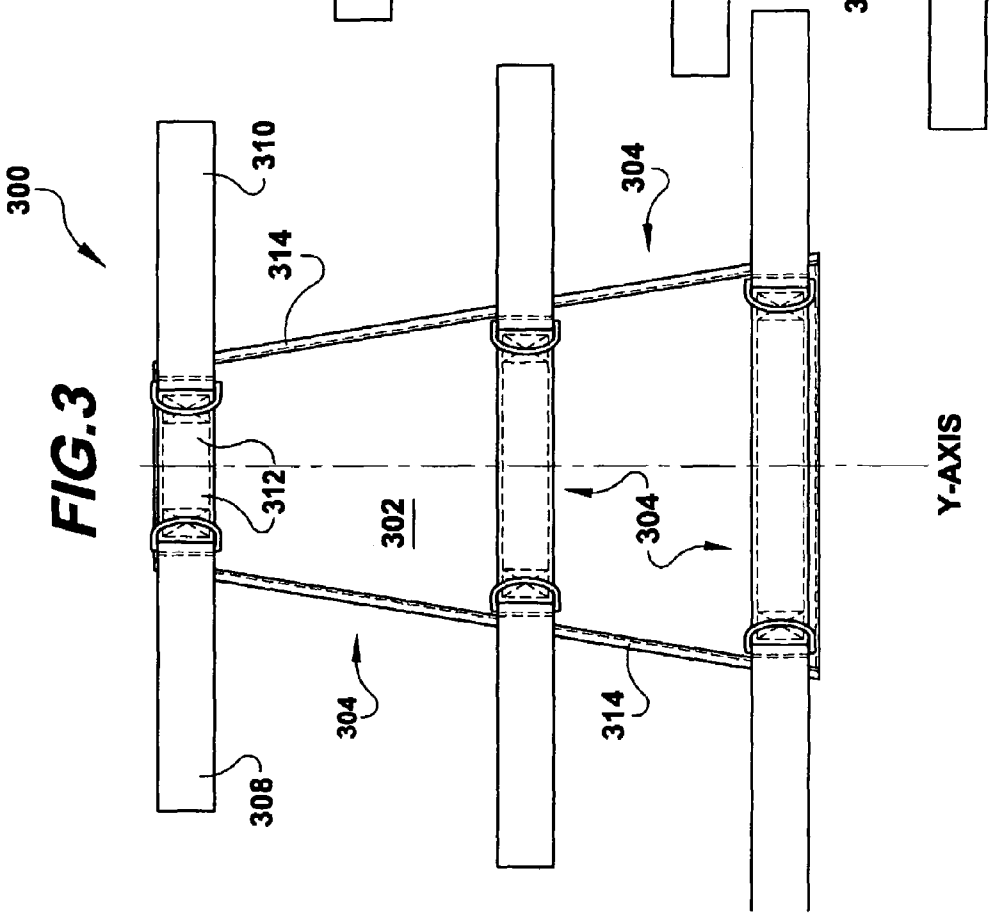

300
304
314
Y-AXIS
402
402
304

FIG.3


300
310
314
304
312
302
304
Y-AXIS
304
314
308

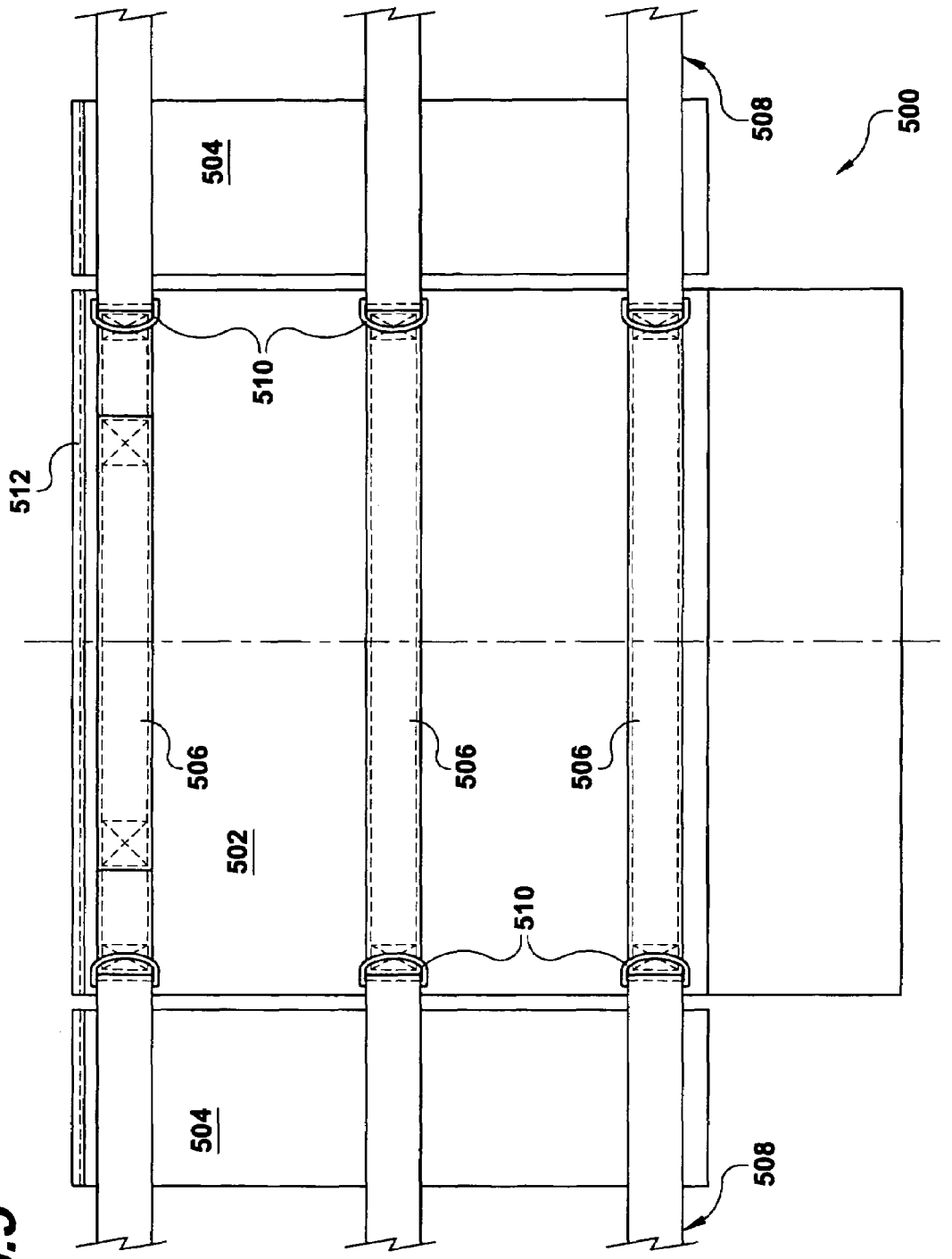


FIG.5

FIG.7

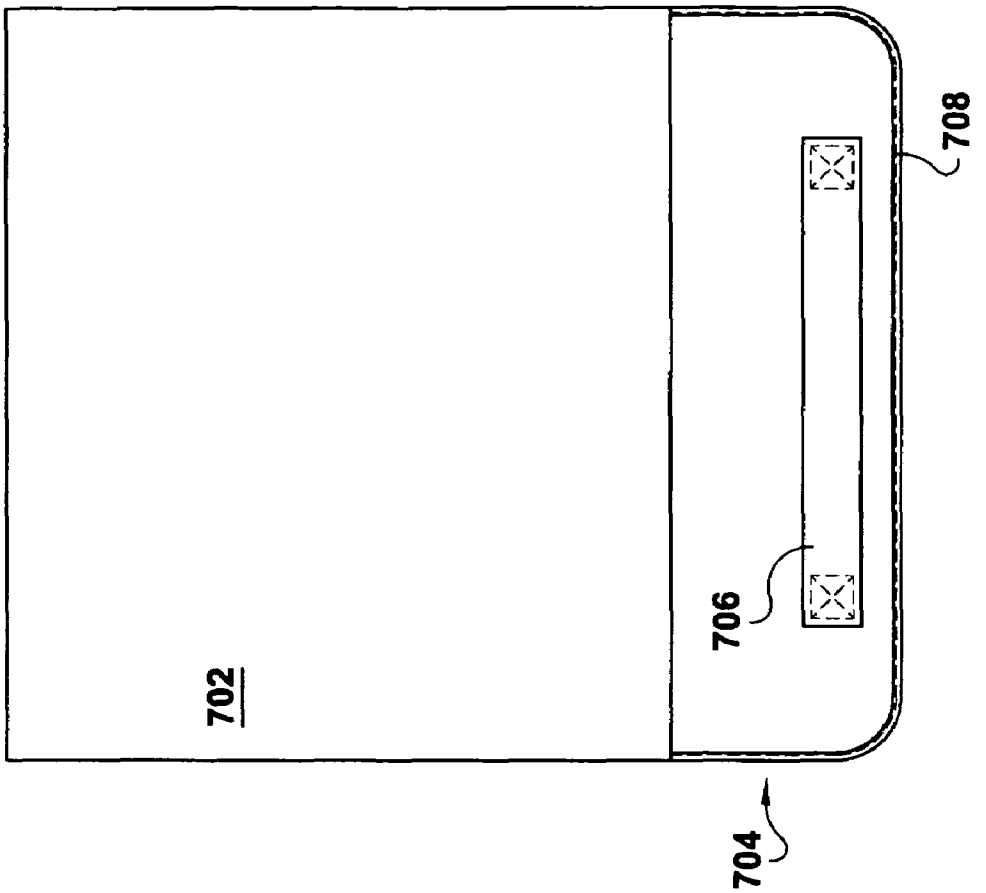
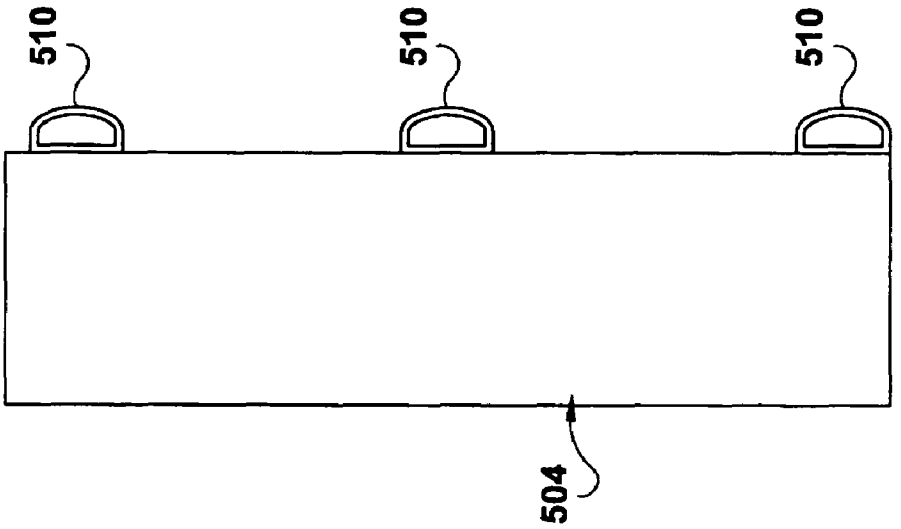


FIG.6



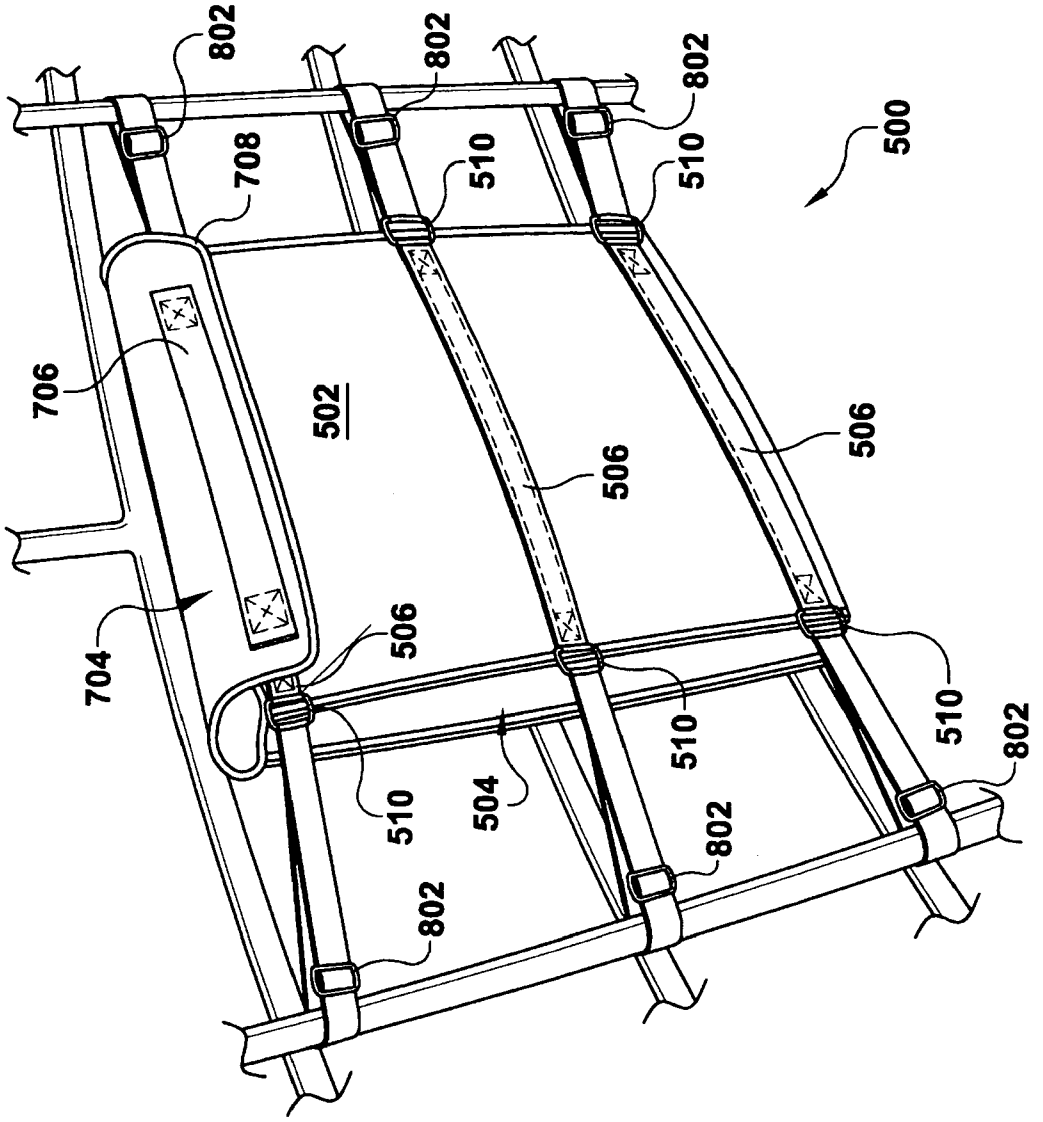

802
802
802
500
708
510
510
706
502
506
506
704
506
510
510
510
802
504
802
802

FIG.8

STORAGE DEVICES FOR BOATS

BACKGROUND

Currently, there are a number of different types of boats for any number of recreational and/or commercial uses. Most boats are manufactured with some form of on-board storage for storing various items (e.g., personal items, supplies, life preservers, fishing tackle, etc.). For example, some boats include a glove box compartment, a seat back pouch, under-bow storage space, and under-seat storage devices, to name a few.

Existing on-board storage solutions, however, have numerous limitations. Many existing storage solutions are not very convenient because they are located in areas that may be difficult for boaters to easily access. Other storage solutions are problematic because they occupy space on the boat that may be more advantageously used for other purposes. Many existing storage solutions do not offer adequate space for storing certain types of items. Furthermore, some storage solutions do not enable the items to be organized in a useful manner.

Yet another limitation of many existing storage solutions for boats is that they generally can only be used in one location on the boat. For example, many existing devices are manufactured with the boat and, therefore, cannot be moved to alternative and possibly more convenient locations. Devices that may be installed, mounted, etc. on a boat do not provide the desired level of flexibility/convenience. For instance, most of these types of storage devices can only be installed in one location (e.g., pouches screwed to seat backs). Therefore, in situations where additional storage space is needed, multiple types of devices are often used, which may be time consuming, expensive, and inconvenient. Therefore, there is a need in the industry for improved storage devices for boats.

SUMMARY

Various embodiments of storage devices for boats are provided. One embodiment is a storage device for removably attaching to a t-top on a boat and for storing items which comprises: a frame comprising marine fabric having an opening to a storage area defined by the frame for receiving an item; an access flap for enabling a user to access the storage area, the access flap comprising marine fabric attached to a top portion of the frame and extending over the opening to a bottom portion of the frame for securing the access flap to the bottom portion of the frame; and a plurality of straps attached to the bottom portion of the frame for providing support from underneath the frame when it is attached to a t-top on a boat, each of the plurality of straps having a first end for attaching to a first horizontal structure of the t-top and a second end for attaching to a second horizontal structure of the t-top.

Another embodiment is a storage device for removably attaching to structures on a boat and for storing items which comprises: a support member comprising marine fabric; at least one pocket member comprising marine fabric which is attached to the support member for forming a pocket on the front side of the support member and for receiving an item to be stored on the boat; and a plurality of straps attached to the support member along a vertical axis of the support member, each of the plurality of straps for removably attaching the storage device to a structure on the boat by extending a first end portion at least partially around the structure along the vertical axis and attaching to the remaining portion of the corresponding strap.

Another such storage device comprises: a support member comprising marine fabric having two opposing sides on a vertical longitudinal axis which are disposed in an oblique relationship to each other; at least one pocket member comprising marine fabric which is attached to the support member for forming a pocket on the front side of the support member and for receiving an item to be stored on the boat; and a plurality of straps attached to the support member in a substantially perpendicular relationship to the longitudinal axis of the support member, each of the plurality of straps having a first end for attaching to a first vertical structure and a second end for attaching to a second vertical structure, the first and second vertical structures being disposed in an oblique relationship to each other.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Many aspects of the invention can be better understood with reference to the following drawings. The components in the drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon clearly illustrating principles in accordance with exemplary embodiments of the present invention. Moreover, in the drawings, like reference numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the several views.

FIG. **1** is a front view of one of a number of embodiments of a storage device for a boat.

FIG. **2** is a back view of the storage device of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **3** is a back view of another embodiment of storage device for a boat.

FIG. **4** is a front view of the storage device of FIG. **3**.

FIG. **5** is a bottom, fold-out view of another embodiment of a storage device for a boat which may be removably secured to a t-top of a boat.

FIG. **6** is a side view of the storage device of FIG. **5**.

FIG. **7** illustrates the top portion and the access flap of the storage device of FIG. **6**.

FIG. **8** is a perspective view of an embodiment of the storage device of FIGS. **5–7** illustrating an exemplary installation of the device on a t-top of a boat.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

This disclosure relates to various embodiments of storage devices for boats. Several exemplary embodiments will be described with respect to FIGS. **1–7**. It will be appreciated, with reference to the following description and the drawings, that these exemplary embodiments of storage devices (as well as others) may be removably attached to existing structure(s) on any of a number of types of boats. For example, many existing boats are manufactured or retrofitted with any of the following, or other, structure(s), on which these storage devices may be removably attached: t-top, hardtop, outrigger, tower, half-tower, boarding arch, fishing arch, radar arch, sailing arch, deck cover, seats, leaning post(s), seat back, aluminum piping, etc. One of ordinary skill in the art will further appreciate that these storage devices may be conveniently attached/detached from any of a number of alternative structure(s) that exist, or may be installed, on boats of any type.

The various embodiments of storage devices offer a portable, convenient, and flexible solution for providing on-board storage for various types of items (e.g., personal items, supplies, life preservers, fishing tackle, etc.). One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the storage devices may be appropriately configured and sized to

accommodate the spatial and/or structural orientation of any installation target, as well as the target items to be stored.

Having described the general structure and operation of various storage devices for boats, several exemplary embodiments will be described with respect to FIGS. **1–7**. FIGS. **1** and **2** illustrate an embodiment of a storage device **100** for removably attaching to structure(s) on a boat of the types generally described above. As illustrated in FIG. **1**, storage device **100** comprises a support member **102**, pocket member **104**, and straps **106**. Support member **102** provides an appropriate support or backing on which pocket member(s) **104** may be attached for forming a pocket in which various types of items may be stored. In one embodiment, support member **102** and/or pocket member(s) **104** comprise a piece of marine fabric. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that any of a number of alternative materials, fabrics, etc. may be used. For example, in certain embodiments, support member **102** and/or pocket member(s) **104** may comprise any of the following, or other materials: acrylic material, woven vinyl-coated polyester fabric, acrylic fiber, etc.

As briefly stated above, storage device **100** may comprise one or more pocket members **104**. Pocket members **104** may be attached to the front side of support member **102** in a number of ways to form the corresponding pocket(s). For example, a pocket member **104** may be stitched to the front side of support member **102** with thread, such as marine thread. As illustrated in FIGS. **1** & **2**, pocket member **104** may be stitched to the front side of support member **102** at each of the edges except a top edge, which remains unattached to support member **102**, to form the corresponding pocket.

In certain embodiments, a plurality of pocket member(s) **104** may be attached to support member **102**. It should be appreciated that pocket members **104** may be positioned in any convenient way on support member **102**. For instance, a plurality of horizontal pockets may be formed by attaching two pocket members **104** next to each other. Alternatively, pocket members **104** may be positioned in a vertical arrangement along the y-axis (FIGS. **1** & **2**) to form vertically-aligned pockets. Furthermore, any combination of horizontally-aligned and/or vertically-aligned pockets may be formed on support member **102**.

It should be further appreciated that a plurality of pockets may be formed by stitching a divider **110** in an existing pocket member **104**. In this manner, a single pocket member **104** may be converted into two smaller pocket members **104** because divider **110** serves as the barrier between the two pockets.

As mentioned above, pocket member(s) **104** may be attached to support member **102** in a number of ways. For example, referring to FIGS. **1** & **2**, pocket member **104** may be formed from a bottom portion of support member **102** by folding support member **102** along, for example, an axis orthogonal to the y-axis, and attaching the folded portion to support member **102** as described above. In this manner, the folded portion (i.e., pocket member **104**) forms the pocket. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that labor costs may be reduced by forming the pocket from support member **102** because separate pocket members **104** do not need to be cut and separately attached.

As further illustrated in FIG. **1**, storage device **100** may further comprise a reinforcing material **112** (e.g., acrylic binding material, canvas material, epoxy, etc.) which is attached to the various edges of support member **102** and/or pocket member(s) **104**. For example, in the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **1** & **2**, reinforcing material **112** comprises an acrylic binding material which is stitched to various edges of support member **102** and pocket member **104**. It should be appreciated that reinforcing material **112** may improve the durability of storage device **100** at, for example, the edges of the device where durability and wear may be an issue.

As best illustrated in FIG. **2**, storage device **100** may be removably attached to various structure(s) on a boat as described above via a plurality of straps **106**. By way of example, storage device **100** may be removably attached to a seat back, or any other suitable structure(s). Straps **106** may comprise a variety of materials, fabrics, etc. In one embodiment, straps **106** comprise web strapping. Any number of straps **106** may be employed as necessary to attach storage device **100**. For example, depending on factors such as the size of storage device **100**, the number of pockets, the size, dimensions and weight of the items being stored, the spatial and structural orientation of the target structure(s), etc., additional straps **106** may be used.

As illustrated in FIG. **2**, straps **106** may be attached to the back side (i.e., the opposite side of the pockets) of support member **102** along the y-axis (FIG. **1**). Straps **106** may include a first end portion **108** which may be used to at least partially extend around the target structure(s) and attach to the remaining portion **204** of the corresponding strap **106**. In this manner, each strap **106** may be wrapped around the target structure(s) and attached to support member **102** or remaining portion **204** and, thereby, secure storage device **100** to the structure(s).

It should be appreciated that straps **106** may be attached in a number of ways. As illustrated in the embodiment of FIG. **2**, a pair of D-rings **202** may be attached near the remaining portion **204**. As known in the art, the first end portion **108** may be extended around the target structure(s) and through the pair of D-rings. In order to secure strap **106**, the first end portion **108** may then be wrapped around one of the D-rings, between the D-rings, and then under the other D-ring. As known in the art, this arrangement provides a simple, cost-effective, and convenient means for securing straps **106** around the target structure and attaching storage device **100** to the structure(s). One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that various alternative means may be employed for attaching straps **106**. For example, any male-to-female, or other, fastening means may be employed. In certain embodiments, Velcro® may be used to attach the end portion **108** of straps **106** to support member **102**.

FIGS. **3** and **4** illustrate another embodiment of a storage device **300** for removably attaching to structure(s) on a boat of the types generally described above. As illustrated in FIG. **3**, storage device **300** comprises a support member **302**, pocket member(s) **402**, and straps **306**. Support member **302** provides an appropriate support or backing on which pocket member(s) **402** may be attached for forming a pocket in which various types of items may be stored. As illustrated in FIGS. **3** & **4**, support member **302** has two opposing sides **304** (relative to vertical, longitudinal axis—y). As described below in more detail, opposing sides **304** are generally disposed in an oblique relationship to each other. In this manner, storage device **300** may advantageously be removably attached to two vertical structures which are disposed in an oblique relationship. There are a number of situations in which this unique configuration may be implemented. For example, many t-tops, hardtops, outriggers, towers, arches, covers, leaning posts, etc. include two opposing structures that are disposed in an oblique relationship to each other. Storage device **300** enables this additional space to be used for on-board storage.

Support member **302** and/or pocket member(s) **402** comprise a piece of marine fabric. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that any of a number of alternative materials, fabrics, etc. may be used. For example, in certain embodiments, support member **302** and/or pocket member(s) **402** may comprise any of the following, or other materials: acrylic material, woven vinyl-coated polyester fabric, acrylic fiber, etc.

As briefly stated above, storage device **300** may comprise one or more pocket members **402**, which may be attached to the front side of support member **302**. Pocket member(s) **402** may be attached to, and positioned on, support member **302** in much the same manner as described above with respect to storage device **100**.

Furthermore, storage device **300** may further comprise a reinforcing material **312** (e.g., acrylic binding material, canvas material, epoxy, etc.) which is attached to the various edges of support member **302** and/or pocket member(s) **402**. For example, in the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **3** & **4**, reinforcing material **314** comprises an acrylic binding material which is stitched to various edges of support member **302** and pocket member **402**. It should be appreciated that reinforcing material **314** may improve the durability of storage device **300** at, for example, the edges of the device where durability, wearing, rubbing, etc. may be an issue.

Storage device **300** may be removably attached to various structure(s) on a boat (e.g., obliquely-opposed, vertical structures, etc.) as described above via a plurality of straps **306**. Straps **306** may comprise a variety of materials, fabrics, etc. In one embodiment, straps **306** comprise web strapping. Any number of straps **306** may be employed as necessary to attach storage device **300**. For example, depending on factors such as the size of storage device **300**, the number of pockets, the size, dimensions and weight of the items being stored, the spatial and structural orientation of the target structure(s), etc., additional straps **306** may be used.

As illustrated in FIG. **3**, straps **306** may be attached to the back side (i.e., the opposite side of the pockets) of support member **302** in a substantially perpendicular relationship to the longitudinal axis (i.e., y-axis) of support member **302**. Straps **306** may include a first end **308** for attaching to a first vertical structure and a second end **310** for attaching to a second vertical structure, which may be disposed in an oblique relationship to the first vertical structure.

It should be appreciated that straps **306** may be attached to the vertical structures in a number of ways. As illustrated in the embodiment of FIG. **3**, first end **308** and second end **310** may each have a corresponding pair of D-rings **312** attached to support member **302** or strap **306**. In the manner described above, the ends **308** and **310** of straps **306** may be wrapped around the corresponding vertical structure and through the corresponding pair of D-rings. In order to secure strap **306**, the corresponding end **308** or **310** may then be wrapped around one of the D-rings, between the D-rings, and then under the other D-ring. As known in the art, this arrangement provides a simple, cost-effective, and convenient means for securing straps **306** around the vertical structures and attaching storage device **300**. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that various alternative means may be employed for attaching straps **106**. For example, any male-to-female, or other, fastening means may be employed. In certain embodiments, Velcro® may be used to attach the ends **308** and **310** to support member **302** or strap **306**.

FIGS. **5–8** illustrate another embodiment of a storage device **500** for removably attaching to structures on a boat. As with the storage devices **100** and **300**, storage device **500** may be attached to a number of different types of structure(s) on the boat. As best illustrated in FIG. **8**, in one embodiment, storage device **500** is designed to removably attach to a t-top, or other similar structure, on a boat. For example, as known in the art, t-tops, towers, arches, etc. typically include two or more parallel pipes (typically made of aluminum) which are located above, and substantially parallel to the floor of the boat. As described in more detail below, storage device **500** may be removably attached to the piping of these structures and, thereby, provide convenient on-board storage.

Referring to FIGS. **5–8**, storage device **500** may comprise a frame, an access flap **704**, and straps **506**. In general, the frame includes an opening to a storage area defined by the frame for storing/removing the items to be stored in the frame. Access flap **704** is attached to a portion of the frame and extends over the opening to another portion of the frame. In this manner, access flap **704** provides a convenient mechanism for enabling a user to access the storage area via the opening and store/remove items from the frame. Furthermore, access flap **704** provides a means for covering the opening in the frame and securing the items stored in the frame. A perspective view of an embodiment of storage device **500** (installed on one example of a target structure) is illustrated in FIG. **8**.

It should be appreciated that the frame may be configured in a number of different ways and from various materials. For example, in the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **5–8**, the frame comprises a bottom portion **502**, a top portion **702**, two opposing side portions **504**, and a back portion (not shown). As known in the art, bottom portion **502**, top portion **702**, side portions **504**, and the back portion may be stitched together (or otherwise attached to each other) to form a five-sided frame having an opening opposite the back portion.

The frame and/or access flap may comprise a number of materials. For example, in the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **5-8**, bottom portion **502**, top portion **702**, side portions **504**, the back portion, and access flap **704** comprise a piece of marine fabric. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that any of a number of alternative materials, fabrics, etc. may be used. For example, in certain embodiments, the frame and/or access flap **704** may comprise any of the following, or other materials: acrylic material, woven vinyl-coated polyester fabric, acrylic fiber, etc. Furthermore, it should be appreciated that the frame may be manufactured in a variety of ways. For example, the frame need not be assembled from separate pieces of marine fabric, or other materials. Rather, the frame may be implemented as a single member, or two or more members formed to define the frame.

As best illustrated in FIG. **8**, in one embodiment, access flap **704** is attached to top portion **702** and extends over the opening in the frame where it may be removably attached to bottom portion **502** to enable the user to easily access the storage area and remove/store items in the frame. In this regard, access flap **704** may further comprise a means for removably attaching access flap **704** to bottom portion **502**. In one embodiment, access flap **704** comprises a securing strip **706** (FIG. **7**) which includes Velcro® for removably attaching to a corresponding Velcro® element located on the frame. It should be appreciated that various alternative means may be employed for removably attaching access flap **704**. For example, any male-to-female, or other, fastening means may be employed. In alternative embodiments, access flap **704** may attach to bottom portion **502** via a zipper.

Storage device **500** may further comprise a reinforcing material **708** and **512** (e.g., acrylic binding material, canvas material, epoxy, etc.) which is attached to the various edges of the frame and/or access flap **704**. For example, as illustrated in FIGS. **5**, **7**, and **8**, reinforcing material **708** and **512** comprises an acrylic binding material which is stitched to various edges of the frame and access flap **704**. It should be appreciated that reinforcing material **512** and **708** may improve the durability of storage device **500** at, for example, the edges of the device where durability, wearing, rubbing, etc. may be an issue.

As stated above, storage device **500** may be removably attached to various structure(s) on a boat (e.g., t-tops, towers, arches, etc.) via a plurality of straps **506**. Straps **506** may comprise a variety of materials, fabrics, etc. In one embodiment, straps **506** comprise web strapping. Any number of straps **506** may be employed as necessary to attach storage device **500**. For example, depending on factors such as the size of storage device **500**, the size, dimensions and weight of the items being stored, the spatial and structural orientation of the target structure(s), etc., additional straps **506** may be used.

As illustrated in FIG. **5**, straps **506** may be attached to bottom portion **502**. Straps **506** comprise a first end **508** for attaching to a first horizontal structure and a second end **512** for attaching to a second horizontal structure. It should be appreciated that storage device **500** may be removably attached to the target structure by attaching ends **508** and **512** to the respective horizontal structures. When storage device **500** is installed on the target structure, straps **502** are attached to the structure and provide support from underneath the frame. In this regard, it should be appreciated that the directional terms top, bottom, etc. refer to storage device **500** as it is installed. In other words, when storage device **500** is installed on, for example, a t-top, top portion **702** is disposed above bottom portion **502**. Therefore, as stated above, access flap **704** may be easily engaged by a user, while at the same time, straps **502** provide support from underneath the frame (and, therefore, underneath the items stored in the frame).

One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that storage device **500** may provide a more secure installation, particularly where gravitational forces may strain the frame and/or straps **506** due to, for example, relatively massive items being stored in the frame. Furthermore, where the distance between the horizontal structures is relatively large, less massive items may still result in relatively large forces on the frame and/or straps **506**. A simple example may illustrate this point. Consider the situation in which two people are holding opposite ends of a one-foot rope. If a heavy object is hung from the middle of the rope, very little strength is required to maintain the tension in the rope. However, if the rope were, for example, fifteen feet long, the same two people may not be able to maintain the tension in the rope when an object with much less mass is hung from the middle of the rope.

One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that straps **506** may be attached to the horizontal structures in a number of ways. In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **5–7**, each end portion of straps **506** may have a corresponding pair of D-rings **510** attached to bottom portion **502** or strap **506**. As known in the art, D-rings **510** provide a simple, cost-effective, and convenient means for securing straps **506** around the horizontal structures and attaching storage device **500**. By way of example, the ends **508** and **512** may be wrapped around the corresponding horizontal structure and through the corresponding pair of D-rings. In order to secure strap **506**, the corresponding end **508** or **510** may then be wrapped around one of the D-rings, between the D-rings, and then under the other D-ring. It should be appreciated that various alternative means may be employed for attaching straps **506**. For example, any male-to-female, or other, fastening means may be employed.

As illustrated in FIG. **8**, straps **506** may further comprise slides **802** for receiving extra length of straps **506** after storage device **500** is installed. Slides **802** may be made from a number of different materials, such as nylon, etc. Storage device **500** may provide a flexible installation system for securing the device to a number of different target structures. For example, where storage device **500** is installed on two horizontal structures that are disposed a relatively large distance from each, slides **802** may not be needed. However, if the distance between the horizontal structures is relatively smaller, extra length of straps **506** may be conveniently held by slides **802**.

The above-described embodiments of the present invention are merely possible examples of implementations, merely set forth for a clear understanding of the principles of the invention. Many variations and modifications may be made to the above-described embodiment(s) of the invention without departing substantially from the spirit and principles of the invention. All such modifications and variations are intended to be included within the scope of this disclosure and the present invention and protected by the following claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A storage device for removably attaching to structures on a boat and for storing items, the storage device comprising:

a support member comprising marine fabric having two opposing sides on a vertical longitudinal axis which are disposed in an oblique relationship to each other;

at least one pocket member comprising marine fabric which is attached to the support member for forming a pocket on the front side of the support member and for receiving an item to be stored on the boat; and

a plurality of straps attached to the support member in a substantially perpendicular relationship to the longitudinal axis of the support member, each of the plurality of straps having a first end for attaching to a first vertical structure and a second end for attaching to a second vertical structure, the first and second vertical structures being disposed in an oblique relationship to each other.

2. The storage device of claim **1**, wherein the support member and the at least one pocket member comprise an acrylic material.

3. The storage device of claim **1**, wherein the support member and the at least one pocket member comprise a woven vinyl-coated polyester fabric.

4. The storage device of claim **1**, wherein the edges of the support member and the pocket member are reinforced with an acrylic binding material.

5. The storage device of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of straps comprise web strapping.

6. The storage device of claim 1 wherein one of the plurality of straps is positioned at the top of the support member and another of the plurality of straps is positioned at the bottom of the support member.

7. The storage device of claim 6, further comprising:

a first pair of D-rings attached to the first end of one of the plurality of straps for attaching the storage device to the first vertical structure; and

a second pair of D-rings attached to the second end of the one of the plurality of straps for attaching the storage device to the second vertical structure.

8. The storage device of claim 1, wherein at least two pocket members are attached to the support member to form two vertically-aligned pockets.

9. The storage device of claim 1, wherein at least two pocket members are attached to the support member to form two horizontally-aligned pockets.

10. The storage device of claim 1, wherein the support member is sized to fit between the first and second vertical structures to which the plurality of straps are to be attached.

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