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Kremeyer

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(54) **SHOCK WAVE MODIFICATION METHOD, APPARATUS, AND SYSTEM**

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(22) Filed: **May 31, 2001**

Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**⁷ **B64C 23/00**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **244/1 N; 244/130**

(58) **Field of Search** 244/1 A, 1 N, 244/1 R, 199, 130

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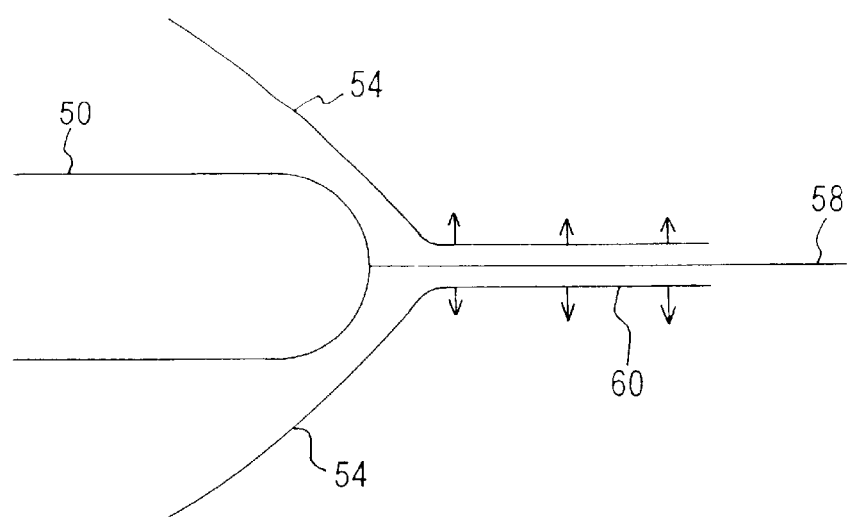
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A shock wave in a fluid is modified by emitting energy to form an extended path in the fluid; heating fluid along the path to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path; and directing a path. The volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave and modifies the shock wave. This eliminates or reduces a pressure difference between fluid on opposite sides of the shock wave. Electromagnetic and/or electric discharge can be used to heat the fluid along the path. This application has uses in reducing the drag on a body passing through the fluid, noise reduction, and steering a body through the fluid. An apparatus is also disclosed.

79 Claims, 15 Drawing Sheets



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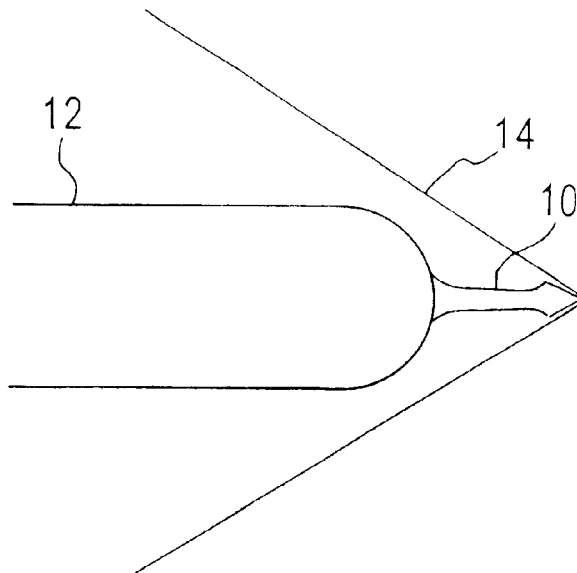


FIG. 1
(PRIOR ART)

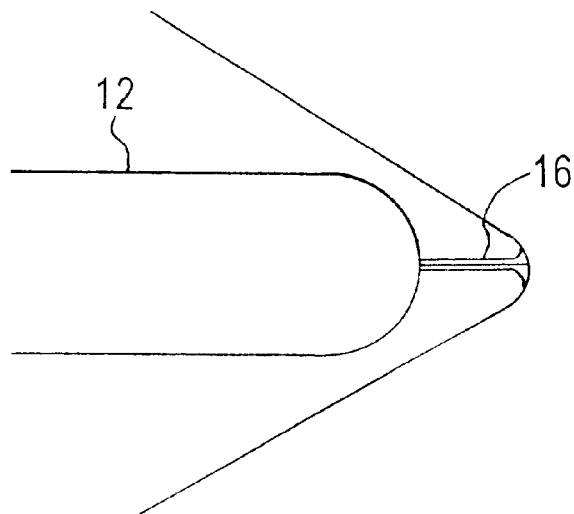


FIG. 2
(PRIOR ART)

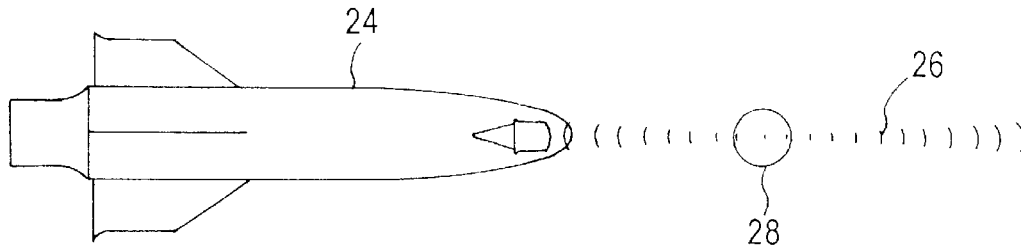


FIG. 3A
(PRIOR ART)

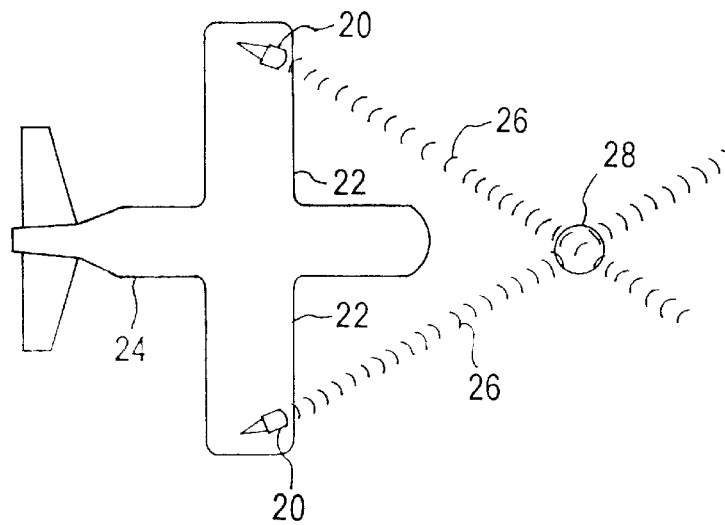


FIG. 3B
(PRIOR ART)

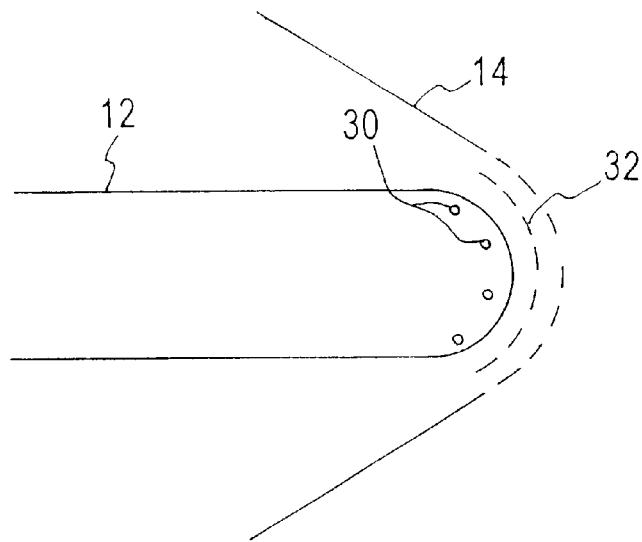


FIG. 4
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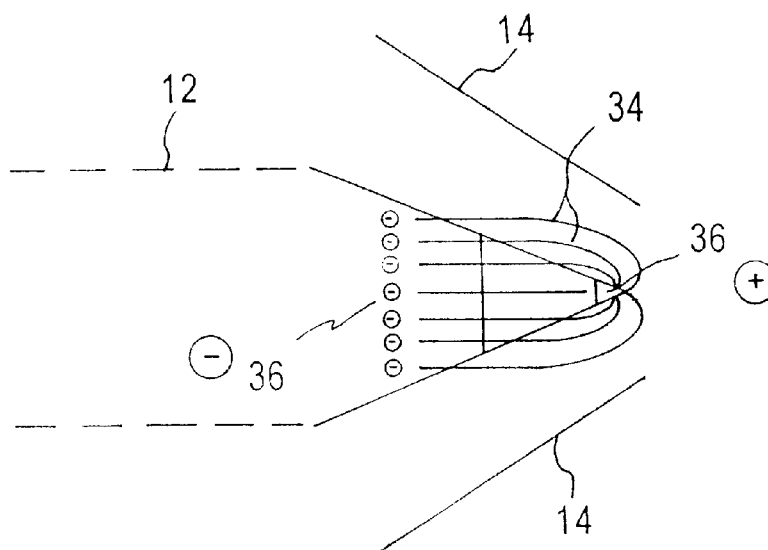


FIG. 5
(PRIOR ART)

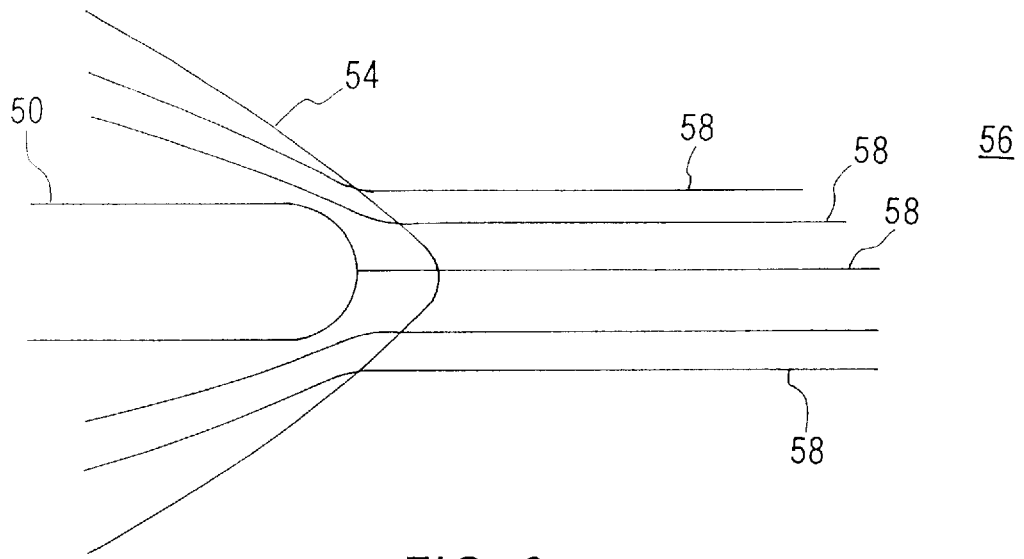


FIG. 6

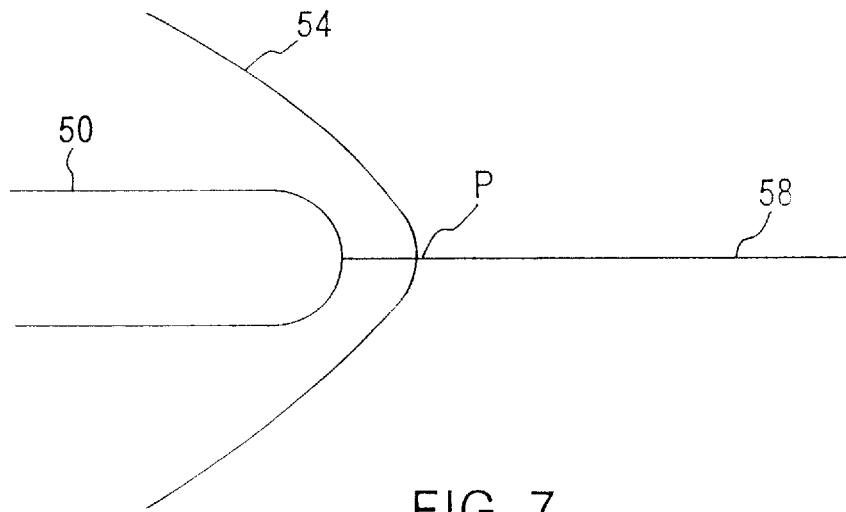
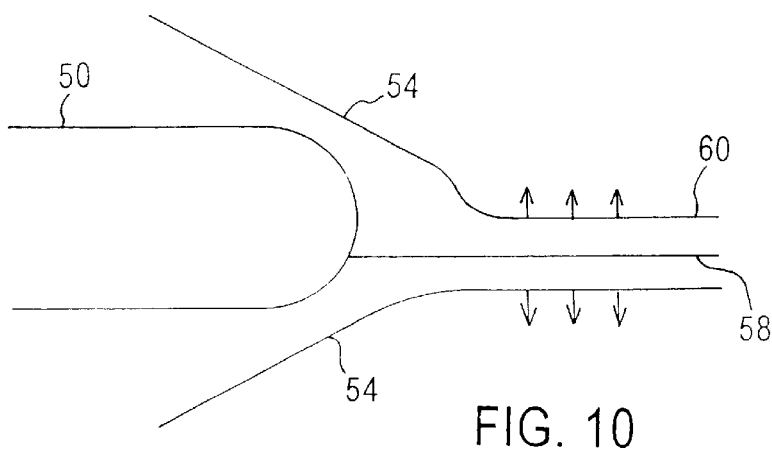
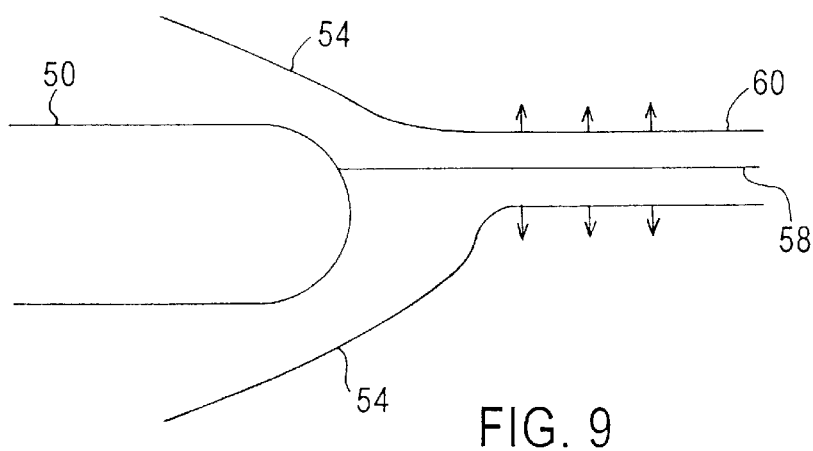
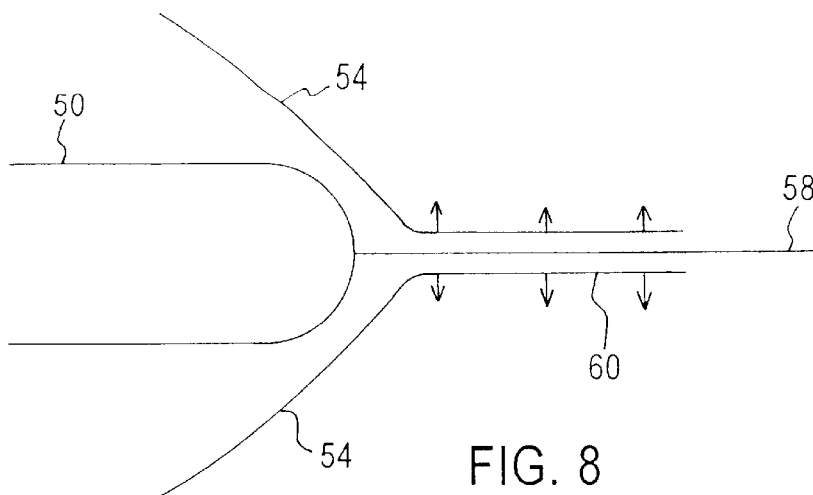


FIG. 7



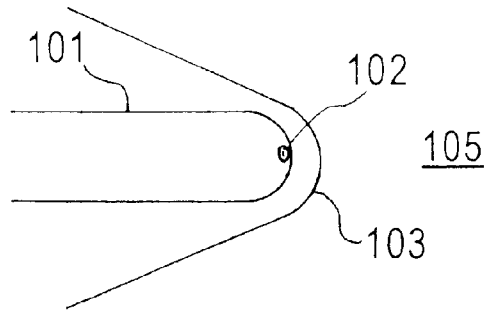


FIG. 11A

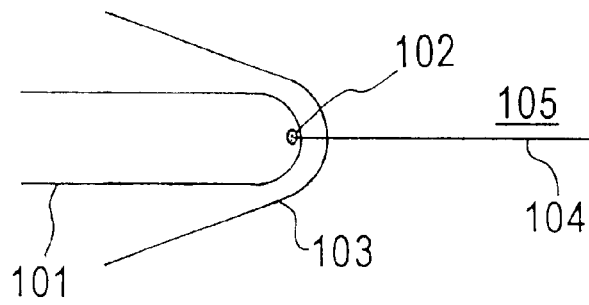


FIG. 11B

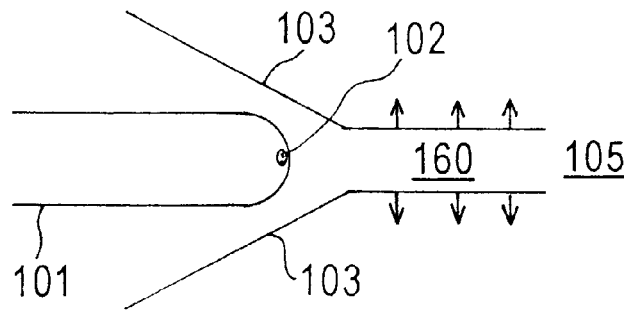


FIG. 11C

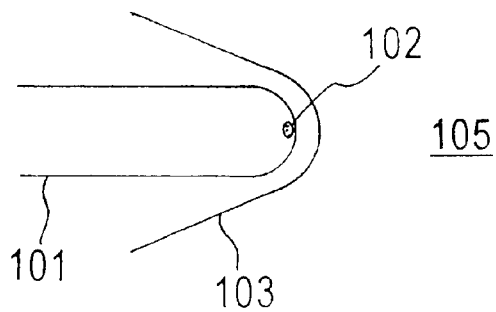


FIG. 11D

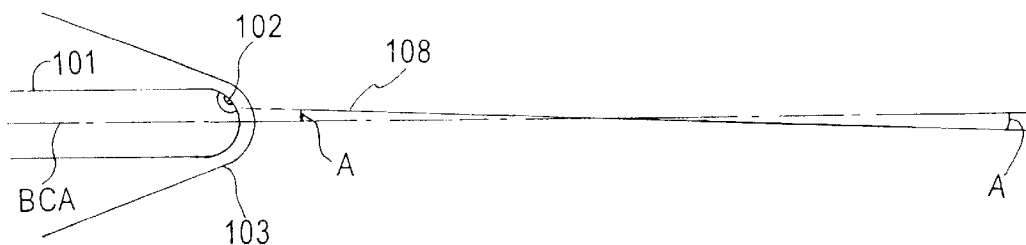


FIG. 12

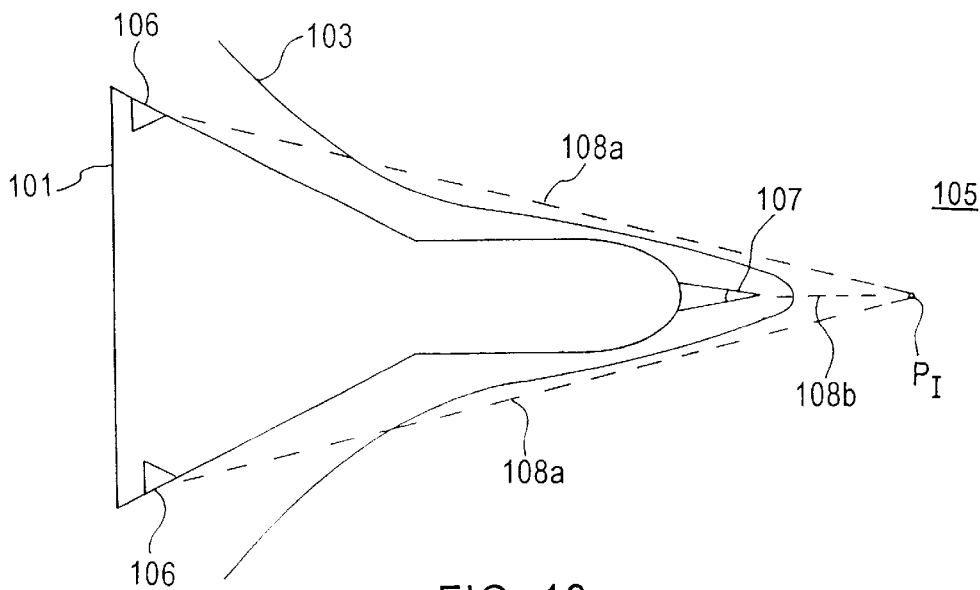


FIG. 13

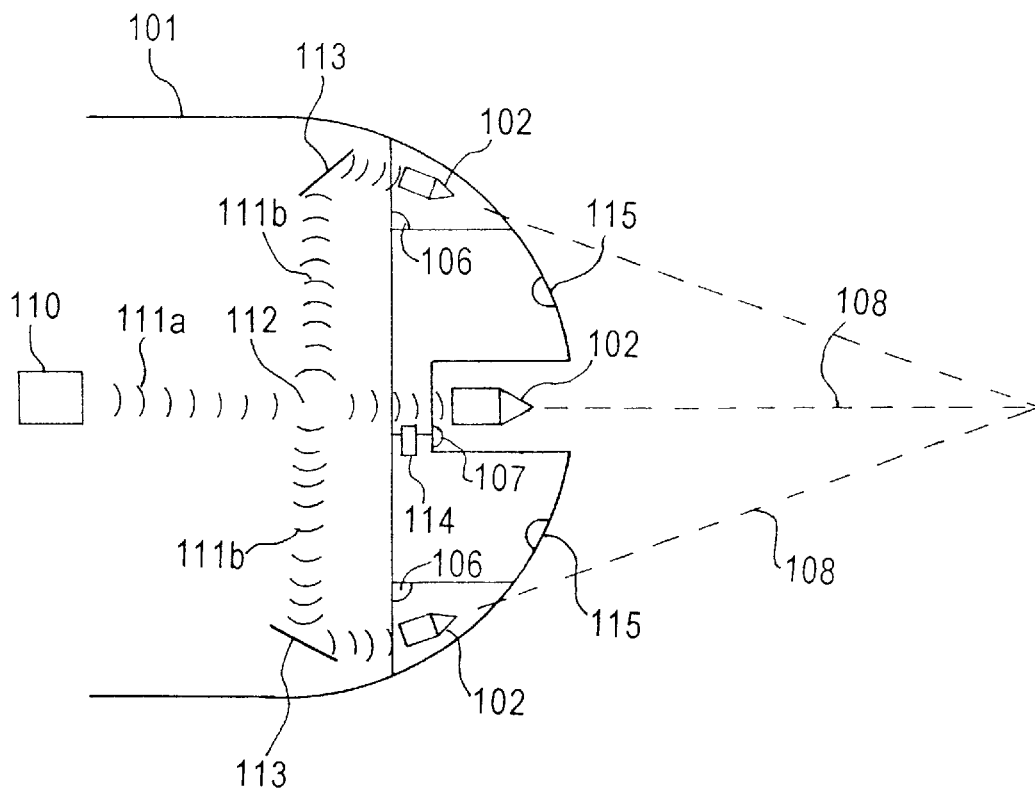


FIG. 14

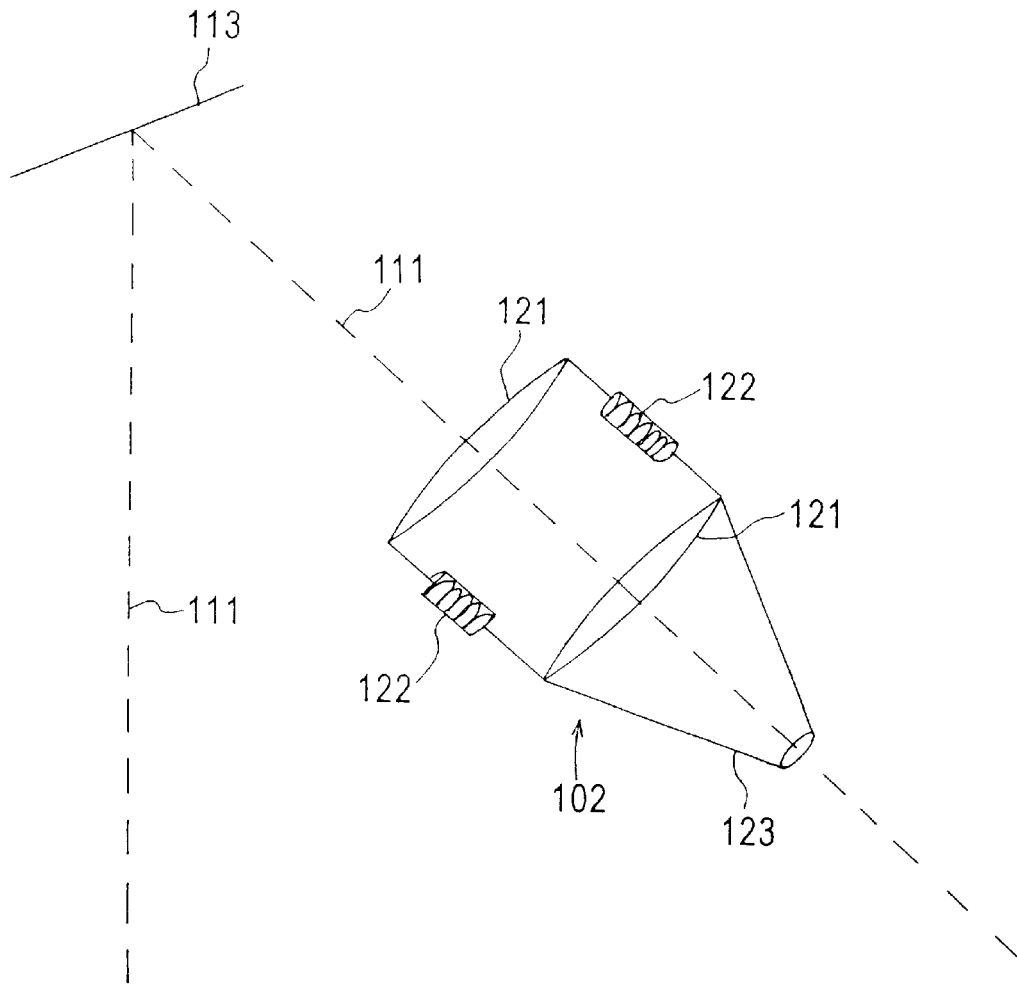


FIG. 15

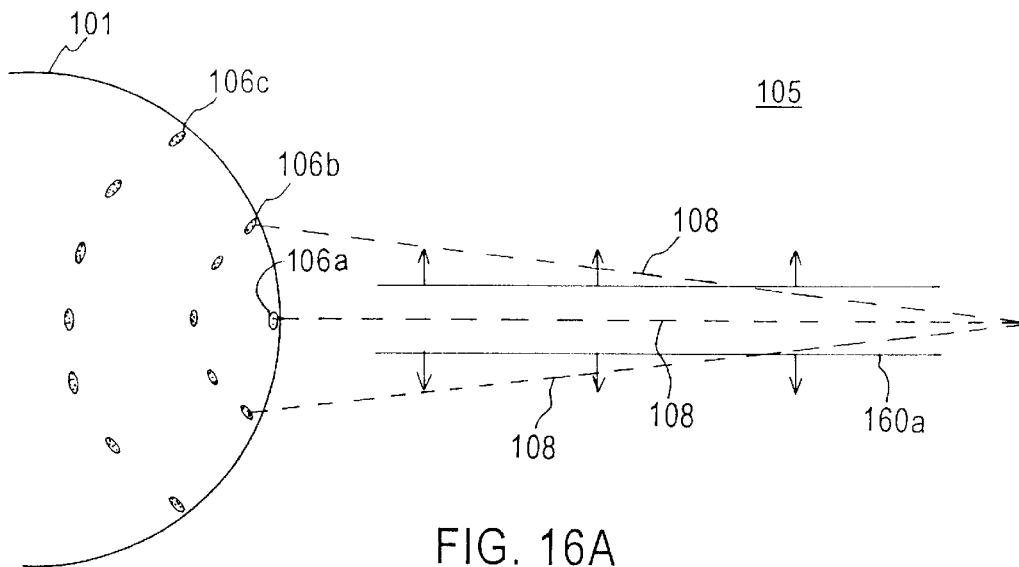


FIG. 16A

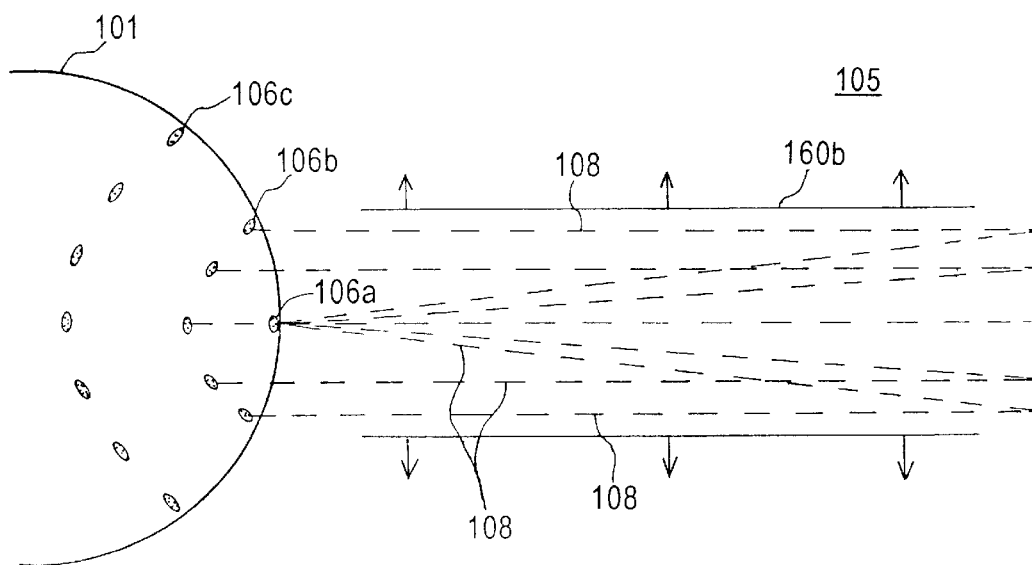


FIG. 16B

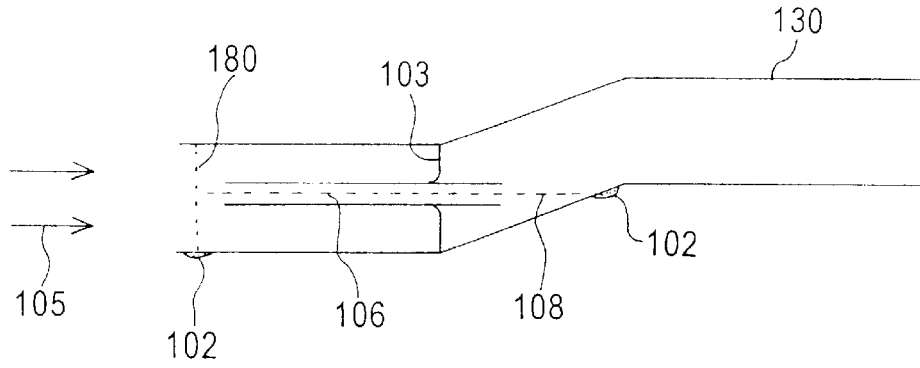


FIG. 17

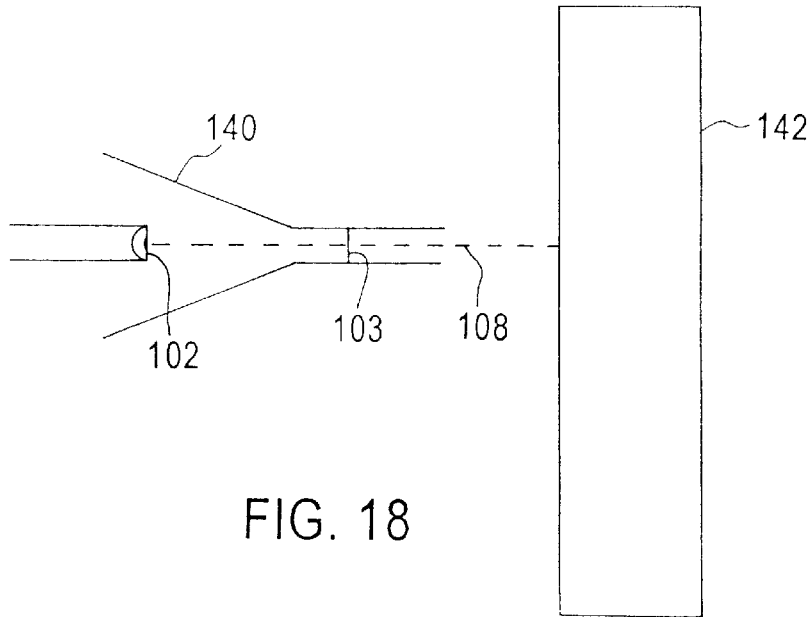


FIG. 18

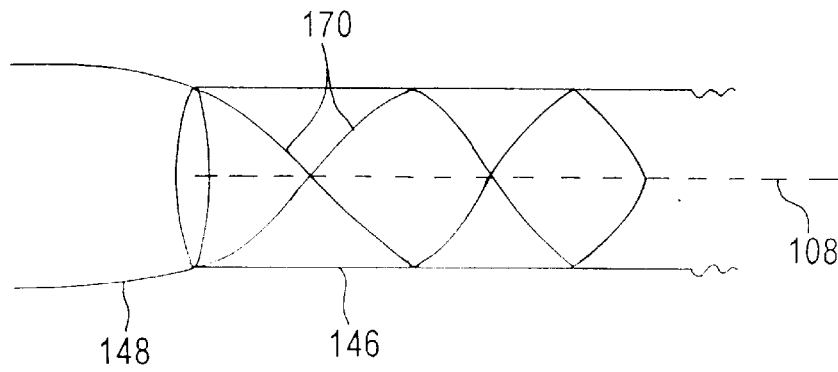


FIG. 19

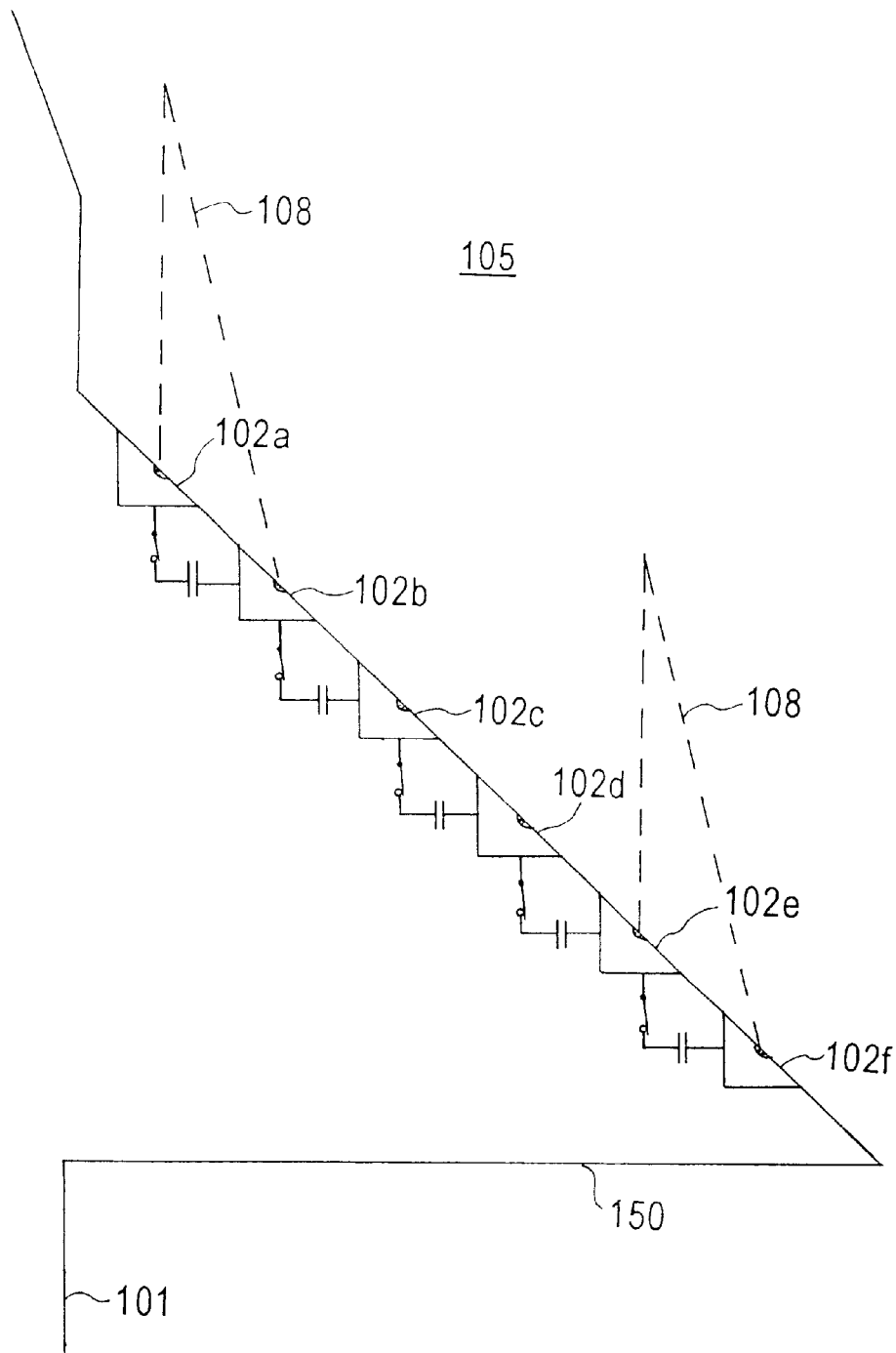
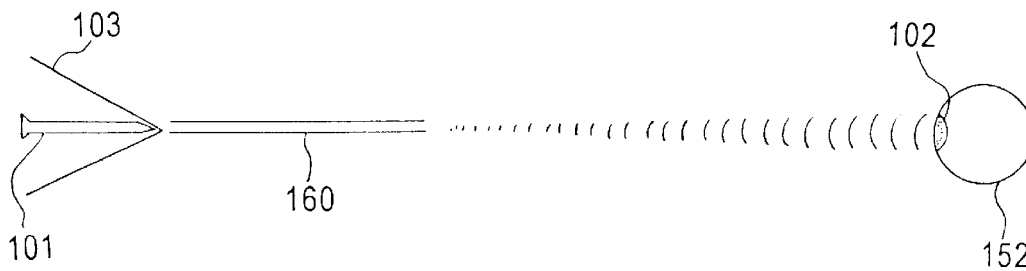
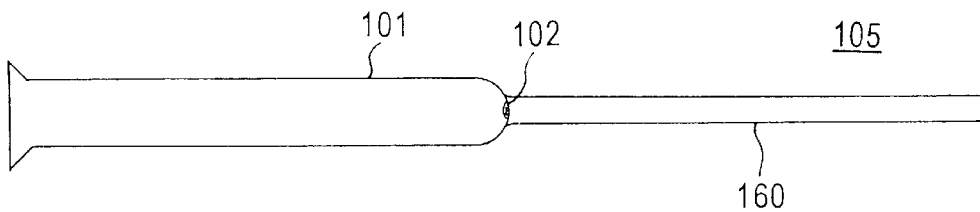
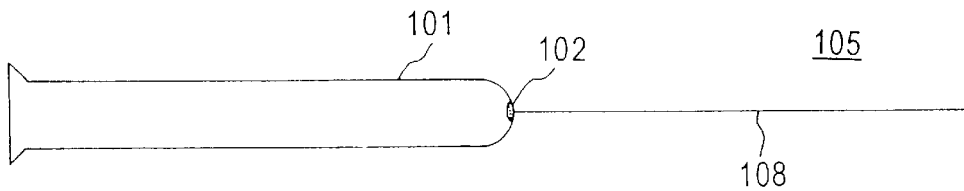


FIG. 20



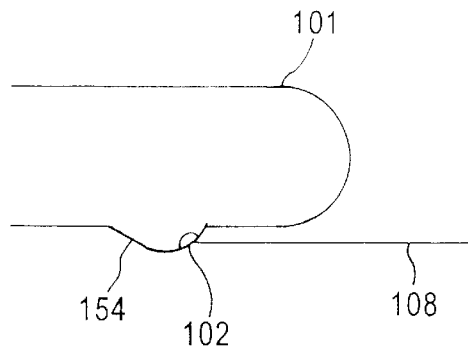


FIG. 23

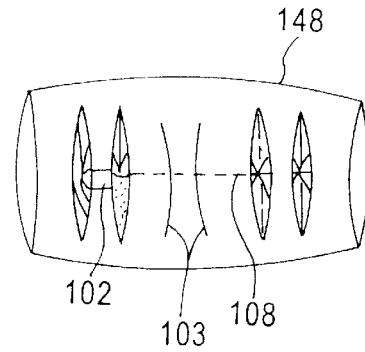


FIG. 24

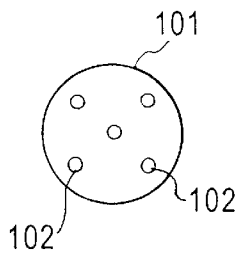


FIG. 25A

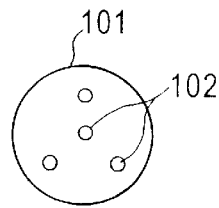


FIG. 25B

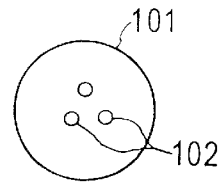


FIG. 25C

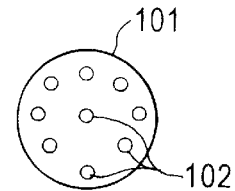


FIG. 25D

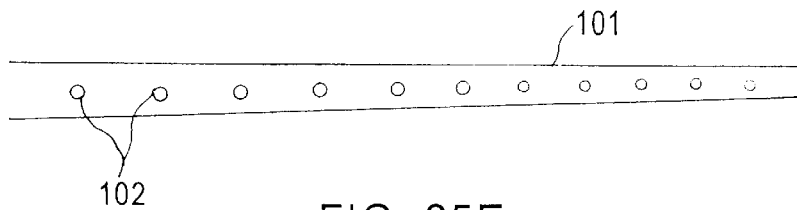


FIG. 25E

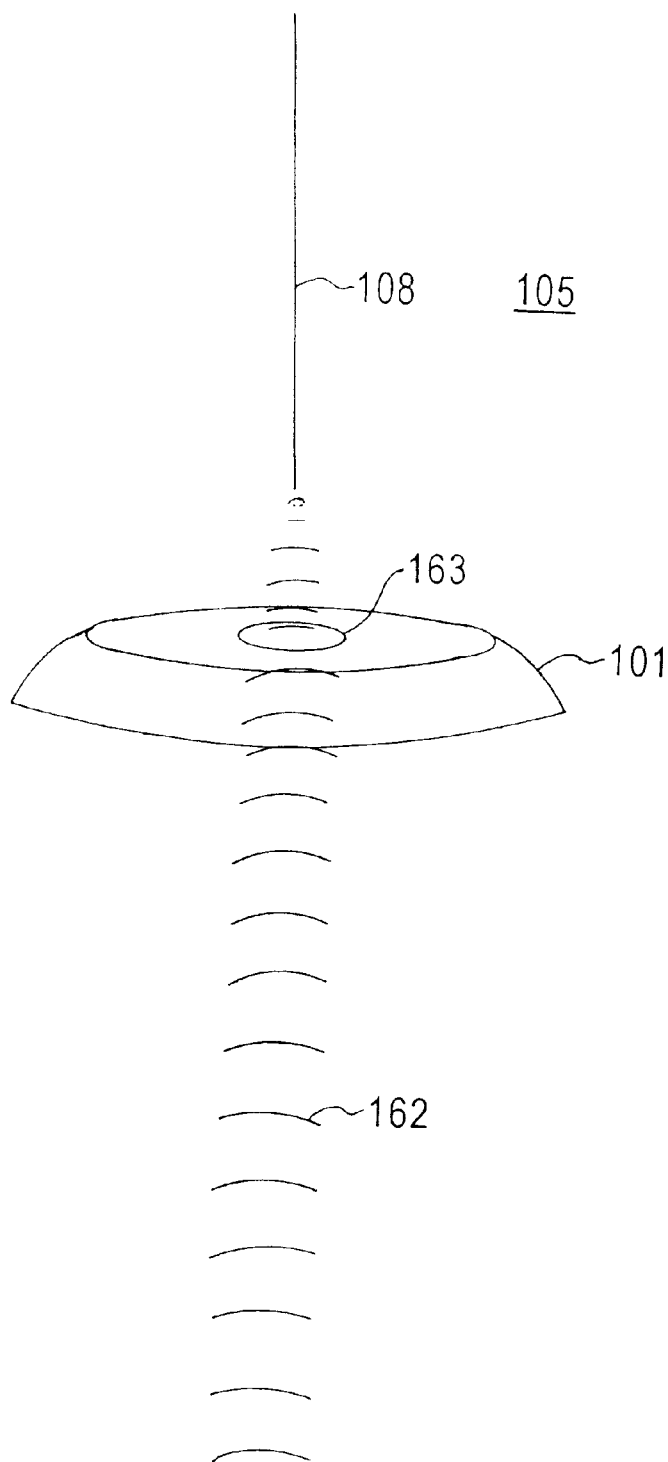


FIG. 26

SHOCK WAVE MODIFICATION METHOD, APPARATUS, AND SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/208,068, filed on May 31, 2000, incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to facilitating the movement of objects through a fluid and, more particularly, to modifying shock waves within the fluid.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

When a fluid is driven to flow at a relative speed, with respect to the fluid it encounters, that exceeds the speed of sound within the encountered fluid, one or more shock waves can develop. The driving of the fluid can occur when the fluid is pressed forward by an object or body propagating through the fluid. Alternatively, the fluid can be accelerated by a pressure gradient generated by any other means, such as in wind tunnels, propulsive units, jets, and rapid heating/expansion. When a shock wave is formed in a supersonic stream of a fluid, several undesirable effects can occur.

If, for example, the supersonic stream of fluid results from a propulsive effluent stream, such as the discharge of a jet aircraft, then pressure jump(s) due to the difference in pressure across a shock wave can reduce the efficiency of the desired momentum transfer from the vehicle to the effluent stream. Additionally, a series of shock waves within the supersonic stream can augment the acoustic signature of the supersonic stream in certain frequency ranges. This augmentation of the acoustic signature is undesirable for both environmental and detection avoidance reasons. As a further example, if solid (or liquid) particles in multi-phase supersonic flow are directed to propagate across a shock wave, such as during supersonic spray deposition, a potential problem is that particles of different sizes and/or densities are affected differently when they cross the shock wave. This can result in an undesired segregation of particles, or particle size redistribution at the shock wave depending on the shock parameters and the size and/or densities of the particles. Furthermore, when a body or vehicle is driving a fluid forward, the driving body will typically feel the strong increase in pressure across the shock wave as a drag force that impedes the forward motion of the body. Another problem associated with the increase in pressure across a shock wave is an increase in temperature. Again, if the shock is being driven by a body or vehicle, high temperatures behind the shock wave can result in undesirable heating of the vehicle materials and/or components behind the shock wave. The deleterious effect of interacting shock waves and their high temperatures and pressures can be yet stronger.

The control of shock waves by reducing the strength of the shock wave or completely eliminating the shock wave is sometimes referred to as flow control. This term is used because the fluid flow is being controlled by manipulating or affecting the shock wave(s) within the fluid. When considering vehicles/bodies, flow control also encompasses processes which reduce drag. This drag can be the overall or total drag, the reduction of which is intended to optimize the performance and efficiency of the vehicle. Alternatively, the drag reduction can be preferentially applied to generate moments or torque, which is useful in maneuvering the

vehicle or maintaining certain angles of attack. Flow control can also be used to reduce heating and modify acoustic signatures such as a sonic boom, which result directly from the shock waves.

As a fluid element crosses from one side of the shock wave to the other, the fluid element experiences a sharp and theoretically discontinuous increase in pressure. The magnitude of this increase or "pressure jump" is typically larger for stronger shock waves, which is characterized by a greater difference between the pressures on either side of the shock wave along a perpendicular line across the shock wave. As used herein, the term "reducing the strength" of a shock wave involves reducing the pressure difference across the shock wave along the original direction of flow by reducing or eliminating the pressure discontinuity within the fluid flow and/or diffusing or broadening the pressure jump to create a shallower pressure gradient across the shock wave in this original direction of flow. When a shock wave has been removed or eliminated, the formerly shocked flow becomes subsonic in the original direction of fluid flow although, however, the flow may be supersonic or shocked in directions transverse (not limited to orthogonal) to the original direction of the fluid flow in the specific spatial region in question.

Reducing the strength of the shock wave, or eliminating it completely, can advantageously reduce or remove a sometimes significant portion of the drag force acting on the body due to the shock wave. This can be beneficial to such bodies because a reduction in drag force increases the range and/or speed of the body. Therefore, the reduction in drag requires less energy/fuel to propel the vehicle and/or allows for a greater payload of the vehicle or body for the same amount of fuel/propellant required without invoking any drag reduction.

Another benefit of being able to reduce the strength of or eliminate the shock wave is the ability to steer the body or vehicle. If only certain portions of the shock wave are reduced in strength at a given time, such as to one side of the body, then drag on the body can be preferentially and selectively controlled. Being able to control the drag on certain parts of the body allows the body to be steered by preferentially controlling the strength of the associated shock wave(s) as well as the resulting pressure distribution along the body.

Since the first supersonic vehicle, there have been many developments to reduce the strength of shock waves; increase shock standoff distance from the vehicle; and reduce the stagnation pressure and temperature. One of the first developments was that of the aerospike **10**, as illustrated in FIG. **1**. This is typically a pointed protrusion extending ahead of the nose of the vehicle **12** or other critical shock-generating surfaces. The aerospike **10** effectively increases the "sharpness" of the vehicle **12**, and is based on the idea of using a mechanical structure to physically push air to seed transverse motion in the fluid, thus allowing the fluid to start moving laterally out of the way before the fluid actually encounters a larger part of the vehicle **12**. Because the aerospike **10** pushes air, a shock wave **14** actually begins to develop when the ambient air encounters the tip of the aerospike **10**.

Other developments, as illustrated in FIG. **2**, have been the injection of fluids **16**, such as streams of water, gas, and heated and/or ionized fluid, toward the shock wave **14** from the vehicle **12**. These fluid extensions behave similarly to the aerospike and obtain similar effects and benefits, because the counter-flowing fluid also pushes the ambient air forward

and laterally before the air reaches a larger part of the vehicle **12**. More recently, there have been attempts to ionize the air ahead of a vehicle and its shock wave using by radio frequency (RF) or microwave radiation. Electromagnetic methods have the benefit that they can pass through the gas without “pushing,” or imparting any momentum, to the gas. The electromagnetic radiation can therefore pass through a shock wave without significantly affecting it.

The microwave methods involve creating a spot ahead of the shock wave using a microwave intensity high enough to heat and/or ionize the gas. One proposed method, as illustrated in FIG. **3A**, is to focus a microwave beam **26** emanating from the front of a supersonic vehicle **24** to a point **28** ahead of the shock wave. Another proposed method using microwaves, as illustrated in FIG. **3B**, has been to mount microwave horns **20** on the wings **22** on both sides of the vehicle fuselage **24**. Each microwave horn **20** emits a microwave beam **26** that is alone too weak to ionize the gas. However, when the two beams **26** are crossed in front of the vehicle **24**, the combined electric field **28** is strong enough to ionize the gas. Both of the aforementioned methods using microwaves disadvantageously must be operated continually to maintain a hot and/or ionized path of gas ahead of the vehicle and/or shock wave. Furthermore, both of these methods concentrate on heating a single spot ahead of the shock wave; and as such, much of the microwave energy is inefficiently used because of the resulting scattering.

Still another development has been the use of RF antennae **30** to generate a diffuse plasma near the body of the vehicle **12**, as illustrated in FIG. **4**. This diffuse plasma **32** mainly affects the viscosity in the boundary layer adjacent the vehicle **12** and heats a general area around the vehicle **12**.

Electric discharges **34** have also been used to ionize the air around the vehicle **12**, with a resulting heating geometry similar to that of the RF generated plasma, as illustrated in FIG. **5**. In this method, an electrode **36** of one polarity is positioned at the tip of the vehicle **12**, and several oppositely polarized electrodes **36** are positioned along the body of the vehicle **12** further downstream. When the discharge **34** is energized, the discharge **34** results in a diffuse heating/ionization around the vehicle body **12**, between the oppositely polarized electrodes **36**, which tends to modify the shock wave **14**.

The problem of flow control at high speeds is becoming more important as the demands on both speed and maneuverability in flight systems are increasing. As previously discussed, one approach to flow control involves mechanical manipulation of the air stream around the vehicle behind the shock wave. However, an attempt to extend an object ahead of the shock wave typically creates a shock wave of its own.

Some methods of mechanical flow control behind the shock wave use the airframe and control surfaces to divert the flow or employ impulsive lateral thrusters. However, as the speed increases to higher Mach numbers, using control surfaces to steer the body requires increasingly greater power to offset the higher pressures encountered at these speeds. These power demands typically cannot be met by the control systems designed for subsonic flow and low supersonic Mach numbers.

The increasing demands and limitations on conventional control systems have led to the desire to develop new concepts for actuators and flow control systems. It is further desired to reduce or eliminate the need for moving parts and also to work with the high speed gas flow, instead of fighting against it. It is, therefore, desirable to develop a new family of control systems whose performance is optimized at

extremely high speeds. For craft that may operate at both subsonic and supersonic speeds, these systems will complement the current methods of flow control, which are very effective at low speeds but increasingly impracticable at higher speeds. There is, therefore, a need for a device with a minimal number of moving parts, and whose effectiveness increases with increasing Mach number.

Additionally, there is a need for an improved method of modifying shock waves to reduce or eliminate the pressure discontinuity within the fluid flow. Such a modification to the shock wave can eliminate or reduce associated problems with momentum transfer efficiency, particulate transfer efficiency, and/or acoustic signature. Furthermore, the modification of the shock wave can reduce heating that results from the shock wave, thereby reducing the need for complex cooling methods, reducing cost, and further expanding the performance envelope of the vehicle associated with the shock wave.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

These and other needs are met by embodiments of the present invention which provide a method for modifying a shock wave in a fluid. The method includes the steps of emitting energy to form an extended path in the fluid; heating fluid along the path to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path; and directing the path. The volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave to modify the shock wave. This eliminates or reduces a pressure difference between locations on opposite sides of the shock wave. Electromagnetic energy and/or electric discharge can be used to heat the fluid along the path. This application has uses in reducing the drag on a body passing through the fluid, noise reduction, and steering a body through the fluid by asymmetrically modifying a shock wave adjacent to the body.

In one aspect of the invention, electromagnetic energy ionizes fluid along the path and the fluid along the path is heated by electric discharge following the ionized path. The electromagnetic energy can also be in the form of a filamenting laser pulse. The energy can be emitted from a body passing through the fluid and creating the shock wave or the energy path can be emitted from a location remote from the body that creates the shock wave.

Additionally, the direction of successive paths can be actively changed. In this manner, steering of a body through the fluid can be achieved. Alternatively, the body can be steered by heating the fluid selectively on multiple paths.

Additional advantages of the present invention will become readily apparent to those skilled in this art from the following detailed description, wherein only an exemplary embodiment of the present invention is shown and described, simply by way of illustration of the best mode contemplated for carrying out the present invention. As will be realized, the present invention is capable of other and different embodiments, and its several details are capable of modifications in various obvious respects, all without departing from the invention. Accordingly, the drawings and description are to be regarded as illustrative in nature, and not as restrictive.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Reference is made to the attached drawings, wherein elements having the same reference numeral designations represent like elements throughout and wherein:

FIG. **1** is a partial side view of an aerospike in accordance with the prior art;

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FIG. 2 is a partial side view of a method of expelling heated fluid ahead of a supersonic aircraft in accordance with the prior art;

FIGS. 3A and 3B are top plan views of methods of using microwave energy to heat a specific location ahead of a supersonic vehicle in accordance with the prior art;

FIG. 4 is a partial side view of RF antennae on a vehicle to generate a diffuse plasma near the vehicle in accordance with the prior art;

FIG. 5 is a partial side view of oppositely polarized electrodes on a vehicle in accordance with the prior art;

FIG. 6 is a partial top plan view of a shock wave adjacent to a body and streamlines flowing into the shock wave;

FIG. 7 illustrates a heated core being formed through the shock wave of FIG. 6 in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 8 illustrates the heated core of FIG. 7 expanding and puncturing the shock wave;

FIG. 9 illustrates a heated core being formed asymmetrically through the shock wave of FIG. 6 so as to form asymmetrical forces against the body;

FIG. 10 illustrates a heated core being formed asymmetrically through the shock wave of FIG. 6 so as to form asymmetrical forces against the body;

FIGS. 11A–11D is a partial top plan view of a shock wave in front of a body being punctured in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 12 is a partial side plan view of a body passing through a fluid with a non-zero angle of attack in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 13 is a partial top plan view of a body using a set of electromagnetic and electric discharge emitters in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 14 is a schematic view of electromagnetic and electric discharge emitters similar to those in FIG. 13;

FIG. 15 is an enlarged schematic view of an emission port shown in FIG. 14;

FIGS. 16A and 16B are partial plan views of a body using an array of energy discharge devices in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 17 is a partial cross-sectional view of a propulsion unit using energy discharge devices in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 18 is a partial cross-sectional view of a supersonic spray deposition unit using an energy discharge device in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 19 is a partial top plan view of a propulsion unit using an energy discharge devices to modify the acoustic signature of the propulsion unit in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 20 is a partial top plan view of a wing on an aircraft using a linear array of energy discharge devices in accordance with the present invention;

FIGS. 21A and 21B are plan views of a submersible body using energy discharge devices in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 22 is a plan view of a heated core being generated adjacent to a body from an energy discharge device located away from the body in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 23 is a side view of a protrusion on a body using an energy discharge device in accordance with the present invention;

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FIG. 24 is a cross-section view of a propulsion unit using energy discharge devices in accordance with the present invention;

FIGS. 25A–25E illustrate several examples of the different geometries in which energy discharge devices can be arranged on a body in accordance with the present invention; and

FIG. 26 is a side view of an energy discharge device located away from a light craft being used to direct energy ahead of the craft in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention involves heating an extended path of fluid along a streamline ahead of a shock wave. A single energetic pulse can be used to heat a core of fluid, and this heated core continues to relieve/reduce the strength of the shock wave with no further energy input as the heated region of fluid streams into the initially shocked region. Alternatively, the shock may be moving into the hot/expanding fluid. The energy can be deposited, for example, by high-power electromagnetic radiation pulses or by electric discharges along an ionized path of an electromagnetic radiation pulse through the fluid. The additional energy deposition of the electric discharge allows the invention to affect a larger area, which can be useful in modifying/controlling larger diameter shock waves. The invention can also be used to modify the shock wave in such a manner as to maneuver a body through a fluid. The invention provides the ability to deposit electromagnetic energy in the form of heat and ionization along very long paths of gas/fluid.

As illustrated in FIG. 6, the method and apparatus of the invention, referring to a modification, such as elimination or reduction of the strength, of a shock wave 54 in a fluid 56, and/or control of the shock wave 54, will be described in the reference frame of the unmodified shock wave 54. In this reference frame, the shock wave 54 is stationary, and the medium or fluid 56 with parameters of a given density, pressure, and temperature distribution flows into the shock wave 54 from one side of the shock wave 54. As the fluid 56 crosses the shock wave 54, the fluid 56 typically experiences an increase in these parameters, the magnitude of which depends on the Mach number of the flow. The trajectories followed by “fluid elements” as they flow into the shock wave are typically called streamlines 58. Although the shock waves 54 are intended to be modified/reduced as a result of the invention, the shock wave 54 is shown in an unaltered state for purposes of describing the invention. If the unmodified shock wave created by a body/vehicle is stationary, the shock dynamics can also be described in the rest frame of the vehicle’s average motion.

It should be noted that the methods, apparatus, and systems of the present invention are applicable to any body 50 and any fluid 56 in any relationship to each other where a shock wave 54 forms in the fluid 56 and affects the fluid near the body 50. They are also applicable in any fluid flow, in which shock waves 54 are present. Furthermore, in dense fluids, such as liquids, the methods, apparatus, and systems can be beneficially applied even in the absence of shock waves.

Potential driving bodies 50, which create the shock wave include vehicles, such as airplanes, submarines, torpedoes, missiles, kill vehicles, launch vehicles, unmanned vehicles, supersonic/hypersonic transports, delivery vehicles, entry vehicles, and re-entry vehicles; portions of vehicles, such as protrusions, accessories, rotor blades and propeller blades;

projectiles; and portions of projectiles, such as missiles, bullets, warheads, and meteoroids. Again, when traveling through a dense fluid such as a liquid, this technology can be advantageously applied, even in the absence of shock waves at subsonic speeds. The fluids **54** through which these bodies **50** pass include ionized and non-ionized gases, such as air, and its components, methane and noble gasses; liquids, such as water; and mixtures of the gasses and liquids, and/or other fluids such as multi-phase fluids, such as dusty gases and aerosols. Additionally, the fluids may be those encountered in non-terrestrial atmospheres. Other flows can include fluids flowing through propulsive systems, such as air, air/fuel mixtures, reactive flow; reaction products passing through and/or out of combustion engines; and ionized or charged flow passing through electromagnetically driven propulsion systems. Such flow can also take place in other flow paths such as a nozzle or duct, or even in a supersonic jet stream, defined and delineated solely by its velocity gradients.

The method of modifying and/or controlling a shock wave **54** involves heating the incoming fluid **56** along a given streamline **58**. As illustrated in FIGS. **7** and **8**, in one aspect, a heated core of the fluid flows into the shock wave **54** through a particular location P in the unmodified shock wave reference frame. This process is discussed in terms of a steady shock wave, although the dynamic nature of the shock wave **54** implies that the shock wave **54** may be changing throughout the process, to which the present invention applies as well. Although, as described, the incoming streamlines **58** are approximately straight lines, the present invention is not limited in this manner, and the invention applies to streamlines that are not constant due to the evolving dynamics or are not straight lines. As the path is typically heated by electromagnetic radiation, the path is also typically effectively a straight line, and the heated path advantageously coincides with the straight streamline **58**. Upon heating a fluid path ahead of the shock wave **54**, an effectively cylindrical shock wave may propagate substantially outward from this path. This cylindrical shock wave will weaken as it expands, but regardless of the evolution of the cylindrical shock wave, the long heated region resulting from the different heating methods may also be referred to herein as a "low-density"/"heated" "core"/"filament" **60** at various stages of its evolution.

As illustrated in FIG. **8**, the shock wave **54** can respond to the heated core in that the shock wave **54** is removed locally, such that fluid flow is no longer supersonic in that location because the speed of sound is sufficiently high in the heated core. Alternatively, the strength of the shock wave is reduced as the heated core flows into the shock wave, such that the fluid flow is still supersonic (not shown), although with a lower local Mach number.

One advantage of the present invention is that the pressure behind the shock wave is reduced locally where the shock wave meets the heated core, and this reduction in pressure occurs because the heated core acts as a channel for the escape of high-pressure gas trapped behind the shock wave. A shock wave typically forms because ambient fluid is being pushed faster than the ambient fluid's speed of sound, such that the fluid is being pushed faster than a pressure buildup can "radiate away" via sound waves. When a streamline of fluid ahead of the shock wave is heated in accordance with the present invention, the heated core becomes a channel having a lower density and a higher speed of sound than the non-heated fluid. If the temperature of the heated fluid is sufficiently high, the speed of sound within the channel can be faster than the velocity of the shock through the ambient

fluid. When this occurs, the high-pressure fluid, formerly contained behind the shock wave can flow forward along the heated core, thus releasing some pressure.

The heated core forming a channel through the shock wave is analogous to a "puncturing" of the shock wave. Once the shock wave is punctured, the formerly sharp increase in pressure across the shock wave fades to a shallow pressure gradient, which Ant drives the forward flow of heated fluid. Even if the speed of the fluid remains supersonic within the heated channel, the standoff distance increases between the body and its shock wave. Although the shock wave is not fully eliminated, this increased stand-off distance and weaker shock wave are commensurate with a locally reduced pressure on the body behind the shock wave.

An additional advantage of this process, as compared to previous processes in which heated fluid was expelled in front of a body, is that previous processes have to overcome the mechanical resistance of the fluid in front of the vehicle that resists the movement of the expelled heated fluid. This is particularly a concern as the speed of the body through the fluid increases. However, the present invention does not experience this problem as the energy source to heat the fluid is not constrained by any mechanical resistance.

Given an oblique shock wave, such as with the conical bow shock of a supersonic vehicle, additional benefits can be obtained when fluid is propagating substantially laterally outward from the heated core ahead of the shock wave. When a streamline along the stagnation line is heated, the geometry of the heated core is particularly effective at seeding lateral motion away from the body that is generating the shock wave to be modified/weakened. The outward motion from the heated core precipitates more effective lateral escape of the ambient fluid when the expanding fluid core crosses the body's shock wave. Otherwise, the fluid along the stagnation line unexpectedly encounters the shock wave and stagnates temporarily in unstable lateral equilibrium. As the low-density heated core is created directly in front of the stagnation point, less fluid impinges on this point, and this results in a lower stagnation pressure and a lower stagnation temperature at that point. Additionally, the more the fluid is heated, the stronger the lateral flow is away from the heated core.

In some aspects, the creation of the heated core can be strong enough to create laterally-moving shock waves. These laterally-moving shock waves can be very effective at laterally "sweeping" the fluid from in the front of the shock wave. In the case of a liquid, strongly heating a swath of fluid along a streamline in front of a shock wave can vaporize the liquid to a gas, and this results in a large reduction in density along the heated core. Similarly, this heating drives a strong lateral movement of dense fluid away from the heated/vaporized core, and the hot, vaporized core allows for the body to more easily pass through the area previously occupied by the dense fluid. As liquids are generally much more dense than their corresponding gases, this method is particularly useful for reducing drag in liquids, even at sub-sonic speeds when there is no shock wave present.

To more effectively modify the shock wave, the heated core is formed such that as much of the heated path as possible is along a streamline coming in toward the shock, as considered in the reference frame of the shock wave. Furthermore, a stronger and quicker heating of the fluid is typically better, because this increases the size of the heated core. Also, the fluid in the heated core is even less dense and

expands outward even faster. If the fluid is heated strongly and quickly enough, a laterally-propagating shock wave away from the heated core can be formed.

The invention is not limited as to the manner in which the heated core is created. For example, the heated core can be formed using electromagnetic radiation. In one example the electromagnetic radiation is provided through the use of a filamenting laser. Alternatively, the heated core can be formed using an electric discharge. The use of an electric discharge can be much more effective at heating a fluid than electromagnetic radiation, such as filamenting lasers. For example, the heating provided by electric discharge is less expensive than comparable heating provided by a filamenting laser. However, the exact path the electrical discharge takes is typically difficult to control. This presents a potential problem in situations in which a precise geometry of the path of the heated core is desired. In contrast, the path of the filamenting lasers is very controllable because the heated core is generated in the path of the laser pulse. The beginning and end of the strongly heated region can also be controlled by adjusting how the pulse is focused, in addition to other parameters described in more detail below. In some cases, however, electromagnetic radiation alone may not be able to produce a sufficiently heated core to provide an effective control/modification of the shock wave.

In one aspect of the invention, the energy source is pulsed. In so doing, energy savings can advantageously be realized. During the formation of the heated core with a single pulse, a long volume of fluid can be heated, and in certain instances a substantially cylindrical shock wave is propagated outward from the heated core. Additionally, as the heated core flows into the shock wave, the heated core relieves the pressure behind the shock wave. Eventually, the shock wave redevelops; however, until the shock wave redevelops, the pulsed energy source has provided a period of benefit by modifying the shock wave. When the shock wave redevelops or before the redevelopment of the shock wave, the energy source can again be pulsed to provide the same benefits. In this manner, the energy source is not being continually used to obtain the benefits of modifying the shock wave. Instead, the energy source is used intermittently and can be timed to operate when heating provided by the energy source(s) produces the most dramatic and/or efficient beneficial effects. The pulse repetition rate of the energy source and the length of the resulting heated cores are not limited to a particular range and can be adjusted according to various factors, such as the density of the ambient fluid and the velocity of the fluid/shock wave.

Operating in this pulsed mode can produce results nearly as good as those for continuous heating, in fact, there are even additional benefits which come from the violent expansion outward from the suddenly heated path. Furthermore, much less energy is expended in the pulsed mode, than for comparable results obtained through continuous, or any other kind of heating in a less extended region.

Alternatively, the energy source can be continually discharged to form the heated core. For example, the continual output of an electric discharge can provide a greater overall effect on the shock wave and provide for greater drag reduction. As previously discussed, however, the continual discharge of the energy source has the disadvantage of requiring a greater energy usage and also is very difficult to guide and control.

More than just one type of energy source can be used to create the heated core. For example, electric discharge can be used in conjunction with electromagnetic radiation to

create the heated core. In this example, the electric discharge is initiated and guided by the ionized path resulting from the electromagnetic energy deposited in the fluid. In operation, the electromagnetic energy, such as a filamenting laser, ionizes and heats the fluid in a substantially straight path through the fluid. The ionized fluid is more conductive than the fluid around it; and therefore, the electric discharge follows the ionized path to further heat the ionized core through ohmic heating.

One approach to forming the ionized path through the fluid for use by the electric discharge is with an ionizing electric discharge guidance system. An ionizing electromagnetic radiation guidance system, whether filamenting or not, defines an unambiguous path for the electric discharge to escape a highly charged electrode. The filamenting laser, however, results in much stronger, more effective, and more controllable ionization and energy deposition. With the use of only one highly charged electrode, for example, at the tip of a vehicle, if an electric discharge escapes, the electric discharge will do so in a substantially uncontrolled direction along an erratic path. If an oppositely polarized second electrode is situated closely enough to the first electrode, the high voltage will discharge between these two electrodes, and again, typically with an erratic path. However, with the use of the ionizing electromagnetic radiation system, the electric discharge can be sufficiently "straightened out" to direct the electric discharge to heat streamlines coming in toward a shock wave as described above. One such ionizing electric discharge guidance system involves the use of filamenting lasers. When coupled with strong electric discharges, the filamenting laser can also be used to modify the shock wave on a smaller scale than that of using electric discharge alone. This additional flexibility allows for finer flow control.

Typically, when electromagnetic energy/radiation is focussed to a point to ionize a fluid, the resulting plasma disperses the beam. However, high-power pico- and femto-second-duration laser pulses have been found to propagate over large distances, while heating/ionizing the fluid in their path. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as filamentation, and filamentation has been observed using a variety of gases, such as nitrogen, helium, and air. Filamentation has also been demonstrated in liquids and solids, although with shorter propagation lengths. The wavelengths for filamentation have been observed ranging from infrared to ultraviolet, although a greater range of wavelengths is possible. The observed pulse durations for filamenting lasers have been reported to vary from picoseconds to tens of femto seconds. Additionally, filamentation has been observed with a variety of laser pulse frequency modulation or "chirp" profiles. The pulse energy needed to initiate filamentation has also been observed to range from milli-Joules to Joules.

With these filamenting lasers, creation of the long, hot filaments is generally easier when using shorter wavelengths. For example ultraviolet wavelengths ionize better than infrared wavelengths. The filamentation also typically depends on intensity-dependent "self-focussing" coefficient(s), often necessitating high intensities, especially for propagation through very low-density materials/fluids such as gases. High intensities can be achieved with the typical high energy, short duration pulses, and for shorter wavelengths or greater photon energies, the intensity requirements are typically lower. This technology has been investigated most intensively for optical and near-optical frequencies; however, the filamentation is broadly applicable over most of the electromagnetic spectrum, and therefore not restricted to any particular set of wavelengths or frequencies.

With regard to spatial qualities, filamenting pulses have been reported to travel as far as 12 kilometers, although a more reliable value is hundreds of meters, while the filament diameters have been reported to range from 0.1 millimeter to several millimeters. As known by those skilled in the art, the laser pulse can be focussed and adjusted to control both the point at which filamentation begins and the length of the filament through the fluid in which the laser pulse propagates. The parameter ranges listed above are exemplary only and are continually being expanded. Additionally, the invention is not limited as to the particular devices used to form the filamenting pulses.

The greatest extent to which heating systems applied in the prior art can expect to significantly deposit heat using a conventional focussed beam of coherent electromagnetic radiation is twice the Rayleigh range, centered about the beam waist. In contrast, filamenting laser pulses can significantly heat/ionize extended paths of fluid over hundreds of meters. For the systems which create these pulses, this is several orders of magnitude beyond the limitations experienced by systems utilized in the prior art. It should be noted that different pulse parameters and modulations (chirps) result in different beginning points and lengths of the filaments.

The invention is not limited as to the direction relative to the shock wave from which the energy emanates to create the heated core of fluid. For example, in certain embodiments of the invention, which will be discussed in more detail later, the energy source, such as a filamenting laser pulse, emanates from in front of the shock wave. In other embodiments, however, the pulse emanates from behind the shock wave. Either orientation of the energy source relative to the shock wave can generate substantially identical heated cores, and as such, the fluid dynamics and flow control resulting from the heated cores are substantially the same. The non-restrictive nature of the location of the energy source relative to the shock wave provides, for example, flexibility in spray deposition applications, in which both sides of the shock wave are typically accessible. As another example, when a heated core is created using both a filamenting laser and an electric discharge, which is discussed in more detail below, the vehicle can be equipped with the capacity to generate the electric discharge, and the filamenting laser that is used to guide the electric discharge can be located remotely and directed toward the moving body associated with the shock wave to be controlled.

The invention is not limited as to the length of the heated core, as long as the heated core is capable of modifying the shock wave. For example, in certain aspects of the invention, the length of the heated core can range from about 0.01 meters to 100 meters in length. In another aspect of the invention, for example with use in overall drag reduction, the length of the heated core is about 0.1 to about 2.0 multiplied by the product of M and d ($M \times d$), wherein M is the Mach number of the body and d is the diameter of the body or feature that is creating the shock wave. Furthermore, the invention is not limited as to the repetition rate at which the heated core is created. In one aspect of the invention, however, the repetition rate is about 0.5 to about 10.0 multiplied by (c/d) , wherein c is the ambient speed of sound. For more targeted flow control applications than general drag reduction, the heated path length can be significantly smaller with much higher repetition rates than listed above.

The invention can be used to reduce the stagnation temperature and drag on one or more strategic points of the airframe of the body, as well as possibly reduce the total drag of the body in an economical fashion. Furthermore, the

invention can be used to guide or steer the body by preferentially controlling the flow and pressure distribution around the body by directing pulses asymmetrically. For example, the path of the pulses relative to the shock wave can be actively changed to change the manner in which the shock wave is modified over time.

As described earlier, creating a heated core along the stagnation line of a body's bow-shock wave will typically result in the greatest overall drag reduction. As illustrated in FIGS. 9 and 10, when a heated core 60 is generated preferentially on a given side of the stagnation line of the body's 50 bow-shock 54, the preferentially reduced drag will result in the capability of maneuvering the body 50, instead of or in addition to only reducing drag. This concept applies whether or not the body 50 is symmetric, although different degrees of symmetry may contribute to more or less resulting torque/moment/rotation of the body about a given axis.

The invention has application in flight systems that may operate, in whole or in part, in a supersonic regime. There is a current emphasis on increasing speed in flight and weapons systems, and control and maneuverability are of vital concern. One application of the present invention is to eliminate the need for problematic cooling methods, necessary on certain vehicles, by reducing the stagnation temperature in front of domes/fairings, which may also be transparent in certain frequency ranges of electromagnetic radiation.

Hypersonic craft are currently limited by issues of propulsion, materials, and flow control. One advantageous aspect of the dynamics described here is that the benefits generated by the present invention increase with higher Mach numbers. As the pressure behind the shock wave becomes greater, as a result of a higher Mach number, the relative pressure reduction by the present invention increases. Therefore, greater benefits can be realized with stronger shock waves given a sufficiently heated core to puncture the shock wave.

Additionally, the minimization of moving parts also reduces the risk of actuator failure. One application of the invention is flow control during supersonic/hypersonic flight for maneuvering, drag reduction, and the control of shocks near and within supersonic inlets, exhausts, and propulsive units. Even in the situation of supersonic/hypersonic flight, where the bow-shock is attached to the vehicle and the stagnation point is ahead of the point at which the shock attaches to the body, creation of a low-density core along the stagnation line will provide great relief from the extremely high temperatures and pressures at the stagnation point as well as overall drag reduction.

EXAMPLE 1

FIGS. 11 A–D illustrate use of the invention with a body 101 moving to the right through a fluid 105 at supersonic speed. In FIG. 11A, the body 101 is moving to the right through the fluid 105 at supersonic speed, as indicated by a shock wave 103 ahead of the body 101. In the rest frame of the shock wave 103, or equivalently the rest frame of the body 101, the fluid 105 ahead of the shock wave is moving to the left.

The invention is not limited as to a particular body 101. For example, the body 101 could be an airplane, a missile, a launch vehicle, a projectile, a re-entry vehicle, or any subsystem or protrusion thereon, such as an engine, the body's nose, an external fuel tank, a fairing, a tail, a wing, or external instrumentation. Furthermore, the invention is

not limited as to the particular fluid **105** through which the body **101** passes. Additionally, the fluid flow need only be locally supersonic to yield a shock wave **103**. The body **101** also includes a port **102** through which energy is directed. Examples of ports are described in more detail with regard to FIG. **15**.

In FIG. **11B**, an energy beam **104** is emitted from the port **102** and travels outward typically at the speed of light. This energy beam **104**, as compared to the time scale of the fluid flow, suddenly heats an extended path of the fluid **105** ahead of the body **101**. In this particular example, the energy is electromagnetic in nature, and results from the use of ultra-short laser pulses in the ultraviolet to the infrared range. The result of this heating method is the long, hot, ionized filament in fluid **105** along the path of the energy beam **104**.

In FIG. **11C**, the hot filament expands over a heated core **160**, which weakens the shock wave **103** and can even temporarily locally eliminate the shock wave **103**. As the body **101** travels into the expanding heated core **160**, the shock wave **103** is locally eliminated when the speed of the body **101** is less than the local speed of sound within the heated core **160**. Fluid **105** is most effectively moved out of the way of the body **101**, when the heated core **160** is parallel to the direction of the body's movement through the fluid **105**. This results in the most effective drag reduction and sonic boom mitigation in the acoustic far field of the body **101**.

In FIG. **11D**, the shock wave **103** is re-established once the effect of the heated core **160** is no longer experienced by the shock wave **103**. Although the heated core **160** can extend over hundreds of meters or more, the heated core **160** can not extend infinitely. Therefore, the effect of the heated core **160** on the shock wave **103** not only diminishes, as the heated core expands outward, but also disappears once the end of the hot core is reached.

EXAMPLE 2

FIG. **12** illustrates a use of the invention with a body **101** that is passing through a fluid **105** with a non-zero angle of attack **A**. The body **102** includes an energy discharge device **102** that creates a heated core along an extended path **108** through a shock wave **103** in front of the body **101**. Although the extended path **108** is parallel to the motion of the body **101** through the fluid **105**, the angle of the extended path **108** from energy discharge device **102** is not parallel to the body center axis (BCA) of the body **101** because of the non-zero angle of attack **A** of the body **101**. In fact, the preferential drag reduction resulting from the off-center/asymmetric application of the heating can be used to partially or fully maintain the non-zero angle of attack **A**, in addition to reducing the overall drag on the body **101**.

EXAMPLE 3

A method of increasing the energy deposition along a heated path through the use of electric discharge is illustrated in FIG. **13**. A body **101** passing through a fluid **105** at supersonic speed such that a set of shock waves **103** is created adjacent to the body **101**. The body includes three energy emitting mechanisms **106**, **107**. Two of the energy emitting mechanisms **106** are charged with a given polarity, and a third energy emitting mechanism **107** is oppositely charged. An example of an energy emitting mechanism is explained in more detail with regard to FIG. **14**.

To better control the electric discharge path of the energy emitting mechanisms **106**, **107**, each of the energy emitting

mechanisms includes an electromagnetic discharge port that is capable of ionizing a path **108** through the fluid **105**. The conductive ionized paths **108** intersect at a point **PI** ahead of the body **101** and ahead of the shock wave **103**. The ionized paths **108** provide a conductive circuit along which the oppositely charged energy emitting mechanisms **106**, **107** can discharge. Such an electric discharge can deposit energy into the fluid **105** more economically than with electromagnetic radiation alone.

The geometry shown creates a heated core along the ionized paths **108a**, **108b**. As such, not only is fluid heated immediately in front of the body **101** along the stagnation line on the axis of symmetry using one ionized path **108b**, but the heated cores along ionized paths **108a** also have the ancillary benefit of pushing some fluid **105** out of the way of the wings of the body **101**. However, because these ionization paths **108a** are not along incoming streamlines, the effect of the heated cores is not as efficient, nor as effective as the heated core along the center ionized path **108b**.

A more specific manifestation of the energy emitting mechanisms previously discussed in FIG. **13** is illustrated in more detail in FIG. **14**. A body **101** includes several directed energy ports **106**, **107**. The energy ports **106**, **107** are electrically isolated from each other, with two of the energy ports **106** having one polarity and the other energy port **107** having an opposite polarity. The electric discharge from the energy ports **106**, **107** can be driven by one or more charge-storage and/or voltage-supply elements **114**.

The electromagnetic energy is emitted from a source **110**, which can consist of a single emitter, as illustrated, or several emitters. The electromagnetic pulses **111** can be generated in rapid enough succession to be considered effectively instantaneous by the fluid dynamics being controlled. Additionally, if only one emitter is used, a single pulse **111a** may also be split at a splitter **112** and sent to the different electromagnetic emission ports **102**. The split pulses **111b** can be redirected using reflecting elements **113** and sent through focussing elements at the emission ports **102** to create the desired conducting circuit of ionized paths **108** to initiate and guide the electric discharge from the energy ports **106**, **107**.

The entire process can be continually monitored by environmental sensors **115** to ensure effective implementation of the process through continual adjustments to the electric and electromagnetic discharges to accommodate changing factors and needs. The electrical isolation of the energy ports **106**, **107** is aided because only optical coupling is required in the internal systems. An example of an optical system for use with the emission ports **102** is described in more detail with reference to FIG. **15**.

A more specific manifestation of an emission port previously discussed in FIG. **14** is illustrated in more detail in FIG. **15**. If necessary, reflecting elements **113** direct the pulse **111** of electromagnetic energy into the emission port **102**. The emission port **102** includes focussing elements **121** that are adjustable with a mechanism **122** to control the point at which the ionized path begins. Additionally, an electrically conducting tapered housing **123** can be included with the emission port **102** to couple an electric discharge to the ionized path created by the electromagnetic pulse **111**.

EXAMPLE 4

An array of energy discharge devices is illustrated in FIGS. **16A**, **16B**. An array of energy emitting mechanisms or elements **106a**, **106b**, **106c** is arranged on a body **101**. The body includes a central element **106a** surrounded by an inner

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annular array of elements **106b** and an outer annular array of elements **106c**. The total array of elements **106** can be used to increase effectiveness of the invention by firing the individual elements **106** or groups of elements **106** in succession. The effectiveness of the invention can be increased by using the array of elements **106** to continue to push the fluid **105** cylindrically outward, after the fluid expanded outward from the central heated core, generated by the central element **106a**.

Although the elements **106** shown emit an electrical discharge, the array is not limited in this manner. For example, the array can include both electric discharge elements **106** and electromagnetic emission ports or can consist of only electromagnetic emission ports. In this example, when an electrical discharge is being used, the electrical discharge follows ionized paths **108** that complete separate conducting circuits between elements **106b** and **106a**. The next set of conductive paths and discharges could then be between **106c** and **106a** (or **106b**).

In operation, as illustrated in FIG. **16A**, the central element **106a** and one or more elements **106b** of the inner array would be fired to create a central heated core **160a**. This heated core would expand outward, possibly bounded by a cylindrical shock wave, which would weaken with the expansion. To add energy to the weakened cylindrical expansion, elements **106b** could be fired, as illustrated in FIG. **16B**. Upon further expansion, elements **106c** of the outer array would then also be fired to maintain a strong continued expansion of the heated core **160b**.

EXAMPLE 5

Use of the method of the present invention with a propulsion unit, such as a scram jet **130**, is illustrated in FIG. **17**. When fluid **105**, such as air, enters the scramjet **130** at a sufficiently high velocity, a shock wave **103** develops within the scramjet **130**. By positioning energy discharge device(s) **102** and possibly thin electrodes **180**, whether electric discharge, electromagnetic, or both, within the intake of the scramjet **130**, a heated core expanding from the path of energy deposition **108** can be created within the scramjet to "puncture" the shock wave **103** according to the invention. In addition to mitigating efficiency losses due to the shock wave, the heated core can also provide the ancillary benefits of heating and ionizing the fluid to help the reaction in the scramjet engine, as well as helping the mixing process and energy recuperation.

Although shown positioned in the flow path of the scramjet **130**, the energy discharge device(s) **102** are not limited to these particular positions. The energy discharge device(s) **102** can be located in any positions that advantageously allow the energy discharge device to modify a shock wave according to the invention. For example, the shock wave can be located in front of the intake; and therefore, the energy discharge devices can also be located in front of the intake, if necessary. Furthermore, this concept can be applied to similar types of geometries, including the inlets and flow paths of other types of propulsion units.

EXAMPLE 6

The use of the invention with supersonic spray deposition is illustrated in FIG. **18**. In this process, particles are propelled at supersonic speed through a nozzle **140** toward a target **142**. One or more shock waves **103** can develop in various positions within and outside of the nozzle **140**. One of the problems caused by the shock waves **103** in this process is the segregation of particle sizes and densities

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which occurs when crossing the shock wave **103**. An energy discharge device **102** can be placed within the nozzle **140** to create a heated core along a streamline ahead of the shock wave **103**. The energy discharge device can use directed ionizing electromagnetic radiation alone, or use this ionization to initiate and guide an electric discharge.

As the target **142** can be electrically conducting, the electrical discharge path **108** can be much less complicated, potentially requiring only one energy discharge device **102** to complete a circuit from the electrical discharge. Additionally, the use of electric discharge is possible without creating an ionized path to guide the electric discharge. This can be accomplished by using particular electrode geometries in conjunction with electrically insulating materials in the nozzle **140**. In addition to mitigating the shock, both electromagnetic radiation and electric discharge can advantageously modify deposition processes and surface treatments.

EXAMPLE 7

One embodiment of the present invention to reduce noise is illustrated in FIG. **19**. Shock waves and expansion waves **170** are formed in the exhaust **146** of a propulsion unit **148**, such as a jet turbine, after-burner, rocket motor/engine, or other types of propulsion units. In such a situation, the shock and expansion waves **170** typically form "shock diamonds," which can be established within the exhaust. These patterns can contribute strongly to an augmentation of the acoustic signature in certain frequency ranges, which is sometimes referred to as "screech." The method of the present invention can disrupt these patterns by providing a heated core along an extended path **108** through the pattern of expansion and shock waves **170**. This technique can also be used to dissipate shock waves formed within the propulsion unit.

The heated core can be formed using electromagnetic radiation and/or an electric discharge. In the situation of an electric discharge, the need to ionize the fluid so as to obtain a path for the electric discharge is not necessary as the exhaust is already partially electrically conductive, and erratic disruption is sufficient to disrupt this particular shock wave pattern. The existing ionization may also have a deleterious effect on the propagation of certain electromagnetic frequencies.

EXAMPLE 8

A schematic representation of one possible application of a linear array of energy discharge devices **102**, similar to those depicted in FIGS. **14** and **15**, is illustrated in FIG. **20**. The energy discharge devices **102** are mounted on a vehicle **101** to push incoming fluid **105** outward along the wing **150**, in a wavelike motion, by firing sequentially from the innermost energy discharge device **102a** to the outermost energy discharge device **102f** furthest from the centerline of the vehicle **101**. These energy discharge devices **102** can either be limited to ionizing electromagnetic radiation, or coupled with electrical discharge units.

The energy discharge devices **102** would typically be electrically isolated, as with the connecting charging units and switches. Additionally, neighboring energy discharge devices can be fired effectively simultaneously to create an electrically conducting path **108**, as previously discussed with regard to FIGS. **13** and **14**. The energy discharge devices **102** can also be fired successively in pairs to use the electric discharges to sweep the fluid **105** outward toward the tips of the wing **150**. Either with or without electric discharge, this method of sweeping fluid toward the wingtips

also directs the fluid over and under the wing **150**. Environmental sensors can also be included to monitor performance and be coupled to the energy discharge devices to modify the different parameters of the energy deposition.

EXAMPLE 9

Application of the method of the present invention to a submersible body **101** is illustrated in FIGS. **21A**, **21B**. Energy is emitted from an energy discharge device **102** located in the submersible body **101** along an extended path **108** in the liquid **105** ahead of the body **101**. The electromagnetic coupling constants to dense fluid, such as liquid **105**, are typically greater than those to gas, and the strongly heated liquid **105** can also vaporize. This results in a channel **160** of gas developing from the heated liquid path **108** through which the body **101** can pass. This channel **160** of gas has a very low-density, compared to its liquid. As a result, even if the body **101** is not traveling supersonically, and there is no shock wave, a significant decrease in drag on the body **101** occurs.

EXAMPLE 10

FIG. **22** illustrates use of the method of the present invention to provide a heated core **160** from an energy discharge device **102** positioned in front of the shock wave **103** of a body **101**. As shown, the energy discharge device **102** can be positioned at a location **152** remote from the body **101**. In this manner, the energy discharge device **102** discharges energy to create an extended heated core **160** in front of the body **101** and/or the shock wave **103**. The remote location **152** may be land-based, sea-based, or space-based, which may dictate the form of the energy deposition.

EXAMPLE 11

FIG. **23** illustrates the use of an energy discharge device **102** to heat along an extended path **108** ahead of a protrusion **154** on a body **101**. The protrusion **152** on the body **101** can be a source of additional drag on the body **101**. As such, by using an energy discharge device **102** to heat along an extended path **108** ahead of the protrusion **154**, the drag due to the protrusion **154** can be reduced. Additionally, the temperature and pressure at the protrusion **154** can be reduced through control of supersonic flow, a shock wave, or interacting shock waves.

EXAMPLE 12

FIG. **24** illustrates the use of an energy discharge device **102** in a propulsion unit **148** to deposit energy along an extended path **108** within the propulsion unit **148**. The creation of a heated core along the extended path can be used to puncture/disrupt any internal shock waves **103**, as well as resonances, that may be established within the propulsion unit **148**.

EXAMPLE 13

FIGS. **25A-E** illustrate some examples of the great variety of different geometries in which energy discharge devices **102** can be arranged on a body **101**. The different geometries of energy discharge devices **102** can be arranged to reduce drag on the body **101**, maneuver the body **101**, mitigate sonic boom, or control a shock wave and/or fluid flow, for example by sweeping fluid in given directions, including cylindrically or linearly outward. In addition, the application of a linear array of energy discharge devices **102** can be formed on the blades of a helicopter rotor to reduce the helicopter's acoustic signature.

EXAMPLE 14

FIG. **26** illustrates the use of the present invention to form a heated core in front of a light craft **101** without the need of providing an energy discharge device on the craft **101**. In operation, a beam **162** of electromagnetic energy is directed toward the craft **101**. The craft **101** includes focussing elements **163** that will further focus the beam **162** to heat the fluid **105** in front of the craft **101** along an extended path **108**. The path **108** can be in the form of a line of heated/ionized gas resulting from a "filamenting" laser pulse, as previously discussed.

Such a concept would allow the craft **101** to take advantage of the shock wave/flow control and drag reduction provided by use of the invention without having to carry the energy generation equipment. Such a concept can also be used with an additional directed electromagnetic energy unit used to provide propulsion for the light craft **101** of the type known to those familiar with the art. Such a system could be used as an inexpensive launch vehicle from a planet with an atmosphere.

The present invention can be practiced by employing conventional materials, methodology and equipment. Accordingly, the details of such materials, equipment and methodology are not set forth herein in detail. In the previous descriptions, numerous specific details are set forth, such as specific electromagnetic pulse details, materials, structures, chemicals, processes, etc., in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. However, it should be recognized that the present invention can be practiced without resorting to the details specifically set forth. In other instances, well known processing structures have not been described in detail, in order not to unnecessarily obscure the present invention.

Only an exemplary aspect of the present invention and but a few examples of its versatility are shown and described in the present disclosure. It is to be understood that the present invention is capable of use in various other combinations and environments and is capable of changes or modifications within the scope of the inventive concept as expressed herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of modifying a shock wave in a fluid, comprising the steps of:

emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid;
heating fluid along the path to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path; and
directing the path whereby the volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave and modifies the shock wave.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the volume of heated fluid passing through the shock wave reduces a pressure difference between locations on opposite sides of the shock wave.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the volume of heated fluid passing through the shock wave eliminates the pressure difference between the locations on opposite sides of the shock wave.

4. The method according to claim 1, where said step of heating fluid along the path decreases the density of the fluid within the volume.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein the electromagnetic energy heats the fluid along the path.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein electromagnetic energy ionizes the fluid along the path.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein the fluid along the path is heated by electric discharge following the ionized path.

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8. The method according to claim 6, wherein the electromagnetic energy is a filamenting laser pulse.

9. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of repeating said steps of emitting energy, heating fluid, and directing the path.

10. The method according to claim 1, wherein multiple paths are formed within the fluid.

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein at least a portion of the multiple paths are formed sequentially.

12. The method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of actively changing a direction of the sequentially formed paths through the fluid.

13. The method according to claim 10, wherein at least a portion of the multiple paths are formed concurrently.

14. The method according to claim 1, wherein the energy is emitted from a body passing through the fluid, and the shock wave forms adjacent to the body.

15. The method according to claim 1, wherein the shock wave forms adjacent to a body, and the energy is emitted from a location away from the body.

16. The method according to claim 1, wherein the path is in a direction parallel to streamlines on a low-pressure side of the shock wave.

17. The method according to claim 1, wherein the fluid is propelled through a nozzle and the fluid contains particles to be deposited on a target whereby modifying the shock wave prevents segregation of the particles.

18. A method of modifying an acoustic signature of a shock wave in a fluid, comprising the steps of:

emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid;

heating fluid along the path to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path; and

directing the path whereby the volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave and modifies the acoustic signature of the shock wave.

19. The method according to claim 18, wherein the volume of heated fluid passing through the shock wave reduces a pressure difference between locations on opposite sides of the shock wave.

20. The method according to claim 18, where said step of heating fluid along the path decreases the density of the fluid within the volume.

21. The method according to claim 18, wherein electromagnetic energy heats the fluid along the path.

22. The method according to claim 18, wherein electric discharge heats the fluid along the path.

23. The method according to claim 18, wherein the energy is emitted from a body passing through the fluid, and the shock wave forms adjacent the body.

24. The method according to claim 18, wherein electromagnetic energy ionizes the fluid along the path.

25. The method according to claim 24, wherein the fluid along the path is heated by electric discharge following the path.

26. The method according to claim 18, wherein multiple paths are formed within the fluid.

27. The method according to claim 18, wherein the shock wave forms adjacent to a body, and the energy is emitted from a location away from the body.

28. A method of modifying an acoustic signature of a body creating a shock wave in a fluid, comprising the steps of:

emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid;

heating fluid by electric discharge along the path in the fluid to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path; and

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directing the path whereby volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave and modifies the acoustic signature of the shock wave,

wherein the energy is emitted from the body and the electric discharge is emitted from the body.

29. A method of decreasing drag of a body passing along a direction through a fluid, comprising the steps of:

emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid;

heating fluid along the path to decrease the density of fluid around the path and to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path; and

directing the path parallel to the direction the body passes through the fluid,

wherein the body passes through the volume of decreased-density heated fluid and whereby the reduction of density of the fluid decreases the drag on the body, and

the heating of the fluid at different points along the path occurs simultaneously.

30. The method according to claim 28, wherein the path is in a direction parallel to streamlines on a low-pressure side of the shock wave.

31. The method according to claim 29, wherein electromagnetic energy heats the fluid along the path.

32. The method according to claim 29, further comprising the step of repeating said steps of emitting energy, heating fluid, and directing the path.

33. The method according to claim 29, wherein multiple paths are formed within the fluid.

34. A method of decreasing drag of a body passing along a direction through a fluid, comprising the steps of:

emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid;

heating fluid along the path to decrease the density of fluid around the path and to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path; and

directing the path parallel to the direction the body passes through the fluid,

wherein the body passes through the volume of decreased-density heated fluid and whereby the reduction of density of the fluid decreases the drag on the body, and wherein the fluid includes a liquid.

35. A method of decreasing drag of a body passing along a direction through a fluid, comprising the steps of:

emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid;

heating fluid along the path to decrease the density of fluid around the path and to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path;

directing the path parallel to the direction the body passes through the fluid; and

actively changing a direction of the path through the fluid, wherein the body passes through the volume of decreased-density heated fluid and whereby the reduction of density of the fluid decreases the drag on the body.

36. A method of steering a body creating a shock wave in a fluid, comprising the steps of:

emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid;

heating fluid along the path to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path;

directing the path whereby the volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave to modify the shock wave; and

modifying the shock wave to asymmetrically change pressures exerted against the body thereby steering the body.

37. The method according to claim 36, wherein the shock wave is modified by actively changing a direction of the path through the fluid.

38. The method according to claim 37, wherein the path extends from the body and the path is movable relative to the body.

39. The method according to claim 36, wherein multiple paths are formed within the fluid, and the shock wave is modified by selectively heating the fluid along one or more of the multiple paths.

40. The method according to claim 39, wherein the paths extend from the body and the paths are fixed relative to the body.

41. The method according to claim 36, wherein the volume of heated fluid passing through the shock wave reduces a pressure difference between fluid on opposite sides of the shock wave.

42. The method according to claim 36, further comprising the step of repeating said steps of emitting energy, heating fluid, directing the path, and modifying the shock wave.

43. The method according to claim 36, wherein electromagnetic energy heats the fluid along the path.

44. The method according to claim 36, wherein electric discharge heats the fluid along the path.

45. An apparatus on a body moving through a fluid for modifying a shock wave formed in the fluid by the body, comprising:

means for emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid; and

means for heating fluid along the path to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path, wherein the heating of the fluid at different points along the path occurs simultaneously;

whereby the volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave to modify the shock wave.

46. The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein the volume of heated fluid passing through the shock wave reduces a pressure difference between locations on opposite sides of the shock wave.

47. The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein the emitted energy is electromagnetic radiation, and the electromagnetic energy ionizes the fluid along the path.

48. The apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the emitted energy also heats the fluid along the path.

49. The apparatus according to claim 48, wherein the means for emitting energy is a filamenting laser.

50. The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein the means for heating the fluid is an electric discharge device.

51. The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein the means for emitting energy can change the direction of the path.

52. The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein the body is a projectile and the fluid is air.

53. The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein the body travels through the air and the fluid is air.

54. The apparatus according to claim 53, wherein an array of multiple means for emitting energy are positioned along the nose of the body.

55. The apparatus according to claim 53, wherein an array of multiple means for emitting energy are positioned along wings of the body.

56. An apparatus on a body moving through a fluid for modifying a shock wave formed in the fluid by the body, comprising:

means for emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid; and

means for heating fluid along the path to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path, wherein the means for emitting energy is a filamenting laser;

whereby the volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave to modify the shock wave.

57. An apparatus on a body moving through a fluid for modifying a shock wave formed in the fluid by the body, comprising:

means for emitting energy along an extended path in the fluid; and

means for heating fluid along the path to form a volume of heated fluid expanding outwardly from the path, wherein the shock wave is generated by exhaust from propulsion units on the body;

whereby the volume of heated fluid passes through the shock wave to modify the shock wave.

58. A method of reducing a shock wave in a fluid, comprising the steps of:

selectively discharging a heating energy in the fluid ahead of the shock wave to form an extended heated path through the shock wave, wherein the heating of the fluid simultaneously at different points forms the extended heated path.

59. The method according to claim 58, wherein the heating energy heats fluid adjacent to the shock wave to form the extended heated path.

60. The method according to claim 59, wherein the heating energy passes through the shock wave and heats fluid behind the shock wave relative to the position of a source of the heating energy.

61. The method according to claim 58, wherein the extended heated path reduces a pressure difference between the locations on opposite sides of the shock wave and adjacent to the shock wave to be modified.

62. The method according to claim 58, wherein the extended heated path causes a local increase in temperature of the portion of the fluid which is heated by the extended heated path, and thereby provides the portion of the fluid with an increased speed of sound.

63. The method according to claim 58, wherein the step of selectively discharging a heating energy in the fluid further includes the step of discharging a pulse of electromagnetic radiation.

64. The method according to claim 58, wherein the step of selectively discharging a heating energy in the fluid further includes the step of discharging an electric discharge.

65. The method according to claim 58, wherein the step of selectively discharging a heating energy in the fluid further includes the steps of:

discharging an ionizing electromagnetic radiation in the fluid to form a conductive path; and

discharging an electric discharge along the conductive path.

66. The method according to claim 65, wherein the step of discharging ionizing electromagnetic radiation comprises the step of discharging electromagnetic radiation from a filamenting laser.

67. The method according to claim 65, wherein the step of discharging ionizing electromagnetic radiation comprises the step of discharging electromagnetic radiation by using UV laser pulses.

68. A method of moving a body through a liquid fluid, comprising the steps of:

propelling the body through the fluid;

selectively discharging a heating energy in the fluid to change the density of the fluid ahead of a predetermined portion of the body;

discharging the heating energy along a localized area of the liquid fluid to vaporize the liquid fluid to form a discrete core of heating energy.

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69. The method according to claim 68, wherein the core of heating energy is formed along a stream line ahead of a bow-shock created by the movement of the body through the fluid.

70. The method according to claim 68, further comprising the step of changing the direction of movement of the body.

71. The method according to claim 68, wherein the step of discharging the heating energy in a localized area reduces the density of the fluid which is heated by the heating energy, thereby causing lateral movement of the fluid away from an area in the fluid to which the heating energy is applied.

72. The method according to claim 68, wherein the step of discharging the heating energy in a localized area reduces the density of the fluid which is heated by the heating energy, thereby reducing drag on the body while body maintains a non-zero angle of attack relative to the fluid.

73. The method according to claim 68, wherein the step of discharging the heating energy in a localized area reduces the density of the fluid which is heated by the heating energy, thereby reducing the temperature on a portion of the body to reduce damage to the portion.

74. The method according to claim 68, wherein the step of discharging the heating energy in a localized area reduces the density of the fluid which is heated by the heating energy, thereby reducing the pressure on a portion of the body to reduce damage to the portion.

75. A method of a modifying a shockwave, comprising the steps of:

generating a shock wave by moving an object through a fluid;

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repetitively emitting electromagnetic pulses through said fluid along the direction of said object through the fluid, wherein

said pulses heat and ionize a path along said direction to levels exceeding 10^{13} electrons/cm³, and said heated and ionized path extends for a distance greater than twice the Rayleigh range; and

forming a substantially cylindrical expansion of said heated fluid, outward from said path, whereby a low-density channel is created that modifies the shockwave.

76. The method according to claim 75, further comprising the step of augmenting the energy deposited along said heated and ionized path by emitting a plurality of pulses to generate a plurality of parallel heated and ionized paths.

77. The method according to claim 76, wherein emissions of said plurality of pulses are timed to sweep said fluid laterally outward.

78. The method according to claim 77, further comprising the step of augmenting the energy deposited along said timed plurality of heated and ionized paths by emitting an electric discharge along some or all of said paths, wherein at least one additional conductive path is created to complete a circuit to allow flow of an amount of electric current.

79. The method according to claim 75, further comprising the step of augmenting the energy deposited along said heated and ionized path by emitting an electric discharge along said heated and ionized path, wherein an at least one additional conductive path is created to complete a circuit to allow flow of an amount of electric current.

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