



US006622416B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Kim

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 6,622,416 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Sep. 23, 2003**

- (54) **TARGET AND NAVIGATION ILLUMINATORS FOR FIREARMS**
- (75) Inventor: **Paul Youngcho Kim**, Westminster, CA (US)
- (73) Assignee: **Surefire, LLC**, Fountain Valley, CA (US)
- (*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 51 days.
- (21) Appl. No.: **09/878,709**
- (22) Filed: **Jun. 11, 2001**
- (65) **Prior Publication Data**
US 2002/0100204 A1 Aug. 1, 2002

2,209,524 A	7/1940	Key
2,209,702 A	7/1940	Meginniss
2,236,736 A	4/1941	Scott
2,450,584 A	10/1948	Dodge
2,523,786 A	9/1950	Soreng
2,597,565 A	5/1952	Chandler et al.
2,912,566 A	11/1959	Cornett
3,086,090 A	4/1963	Carroll
3,596,078 A	7/1971	Owens
3,739,167 A	6/1973	Avery
3,743,915 A	7/1973	Struck
4,249,234 A	2/1981	Park et al.
4,533,980 A	8/1985	Hayes
4,677,533 A	6/1987	McDermott et al.
4,814,957 A	3/1989	Dennis
4,856,218 A	8/1989	Reynolds, Jr.
4,947,291 A	8/1990	McDermott
4,963,798 A	10/1990	McDermott
4,985,813 A	1/1991	Putman
5,064,988 A	11/1991	E'nama et al.
5,081,568 A	1/1992	Dong et al.

Related U.S. Application Data

- (60) Provisional application No. 60/259,726, filed on Jan. 4, 2001.
- (51) **Int. Cl.⁷** **F41A 15/00**
- (52) **U.S. Cl.** **42/146; 42/114; 362/110; 362/114**
- (58) **Field of Search** **42/146, 114; 362/110, 362/114**

(List continued on next page.)

Primary Examiner—J. Woodrow Eldred
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—David Weiss

(57) **ABSTRACT**

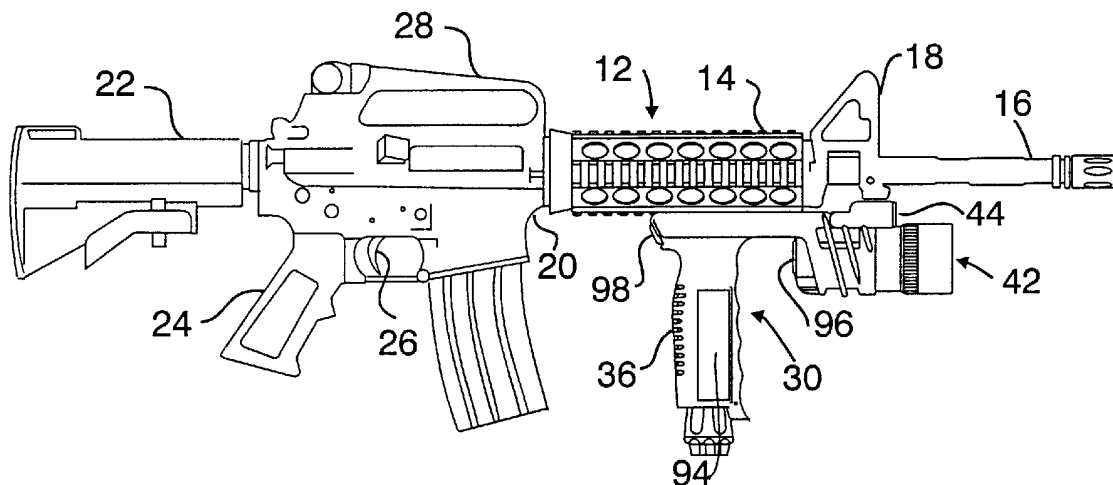
A firearm illuminator for selectively providing low intensity illumination to assist the firearm user to navigate his or her surroundings in dark environments, as well as for selectively providing high intensity illumination of a target. The preferred embodiment includes a vertical handgrip having a battery compartment in the handgrip. A battery retainer cap assembly for the battery compartment includes a battery enable/disable mechanism and a safety latch is provided on the handgrip or battery housing for assuring the retainer cap assembly's secure attachment to the battery housing.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

1,423,911 A	7/1922	Cardwell
1,448,352 A	3/1923	Barany et al.
1,579,671 A	4/1926	Staats-Oels
1,865,127 A	6/1932	McKeen
1,950,835 A	3/1934	Zajac
2,137,230 A	11/1938	Arden
2,190,035 A	2/1940	Loungway

54 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



US 6,622,416 B2

Page 2

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

5,161,095 A	11/1992	Gammache	5,685,637 A	11/1997	Chapman et al.	
5,161,879 A	11/1992	McDermott	5,704,155 A *	1/1998	Primeau, IV	42/114
5,174,648 A	12/1992	Clary et al.	5,722,755 A	3/1998	Slape	
5,359,779 A	11/1994	Polk et al.	5,871,272 A	2/1999	Sharrah et al.	
5,400,540 A	3/1995	Solinsky et al.	5,984,494 A	11/1999	Chapman et al.	
5,590,951 A	1/1997	Matthews	6,019,482 A	2/2000	Everett	
5,601,359 A	2/1997	Sharrah et al.	6,046,572 A	4/2000	Matthews et al.	
5,629,105 A	5/1997	Matthews	6,095,661 A	8/2000	Lebens et al.	
5,642,932 A	7/1997	Matthews	6,230,431 B1 *	5/2001	Bear	42/117

* cited by examiner

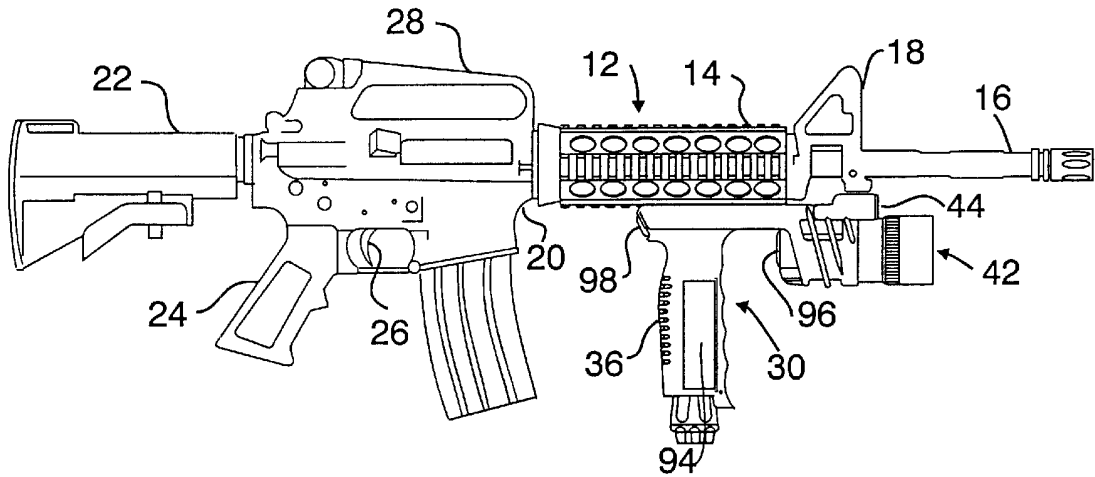


Fig. 1

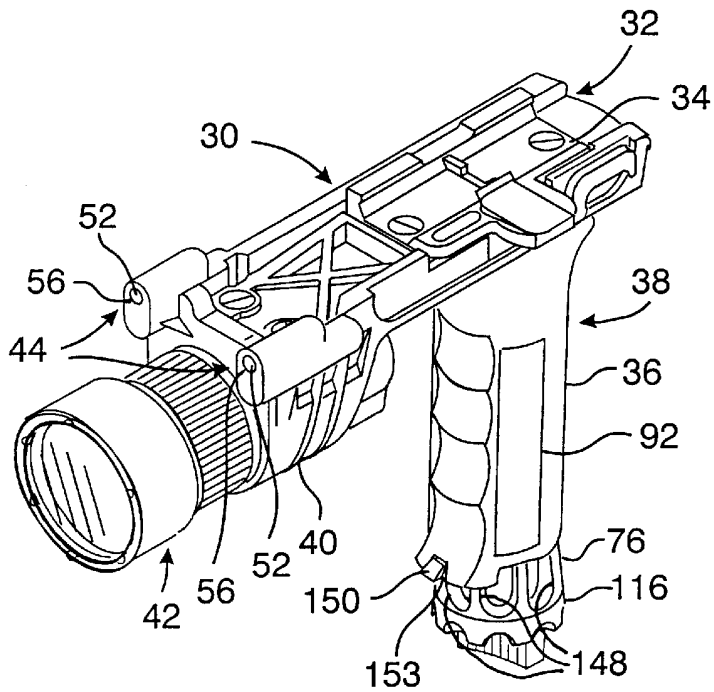


Fig. 2

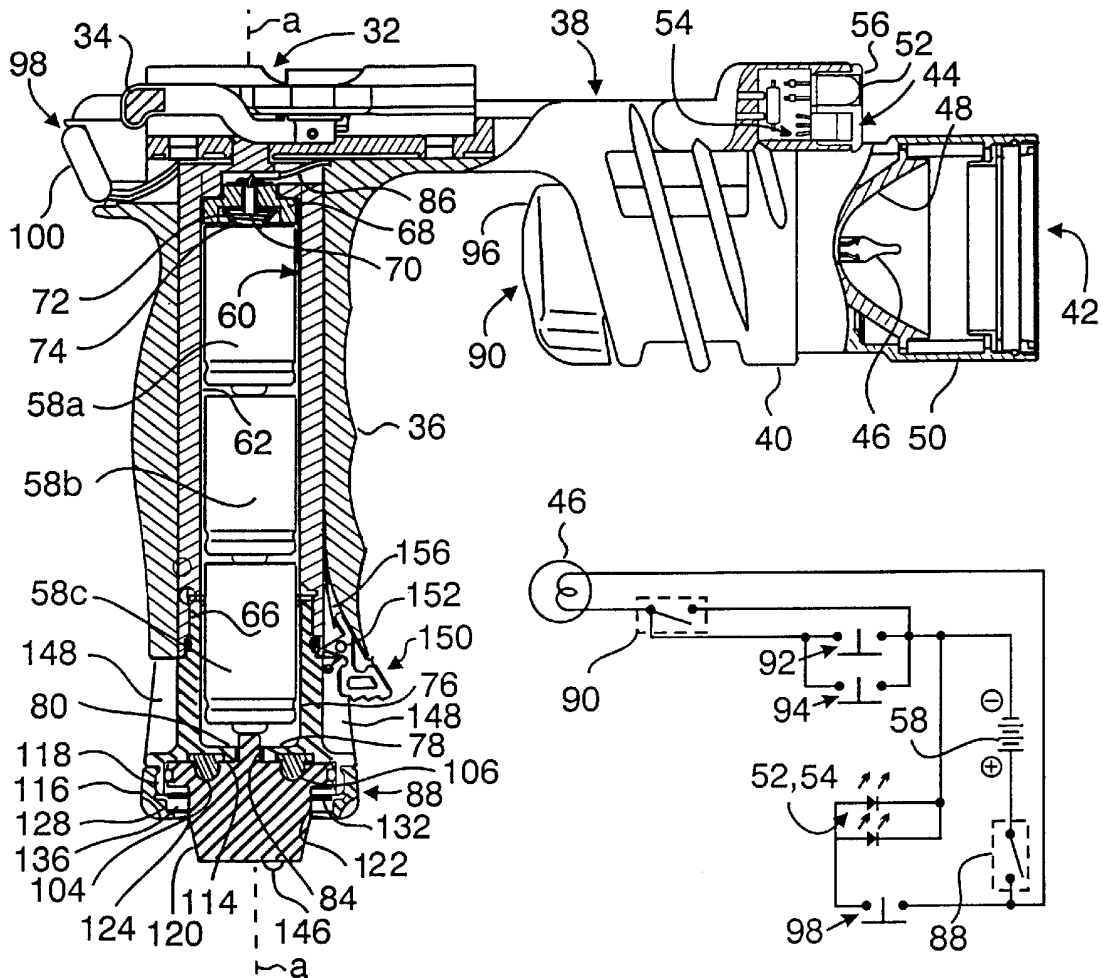


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

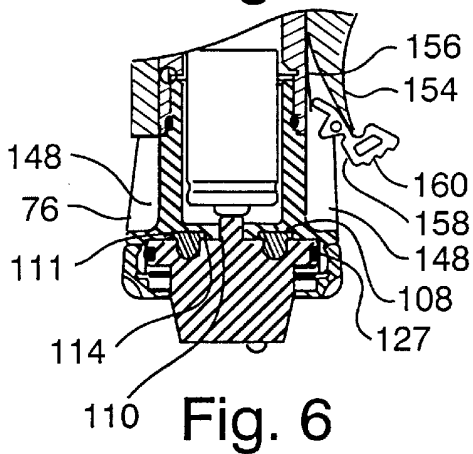


Fig. 6

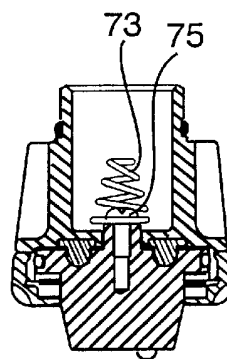


Fig. 15

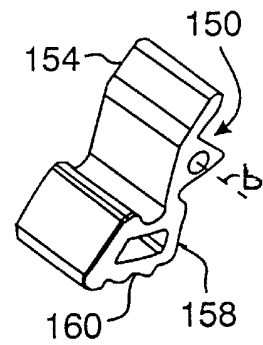


Fig. 5

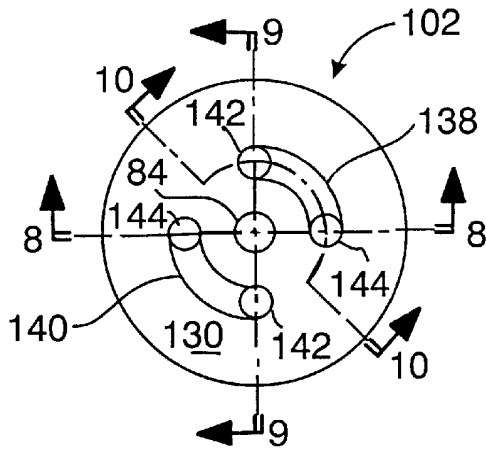


FIG. 7

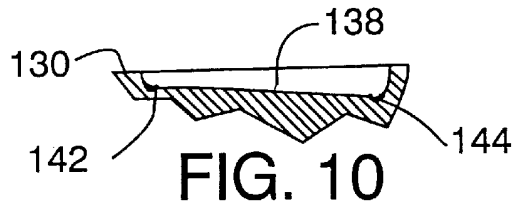


FIG. 10

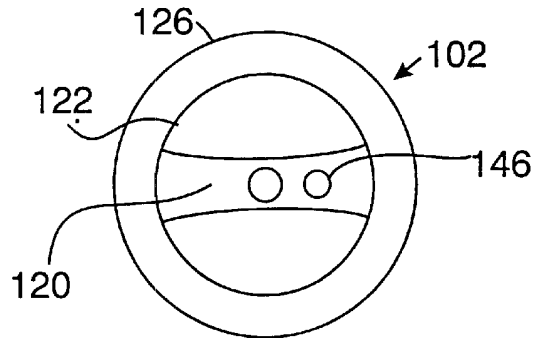


FIG. 11

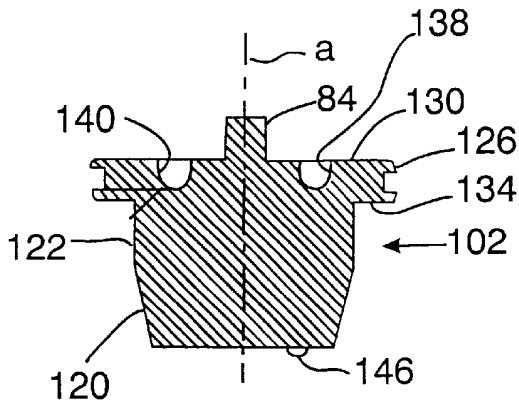


FIG. 8

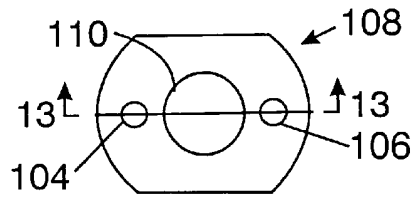


FIG. 12

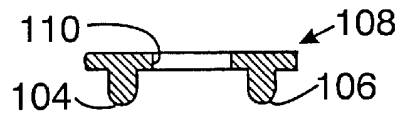


FIG. 13

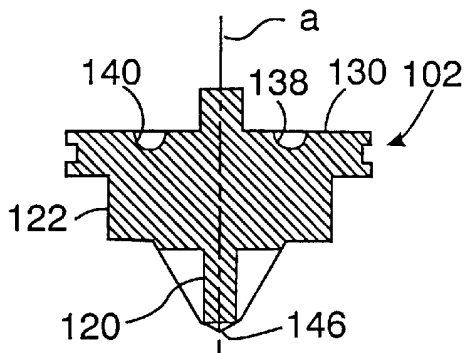


FIG. 9

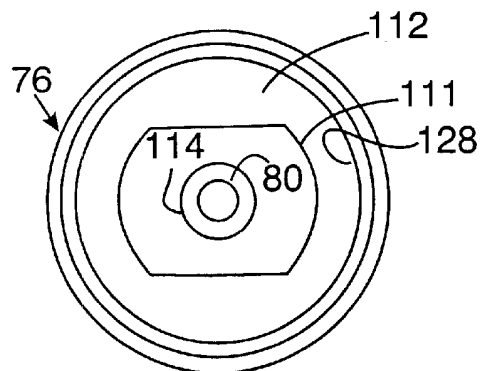


FIG. 14

1

TARGET AND NAVIGATION ILLUMINATORS FOR FIREARMS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/259,726, filed Jan. 4, 2001, which application is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to illuminators for firearms, and more particularly to illuminator devices for selectively providing low intensity illumination to assist the user to navigate his or her surroundings in dark environments, as well as for selectively providing high intensity illumination of a target, and to battery compartments and switching devices useful therewith.

Target illuminators for attachment to firearms are well known. Illuminator devices have been used on tactical weapons such as carbines for illuminating targets for being fired upon, as well as for momentarily blinding and disorienting an adversary. In dark environments, whether outside at night or indoors, a military or law enforcement person engaged in an adversarial situation may find it difficult or impossible to efficiently and noiselessly navigate his or her surroundings. To provide visual assistance by momentarily turning on a target illuminator may betray his presence or even his position.

Vertical fore-end handgrips for tactical weapons such as carbines are also well known. Such handgrips may be attached to a rail interface system device secured to the fore-end of a carbine, for providing assistance in physically controlling the carbine when various accessories are secured to its fore-end rail interface system device.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Against this background, a primary aspect of the present invention provides an illuminator for a firearm for selectively generating low intensity illumination for assisting the firearm user to navigate his surroundings, i.e. to provide low level illumination for assisting the user to find his way to a point of entry without betraying his presence or position with high intensity light. A preferred embodiment of the present invention combines the low intensity navigation illuminator with a high intensity target illuminator, and is configured with a vertical fore-end handgrip adapted for attachment to a long firearm such as a carbine or other rifle or a shotgun. The vertical handgrip includes a battery compartment with a bottom cap assembly for retaining the battery as well as a safety latch for assuring the secure attachment of the cap assembly to the battery compartment. The battery retainer cap assembly further includes a readily accessible enable/disable switch for permitting the user to positively prevent operation of the illuminators.

Specifically, according to one aspect of the present invention, an illumination apparatus is provided for a firearm comprising the combination of: a housing adapted to be secured to the firearm; a high intensity light source carried by the housing and operable by a user for illuminating a target when the housing is secured to the firearm; and at least one low intensity light source carried by the housing and operable by the user for illuminating the user's surroundings when the housing is secured to the firearm. In the preferred embodiment, the at least one low intensity light source includes a light emitting diode. The housing of the preferred

2

embodiment includes a handgrip substantially vertically disposed beneath the firearm's barrel when the housing is secured to the firearm and the firearm is horizontally disposed, the housing further including a forward portion carrying the high intensity and low intensity light sources. The vertical handgrip includes a compartment for containing a battery, and preferably a replaceably removable battery retainer cap at the lower end of the handgrip for removably retaining the battery in the battery compartment.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, the battery compartment retainer cap is protected against inadvertent removal such as by vibrations generated by the firearm. For providing such protection, the battery retainer cap is threadedly attached to the lower end of the handgrip and includes a plurality of circumferentially-spaced vertically-oriented grooves along the outer surface thereof; and a lever is pivotally attached to the handgrip, the lever having a lower leg radially inwardly biased and normally cooperating with a one of the grooves for preventing rotation of the battery retainer cap with respect to the handgrip, the leg including a portion adapted for manipulation by the user for outwardly pivoting the leg from the one groove for permitting the user to rotate the battery retainer cap with respect to the handgrip.

A further aspect of the present invention, involving the battery compartment which is useful in other electrical appliances as well, concerns an actuator mounted to the battery retainer cap operable by a user for alternatively connecting and disconnecting the battery in a circuit thereby respectively enabling and disabling the battery. The battery compartment includes an electrically conductive sleeve and the battery retainer cap is electrically conductive and conductively retained by the sleeve for containing the battery with one terminal of the battery in conductive engagement with a conductive floor or partition of the battery retainer cap when the battery is enabled. The other terminal of the battery contacts a conductive spring electrically insulated from the sleeve and downwardly biasing the battery, the sleeve and the spring electrically connected to the circuit. The partition or floor includes a bore therethrough, the actuator includes an electrically insulating post in the bore, and the actuator is actuatable by the user for upwardly displacing the post to urge the one terminal of the battery to conductively disengage from the conductive partition or floor for disabling the battery and alternatively for downwardly displacing the post such that the one terminal of the battery conductively engages the floor for enabling the battery. The preferred embodiment further includes an actuator retainer cap retainably mounting the actuator to the battery retainer cap; two projections depending from the battery retainer cap and radially spaced from the bore; two arcuate recesses in the actuator and concentrically spaced about the post for respectively receiving the projections, the depth of each of the recesses increasing from one end to the other end thereof; and a compression spring held by the actuator retainer spring and acting upon the actuator for maintaining the recesses in engagement with the projections. Each end of each of the arcuate recesses preferably includes a detent for releaseably retaining an associated one of the projections.

The preferred embodiment of the present invention, including both high intensity and low intensity light sources, further includes: an ON/OFF switch on the housing and operable by the user for alternatively turning on and off the high intensity light source when the battery is enabled; at least one momentary switch on the handgrip operable by the user for momentarily turning on the high intensity light source when the battery is enabled; and a momentary switch

on the housing operable by the user for momentarily turning on the at least one low intensity light source when the battery is enabled.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed to be characteristic of the invention, together with further advantages thereof, will be better understood from the following description considered in connection with the accompanying drawings in which preferred embodiments of the present invention and various aspects thereof are illustrated by way of example. It is to be understood, however, that the drawings are for the purpose of illustration and description only and are not intended as a definition of the limits of the invention.

FIG. 1 is a side elevation view of a preferred embodiment of a combined target illuminator and navigation illuminator device in accordance with the present invention, mounted to a firearm;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged perspective view of the target/navigator illuminator device of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a side elevation view of the device of FIG. 2, partially broken away and partially in cross-section to show features of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram of an electric circuit included in the preferred embodiment of FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the battery compartment safety latch shown in FIG. 3 in its normal position;

FIG. 6 is a fragment of the lower portion of FIG. 3, showing the safety latch in its actuated position;

FIG. 7 is a top view of a preferred embodiment of an actuator component of the battery enable/disable switch assembly shown in FIG. 3;

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional elevation view of the switch actuator of FIG. 7, taken along the line 8—8 of FIG. 7 in the direction of the appended arrows;

FIG. 9 is an elevational cross-sectional view of the switch actuator, taken along the line 9—9 of FIG. 7 in the direction of the appended arrows;

FIG. 10 is a fragmented enlarged cross-sectional elevation view of the switch actuator, taken along the line 10—10 of FIG. 7 in the direction of the appended arrows;

FIG. 11 is a bottom view of the switch actuator of FIG. 7;

FIG. 12 is a bottom view of a plate element of the enable/disable switch assembly shown in FIG. 3, for cooperative engagement by the switch actuator of FIGS. 7—11;

FIG. 13 is a cross-sectional elevation view of the switch plate of FIG. 12, taken along the line 13—13 of FIG. 12 in the direction of the appended arrows;

FIG. 14 is a bottom view of the battery retainer cap shown in FIGS. 3 and 6; and

FIG. 15 is a fragment of the lower portion of FIG. 3 modified to show a variation of the battery enable/disable switch assembly.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Turning first to FIG. 1, there is illustrated a firearm 12, specifically a carbine such as manufactured by Colt Firearms (Division of Colt Industries, of Hartford, Conn.), equipped with a rail interface system device 14 such as manufactured by Knight's Manufacturing Co. (of Vero Beach, Fla.) secured to the carbine and surrounding the carbine's barrel 16 along the carbine's fore-end section between the front

sight 18 and lower receiver 20. The carbine 12 further includes a stock 22, pistol grip 24, trigger 26 and upper receiver 28 with (in this example) carrying handle and rear sight. Such carbines 12 and rail interface system devices 14 are well known in the firearms art.

A preferred embodiment of the target/navigator illuminator device 30 in accordance with the present invention is mounted to the underside of the rail interface device 14, and hence under the barrel 16 and forwardly of the carbine's lower receiver 20. The illuminator device 30 is more clearly shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, and includes a mounting plate assembly 32 for mounting the illuminator device 30 to the rail interface device 14. Such mounting plate assemblies are well known in the firearms art, and may include a single lever platform mount 34 of the type shown in FIGS. 2 and 3. The preferred illuminator device 30 includes a handle or handgrip 36 with its longitudinal axis a—a substantially vertically disposed beneath the carbine's fore-end section when the barrel 16 is horizontally disposed, in a position such that a user of the firearm 12 may comfortably grasp the foregrip or handgrip 36 with one hand while the user's other hand grasps the pistol grip 24 for permitting firing of the firearm 12.

The device 30 includes a housing 38, preferably of one-piece construction and molded of a polymeric material such as nylon, the housing 38 including the vertical grip 36 as well as a forward housing portion 40 for accommodating a high-intensity light source assembly 42 and at least one low intensity light source assembly 44, forwardly of the vertical grip 36. In the preferred embodiment, two low intensity light source assemblies 44 are provided, above the assembly 42, the low intensity light source assemblies 44 being similar to and laterally spaced from each other.

The high intensity light source assembly 42 is for illuminating a target and includes an electric lamp 46, a parabolic reflector 48 and bezel assembly 50, and may be of the type described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/229,915, of Paul Y. Kim and John W. Matthews, which application is incorporated herein by reference. Typical light output of the target illuminator light source assembly 42 may be 125 to 225 lumens or greater.

The low intensity light source assemblies 44, each preferably including a light emitting diode or LED 52 with conventional resistor and regulator combination 54, are secured in the housing front portion 40 that includes an aperture or window 56 for permitting each LED 52 to emit light therethrough. The purpose of the LEDs 52 is to provide a low intensity illumination to a user's surroundings, for permitting the user to get about or navigate in otherwise unlighted or dark surroundings. It is preferred that the LEDs 52 be of a type that emits white light of approximately 1.5 lumens light output each, although LEDs emitting colored light may be useful in certain environments. Although low intensity filament bulbs or other types of lamps may be used instead of the LEDs 52, LEDs are preferred because of their low energy consumption and long life.

In one manner of using the navigation illuminator feature of the invention, the user may in appropriate situations point his weapon and hence the navigation illuminator 44 downwardly, illuminating his dark surroundings sufficiently to navigate without attracting the attention of an enemy. The navigation illuminator 44 may be attached to other firearms such as handguns as well as to long arm weapons.

The energy source for the target illuminator 42 and the navigation illuminator 44 is provided by a battery 58 which may include a plurality of battery cells, such as the three

battery cells **58a**, **58b** and **58c** (see FIGS. 3 and 4) in series arrangement, such as a 9-volt battery **58** consisting of three 3-volt lithium battery cells **58a**, **b**, **c**.

The battery **58** is contained within a battery housing **60** including an electrically conductive sleeve **62** aligned within the vertical grip **36** and an electrically conductive battery retainer cap **76** threadably engaging the lower end of the sleeve **62** by mating threads **66**. The upper end of the electrically conductive sleeve **62** is closed with an electrically insulating plug **68** having an aperture through which a conductive wire **70** is attached to a retained conductive helical spring **72** to provide the upper electrical contact for the battery's negative terminal **74**.

The battery retainer cap **76** includes an electrically conductive partition or floor **78** having a central bore **80** therethrough. The interior diameter of the battery retainer cap **76** is the same as the interior diameter of the battery housing sleeve **62**, and the battery retainer cap **76** contains a portion of the lowermost battery cell **58c**. The positive battery terminal **82** faces and is normally conductively disengaged from the battery retainer cap **76** (e.g. disengaged from the floor **78**) and hence from the sleeve **62**, by means of an electrically insulating post **84** retractably extending through the bore **80** with the post's upper surface extending above the floor **78** and contacting the battery positive terminal **82** for urging the battery **58** upwardly against the spring **72**. The battery **58** is enabled when the lowermost battery cell **58c** positive terminal **82** conductively engages the battery retainer cap **76** by contacting the conductive floor **78** (the battery positive terminal **82** having a diameter greater than the diameter of the central bore **80**), thereby electrically communicating with the sleeve **62** and an electrically conductive wire **86** conductively attached to the sleeve **62**. The insulating post **84** is part of an enable/disable switch assembly **88** that permits the firearm user to positively prevent operation of the target illuminator **42** and the navigation illuminator **44**, such as when preservation of absolute darkness is essential in cases where accidental actuation of either illuminator **42** or **44** may disclose the user's position to a possible criminal or enemy. In addition, the enable/disable switch **88** is useful for preventing battery drain through inadvertent actuation of other switches for energizing the illuminators **42** and/or **44** when the target/navigator illuminator device **30** (alone or mounted to the firearm **12**) may be temporarily stored or transported without removal of the battery **58** therefrom.

In the enable/disable switch activator variation shown in FIG. 15, a lower conductive helical spring **73** is secured to the top of the insulated post **84** by a conductive screw **75**, for providing a lower electrical contact for the battery's lower terminal. This variation may be preferred where the battery **58** is arranged with its negative terminal downwardly oriented, i.e. with the battery negative terminal **74** of the lowermost battery cell **58c** contacting the lower spring **73** and with the upper spring **72** providing the upper electrical contact for the battery's positive terminal **82**. In such orientation of the battery **58**, of course, the circuit schematic of FIG. 4 would show the battery **58** and the light emitting diodes **52**, **54** with reversed polarity. The lower spring **73** extends laterally of the post **84** and does not contact the conductive floor **78** when the battery **58** is disabled. The battery **58** is enabled when the lowermost battery cell **58c** negative terminal **74** conductively engages the battery retainer cap **76**, by means of the electrically insulating post **84** being retracted such that the lower portion of the lower conductive spring **73** contacts the conductive floor **78**, thereby electrically communicating with the sleeve **62** for completing the electrical circuit.

In either case, when the battery **58** is enabled (i.e., when the insulating post **84** is retracted such that the lower battery terminal is in electrically conductive engagement with the battery retainer cap **76**), electrical energy from the battery **58** is supplied to the lamp **46** of the target illuminator **42** either through actuation of a constant ON/OFF switch, or through actuation of one or the other of two momentary switches **92**, **94**. The ON/OFF switch **90** provides a constant ON or a constant OFF by closing or opening a conductive path to the lamp **46**, through user control of an ON/OFF switch knob **96** by say a one-eighth turn of the knob **96**. Such switching circuits are well known in the art.

The momentary switches **92**, **94** provide the firearm user with instantaneous light control. Momentary switches are well known in the art and include the so-called tape switches used in firearm systems. Their construction typically includes spaced electrodes in a flexible enclosure that are squeezed together and thus brought into electrical contact with each other by the firearm user when energization of the illuminator is desired, through conventional electrical circuitry including the normally spaced electrodes. The momentary tape switches **92**, **94** are situated on opposite sides of the vertical grip **36**, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. One or the other of these tape switches **92**, **94** (depending upon which one of the user's hands is employed for grasping the vertical grip **36**) is squeezed by the user's fingers when the user desires to energize the target illuminator lamp **46**, which remains energized for only as long as one of the tape switches **92**, **94** remains squeezed (see FIG. 4).

In addition, when the battery **58** is enabled, the diodes **52** of the navigation illuminator **44** may be energized upon actuation of switch **98**, which is preferably a momentary switch (see FIGS. 3 and 4). The navigation illuminator switch **98** is preferably actuated by a pushbutton device **100** situated at the rear of the illuminator device **30** and above the vertical grip **36**. Accordingly, the navigation illuminator switch **98** may be actuated by the user pressing his or her thumb against the pushbutton **100**, such thumb being of the same hand used to grasp the vertical grip **36**. Pushbutton-actuated momentary switches **98**, **100** are well known in the art, and as used in the present invention the LEDs **52** remain energized for only as long as the pushbutton **100** is depressed.

The various components of the enable/disable switch assembly **88** are shown in FIGS. 3 and 7-14. The enable/disable switch actuator **120** (FIGS. 3 and 7-11), constructed preferably of a polymeric material such as nylon, cooperates with two downwardly extending generally cylindrical projections **104**, **106** of a plate **108** which may also be of nylon (FIGS. 3, 12 and 13). The projections **104**, **106** have rounded ends and are laterally spaced from each other, on either side of a circular central aperture **110** in the plate **108**. The plate **108** is held against lateral and rotational movement within a conforming recess **111** in the bottom surface **112** of the floor **78** of the battery retainer cap **76** (FIGS. 3, 6 and 14), the central boundary of the recess **111** comprising an annular boss **114** about the central bore **80** through the floor **78**. The depth of the recess **111** is approximately the same as the thickness of the plate **108**, so that the projections **104**, **106** effectively depend from the bottom surface **112**.

The enable/disable actuator **102** is supported for cooperation with the battery **58**, with the actuator's central vertical post **84** extending within the central bore **80**, by actuator retaining cap **116** threadably engaging the bottom of the battery retainer cap **76** by mating threads **118**. The actuator **102** is rotatable about its axis **a**, which coincides with the longitudinal axis of the vertical grip **36**, and the actuator

includes a depending handle **120** for implementing such rotation through the user's grasping the handle **120** between his thumb and a finger and rotating the handle through a 90° arc as illustrated in FIG. 9 as compared to FIG. 8. The lower cylindrical portion **122** of the actuator **102** is rotatable within a bore **124** through the bottom of the actuator retaining cap **116**, and the upper cylindrical portion **126** of the actuator **102** (with interfacing O-ring **127**) is rotatable within an inner cylindrical wall **128** at the bottom of the battery retainer cap **76**. The upper surface **130** of the actuator **102** is urged toward the bottom surface **112** of the battery retainer cap **76** by means of a compression spring **132** about the actuator's lower cylindrical portion **122** and trapped between the actuator's annular shoulder **134** and the actuator retaining cap's interior annular ledge **136**.

The upper surface **130** of the actuator **102** includes two arcuate recesses **138**, **140** concentrically spaced about the post **84**, the arc of each recess **138**, **140** being approximately 90° and opposing one another as shown in FIG. 7. The recesses **138**, **140** are positioned and dimensioned for accepting the respective projections **104**, **106**, and the depth of each recess **138**, **140** gradually increases from one end of each arcuate recess to the other, for example by approximately 0.056 inch. Each of the recesses **138**, **140** terminate with a detent **142** at one end and a detent **144** at the other end, for being engaged by and releasably retaining the associated projections **104**, **106**.

As shown in FIG. 3, the projections **104**, **106** engage the arcuate recesses **138**, **140** respectively, and are maintained in such engagement by action of the compression spring **132**. When the actuator handle **120** is in its clockwise position with the projections **104**, **106** engaging the lower detents **144**, the actuator **102** is upwardly urged by the compression spring **132** to be releasably retained in place with the center post **84** extending beyond the floor **78** sufficiently to lift the battery **58**. In this position, the battery's positive terminal **82** does not contact the conductive floor **78**; the battery **58** is therefore disabled (FIG. 3). When the actuator handle **120** is rotated 90° counterclockwise (FIG. 9) so that the projections **104**, **106** engage the upper detents **142**, the actuator **102** is downwardly urged by projections **104**, **106** against the compression spring **132** to be releasably retained in place with the top of the center post **84** below the top surface of the floor **78**. In this position, the battery **58** is urged downwardly by the helical spring **72** such that the positive terminal **82** contacts the conductive floor **78**; the battery is therefore enabled.

The actuator **102** may include a tactile device, such as a protuberance **146** at one side of the handle **120**, for permitting the firearm user to tactilely determine in darkened environments whether the battery is enabled or disabled without the necessity of making such determination by momentary actuating one of the illuminator switches **92**, **94**, **98**.

A feature of the present invention is the provision of a safety latch device for assuring the secure attachment of the battery retainer cap **76** as well as the enable/disable switch assembly **88** to the battery housing sleeve **62**. The safety latch assembly is described below with reference to FIGS. 2, 3 and 5.

The outer surface of the battery retainer cap **76** includes a plurality of circumferentially-spaced vertically-oriented (or axially-oriented) channels or wide grooves **148**. The enable/disable actuator retaining cap **116**, which is threadedly secured to the battery retainer cap **76** as previously described, is further fixedly secured to the battery retainer cap **76** such as by an adhesive. The latch mechanism consists

of a lever **150** that cooperates with any one of the grooves **148** for precluding rotation of the battery retainer cap with respect to the battery sleeve **62**, i.e. for precluding unthreading of the retainer cap **76** at threads **66** (FIG. 3). This is of particular importance when the vertical grip device **36** is mounted to a firearm such as a carbine **12** (FIG. 1) which produces vibrations during firing that may (without the locking feature) cause unthreading of the battery retainer cap **76**. Such unthreading may result in disablement of the battery **58** and ultimately in the cap **76** separating from the battery sleeve **62** in which case the batteries will fall from the illuminator device **30**.

The latch comprises a lever **150** that is pivotable about a pin **152** horizontally secured to the sides of a rectangular cut-out **153** at the bottom of the vertical grip portion **36** of the housing **38**, so that the latch **150** is pivotable about its horizontal axis **b** and radially of the battery retainer cap **76**. The lever **150** includes an upper arm **154** and a lower leg **158** on opposite sides of the pivot axis **b**, and the arm **154** is outwardly radially biased by leaf spring **156** causing the leg **158** to pivot radially inwardly. The leg **158** doglegs radially outwardly to form a boxlike structure having a lower side **160** with lateral ridges for permitting a user to upwardly manipulate the lower side **160** with his thumb to outwardly pivot the leg **158**. The width of the latch **150** is slightly less than the width of each of the grooves **148** in the battery retainer cap **76**.

The latch **150** is shown in its normal latching position in FIG. 3, with the boxlike leg **158** inserted in one of the battery retainer cap grooves **148**, thereby preventing rotation of the battery retainer cap **76** with respect to the battery sleeve **62**. When relative rotation between these two components **76**, **62** is desired, such as when the battery retainer cap **76** is required to be removed and reinstalled for replacement of the battery cells **58 a, b, c**, the user places his thumb in contact with the ridged surface **160** of the lever leg **158** and outwardly pivots the leg **158** against the bias of the leaf spring **156**, until the leg **158** is completely removed from the battery retainer cap groove **148** as shown in FIG. 6. The user forcibly maintains the latch **150** in this position while rotating the cap **76** with respect to the battery sleeve **62** for threadedly removing or reinstalling the cap **76**. When the cap **76** is fully installed with one of the grooves **148** aligned with the latch **150**, the user releases his thumb from the grooved surface **160** and the leg **158** is urged by the leaf spring **156** to enter and be retained by the aligned groove **148** for securing the cap **76** against rotation as shown in FIG. 3.

Thus, there has been described preferred embodiments of a target and navigation illuminator for firearms. A preferred embodiment includes a vertical handgrip having a battery compartment in the handgrip. A battery retainer cap assembly for the battery compartment includes a battery enable/disable mechanism, and a safety latch is provided on the handgrip or battery housing for assuring the retainer cap assembly's secure attachment to the battery compartment. Other embodiments of the present invention and of its various aspects, and variations of the embodiment and its aspects described herein, may be developed without departing from the essential characteristics thereof. Accordingly, the invention should be limited only by the scope of the claims listed below.

I claim:

1. An illumination apparatus for a firearm, comprising the combination of:

- a housing adapted to be secured to the firearm;
- a high intensity light source carried by said housing and operable by a user for illuminating a target when said housing is secured to the firearm;

at least one low intensity light source carried by said housing and operable by the user for illuminating the user's surroundings when said housing is secured to the firearm; and

said housing including a handgrip having a longitudinal axis substantially vertically disposed beneath a barrel of the firearm when said housing is secured to the firearm and the firearm is horizontally disposed, said housing further including a forward portion carrying said light sources.

2. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein: said at least one low intensity light source includes a light emitting diode.

3. The apparatus according to claim 1, including: a compartment in said handgrip for containing a battery.

4. The apparatus according to claim 3, including: a replaceably removable battery retainer cap at a lower end of said handgrip for removably retaining the battery in said compartment.

5. The apparatus according to claim 4, including: a latch carried by said handgrip normally preventing removal of said battery retainer cap.

6. The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said battery retainer cap is threadedly attached to said lower end of said handgrip and includes a plurality of circumferentially-spaced vertically-oriented grooves along the outer surface thereof;

and including

a lever pivotally attached to said handgrip and having a lower leg radially inwardly biased and normally cooperating with a one of said grooves for preventing rotation of said battery retainer cap with respect to said handgrip, said leg including a portion adapted for manipulation by a user for outwardly pivoting said leg from said one groove for permitting the user to rotate said battery retainer cap with respect to said handgrip.

7. The apparatus according to claim 4, including: a battery in said compartment; and an actuator mounted to said battery retainer cap operable by a user for alternatively connecting and disconnecting said battery in a circuit thereby respectively enabling and disabling said battery.

8. The apparatus according to claim 7, including: an ON/OFF switch on said housing and operable by the user for alternatively turning on and off said high intensity light source when said battery is enabled.

9. The apparatus according to claim 7, including: at least one momentary switch on said handgrip operable by the user for momentarily turning on said high intensity light source when said battery is enabled.

10. The apparatus according to claim 7, including: a momentary switch on said housing operable by the user for momentarily turning on said at least one low intensity light source when said battery is enabled.

11. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein: said battery compartment includes an electrically conductive sleeve and said battery retainer cap is electrically conductive and conductively retained by said sleeve for containing said battery with one terminal of said battery in conductive engagement with said battery retainer cap when said battery is enabled and the other terminal of said battery contacting a conductive spring electrically insulated from said sleeve and downwardly biasing said battery, said sleeve and said spring electrically connected to said circuit, said floor having a bore there-through; and

said actuator includes an electrically insulated post in said bore, said actuator actuable by the user for upwardly displacing said post to urge said one terminal of said battery to conductively disengage from said battery retainer cap for disabling said battery and alternatively for downwardly displacing said post such that said one terminal of said battery conductively engages said battery retainer cap for enabling said battery.

12. The apparatus according to claim 11, including an actuator retainer cap rotatably mounting said actuator to said battery retainer cap;

two projections depending from said battery retainer cap and radially spaced from said bore;

two arcuate recesses in said actuator and concentrically spaced about said post for respectively receiving said projections, the depth of each of said recesses increasing from one end to the other end thereof; and

a compression spring held by said actuator retainer cap and acting upon said actuator for maintaining said recesses in engagement with said projections.

13. The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein: each end of each of said arcuate recesses includes a detent for releasably retaining an associated one of said projections.

14. An illumination apparatus for a firearm, comprising the combination of:

a housing adapted to be secured to the firearm, said housing including a handgrip having a longitudinal axis substantially vertically disposed beneath a barrel of the firearm when said housing is secured to the firearm and the firearm is horizontally disposed;

a light source carried by said housing; and

a compartment in said handgrip for containing a battery for energizing said light source.

15. The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein: said light source is a high intensity light source operable by a user for illuminating a target when said housing is secured to the firearm.

16. The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein: said light source includes at least one low intensity light source operable by the user for illuminating the user's surroundings when said housing is secured to the firearm.

17. The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein: said at least one low intensity light source includes a light emitting diode.

18. The apparatus according to claim 14, including: a replaceably removable battery retainer cap at a lower end of said handgrip for removably retaining the battery in said compartment.

19. The apparatus according to claim 18, including: a latch carried by said handgrip normally preventing removal of said battery retainer cap.

20. The apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said battery retainer cap is threadedly attached to said lower end of said handgrip and includes a plurality of circumferentially-spaced vertically-oriented grooves along the outer surface thereof; and including

a lever pivotally attached to said handgrip and having a lower leg radially inwardly biased and normally cooperating with a one of said grooves for preventing rotation of said battery retainer cap with respect to said handgrip, said leg including a portion adapted for manipulation by a user for outwardly pivoting said leg from said one groove for permitting the user to rotate said battery retainer cap with respect to said handgrip.

21. The apparatus according to claim 18, including:
a battery in said compartment; and
an actuator mounted to said battery retainer cap operable
by a user for alternatively connecting and disconnecting
said battery in a circuit thereby respectively
enabling and disabling said battery. 5

22. The apparatus according to claim 21, including:
an ON/OFF switch on said housing and operable by the
user for alternatively turning on and off said light
source when said battery is enabled. 10

23. The apparatus according to claim 21, including:
at least one momentary switch on said handgrip operable
by the user for momentarily turning on said light source
when said battery is enabled. 15

24. The apparatus according to claim 21, including:
a momentary switch on said housing operable by the user
for momentarily turning on said light source when said
battery is enabled.

25. The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein: 20
said battery compartment includes an electrically conductive
sleeve and said battery retainer cap is electrically
conductive and conductively retained by said sleeve for
containing said battery with one terminal of said battery
in conductive engagement with said battery retainer cap
when said battery is enabled and the other terminal of
said battery contacting a conductive spring electrically
insulated from said sleeve and downwardly biasing said
battery, said sleeve and said spring electrically connected
to said circuit, said floor having a bore there-
through; and 30
said actuator includes an electrically insulated post in said
bore, said actuator actuable by the user for upwardly
displacing said post to urge said one terminal of said
battery to conductively disengage from said battery
retainer cap for disabling said battery and alternatively
for downwardly displacing said post such that said one
terminal of said battery conductively engages said
battery retainer cap for enabling said battery. 35

26. The apparatus according to claim 25, including 40
an actuator retainer cap rotatably mounting said actuator
to said battery retainer cap;
two projections depending from said battery retainer cap
and radially spaced from said bore; 45
two arcuate recesses in said actuator and concentrically
spaced about said post for respectively receiving said
projections, the depth of each of said recesses increasing
from one end to the other end thereof; and
a compression spring held by said actuator retainer cap
and acting upon said actuator for maintaining said
recesses in engagement with said projections. 50

27. The apparatus according to claim 26, wherein:
each end of each of said arcuate recesses includes a detent
for releasably retaining an associated one of said pro-
jections. 55

28. Firearm and illumination apparatus, comprising in
combination:
a firearm including a barrel; 60
a housing secured to said firearm;
a high intensity light source carried by said housing and
operable by a user of said firearm for illuminating a
target;
at least one low intensity light source carried by said
housing and operable by the user for illuminating the
user's surroundings; and 65

said housing including a handgrip having a longitudinal
axis substantially vertically disposed beneath said barrel
when said barrel is horizontally disposed, said
housing further including a forward portion carrying
said light sources.

29. The apparatus according to claim 28, wherein:
said at least one low intensity light source includes a light
emitting diode.

30. The apparatus according to claim 28, including:
a compartment in said handgrip for containing a battery.

31. The apparatus according to claim 30, including:
a replaceably removable battery retainer cap at a lower
end of said handgrip for removably retaining the battery
in said compartment.

32. The apparatus according to claim 31, including:
a latch carried by said handgrip normally preventing
removal of said battery retainer cap.

33. The apparatus according to claim 31, wherein
said battery retainer cap is threadedly attached to said
lower end of said handgrip and includes a plurality of
circumferentially-spaced vertically-oriented grooves
along the outer surface thereof; and including
a lever pivotally attached to said handgrip and having
a lower leg radially inwardly biased and normally
cooperating with a one of said grooves for preventing
rotation of said retainer cap with respect to said
handgrip, said leg including a portion adapted for
manipulation by the user for outwardly pivoting said
leg from said one groove for permitting a user to
rotate said battery retainer cap with respect to said
handgrip.

34. The apparatus according to claim 31, including:
a battery in said compartment; and
an actuator mounted to said battery retainer cap operable
by the user for alternatively connecting and disconnecting
said battery in a circuit thereby respectively
enabling and disabling said battery.

35. The apparatus according to claim 34, including:
an ON/OFF switch on said housing and operable by the
user for alternatively turning on and off said high
intensity light source when said battery is enabled.

36. The apparatus according to claim 34, including:
at least one momentary switch on said handgrip operable
by the user for momentarily turning on said high
intensity light source when said battery is enabled.

37. The apparatus according to claim 34, including:
a momentary switch on said housing operable by the user
for momentarily turning on said at least one low
intensity light source when said battery is enabled.

38. The apparatus according to claim 34, wherein:
said battery compartment includes an electrically conductive
sleeve and said battery retainer cap is electrically
conductive and conductively retained by said sleeve for
containing said battery with one terminal of said battery
in conductive engagement with said battery retainer cap
when said battery is enabled and the other terminal of
said battery contacting a conductive spring electrically
insulated from said sleeve and downwardly biasing said
battery, said sleeve and said spring electrically connected
to said circuit, said floor having a bore there-
through; and
said actuator includes an electrically insulated post in said
bore, said actuator actuable by the user for upwardly
displacing said post to urge said one terminal of said
battery to conductively disengage from said battery

retainer cap for disabling said battery and alternatively for downwardly displacing said post such that said one terminal of said battery conductively engages said battery retainer cap for enabling said battery.

39. The apparatus according to claim 38, including an actuator retainer cap rotatably mounting said actuator to said battery retainer cap; two projections depending from said battery retainer cap and radially spaced from said bore; two arcuate recesses in said actuator and concentrically spaced about said post for respectively receiving said projections, the depth of each of said recesses gradually increasing from one end to the other end thereof; and a compression spring held by said actuator retainer cap and acting upon said actuator for maintaining said recesses in engagement with said projections.

40. The apparatus according to claim 38, wherein: each end of each of said arcuate recesses includes a detent for releasably retaining an associated one of said projections.

41. Firearm and illumination apparatus, comprising in combination:

- a firearm including a barrel;
- a housing secured to said firearm, said housing including a handgrip having a longitudinal axis substantially vertically disposed beneath said barrel when said firearm is horizontally disposed;
- a light source carried by said housing; and
- a compartment in said handgrip for containing a battery for energizing said light source.

42. The apparatus according to claim 41, wherein: said light source is a high intensity light source operable by a user for illuminating a target.

43. The apparatus according to claim 41, wherein: said light source includes at least one low intensity light source operable by the user for illuminating the user's surroundings.

44. The apparatus according to claim 43, wherein: said at least one low intensity light source includes a light emitting diode.

45. The apparatus according to claim 41, including: a replaceably removable battery retainer cap at a lower end of said handgrip for removably retaining the battery in said compartment.

46. The apparatus according to claim 45, including: a latch carried by said handgrip normally preventing removal of said battery retainer cap.

47. The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein said battery retainer cap is threadedly attached to said lower end of said handgrip and includes a plurality of circumferentially-spaced vertically-oriented grooves along the outer surface thereof; and including a lever pivotally attached to said handgrip and having a lower leg radially inwardly biased and normally cooperating with a one of said grooves for preventing rotation of said battery retainer cap with respect to said handgrip, said leg including a portion adapted for manipulation by a user for outwardly pivoting

said leg from said one groove for permitting the user to rotate said battery retainer cap with respect to said handgrip.

48. The apparatus according to claim 45, including: a battery in said compartment; and an actuator mounted to said battery retainer cap operable by a user for alternatively connecting and disconnecting said battery in a circuit thereby respectively enabling and disabling said battery.

49. The apparatus according to claim 48, including: an ON/OFF switch on said housing and operable by the user for alternatively turning on and off said light source when said battery is enabled.

50. The apparatus according to claim 48, including: at least one momentary switch on said handgrip operable by the user for momentarily turning on said light source when said battery is enabled.

51. The apparatus according to claim 48, including: a momentary switch on said housing operable by the user for momentarily turning on said light source when said battery is enabled.

52. The apparatus according to claim 48, wherein: said battery compartment includes an electrically conductive sleeve and said battery retainer cap is electrically conductive and conductively retained by said sleeve for containing said battery with one terminal of said battery in conductive engagement with said battery retainer cap when said battery is enabled and the other terminal of said battery contacting a conductive spring electrically insulated from said sleeve and downwardly biasing said battery, said sleeve and said spring electrically connected to said circuit, said floor having a bore therethrough; and said actuator includes an electrically insulated post in said bore, said actuator actuable by the user for upwardly displacing said post to urge said one terminal of said battery to conductively disengage from said battery retainer cap for disabling said battery and alternatively for downwardly displacing said post such that said one terminal of said battery conductively engages said battery retainer cap for enabling said battery.

53. The apparatus according to claim 52, including an actuator retainer cap rotatably mounting said actuator to said battery retainer cap; two projections depending from said battery retainer cap and radially spaced from said bore; two arcuate recesses in said actuator and concentrically spaced about said post for respectively receiving said projections, the depth of each of said recesses increasing from one end to the other end thereof; and a compression spring held by said actuator retainer cap and acting upon said actuator for maintaining said recesses in engagement with said projections.

54. The apparatus according to claim 53, wherein: each end of each of said arcuate recesses includes a detent for releasably retaining an associated one of said projections.