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(54) **PUBLIC TELEPHONE CONTROL WITH
VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL
TRANSMISSION**

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See application file for complete search history.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

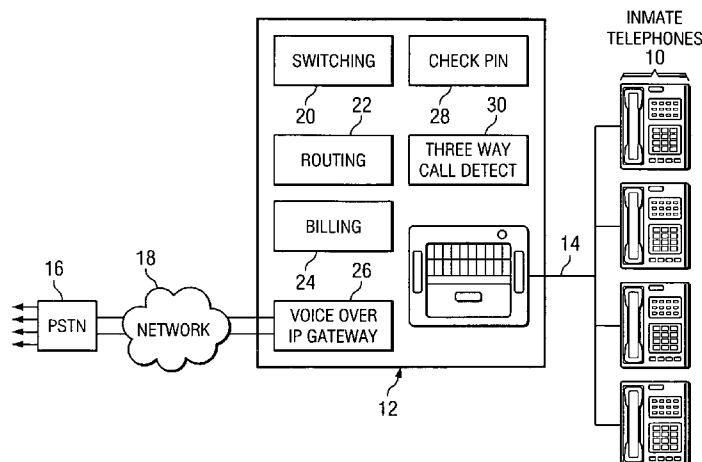
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Controlled public telephone communication systems includes a plurality of telephones at a given site, a program-mable control computer for switching, accessing, routing, timing, billing, and the control of the telephones at the site and a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) network connecting the telephones to an off site public switched telephone network. The programming of the control computer is distributed to remote locations over the VoIP network. A data exchange network interconnects other sites with the telephone communications system being integrated into the data exchange network.

17 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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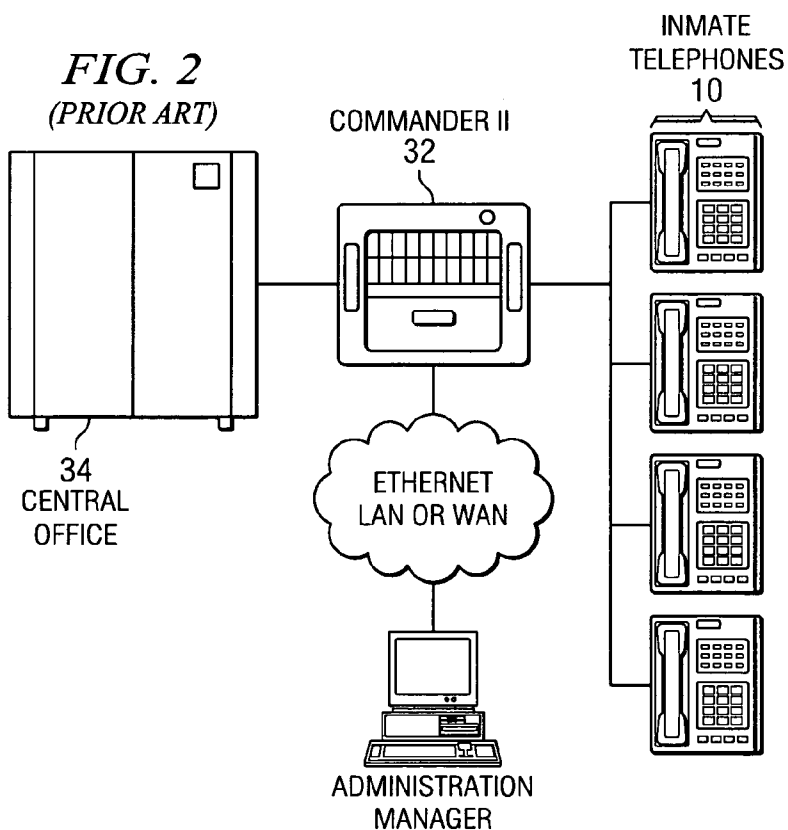
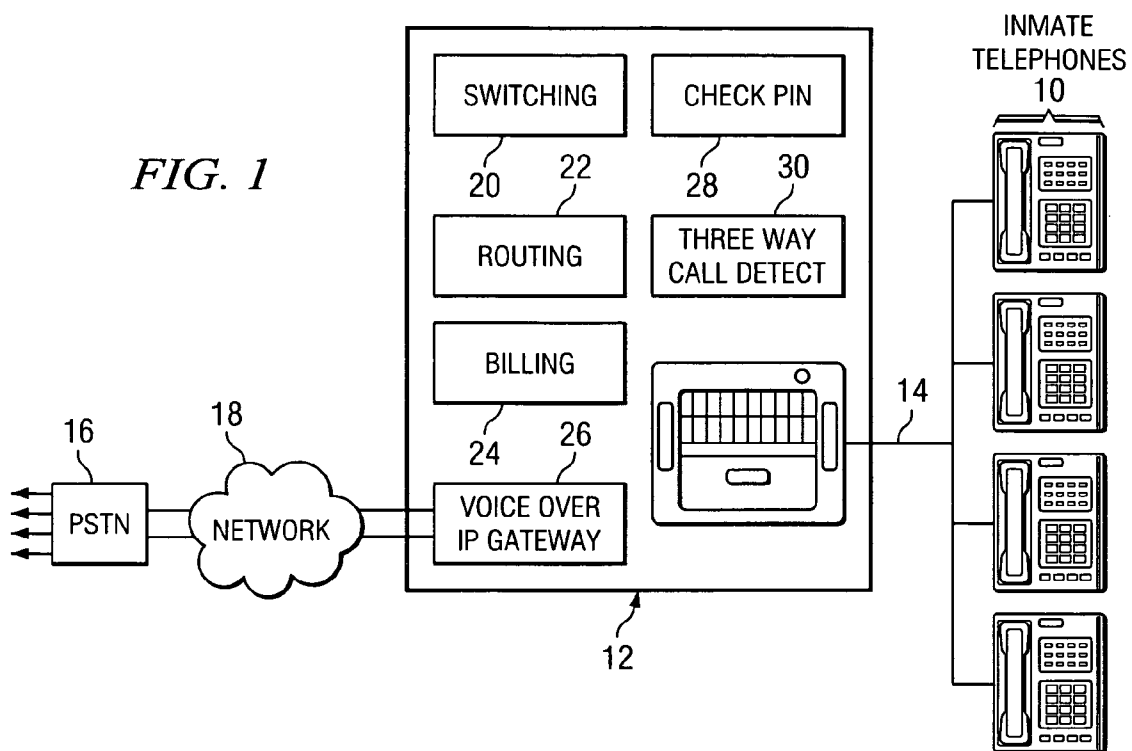
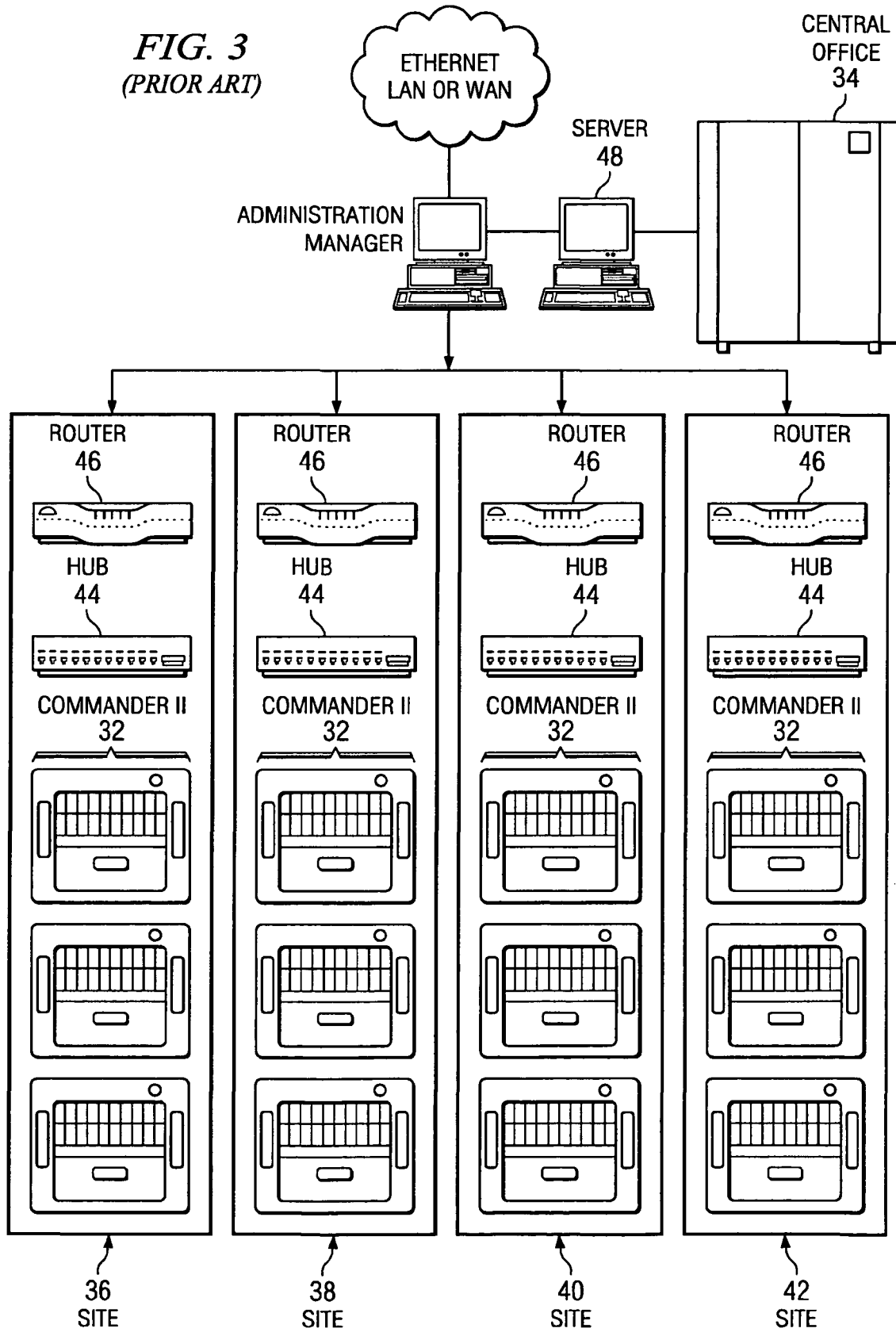
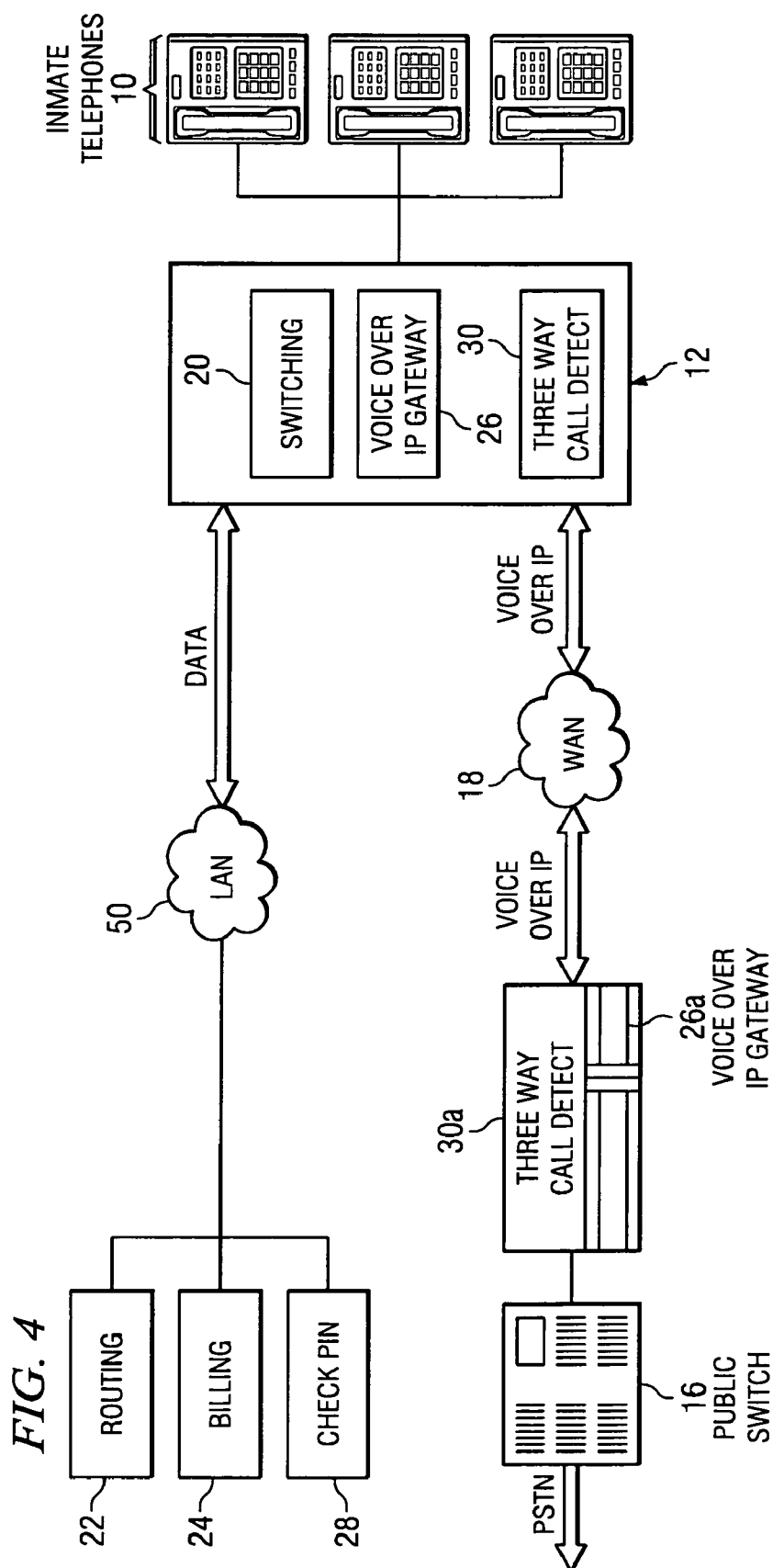
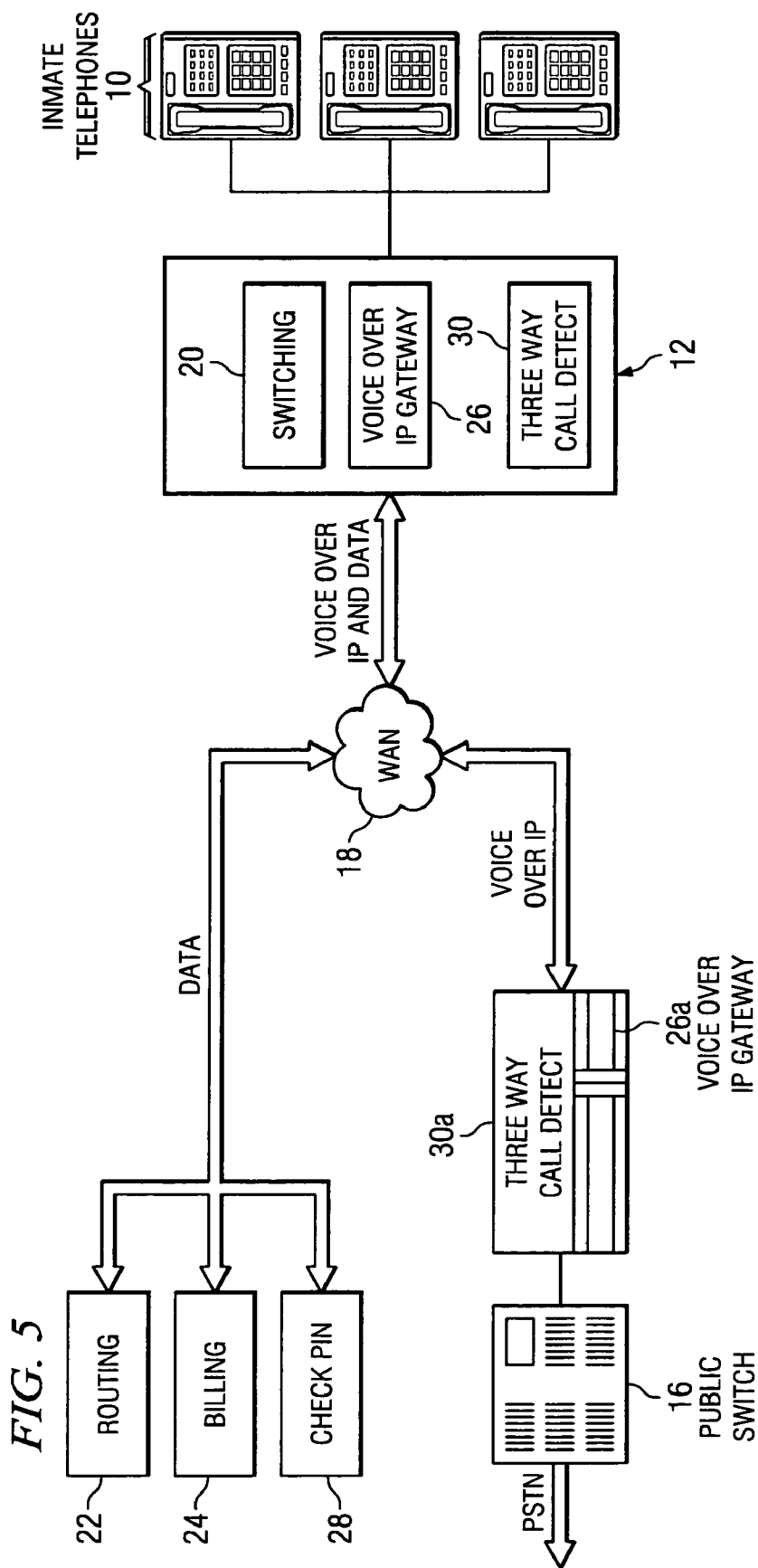
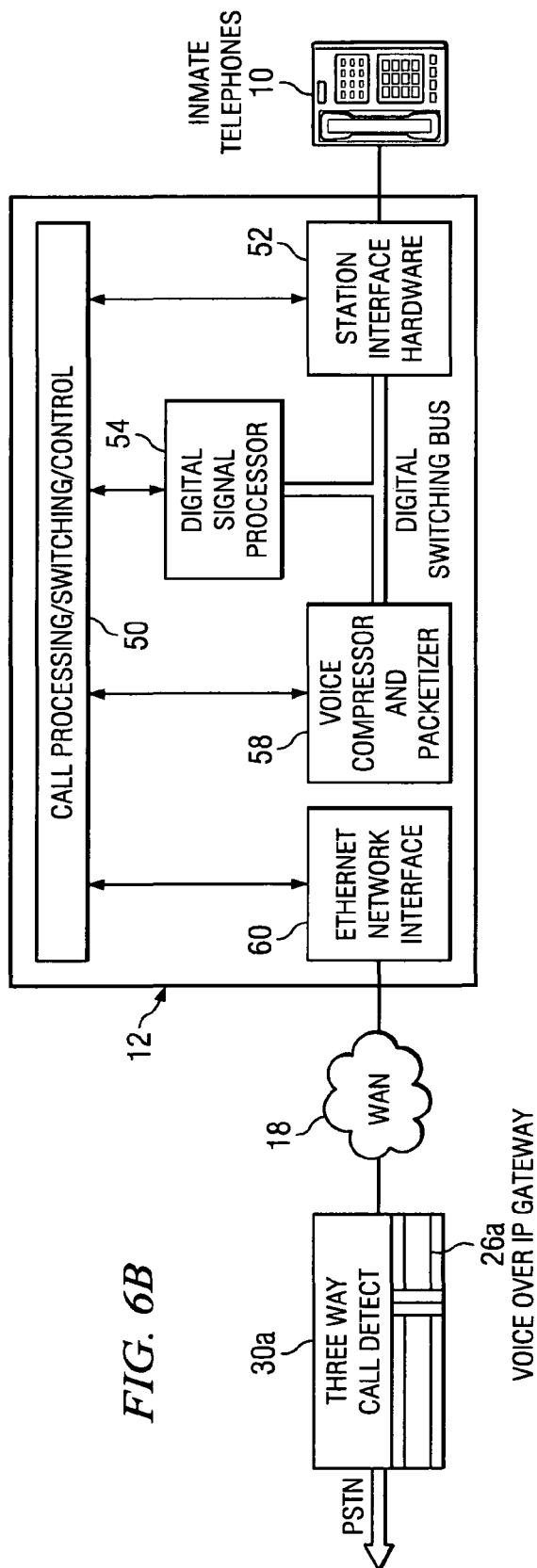
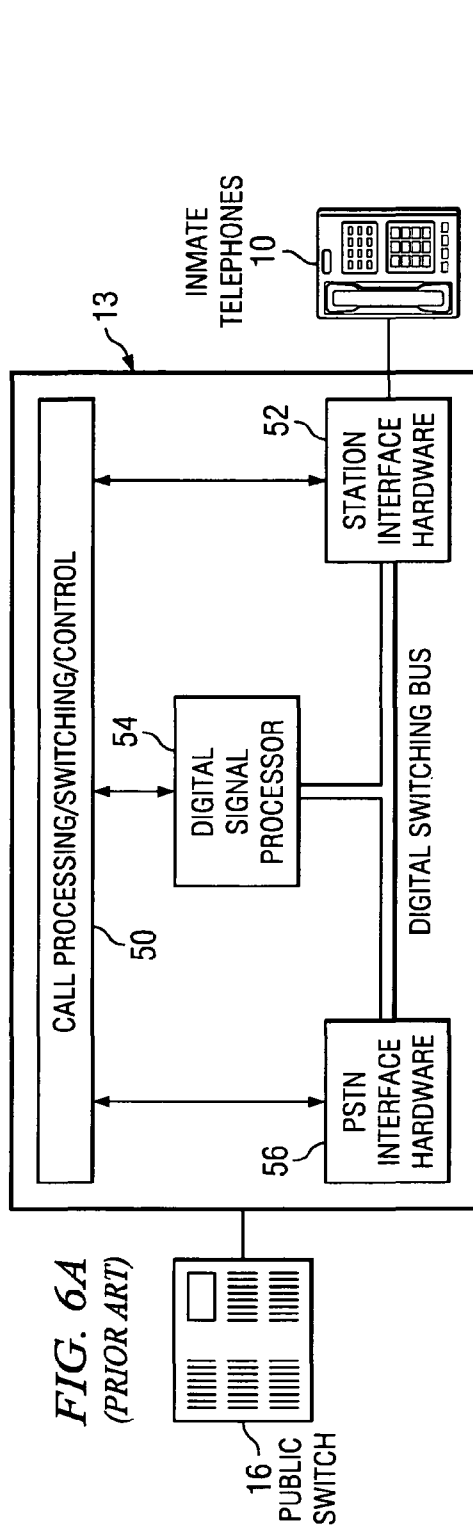


FIG. 3
(PRIOR ART)









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PUBLIC TELEPHONE CONTROL WITH VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL TRANSMISSION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to the control of public telephones at a given site and the processing of voice telephone calls with the calls being routed over Voice over Internet Protocol networks.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

With typical coin operated public telephones a caller manually dials appropriate information over transmission means, such as local wire loops connected to a computing and switching means called a "central office switch," which first collects the dialed caller information, processes the call, and controls the switching, accessing, and routing of caller information over long-distance transmission means to other similarly-arranged computing and switching means that are remotely located. In the past voice telephone calls were connected to a human operator to provide assistance in accounting and billing for a call. Access over additional long-distance transmission means was provided to a last computing and switching means connected to the local loop of a destination telephone terminal instrument and various computing and switching means which record the call numbers and timing and further arrange the accounting and billing for the public telephones and calls.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,935,956, Hellwarth, et al. describes a public phone service that permits and arranges long distance calls, the charges of which can be billed to either a credit account, the called party, or to a third party with a computer recording and accounting for the revenues collected from the telephone service. This is an example of a controlled public telephone system.

Telephone instruments which are accessible to the public for placing telephone calls are used in locations which are accessible to persons who are not necessarily responsible for their use. Often, public telephones are located in areas where restrictions must be placed on their use. For example, in prisons limitations are placed on the destination telephones which may be called. In order to control the destination numbers it is necessary to detect attempted three-way calls. U.S. Pat. No. 5,768,355, Salibrici et al., shows a three-way call detection system which uses digital signal processing to identify a third party connection. The three-way call detection of this patent is used in the Commander™ telephone system supplied by Science Dynamics Corporation. This is another example of a controlled public telephone system.

Recently, voice over internet protocol (VoIP) has been used for transmitting packets of data representing voice telephone messages. A VoIP gateway permits VoIP sessions to be conducted with called parties such as a called party having a PC connected to a Public Switching Transmission Network (PSTN) by a telephone line.

It is an object of the present invention to use Voice over Internet Protocol networks to transmit information from a controlled public telephone system.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the present invention a controlled public telephone communication system has a plurality of telephones at a given site and a programmable computer for switching, accessing, routing, timing, billing, and the control

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of the telephones. The telephones are selectively connected to an off site switched telephone network over a Voice over Internet Protocol network.

Further in accordance with the invention the programming for the computer is not all performed by the computer at the site. The system of the present invention distributes the processing to remote locations over an Intranet or Internet network. In accordance with the invention the distribution of the data processing to remote locations is integrated with the distribution of telephony signals over the Voice over Internet Protocol network.

Further in accordance with the invention, the processing of three way call detection is moved beyond the VoIP network so that signal loss or degradation by VoIP does not interfere with three way call detection.

The foregoing and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be better understood from the following more detailed description and dependent claims.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of a controlled public telephone system of the present invention;

FIG. 2 shows prior art public telephones at a single site;

FIG. 3 shows prior art multiple site public telephone systems;

FIG. 4 shows the ability of the invention to access software functions over a data network;

FIG. 5 shows the same ability as FIG. 4 but shows that the VoIP and data network are the same;

FIG. 6A depicts a prior art control computer; and

FIG. 6B shows the modifications to the control computer necessary to provide VoIP and data network capability.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 shows a controlled public telephone communication system including a plurality of public telephones 10 at a given site. The site may, for example, be a prison in which the use of the public telephones is monitored and controlled. Other sites for application of such control include hotels, airports, convention centers, or any location both public and private which contains a plurality of public telephones. A programmable computer 12 at the site is provided for switching, accessing, routing, timing, billing and the control of the telephones 10 at the site. Telephones 10 are connected to computer 12 by wire lines 14. The computer 12 may be of the type shown in U.S. Pat. No. 4,935,956, Hellwarth or of the commercially available type provided by Science Dynamics Corporation under their Commander™ designation.

Computer 12 has a modem which establishes a connection to a desired Public Switched Telephone Network ("PSTN") 16. The PSTN is any of those provided by AT&T, GTE, a Regional Bell Operating Company and others comprising multiple switching offices. As is known in the art, a Public Switched Telephone Network ("PSTN") includes a hierarchy of telephony switching offices. Individual subscribers are accessed on "local loops" or individual telephone lines to a nearby telephone exchange called an "end office" also called an "end telephony office". One or more end offices may be accessed to a "local central office," also called a "local central telephony office" or accessed to a "toll office." An end office may also function as a local central office (e.g., in a remote area or rural area). Alternatively, the system can terminate in a Private Branch Exchange instead of the PSTN.

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In accordance with the present invention the telephones **10** are selectively connected to the off site switch telephone network **16** over an Internet Protocol (IP) network **18** via Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) gateway **26**. The Internet Protocol (IP) network may be a Wide Area Network (WAN) or a local area network (LAN). Computer **12** selectively connects the telephones with the Voice over Internet Protocol gateway **26**. The Internet Protocol ("IP") is a routing protocol designed to route traffic within a network or between networks. Voice-over-IP is a method for providing voice capabilities over an IP network such as the Internet or an intranet. In such networks data packets are sent to and from communication sites to facilitate communication. In communication systems utilizing a Voice over Internet Protocol (IP) protocol, these packets are commonly referred to as datagrams. In typical Voice over IP networks, each communication site sends datagrams to other communication sites. There are different approaches to sending datagrams.

The control computer **12** supports a variety of applications, such as remote configuration, management and back-up, bandwidth allocation and control, least cost routing, Voice over Internet Protocol (or Voice over IP), as well various telephony related applications. In certain preferred embodiments, control signals per ITU recommendation H.323, and audio based media streams using RTP per Internet RFC1889 are applied. Alternatively control signals could be applied using other protocols such as SIP per Internet RFC 2543.

FIG. 1 shows that the computer **12** performs the function of switching, indicated at **20**, routing, indicated at **22**, and billing, indicated at **24**. Typically a prison environment such as described in the example has rules and regulations regarding what each inmate is allowed for telephone usage. The telephone user first dials a calling card number and a PIN code which is checked at **28**. A calling card number is associated with the PIN code. Control computers such as the Commander™ have stored therein the restrictions on telephone usage associated with that PIN number. As an example, on Monday the inmate may be allowed to call his attorney or to call his mother. As part of the restriction on telephone usage the Commander™ provides a three-way call detect system **30** as described in the aforementioned Salibrici et al. patent. This is one of the restriction imposed by control computer **12**.

Voice data is processed by means of a vocoder (Voice Coder/Decoder). This process utilizes one of several standard schemes such as ITU recommendation G.723.1, G.729, or G.711 among others. VoIP Gateway **26** is provided to service and control Voice over IP ("VoIP") communications. Various types of VoIP communications may be effectively managed and controlled in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 2 depicts the prior art in which four public telephones at a single site are connected through a commander™ unit **32** to a central office **34**. FIG. 3 depicts four sites **36**, **38**, **40** and **42** each of which has a plurality of Commander™ units connected through hubs **44** to a router **46**. The router **46** routes calls to a server **48** which connects the calls to central office **34**.

In accordance with the present invention, lower cost and efficiency are obtained by operating systems such as shown in FIGS. 2 and 3 over Ethernet and Voice over Internet Protocol networks. For example, each prison in a state wide prison system has Commander™ units such as shown in FIG. 3. There may be a thousand phones but all of the phones are connected through Commander™ systems over Voice over Internet Protocol network. Often large administrative systems such as this have existing data networks which process and transmit e-mail and the like. Providing a control com-

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puter such as the Commander™ with a VoIP gateway and Ethernet capability allows the public telephone systems at various sites to be integrated into the data network easily.

FIG. 4 shows how the programming of control functions may be distributed to remote locations over the Ethernet network. In FIG. 4 the routing function **22**, the billing function **24** and the PIN Checking **28** are distributed to a remote location or locations by the Ethernet network **50**. As shown in FIG. 4, the network **50** is a local area network (LAN). However, these functions may also be distributed over a WAN. The distribution of these functions to remote locations has the advantage that the functions can be centralized with the functions being performed at a central administration location.

The distribution of a control function is accomplished with programming based on software architecture such as BubbleLINK® and equipment with the ability to enable a seamless connection between traditional circuit-based networks and newer digital packet-based networks. Such equipment includes the Integrator C-2000® series of IP Telephony Gateways and the Commander II Inmate Control phone system (also based on the Integrator C-2000® architecture). The control functions include a wide array of editable call control parameters, advanced call monitoring, real time call recording and three way call fraud detection.

FIG. 5 shows the integration of the VoIP and data networks. In this case the telephone communication is integrated into the data exchange network. FIGS. 4 and 5 also show that the three way call detection **30a** is moved from the site, i.e. in the control computer **12** as indicted at **30**, to a point beyond the VoIP network. VoIP transmission requires voice compression and packetizing. These operations are lossy and detrimental to the ability to perform three way call detection. Therefore, three way call detection is performed at **30a** after the telephony signals have been decompressed and depacketized by the VoIP gateway **26a**.

FIG. 6A depicts a prior art Commander™ control computer **13** which has software **50** for performing the functions of call processing, switching and control. It has station interface hardware **52** which provides an interface with the telephones **10**. It has a digital signal processor **54** for processing signals from the telephones **10** as programmed by the software **50**. PSTN interface hardware **56** provides an interface to the PSTN switch **16**.

FIG. 6B shows modifications to the control computer to provide VoIP and data network capability wherein VoIP gateway **26a** and voice compressor and packetizer **58** have been added to produce compressed data packets from the telephony signals. These are the principal functions of the VoIP Gateway **26**. The packets are processed in the Ethernet network interface **60** so that they can be applied through the WAN **18**, or a LAN, to the VoIP Gateway **26a**. The telephone signals are decompressed and depacketized by VoIP gateway **26a** and distributed to a public switch. Preferably, three way call detection is performed at this point by three way call detect system **30a**.

Mixed modes providing both Local access wire circuits (analog or digital) and VoIP may be used. The local access circuits transport local calls at fixed lower rates to a Local Exchange Carrier (LEC), while the VoIP portion transports higher cost long distance calls to an Inter-Exchange Carrier (IXC). By connecting a plurality of sites on the WAN, multiple sites could share a common set of local access circuits. The sharing of local access circuits is called 'Edge Routing'. The Edge Routing negates the need for local access circuits at each facility.

While a particular embodiment of the invention has been shown and described various modifications may be made.

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The appended claims are, therefore, intended to cover all such modifications within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

The invention claimed is:

1. A control computer for connecting a plurality of telephones at a restricted site to an offsite public switching network via a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) network, said control computer comprising:

a storage for storing restrictions associated with usage of said plurality of telephones by individuals; and

a first VoIP gateway for translating call signals from said telephones for a call authorized by the stored restrictions into data packets, the first VoIP gateway transmitting the data packets over said VoIP network to a second VoIP gateway for processing the received data packets into telephone signals transmitted to said offsite public switched telephone network via a three-way call detection system for imposing a three-way call restriction, said three-way call detection system being disposed between a second VoIP gateway and said offsite public switched telephone network.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein said first VoIP gateway further performs voice compression and packetization of the call.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the second VoIP gateway performs decompression and depacketization of the data packets received from the first VoIP gateway.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein said first VoIP gateway includes an Ethernet network interface.

5. The control computer of claim 1 wherein said storage further stores account information including personal identification numbers (PINs) of the individuals, a PIN received at the control computer via at least one of said plurality of telephones for obtaining authorization to place a call by at least one of the individuals associated with the PIN.

6. A method for providing prison facility call processing, said method comprising:

coupling a prison telephone system to an IP network via a call processing system including a first Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) gateway; and

interfacing a telephone terminal of said prison telephone system with a public switched telephone network (PSTN) via the first VoIP gateway, a second VoIP gateway and a three-way call detection system responsive to the call processing system authorizing a call placed on the telephone terminal, the second VoIP gateway placed between the PSTN and the IP network, and the three-way call detection system placed between said second VoIP gateway and said PSTN.

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7. The method of claim 6 further comprising:

the three-way call detection system monitoring said authorized call to detect three-way calling.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the three-way call detection system is located remotely with respect to said prison telephone system.

9. The method of claim 6 further comprising: said call processing system recording the authorized call.

10. The method of claim 6 further comprising: said call processing system providing billing with respect to said authorized call.

11. The method of claim 6 further comprising: said call processing system routing said authorized call.

12. The method of claim 6 further comprising: said call processing system checking caller identification with respect to said authorized call.

13. The method of claim 6 further comprising: said call processing system providing three-way call detection with respect to said authorized call.

14. The method of claim 6 further comprising: said call processing system providing fraud detection with respect to said authorized call.

15. The method of claim 6 further comprising: said call processing system providing call monitoring with respect to said authorized call.

16. The method of claim 6 further comprising: authorizing the call responsive to receiving a personal identification number (PIN) associated with an account stored in the centralized system.

17. A controlled telephone communications system comprising:

a control computer comprising a first Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) gateway for processing calls from a restricted site into VoIP communication data packets transmitted over an IP network, and a switch selectively connecting the calls with an offsite public switched telephone network (PSTN) via said IP network;

a second VoIP gateway disposed between said IP network and said offsite PSTN for processing the VoIP communication data packets into telephone signals for transmission over said offsite PSTN; and

a three-way call detection system disposed between said second VoIP gateway and said offsite PSTN, said three-way call detection system configured to perform three-way call detection upon the telephone signals.

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