

ABSTRACT

.5

"COMMUNICATION NETWORK ARCHITECTURE"

A communication network architecture is described in which individual user terminals within a larger network may register with private network switches to form
10 virtual private networks within the larger network. When a user terminal 1a within a virtual private network wishes to communicate to another member 1d of that virtual private network the message is sent via a private network switch 4 that multicasts the message to all members 1a-1d of that virtual private network. In the event that traffic flow between two members 1a and 1d is high, a direct connection bypassing virtual
15 private network switch 4 may be established at the request of either the end user terminal 1d or failing that the private network switch 4.

Fig. 1