

tions to that effect on some portion of the vehicle's electronic control system or a local PPE failing to decrypt or otherwise provide certain key information required for vehicle operation.

Example—Appliance Rental

Through use of the present invention, electronic appliances can be "leased" or otherwise provided to customers who, rather than purchasing a given appliance for unlimited usage, may acquire the appliance (such as a VCR, television, microwave oven, etc.) and be charged according to one or more aspects of use. For example, the charge for a microwave might be for each time it is used to prepare an item and/or for the duration of time used. A telephone jack could be attached, either consistently or periodically, to an inexpensive modem operatively attached or within the microwave (the modem might alternatively be located at a location which services a plurality of items and/or functions—such as burglar alarm, light and/or heat control). Alternatively, such appliances may make use of a network formed by the power cables in a building to transmit and receive signals.

At a periodic interval, usage information (in summary form and/or detailed) could be automatically sent to a remote information utility that collects information on appliance usage (the utility might service a certain brand, a certain type of appliance, and/or a collection of brands and/or types). The usage information would be sent in VDE form (e.g. as a VDE object **300**). The information utility might then distribute information to financial clearinghouses) if it did not itself perform the billing function, or the information "belonging" to each appliance manufacturer and/or lessor (retailer) might be sent to them or to their agents. In this way a new industry would be enabled of leased usage of appliances where the leases might be analogous to car leasing.

With VDE installed, appliances could also be managed by secure identification (PIN, voice or signature recognition, etc.). This might be required each time a unit is used, or on some periodic basis. Failure to use the secure identification or use it on a timely basis could disable an appliance if a PPE **650** issued one or more instructions (or failed to decrypt or otherwise provide certain information critical to appliance operation) that prevented use of a portion or all of the appliance's functions. This feature would greatly reduce the desirability of stealing an electronic appliance. A further, allied use of VDE is the "registration" of a VDE secure subsystem in a given appliance with a VDE secure subsystem at some control location in a home or business. This control location might also be responsible for VDE remote communications and/or centralized administration (including, for example, restricting your children from viewing R rated movies either on television or videocassettes through the recognition of data indicating that a given movie, song, channel, game, etc. was R rated and allowing a parent to restrict viewing or listening). Such a control location may, for example, also gather information on consumption of water, gas, electricity, telephone usage, etc. (either through use of PPEs **650** integrated in control means for measuring and/or controlling such consumption, or through one or more signals generated by non-VDE systems and delivered to a VDE secure subsystem, for example, for processing, usage control (e.g. usage limiting), and/or

billing), transmit such information to one or more utilities, pay for such consumption using VDE secured electronic currency and/or credit, etc.

In addition, one or more budgets for usage could be managed by VDE which would prevent improper, excessive use of a certain, leased appliance, that might, for example lead to failure of the appliance, such as making far more copies using a photocopier than specified by the duty cycle. Such improper use could result in a message, for example on a display panel or television screen, or in the form of a communication from a central clearinghouse, that the user should upgrade to a more robust model.

While the invention has been described in connection with what is presently considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is to be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the disclosed embodiment, but on the contrary, is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A process which takes place in an apparatus including a secure processing unit, comprising the following steps:

accessing a first record containing information directly or indirectly identifying one or more elements of a first component assembly, at least one of said elements including at least some executable programming;

using said information to identify and locate said one or more elements;

said step of identifying and locating one or more elements includes locating one or more load modules, said load module(s) locating step comprising:

searching in at least one memory of said secure processing unit to determine whether at least one of said one or more load modules is located in said memory;

if at least one of said one or more load modules is located in a memory of said secure processing unit, loading and using said load module without decrypting said load module; and

if at least one of said one or more load modules is located outside of a memory of said secure processing unit, decrypting said load module prior to use of said load module;

accessing said located one or more elements;

securely assembling said one or more elements to form at least a portion of said first component assembly; and executing at least some of said executable programming.

2. A process as in claim **1** in which at least one memory of said secure processing unit contains at least one load module relating to a budget method.

3. A process as in claim **1** in which at least one memory of said secure processing unit contains at least one load module relating to a billing method.

4. A process as in claim **1** in which at least one memory of said secure processing unit contains at least one load module relating to an audit method.

5. A process as in claim **1** in which at least one memory of said secure processing unit contains at least one load module relating to an aggregate method comprising budgeting, billing and auditing functions.

6. A process comprising the following steps:

accessing a first record containing information directly or indirectly identifying one or more elements of a first component assembly,