chine so that said lumen communicates with said respirator machine in a closed system;

upon connection of said respirator machine to said endotracheal tube, performing a surgical operation on the patient;

maintaining said lumen free of obstructions during performance of said operation;

during performance of said operation, emitting ultrasonic pressure waves from a distal end portion of said endotracheal tube in the direction of insertion of said endotracheal tube;

automatically sensing ultrasonic waves reflected from internal tissues in the patient;

automatically analyzing the sensed ultrasonic waves to determine an internal structure of the patient;

upon placement of said endotracheal tube at said predetermined position within the patient's trachea and prior to the performance of said surgical operation, storing, as reference data in encoded form, selected internal organic structures of the patient at said predetermined position; and

during performance of said operation, automatically comparing the automatically determined internal structure with said reference data to determine whether said distal end of said endotracheal tube has moved from said predetermined position.

* * * * *