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# United States Patent [19]

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Horstmann

[45] Date of Patent: **Dec. 28, 1999**

[54] **MULTI-TIER ELECTRONIC SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTION**

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[75] Inventor: **Cay S. Horstmann**, Cupertino, Calif.

[73] Assignee: **Preview Systems, Inc.**, Cupertino, Calif.

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[21] Appl. No.: **08/921,394**

[22] Filed: **Aug. 29, 1997**

[51] **Int. Cl.<sup>6</sup> .....** **H04L 9/00**

[52] **U.S. Cl. ....** **713/200; 380/4**

[58] **Field of Search .....** 395/186, 187.01, 395/188, 600, 700, 726; 380/1.4, 25, 21-24, 46, 49, 42-45, 55; 379/93.12, 91.02; 364/286.4, 286.5, 286.6; 713/200, 201, 202

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*Assistant Examiner*—Nadeem Iqbal

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### [57] ABSTRACT

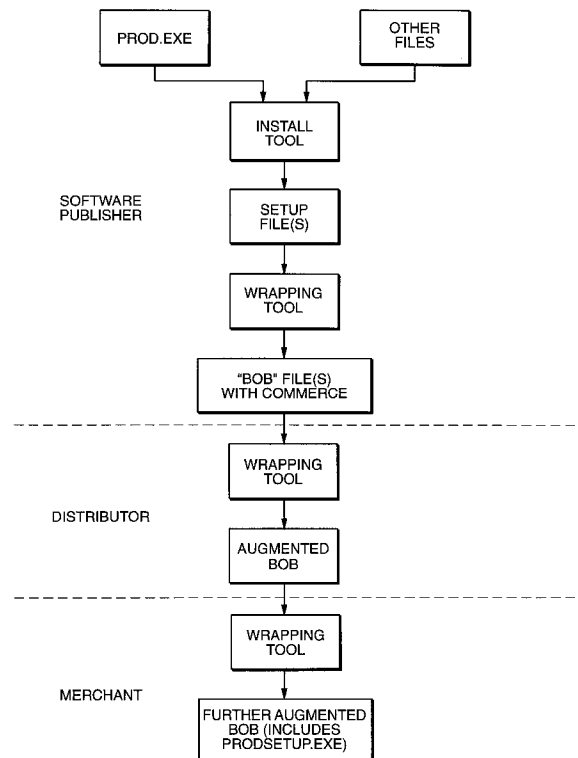
Methods of electronic software distribution are provided in which software products may be wrapped by their publishers in a straightforward, secure manner, but in such a way as to allow for the addition of information by downstream distribution channel partners, e.g., distributors and merchants (resellers). Distribution policies, or business rules, governing the distribution process may be fixed by the software publisher or may be left to the discretion of channel partners. The software product itself, however, is secured against tampering or inadvertent infection by a virus. A tool facilitates the foregoing incremental wrapping process without requiring sophistication in computer technology on the part of channel partners. The publisher may use a conventional setup tool of the publisher's choice to prepare a setup file set for distribution. That is, the wrapping tool need not influence the publisher's choice of setup tools.

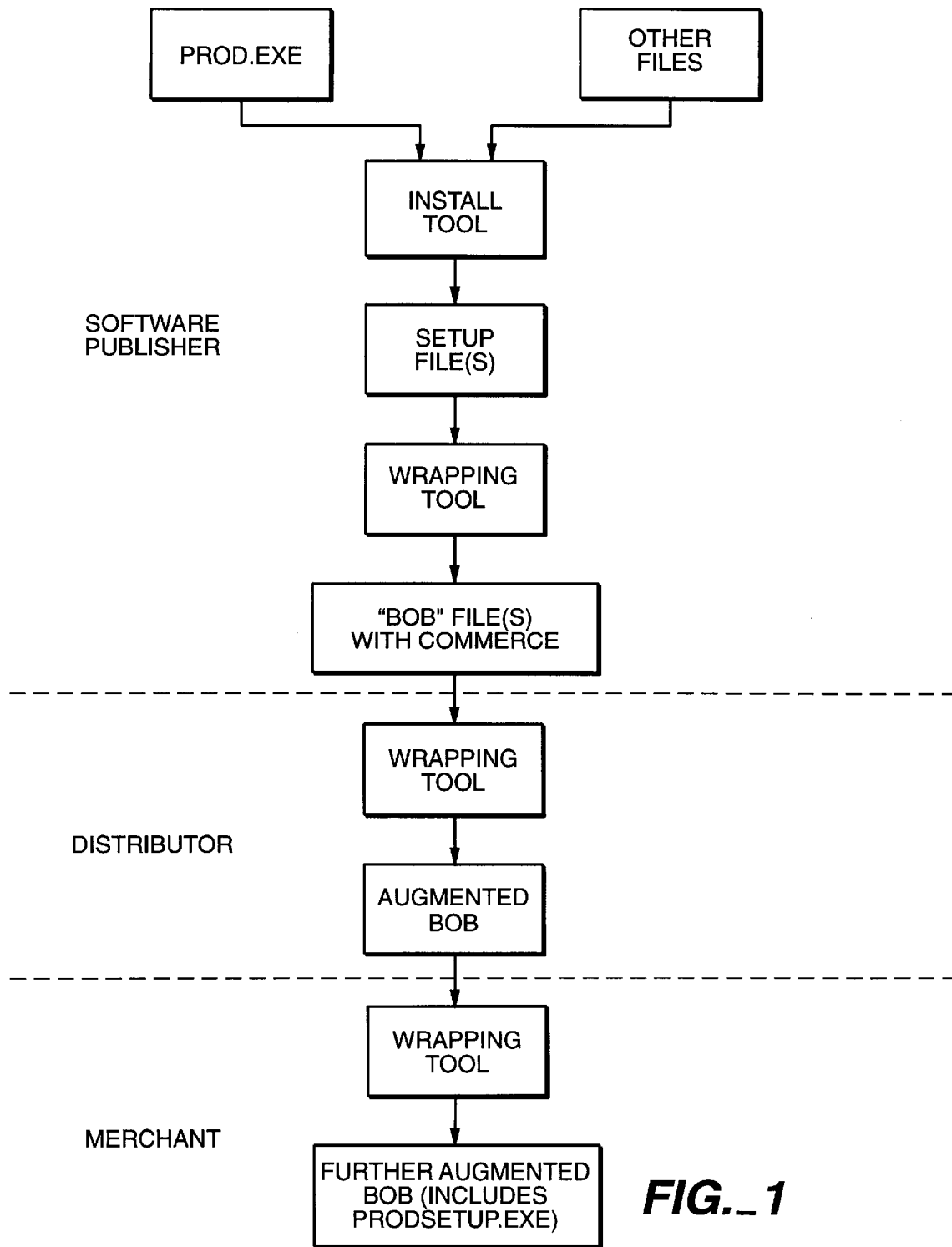
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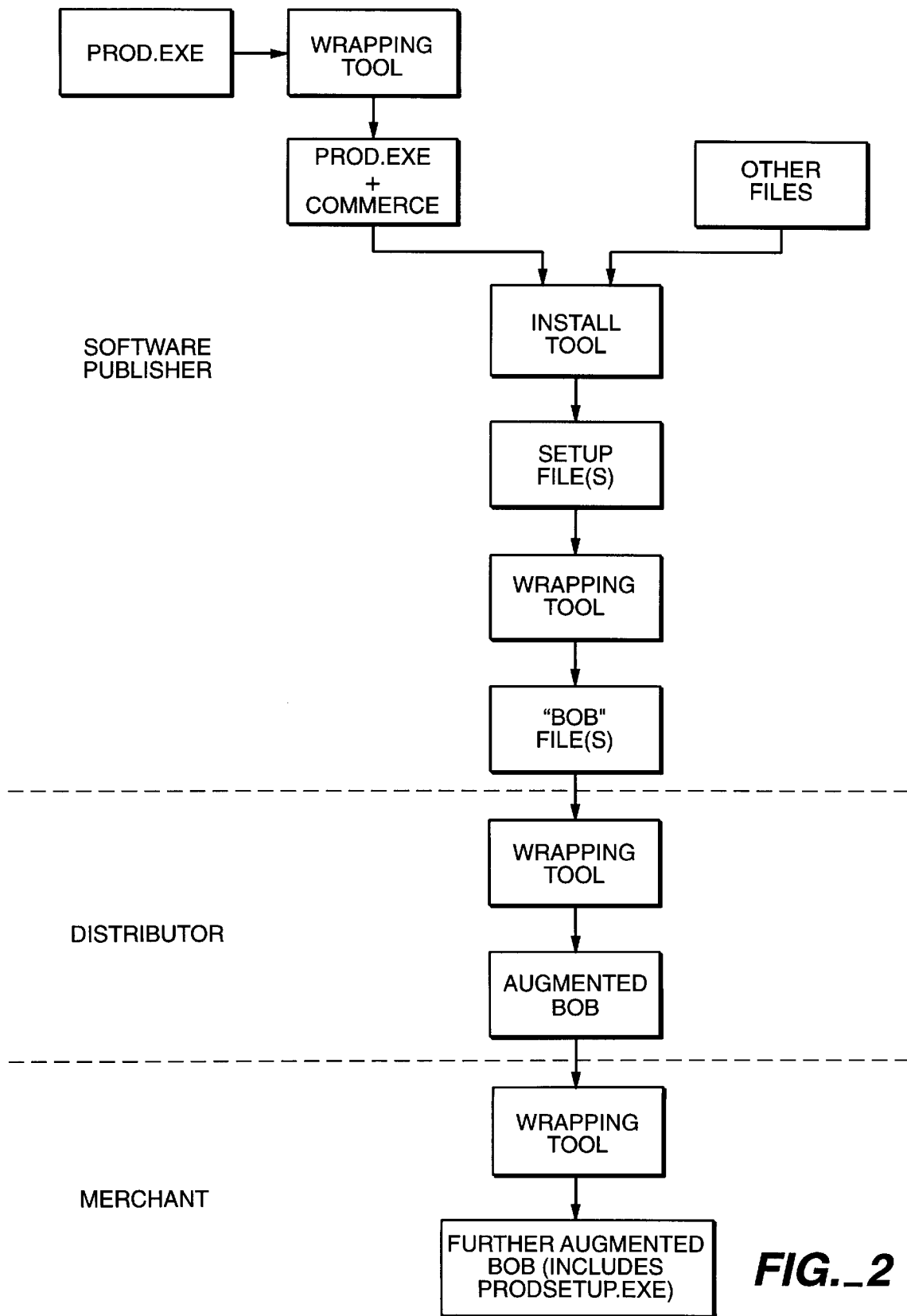
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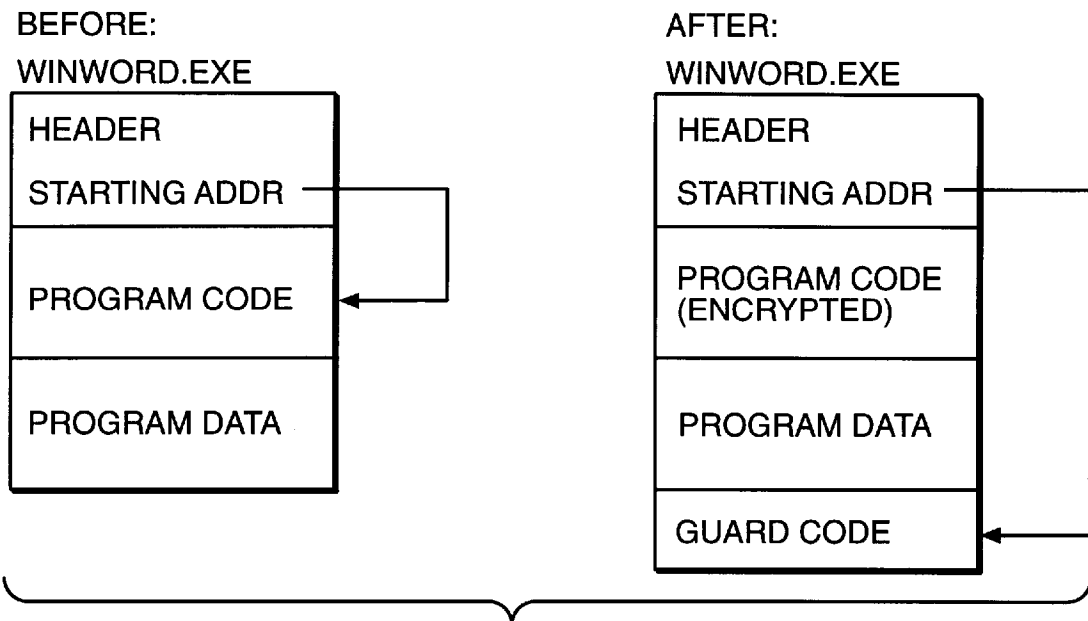
**10 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets**



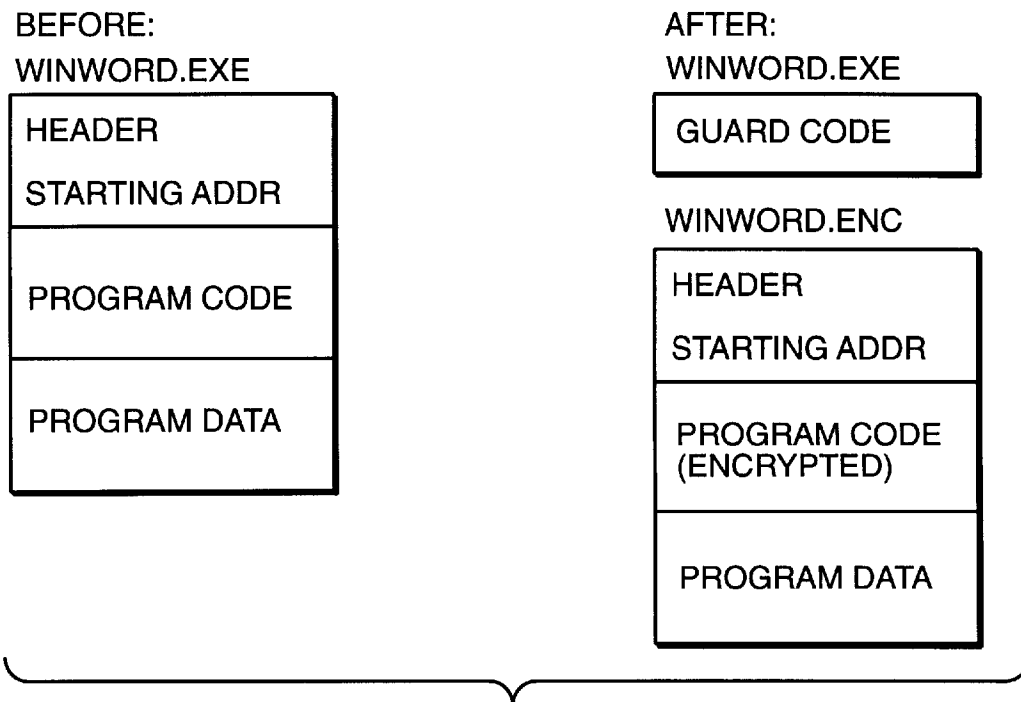




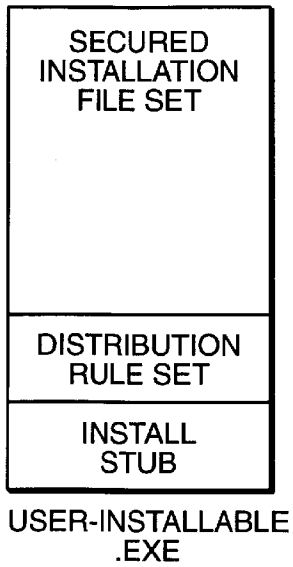
**FIG.\_2**



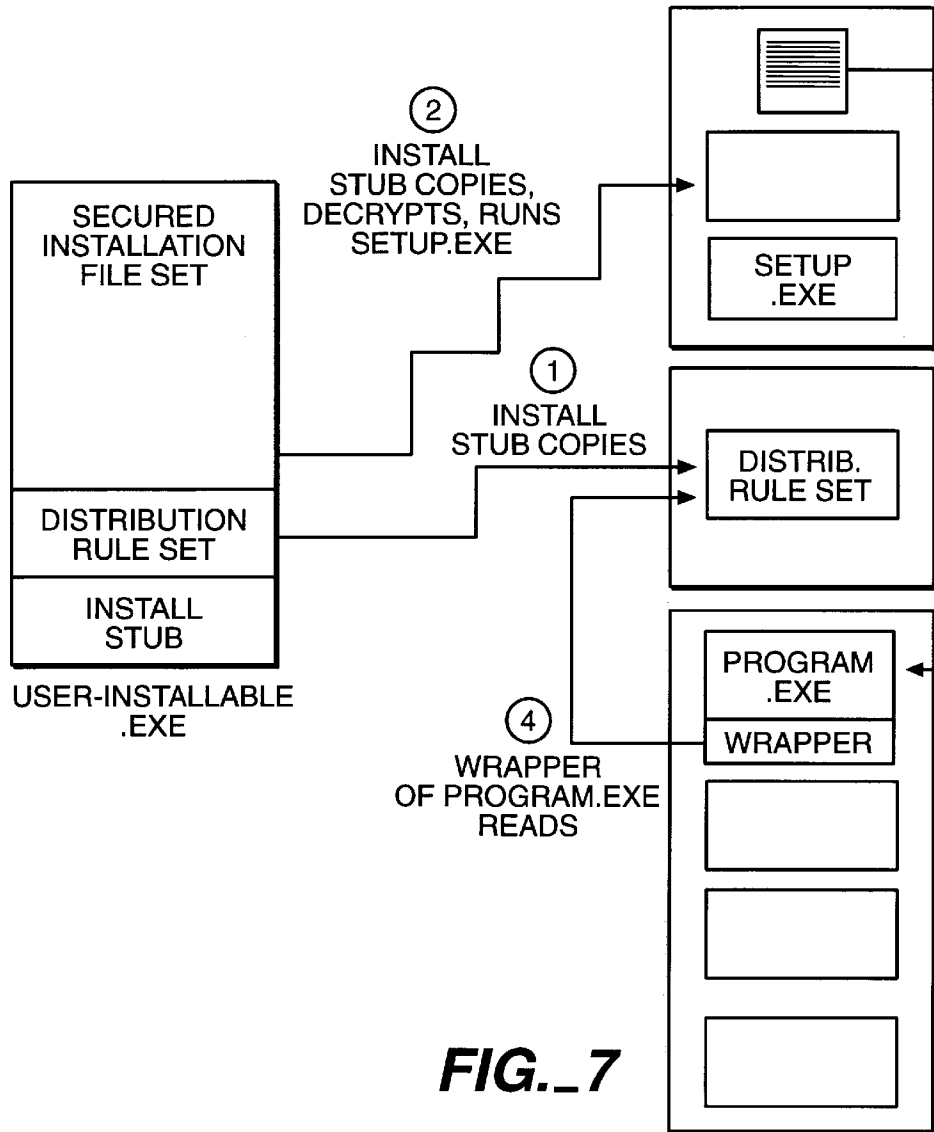
**FIG.\_3**



**FIG.\_4**



**FIG.\_5**



**FIG.\_7**

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