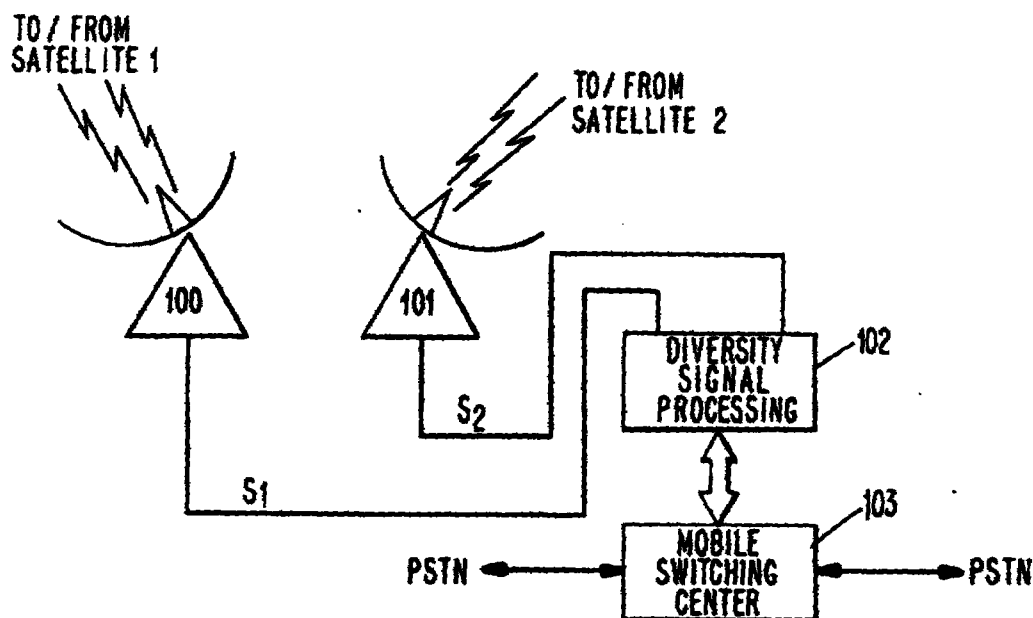


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(57) Abstract

A method and apparatus for communicating with a plurality of ground terminals using a plurality of satellites transmitting time-division multiplexed signals are disclosed. First, a first satellite transmits to a first group of ground terminals using a first number of timeslots in a TDM frame period. In addition, the first satellite and a second satellite transmit in alternate TDM frames to a second group of ground terminals using a second number of timeslots in said TDM frame period. Finally, the second satellite transmits to a third group of ground terminals using a third number of timeslots in the TDM frame period.