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SURVEILLANCE PLATFORM HAVING A RETRACTABLE TELESCOPING STRUCTURE THAT FULLY RETRACTS WITHIN A VEHICLE AND WHICH HAS SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT MOUNTED THEREON, AND SEALING DEVICE MOUNTED TO THE TELESCOPING STRUCTURE

Abstract

A surveillance equipment platform mounting in an interior cabin of a vehicle. The interior cabin of the vehicle has a roof with an opening. The surveillance equipment platform includes a retractable telescoping structure having surveillance equipment mounted so as to extend through the opening of the roof, and to fully retract into the interior cabin. The surveillance equipment platform also includes a sealing device that mounts to the retractable telescoping structure below the surveillance equipment and oriented parallel to the roof of the interior cabin. The sealing device includes an elastically deformable gasket that elastically deforms during travel of the sealing device through the roof of the interior cabin when the surveillance equipment extends through the opening in the roof during extension of the retractable telescoping structure, and when the surveillance equipment retracts into the interior cabin during retraction of the retractable telescoping structure.

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Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS [0001] This application is a continuation of copending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 18/084,219 filed Dec. 19, 2022, which, in turn, is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/371,894 filed Jul. 9, 2021, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,529,911, which, in turn, is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/173,517 filed Feb. 11, 2021, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,059,431, which, in turn, is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/545,690 filed Aug. 20, 2019, now U.S. Pat. No. 10,919,459. The disclosures of each of these applications are hereby incorporated by reference herein in their entirety. [0002] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Patent Application No. 62/720,085 filed Aug. 20, 2018, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Retractable vehicle-mounted mobile surveillance equipment (also interchangeably referred to as “sensors”) is well-known in the art. One example of such equipment is Freedom-On-The-Move (FOTM 3.0), which is commercially available from Freedom Surveillance, LLC dba STRONGWATCH®, Scottsdale, Arizona. The surveillance equipment is mounted to a flatbed of a truck. In its retractable state, the equipment fits entirely within the flatbed so that it can be completely hidden and protected from the elements using a conventional flatbed covering. FIGS. 5A and 5B are prior art views of such a truck. FIG. 5A shows the truck during operation of the surveillance equipment, and FIG. 5B shows the truck when the surveillance equipment is in its retracted state.

[0004] However, it is desirable to include additional surveillance equipment on the vehicle that is fully retractable into the interior space of the vehicle when not in use, and which can be retracted out of the vehicle during use. It is further desirable for the additional surveillance equipment to be hidden from view and protected from the elements when it is fully retractable into the interior space of the vehicle. The present invention fulfills such a need.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] A vehicle is provided having an interior cabin and a roof at the top of the interior cabin. The vehicle includes a flatbed, an opening in the roof of the interior cabin, a first retractable telescoping structure having a first set of surveillance equipment mounted to the flatbed, and a second

retractable telescoping structure having a second set of surveillance equipment mounted so as to extend through the opening of the roof, and to fully retract into the interior cabin. A sealing device mounts to the second retractable telescoping structure below the second set of surveillance equipment and oriented parallel to the roof of the interior cabin. The sealing device includes an elastically deformable gasket that elastically deforms during travel of the sealing device through the roof of the interior cabin when the second set of surveillance equipment extends through the opening in the roof during extension of the second retractable telescoping structure, and when the second set of surveillance equipment retracts into the interior cabin during retraction of the second retractable telescoping structure.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] The foregoing summary, as well as the following detailed description of the invention, will be better understood when read in conjunction with the appended drawings. For the purpose of illustrating the invention, there are shown in the drawings embodiments which are presently preferred. It should be understood, however, that the invention is not limited to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown. In the drawings:

[0007] FIGS. **1A** and **1B** are perspective views of a vehicle in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0008] FIGS. **2A-2F** are views of a retractable telescoping structure having a set of surveillance equipment mounted thereon, and a sealing device, for installation inside of the vehicle, in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0009] FIG. **3** is an exploded view of the sealing device shown in FIGS. **2A-2F**, in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0010] FIGS. **4A-4E** are additional views and embodiments of the retractable telescoping structure having the set of surveillance equipment mounted thereon, and the sealing device shown in FIGS. **2A-2F**.

[0011] FIGS. **5A** and **5B** are perspective views of a prior art vehicle.

[0012] FIG. **6** shows a top surface of the sealing device that includes strips of heating elements, in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] FIGS. **7A** and **7B** show embodiments of the sealing device that include magnets.

[0014] FIG. **8** shows a view of FIG. **4A**, with the addition of a leveler, in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0015] Certain terminology is used herein for convenience only and is not to be taken as a limitation on the present invention. The words “a” and “an”, as used in the claims and in the corresponding portions of the specification, mean “at least one.”

I. Overview

[0016] Referring to FIG. **1A**, in one preferred embodiment, the vehicle is a truck-like vehicle **10** comprising at least the following structural and additional add-on elements:

[0017] i. A flatbed **12**.

[0018] ii. A retractable sunroof/moonroof **14** (hereafter, referred to as “sunroof **14**”), preferably, having a horizontally retractable mechanism. More broadly, the sunroof **14** may simply be an opening cut through the roof of the vehicle **10** to allow objects to protrude out of the interior cabin of the vehicle **10**. Thus, the sunroof **14** is one embodiment of such an opening. In one preferred embodiment, the sunroof **14** is mounted in reverse and programmed so that the tilt mechanism is disabled in order to prevent dust and debris from entering the vehicle when mobile. In FIG. **1A**, the sunroof **14** is open.

[0019] iii. A first retractable telescoping structure **16** having a first set of surveillance equipment **18** mounted thereon. The first retractable telescoping structure **16** is fastened at its bottom to the floor of the flatbed **12**, or to a mounting mechanism (not shown) that is fastened to the floor of the flatbed. The first retractable telescoping structure **16** retracts to a form factor that allows it, and the associated first set of surveillance equipment **18**, to be completely stored in the flatbed and fully covered by flatbed cover **20**, shown in its rolled up position in FIG. **1**. In its fully extended, upright position, the first retractable telescoping structure **16** effectively functions as a mast, and the first set of surveillance equipment **18** is preferably mounted at or near a top portion of the mast. The first retractable telescoping structure may be the conventional structure described above, namely, FOTM 3.0. In one preferred embodiment, the first retractable telescoping structure **16** has a platform **19**, and the first set of surveillance equipment **18** is removably mounted to the platform **19**.

[0020] iv. A second retractable telescoping structure **22** having a second set of surveillance equipment **24** mounted thereon. When fully retracted, the second retractable telescoping structure **22** and the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is completely inside of the vehicle. When the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is in use, the second retractable telescoping structure allows the second set of surveillance equipment **24** to extend through the sunroof **14** by an amount sufficient to allow the second set of surveillance equipment **24** to be fully external to the vehicle **10**. In its fully extended, upright position, the second retractable telescoping structure **22** also effectively functions as a mast, and the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is preferably mounted at or near a top portion of the mast.

[0021] v. A sealing device **26** to inhibit water and/or dirt from entering the passenger compartment of the vehicle **10** through the open sunroof **14** when the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is fully external to the vehicle **10**, such as when it is in use. The sealing device **26** is fixed to a platform of the second retractable telescoping structure **22** as described in more detail below, and has a form factor that slightly exceeds the length and width dimensions of the sunroof **14**, so as to provide a water-tight roof cover, and so that any water and/or dirt will have a harder time penetrating into the passenger compartment of the vehicle **10** (also, referred to interchangeably as the “interior cabin” or “interior cab”). The sealing device **26** also seals the interior cabin from the external environment so that if the interior cabin is air conditioned or heated, the cold or warm air will be inhibited from escaping out through the sunroof **14**. The vehicle **10** may be deployed in harsh environments, such as deserts, where extreme heat, or snow and/or ice, may be present. [0022] FIG. **1B** shows the truck **10** of FIG. **1A** when the first and second sets of surveillance equipment **18** and **24** are concealed, and the sunroof **14** is closed, and thus sunroof cover **25** is visible.

II. Detailed Disclosure

[0023] FIG. **3** shows an exploded view of the sealing device **26** in accordance with one preferred embodiment. The sealing device **26** includes a rigid support plate **40**, an elastically deformable gasket **42**, and a backing frame or flange **44**. The elastically deformable gasket **42** is attached to the rigid support plate **40** via fasteners **46**. Additional details of these components are described below.

[0024] FIGS. **4A** and **4B** show one embodiment of the second retractable telescoping structure **22** as being a scissor jack mechanism **28** with a top platform **30**. The second set of surveillance equipment **24** is secured to, or mounted onto, the second retractable telescoping structure **22** (scissor jack mechanism **28** with the top platform **30**) as follows:

[0025] i. A pedestal-type brace **36** is fastened at one end to the top surface of the scissor jack top platform **30**, and is attached at the other end to the bottom surface of the rigid support plate **40** of the sealing device **26**.

[0026] ii. A support stand **48** having surveillance equipment platform **50** is fastened to the top surface of the rigid support plate **40** of the sealing device **26**. In one preferred embodiment, the support stand **48** has a fixed height. In another embodiment, the support stand **48** is attached to, or

is integrated with, a small telescoping mast (not shown) to provide additional height for the second surveillance equipment **24** above the roof line of the vehicle **10**.

[0027] iii. The surveillance equipment **24** is secured to, or mounted onto, the surveillance equipment platform **50**. In one embodiment, quick connect clamp **52** is used to secure the surveillance equipment **24** to the surveillance equipment platform **50**.

[0028] In one configuration, the brace **36** is formed of triangular machined bracing. The brace **36** stabilizes and supports the support stand **48** and the selected surveillance equipment that is connected on the top of the surveillance equipment platform **50** (e.g., camera, sensor, radar, drone).

[0029] The dimensions of the top platform **30** are smaller (in length and width) than the dimensions of the sunroof **14** so that the top platform **30** can extend through the sunroof **14**. The overall height of the fully retracted scissor jack mechanism **28**, the brace **36**, the sealing device **26**, the support stand **48**, and the second set of surveillance equipment **24** secured to, or mounted thereon, is less than the interior height of the vehicle's interior cabin so that the second set of surveillance equipment **24** can be hidden completely inside of the vehicle's interior cabin when not in use, and when the sunroof **14** is closed, as shown in FIG. **1B**. If the support stand **48** is attached to, or is integrated with, a small telescoping mast, as described above, the height of the mast in its fully retracted position must be accounted for to ensure that the overall height of the assembly shown in FIGS. **4A** and **4B** (also, referred to herein as a “stack”) can still fit entirely within the vehicle **10** when the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is not in use.

[0030] The second retractable telescoping structure **22**, here, scissor jack mechanism **28** is preferably mounted in the back seat of vehicle **10** and on the back wall of interior cabin using existing seat and seat belt mounting points so that there are no new holes or cutting that would impact the structural integrity of the vehicle **10** or impact its warranty. Alternatively, the scissor jack mechanism **28** may be fastened to a plate **32** that lays on, or is slightly elevated from, the backseat floor **34** of the vehicle **10**. Alternatively, the scissor jack mechanism **28** may be bolted directly to the backseat floor **34** of the vehicle **10**.

[0031] Other mechanisms that telescopically extend and retract may be used in place of the scissor jack mechanism **28** for the second retractable telescoping structure **22**.

[0032] The vehicle **10** may be a conventional, commercially available pickup truck, such as a Ford® F-150®. The cab of these vehicles includes mounting points that are typically used for attaching seats, seatbelts and other typical car components, and which can be used for mounting the second retractable telescoping structure **22**.

[0033] The platforms **19** and **50** of the two respective retractable telescoping structures **16** and **22** are preferable designed to allow for interchangeability of the surveillance equipment **18** and **24** mounted thereto. The surveillance equipment **18** and **24** is preferably attached to their respective platforms **19** and **50** via quick clamp structure, described in more detail below.

[0034] FIG. **4C** is a top view of the elements shown in FIGS. **4A** and **4B**.

[0035] In one preferred embodiment, the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is a drone, and the top surface of the surveillance equipment platform **50** is a drone launching and landing platform (pad). In one alternative drone embodiment, shown in FIG. **4E**, the drone (referred to herein as element **24**) is placed on the surveillance equipment platform **50** prior to extending the second retractable telescoping structure **22** through the roof of the vehicle **10**. After the second retractable telescoping structure **22** is extended to reach its operational position, the drone **24** is released via remote control commands, such as from an operator who is inside of the vehicle **10**. Upon conclusion of a surveillance session, the drone **24** is returned to the surveillance equipment platform **50**, and then is retrieved from the surveillance equipment platform **50** after the second retractable telescoping structure **22** retracts back into the interior of the vehicle **10**.

[0036] In another alternative drone embodiment shown in FIG. **4D**, the drone **24** is secured to the surveillance equipment platform **50** by a suitable quick release mechanism, such as a specialized version of the quick connect clamp **52**, that attaches to the legs or other structure of the drone. This

embodiment is identical to the previous drone embodiment, except that the quick release mechanism must be released during initiation of the surveillance session, and locked back into place after the drone **24** is returned to the platform upon conclusion of the surveillance session. One advantage of this alternative embodiment over the embodiment of FIG. **4E** is that if the vehicle **10** is in motion, there is less likelihood of the drone **24** being knocked off of the platform and damaged before and after it is used.

[0037] Any conventional drone and drone launching and landing platform (pad) configuration may be used for these embodiments.

[0038] In the preferred embodiment, it is desirable to use a vehicle that has a factory-installed or after-market installed sunroof, instead of cutting a custom opening into a roof of a vehicle that does not have a factory-installed or after-market installed sunroof. However, the scope of the invention does not require the use of a vehicle with a factory-installed or after-market installed sunroof. If a custom opening is cut, a leakproof cover plate may be installed over the opening when the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is not being used.

[0039] Referring again to FIG. **3**, sample dimensions and compositions of the rigid support plate **40** and elastically deformable gasket **42** that comprise the sealing device **26** are as follows:

Rigid Support Plate **40**

[0040] ½ inch solid galvanized sheet metal (thickness T.sub.2 is ⅛ inch) [0041] 22 threaded 5/16 inch holes spaced along perimeter [0042] 30 inches×11 inches (L.sub.2=30 inches; W.sub.2=11 inches)

Backing Frame **44**

[0043] ½ inch solid galvanized sheet metal [0044] 22 matching threaded 5/16 inch holes spaced along perimeter 1 inch width

Elastically Deformable Gasket **42**

[0045] 38½ inches×18½ inches (L.sub.1=38½ inches; W.sub.1=18½ inches) [0046] Gasket extends past edge of rigid support plate **40** by ¾ inch along length, and ¼ inch along width. [0047]

Formed from Neoprene® Rubber Sheet (solid sheet of synthetic rubber produced by free-radical polymerization of chloroprene, also known as “polychloroprene”) [0048] ⅛ inch thickness

(thickness T.sub.1 is ⅛ inch) [0049] Durometer: McMaster-Carr, Medium Hard (60A) [0050]

Fasteners **46** for attaching rigid support plate **40**, elastically deformable gasket **42**, and backing frame **44** to each other: [0051] 5/16 inch threaded Allen head bolts

[0052] The scope of the invention is not limited to the dimensions listed above. The dimensions of the sunroof opening will determine the relative dimensions of the rigid support plate **40** and elastically deformable gasket **42**.

[0053] If the elastically deformable gasket **42** shown in FIG. **3** is formed from sheet material, it has a cut-out portion wherein material is removed from its center portion so as to allow the center support structure of the brace **36** to attach directly to the bottom surface of the rigid support plate **40**. In this embodiment, the elastically deformable gasket **42** can also be characterized as being a “rectangular gasket.” However, the elastically deformable gasket **42** does not necessarily need to have the cut-out portion, and it may be a uniform, rectangular sheet. In this embodiment, the fasteners that connect the brace **36** to the bottom surface of the rigid support plate **40** will also need to pass through the sheet-like elastically deformable gasket **42**. For purposes of this invention, both embodiments are defined as being “elastically deformable gaskets” since both embodiments perform the function of a gasket, namely, to make a joint fluid-tight.

[0054] The elastically deformable gasket **42** may also be formed via a mold process. In the mold process, it would not be necessary to remove the cut-out portion, since the mold process would directly form only the rectangular gasket.

[0055] The elastically deformable gasket **42** has properties of “elastic deformation,” meaning that the material always returns back to its original shape after any stress on the gasket is removed. Here, the stress occurs as the sealing device **26** is passed through the sunroof **14**. Thus, the

deformation is reversible. That is, no permanent deformation occurs due to stress on the gasket. In contrast to elastic deformation, plastic deformation results in a permanent altering of the original shape.

[0056] Referring again to FIG. 3, the relative dimensions of the rigid support plate **40** with respect to the elastically deformable gasket **42** and the dimensions of the sunroof **14** are important for optimal performance of the sealing device **26**. In particular, the ratio $L_{sub.1}/L_{sub.2}$ is about 1.28, and the ratio of $W_{sub.1}/W_{sub.2}$ is about 1.68. These ratios are for a sunroof **14** having an opening of about 32½ inches×about 14 inches, which means that the ratio of the sealing device **26** and the opening of the sunroof **14** is about 1.18 lengthwise, and about 1.32 widthwise. These dimension ratios allow the elastically deformable gasket **42** to pass through the sunroof **14** with relatively low force, while still providing sufficient width in its final position to adequately protect the roof opening from weather elements.

[0057] In one embodiment, the scissor jack mechanism **28** has a fully extended position wherein the surveillance equipment platform **50** extends through the sunroof, and an operational position wherein the surveillance equipment platform **50** is slightly above the opening of the sunroof **14**. The operational position is the position when the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is performing its surveillance functions. As discussed below with respect to FIGS. 2A-2F, the fully extended position is slightly more extended than the operational position.

[0058] FIGS. 2A-2F show the elements of FIGS. 4A and 4B in a variety of different positions, summarized as follows:

[0059] FIG. 2A: The second set of surveillance equipment **24** is fully retracted into the vehicle **10** and no parts of the equipment **24** extend through the sunroof **14**. In this position, the sunroof **14** is preferably closed.

[0060] FIG. 2B: The second set of surveillance equipment **24** is being moved to its operational position outside of the vehicle **10**, directly above the sunroof **14**, by lifting the scissor jack mechanism **28**. In this position, the sunroof **14** has been opened. The elastically deformable gasket **42** is deforming downwardly as the sealing device **26** is pushing through the opening of the sunroof **14**.

[0061] FIG. 2C: The scissor jack mechanism **28** is in a fully extended position. The second set of surveillance equipment **24** and the sealing device **26** are now both outside of the vehicle **10**, directly above the sunroof **14**. The elastically deformable gasket **42** has returned to its original shape because the stress applied to it in the FIG. 2B position has been removed.

[0062] FIG. 2D: The scissor jack mechanism **28** has been slightly retracted from its fully extended position to an “operational position,” as described above. In this position, the sealing device **26** is seated directly on top of the opening of the sunroof **14**. The edges of the elastically deformable gasket **42** span across the edges of the opening of the sunroof **14** and lay against the roof of the vehicle **10**, surrounding the opening of the sunroof **14**. In this manner, the sealing device **26** provides the desired environmental barrier by inhibiting water and/or dirt from entering the passenger compartment of the vehicle **10** through the open sunroof **14**.

[0063] In one preferred embodiment, the scissor jack mechanism **28** retracts about 3-4 inches between the positions shown in FIGS. 2C and 2D. The scissor jack mechanism **28** is preferably programmed to retract by a sufficient distance to seal the opening of the sunroof **14**. The number of times that the scissor jack mechanism **28** pushes the sealing device **26** through the opening of the sunroof **14**, coupled with the age of the elastically deformable gasket **42**, will determine the optimal retraction distance. As the elastically deformable gasket **42** flexes during use and ages over time, it becomes more limp which requires that the sealing device **26** be raised higher to allow the elastically deformable gasket **42** to clear the opening of the sunroof **14**, which, in turn, requires a greater retraction distance to reach the optimum sealing position.

[0064] The slight retraction that occurs to form the complete seal can either be (a) manually performed by the vehicle operator, (b) pre-programmed to account for the height of the entire

assembly (stack) shown in FIGS. 2A-2E, and the characteristics of the seal, or (c) automatically retracted until contact sensors (not shown) on the corners of the elastically deformable gasket **42** make contact with the roof of the vehicle **10**.

[0065] FIG. 2E: Upon conclusion of a surveillance session, the scissor jack mechanism begins to retract so as to bring the second set of surveillance equipment **24** back into the interior cabin of the vehicle **10**. In this position, the elastically deformable gasket **42** is deforming upwardly as the sealing device **26** is pushing through the opening of the sunroof **14**, but in the opposite direction as shown in FIG. 2B.

[0066] FIG. 2F: The second set of surveillance equipment **24** is now fully retracted into the vehicle **10** and no parts of the equipment **24** extend through the sunroof **14**. In this position, the sunroof **14** is preferably closed. FIG. 2F thus depicts the same positioning as FIG. 2A. The elastically deformable gasket **42** has again returned to its original shape because the stress applied to it in the FIG. 2E position has been removed.

[0067] In one alternative embodiment, the pedestal-type brace **36** is not part of the assembly of elements associated with the second retractable telescoping structure **22** having the second set of surveillance equipment **24** mounted thereon (stack). In this alternative embodiment, the top surface of the scissor jack top platform **30** is attached directly to the bottom surface of the rigid support plate **40** of the sealing device **26**. Thus, this embodiment is identical to FIGS. 4A and 4B, except for the removal of the brace **36**.

[0068] In yet another alternative embodiment, the sealing device **26** is formed solely of the elastically deformable gasket **42**, either in a solid sheet form, or in a rectangular gasket form with a rectangular cutout center region, and is attached directly to the top surface of the scissor jack top platform **30**. In this embodiment, the second set of surveillance equipment **24** may also be attached to the top surface of the scissor jack top platform **30**, such as via the support stand **48**. The elastically deformable gasket **42** is still positioned between the second set of surveillance equipment **24** and the top surface of the scissor jack top platform **30** so as to provide the same desired environmental sealing protection as the other embodiments.

[0069] The surveillance equipment that is mounted to each of the retractable telescoping structures includes one or more sensors. The sensors may be optical, infrared, thermal, acoustic, radar, seismic RF (to detect location and range of RF signals), or any combinations thereof, or any other known forms of surveillance sensors. One or more of the sensors may incorporate a GPS compass, inertial sensors and range-finding sensor (e.g. laser rangefinder) to determine the location of an item of interest (referred to herein as a “target”) as a set of GPS coordinates.

[0070] The sensors may communicate with each other so that they can work cooperatively. That is, each sensor can generate data that can be used to direct other sensors. For example, one sensor (e.g., radar) may detect a target and the GPS coordinates of its location, and may communicate the target location to another sensor (e.g., optical sensor). The other sensor may then use the location data of the target to either manually (if operated by a person) or automatically point the sensor at the target, such that the target is within a field of view of the optical sensor. A software system is provided to coordinate and control the operation of the platforms and the sensors mounted thereon. Sensor communication and software systems for target tracking may use systems and methods described in U.S. Pat. No. 10,267,598 (Fougnies), which is incorporated by reference herein, wherein the lead and follower scopes described in this patent are equivalent to the surveillance equipment **18** and **24** (sensors) on the respective first and second retractable telescoping structures **16** and **22**.

[0071] The following are sample specifications for surveillance equipment and corresponding mounting structure, in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Surveillance Equipment **18**

SMSS (Stabilized Multi-Sensor System)

[0072] i. 2-axis gyro-stabilized precision gimbal

[0073] ii. MWIR 700 mm cooled camera-capable of 7.5 mile human detection (using turbulence mitigation software enhancement)

[0074] iii. HD Color camera with zoom lens, 1920×1080 resolution

[0075] iv. LRF-up to 10 km human detection range; eye-safe

[0076] v. Laser Illuminator-visible to Night Vision Goggles (NVGs); eye-safe

Surveillance Equipment **24**

Integrated Long-Range Radar System

[0077] i. SRC SR Hawk ground surveillance radar up to 7.5 miles human detection (SR Hawk™ Ground Surveillance Radar, commercially available from SRC, Inc., North Syracuse, New York)

[0078] ii. 360 degree coverage

[0079] iii. Tracks up to 350 simultaneous targets

[0080] iv. Elevated through roof of crew cab of any GFE full-sized ½ ton or larger truck (possible scissor/platform, cobra or pneumatic tubular mast lift options)

[0081] v. Automatic bottle jack, frame mounted leveling system

[0082] In one preferred embodiment, a leveler is provided as part of the scissor jack mechanism **28**. Certain sensors, such as radar, require that the platform on which they are mounted is level with the horizon. However, depending on the terrain, the vehicle **10** may not be level. Using a leveling sensor alone or in conjunction with a gyroscope, a leveler determines the extent to which the vehicle is not level with the horizon and adjusts the sensor platform. Alternatively, the entire vehicle may be leveled using commercially available leveling systems.

[0083] In one preferred embodiment, shown in FIG. 8, leveler **66** is installed between the scissor jack **28** and the brace **36** on top of the platform **30** of the scissor jack **28**. More specifically, a bottom surface of the leveler **66** is fastened to a top surface of the platform **30**, and a top surface of the leveler is fastened to a bottom surface of the brace **36**.

[0084] FIG. 6 shows an alternative embodiment wherein the top surface of the sealing device **26** includes strips of heating elements **60**, similar to a vehicle window glass defroster so as to inhibit buildup of snow and/or ice on the sealing device **26**. The heating elements **60** may be powered by the battery of the vehicle **10**, or by another source of power that is available inside of the vehicle **10**. Collected snow and/or ice may potentially interfere with retraction of the second surveillance equipment **24** into the vehicle **10**.

[0085] FIGS. 7A and 7B show other alternative embodiments wherein the bottom surface of the elastically deformable gasket **42** of the sealing device **26** includes magnets placed around the outer edges so as to more securely hold the sealing device **26** against the roof of the vehicle **10**, such as due to wind that might allow rain or snow to get underneath the sealing device **26**. In one embodiment shown in FIG. 7A, magnets **62** are securely fastened at each of the corners. In another embodiment shown in FIG. 7B, flexible magnetic tape (also, referred to as “flexible magnetic strip”) **64** is used. In both embodiments, the flux of the magnetic material is selected so as to be strong enough to hold the edges of the elastically deformable gasket **42** against the roof of the vehicle **10**, but weak enough to allow the elastically deformable gasket **42** to easily release from the roof of the vehicle **10** during retraction process illustrated in FIG. 2D and 2E.

[0086] These embodiments presume that the roof of the vehicle **10** is metallic, and that when the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is in its operational position (FIG. 2D), the outer edges of the elastically deformable gasket **42** extend past the outer edges of the frame of the sunroof **14** and seat against the roof of the vehicle **10**. If the roof of the vehicle is non-metallic, such as aluminum, metallic material is fastened to the roof of the vehicle **10** to mate with the magnets **62** or **64**.

Alternatively, if the outer edges of the elastically deformable gasket **42** seat against the outer edges of the frame of a non-metallic sunroof **14** and do not extend over the roof of the vehicle **10**, metallic material is fastened to the outer edges of the frame of the sunroof **14**. If metallic material is already present in the frame of the sunroof **14**, this metallic material is used to mate with the magnets **62** or **64** of the elastically deformable gasket **42**.

[0087] The form factor and drainage properties of the sunroof **14** and outer frame of the sunroof **14** partly determines the outer dimensions of the elastically deformable gasket **42** of the sealing device **26** and how it seals against the roof of the vehicle **10**. In the most protective embodiment, the outer edges of the elastically deformable gasket **42** preferably extend past the outer frame of the sunroof **14** and seat against the roof of the vehicle **10** when the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is in its operational position (FIG. 2D), thereby completely covering all components of the sunroof **14**. In an alternative embodiment wherein the outer frame of the sunroof **14** has a significant lip and the ability to drain water falling on the lip so that the water does not enter the interior space of the vehicle **10**, the outer edges of the elastically deformable gasket **42** may seat against the lip of the outer frame of the sunroof **14** when the second set of surveillance equipment **24** is in its operational position (FIG. 2D). Sunroof enclosures are typically designed with a gutter trough for water to run along, and a drain tube sheds water down the vehicle to the ground.

[0088] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that changes could be made to the embodiments described above without departing from the broad inventive concept thereof. It is understood, therefore, that this invention is not limited to the particular embodiments disclosed, but it is intended to cover modifications within the spirit and scope of the present invention.

Claims

1. A surveillance equipment platform configured for mounting in an interior cabin of a vehicle, the interior cabin of the vehicle having a roof with an opening, the surveillance equipment platform comprising: (a) a retractable telescoping structure configured to receive surveillance equipment that is mounted thereon, the retractable telescoping structure being configured to allow the retractable telescoping structure and the associated surveillance equipment to both fully retract into the interior cabin, and to allow the surveillance equipment to extend through the opening in the roof by an amount sufficient to allow the surveillance equipment to be fully external to the vehicle, the retractable telescoping structure including a top platform that is oriented to be parallel to the roof of the interior cabin; and (b) a sealing device mounted to the retractable telescoping structure below the surveillance equipment and oriented parallel to the roof of the interior cabin, the sealing device including: (i) a rigid support plate fastened to the top platform, wherein the rigid support plate includes an upper surface that is configured to allow the surveillance equipment to be mounted thereto, and (ii) an elastically deformable gasket fastened above and to the rigid support plate, the elastically deformable gasket having dimensions larger on all sides than the dimensions of the top platform, the rigid plate, and the opening in the roof, wherein edges of the elastically deformable gasket are configured to elastically deform during travel of the sealing device through the roof of the interior cabin when the surveillance equipment extends through the opening in the roof during extension of the retractable telescoping structure, and when the surveillance equipment retracts into the interior cabin during retraction of the retractable telescoping structure.
2. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 1 wherein the surveillance equipment is connected to the surveillance equipment platform via a quick-release mechanism.
3. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 1 wherein the surveillance equipment is selected from the group consisting of a camera, a sensor, radar, and a drone.
4. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 1 wherein the elastically deformable gasket is polychloroprene.
5. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 1 wherein the rigid support plate is fastened to the top platform via a brace, the brace being fastened at one end to a top surface of the top platform, and being fastened at the other end to a bottom surface of the rigid support plate.
6. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 1 further comprising: (c) a leveler mounted to the retractable telescoping structure.
7. A surveillance equipment platform configured for mounting in an interior cabin of a vehicle, the

interior cabin of the vehicle having a roof with an opening, the surveillance equipment platform comprising: (a) a retractable telescoping structure configured to receive surveillance equipment that is mounted thereon, the retractable telescoping structure being configured to allow the retractable telescoping structure and the associated surveillance equipment to both fully retract into the interior cabin, and to allow the surveillance equipment to extend through the opening in the roof by an amount sufficient to allow the surveillance equipment to be fully external to the vehicle, the retractable telescoping structure including a top platform that is oriented to be parallel to the roof of the interior cabin; and (b) a sealing device mounted to the retractable telescoping structure below the surveillance equipment and oriented parallel to the roof of the interior cabin, the sealing device being fastened to the top platform, the sealing device being an elastically deformable gasket having dimensions larger on all sides than the dimensions of the top platform and the opening in the roof, wherein edges of the elastically deformable gasket are configured to elastically deform during travel of the sealing device through the roof of the interior cabin when the surveillance equipment extends through the opening in the roof during extension of the retractable telescoping structure, and when the surveillance equipment retracts into the interior cabin during retraction of the retractable telescoping structure.

8. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 7 wherein the surveillance equipment is connected to the surveillance equipment platform via a quick-release mechanism.

9. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 7 wherein the surveillance equipment is selected from the group consisting of a camera, a sensor, radar, and a drone.

10. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 7 wherein the elastically deformable gasket is polychloroprene.

11. The surveillance equipment platform of claim 7 further comprising: (c) a leveler mounted to the retractable telescoping structure.
