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CA 2572758 C 2010/10/26

(11)(21) 2 572 758

(12) BREVET CANADIEN
CANADIAN PATENT

(13) C

(22) Date de dépôt/Filing Date: 2007/01/04

(41) Mise à la disp. pub./Open to Public Insp.: 2008/07/04

(45) Date de délivrance/Issue Date: 2010/10/26

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *E21B 19/00* (2006.01),
E21B 15/00 (2006.01)

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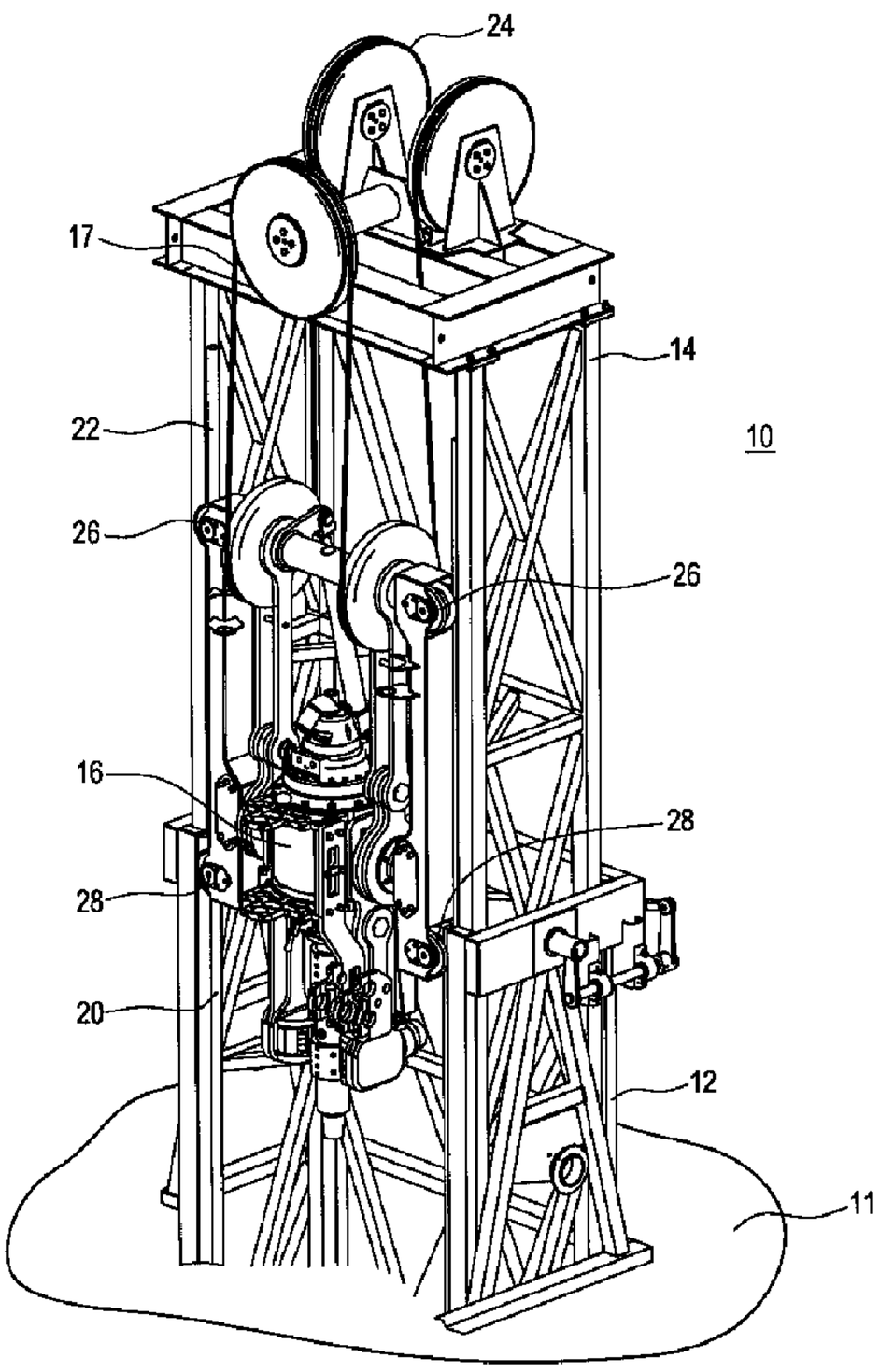
(54) Titre : SYSTEME DE GUIDE POUR MAT TELESCOPIQUE D'APPAREIL DE FORAGE
(54) Title: A GUIDE RAIL SYSTEM FOR A TELESCOPING MAST ON A DRILLING RIG



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
A guide track system for a tool that can be raised and lowered within a telescoping drilling rig tower is provided. The system consists of parallel guide rails mounted on a fixed lower tower section and on a movable upper tower section of the drilling rig

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(57) Abrégé(suite)/Abstract(continued):
tower. The lower and upper guide rails are parallel to one another and overlap one another when the lower tower section is nested within the upper tower section. Guide wheels rotatably attached to the tool can have parallel grooves to roll on the guide rails. The grooves have sidewalls that flare outward so that they do not scuff against the guide rails as the tool travels up and down within the tower.

ABSTRACT

A guide track system for a tool that can be raised and lowered within a telescoping drilling rig tower is provided. The system consists of parallel guide rails mounted on a fixed lower tower section and on a movable upper tower section of the drilling rig tower. The lower and upper guide rails are parallel to one another and overlap one another when the lower tower section is nested within the upper tower section. Guide wheels rotatably attached to the tool can have parallel grooves to roll on the guide rails. The grooves have sidewalls that flare outward so that they do not scuff against the guide rails as the tool travels up and down within the tower.

"A GUIDE RAIL SYSTEM FOR A TELESCOPING MAST ON A DRILLING RIG"

Inventor: Gerald Lesko

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is related to the field of telescoping drilling rigs towers and a guide rail system for mounting thereon.

BACKGROUND

It is known to assemble drilling rig towers by providing a telescoping tower structure where an upper frame section or mast is raised within a lower frame section fixed to a drilling platform. Often, these sections are pyramid-shaped to provide rigidity and structural strength. In providing a telescoping tower in this configuration, it is not possible to place guide rails on the tower sections such that the rails on the lower section will align with rails on the upper section as the upper section is raised or lowered within the lower section so as to allow a top drive motor unit to travel within the tower along the guide rails.

It is, therefore, desirable to have a telescoping rig tower that has guide rails on both the upper and lower tower sections that allow a tool, such as a top drive unit, to be raised and lowered vertically therein.

SUMMARY

A guide rail system is provided for a telescoping drilling tower having guide rails mounted on the lower and upper tower sections whereby a tool, such as a top drive motor unit, can travel on the guide rails and be raised and

lowered within the telescoping tower no matter where the upper tower section is positioned with respect to the lower tower section.

An embodiment of the guide rail system comprises a lower tower frame section that is operatively mounted on a drilling rig platform base and remains stationary. An upper tower section is slidably coupled to the lower tower section. In a representative embodiment, the upper tower section can be a parallelopiped structure and can be sized to slide inside the lower tower section, which also can be a parallelopiped structure, although it would be obvious to one skilled in the art that the upper tower section can be sized to slide on the outside of the lower tower section.

In one embodiment, the upper tower section is raised and lowered with respect to the lower tower section using means suited thereto. It would be obvious to one skilled in the art that any number of mechanisms can be used to telescope the upper tower section. These means could include a motorized rack and pinion gear set or a cable and pulley mechanism. In one embodiment, hydraulic rams can be operatively coupled between the upper and lower tower sections to raise and lower the upper tower section using hydraulic control systems as well known to those skilled in the art.

On one side of each of the upper and lower tower sections, the guide rails can be placed on vertical frame members of the sections. The guide rails can be positioned such that they are facing or opposing one another and are substantially parallel. The guide rails can be welded to the tower sections or they can be attached to the tower sections using suitable fasteners as well known to those skilled in the art.

In another embodiment, the upper tower guide rails can be adjacent to at least a portion of the lower tower guide rails as well as being substantially parallel to them when the upper tower section is slidably coupled to the lower tower section.

In another embodiment, the guide rail system can further comprise at least one pair of guide wheels that are configured to be rotatably attached to the top drive unit, one wheel on each side of the top drive unit. The guide wheels can be integral to the top drive unit or they can be separate devices that can be attached to the top drive unit by welding, by fasteners or by using any other suitable means as well known to those skilled in the art.

In one embodiment, each guide wheel is adapted to roll on a guide rail on the tower sections thereby positioning the top drive unit between the vertical members within the tower sections bearing the guide rails. In a representative embodiment, the top drive unit can have two pairs of guide wheels adapted to roll on the guide rails, two guide wheels vertically spaced apart on each side of the top drive unit. This arrangement steadies the top drive unit within the tower sections and keeps it from pitching forwards and backwards or from rocking side to side as the top drive unit is raised or lowered within the drilling rig tower. The guide wheels can be adapted to have two parallel grooves where one groove rolls on the lower tower section guide rails and whereas the other groove rolls on the upper tower section guide rails as the top drive unit is raised within the drilling rig tower from the lower tower section to the upper tower section.

In a representative embodiment, the guide rails are rectangular or square tubing having rounded outside corners. The grooves on the guide wheels are adapted to roll on the tubing and have flat bottom surfaces and rounded corners on the bottom of the grooves to correspond to the rolling surface of the guide rail tubing. The side walls of the guide wheel grooves flare outwards such that these side walls do not touch or scuff against the side walls of the guide rail tubing as the guide wheels roll up and down the guide rails. In this manner, the guide rail groove can be centered on the guide rail as the rounded corners of the groove ride on the rounded corners of the guide rail tubing yet the groove side walls do not drag against the tubing side walls allowing the top drive unit to ride smoothly and securely on the guide rails.

Broadly stated, a guide rail system is provided for a tool configured to be raised and lowered within a telescoping tower structure having a stationary lower tower section and an upper tower section slidably coupled to said lower tower section, said upper tower section configured to be raised and lowered with respect to said lower tower section, the system comprising: a pair of opposing first guide rails configured to be disposed on said lower tower section, said first guide rails substantially parallel and facing each other; a pair of opposing second guide rails configured to be disposed on said upper tower section, said second guide rails substantially parallel and facing each other, said second guide rails adjacent and substantially parallel to at least a portion of said first guide rails when said upper tower section is slidably coupled to said lower tower section; and at least one pair of guide wheels configured to be rotatably coupled to said tool, one of said at least one pair of guide wheels

adapted to roll on one of said first opposing guide rails, the other of said at least one pair of guide wheels adapted to roll on the other of said first opposing guide rails whereby said guide wheels roll on said first guide rails as said tool is raised within said lower tower section, said guide wheels further adapted to roll on said second opposing guide rails when said tool is raised from said lower tower section to said upper tower section within said tower structure.

Broadly stated, a telescoping drilling rig tower is provided for a tool configured to be raised or lowered within said tower, comprising: a lower tower section adapted for stationary mounting on a rig mounting base; an upper tower section slidably coupled to said lower tower section; means for raising and lowering said upper tower section with respect to said lower tower section; a pair of opposing first guide rails disposed on said lower tower section, said first guide rails substantially parallel and facing each other; and a pair of opposing second guide rails disposed on upper tower section, said second guide rails substantially parallel and facing each other, said second guide rails adjacent and substantially parallel to at least a portion of said first guide rails when said upper tower section is slidably coupled to said lower tower section.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view depicting a telescoping rig tower having a top drive unit wherein the upper and lower rig tower sections are shown in a collapsed configuration.

Figure 2 is perspective view depicting the rig tower of Figure 1 in an extended configuration with the top drive unit positioned in the lower rig tower section.

Figure 3 is perspective view depicting the rig tower of Figure 1 in an extended configuration with the top drive unit positioned where the upper and lower rig tower sections overlap.

Figure 4 is perspective view depicting the rig tower of Figure 1 in an extended configuration with the top drive unit positioned in the upper rig tower section.

Figure 5 is a front elevational view depicting the top drive unit of Figure 1.

Figure 6 is a side elevational view depicting the top drive unit of Figure 1.

Figure 7 is perspective view depicting the top drive unit of Figure 1.

Figure 8 is a top plan view depicting the guide rail components of the rig tower of Figure 1.

Figure 9 is a close up top plan view depicting the guide rail components of Figure 8.

Figure 10 is a perspective view depicting the guide rail components of the rig tower of Figure 2.

Figure 11 is a perspective view depicting the guide rail components of Figure 10 when the top drive unit is positioned where the upper and lower rig tower sections overlap.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Illustrated in Figure 1 is an embodiment of a guide rail system for a telescoping drilling rig tower. This embodiment comprises rig tower 10 having lower tower section 12 that can be mounted on top of rig platform 11. Rig platform 11 may be part of a stationary drilling rig or part of a portable drilling rig structure mounted on a vehicle such as a flat-bed truck adapted for such use, as well known to those skilled in the art. In this Figure 1, upper tower section 14 is shown fully nested in lower tower section 12. Upper tower section 14 can be slidably coupled to lower tower section 12. In one embodiment, lower tower section 12 and upper tower section 14 can be parallelopiped structures. In a representative embodiment, upper tower section 14 can slide within lower tower section 12 in a telescoping fashion although it would be obvious to those skilled in the art that upper tower section 14 can be sized to slide on the outside of lower tower section 12.

In another embodiment, mounted within tower 10 is a tool such as top drive unit 16 that is supported by cable 17 that, in turn, rolls over the pulleys in king block 24 to a cable drawworks mechanism (not shown). Upper tower section 14 can be raised or lowered with respect to lower tower section 12 using a mechanism such as a rack and pinion gear set, cable and pulley system or a hydraulic ram system. In a representative embodiment, hydraulic rams (not shown) coupled between tower sections 12 and 14 provide the means to raise or lower upper tower section 14 with respect to lower tower section 12 as well known to those skilled in the art.

Referring to Figures 2, 3 and 4, top drive unit 16 is shown in a lower position, in a halfway position and in an upper position, respectively, within tower 10.

Referring to Figures 5, 6 and 7, top drive unit 16 is shown having upper guide wheels 26 and lower guide wheels 28, one of each mounted on each side of top drive unit 16. Guide wheels 26 and 28 are vertically spaced-apart so as to provide stability to top drive unit 16 as it travels within tower 10 as discussed in further detail below.

Referring to Figures 8 and 9, guide wheels 26 and 28 can roll on guide track 18 that consists of upper guide rails 22 mounted on vertical frame members 15 of upper tower section 14, and lower guide rails 20 mounted on vertical frame members 13 of lower tower section 12. Both sets of guide rails 20 and 22 are parallel to one another and oppose or face one another within tower 10. When upper tower section 14 is slidably coupled to lower tower section 12, upper guide rails 22 overlap lower guide rails 20 such that the guide rails are adjacent to at least a portion of each other and are parallel to one another as to form a continuous guide track 18 along the height of tower 10. Guide rails 20 and 22 can be welded to the tower sections or can be attached to the tower sections using suitable fasteners as known to those skilled in the art.

In one embodiment, guide wheels 26 and 28 can have parallel grooves 42 and 44 in a side-by-side arrangement. Groove 42 rolls on lower guide rail 20 whereas groove 44 rolls on upper guide rail 22. When upper and lower tower sections 14 and 12 overlap, guide wheels 26 and 28 are positioned on

guide track 18 such that guide wheels 26 and 28 roll on both lower and upper guide rails 20 and 22. With this arrangement, guide rails 26 and 28 smoothly roll from guide rails 20 to guide rails 22 as top drive unit 16 is raised from lower tower section 12 to upper tower section 14.

Referring to Figure 9, a detailed top view of a representative embodiment of the guide rail system is shown. As described above, each guide rail 26 and 28 has grooves 42 and 44 that are adapted to roll on guide rails 20 and 22. In one embodiment, both guide rails 20 and 22 can be rectangular in cross-section. In a representative embodiment, guide rails 20 and 22 are square in cross-section. Grooves 42 and 44 are formed between sidewall 36, center ridge 38 and sidewall 40 on guide wheels 26 and 28. Groove 42 can have groove sidewalls 60, groove base 46 and base corners 50. Groove 44 can have groove sidewalls 61, groove base 48 and base corners 51. Groove bases 46 and 48 correspond to guide rail faces 54 and 55 of guide rails 20 and 22. Base corners 50 and 51 can be rounded and adapted to roll smoothly on guide rail corners 56 and 57 of guide rails 20 and 22 with little or no side-to-side movement of guide rails 20 and 22 within grooves 42 and 44.

In another embodiment, groove sidewalls 60 and 61 can flare outwardly in each of grooves 42 and 44 at angles 52 and 53. By angling sidewalls 60 and 61 in this manner, there is clearance between groove sidewalls 60 and 61 and guide rail sidewalls 58 and 59 such that groove sidewall 60 and 61 will not scuff against guide rail sidewalls 58 and 59 as

guide wheels 26 and 28 roll on guide track 18. In a representative embodiment, angles 52 and 53 can be in the range of 1° to 10°.

Referring to Figures 10 and 11, top drive unit 16 is shown being raised in tower 10 from lower tower section 12 (Figure 10) to upper tower section 14 (Figure 11). Guide wheels 26 and 28 roll on both guide rails 20 and 22 where upper tower section 14 overlaps lower tower section 12. As guide wheels 26 and 28 roll up guide track 18, groove 42 rolls off of guide rail 22 thereby leaving groove 44 rolling on guide rail 22 by itself. As shown in Figures 5, 6 and 7, guide rails 26 and 28 are vertically spaced apart on top drive 16 to provide stability to top drive unit 16 and keep it from pitching forwards or backwards or rocking side-to-side as it travels on guide track 18 within tower 10.

Although a few preferred embodiments have been shown and described, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications might be made without departing from the scope of the invention. The terms and expressions used in the preceding specification have been used herein as terms of description and not of limitation, and there is no intention in the use of such terms and expressions of excluding equivalents of the features shown and described or portions thereof, it being recognized that the scope of the invention is defined and limited only by the claims that follow.

We claim:

1. A guide rail system for a tool configured to be raised and lowered within a telescoping tower structure having a stationary lower tower section and an upper tower section slidably coupled to said lower tower section, said upper tower section configured to be raised and lowered with respect to said lower tower section, the system comprising:

a) a pair of opposing first guide rails configured to be disposed on said lower tower section, said first guide rails substantially parallel and facing each other, said guide rails further comprised of tubing, said tubing comprising rounded outside corners;

b) a pair of opposing second guide rails configured to be disposed on said upper tower section, said second guide rails substantially parallel and facing each other, said second guide rails adjacent and substantially parallel to at least a portion of said first guide rails when said upper tower section is slidably coupled to said lower tower section; and

c) at least one pair of guide wheels configured to be rotatably coupled to said tool, one of said at least one pair of guide wheels adapted to roll on one of said first opposing guide rails, the other of said at least one pair of guide wheels adapted to roll on the other of said first opposing guide rails whereby said guide wheels roll on said first guide rails as said tool is raised within said lower tower section, said guide wheels further adapted to roll on said second opposing guide rails when said tool is raised

from said lower tower section to said upper tower section within said tower structure, said guide wheels further comprising grooves configured to substantially contact said rounded outside corners of said tubing and to roll on said tubing, said guide wheels further comprising sidewalls that are configured not to contact said tubing as said guide wheels roll on said tubing.

2. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said tool is a top drive unit.

3. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said tubing comprises rectangular tubing.

4. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said system comprises two pairs of opposing guide wheels configured to be rotatably coupled to said tool.

5. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said upper tower section is adapted to slide up and down inside said lower tower section.

6. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said upper tower section is adapted to slide up and down outside said lower tower section.

7. The system as set forth claim 1 wherein said sidewalls on said guide wheels flare outwardly.

8. A telescoping drilling rig tower for a tool configured to be raised or lowered within said tower, comprising:

a) a lower tower section adapted for stationary mounting on a rig mounting base;

b) an upper tower section slidably coupled to said lower tower section;

c) means for raising and lowering said upper tower section with respect to said lower tower section;

d) a pair of opposing first guide rails disposed on said lower tower section, said first guide rails substantially parallel and facing each other;

e) a pair of opposing second guide rails disposed on upper tower section, said second guide rails substantially parallel and facing each other, said second guide rails adjacent and substantially parallel to at least a portion of said first guide rails when said upper tower section is slidably coupled to said lower tower section;

f) said first and second guide rails comprised of tubing, said tubing comprising rounded outside corners; and

g) at least one pair of guide wheels configured to be rotatably coupled to said tool, one of said at least one pair of guide wheels adapted to roll on one of said first opposing guide rails, the other of said at least one pair of guide wheels adapted to roll on the other of said first opposing guide rails whereby said guide

wheels roll on said first guide rails as said tool is raised within said lower tower section, said guide wheels further adapted to roll on said second opposing guide rails when said tool is raised from said lower tower section to said upper tower section within said drilling rig tower, said guide wheels further comprising grooves configured to substantially contact said rounded outside corners of said tubing and to roll on said tubing, said guide wheels further comprising sidewalls that are configured not to contact said tubing as said guide wheels roll on said tubing.

9. The tower as set forth in claim 8 wherein said tool is a top drive unit.

10. The tower as set forth in claim 8 wherein said tubing comprises rectangular tubing.

11. The tower as set forth in claim 8 further comprising two pairs of guide wheels configured to be rotatably coupled to said tool.

12. The tower as set forth in claim 8 wherein said upper tower section is adapted to slide up and down inside said lower tower section.

13. The tower as set forth in claim 8 wherein said upper tower section is adapted to slide up an down outside said lower tower section.

14. The tower as set forth in claim 8 wherein said means for raising and lowering said upper tower section is selected from the group consisting of motorized rack and pinion mechanisms, cable and pulley mechanisms, and hydraulic ram mechanisms.

15. The tower as set forth in claim 8 wherein said sidewalls on said guide wheels flare outwardly.

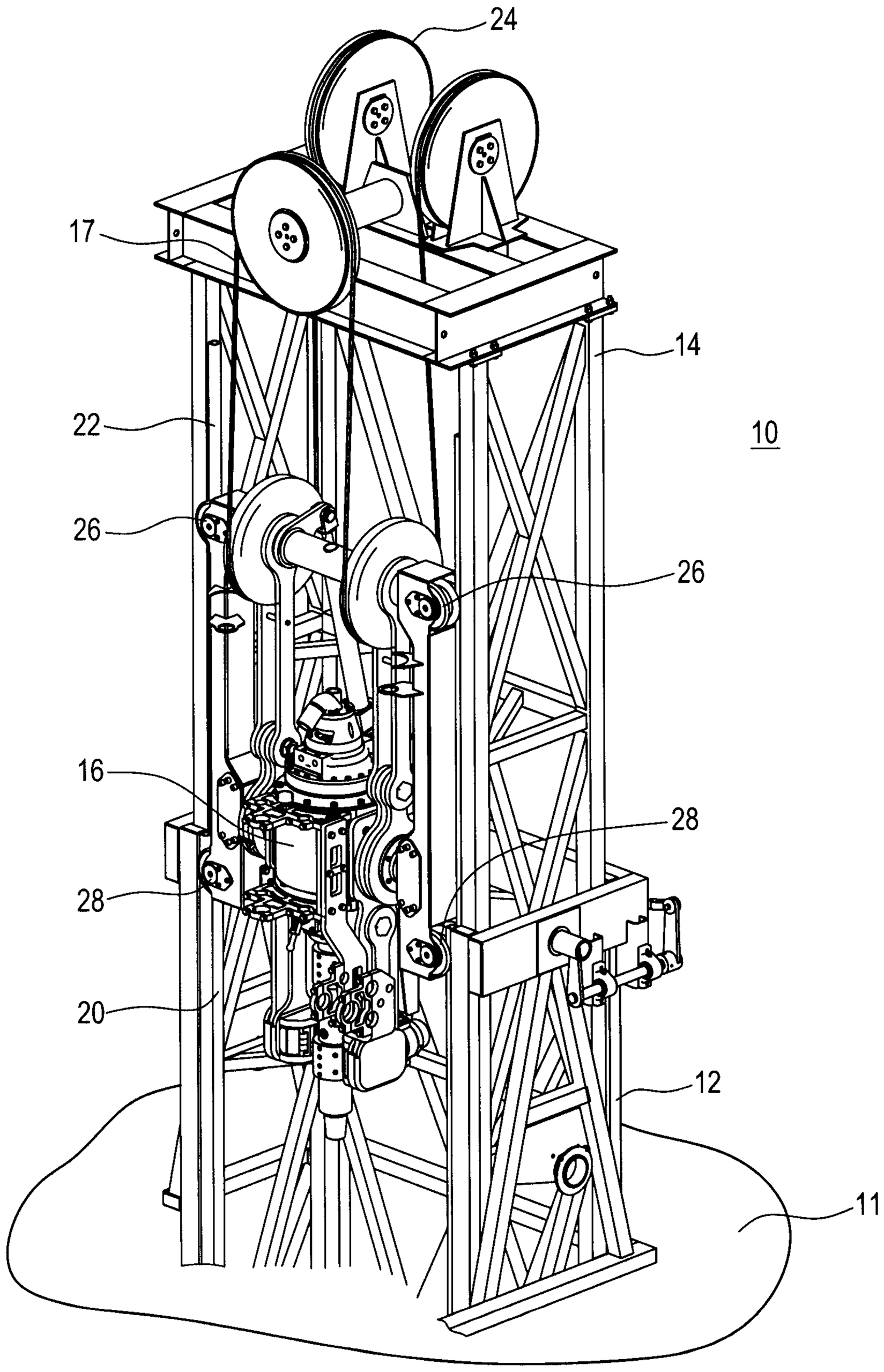

FIG. 1

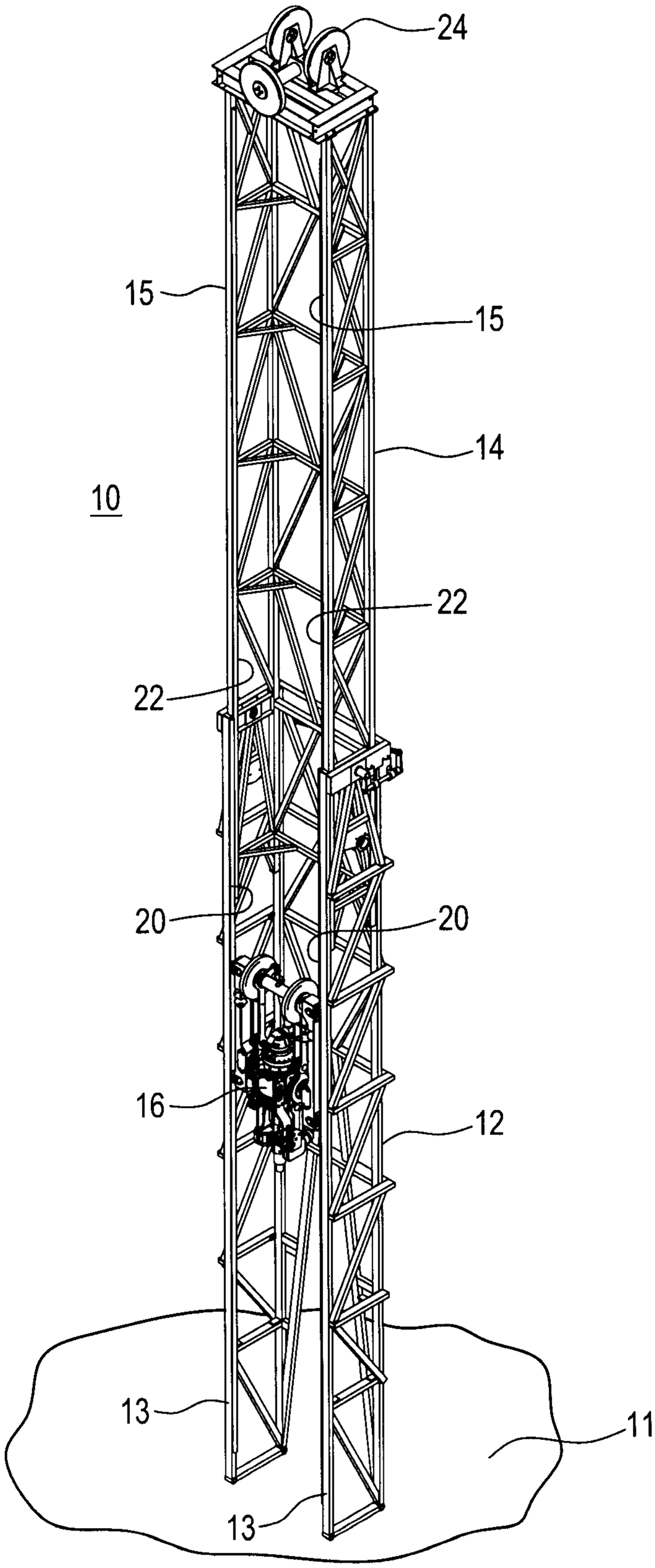

FIG. 2

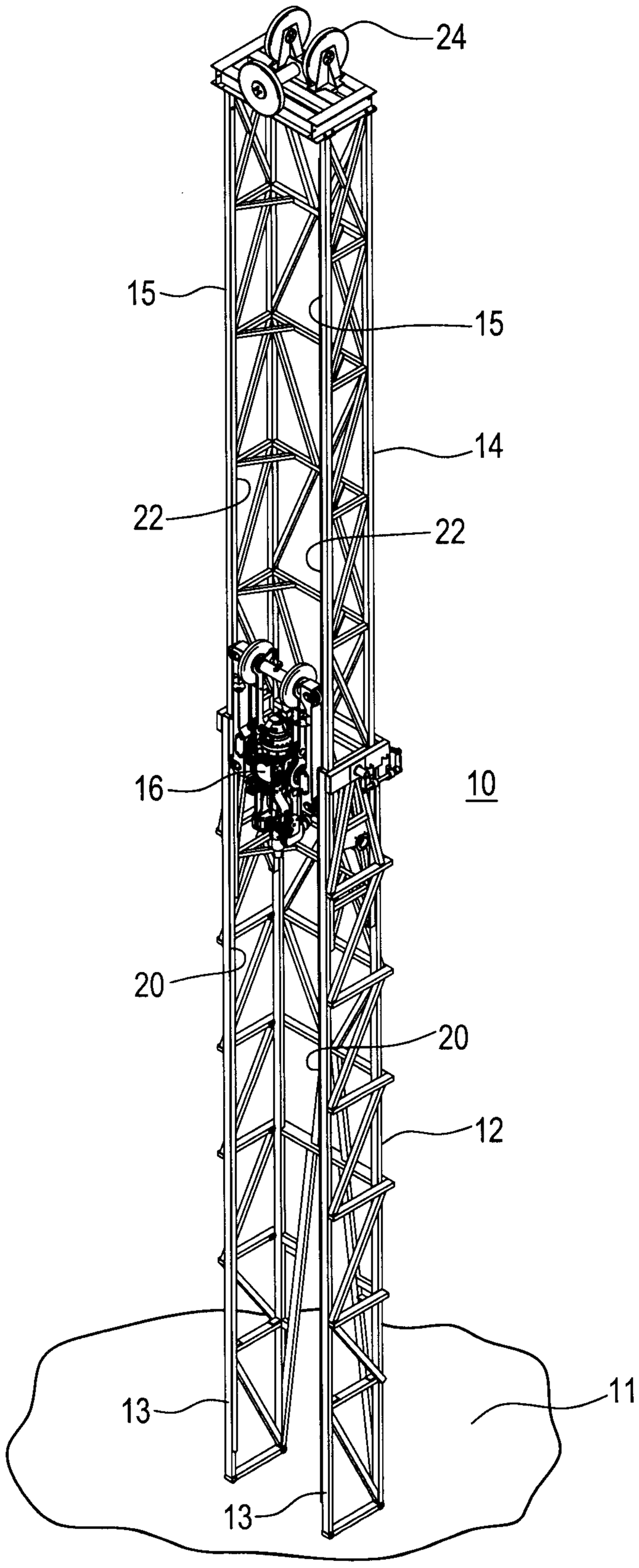

FIG. 3

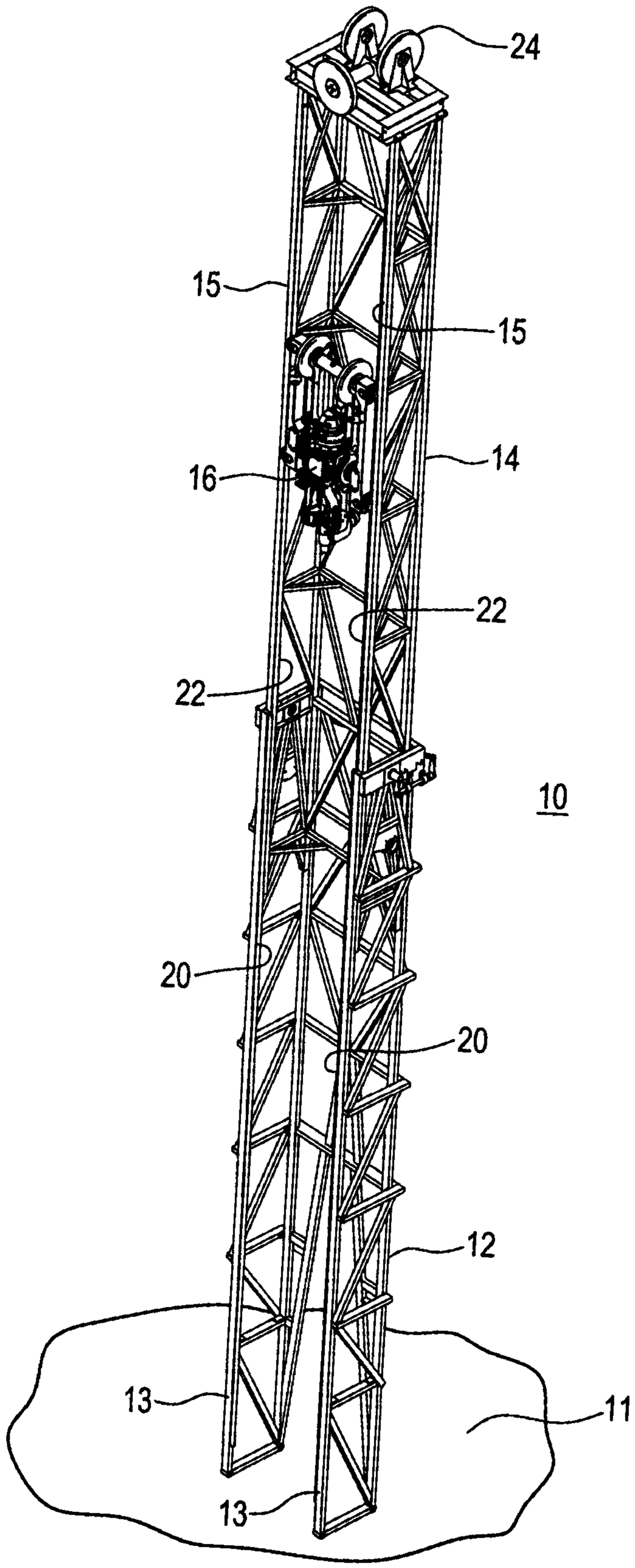

FIG. 4

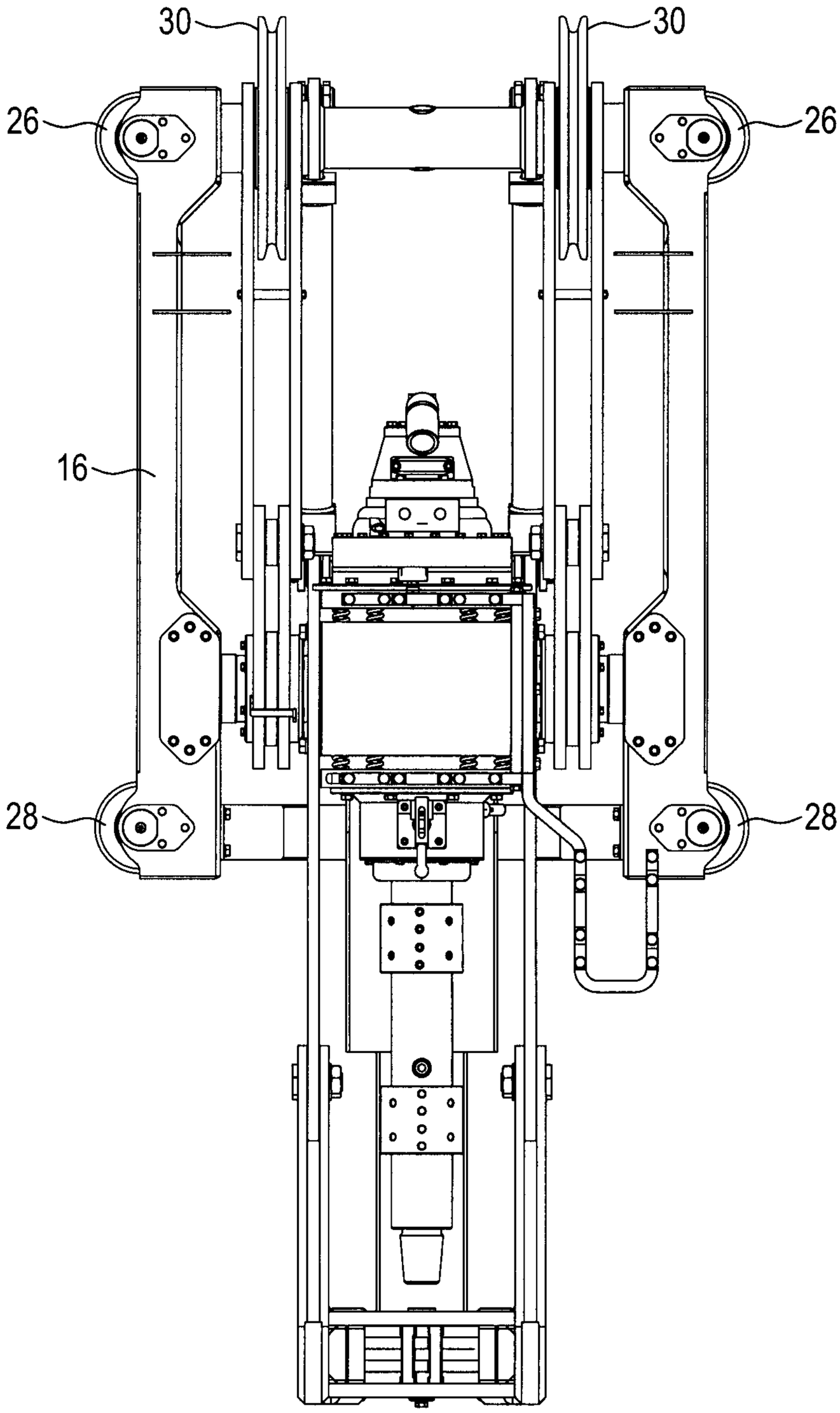

FIG. 5

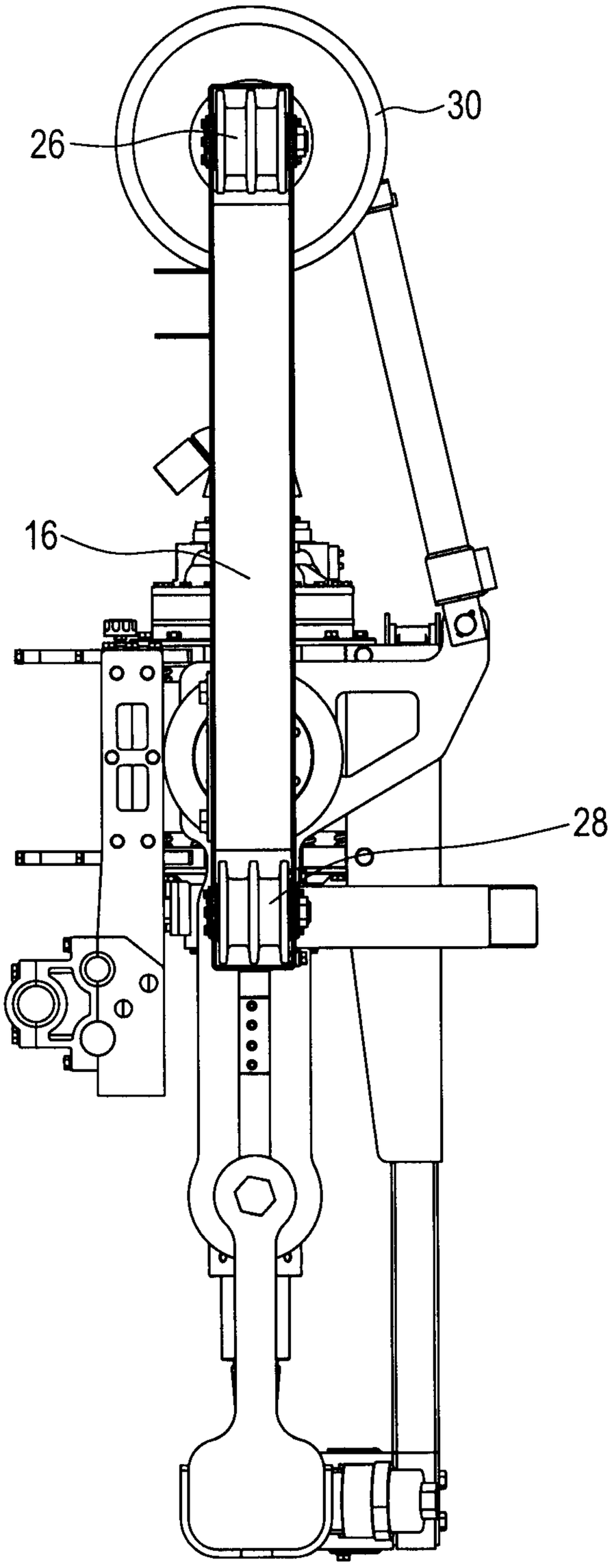

FIG. 6

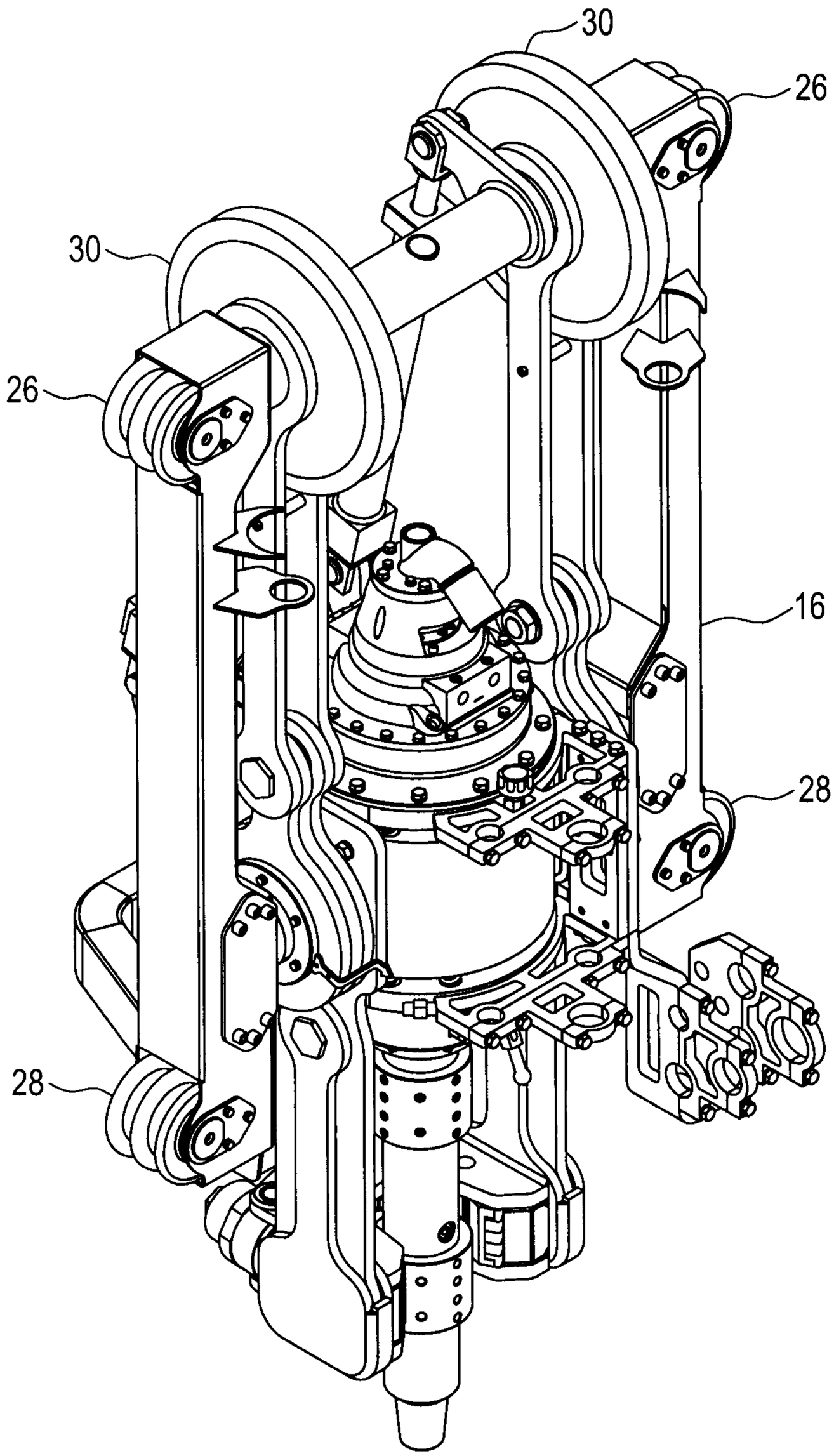

FIG. 7

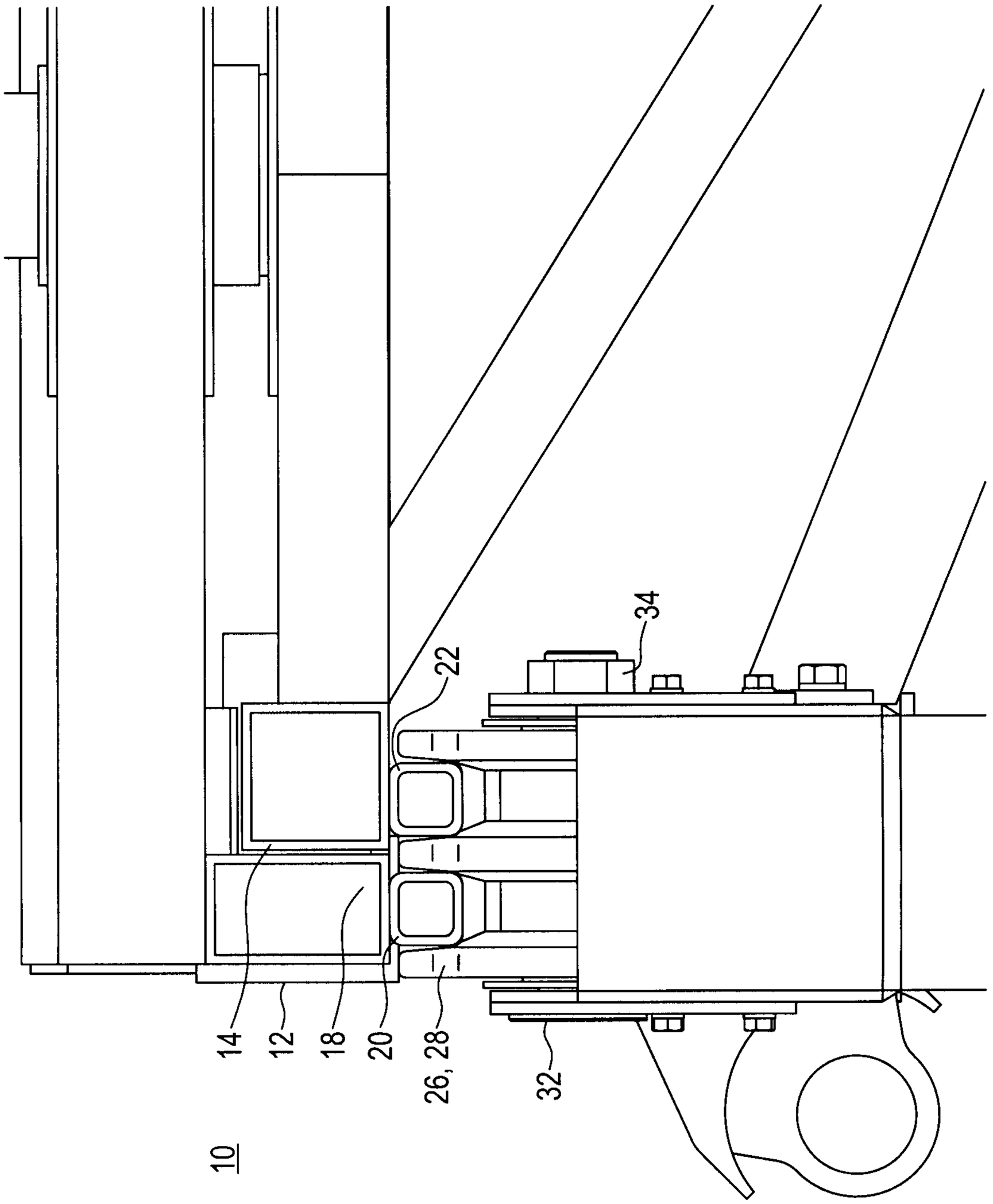

FIG. 8

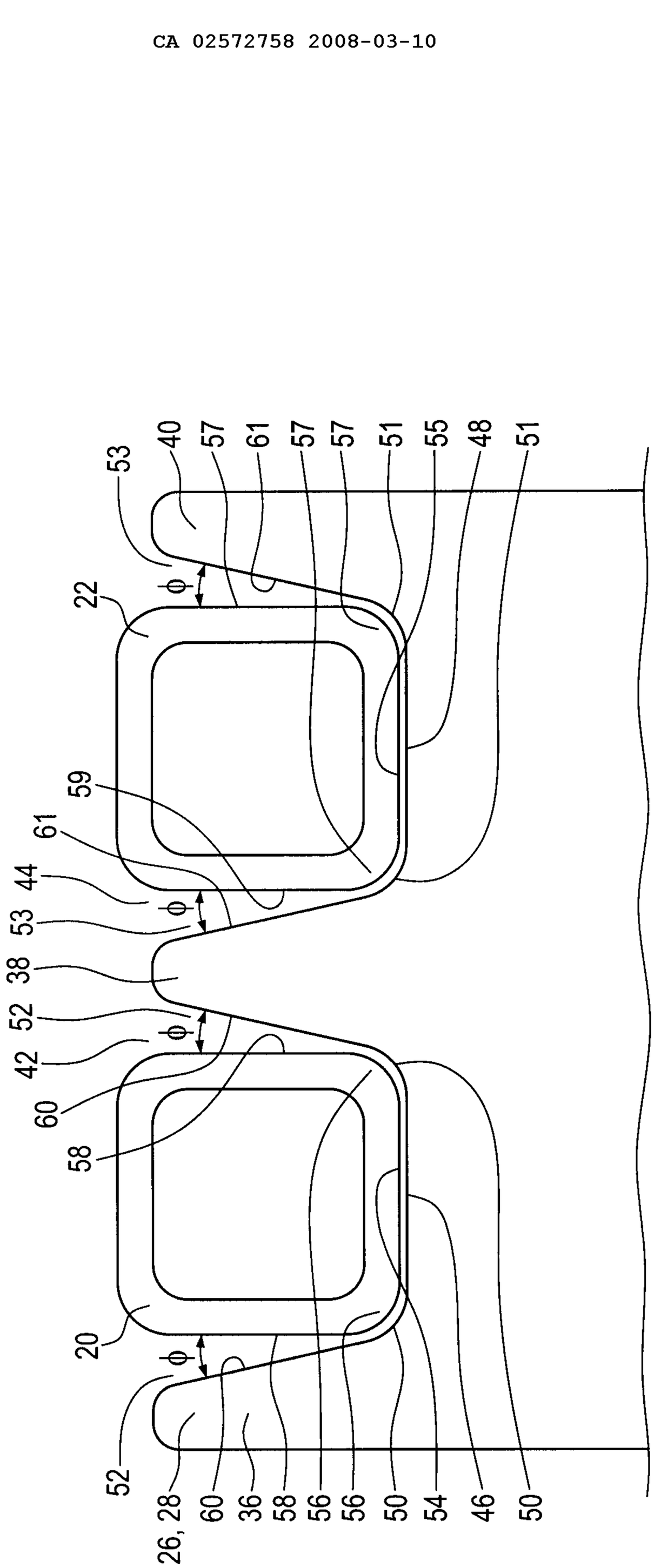
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FIG. 9

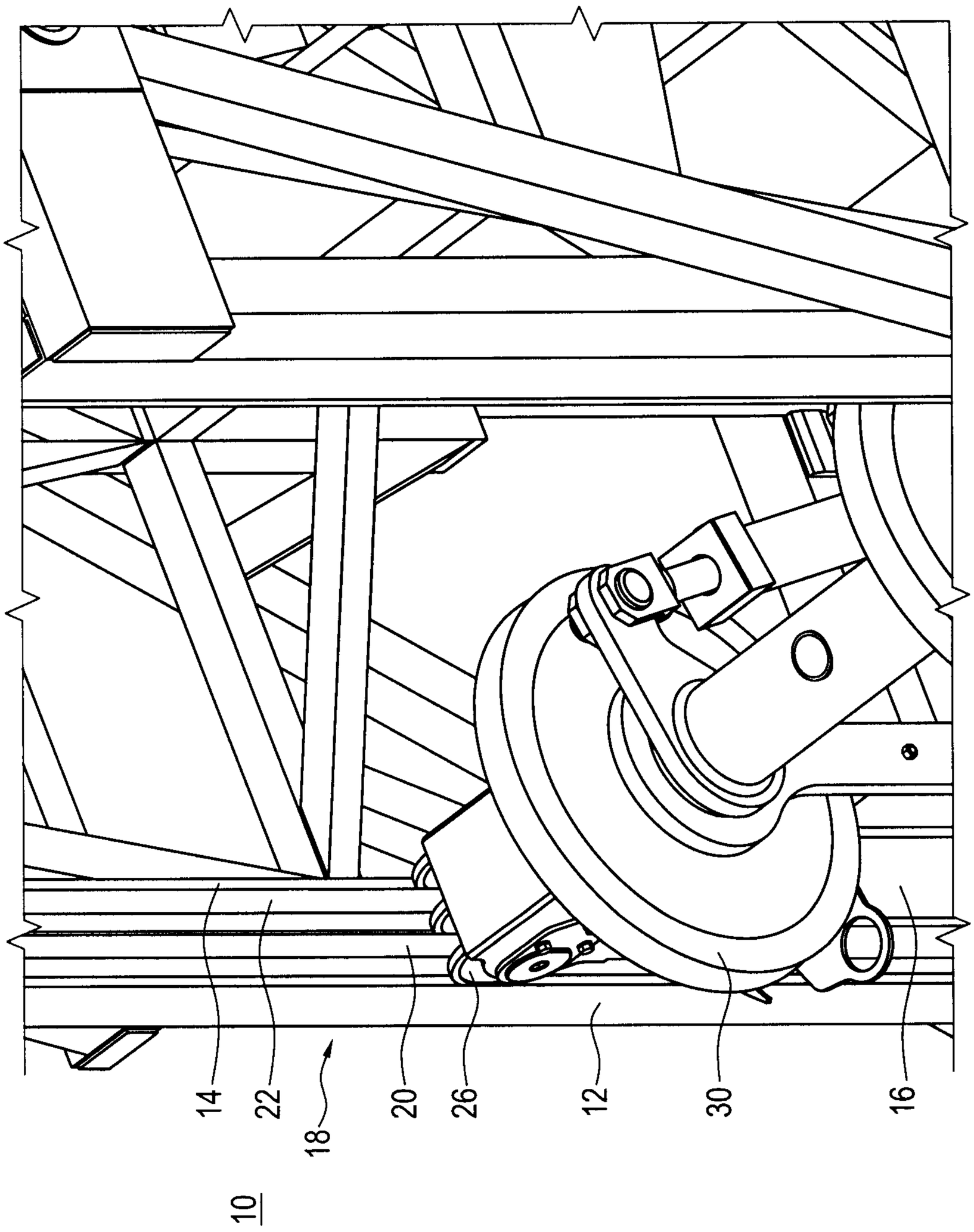


FIG. 10

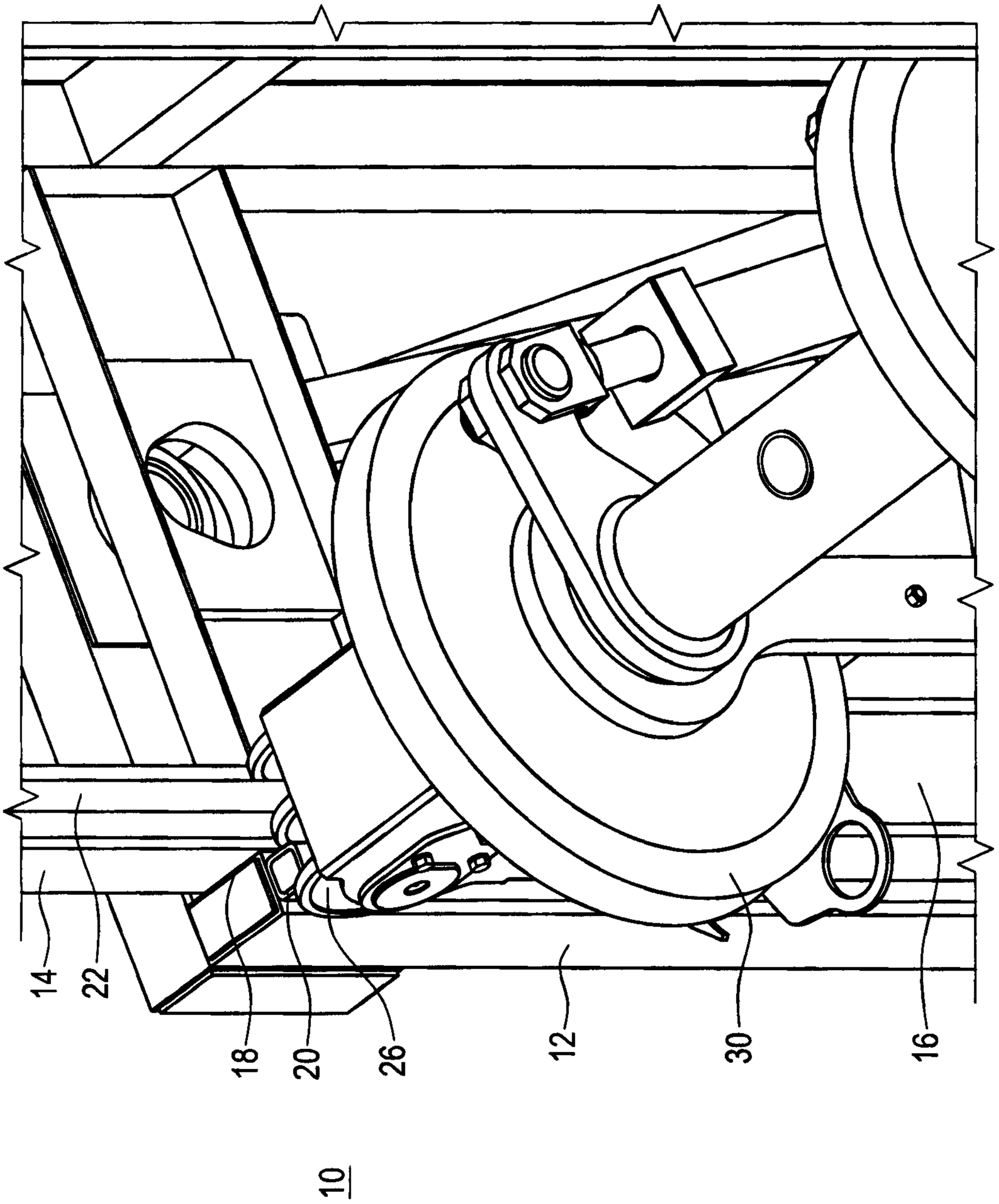
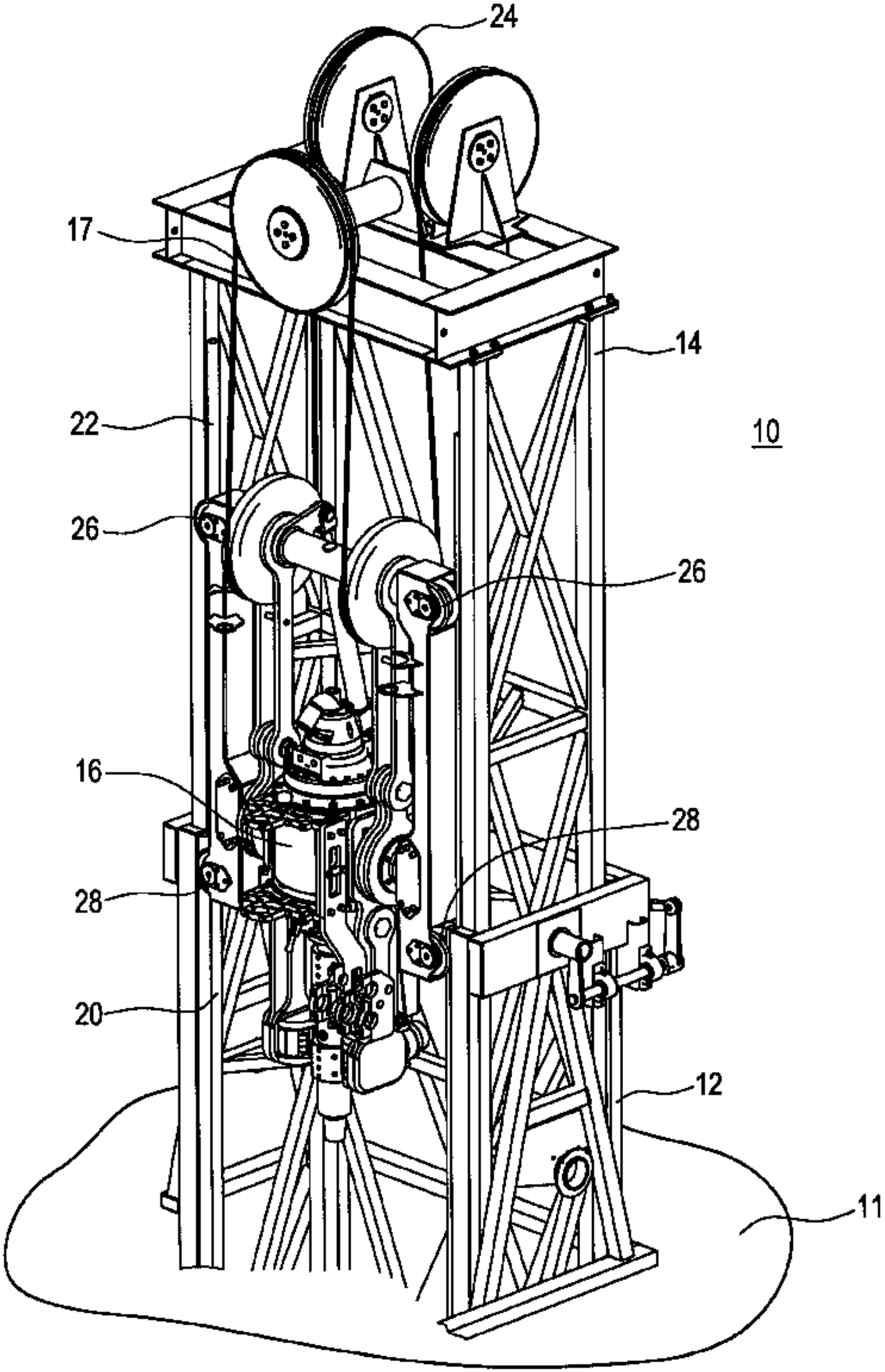


FIG. 11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