



United States Patent [19]

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Walker et al.

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- [54] **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR A CRYPTOGRAPHICALLY ASSISTED COMMERCIAL NETWORK SYSTEM DESIGNED TO FACILITATE BUYER-DRIVEN CONDITIONAL PURCHASE OFFERS**
- [75] Inventors: **Jay S. Walker**, Ridgefield, Conn.; **Bruce Schneier**, Oak Park, Ill.; **James A. Jorasch**, Stamford, Conn.
- [73] Assignee: **Walker Asset Management Limited Partnership**, Stamford, Conn.
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- [22] Filed: **Sep. 4, 1996**
- [51] Int. Cl.⁶ **G06F 15/20**
- [52] U.S. Cl. **705/23; 705/26; 380/49; 380/23; 380/25**
- [58] Field of Search 395/226, 227, 395/237, 238, 239, 244; 380/23, 24, 25, 49; 705/26, 27, 37, 38, 39, 44, 1, 5, 6

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Primary Examiner—Thomas H. Tarcza
Assistant Examiner—Pinchus M. Laufer
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Morgan & Finnegan LLP; Jeffrey L. Brandt

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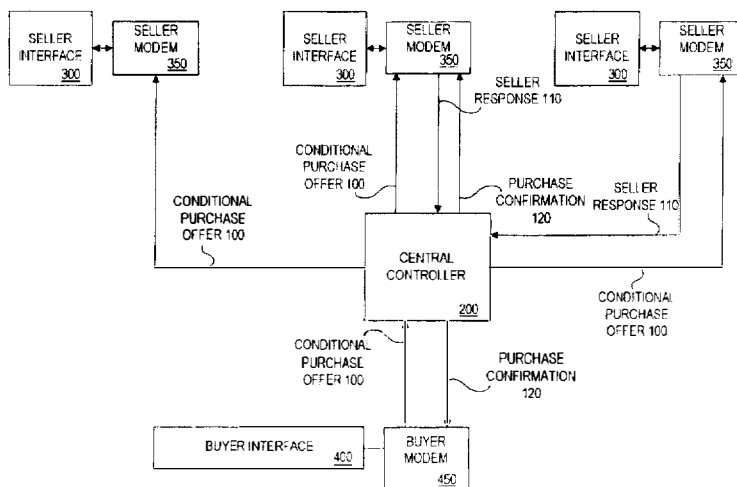
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[57] ABSTRACT

The present invention is a method and apparatus for effectuating bilateral buyer-driven commerce. The present invention allows prospective buyers of goods and services to communicate a binding purchase offer globally to potential sellers, for sellers conveniently to search for relevant buyer purchase offers, and for sellers potentially to bind a buyer to a contract based on the buyer's purchase offer. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus of the present invention includes a controller which receives binding purchase offers from prospective buyers. The controller makes purchase offers available globally to potential sellers. Potential sellers then have the option to accept a purchase offer and thus bind the corresponding buyer to a contract. The method and apparatus of the present invention have applications on the Internet as well as conventional communications systems such as voice telephony.

44 Claims, 20 Drawing Sheets



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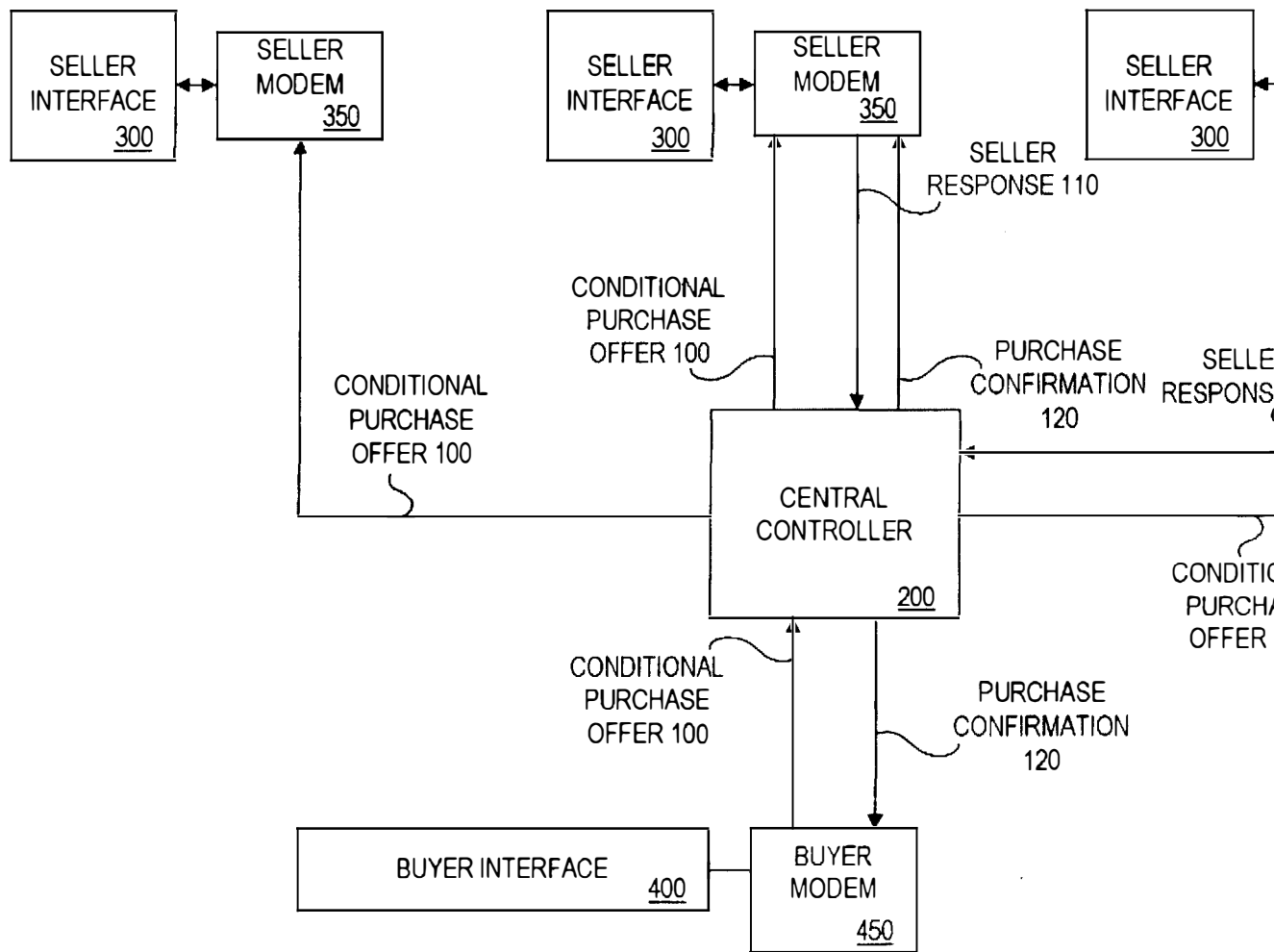


FIG. 1

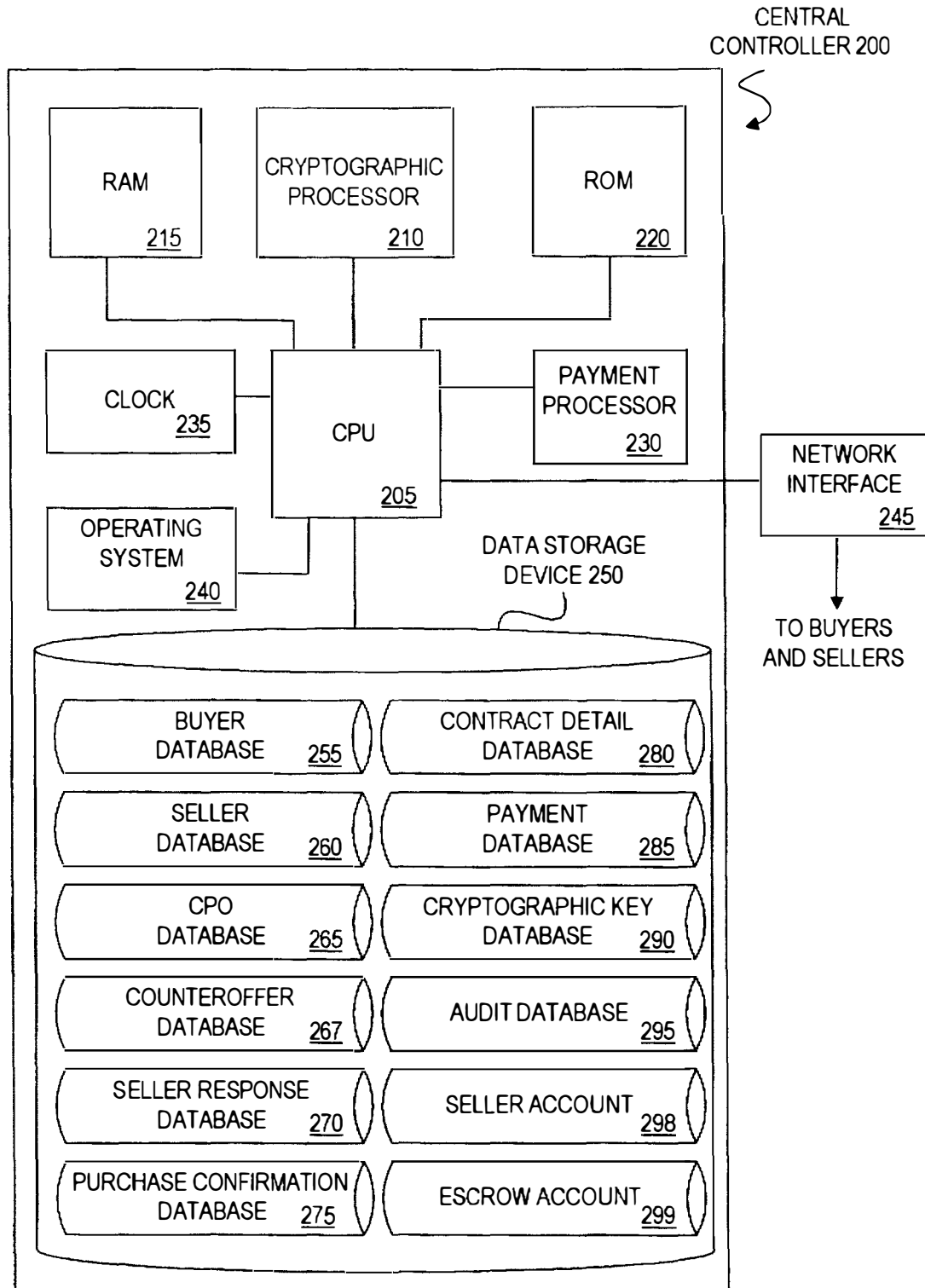


FIG. 2

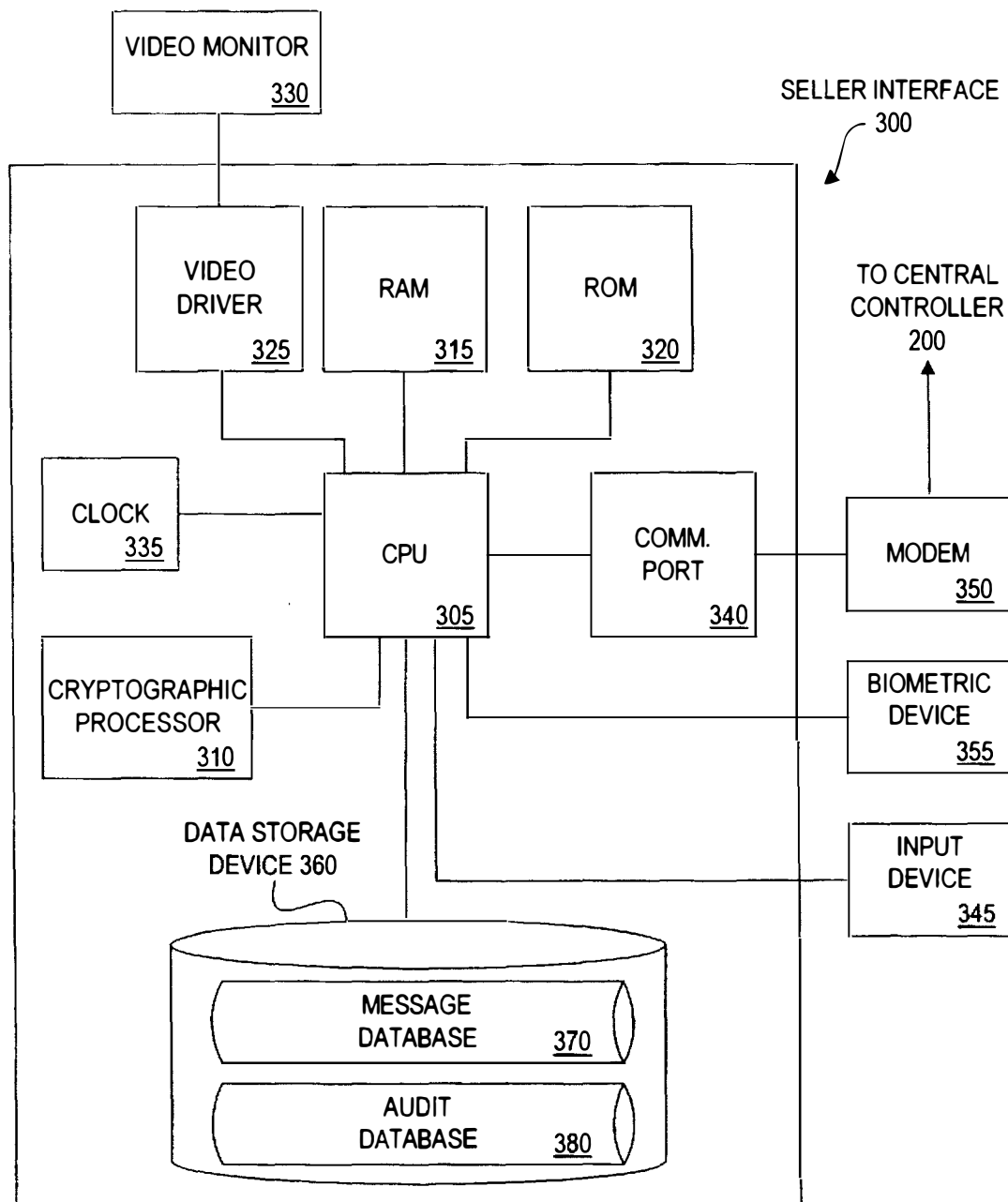


FIG. 3

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