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(54) **COMPUTER PERIPHERAL APPARATUS AND METHOD OF CONTROLLING THE SAME**

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

(75) Inventor: **Yukihiko Shimizu, Chiba (JP)**

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Correspondence Address:
FITZPATRICK CELLA HARPER & SCINTO
1290 Avenue of the Americas
NEW YORK, NY 10104-3800 (US)

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(73) Assignee: **Canon Kabushiki Kaisha, Tokyo (JP)**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A computer peripheral apparatus of this invention has a check step of checking whether received data is infected with a computer virus. If the received data satisfies a predetermined condition, the apparatus executes the check step before predetermined data processing. If the received data does not satisfy the predetermined condition, the apparatus executes the check step before the predetermined data processing.

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 10/704,676, filed on Nov. 12, 2003, now Pat. No. 7,571,481.

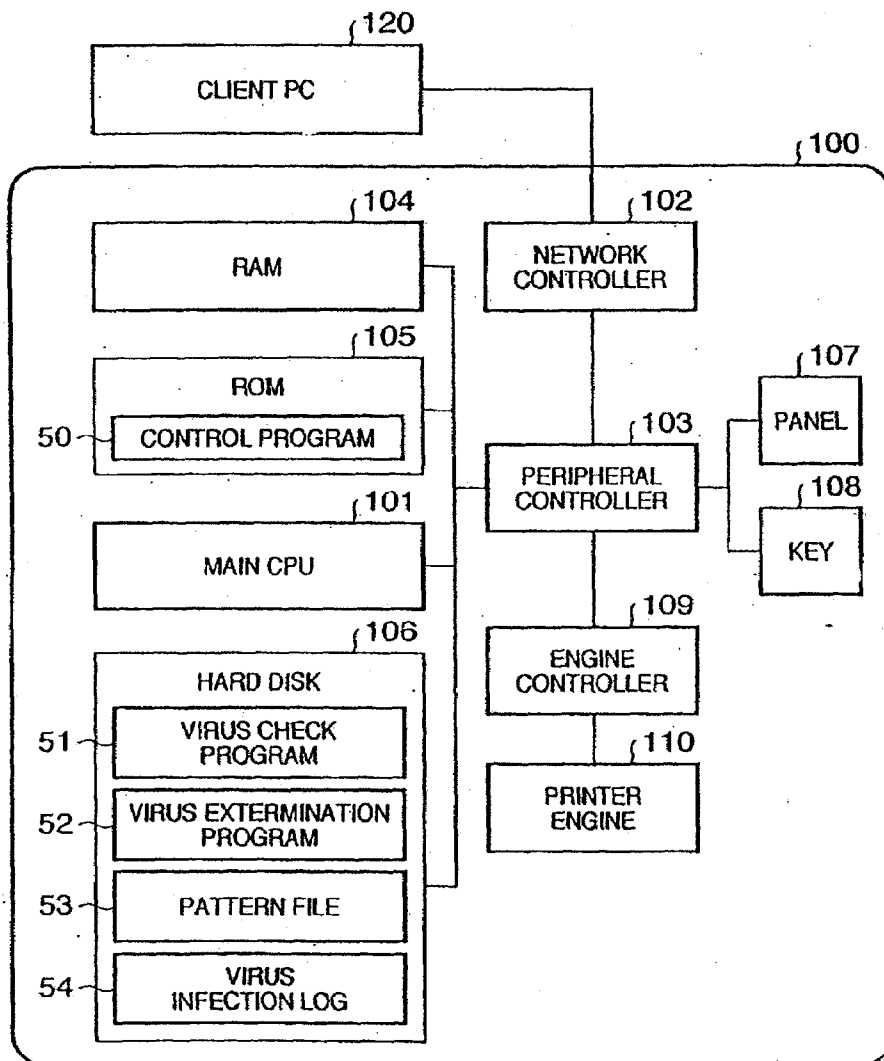


FIG. 1

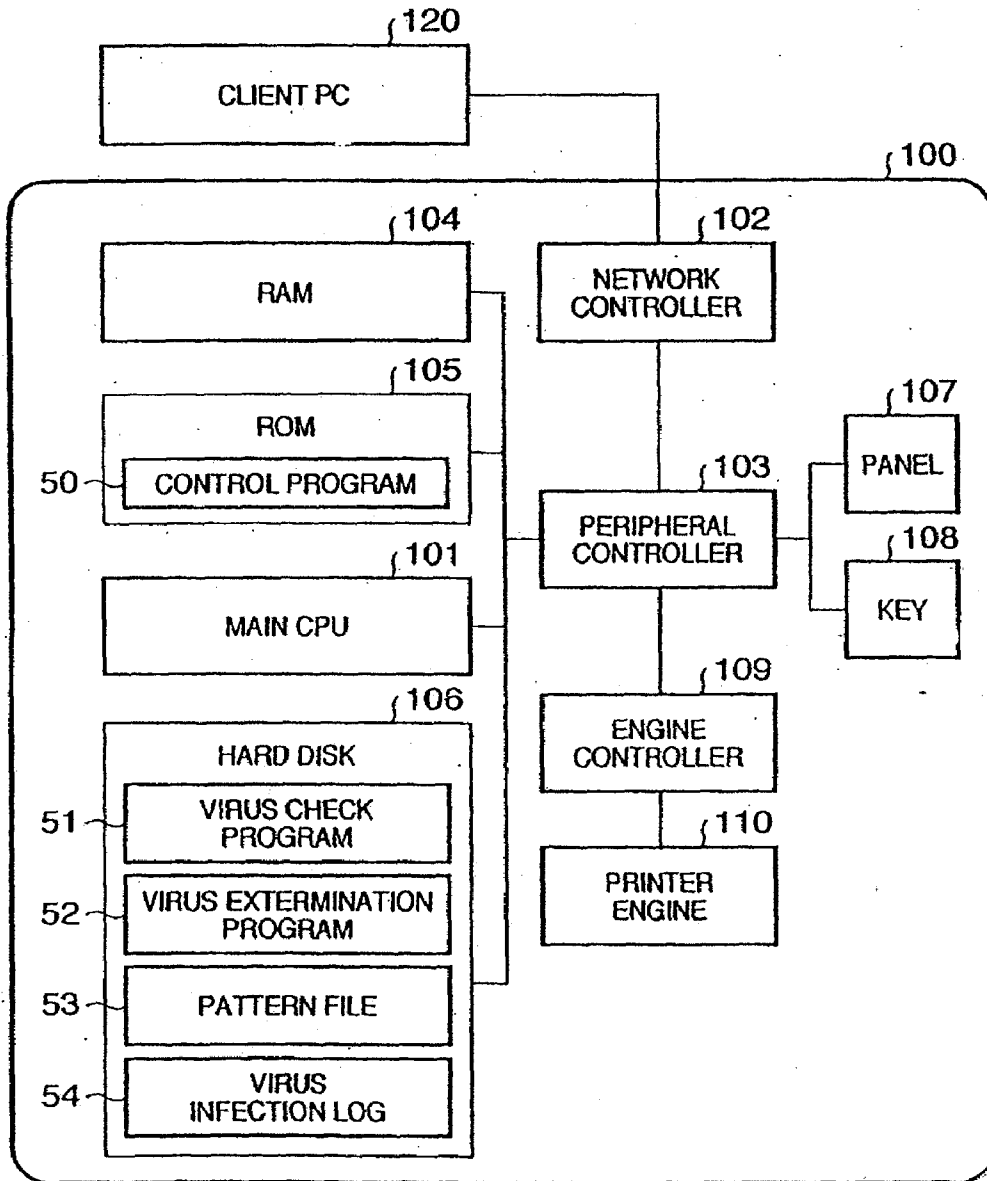


FIG. 2

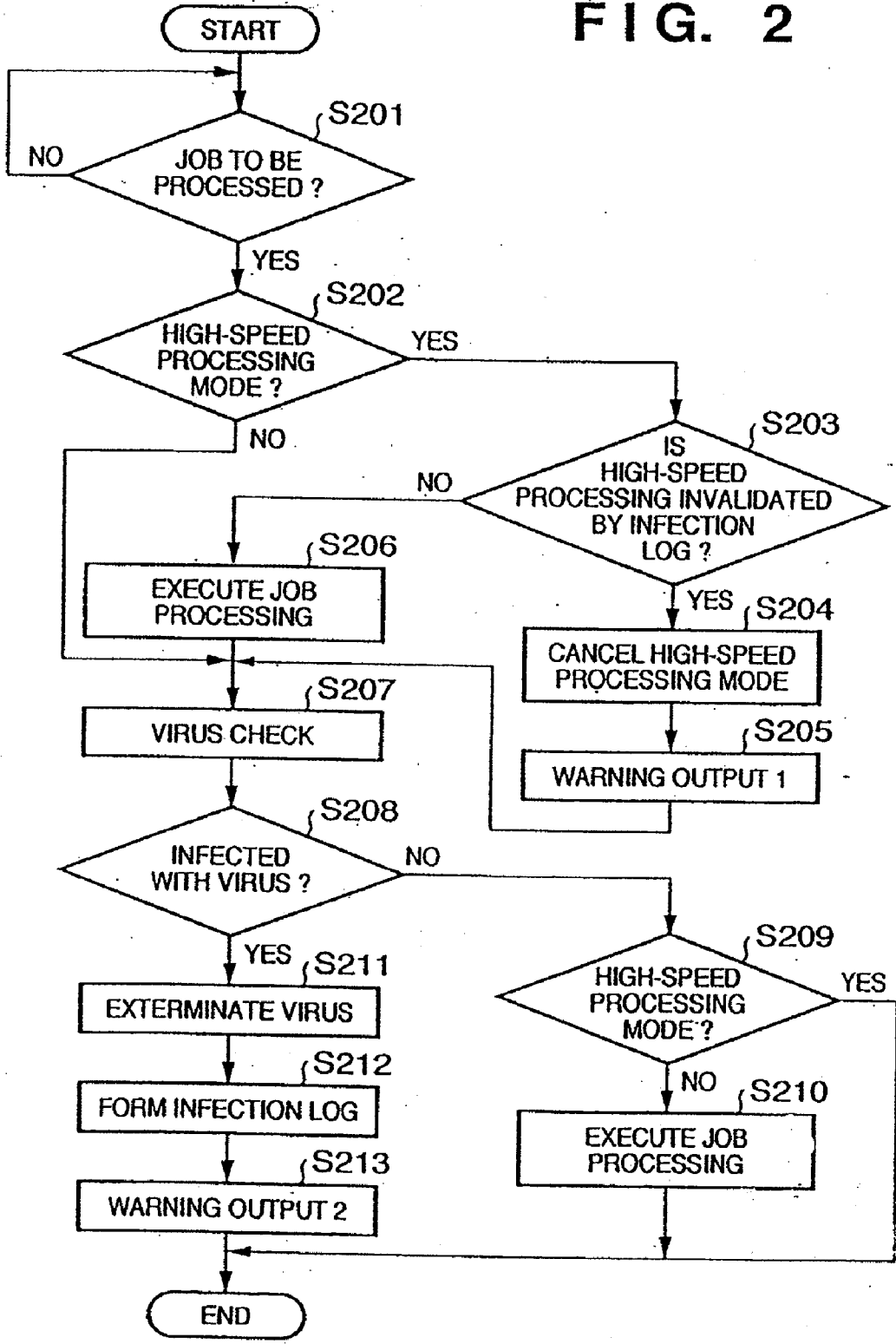


FIG. 3

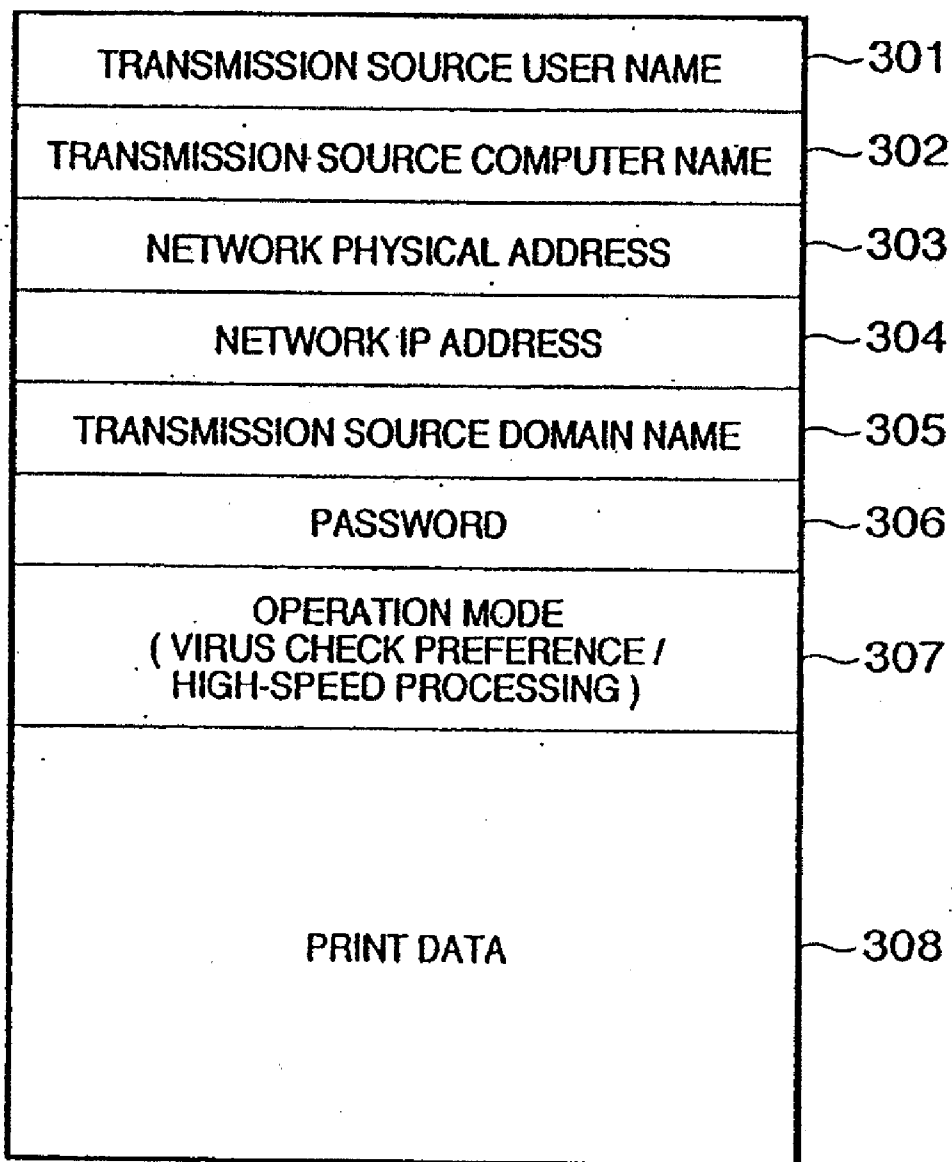


FIG. 4

LOG NO	USER NAME	DATE	VIRUS	FAST PRINT FLAG
0001	USER-A	20010914	OBL	1
0002	USER-B	20010918	OBL	1
0003	USER-A	20011207	KXP	0
⋮				

FIG. 5

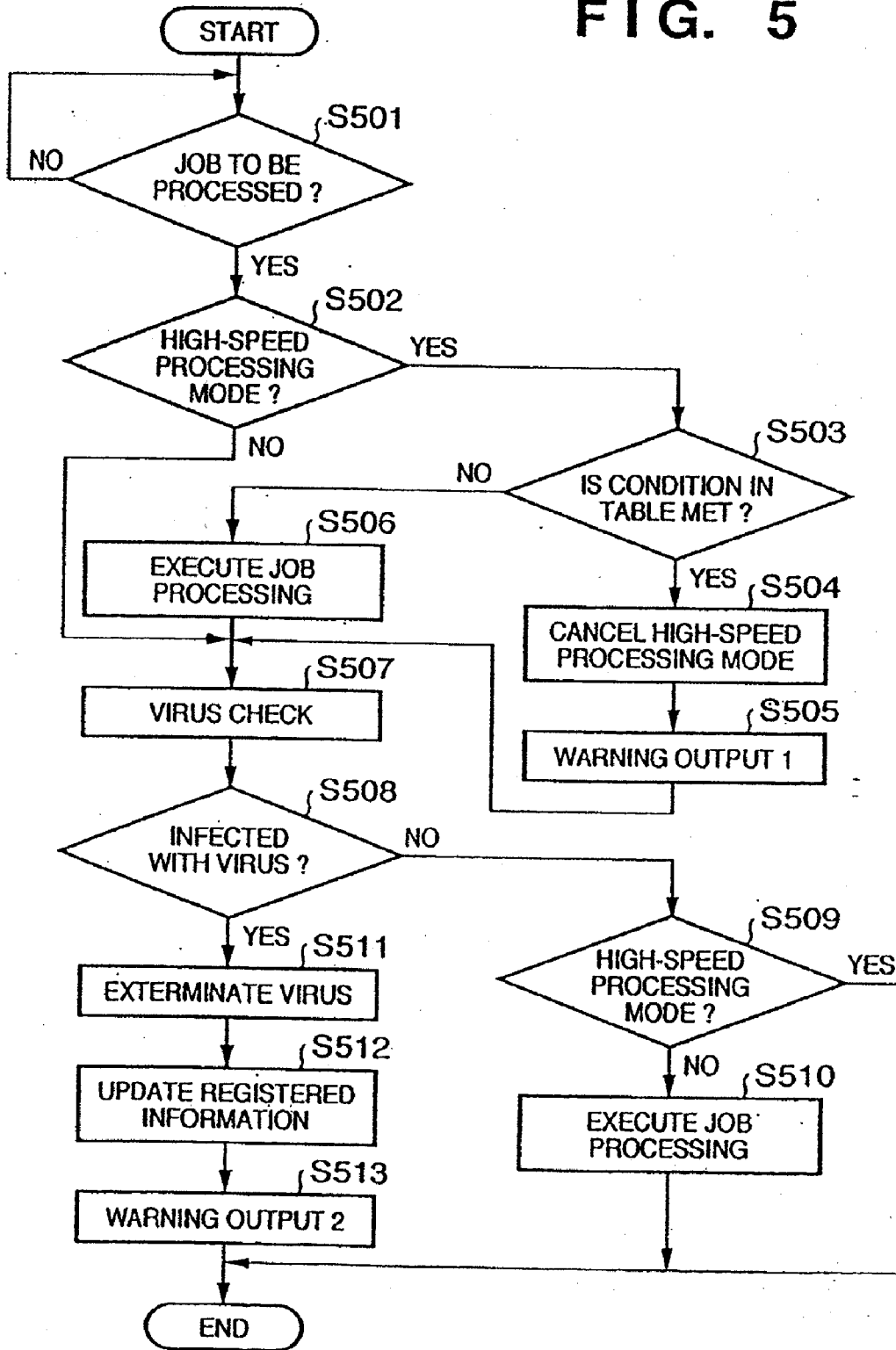


FIG. 6

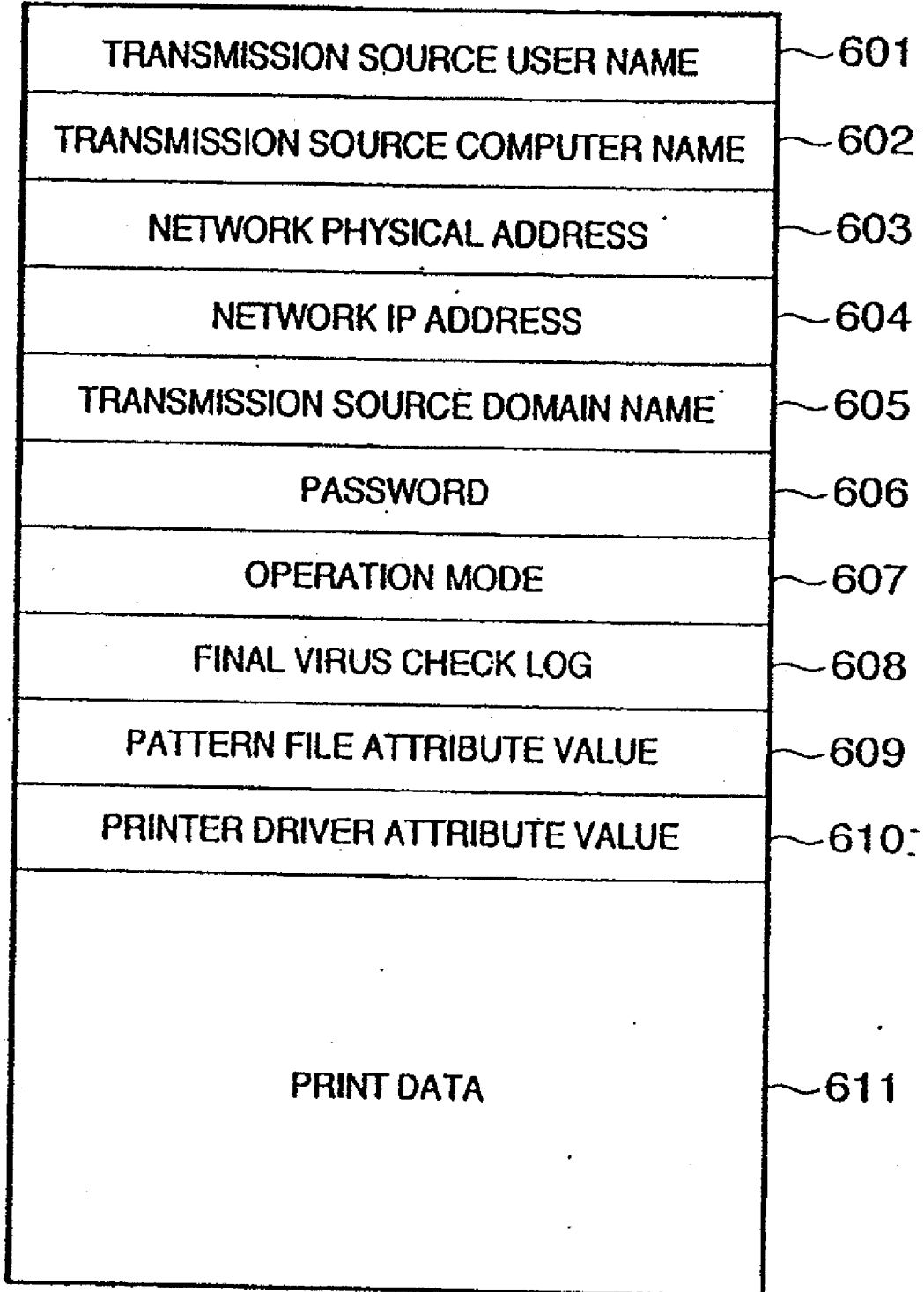


FIG. 7

TRANSMISSION SOURCE USER NAME	C001 ~ C099
TRANSMISSION SOURCE COMPUTER NAME	GANON***** (*:0~9)
NETWORK PHYSICAL ADDRESS	00D086*0*** (*:0~F)
NETWORK IP ADDRESS	127.0.*.* (*:0~255)
TRANSMISSION SOURCE DOMAIN NAME	NO_VIRUS*** (*:0~9)
PASSWORD	DONT CARE
OPERATION MODE	DONT CARE
FINAL VIRUS CHECK LOG	DATE > 2002.03.20
PATTERN FILE ATTRIBUTE VALUE	DATE_VERSION > 2002.03.01
PRINTER DRIVER ATTRIBUTE VALUE	VERSION > GANON_DRV_V7.12

FIG. 8

JOB TYPE	PRINT	PDF-DIRECT-PRINT	SEND	BOX
TRANSMISSION SOURCE USER NAME	C001 ~ C099	No User Applied	C001 ~ C012	C001 ~ C034
TRANSMISSION SOURCE COMPUTER NAME	GANON***** (*: 0 ~ 9)	No Computer Applied	GANON001** (*: 0 ~ 9)	GANON00** (*: 0 ~ 9)
NETWORK PHYSICAL ADDRESS	00D086*0***** (*: 0 ~ F)	No MAC Address Added	00D086B0**A (*: 0 ~ F)	00D086B0**** (*: 0 ~ F)
NETWORK IP ADDRESS	127.0.*.* (*: 0 ~ 255)	No IP Address Applied	127.0.255.* (*: 0 ~ 128)	127.0255.* (*: 0 ~ 255)
TRANSMISSION SOURCE DOMAIN NAME	NO_VIRUS*** (*: 0 ~ 9)	No Domain Applied	NO_VIRUS11* (*: 0 ~ 9)	NO_VIRUS1** (*: 0 ~ 9)
PASSWORD	DONT CARE	DONT CARE	DONT CARE	DONT CARE
OPERATION MODE	DONT CARE	DONT CARE	DONT CARE	DONT CARE
FINAL VIRUS CHECK LOG	DATE > 20020320	No History Applied	DATE > 20020920	DATE > 20020620
PATTERN FILE ATTRIBUTE VALUE	DATE_Ver. > 20020301	No Pattern Applied	DATE_Ver. > 20020901	DATE_Ver. > 20020601
PRINTER DRIVER ATTRIBUTE VALUE	Ver. > CDRV_V712	No Driver Applied	Ver. > CDRV_V802	Ver. > CDRV_V720

FIG. 9

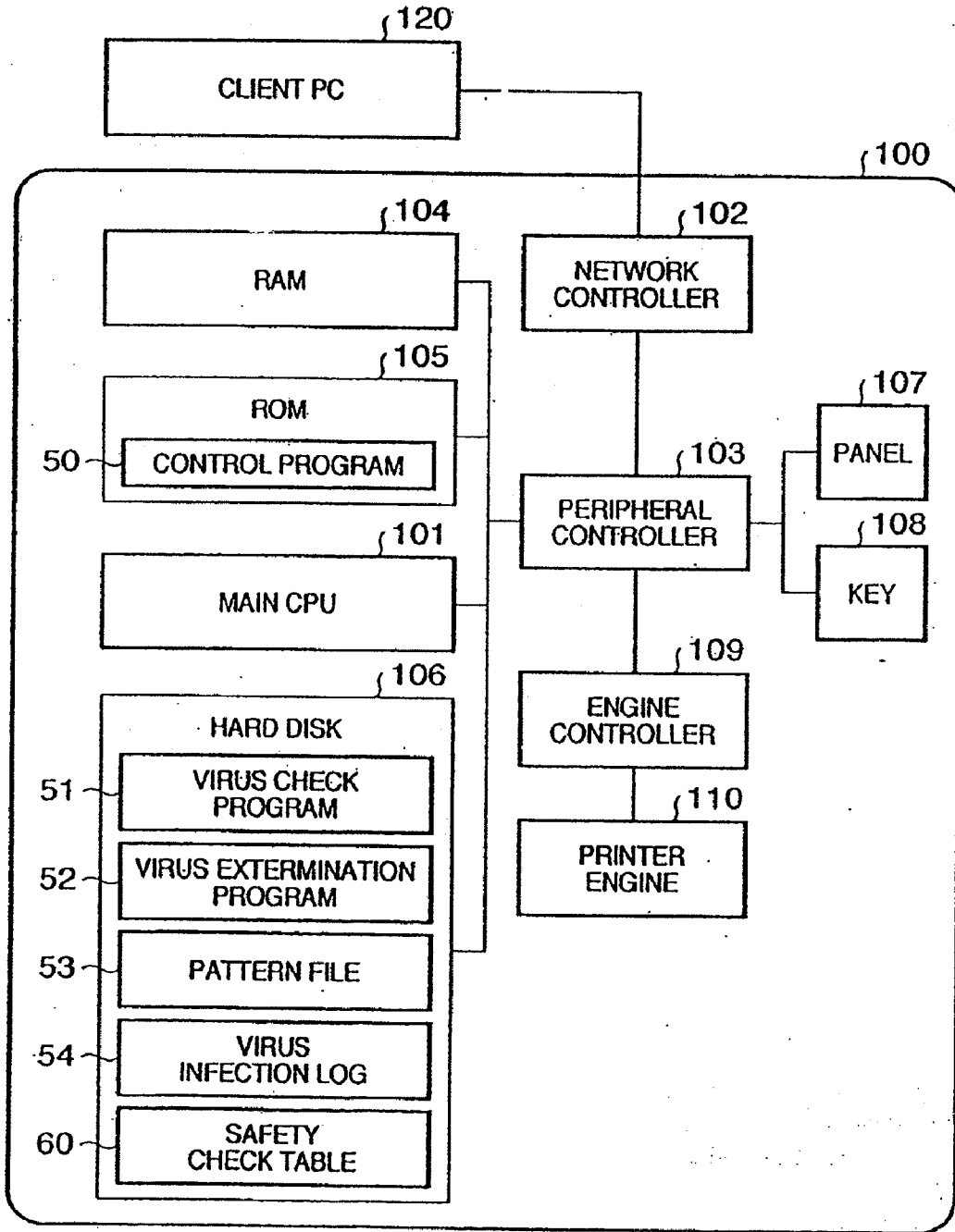


FIG. 10

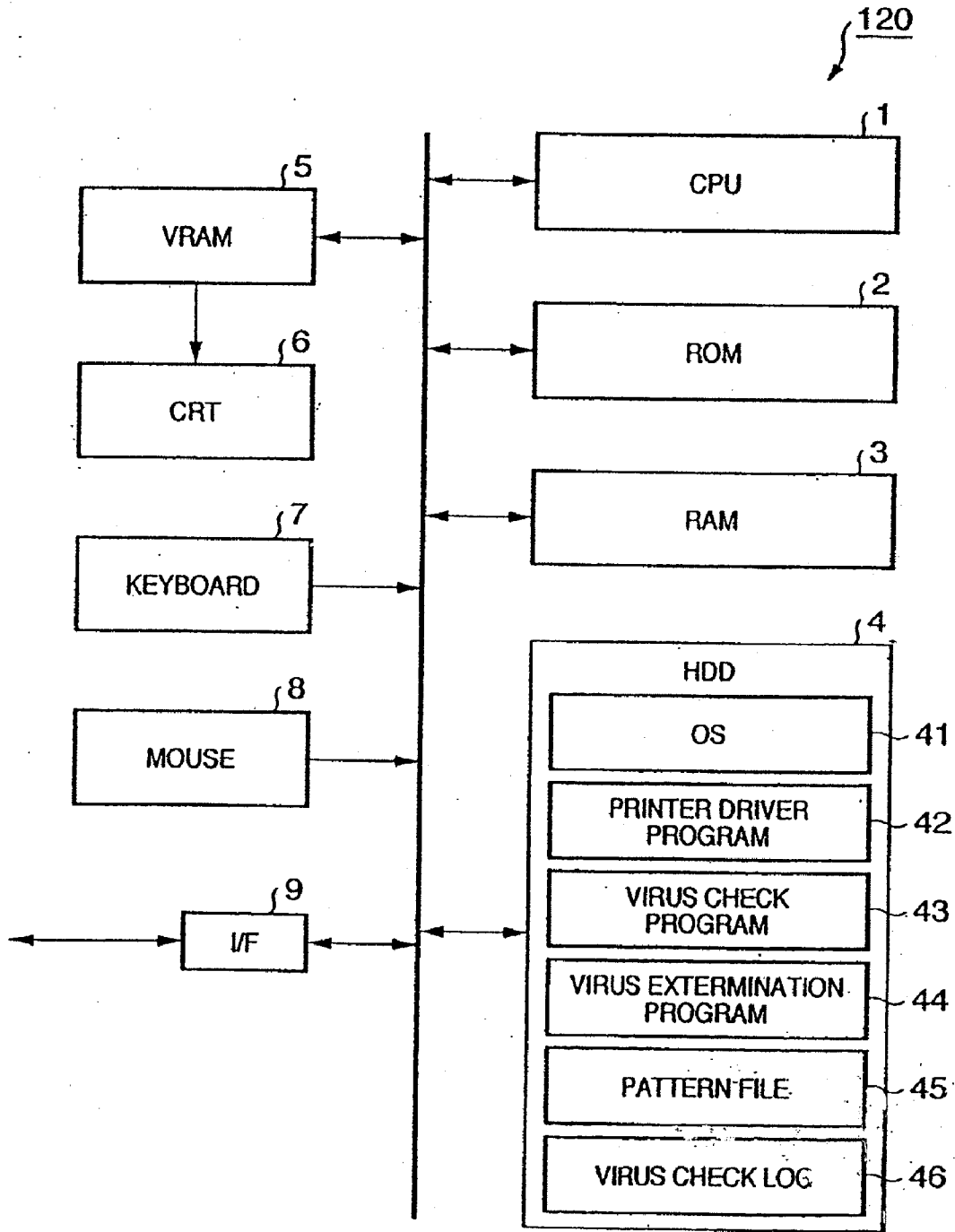


FIG. 11

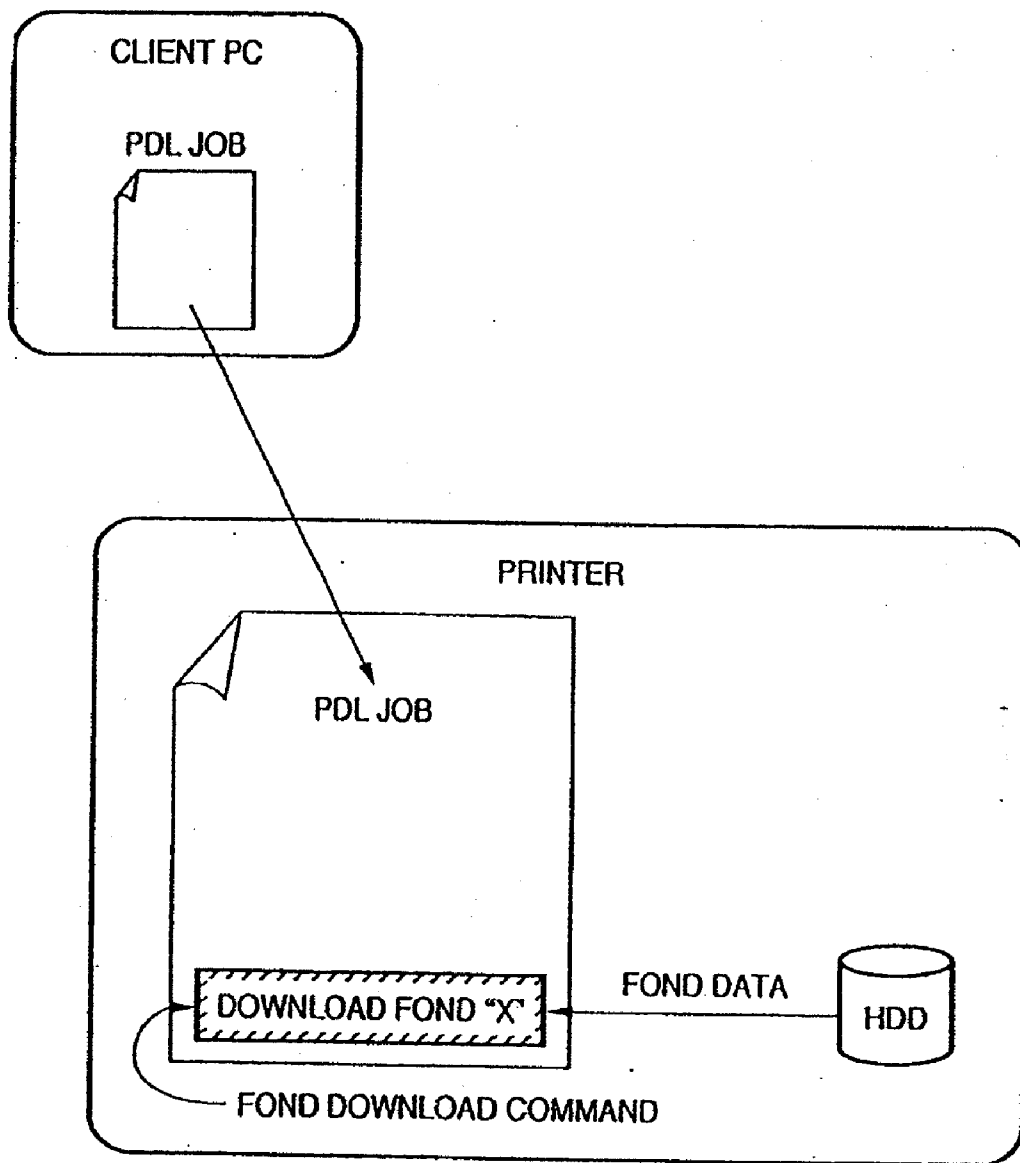


FIG. 12

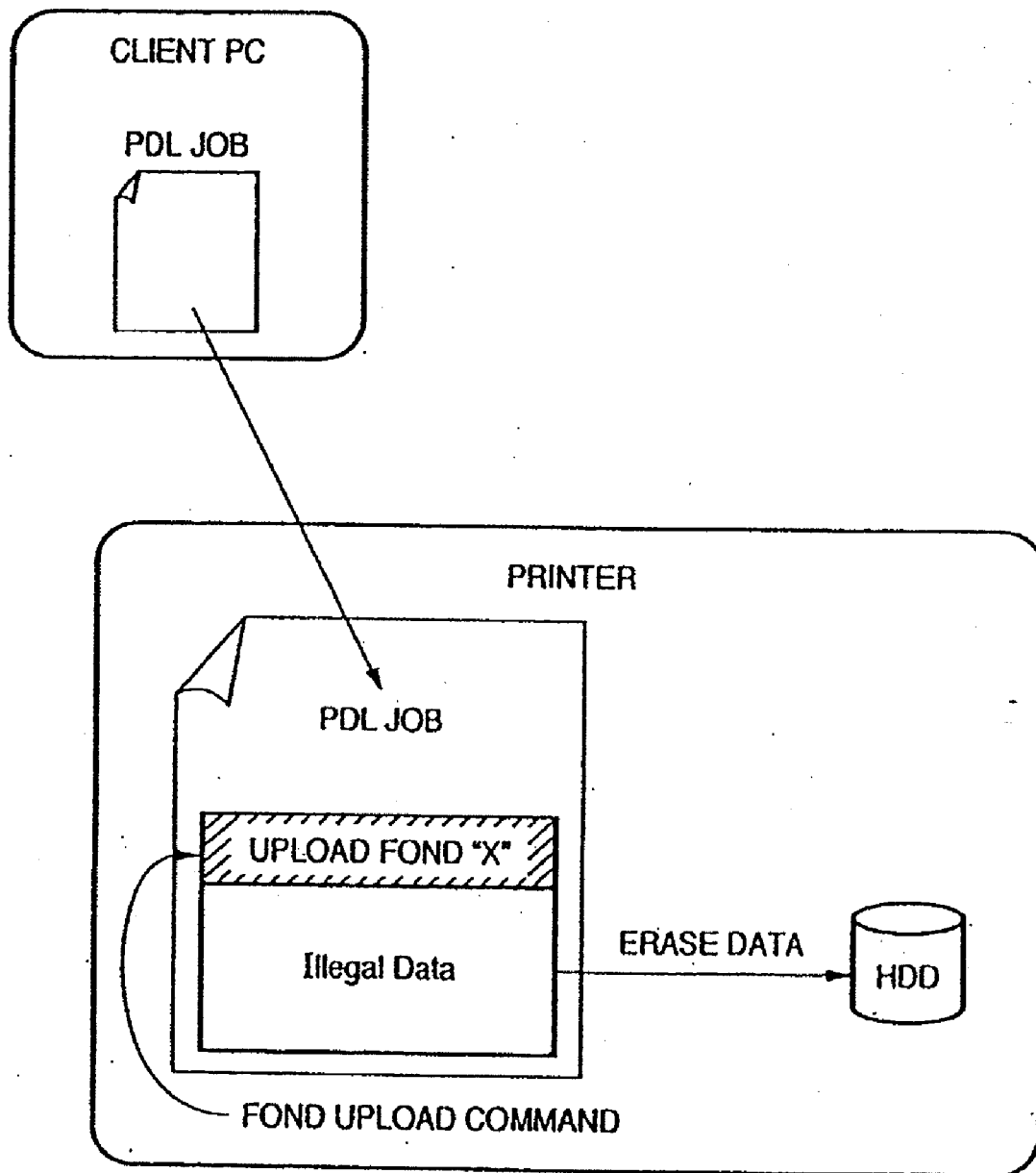


FIG. 13

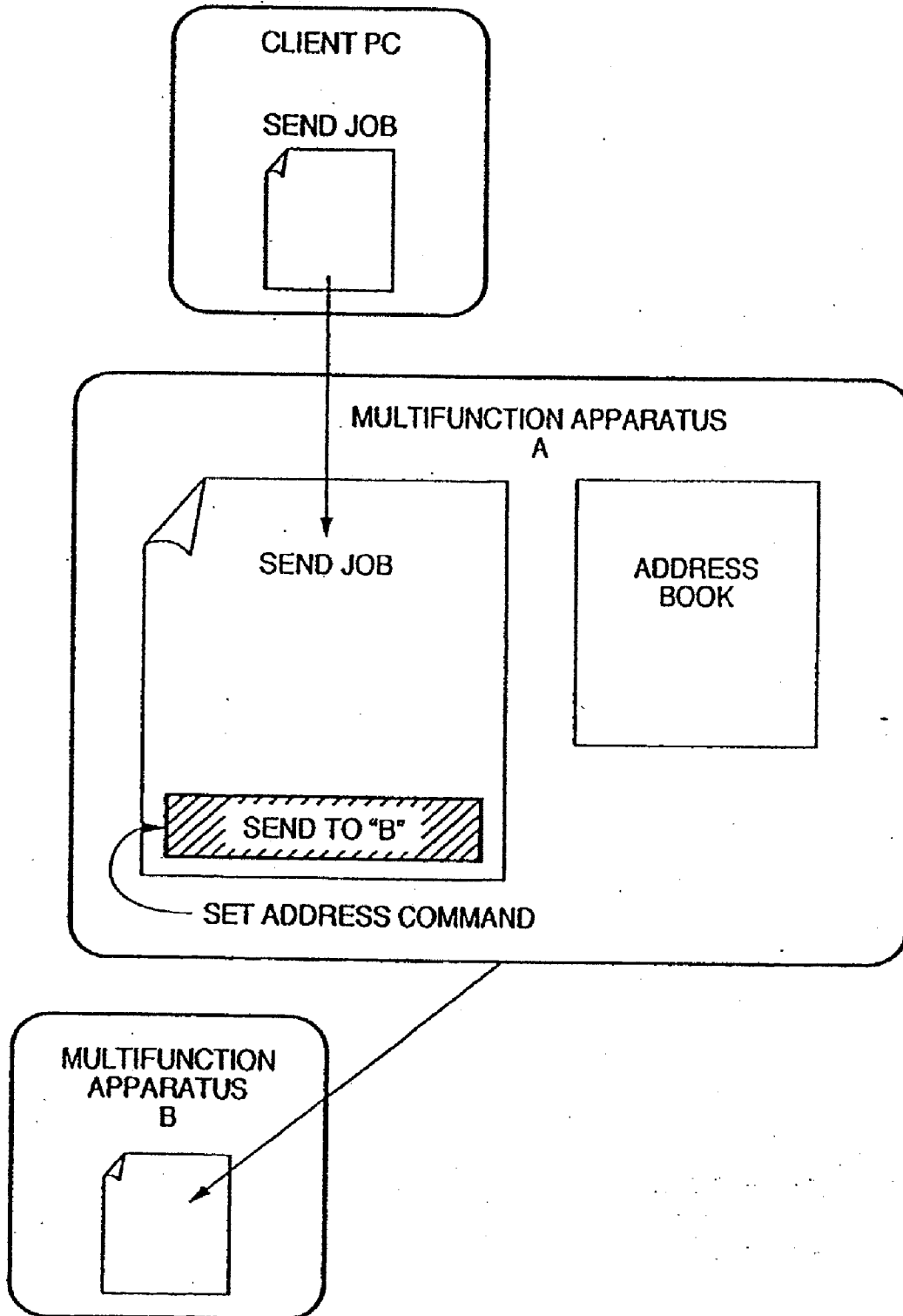


FIG. 14

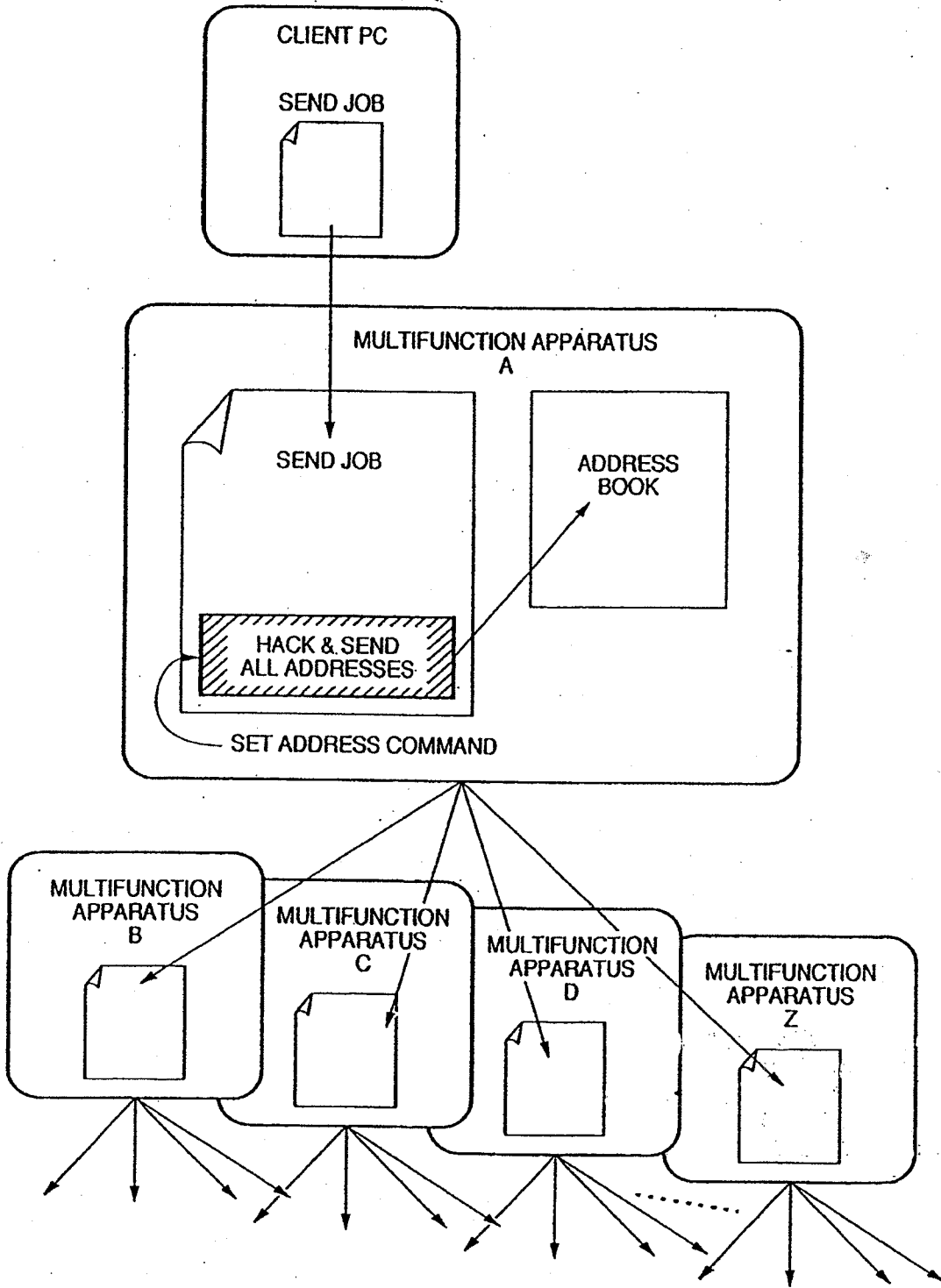


FIG. 15

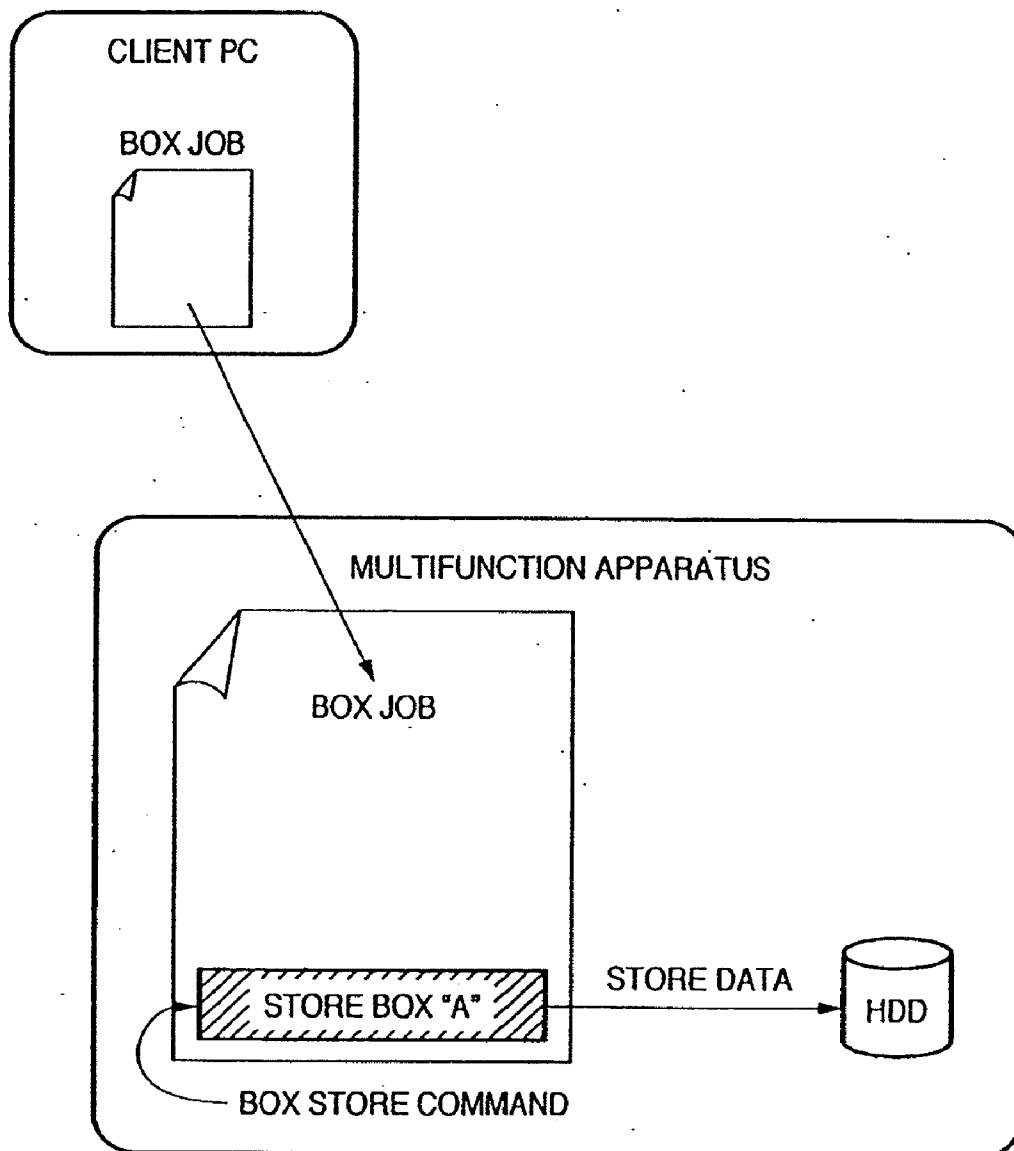
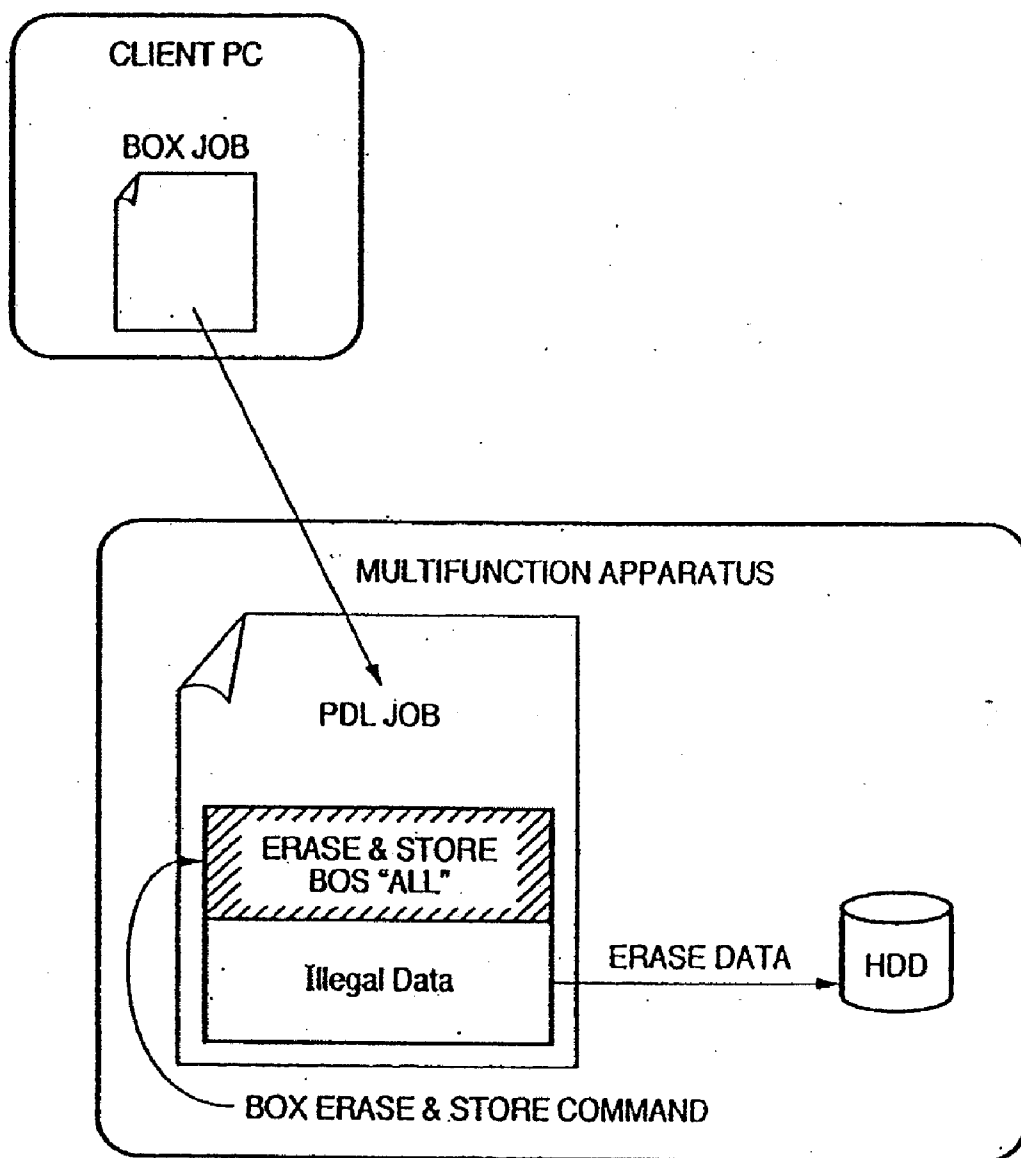


FIG. 16



COMPUTER PERIPHERAL APPARATUS AND METHOD OF CONTROLLING THE SAME

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a continuation of application Ser. No. 10/704,676, filed Nov. 12, 2003, claims benefit of that application under 35 U.S.C. § 120, claims priority benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 119 of Japanese patent applications nos. 2002/327144 and 2003/352545, filed Nov. 11, 2002, and Oct. 10, 2003, respectively, and incorporates the entire content of each of the three mentioned applications by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to an anti-computer virus technique in a computer peripheral apparatus for performing specific processing for data supplied from an external apparatus.

[0004] 2. Background of the Invention

[0005] A computer virus is a typical example of an unauthorized job or data. For example, as an apparatus for suppressing computer virus infection, Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 6-350784 discloses a facsimile apparatus which, when detecting that a received file is contaminated with a computer virus, erases the contaminated file, and transmits a warning to the file transmitter. Also, Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 11-119927 discloses a printer apparatus which receives printing data and a program language, and detects and removes a computer virus mixed in the program language.

[0006] Recently, some computer peripheral apparatuses such as printers have a virus check function and can be operated in either a virus check preference mode in which data processing is performed after virus check is performed for a received job, and a data processing preference mode (high-speed processing mode) in which virus check is performed after data processing for a received job is completed.

[0007] If, however, an apparatus having the high-speed processing mode as described above intermittently receives in this high-speed processing mode a job contaminated by a computer virus which poses a problem in the apparatus itself, damage to the apparatus may become enormous.

[0008] For example, a control program of a printer or multifunction apparatus often has a strong authorization capable of directly controlling hardware such as a printer controller and video controller. Therefore, damage can be given to the apparatus by hiding harmful data in a job and causing the control program to process the job. Practical examples of such an attack from a malicious third party will be described below.

[0009] A first example is internal data destruction by a print job transmitted from a client PC (personal computer) to a printer. As shown in FIG. 11, a printer normally reads out data such as a font stored in a specific area of an internal hard disk of the printer, in accordance with a command contained in printing data (PDL JOB) transferred from a client PC, and rasterizes the data inside a controller. The first attack example abuses this mechanism. That is, as shown in FIG. 12, the first attack example hides harmful data which looks like font data in a print job, and causes the printer to write this data in a specific area of the internal hard disk of the printer, thereby destroying data such as fonts and programs stored in the specific area.

[0010] A second example is an indiscriminate transmission attack by a job transmitted from a client PC to a multifunction apparatus. This attack will be explained by taking facsimile transmission from a multifunction apparatus A to a multifunction apparatus B as an example. As shown in FIG. 13, this is usually done by the multifunction apparatus A by reading an address designation command contained in a facsimile transmission job (SEND job) received from a client PC. The second attack example misuses this mechanism. That is, as shown in FIG. 14, the second attack embeds a harmful code in the address designation command of the facsimile transmission job, and forces the multifunction apparatus A to transmit the same job to all data in an address notebook stored in the multifunction apparatus A. If a transmission destination is a multifunction apparatus of the same type, the same processing may be recurrently repeated to allow the harmful code to propagate in a broad range in a moment.

[0011] A third example is internal data destruction by a storage job transmitted from a client PC to a multifunction apparatus. As shown in FIG. 15, a multifunction apparatus can normally store data in a specific area (box) of an internal hard disk of the apparatus, in accordance with a storage destination control command, which is contained in a storage job (BOX JOB) transferred from a client PC. The third attack example misuses this mechanism. That is, as shown in FIG. 16, the third attack example hides a harmful code in the storage destination control command contained in the storage job, thereby overwriting all stored data in the box while erasing the data.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] It is an object of the present invention to provide a computer peripheral apparatus capable of minimizing damage caused by computer viruses as described above, and a method of controlling the same.

[0013] According to one aspect of the present invention, preferably, a computer peripheral apparatus for receiving data to be processed from an external apparatus, and performing predetermined data processing, comprises:

[0014] a check unit adapted to check whether received data is infected with a computer virus; and

[0015] a control unit adapted to activate the check unit after the predetermined data processing if the received data satisfies a predetermined condition, and activate the check unit before the predetermined data processing if the received data does not satisfy the predetermined condition.

[0016] Other features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters designate the same or similar parts throughout the figures thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0017] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of the specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and, together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

[0018] FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing the arrangement of a printer as a computer peripheral apparatus of an embodiment;

[0019] FIG. 2 is a flow chart showing the contents of processing performed by a printer of the first embodiment;

[0020] FIG. 3 is a view showing the structure of a print job supplied to the printer of the first embodiment;

[0021] FIG. 4 is a view showing the structure of a virus infection log of the first embodiment;

[0022] FIG. 5 is a flow chart showing the contents of processing performed by a printer of the second embodiment;

[0023] FIG. 6 is a view showing the structure of a print job supplied to the printer of the second embodiment;

[0024] FIG. 7 is a view showing the structure of a safety check table of the second embodiment;

[0025] FIG. 8 is a view showing the structure of a safety check table applied to a multifunction apparatus;

[0026] FIG. 9 is a block diagram showing the arrangement of the printer of the second embodiment;

[0027] FIG. 10 is a block diagram showing the arrangement of a client PC of the second embodiment;

[0028] FIG. 11 is a view for explaining processing for a normal print job;

[0029] FIG. 12 is a view for explaining internal data destruction by a print job containing a harmful code;

[0030] FIG. 13 is a view for explaining processing for a normal transmission job;

[0031] FIG. 14 is a view for explaining indiscriminate transmission by a transmission job containing a harmful code;

[0032] FIG. 15 is a view for explaining processing for a normal storage job; and

[0033] FIG. 16 is a view for explaining internal data destruction by a storage job containing a harmful code.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0034] Preferred embodiments of the present invention are described in detail in accordance with the accompanying drawings.

First Embodiment

[0035] FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing the arrangement of a printer as a computer peripheral apparatus of this embodiment.

[0036] A printer 100 is connected to a client PC 120 as an external apparatus so as to be able to communicate with the client PC 120. Note that although only one client PC connected to the printer 100 is illustrated in FIG. 1, a plurality of client PCs can exist in practice. Since these client PCs are sources of supplying data to the printer 100, they will be also called "supply source computers" hereinafter. Note also that the form of connection between the client PC and printer can be either wired or wireless.

[0037] Basically, the printer 100 prints on the basis of data supplied from the client PC 120. In the printer 100, a main CPU 101 is a central control unit for controlling the whole apparatus. A network controller 102 controls transmission and reception. That is, the network controller 102 receives a print request, print data, storage request, storage data, and the like from the client PC 120, and transmits status information of the printer 100, e.g., error information indicating paper jam, to the client PC 120.

[0038] A peripheral controller 103 controls peripheral devices 104 to 108 connected to the main CPU 101. A RAM 104 temporarily stores print data and the like, and also functions as a main memory. A ROM 105 is a read only memory

for storing, e.g., a control program 50 for controlling the whole apparatus, e.g., controlling activation of the printer 100 itself.

[0039] A hard disk unit 106 is a magnetic recording medium, i.e., a nonvolatile storage means used to temporarily or permanently store, e.g., print data and storage data, and temporarily save data exceeding the capacity of the RAM 104. As shown in FIG. 1, the hard disk unit 106 also stores a virus check program 51 for checking the presence/absence of infection of a computer virus (to be simply referred to as a "virus" hereinafter), a virus extermination program 52 for exterminating a virus, a pattern file 53 for detecting a virus, and a virus infection log 54 (to be described later). The virus check program 51 and virus extermination program 52 are called by the control program 50 described above, loaded in the RAM 104, and executed by the main CPU 101.

[0040] A panel 107 is a monitor for displaying the state of the printer 100. A key 108 is an input device which accepts a control request to the printer 100 and display switching to the panel 107.

[0041] An engine controller 109 controls driving of a printer engine 110, output data transfer, and the like. The printer driver 110 is a printer mechanism for outputting a final output image.

[0042] The above-mentioned printer has a virus check function achieved by the virus check program 51 and can be operated in either a "virus check preference mode" in which data processing is performed after virus check is performed for a received job, or a "data processing preference mode (high-speed processing mode)" in which virus check is performed after specific data processing (e.g., printing) for a received job is completed. More specifically, in the high-speed processing mode, to avoid a decrease in operating speed caused by virus check, virus check is performed for received print data after job processing is completed or if the CPU 101 has not received any job for a predetermined time period after job processing is completed.

[0043] FIG. 2 is a flow chart showing the contents of processing performed by the printer 100 of this embodiment. A program corresponding to this flow chart is contained in the control program 50 stored in the ROM 105, and executed by the main CPU 101.

[0044] First, in step S201, the presence/absence of a print job is determined. More specifically, when receiving a print request from the client PC 120, the printer 100 operates as follows. First, the network controller 102 requests the main CPU 101 to generate a command for acquiring internal status information of the printer. In response to this request, the main CPU 101 verifies the normality of the state of all the internal devices. After confirming that the internal state of the printer 100 has no abnormality, the main CPU 101 transmits to the network controller 102 a code indicating that the internal state of the printer 100 is normal. If the internal state of the printer 100 is abnormal, the main CPU 101 transmits to the network controller 102 a code containing an error code indicative of the abnormal portion. The network controller 102 receives this code concerning the internal state from the main CPU 101, and transfers the received code to the client PC 120. If the client PC 120 determines on the basis of the received code that the internal state of the printer 100 is normal, the client PC 120 starts transmitting print data.

[0045] FIG. 3 shows the structure of print job data supplied from the client PC 120 to the printer 100.

[0046] As shown in FIG. 3, the print job data includes, e.g., attribute information such as a transmission source user name **301**, a transmission source computer name **302**, a network physical address **303** of the transmission source computer, an IP address **304** of the transmission source computer, a domain name **305** to which the transmission source computer belongs, password information **306** for obtaining printout permission, and information (flag) **307** for designating an operation mode (virus check preference mode/high-speed processing mode), in addition to print data **308**.

[0047] In step **S202**, if all print data from the client PC **120** is received, the flag **307** for designating an operation mode for the job is checked. If the high-speed processing mode is designated, the flow advances to step **S203** to load into the RAM **104** the virus infection log **54** (i.e., the log of reception of virus infected data) recorded in the hard disk unit **106**, and search the contents. FIG. 4 shows the structure of the virus infection log **54**.

[0048] For example, the virus infection log **54** contains a log number (LOG NO) for indexing individual information of the log, a user name (USER NAME) indicating the name of a user who has sent infected data, date information (DATE) indicating the sending date of infected data, and information (VIRUS TYPE) pertaining to the type of virus. In addition, the virus infection log **54** of this embodiment contains data (FAST PRINT FLAG) indicating whether an operation is possible in the high-speed processing mode. For example, if FAST PRINT FLAG=0, an operation in the high-speed processing mode is invalid; if FAST PRINT FLAG=1, an operation in the high-speed processing mode is valid. This FAST PRINT FLAG can be set on the basis of input from the panel **107** or key **108** of the printer **100**, or on the basis of input information from an external apparatus.

[0049] In step **S203** of searching the contents of the virus infection log **54**, if there is no log of a user name (USER NAME) matching the transmission source user name **301** of the received data, or if a log of a user name matching the transmission source user name **301** of the received data is present and FAST PRINT FLAG of the log is set to 1 (i.e., if an operation in the high-speed processing mode is valid), the flow advances to step **S206** to execute job processing (e.g., printing) of the received job. After that, the flow advances to step **S207**.

[0050] On the other hand, in step **S203** of searching the contents of the virus infection log **54**, if the virus infection log **54** has a log of a user name (USER NAME) matching the transmission source user name **301** of the received data and, preferably, if FAST PRINT FLAG of the log is set to 0 (i.e., if an operation in the high-speed processing mode is invalid), the flow advances to step **S204** to cancel the high-speed processing mode (i.e., switch to the virus infection preference mode) by changing the operation mode designating flag **307** in the received data. The flow then advances to step **S205**. If a plurality of logs of the same user such as LOG Nos. **0001** and **0003** in FIG. 4 are present and, if FAST PRINT FLAG=0 in even one of these logs, it is preferable to cancel the high-speed processing mode and skip the job processing in step **S206** from the viewpoint of safety. In step **S205**, warning data (stored in, e.g., the hard disk **106**) for notifying that the high-speed processing mode is canceled is loaded into the RAM **104**, converted into print data from the engine controller **109** to the printer engine **110**, and printed out. After that, the flow advances to step **S207**. As described above, if in step **S203** it is determined on the basis of the contents of the virus

infection log **54** that the safety of the received data is not ensured, the job processing in step **S206** is skipped, and the high-speed processing mode is canceled.

[0051] If the high-speed processing mode is not designated in step **S202** (i.e., if the virus check preference mode is designated), the flow immediately advances to step **S207**.

[0052] In step **S207**, the virus check program **51** stored in the hard disk unit **106** is called. In response to this call, the virus check program **51** and the pattern file **53** for detecting a virus are loaded into the RAM **104**, and the virus check program **51** is activated to perform virus check. In step **S208**, whether the print data is infected with a virus is determined on the basis of the result of the virus check. If it is determined that the print data is not infected with any virus, the virus check program **51** is terminated, and the flow advances to step **S209**.

[0053] In step **S209**, whether the printer **100** is operating in the high-speed processing mode is determined. This determination can be done by determining whether the job processing in step **S206** is executed. As described above, step **S206** is executed when the high-speed processing mode is designated for the received data (YES in step **S202**), and no problem is found by the search of the contents of the virus infection log **54** (NO in step **S203**). In this case, the job processing is already completed in step **S206**, so this process is terminated. In other cases, the flow advances to step **S210** to execute corresponding job processing.

[0054] If it is determined in step **S208** that the print data is infected with a virus, the flow advances to step **S211** to call the virus extermination program **52** stored in the hard disk unit **106**. In response to this call, the virus extermination program **52** is loaded into the RAM **104** and activated. Consequently, the virus contained in the print data is invalidated.

[0055] In step **S212**, in accordance with the format as shown in FIG. 4, a new log number is generated in the virus infection log **54** loaded in the RAM **104**, and an infection log of this print data is additionally written. The thus updated virus infection log **54** is also copied to the hard disk unit **106**. In addition, if the high-speed processing mode has not been invalidated yet at this point, the mode is invalidated.

[0056] In step **S213**, warning data (stored in, e.g., the hard disk **106**) indicating that the received data is infected with a virus and the virus is exterminated is loaded into the RAM **104**, converted into print data from the engine controller **109** to the printer engine **110**, and printed out. After that, this process is terminated.

[0057] In the first embodiment described above, even when the high-speed processing mode in which execution of job processing is given priority over virus check is designated (YES in step **S202**), if in step **S203** it is determined on the basis of the search of the contents of the virus infection log **54** that received data may be infected with a virus, the job processing in step **S206** is skipped, and as a consequence the high-speed processing mode is canceled.

[0058] As described above, the printer of this embodiment has a check unit for performing virus check on supplied data, and stores a reception log of data infected with a virus in a memory. This printer further includes a controller for selecting the virus check preference mode in which virus check is executed prior to predetermined data processing such as printing, or the data processing preference mode (high-speed processing mode) in which virus check is performed after the predetermined data processing, and controlling the virus check execution timing in accordance with the selected mode. When selecting the high-speed processing mode, the control-

ler changes this high-speed processing mode to the virus check preference mode on the basis of the reception log.

[0059] In addition to the processing explained above, it is also possible to change the program such that the high-speed processing mode is reset when a predetermined time has elapsed after the high-speed processing mode is cancelled in step S203.

[0060] Also, in the first embodiment, after the job processing is executed in the high-speed processing mode in step S206, the flow advances to step S207 to perform virus check. However, if jobs in the high-speed processing mode are continuously set, virus check may also be executed when jobs are not processed for a predetermined time or more, or at specific time (e.g., 2 a.m.).

[0061] In the first embodiment described above, a printer which receives data to be printed from an external apparatus and prints the data is explained. However, the present invention is also applicable to a computer peripheral apparatus such as a multifunction data processor (multifunction apparatus) having not only the above-mentioned printing function but also a facsimile transmitting/receiving function, a universal send function of simultaneously distributing digital data across a network to a plurality of addresses, a box function of storing data in an internal nonvolatile memory (e.g., a hard disk unit) of the apparatus, and the like.

Second Embodiment

[0062] The second embodiment controls the execution timing of virus check on the basis of attribute information of supplied data.

[0063] FIG. 9 is a block diagram showing the arrangement of a printer of this embodiment. The same reference numerals as the components shown in FIG. 1 of the first embodiment denote the same components in FIG. 9. As shown in FIG. 9, the arrangement of this printer is almost the same as the printer of the first embodiment, so a description of each part will be omitted. The difference from the printer of the first embodiment is that a hard disk unit 106 further stores a safety check table 60.

[0064] More specifically, a client PC 120 of this embodiment is arranged as shown in FIG. 10.

[0065] Referring to FIG. 10, a CPU 1 controls the whole computer, a ROM 2 stores a boot program and the like, a RAM 3 functions as a main memory, and a hard disk driver (HDD) 4 stores various programs and data. A memory (VRAM) 5 is used to rasterize image data to be displayed. Image data or the like can be displayed on a CRT 6 by rasterizing the data in the VRAM 5. Reference numerals 7 and 8 denote a keyboard and mouse, respectively, as input devices; and 9, an interface (I/F) for connecting to a printer 100. In this embodiment, as shown in FIG. 10, an OS 41, a printer driver program 42 (to be simply referred to as a "printer driver" hereinafter) for generating print job data for the printer 100, a virus check program 43, a virus extermination program 44, a pattern file 45, a virus check log 46, and the like are installed in the HDD 4.

[0066] FIG. 5 is a flow chart showing data processing performed by the printer 100 of this embodiment. A program corresponding to this flow chart is contained in a control program stored in a ROM 105, and executed by a main CPU 101.

[0067] First, in step S501, the presence/absence of a print job is determined.

[0068] That is, when receiving a print request from the client PC 120, the printer 100 operates as follows. First, a network controller 102 requests the main CPU 101 to generate a command for acquiring internal status information of the printer. In response to this request, the main CPU 101 causes a peripheral controller 103 to verify the normality of the state of all the internal devices. After confirming that the internal state of the printer 100 has no abnormality, the main CPU 101 transmits to the network controller 102 a code indicating that the internal state of the printer 100 is normal. If the internal state of the printer 100 is abnormal, the main CPU 101 transmits to the network controller 102 a code containing an error code indicative of the abnormal portion. The network controller 102 receives this code concerning the internal state from the main CPU 101, and transfers the received code to the client PC 120.

[0069] If the client PC 120 determines on the basis of the received code that the internal state of the printer 100 is normal, the client PC 120 activates the printer driver 42. The printer driver 42 refers to the pattern file 45, and reads out the attribute value of the file (e.g., version information of the pattern file 45). Also, the printer driver 42 refers to the virus check log 46, and reads out a final virus check log (e.g., date information indicating the last virus check execution date). The printer driver 42 adds these pieces of readout information as attribute values to print job data to be transmitted to the printer 100. Furthermore, the printer driver 42 adds a transmission source user name, transmission source computer name, network physical address, network IP address, transmission source domain name, and printer driver 42 version information as attribute values to the print job data. After that, the printer driver 42 starts transmitting the print job data.

[0070] FIG. 6 shows the structure of the print job data generated by the printer driver 42.

[0071] As shown in FIG. 6, the print job data includes, e.g., attribution information such as a transmission source user name 601, a transmission source computer name 602, a network physical address 603 of the transmission source computer, an IP address 604 of the transmission source computer, a domain name 605 to which the transmission source computer belongs, password information 606 for obtaining print-out permission, information (flag) 607 for designating an operation mode (virus check preference mode/high-speed processing mode), a final virus check log 608 of the transmission source computer, a pattern file attribute value 609 of the transmission source computer, and a printer driver attribute value 610 of the transmission source computer, in addition to print data 611.

[0072] In step S502, if all print data from the client PC 120 is received, the flag 607 for designating an operation mode for the job is checked. If the high-speed processing mode is designated, the flow advances to step S503.

[0073] In step S503, the safety check table 60 recorded in the hard disk 106 is loaded into the RAM 104 to determine whether attribute information contained in the received print job data meets conditions registered in the table 60, thereby checking the safety of the job. FIG. 7 shows the structure of the safety check table 60. As shown in FIG. 7, the safety check table 60 has items corresponding to the attribute information 601 to 610 of the job data shown in FIG. 6, and describes a condition for determining the safety for each item. Some conditions described in the table shown in FIG. 7 will be explained below. For example, the transmission source computer name is set under the condition that the computer name

must begin with "GANON" followed by arbitrary numbers. The final virus check log is set under the condition that the execution date of the last virus check in the transmission source computer must be after 2002.03.20. Also, the pattern file attribute value is set under the condition that the date indicating the version of the pattern file installed in the transmission source computer must be after 2002.03.01.

[0074] These conditions in the safety check table 60 can be registered on the basis of inputs from a panel 107 or key 108 of the printer 100 and/or on the basis of input information from an external apparatus.

[0075] If in step S503 a predetermined number (e.g., one or all) or more of the conditions set in the safety check table 60 are met, the flow advances to step S506 to execute job processing (e.g., printing) of the received data. After that, the flow advances to step S507.

[0076] On the other hand, if in step S503 a predetermined number of more of the conditions set in the safety check table 60 are not met, the flow advances to step S504 to cancel the high-speed processing mode (i.e., switch to the virus check preference mode) by changing the operation mode designating flag 307 in the received data. After that, the flow advances to step S505. In step S505, warning data (stored in, e.g., the hard disk 106) for notifying that the high-speed processing mode is canceled is loaded into the RAM 104, converted into print data from an engine controller 109 to a printer engine 110, and printed out. After that, the flow advances to step S507. As described above, if in step S503 it is determined on the basis of the contents of the safety check table 60 that the safety of the received data is not ensured, the job processing in step S506 is skipped, and the high-speed processing mode is canceled.

[0077] If the high-speed processing mode is not designated in step S502 (i.e., if the virus check preference mode is designated), the flow immediately advances to step S507.

[0078] In step S507, the virus check program 51 stored in the hard disk unit 106 is called. In response to this call, the virus check program 51 and the pattern file 53 for detecting a virus are loaded into the RAM 104, and the virus check program 51 is activated to perform virus check. In step S508, whether the print data is infected with a virus is determined on the basis of the result of the virus check. If it is determined that the print data is not infected with any virus, the virus check program 51 is terminated, and the flow advances to step S509.

[0079] In step S509, whether the printer 100 is operating in the high-speed processing mode is determined. This determination can be done by determining whether the job processing in step S506 is executed. As described above, step S506 is executed when the high-speed processing mode is designated for the received data (YES in step S502), and a predetermined number or more of the conditions set in the safety check table 60 are met (YES in step S503). In this case, the job processing is already completed in step S506, so this process is terminated. In other cases, the flow advances to step S510 to execute corresponding job processing.

[0080] If it is determined in step S508 that the print data is infected with a virus, the flow advances to step S511 to call the virus extermination program 52 stored in the hard disk unit 106. In response to this call, the virus extermination program 52 is loaded into the RAM 104 and activated. Consequently, the virus contained in the print data is invalidated.

[0081] In step S512, a new log number is generated in the virus infection log 54, and an infection log of this print data is additionally written. In addition, since the received data is

found to be infected with a virus in step S508 although it is determined in step S503 that the data is safe because the conditions in the safety check table 60 are met, the conditions in the safety check table 60 are so rewritten that this received data is regarded as unsafe, thereby preventing the job processing from being executed in step S506 even when similar data is received after that. Furthermore, if the high-speed processing mode has not been invalidated yet at this point, the mode is invalidated.

[0082] In step S513, warning data (stored in, e.g., the hard disk 106) indicating that the received data is infected with a virus and the virus is exterminated is loaded into the RAM 104, converted into print data from the engine controller 109 to the printer engine 110, and printed out. After that, this process is terminated.

[0083] In the second embodiment described above, even when the high-speed processing mode in which execution of job processing is given priority over virus check is designated (YES in step S502), if in step S503 it is determined on the basis of the result of comparison of the attribute information of received data with the safety check table 60 that the transmission source computer is not restricted by the table 60, or that virus check on the transmission source computer side is based on an old pattern file, it is determined that the safety of the received data is not assured (i.e., the received data may be infected with a virus), the job processing in step S506 is skipped, and as a consequence the high-speed processing mode is canceled.

[0084] As described above, the printer of this embodiment has a check unit for performing virus check on supplied data, and stores in a memory a table describing conditions for determining the safety of received data before virus check is performed. This printer further includes a controller for selecting the virus check preference mode in which virus check is executed before predetermined data processing such as printing, or the data preprocessing preference mode (high-speed processing mode) in which virus check is performed after the predetermined data processing, and controlling the virus check execution timing in accordance with the selected mode. When selecting the high-speed processing mode, the controller changes this high-speed processing mode to the virus check preference mode on the basis of the conditions described in the table.

[0085] Conditions for a transmission source user name, transmission source computer name, network physical address, IP address, and transmission source domain name are set in the safety check table shown in FIG. 7, and a transmission source can be restricted by these conditions. In this embodiment, if the supply source of received data is not restricted by the above table, it is determined that the safety of this received data is not assured, and the high-speed processing mode is canceled. After that, virus check can be performed in step S507 as a pre-stage of the job processing in step S510. In short, information for specifying a group of safe transmission sources is described in the safety check table, and the high-speed processing mode is canceled if information for specifying the supply source of received data is not described in the table.

[0086] In addition, in the safety check table shown in FIG. 7, the condition that the data indicating the version of a pattern file installed in a transmission source computer must be after a predetermined day (in the example shown in FIG. 7, 2002.03.01) is set as the pattern file attribute value. It is convenient to set, as this predetermined day, the date indicating the ver-

sion of the pattern file **53** installed in the printer **100**. In this case, even when print data is transmitted after virus check is performed in a transmission source computer, if the version of a pattern file used in this virus check is older than that of the pattern file **53** in the printer **100**, it is determined that the safety of the data is not ensured, and the high-speed processing mode is canceled. This makes it possible to reexecute virus check in step **S507** in the printer, and execute the job processing in step **S510** after that. In short, this embodiment can provide a mechanism by which the version of a pattern file in a transmission source computer is compared with that of a pattern file in the printer **100**, and, if the version of the pattern file in the printer **100** is newer, the printer performs virus check again prior to job processing.

[0087] In addition to the processing explained above, it is also possible to change the program such that the high-speed processing mode is reset when a predetermined time has elapsed after the high-speed processing mode is cancelled in step **S503**.

[0088] Also, in the second embodiment, after the job processing is executed in the high-speed processing mode in step **S506**, the flow advances to step **S507** to perform virus check. However, if jobs in the high-speed processing mode are continuously set, virus check may also be executed when jobs are not processed for a predetermined time or more, or at specific time (e.g., 2 a.m.)

[0089] In the second embodiment described above, a printer which receives data to be printed from an external apparatus and prints the data is explained. However, the present invention is also applicable to a computer peripheral apparatus such as a multifunction data processor (multifunction apparatus) having not only the above-mentioned printing function but also a facsimile transmitting/receiving function, a universal send function of simultaneously distributing digital data across a network to a plurality of addresses, a box function of storing data in an internal nonvolatile memory (e.g., a hard disk unit) of the apparatus, and the like.

[0090] FIG. **8** shows the structure of a safety check table applied to a multifunction apparatus. Note that a multifunction apparatus processes not only a print job explained in the above embodiments but also other types of jobs. Examples shown in FIG. **8** other than a normal print job supplied via a printer driver are a PDF direct print job for transmitting PDF (Portable Document Format) data directly to a printer without any intervention of a printer driver, a facsimile transmission job (SEND job) for performing facsimile transmission, and a storage job (BOX job) for storing data in a storage device of the multifunction apparatus. As shown in FIG. **8**, conditions for determining the safety can be individually set in accordance with the type of job. In the examples shown in FIG. **8**, conditions are set for the normal print job supplied via a printer driver, so the high-speed processing mode is canceled if these conditions are not met. However, since no conditions are set for the PDF direct print job, the high-speed processing mode is not canceled.

[0091] The printers of the first and second embodiments are so designed as to select an operation mode in accordance with designation information contained in supplied data. However, the present invention is not limited to these embodiments. For example, an operation mode can also be designated by the user of a printer.

[0092] Note that the present invention can be implemented even if there is no such clear concept as an "operation mode" as described above. In short, the substantial characteristic of

the present invention is to control the execution timing of virus check for supplied data on the basis of "predetermined determination criterions" for activating the virus check.

Other Embodiments

[0093] Although the embodiments of the present invention are described in detail above, the present invention is applicable to a system comprising a plurality of apparatuses or to an apparatus comprising a single device.

[0094] The present invention can also be achieved by supplying the program (corresponding to the flow chart shown in FIG. **2** or **5**) of software for implementing the functions of the above-mentioned embodiments to a system or apparatus directly or from a remote place, and allowing a computer of the system or apparatus to read out and execute the supplied program code. In this case, the form is not limited to a program as long as the functions of the program are achieved.

[0095] Accordingly, the program code itself installed in the computer to implement the functional processing of the present invention by the computer also implements the present invention. That is, the scope of claims of the present invention includes the computer program itself for implementing the functional processing of the present invention.

[0096] The form of the program is not particularly limited as long as the functions of the program are achieved. Examples are an object code, a program executed by an interpreter, and script data to be supplied to an OS.

[0097] Examples of a recording medium for supplying the program are a flexible disk, hard disk, optical disk, magnetooptical disk, MO, CD-ROM, CD-R, CD-RW, magnetic tape, nonvolatile memory card, ROM, and DVD (DVD-ROM and DVD-R).

[0098] The program can also be supplied by connecting to a homepage of the Internet by using a browser of a client computer, and downloading the computer program itself of the present invention or a compressed file including an automatic installation function from the homepage to a recording medium such as a hard disk. It is also possible to divide the program code forming the program of the present invention into a plurality of files, and download the individual files from different homepages. That is, the scope of claims of the present invention includes a WWW server which allows a plurality of users to download a program file for implementing the functional processing of the present invention by a computer.

[0099] Furthermore, the program of the present invention can also be encrypted and distributed to users by storing the program in a storage medium such as a CD-ROM. In this case, a user who has cleared predetermined conditions is allowed to download key information for decryption from a homepage across the Internet. The encrypted program is executed by using the key information, and the functional processing of the present invention is implemented by installing the program in the computer.

[0100] Also, besides the functions of the above embodiments that are implemented by executing the readout program code by the computer, the functions of the embodiments can be implemented when an OS or the like running on the computer performs part or the whole of actual processing on the basis of designations by the program.

[0101] Furthermore, the functions of the above embodiments can be implemented when the program read out from the storage medium is written in a memory of a function expansion board inserted into the computer or of a function

expansion unit connected to the computer, and a CPU or the like of the function expansion board or function expansion unit performs part or the whole of actual processing on the basis of designations by the program.

[0102] The present invention is not limited to the above embodiments and various changes and modifications can be made within the spirit and scope of the present invention. Therefore, to apprise the public of the scope of the present invention, the following claims are made.

- 1. (canceled)
- 2. An image processing apparatus, comprising:
 - a receiving unit configured to receive data to be processed from a transmission source;
 - a determination unit configured to determine whether or not the transmission source is safe;
 - a checking unit configured to check whether or not the data includes malicious code data;
 - a processing unit configured to perform data processing using the data; and
 - a control unit configured to control the activation of the checking unit and the processing unit,
 wherein if the determination unit determines that the transmission source is safe, the control unit activates the processing unit, and if the determination unit determines that the transmission source is not safe, the control unit activates the checking unit and then activates the processing unit.
- 3. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the data to be processed comprises print data, and the image processing apparatus comprises a printing apparatus.
- 4. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the determination unit determines whether or not the transmission source of the data is safe based on attribute information included in the data, wherein the attribute information includes date information indicating the execution date of a malicious code data check for the data in the transmission source or version information of a pattern file used in the malicious code data check for the data in the transmission source.
- 5. The apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising a storage unit configured to store a reception log of data including malicious code data, or to store a group of safe transmission sources,
 - wherein the determination unit determines whether or not the transmission source of the data is safe based on the reception log or the group of safe transmission sources stored on the storage unit.
- 6. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein if the determination unit determines that the transmission source is safe, the control unit activates the checking unit after activating the processing unit.
- 7. An image processing method, comprising the steps of:
 - receiving data to be processed from a transmission source;
 - determining whether or not the transmission source is safe;
 - checking whether or not the data includes malicious code data;
 - performing data processing using the data; and
 - controlling the activation of the checking step and the processing step,
 wherein if it is determined in the determining step that the transmission source is safe, then in the controlling step, the processing step is activated, and if it is determined in the determining step that the transmission source is not

- safe, then in the controlling step, the checking step is activated and then the processing step is activated.
- 8. The method according to claim 7, wherein the data to be processed comprises print data, and the method is executed in a printing apparatus.
- 9. The method according to claim 7, wherein the determining step further comprises determining whether or not the transmission source of the data is safe based on attribute information included in the data, wherein the attribute information includes date information indicating the execution date of a malicious code data check for the data in the transmission source or version information of a pattern file used in the malicious code data check for the data in the transmission source.
- 10. The method according to claim 7, further comprising the step of storing a reception log of data including malicious code data, or a group of safe transmission sources,
 - wherein the determining step further comprises determining whether or not the transmission source of the data is safe based on the reception log or the group of safe transmission sources stored in the storing step.
- 11. The method according to claim 7, wherein if it is determined in the determining step that the transmission source is safe, then in the controlling step, the checking step is activated after activation of the processing step.
- 12. A computer-readable storage medium, storing, in executable form, program code for causing a computer to perform an image processing method, the method comprising the steps of:
 - receiving data to be processed from a transmission source;
 - determining whether or not the transmission source is safe;
 - checking whether or not the data includes malicious code data;
 - performing data processing using the data; and
 - controlling the activation of the checking step and the processing step,
 wherein if it is determined in the determining step that the transmission source is safe, then in the controlling step, the processing step is activated, and if it is determined in the determining step that the transmission source is not safe, then in the controlling step, the checking step is activated and then the processing step is activated.
- 13. The computer-readable storage medium according to claim 12, wherein the data to be processed comprises print data, and the method is executed in a printing apparatus.
- 14. The computer-readable storage medium according to claim 12, wherein the determining step further comprises determining whether or not the transmission source of the data is safe based on attribute information included in the data, wherein the attribute information includes date information indicating the execution date of a malicious code data check for the data in the transmission source or version information of a pattern file used in the malicious code data check for the data in the transmission source.
- 15. The computer-readable storage medium according to claim 12, wherein the method further comprises the step of storing a reception log of data including malicious code data, or a group of safe transmission sources,
 - wherein the determining step further comprises determining whether or not the transmission source of the data is safe based on the reception log or the group of safe transmission sources stored in the storing step.
- 16. The computer-readable storage medium according to claim 12, wherein if it is determined in the determining step that the transmission source is safe, then in the controlling step, the checking step is activated after activation of the processing step.