



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁷ : B64B 1/00, 1/66	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/47467 (43) International Publication Date: 17 August 2000 (17.08.00)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB00/00386 (22) International Filing Date: 8 February 2000 (08.02.00) (30) Priority Data: 9902876.3 9 February 1999 (09.02.99) GB (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): AIRSHIP TECHNOLOGIES SERVICES LTD. [GB/GB]; Sixth Floor, Town Hall, St Paul's Square, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 1SJ (GB). (72) Inventor; and (75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): HILLSDON, Reginald, Harold [GB/GB]; 10 Andrews Way, Raunds, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN9 6RD (GB). (74) Agent: NEWBY, Martin, John; JY & GW Johnson, Kingsbourne House, 229-231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DP (GB).		(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG). Published <i>With international search report.</i> <i>Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i>
(54) Title: LAUNCHING OF HIGH ALTITUDE AIRSHIPS (57) Abstract A method of launching inflatable airship apparatus (3) for subsequent ascent to high altitude for operation as an airship having a hull (4) formed from an inflated flexible gas containment envelope (5), payload means (15), drive means (6) mounted at the stern of the hull and cable suspension means (26, 27), for supporting the payload means (15) within the hull (4), connected to said drive means (6) and to the hull at, or adjacent to, a nose portion of the hull. The method comprises partially inflating the gas containment envelope (5) with a lighter than air gaseous medium to cause the nose portion to rise within a vertical launch enclosure (10) to position the partially inflated gas containment envelope (5) in a launch position, and subsequently releasing the partially inflated gas containment envelope (5) from its launch position through an open top of the vertical enclosure so that the envelope ascends clear of the vertical enclosure (10) and lifts the payload means (15) and drive means (6) by means of the cable suspension means. The invention also relates to inflatable airship apparatus (3) and to a launch station (2) for launching inflatable airship apparatus.		