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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California

MULTIPLE-TARGET CW FM RADAR

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Development of a multiple-target CW FM radar is described. This type of radar has advantages over pulse radars particularly in portable, battery operated applications.

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MULTIPLE-TARGET CW FM RADAR

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Abstract

Development of a multiple-target CW FM radar is described. This type of radar
has advantages over pulse radars particularly in portable, battery operated
applications.

INTRODUCTION

Although multiple-target CW FM radars have been
suggested [1], little application of FM radar in
this mode of operation seems to have been made.
Recent advances in solid-state technology have
made available devices that would permit the con-
struction of a multiple-target FM radar that would
be completely solid state except for the cathode-
ray tube indicator, and perhaps even a solid-
state replacement for the cathode-ray tube will
be available within a few years.

The most obvious application for a radar of this
type would be in situations where light weight,
low power consumption, and high reliability are
of paramount importance. Light weight indicates
operation at 9 GHz or higher to obtain narrow an-
tenna beam width with reasonable antenna size.
It will be shown that doppler frequency shifts
can be of acceptable magnitude at 9 GHz for sur-
face targets. Powers in the order of 1 watt can
be obtained at 9 GHz from solid-state devices,
and this is adequate for many applications. An
experimental program has been initiated to demon-
strate the feasibility of such a radar suitable
for use on small vessels down to the size of
motor whale boats.

THEORY OF OPERATION

If the transmitted frequency of a CW radar is swept
linearly with time as shown in Figure 1a, the re-
ceived echos from fixed targets will have a simi-
lar pattern, but will be delayed in time by 2 R/c
where R is the target range, and c is the velocity
of propagation. If now the echo frequency is
heterodyned with the transmitted signal to obtain
the beat frequency, f_b, then

$$f_b = \frac{2R}{c} \frac{df}{dt} = \frac{2R\Delta f}{c\,T} \qquad (1)$$

where Δf is the transmitter frequency excursion
and T is the sweep period. Figure 1-b shows that
during the initial portion of the transmitter
sweep, echos are still being received from the pre-
vious sweep, hence the beat frequency is higher
than given by (1). After a time ΔT corresponding
to targets at maximum range the difference fre-
quencies associated with all targets are as given
by (1). The receiver is gated off during the
initial interval to prevent the passage of the
incorrect frequencies. It is convenient to make
the duty cycle, (1 – A), equal to 1/2 so that the
receiver is gated on for a time τ equal to one
half of the sweep period, T.

Figure 2 shows the beat frequency spectrum due to
a single sweep and a single target. The spectrum
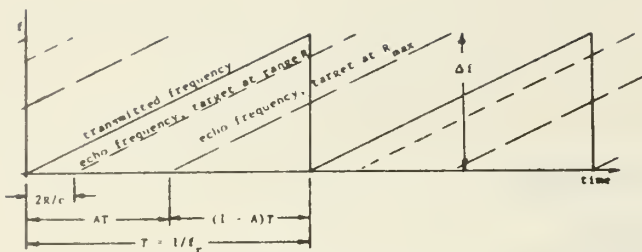is continuous and has a (sin x)/x envelope.
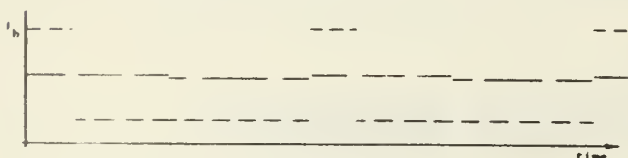
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Figure 1-a Radio frequencies vs. time

Figure 1-b Beat frequencies vs. time

To separate targets at different ranges one or more filters may be used. The ideal filter for maximum output signal-to-noise ratio would be matched to the spectrum. As a practical matter the filter may be matched as nearly as possible to the central lobe of the spectrum. The filter 6dB (half amplitude) bandwidth is, then, $1.2/\tau$ or $2.4/T$. This filter has rise and decay time approximately equal to τ, hence the signal due to one target decays during the receiver dead time clearing the filter to accept another target during the succeeding on time.

Figure 3 is a simplified block diagram of the complete system. Received echos are converted to an intermediate frequency for good noise performance and convenience in filtering. The carrier oscillator is linearly swept over the frequency band Δf. A portion of this signal is mixed with the output of the IF oscillator at the frequency $(f_i - f_b)$. A bandpass filter passes the sum frequency $(f_t + f_i - f_b)$, to the receiver mixer. The other input to this mixer is from the receiving antenna. The received signal at frequency $(f_t - f_b)$ is mixed to form a signal at the IF frequency, f_i. The IF filter with 6dB bandwidth $f_f = 1.2/\tau$ passes this signal to the gated amplifier, detector and indicator.

By slowly varying the frequency of the IF oscillator from f_i to $(f_i - 2R_{max}\Delta f/cT)$, incoming signals from each range interval from zero to
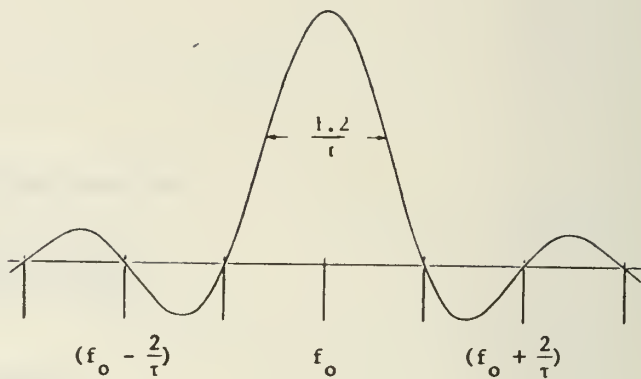

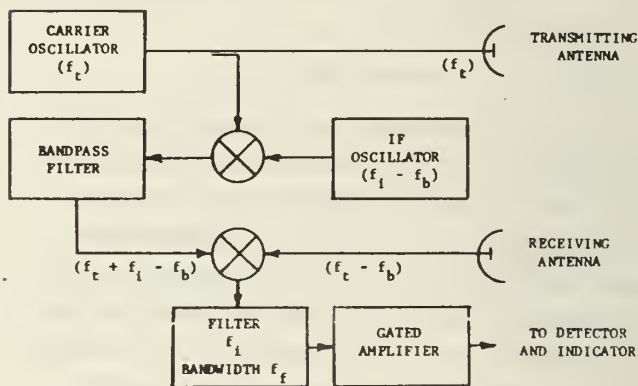Figure 2. Beat-frequency spectrum due to a single sweep and a single target.

Figure 3. System block diagram

maximum range are successively converted to the frequency f_i and are thus separated to yield target range information. The oscilloscope PPI display is deflected radially in synchronism with the IF oscillator frequency sweep, and deflected in azimuth synchronously with the antenna sweep.

The range discrimination of the systems can be determined from equation (1). Targets of equal strength can be separately detected if their beat frequencies are separated by f_f. It follows then the range discrimination, δR, is given by

$$\delta R = \frac{cTf_f}{2\Delta f} = \frac{1.2c}{\Delta f} \qquad (2)$$

Now for $\tau\Delta f \gg 1$ it can be shown that the width of the transmitted spectrum at half amplitude is Δf[2]. It is not surprising that for equal bandwidth, the range discrimination of the CW FM radar is the same as that of the pulse radar.

The radar shown in Figure 3 has the advantage of simplicity, but information rate is limited since

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only one range interval can be examined at a time. Information rate could be increased by using a multiplicity of filters. It is significant to determine the time required to search all range and azimuth bins. Assume that the maximum range of interest is N times the range discrimination. If successive range intervals examined are separated by δR, and $1/T$ range are intervals examined per second, then the time required to sweep from 0 to maximum range, t_s, is

$$t_s = NT \qquad (3)$$

If the antenna is rotated one beam width, θ_B, in time t_s, then the search time required to rotate the antenna through 360° is

$$t_a = \frac{360NT}{\theta_B} \qquad (4)$$

where θ_B is in degrees. For example, if N is 200, T is 400 μsec, and θ_B is 3°, then t_a is 9.6 seconds. This time is increased if N is increased, or if, as is desirable, some overlap is permitted between successive range intervals examined. The search time decreases if a sector less than 360° is scanned.

The doppler shift due to target motion is $2v_r f_o/c$ where v_r is the radial component of velocity. If v_r is 20 yards/sec, representing a very fast surface target, and f_o is 9 GHz, the doppler shift is 1100 hertz. Typically f_f would be in the order of 5000 hertz for a marine navigation radar, so this doppler shift represents a range error less than one fourth of the range discrimination, an entirely acceptable error.

COMPARISON WITH PULSE RADAR

Equation (2) shows for equal transmitted bandwidths, CW FM and pulse radars have virtually the same range discrimination. In the pulse radar the receiver must have a bandwidth comparable to the transmitted bandwidth. The CW FM radar, on the other hand, has an IF bandwidth equal to f_f, a small fraction of the transmitted bandwidth. Required gain can therefore be obtained with a relatively small number of stages. Moreover, the

range discrimination may be changed simply by changing Δf, the transmitter frequency deviation. To change range discrimination of a pulse radar, one generally changes pulse width, receiver bandwidth, and the pulse repetition frequency.

It can be shown that for equal useful average powers transmitted, target illumination times, equal receiver noise figures, antenna gains, integration efficiencies, integration times, and optimized bandwidths, pulse and CW FM radars have the same maximum range on a given target. Here the CW FM radar has a 3dB disadvantage if the receiver duty cycle is 50 percent. Additional loss of up to 3dB may occur if the echo spectrum is not centered in the IF filter. The pulse radar, on the other hand, has a 7dB loss when in a typical case 25 pulses from a given target are integrated by means of a cathode-ray tube. Typically, then, the range performance of a CW FM radar equals that of a comparable pulse radar when the average transmitted powers are the same.

The pulse radar transmits high peak power in short pulses to obtain a given average power. High voltages are therefore required in the relatively complicated modulator. In the CW FM transmitter the power is constant, and only relatively low voltages are required in the transmitter. Solid state oscillators now available can furnish the power required for a moderate (10 mile) range marine navigational radar while operating from the storage battery voltages available on most small craft. A high degree of modulation linearity is required in the CW FM transmitter, but the required linearity is not necessarily hard to obtain [3].

Pulse radars do not suffer from any range ambiguity provided echos are not received from targets at a time greater than the pulse repetition period. CW FM radars may have a range ambiguity problem when weak target returns are received at ranges somewhat smaller or larger than the return from a very strong target. Figure 2 shows the IF spectrum of a given target. If the IF filter is at a frequency $2/\tau$ higher than the center of this

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spectrum in an effort to locate a target at a range differing by $2c/\Delta f$, the filter will respond to the side bands of the strong-target spectrum. The filter output in this case will be in the order of 26 dB less than if the strong target return were centered in the filter, but this spurious response could make it difficult to detect the return from a navigational buoy with a relatively large object such as a ship nearby. This range ambiguity can be reduced, for example, by shaping the IF spectrum of targets to reduce the amplitude of the side bands. This could be accomplished by modulating the receiver gain before the IF filter with a smooth weighting function rather than by employing square-wave gating as has been assumed. Further work needs to be done in this area.

EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM

As the first step in demonstrating the feasibility of a solid-state CW FM radar, a hybrid unit was constructed from laboratory components. The basic system block diagram was as indicated in Figure 3. Operation was at a frequency of about 9 GHz with a power output of 2 watts. The transmitter frequency deviation could be set at any value up to 12 MHz. The receiver intermediate frequency was 30 MHz, and the IF filter was a linear phase (Gaussian) filter with a 6 dB bandwidth of 5.1 kHz. Receiver noise figure was 13.8 dB. Circular parabolic reflectors with a 3 degree beam width were used for both transmitting and receiving antennas. These antennas could not conveniently be scanned, so a type A (amplitude vs range) presentation was used.

Figure 4 shows a typical display obtained with the antenna oriented as shown in Figure 5. Figure 6 shows a high resolution display obtained with the antenna oriented as shown in Figure 7. Note that objects separated by 40 yards are completely resolved. This display was obtained with a Δf of 12 MHz for a theoretical range resolution from equation (2) of 33 yards.
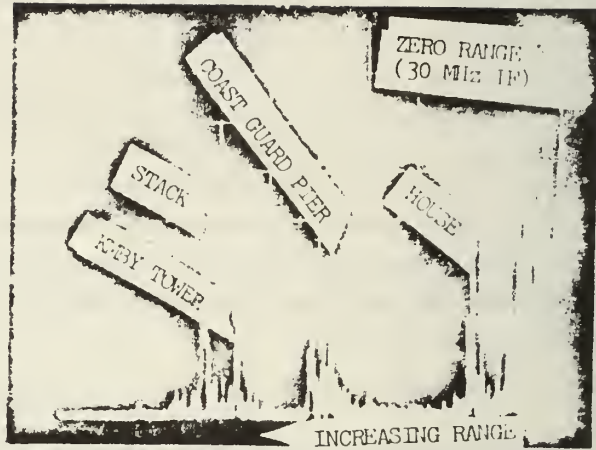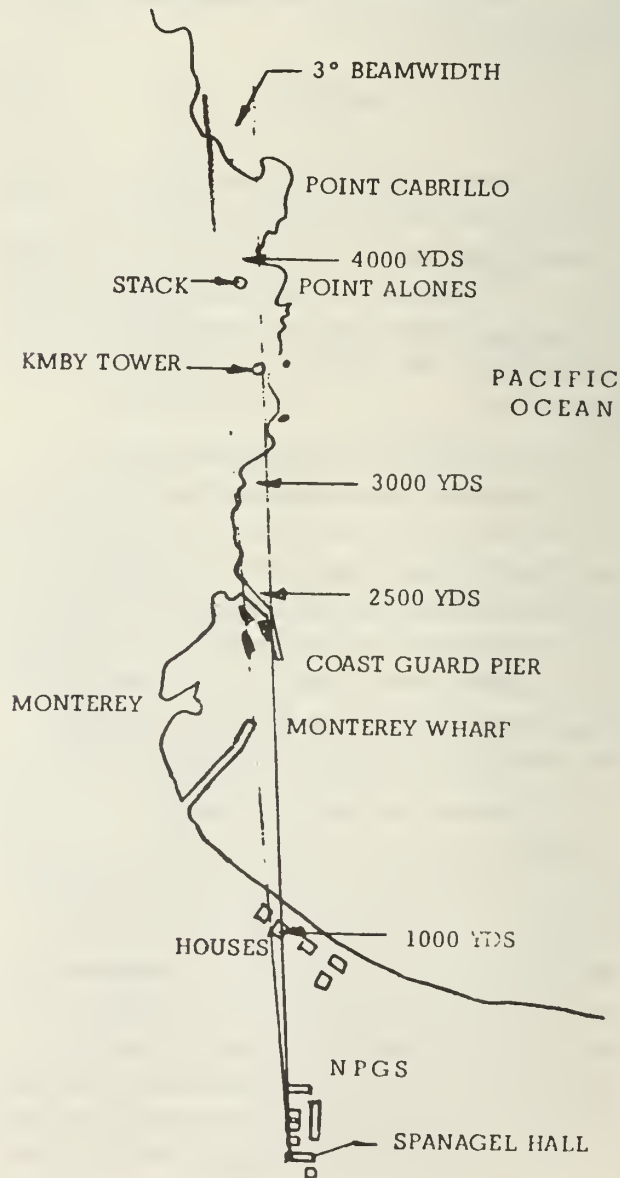

Figure 4. Long-range display

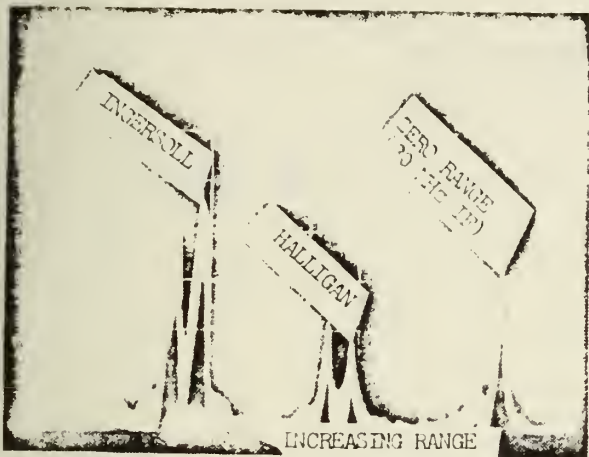Figure 5. Radar field of view (long-range)
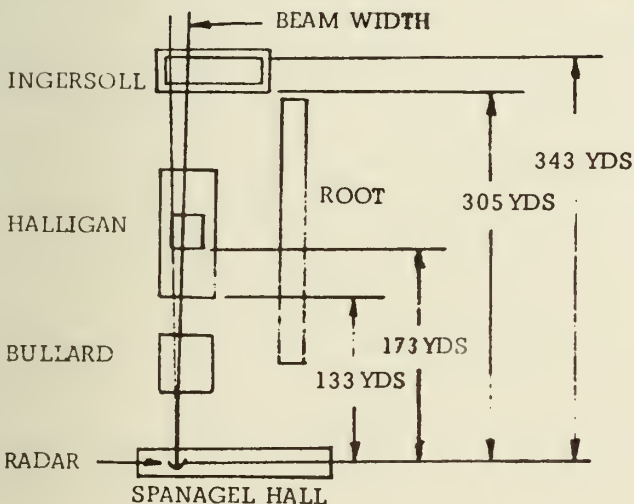
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Figure 6. Short-range display of campus

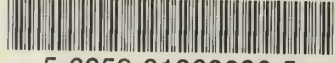Figure 7. Radar field of view (short-range)

CONCLUSIONS

The feasibility of a CW FM radar with a range resolution of about 30 yards has been demonstrated. It remains to be shown that such a radar can be built with all solid-state components in a small, lightweight package. Development of the necessary solid-state circuitry is proceeding as time and limited funding permit.

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