

A CARGO COMPARTMENT FOR A LIGHTER-THAN-AIR VEHICLE

ABSTRACT

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The invention is a cargo compartment for a lighter-than-air vehicle (10), the vehicle having a longitudinal (12), vertical (14) and lateral axis (16). In detail, the cargo compartment includes a cargo carrying structure (20) mounted to the bottom of the vehicle (28), the structure extending along at least a portion of the longitudinal axis (12) of the vehicle and having a plurality of passageways (40A-F) extending along the longitudinal axis (12) of the vehicle. Each of the passageways (40A-F) is aligned with the lateral axis (16) of the vehicle and extend completely through the structure, and is adapted to simultaneously unload cargo (34) from one end (42) and load cargo from the opposite end (44). A cargo moving system (50, 52) is mounted in the floor (46) of each passageway (40A-F) for moving the cargo (34) in one end (42) and out the opposite end (44) of the passageway and intermediate positions therebetween. A cargo securing system (60, 66) is mounted on the floor (46) of the passageway for releasable securing the cargo within the passageway at the intermediate positions.

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