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Kavaler

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- (54) MICRO-RADAR, MICRO-RADAR SENSOR
NODES, NETWORKS AND SYSTEMS

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- (*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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G01S 13/08 (2006.01)

- (52) **U.S. Cl.** 342/128; 342/136

- (58) **Field of Classification Search** 342/118–146
See application file for complete search history.

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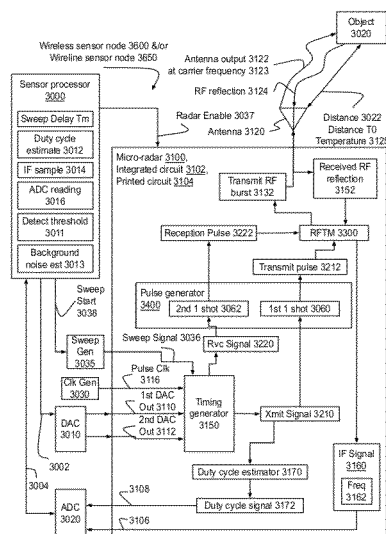
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A micro-radar is disclosed that is operated based upon two Digital to Analog Converter (DAC) outputs that control its internal timing and Intermediate Frequency (IF) signal frequency. Calibration and temperature compensation is done through estimating the duty cycle of the transmit signal and possibly the reception signal that stimulate a pulse generator to create the transmit pulse and the reception pulse and adjusting one or both DAC outputs. Sensor processors, wireless sensor nodes and wireline sensor nodes are disclosed for operating the micro-radar. An integrated circuit is disclosed implementing all or portions of the micro-radar. Access points, servers as well as systems that include but are not limited to a traffic monitoring system, a traffic control system, a parking management system and/or a production management system are also disclosed.

20 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



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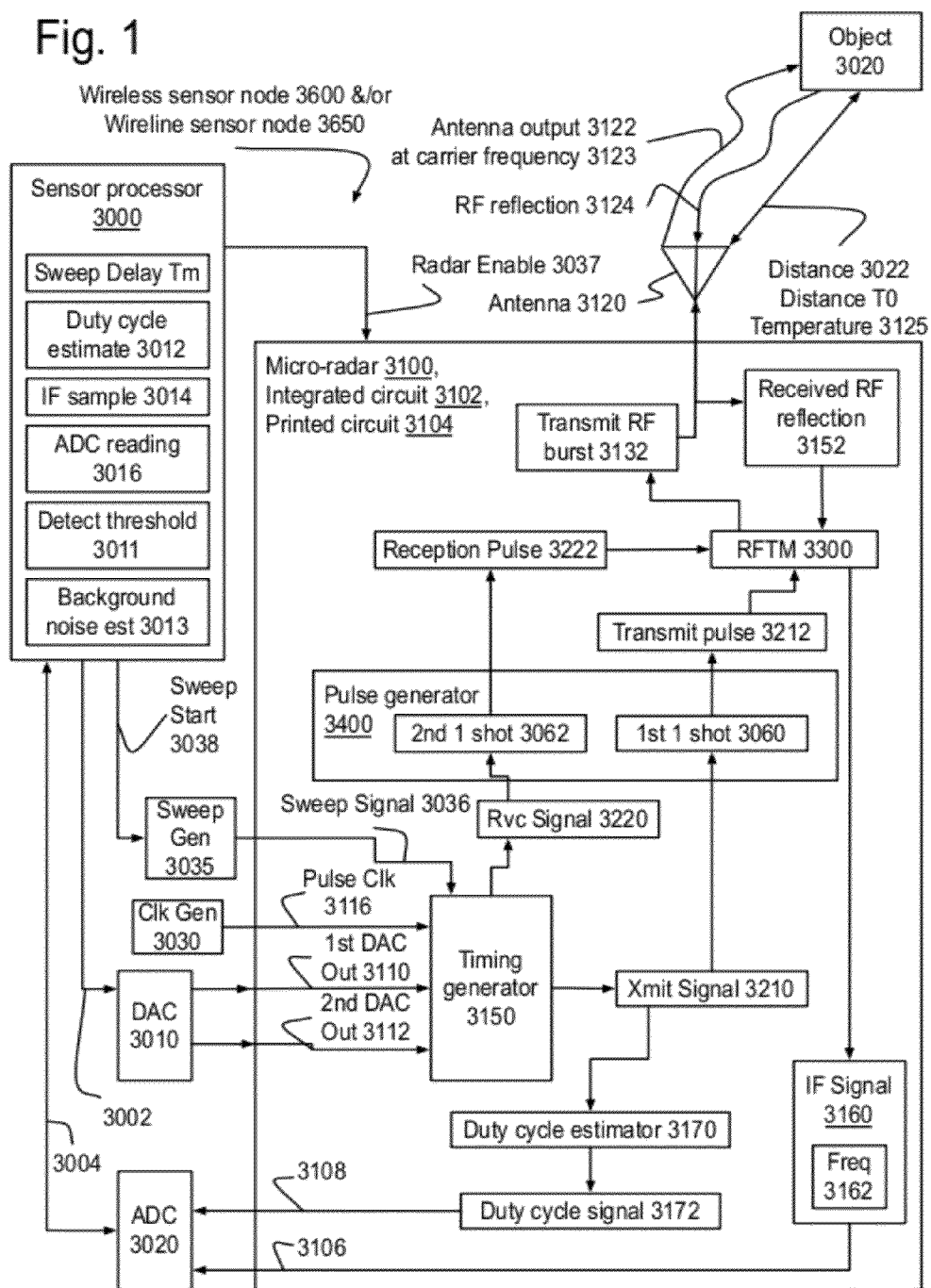
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Fig. 1



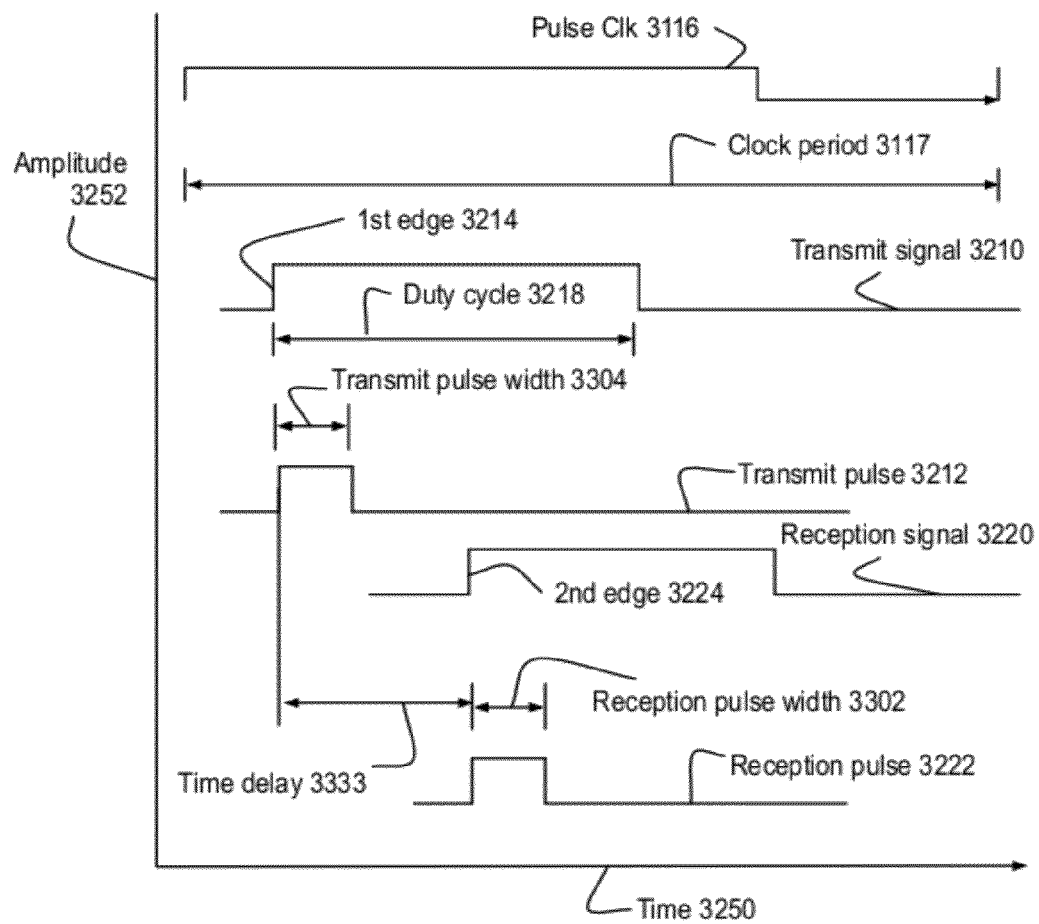


Fig. 2A

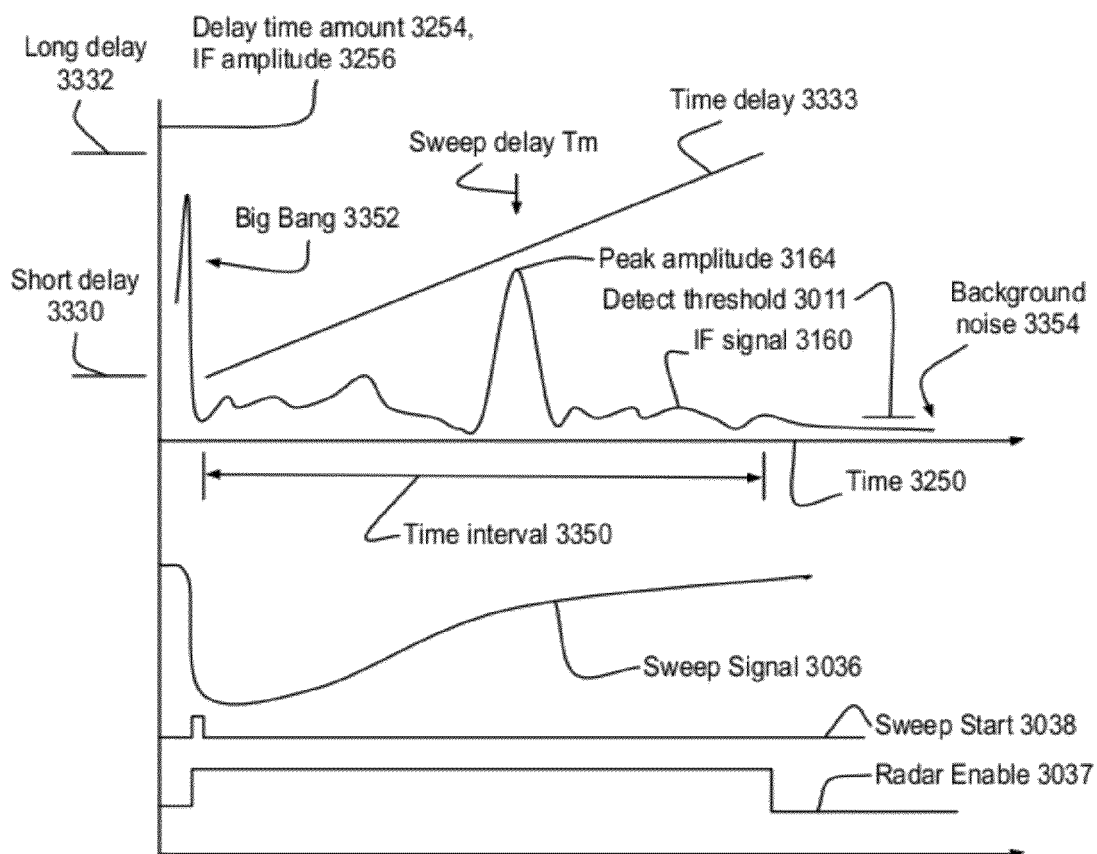


Fig. 2B

Fig. 3

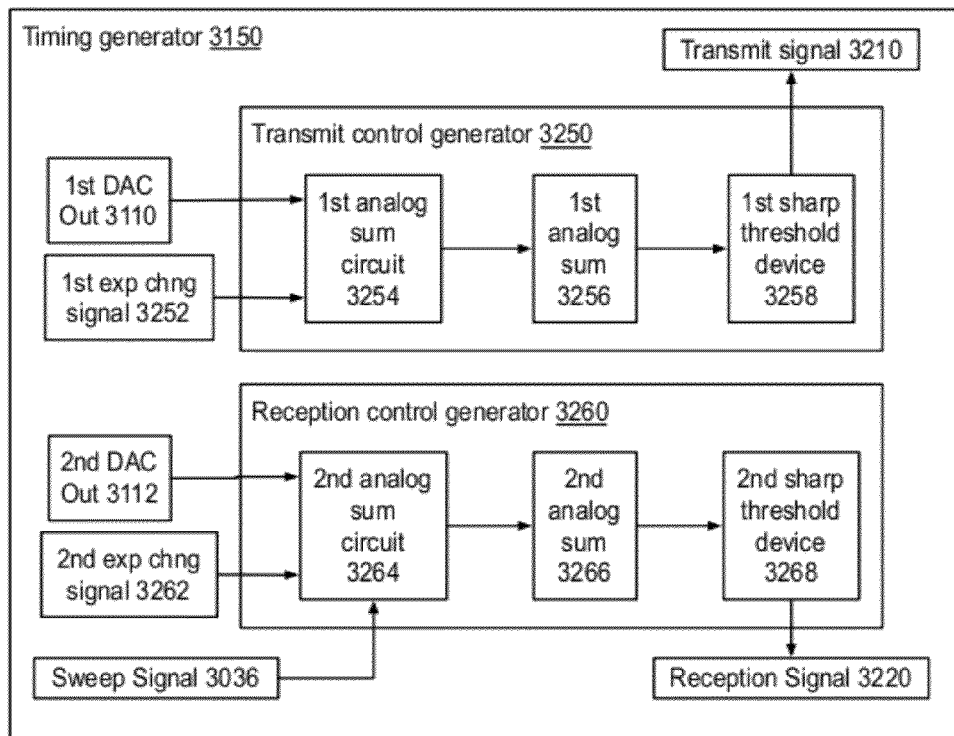


Fig. 4

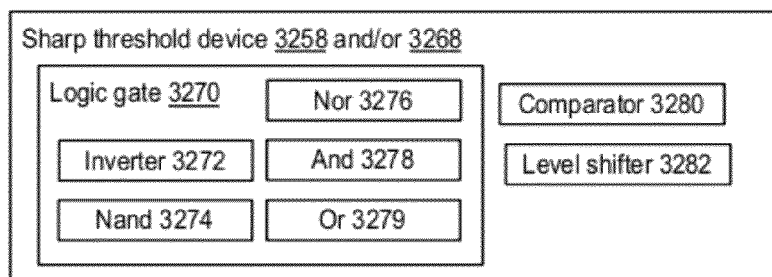


Fig. 5

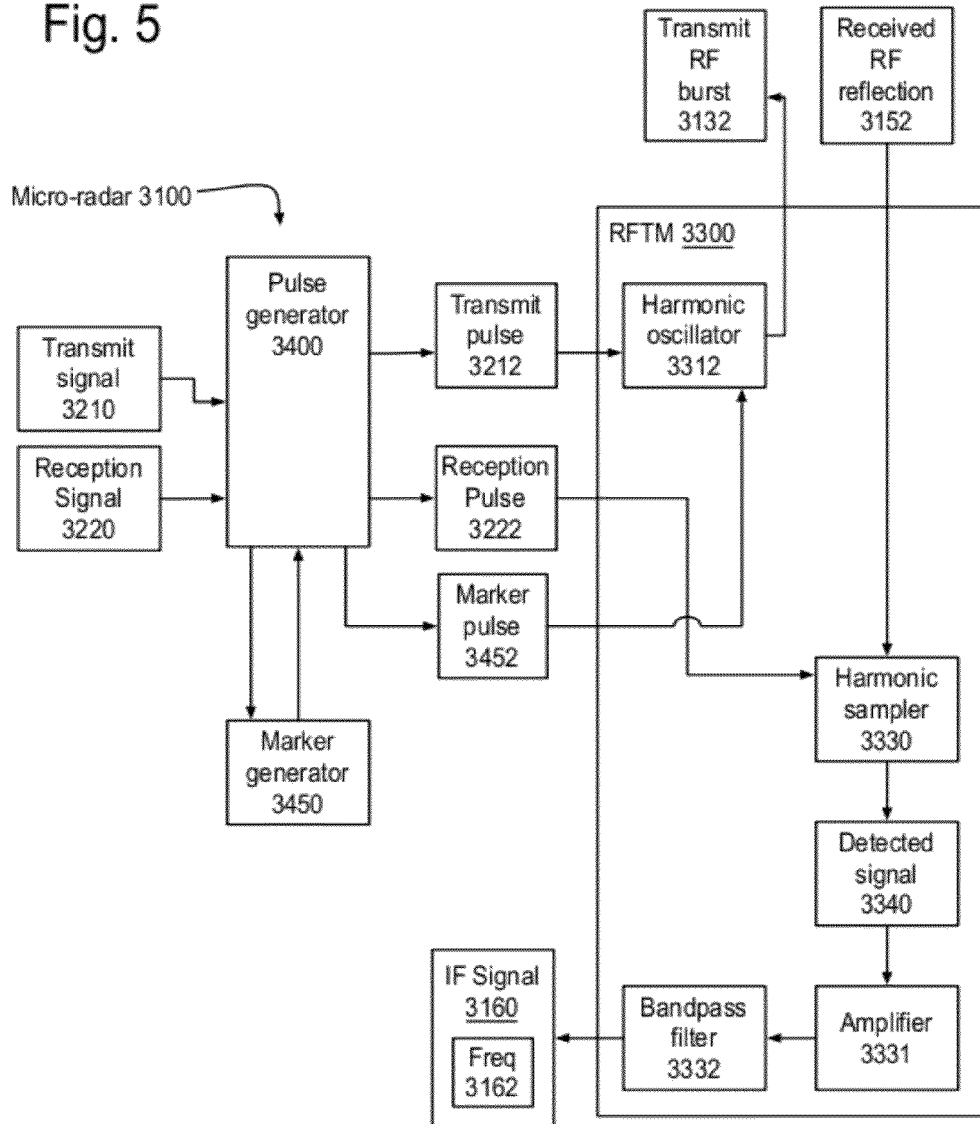


Fig. 6

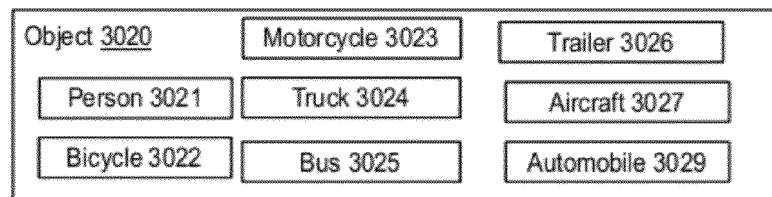


Fig. 7 is a schematic diagram of a chamber 3029 used for measuring the temperature of an object 3020. The object 3020 is partially submerged in a filling 3028. An antenna 3120 is positioned above the object, and a temperature sensor 3125 is located within the filling. The distance between the antenna and the object is labeled T0.

Fig. 8 is a schematic diagram of a system for measuring the temperature and size of an object 3020, which is a truck 3024. The system includes a wireline sensor node 3650 and a wireless sensor node 3600. The wireline sensor node 3650 contains a sensor processor 3000, a 2nd micro-radar 3100-2, and a 2nd antenna 3120-2. The wireless sensor node 3600 contains a radio antenna 3640, a radio 3630, a micro-radar 3100, a sweep time Tm, and a report 3620. The system also includes an access point 3700 &/or server 3750 with a processor 3800. The access point 3700 &/or server 3750 is connected to the wireline sensor node 3650 via wireline communication 3652 and to the wireless sensor node 3600 via wireless communication 3642. The access point 3700 &/or server 3750 also contains a processor 3800 with a Tm and a 2nd Tm, which are connected to Est T0 and Est T02 respectively. The distance between the 2nd antenna 3120-2 and the object 3020 is labeled 2nd T0. The size of the object 3020 is labeled Size 3028. The distance between the radio antenna 3640 and the object 3020 is labeled T0.

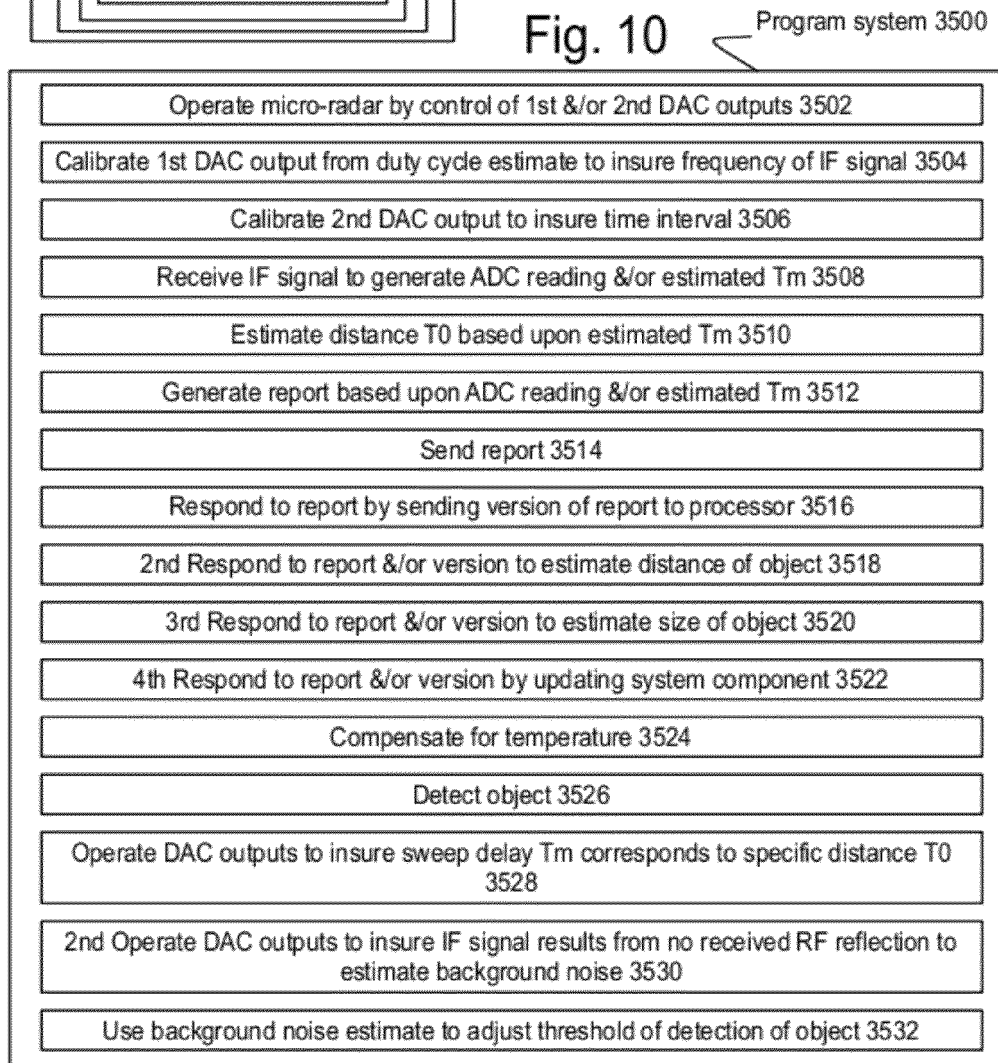
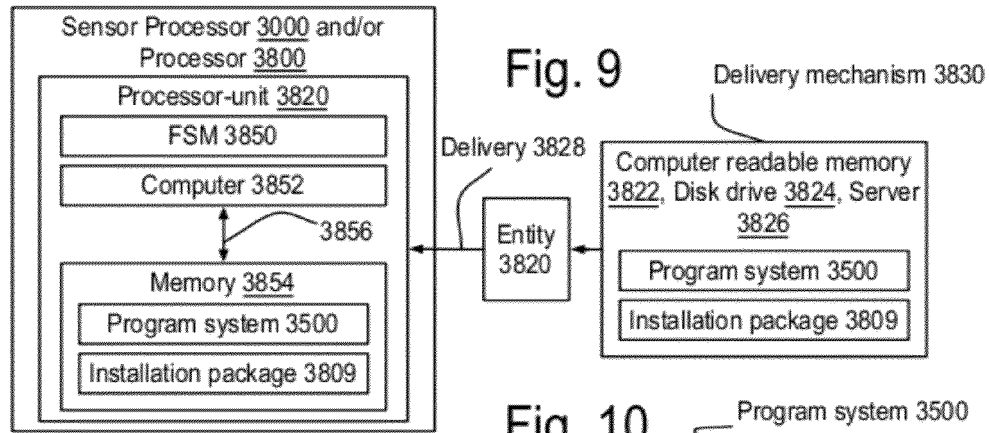
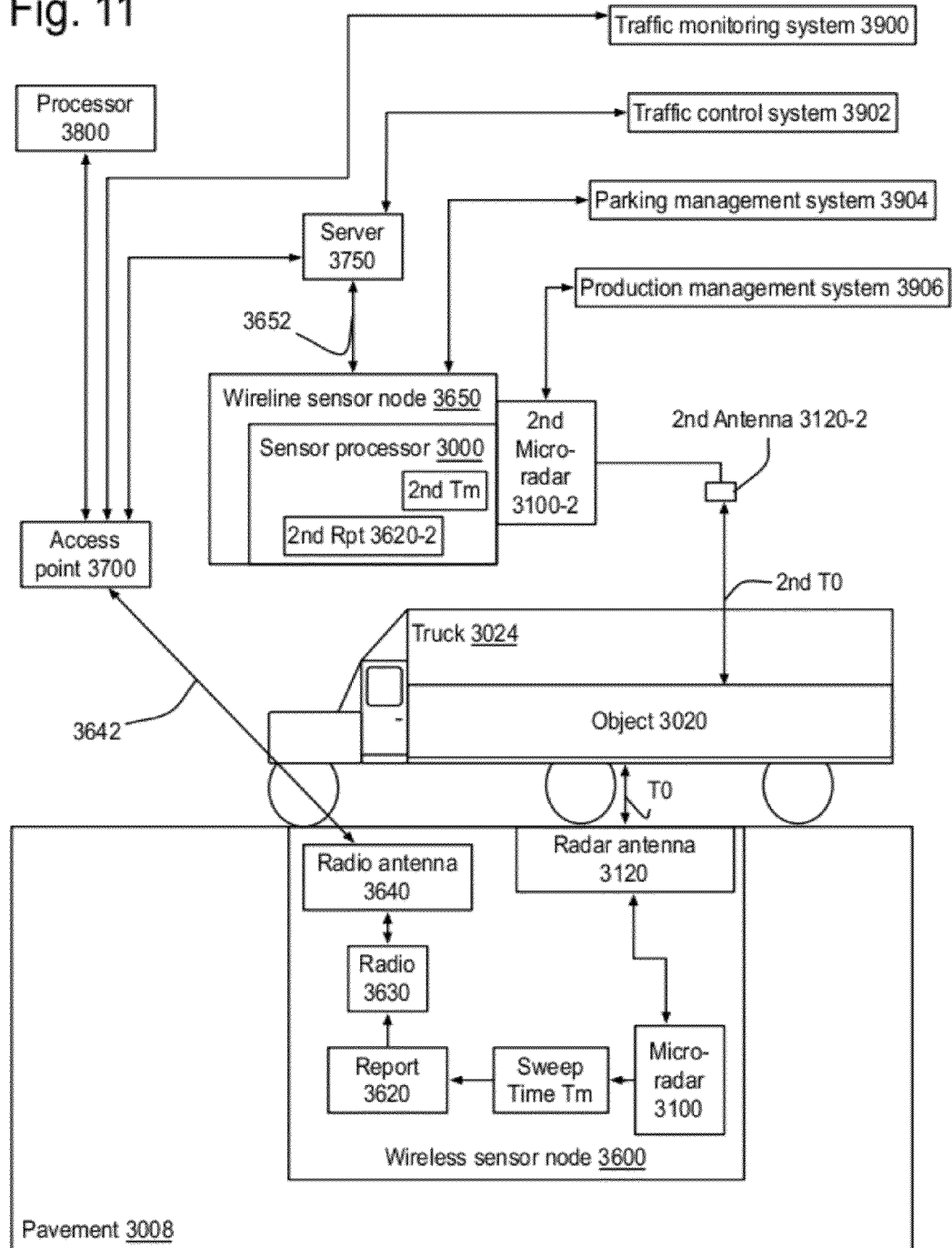


Fig. 11



MICRO-RADAR, MICRO-RADAR SENSOR NODES, NETWORKS AND SYSTEMS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED PATENT APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to Provisional patent application No. 61/581,620 filed Dec. 29, 2011, entitled "Micro-Radar, Micro-Radar Sensor Nodes, Networks and Systems", Provisional patent application No. 61/582,157, filed Dec. 30, 2011, entitled "Wireless and Wireline Sensor Nodes, Micro-Radar, Networks and Systems", and Provisional patent application No. 61/623,044, filed Apr. 11, 2012, entitled "Micro-Radar, Micro-Radar Sensor Nodes, Networks and Systems", each which is incorporated herein in their entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This disclosure relates to micro-radars, radar antennas, sensor nodes adapted to interact with a micro-radar, and processors adapted to respond to the micro-radar, as well as components and systems supporting communications between the micro-radars and the processors. The processors and systems may further support traffic analysis and management of moving and/or stationary vehicles.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

There has been extensive development of radar since the 1930's for detecting aircraft and ships at a distance, often over the horizon. Such systems routinely use many kilowatts to megawatts for transmitting their radar pulses. What is disclosed herein are micro-radars that use ten milli-Watts (mW) or less of power to transmit their pulses. Micro-radars are also used to detect vehicles and determine distances, but the distances involved are typically within a few meters of the micro-radar.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

The prior art includes a discussion that radar transmission signals in multi-GigaHertz (GHz) bands are unaffected by changing weather conditions. While this is true, the prior art overlooks some issues that the inventor has had to cope with. The inventor has found each of the following issues to seriously affect at least some installations of micro-radar:

Different manufacturing runs may alter the operating characteristics of the micro-radar, even in a laboratory setting.

Varying temperature/weather conditions may alter the operating characteristics.

Varying ground conditions for a micro-radar embedded in the ground may alter the operating characteristics.

The micro-radar components may also drift over time even when there are little or no changes in the weather or ground conditions. The component drift may also alter the operating characteristics.

Often, there may be variations in the noise in the Intermediate Frequency (IF) signal that can compromise the detection and/or distance estimate.

Often, there is a need to operate the micro-radar in a manner that minimizes power consumption. For example, in some wireless sensor nodes, there is a very limited amount of power that can be generated and/or stored by

the wireless sensor node, requiring that a micro-radar use power in a frugal manner.

These operating characteristics of the micro-radar may include changes in the IF frequency and/or noise of the micro-radar and/or changes in the timing delays of the receiver. Changes in either or both of these characteristics can adversely affect a sensor's ability estimate the travel time of the radar pulse and from that render the distance estimate to an object less accurate.

The application discloses and claims several embodiments, a micro-radar, sensor nodes adapted to interact with the micro-radar, processors responding to the micro-radar, as well as systems and components supporting communications between the micro-radars and the processors. The processors and systems may further support traffic analysis and management of moving and/or stationary vehicles. The vehicles may include sections of non-magnetic materials such as aluminum, wood and/or plastics that tend to create false readings for magnetic sensors. The processors and systems may also support measurement and/or management of production processes such as chemical production, device fabrication and container filling of various items such as liquids, grains and/or saw dust.

The micro-radar will refer to a radar adapted to generate an antenna output of less than or equal to ten milli-Watts (mW). The micro-radar is adapted to operate in response to at least one output of a Digital to Analog Converter (DAC) and sometimes preferably two DAC outputs.

The DAC output may be used to generate an analog sum including an exponentially changing signal and the output of the DAC. Here are two examples of the response of the micro-radar to distinct analog sums, either or both of which may be incorporated into the micro-radar and/or its operations:

First, the micro-radar may operate in response to a first analog sum of a first DAC output, an exponentially changing signal, and a clock pulse. The response may include generating a receiver mixing signal that is asserted at a succession of time delays that are a function of the first analog sum.

Second, the micro-radar may be operated based upon a second analog sum of a second exponentially changing signal and a second DAC output to control the Intermediate Frequency of the down converted RF signal. This second sum may control a duty cycle of a pulse generating oscillator output without changing its frequency. The duty cycle may be measured as the high time divided by the period of the oscillator output.

The micro-radar may include a RF transceiver/mixer RFTM used to generate carrier signal for the antenna output and to generate the received IF signal.

The micro-radar may be operated through the control of the first and/or second DAC outputs. Some operations that may be supported include any combination of the following:

Controlling both the first and second DAC outputs to advance or retard the sweep delay relative to the distance to an object.

Setting the second DAC output to generate the IF signal as a noise reading.

And calibrating the first DAC output, and possibly the second DAC output, to establish the IF frequency.

The apparatus may further include a wireless sensor node and/or a wireline sensor node and/or a processor and/or an access point and/or a server.

The wireless sensor node may include a first instance of the micro-radar and a radio transceiver configured to send a report regarding the sweep delay for the object, when the

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IF signal has a peak amplitude corresponding to the received RF reflection from the object.

The wireline sensor node may be configured to operate a second instance of the micro-radar and including a wireline interface configured to send the report regarding the sweep delay for the object.

The processor may be configured to receive the report and configured to respond to the report by generating an estimate of the distance of the object from the micro-radar.

The access point may be configured to wirelessly communicate with the micro-radar via the radio transceiver to send a version the report to the processor.

And the server may be configured to communicate the version of the report from the micro-radar to the processor.

The wireless sensor node and/or the wireline sensor node may further include a sensor processor configured to control the micro-radar by at least control of the first DAC output and the second DAC output.

At least one of the sensor processor, the access point, the server and/or the processor includes at least one instance of at least one of a finite state machine and a computer accessibly coupled to a memory containing a program system comprised of program steps configured to instruct the computer.

Various implementations of the program system may include at least one of the program steps of:

Operating the micro-radar based upon control of the first DAC output and/or the second DAC output.

Receiving the IF signal to generate an ADC reading and/or an estimate of the sweep delay for the object.

Estimating the distance of the object based upon the estimated sweep delay.

Generating the report based upon the ADC reading and/or the sweep delay.

Responding to the report by sending the version of the report to the processor.

Second responding to the report and/or the version to estimate the distance of the object from the micro-radar.

Third responding to the report and/or the version to generate the size of the object.

And/or fourth responding to the distance of the object from the micro-radar by updating at least one of a traffic monitoring system, a traffic control system, a parking management system, and/or a production management system.

The apparatus may further include at least one of the traffic monitoring system, the traffic control system, the parking management system, and/or the production management system, any of which may include

At least one communicative coupling to at least one of the micro-radar, the wireless sensor node, the wireline sensor node, the processor, the access point and/or the server.

The communicative coupling(s) may support communication across at least one of a wireline physical transport and/or a wireless physical transport.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a simplified block diagram of an example of a wireless sensor node and/or a wireline sensor node that may include a sensor processor configured to operate a micro-radar based upon a first DAC output and second DAC output.

FIG. 2A shows a timing diagram of the relationship between the pulse clock, the transmit signal and the reception signal as generated by the timing generator and used by the

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RFTM of FIG. 1, including the time delay between the signals and/or the pulses, the pulse widths and duty cycle.

FIG. 2B shows a timing diagram sweep of the time delay from a short delay to a long delay over a time interval, as well as the IF signal over the time interval with a peak amplitude at a sweep delay T_m corresponding to the distance T_0 of the object from the antenna as shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 shows some details the micro-radar, in particular the timing generator of FIG. 1, including a transmit control generator responding to the first DAC output and a reception control generator responding to the second DAC output.

FIG. 4 shows the first sharp threshold device and/or the second sharp threshold device of FIG. 3 may include at least one instance of a logic gate, a comparator and/or a level shifter.

FIG. 5 shows an example of the RFTM of FIG. 1 based upon the circuitry of U.S. Pat. No. 6,414,627 (hereafter referred to as the '627 patent).

FIG. 6 shows some examples of the object as at least one of a person, a bicycle, a motorcycle, an automobile, a truck, a bus, a trailer and/or an aircraft.

FIG. 7 shows some examples of the object as a surface of a filling of a chamber.

FIG. 8 shows some other apparatus embodiments that involve the micro-radar of FIG. 1, including but not limited to, the wireless sensor node and the wireline sensor node, sending report based upon the estimate sweep delay. A processor may respond to the reports to generate an estimated distance approximating the distance T_0 of the radar antenna from the object. Access points and/or servers may include the processor and/or share communications between the sensor nodes and/or the micro-radars and/or the processors.

FIG. 9 shows some details of at least one of the sensor processor and/or the processor of FIG. 8 may be individually and/or collectively may be implemented as one or more instances of a processor-unit that may include a finite state machine, a computer, a program system, an inferential engine and/or a neural network. The apparatus may further include examples of a delivery mechanism, which may include a computer readable memory, a disk drive and/or a server, each configured to deliver the program system and/or an installation package to the processor-unit to implement at least part of the disclosed method and/or apparatus.

FIG. 10 shows a flowchart of the program system of FIG. 8.

FIG. 11 shows a simplified network diagram of various systems that may communicate with the micro-radars and/or the wireless sensor node and/or the wireline sensor node and/or the processor and/or the access point and/or the server of FIG. 8. The various systems include but are not limited to a traffic monitoring system, a traffic control system, a parking management system and/or a production management system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

This disclosure relates to micro-radars, radar antennas, sensor nodes adapted to interact with a micro-radar, and processors adapted to respond to the micro-radar, as well as components and systems supporting communications between the micro-radars and the processors. The processors and systems may further support traffic analysis and management of moving and/or stationary vehicles. In some embodiments the micro-radar, sensor nodes, processors and/or system may support production management.

FIG. 1 shows a simplified block diagram of an example of a wireless sensor node 3300 and/or a wireline sensor node 3310 that may include a sensor processor 3000 configured to

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operate a micro-radar **3100** based upon a first DAC output **3110** and second DAC output **3112**.

The micro-radar **3100** is a radar that may be adapted to generate an antenna output **3122** of less than or equal to (no more than) ten milliWatts (mW) and responds to at least two outputs of a Digital to Analog Converter (DAC), which will be referred to as a DAC output.

An object **3020** may be situated at a distance **3022**, for example a distance T_0 , from an antenna **3120** interacting with the micro-radar **3100**. In many situations, the antenna and the micro-radar may be considered as located at one location, but in other situations, there may be some distance between them. To simplify this discussion, only the distance **3022** from the antenna will be discussed. The object **3020** may reflect the antenna output **3122** to generate a RF reflection **3124**. The micro-radar **3100** may be adapted to generate a received RF reflection **3152** from the RF reflection **3124**.

The micro-radar may use a timing generator **3150** adapted to respond to the two DAC outputs **3110** and **3112** to generate a transmit signal **3210** and a reception signal **3220** that stimulate a Radio Frequency (RF) transceiver/mixer (RFTM) **3300** to generate the antenna output **3122** and to down convert an Intermediate Frequency (IF) signal **3160** based upon and proportional to the received RF reflection **3152**.

Consider the micro-radar **3100** response to the first DAC output **3110** and to the second DAC output **3112** over the clock period **3117** of a sweep clock **3116**.

The sweep clock **3116** may be generated by a separate clock generator **3030**. In other implementations, the micro-radar and/or the sensor processor **3000** may include the clock generator.

The timing generator **3150** may respond to the first DAC output **3110** by generating a transmit signal **3210** over the clock period **3117** of sweep clock **3116** as shown in FIG. 2A, which will be discussed shortly.

The timing generator **3150** may respond to the second DAC output **3112** by generating a reception signal **3220** with a time delay **3300** from the transmit signal over the sweep clock **3116** period **3117**, also shown in FIG. 2A. A first one-shot multi-vibrator **3060** may respond to the transmit signal **3210** by generating the transmit pulse **3212**.

A second one-shot multi-vibrator **3062** may respond to the reception signal **3220** by generating the reception pulse **3222**.

The RFTM **3300** may respond to the transmit pulse **3210** by generating a transmitted Radio Frequency (RF) burst **3132** for delivery to the antenna **3120** to generate the antenna output **3122**.

The RFTM **330** may mix a received RF reflection **3152** with the transmit RF burst **3132**, in response to the reception pulse **3220**, to generate the IF signal **3160** with a peak amplitude **3164** at a sweep delay T_m for a distance T_0 of the object **3020** from the antenna **3120**.

The frequency **3160** of the IF signal **3160** is preferably about one over the compression ratio multiplied by the carrier frequency **3123** of the antenna output **3122**, where the compression ratio is about one million.

A pulse generator **3400** may be used to respond to the transmit signal **3210** to generate the transmit pulse **3212** and to respond to the reception signal **3220** to generate the reception pulse **3222**. The transmit signal may further stimulate a first one shot multi-vibrator **3060** to at least partly generate the transmit pulse. The reception signal may further stimulate a second one-shot multi-vibrator **3060-2** to at least partly

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generate the reception pulse. Note that in some implementations, the reception pulse may include the transmit pulse occurring before at a time delay **3300** before it. The time delay will be shown in FIG. 2A. FIG. 2A will show the reception pulse not including the transmit pulse.

Before discussing the timing relationships in FIGS. 2A and 2B, there are two questions to answer: Where does the compression ratio show up in this apparatus? And what is the relationship of the duty cycle **3218** of the transmit signal **3210** to compression ratio and the frequency **3162** of the IF signal **3160**?

First, here is how the compression ratio shows up. The carrier frequency **3123** of the antenna output **3122** is in the GigaHertz (GHz) range. For example, in the inventor's products, which include wireless sensor nodes **3310**, the carrier frequency is about 6.3 GHz. The return times for the antenna output **3122** to travel the distance T_0 of 6 feet to the object **3020** and return are as the RF reflection are about 12 nano-seconds.

But the system clock for the sensor processor **3000** is about 32 KHz. This clock frequency is set low to conserve on power stored in the wireless sensor node **3310**. The sensor processor cannot directly detect the reception time T_m of the RF reflection **3124** without consuming a lot more power than can be afforded.

There are RFTM **3212** and similar micro-radar **3100** circuits that held a promise of meeting these needs, in that the frequency **3162** of the IF signal **3160** is one millionth of the carrier frequency **3123**, making the IF frequency about 6.3 KHz, which is within the operating frequency of the sensor processor **3000**.

Because of the compression ratio, the frequency **3162** of the IF signal **3160** frequency **3162** is small enough that sensing it can be done efficiently enough for a wireless sensor node **3300**.

Here is where the duty cycle and its relationship to the compression ratio and the frequency **3162** of the IF signal **3160** shows up:

The inventor obtained some samples of micro-radars, and they worked.

However, when he made then some that had the same schematic and they did not work. It turned out there were manufacturing variations in the components that changed the compression ratio and consequently, the frequency **3162**.

After much experimentation, he found that by adding DAC outputs **3110** and **3112** to generate the transmit signal **3210** and the receive signal **3220**, and measuring the duty cycle of the transmit signal, he could control the compression ratio at the same time he controlled the duty cycle.

This also allowed a program to be executed on the sensor processor **3000** that could change the first DAC output **3110** until the duty cycle **3218** was within a fractional range of the clock period **3117** of the sweep clock **3116**. For instance, he found that if the ratio of the duty cycle to the clock period was 50%, the frequency **3162** of the IF signal **3160** was about 10 KHz, whereas if the ratio was about 70%, the frequency was about 6.3 KHz.

There is no immediate theory that seems to account for this phenomena, but experimentally it has been found to be true.

Further, field testing of the wireless sensor nodes **3310** has revealed that the compression ratio and therefore the frequency **3162** of the IF signal **3160** of these micro-radars **3100** are also sensitive to fluctuations in temperature **3125**. However, it was again discovered that if the

first DAC output **3110** was adjusted until the duty cycle estimate **3012** was again adjusted until it was in the vicinity of 70%, the frequency **3162** of the IF signal **3160** was again in the range of 6.3 KHz.

Before continuing the discussion of FIG. 1, the timing relationships involved with this micro-radar will be shown and discussed in FIGS. 2A-2C.

FIG. 2A shows a timing diagram of the relationship between the sweep clock **3116**, the transmit signal **3210** and the reception signal **3220** as generated by the timing generator **3150** and used by the RFTM **3300**, including the time delay **3300** between the signals and/or the pulses, the pulse widths and duty cycle **3218**.

The transmit signal **3210** and the reception signal **3220** may be generated once in every cycle of the sweep clock **3116** by the timing generator **3150**. The sweep clock has a clock period **3117**, which in some situations is about 6.3 MHz.

The duty cycle **3218** of the transmit signal **3210** is the time in the clock period **3117** in which the signal is high, which is often referred to as logic '1'.

The transmit pulse **3212** is initiated in response to a first edge **3214** of the transmit signal **3210**. Since the micro-radar **3100** circuitry is so much faster than the sensor processor **300** and the wireless sensor node **3300** in general, there are no delays shown between the first edge **3214** and the transmit pulse **3212** starting.

The reception pulse **3222** is initiated in response to a second edge **3224** of the reception signal **3220**, again shown with no delays. However, there is a time delay **3300** between the first edge **3214** and the second edge **3224**, which leads to essentially the same delay between the transmit pulse **3212** and the reception pulse **3222**.

The transmit pulse width **3304** is shown as the active high width of the transmit pulse **3210**. The reception pulse width **3302** is shown as the active high width of the reception pulse **3220**. Both the transmit pulse with **3304** and the reception pulse width **3302** are about the same, and in some situations may be about 4 ns.

FIG. 2B shows a timing diagram sweep of the time delay **3300** from a short delay **3330** to a long delay **3332** over a time interval **3350**, as well as the IF signal **3160** over the time interval with a peak amplitude **3164** at a sweep delay T_m corresponding to the distance T_0 of the object **3020** from the antenna **3120** as shown in FIG. 1. The time interval may see the sweep start at the short delay and progress to the long delay as is shown. In other implementations, the time interval may see the opposite, that the sweep starts at the long delay progresses to the short delay.

Since the pulse widths **3302** and **3304** are essentially the same, for example, both about 4 ns, avoiding a collision between sending the antenna output **3122** and receiving the RF reflection **3124**, can be served by setting the short delay **3330** to 4 ns. Setting the long delay **3332** to 20 ns after the short delay leads to setting the long delay to 24 ns, allowing for sweep delays T_m that corresponding to traversing to and from the object at a distance roughly 10 feet, which is sufficient for many applications of the micro-radar **3100**.

The IF signal **3160** is shown with a peak labeled a big bang **3352** before the start of the time interval **3350**. The big bang is an occurrence where the sweep start **3038** is initiated earlier than shown in this Figure. In such a situation, the transmit RF burst **3132** and the reception pulse **3222** overlap in time, causing a false peak, irrespective of the received RF reflection **3152**. In some situations, it may be preferred to operate the micro-radar **3100** so that the sweep start occurs after the big

bang, not only saving power but also removing the need to remove the false peak from the detection of the sweep delay T_m .

The sensor processor **3000** shown in FIG. 1 may use an Analog to Digital Converter (ADC) **3020** less than 20 thousand times a second and yet determine the distance T_0 very accurately, while being able to calibrate itself to account for variations in manufacturing, temperature **3125** and other ambient conditions.

The IF signal **3160** is also shown in FIG. 2B with a persisting trough occurring after the time interval **3350**. This trough is labeled background noise **3354**. By operating the micro-radar **3100** after the time interval, the IF signal may be sampled to create one or more ADC readings **3016** that may be used to generate a background noise estimate **3013** shown in FIG. 1. While the background noise has been shown as a persisting trough, it may take any of a wide variation in shapes and be encompassed in the scope of the claims. Background noise is noisy, but tends to be relatively small compared to the IF signal during the time interval, when received RF reflections **3152** increase the amplitude of the IF signal as shown in FIG. 2B. Detecting the object **3020** may also involve using a detect threshold **3011**, which will be discussed later. The sensor processor **3000** may include the detect threshold, which may be generated from the background noise estimate **3013**, shown first in FIG. 1 and further shown in FIG. 2B.

The micro-radar **3100** and/or the RFTM **3200** may be implemented as at least part of an integrated circuit **3102** and/or a printed circuit **3104**. Through the use of the first DAC output **3110** and the second DAC output **3112**, initial and later calibration of the micro-radar **3100**, the integrated circuit **3102** and/or the printed circuit **3104** may be cost effectively performed, thereby minimizing production test costs and improving reliability in varying field conditions.

The micro-radar **3100** may be operated by the sensor processor **3000** through interactions with the DAC and an Analog to Digital Converter (ADC) **3020**. The setting of the DAC outputs **3110** and **3112** have been described to some extent.

A duty cycle estimator **3170** may respond to the transmit signal **3210** to generate a duty cycle signal **3172** presented to an Analog to Digital Converter (ADC) to generate an ADC reading used to calculate a duty cycle estimate **3012**.

The IF signal **3160** may be sampled by the ADC **3020** to create a possibly different ADC reading **3016** used to generate the IF sample **3014** at an estimated sweep delay T_m .

FIG. 1 shows one DAC **3010** generating both the first DAC output **3010** and the second DAC output **3112** and being coupled **3002** to the sensor processor **3000**.

Various implementations of the DAC **3010** may be used to generate the first DAC output **3110** and/or the second DAC output **3112**. These implementations of the DAC **3010** do not have to be the same, may differ in resolution and sampling rate. However, the discussion will proceed to illustrate one DAC generating both the first and second DAC outputs. This is not intended to limit the scope of the claims. It is done for the sake of simplifying the discussion. Also, the resolution of the DAC outputs **3110** and/or **3112** may be at least 10 bits, and in some situations may be preferred to be more than 10 bits.

The coupling **3002** between the sensor processor **3000** and the DAC **3010** today is preferably a wireline coupling, frequently involving one or more electrically conductive materials. However other implementations may be pre-

ferred. For example, the coupling may also implement an optical coupling which might not be electrically conductive.

FIG. 1 also shows the sensor processor **3000** second coupled **3004** to an Analog to Digital Converter (ADC) **3020**. The sensor processor and/or the wireless sensor node **3300** and/or the wireline sensor node **3310** may be adapted and/or configured to use the ADC **3120** in one or more of the following ways:

The ADC **3020** may respond to the duty cycle signal **3212** and the interactions of the sensor processor **3000** through the second coupling **3004** to generate a duty cycle estimate **3012** in the sensor processor, and/or The ADC **3020** respond to the IF signal **3160** and the interactions of the sensor processor **3000** through the second coupling **3004** to generate an IF sample **3014** in the sensor processor.

Various implementations of the ADC **3020** may be used to generate the duty cycle estimate **3012** and/or the IF sample **3014**. These implementations of the ADC **3020** do not have to be the same, may differ in resolution and sampling rate. However, the discussion will proceed to illustrate one ADC generating both the duty cycle estimate **3012** and the IF sample **3014**. This is not intended to limit the scope of the claims. It is done for the sake of simplifying the discussion. Also, the resolution of the ADC **3020** may be at least 10 bits, and in some situations may be preferred to be more than 10 bits.

The second coupling **3004** between the sensor processor **3000** and the ADC **3020** today is preferably a wireline coupling, frequently involving one or more electrically conductive materials. However other implementations may be preferred. For example, the second coupling may also implement an optical coupling which might not be electrically conductive.

The interactions across the second coupling **3004** may include a selection of an analog input port and a strobing of the ADC **3020** to provide data to be used as the duty cycle estimate **3012** and/or the IF sample **3014**.

The micro-radar **3100** may include a first ADC coupling **3106** of the IF signal **3160** to the ADC **3160**, and/or a second ADC coupling **3108** of the duty cycle signal **3212** to the ADC **3160**.

In some embodiments, the sensor processor **3000** may include the DAC **3010** and/or include the ADC **3020**. Whereas in other embodiments, the sensor processor, the DAC and the ADC may be separate components fastened to a printed circuit **3104**, possibly containing all or part of the micro-radar **3100**, and the first coupling **3002** and the second coupling **3004** may be electrical traces on and/or through the printed circuit.

FIG. 3 shows some details the micro-radar **3100**, in particular the timing generator **3150** of FIG. 1, including a transmit control generator **3250** responding to the first DAC output **3110** and a reception control generator **3260** responding to the second DAC output **3112**.

The transmit control generator **3250** may include a first analog sum **3256** of a first exponentially changing signal **3252** and the first DAC output **3110** triggering a first sharp threshold device **3258** to generate the transmit signal **3210** with a duty cycle **3218** as shown in FIG. 2A. The transmit signal may stimulate the duty cycle estimator **3170** to generate the duty cycle signal **3172** as shown in FIG. 1. Note that the first analog sum may be generated by a first analog sum circuit **3256**.

The reception control generator **3260** may includes a second analog sum **3266** of the second DAC output **3112**, a

second exponentially changing signal **3262** and the sweep clock signal **3116** triggering a second sharp threshold device **3268** to generate the reception signal **3220**. The second analog sum may be generated by a second analog sum circuit **3266**.

The first and second analog sum circuits **3254** and **3264** may be implemented in a wide variety of ways, including through the use of differential amplifiers and/or weighted resistor networks designed based upon Ohm's Law to generate the analog sum **3256** and/or **3266**.

The first exponentially changing signal **3252** is used to generate the transmit signal **3210**, and will tend to need a fast time of change, possibly changing from a saturation to depleted state in a few nanoseconds.

The second exponentially changing signal **3262** is used to generate the time delay **3300** sweep from a short delay **3330** to a long delay **3332** over the time interval **3350**, which may be on the order of 20 ms.

Circuitry to generate the first exponentially changing signal **3252** and/or the second exponentially changing signal **3262** may be implemented based upon capacitor charging and/or discharging across a resistor, which may be further implemented with various components of one or more transistors acting as the capacitor and/or the resistor.

In some embodiments, the exponentially changing signals **3252** and/or **3262** may be generated through piecewise linear behavior of threshold switching components. Such signals may not change in an exactly exponential fashion, but will display a distinctive change in the rate of change which will be monotonically increasing or monotonically decreasing within one sweep clock **3116** period **3117**.

The first exponentially changing signal **3252** may have an RC delay of 20 ns. The second exponentially changing signal **3262** may have an RC decay of 20 ms. The delay sweep shown in FIG. 2B may be controlled by a signal set by the sensor processor **3000** that may short the capacitor that generates the second exponentially changing signal.

The transmit pulse **3212** use only the high speed RC signal and the reception pulse **3222** may use both the reception signal **3220** and the transmit signal **32210**.

FIG. 4 shows the first sharp threshold device **3258** and/or the second sharp threshold device **3268** may include at least one instance of a logic gate **3270**, a comparator **3280** and/or a level shifter **3282**. The logic gate **3272** which may be implemented as an inverter **3272**, a NAND gate **3274**, a NOR gate **3276**, an AND gate **3278**, and/or an OR gate **3279**. In situations where the logic gate has more than one input, the analog sum **3256** or **3266** may be supplied to one or more of the inputs. Any remaining inputs may be tied to logic 1 or 0 as needed.

The simplicity of using basic power logic gates **3270** instead of more power consuming comparators **3280** is very desirable but adds to the need to calibrate out the part to part voltage threshold differences found in these gates. Threshold variations may cause two major issues in the design: the IF signal **3160** frequency **3162** may vary based on the part of the RC curve that is used as the switching point, and the time delay **3300** of the transmit pulse **3212** versus the reception pulse **3222** may create uncertainty in the detection distance **tO** versus sweep delay **tM** relationship.

To address these situations, a method of calibrating the micro-radar **3100** that can adjust for both of these uncertainties and compensate them over temperature **3125** without a lot of power consumption or specially calibrated parts was devel-

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oped. This method will be described later in FIG. 10 in terms of a program system 3500 that may instruct a computer 3852.

FIG. 5 shows an example of the RFTM 3300 of FIG. 1 based upon the circuitry of U.S. Pat. No. 6,414,627 (hereafter referred to as the '627 patent). In this example, the carrier frequency 3123 of antenna output 3122 is 24 GHz. A single antenna 3120 is used as shown in FIG. 1. The RFTM emits 24 GHz RF sinewave packets and samples echoes with strobed timing such that the illusion of wave propagation at the speed of sound is observed, thereby forming an ultrasound mimicking radar (UMR). A 12 GHz frequency-doubled transmit oscillator in the RFTM is pulsed by the transmit pulse 3212 a first time to transmit a 24 GHz harmonic burst as the transmit RF burst 3132 and pulsed by the reception pulse 3222 a second time to produce a 12 GHz local oscillator burst for a sub-harmonically pumped, coherently integrating sample-hold receiver (homodyne operation). The time between the first and second oscillator bursts is swept as shown in FIG. 2B to form an expanded-time replica of echo bursts at the receiver output as the IF signal 3160.

A random phase RF marker pulse may be interleaved with the coherent phase transmitted RF antenna output 3122 to aid in spectrum assessment of the micro-radar's 3100 nearly undetectable emissions. The low-cost micro-radar 3100 can be used for automotive backup and collision warning, precision radar rangefinding for fluid level sensing and robotics, precision radiolocation, wideband communications, and time-resolved holographic imaging.

The RFTM 3300 may be implemented as a transmit oscillator and as a swept-in-time pulsed receive local oscillator. This dual function use of one oscillator eliminates the need for two microwave oscillators and facilitates operation with only one antenna for both transmit and receive functions. Further, it assures optimal operation since there are no longer two oscillators that can go out of tune with each other (in a two oscillator system, both oscillators must be tuned to the same frequency).

The transmit RF burst 3132 may be short, perhaps on the order of a few nanoseconds and sinusoidal, is transmitted to as the antenna output 3122 and reflected as the RF reflection 3124 from the object 3020. Shortly after transmission, the same RF oscillator used to generate the transmit pulse is re-triggered to produce a local oscillator pulse (homodyne operation) as the reception pulse, which gates a sample-hold circuit in to produce a voltage sample. This process may be repeated at a several megahertz rate as controlled by the sweep clock 3116. With each successive repetition, another sample may be taken and integrated with the previous sample to reduce the noise level. Also, each successive local oscillator pulse is delayed slightly from the previous pulse such that after about the time interval 3350, the successive delay increments add up to a complete sweep or scan from the short delay 3330 to the long delay 3332, for example, of perhaps 100-nanoseconds or about 15 meters in range. After each scan, the local oscillator delay is reset to a minimum and the next scan cycle begins.

The micro-radar 3100 produces a sampled voltage waveform on a millisecond scale that is a near replica of the RF waveform on a nanosecond scale. This equivalent time effect is effectively a dimensionless time expansion factor. If the compression ratio is set to 1-million, 24 GHz sinewaves are output from the micro-radar as 24 kHz sinewaves. Accordingly, the radar output can be made to appear like an ultrasonic ranging system. In addition to having the same frequency, e.g., 24 kHz, a 24 GHz radar actually has the same

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wavelength as a 24 kHz ultrasonic system. In addition, the range vs. round-trip time is the same (in equivalent time for the radar, of course).

The emission spectrum from the RFTM 3300 is very broad and often implemented as an Ultra Wide-Band (UWB) compliant signal generator. Sometimes, a narrowband, incoherent RF marker pulse may interleaved with the short coherent RF pulses used for ranging to produce a very visible spectrum with an identifiable peak, i.e., carrier frequency 3123. However, the marker pulse may create spurious echoes. Accordingly, the marker pulse may be randomized in phase so its echoes average to zero in the RFTM. At the same time, the desired ranging pulses as the antenna output 3122 and the RF reflection 3124 phase-coherently integrating from pulse to pulse into a clean IF signal 3160.

FIG. 5 shows some details of the micro-radar 3100 and the RFTM 3300 of FIG. 1 adapted to operate as in the '627 patent. A harmonic oscillator 3312 receives the transmit pulse 3212 from the transmit signal 3210 via pulse generator 3400 and produces RF burst pulses as the transmit RF burst at the antenna 3120 as shown in FIG. 1.

In some implementations the transmit signal 3210 may be a 1-10 MHz square wave that is passed through pulse generator to form about 1 ns wide transmit pulses 3212 with rise and fall times on the order of 100 picoseconds (ps). The transmit pulse 3212 and the reception pulse 3222 may be clock pulses with very fast rise and fall times. The transmit pulse 3212 and pulse generator 3400 may together be viewed as a clock signal generator. These short pulses bias-on the harmonic oscillator 3312, which is designed to start and stop oscillating very rapidly as a function of applied bias. The oscillations of the transmit pulses 3212 are phase coherent with the drive pulses, the phase of the RF sinusoids of the transmit RF burst 3132 relative to the drive pulse remains constant, i.e., coherent, each time the harmonic oscillator 3312 is started—there is little clock-to-RF jitter. However, as will be discussed below with reference to the marker generator 3450, separate marker pulses M may have a random phase relative to the clock.

A high degree of phase coherence for the transmit pulse 3212 may be obtained with a very fast risetime transmit signal 3210 that shock-excites the harmonic oscillator 3312 into oscillation. Accordingly, the pulse generator 3400 may have transition times of about 100 ps to ensure coherent harmonic oscillator startup.

The harmonic oscillator 3312 may operate at a fundamental frequency of 12.05 GHz with a second harmonic at 24.1 GHz. A frequency of 24.1 GHz or thereabouts may be preferred since commercial and consumer devices such as radar rangefinders can operate in the 24.0-24.25 GHz band without a license. The transmitted RF bursts 3132 may be typically 12 cycles long at a carrier frequency 3123 of 24.1 GHz.

The reception signal 3220 may be a 1-10 MHz square wave passed through pulse generator 3400 to form the reception pulse 3222 as about 1 ns wide pulses with rise and fall times below 100 ps. These short pulses bias-on the harmonic oscillator 3312 to generate the reception pulse 3222 in a similar fashion to the transmit pulses 3212 to form the reception pulses as 0.5 ns wide gate pulses. The reception pulses 3222 gate the harmonic sampler 3330 at typical frequency of 12 GHz to sample the received RF reflection 3152.

The harmonic sampler 3330 develops a detected signal 3332, representing the coherent integration of multiple gateings of sampler 30, which is amplified by a low frequency amplifier 3331 and filtered in bandpass filter 3332 to produce the IF signal 3160 signal.

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The micro-radar **3100** may include a marker generator **3450**. The marker generator may be triggered by pulses from the pulse generator **3400** to form marker pulses **3452** which are much wider than the transmit pulse **3212** or the reception pulse **3222**. Due to the width of the marker pulses **3452**, the radiated spectrum becomes relatively narrow, since the emission spectrum is roughly related by $1/PW$, where PW is the width of the emitted pulses. One purpose of the narrow marker pulse spectrum is to aid in identifying the RF carrier frequency **3123** and spectral width of the transmitted pulses **3212** and/or the transmit RF burst **3132**.

Note that in some implementations, the amplifier **3331** and the bandpass filter **3332** may be implemented by a single component. Such a component may be a fixed gain (possibly about 45 dB) 6 pole bandpass amplifier centered at 6.5 kHz with a bandwidth of approximately 24 kHz. In other implementations, fewer gain stages may be used with the filtering reduced to say 4 poles.

FIG. 6 shows some examples of the object **3020** as at least one of a person **3021**, a bicycle **3022**, a motorcycle **3023**, an automobile **3029**, a truck **3024**, a bus **3025**, a trailer **3026** and/or an aircraft **3027**.

FIG. 7 shows some examples of the object **3020** as a surface of a filling **3028** of a chamber **3029**, where the filling may be a liquid and/or granules such as grain, powders and/or sand. The chamber may be used for storage and/or mixing of components which may be considered as the filling in some implementations.

FIG. 8 shows some other apparatus embodiments that involve the micro-radar **3100** of FIG. 1, including but not limited to, the wireless sensor node **3600**, the wireline sensor node **3650**, each of which may send reports **3620** and/or **3620-2** regarding the sweep delay T_m sampled by their respective micro-radar **3100** to an access point **3700** and/or a server **3750**. A processor **3800**, which may be separate from, or included in the access point and/or the server may respond to one or both reports to generate an estimated distance approximating the distance T_0 of the relevant radar antenna **3120** or **3120-2** from the object **3020**, in this example, a truck **3024**.

The wireless sensor node **3600** may include a radio **3630** coupled to a radio antenna **3640** to wirelessly communicate **3642** the report **3620** to the access point **3700**. As shown in this Figure, the processor **3800** may be included in the access point and configured to use the report **3620** to create the sweep delay T_m , local to the access point and/or the processor. The processor may further be configured to respond to the sweep delay T_m by generating an estimated T_0 distance of the radar antenna to the object **3020**. The radio antenna **3640** and the radar antenna **3120** may be located near the top of the wireless sensor node **3600**, which may be embedded in the pavement **3008**.

The wireline sensor node **3650** may not include the second micro-radar **3100-2**, but may communicate with it in a fashion similar to that described with regards FIG. 1. The second antenna **3120-2** may or may not be located close to the micro-radar. The wireline sensor node may operate the second micro-radar to generate a second sweep delay T_m corresponding to a second distance T_0 of the second antenna from the object **3020**. The wireline sensor node may wireline communicate **3652** with the server **3750** and/or the access point **3700**. The processor **3800** may be included in the server and may be configured to respond to reception of the second report by generating the second sweep delay T_m . The processor may further respond by generating a second distance estimate T_{02} based upon the second sweep delay T_m .

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FIG. 9 shows some details of at least one of the sensor processor **3000** and/or the processor **3800** may be individually and/or collectively may be implemented as one or more instances of a processor-unit **3820** that may include a finite state machine **3850**, a computer **3852** coupled **3856** to a memory **3854** containing a program system **2300**, an inferential engine **3858** and/or a neural network **3860**. The apparatus may further include examples of a delivery mechanism **3830**, which may include a computer readable memory **3822**, a disk drive **3824** and/or a server **3826**, each configured to deliver **3828** the second program system **2300** and/or an installation package **3809** to the processor-unit **3820** to implement at least part of the disclosed method and/or third apparatus. These delivery mechanisms **3830** may be controlled by an entity **3820** directing and/or benefiting from the delivery **3828** to the processor-unit **3820**, irrespective of where the server **3826** may be located, or the computer readable memory **3822** or disk drive **3824** was written.

As used herein, the Finite State Machine (FSM) **3850** receives at least one input signal, maintains at least one state and generates at least one output signal based upon the value of at least one of the input signals and/or at least one of the states.

As used herein, the computer **3852** includes at least one instruction processor and at least one data processor with each of the data processors instructed by at least one of the instruction processors. At least one of the instruction processors responds to the program steps of the second program system **2300** residing in the memory **3854**.

As used herein, the Inferential Engine **3858** includes at least one inferential rule and maintains at least one fact based upon at least one inference derived from at least one of the inference rules and factual stimulus and generates at least one output based upon the facts.

As used herein, the neural network **3860** maintains at list of synapses, each with at least one synaptic state and a list of neural connections between the synapses. The neural network **3860** may respond to stimulus of one or more of the synapses by transfers through the neural connections that in turn may alter the synaptic states of some of the synapses.

FIG. 10 shows a flowchart of the program system **3500** of FIG. 8 including at least one of the shown program steps.

Program step **3502** supports operating the micro-radar **3100** by control of the first DAC output **3110** and/or the second DAC output **3112**.

Program step **3504** supports calibrating the first DAC output **3110** based upon the duty cycle estimate **3012** to insure the frequency **3162** of the IF signal **3160**. Note that this program step may be used to help calibrate the second DAC output **3112**, by measuring the duty cycle of the reception signal **3220** with another ADC **3020** input. This program step may be executed every so often, possibly every few seconds or minutes, to compensate for temperature **3125** or other ambient condition changes.

Program step **3506** supports calibrating the second DAC output **3112** to insure the time interval **3350** sweeps between the short delay **3330** and the long delay **3332**.

Program step **3508** supports receiving the IF Signal **3106** to generate one or more ADC readings **3016** and/or an estimated sweep delay T_m for the object **3020**.

Program step **3510** supports estimating the distance based upon the estimated sweep delay T_m to generate the estimated distance T_0 as shown in FIG. 8.

Program step **3510** may be executed by a computer in any of the sensor nodes **3600** and/or **3650**, the processor **3800**, the

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access point **3700**, and/or the server **3750**. However, another approach may be to generate **3512** and send **3514** at least one report **3620** as shown in FIG. **8**, which is then used as the basis of response for a system.

Program step **3512** supports generating the report **3620** based upon the one or more ADC readings **3016** and/or the estimate sweep delay T_m .

Program step **3514** supports sending the report **3620**, which in various embodiments may be targeted for the access point **3700**, the server **3750** and/or the processor **3800**. The report may be sent from the wireless sensor node **3600** and/or from the write sensor node **3650**. Depending upon the communications technology employed in the sending, the report **3620** may be implemented as one or more packets, frames or encoded in a data stream.

Program step **3516** supports responding to the report **3620** by sending a version of the report to the processor **3800**.

Program step **3518** supports a second responding to the report **3620** and/or a version of the report to estimate the distance T_0 of the object **3620**.

Program step **3520** supports a third responding to the report **3620** and/or a version of the report to estimate the size **3028** of the object **3020**, which may be the length of a truck **3024** in some embodiments.

Note that the report **3620** and/or one of the versions of the report may include the distance estimate T_0 and/or the size estimate **3028** of the object **3020** in some embodiments.

Program step **3522** supports a fourth responding to the report **3620** and/or a version of the report by updating a system and/or system component. Consider for the moment the systems and/or components shown in FIG. **11**.

Any of the processor **3800**, the access point **3700**, and/or the server **3750** may be updated.

In some embodiments, the wireless sensor node **3600** and/or the wireline sensor node **3650** and/or one of the sensor processors **3000** may be updated.

Also, a traffic monitoring system **3900**, a traffic control system **3902**, a parking management system **3904** and/or a production management system **3906** may be updated.

Returning to FIG. **10**, program step **3524** supports compensating for the temperature **3125** shown in FIG. **1** in operating the micro-radar **3100**, often by altering the first DAC output **3110** and/or the second DAC output **3112**. This supports what the inventor has experimentally found to be the operational reality of the components of the micro-radar, as opposed to the temperature immunity of the antenna output **3122** and the RF reflection **3124** reported by the prior art.

The duty cycle estimate **3012** may be based upon measuring the output of the sharp threshold device **3258** and/or **3268** (for example as a comparator **3280**) corresponds directly to the operating point of the RC curve. That means that adjusting the duty cycle higher, moves the operating range of the comparator to a lower (faster moving) part of the RC curve which in turn reduces the IF frequency **3162**. It was found out experimentally that operating at a 70% duty cycle corresponds to approximately a 6.5 KHz IF frequency. The first step in the calibration process then is to adjust the DACs **3010** to measure a 70% duty cycle on the output.

The temperature **3125** may affect the IF signal **3160** in a couple of ways. First, the threshold offsets of the sharp threshold devices **3258** and **3268** may vary with temperature causing a time shift between the transmit pulse **3212** and the reception pulse **3222**. Second, the noise of the IF signal **3160** may increase as the temperature **3125** increases.

The time shift variation between the transmit pulse **3212** and the reception pulse **3222** may be eliminated by occasion-

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ally performing calibration radar sweeps supported by program step **3506**, which sample the leading edge of the big bang using the second DAC output **3112** measured during calibration. A feedback loop is implemented in firmware to adjust the DAC such that the leading edge of the big bang is fixed to the same value it had during calibration. The DAC offset from its calibrated value is then filtered (to smooth operation) and applied to the DAC value used during normal operation of the micro-radar **3100**.

Eliminating the noise in the IF signal **3160** may not be practical. However, the influence of the extra noise may be used during detection to adjust a detection threshold **3011**. While noise increases with increased temperature **3125**, the radar return signal, or RF reflection **3124** does not.

In certain situations, adjusting DAC **3010** thresholds to temperature **3125** may improve sensitivity at low temperatures, which may not be the desired effect.

Also, as temperatures **3125** lower the micro-radar **3100** might uncover return signals that do not scale with temperature.

A method for measuring the background noise would allow its effects to be corrected. One method may be to measure temperature **3125** and apply a log scale factor that is linear if noise is measured in decibels (dB).

In order to reduce the power consumption of the micro-radar **3100**, the sensor processor only needs to listen for the RF reflection **3124** after the initial Rx/Tx overlapping period, called the big bang.

Adjusting the second DAC output **3112** may advance or delay the reception signal **3220** when compared to the transmit signal **3210**. Experimentally it was determined that there is a near linear relationship between the offset time DAC setting and that the leading edge of the big bang. The leading edge of the big bang may act as a useful timing reference, because it is not influenced by the RF reflections **3124** of the micro-radar **3100**. Measuring the leading location of the big bang **3352** at two different duty cycles **3012** can support computing the second DAC output **3112** that will set the big bang before the start of the time interval **3350** of the time interval **3300** as shown in FIG. **2B**.

The calibration steps **3504** and **3506** create an initial setting of the first DAC output **3110** for the transmit pulse **3212** and the second DAC output **3112** for reception pulse **3222** for use in normal operation and a second setting of the second DAC output that corresponds to setting the leading edge of the big bang at a fixed time location (currently 64 samples). This last value may be used by the temperature compensation algorithm denoted as program step **3524**.

The input to the detection algorithm **3526** may be **512** samples at 40 micro-seconds per sample for a total time of 20.48 milliseconds.

In order to improve the signal to noise ratio (SNR) for the detection step **3526**, sampling the IF signal **3160** may be divided into time segments, each 32 samples long. It was experimentally found that better results could be obtained if the segments overlap by 16 samples. This leads to one complete scan being split into 31 bins of 32 samples each. The energy of the IF signal in each bin is then computed by first subtracting the average (DC) component of the IF signal and then computing the sum of the squares of the samples. A single average is computed for all bins, based on that part of the sweep that is past the influence of the big bang. In some modes of operation of the sensor processor **3000** may present the value of each bin in dB for test and debugging purposes. For detection **3526**, a separate baseline may be computed for each bin. A threshold may then computed based on this baseline.

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For motion detection **3526** of the object **3020**, often **32** non-overlapping 32 sample bins may be used. Motion is detected by subtracting the raw samples of one radar sweep from a previous sweep. This has a couple of nice features: the average value of the difference is zero so that average need not be computed or subtracted before energy is computed, and the big bang signal present in the data is also subtracted so that the sensitivity is constant across the sweep. For motion detection the detection threshold **3011** may be used for all bins.

Program step **3528** supports operating the first DAC output **3110** and the second DAC output **3112** to insure that the sweep delay T_m corresponds to a specific distance T_0 .

Program step **3530** supports second operating the first DAC output **3110** and the second DAC output **3112** to insure the IF signal **3160** results from no received RF reflection **3124**, so that the IF signal results from the background noise **3354** as shown in FIG. 2B to create the background noise estimate **3013** shown in FIG. 1.

Program step **3532** supports using the background noise estimate **3013** to adjust the detect threshold **3011** shown in FIG. 1. The detect threshold is then used in program step **3526** to detect the object **3020**, particularly when it is moving as discussed above.

FIG. 11 shows a simplified network diagram of various systems that may include one or more communicative couplings **3642** and/or **3652** to the micro-radar **3100** and/or **3100-2** and/or the wireless sensor node **3600** and/or the wireline sensor node **3650** and/or the processor **3800** and/or the access point **3700** and/or the server **3750**. The various systems include but are not limited to a traffic monitoring system **3900**, a traffic control system **3902**, a parking management system **3904** and/or a production management system **3906**. Note that the second micro-radar **3100-2** may be used to estimate the distance T_0 to the object **3020**, which may be the surface of a filling **3028** in a chamber of the truck **3024**, to determine how full it is of grapes or oranges, for example.

The preceding discussion serves to provide examples of the embodiments and is not meant to constrain the scope of the following claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. An apparatus, comprising:

a micro-radar adapted to generate an antenna output of less than or equal to 10 milli-Watt (mW) through an antenna to an object and receive a Radio Frequency (RF) reflection off of said object, and adapted to respond to a first Digital to Analog Converter (DAC) output and a second DAC output, comprising:

a timing generator adapted to generate a transmit signal with a first edge in response to said first DAC output and a system clock; and

said timing generator adapted to generate a reception signal with a second edge in response to said second DAC and said system clock, where said second edge has a delay from said first edge that sweeps through a short delay to a long delay over a time interval;

said micro-radar generates a transmit RF burst in response to said first edge of said transmit signal for delivery to said antenna to generate said antenna output in response to said transmit pulse;

said micro-radar mixes a received RF reflection of said RF reflection and said transmit RF burst, in response to said second edge of said reception signal, to generate an Intermediate Frequency (IF) signal with a peak amplitude at a sweep delay T_m for a distance T_0 of said object from said antenna; and

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a frequency of said IF signal is one over a compression ratio multiplied by a carrier frequency of said antenna output, where said compression ratio is about one million.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said timing generator, comprises at least one of:

a transmit control generator adapted to receive said first DAC output and a first exponentially changing signal to generate a duty cycle of said transmit signal to stimulate a duty cycle estimator to generate said duty cycle signal; and/or

a reception control generator adapted to receive said second DAC output, a second exponentially changing signal and a clock signal to generate said reception signal.

3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said micro-radar further comprises at least one of:

a first Analog to Digital Converter (ADC) coupling of said IF signal to generate an IF sample approximating said peak amplitude at said sweep delay; and/or

a second Analog to Digital Converter (ADC) coupling of a duty cycle signal based upon said transmit signal to generate a duty cycle estimate that indicates said compression ratio.

4. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said transmit control generator comprises a first analog sum of said first exponentially changing signal and said first DAC output to generate a first analog signal triggering a first sharp threshold device to generate said transmit signal with said duty cycle; and/or

said reception control generator comprises a second analog sum of said second DAC output, said second exponentially changing signal and said clock signal to generate a second analog signal triggering a second sharp threshold device to generate said reception signal.

5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein at least one of said first sharp threshold device and said second sharp threshold device includes a logic gate and/or a comparator and/or a level shifter.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said compression ratio is one million to within twenty percent.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said micro-radar is implemented as an integrated circuit.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said object includes at least one of a person, a bicycle, a motorcycle, an automobile, a truck, a bus, a trailer and an aircraft.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said object is a surface of a filling of a chamber.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising at least one of:

a wireless sensor node and/or a wireline sensor node, each configured to operate an instance of said micro-radar to send a report regarding said sweep delay for said object; and/or

a processor configured to receive and to respond to said report by generating an estimate of said distance of said object from said micro-radar; and/or

an access point configured to wirelessly communicate with said micro-radar via said radio transceiver to send a version said report to said processor; and/or

a server configured to communicate said version of said report from said micro-radar to said processor.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein said wireless sensor node and/or said wireline sensor node further comprises a sensor processor configured to operate said micro-radar by control of said first DAC output and said second DAC output.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein at least one of said processor, said access point, said server and/or said sensor processor includes at least one instance of at least one of a finite state machine and a computer accessibly coupled to a

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memory containing a program system comprised of program steps configured to instruct said computer.

13. The apparatus of claim **12**, wherein said program system comprises at least one of the program steps of:

- operating said micro-radar based upon control of said first DAC output and/or said second DAC output to control said compression ratio and said IF signal;
- receiving an ADC reading based upon said IF signal and/or said sweep delay for said object;
- generating said report based upon said ADC reading and/or said sweep delay;
- responding to said report by sending said version of said report to said processor;
- second responding to said report and/or said version to generate said distance of said object from said micro-radar;
- third responding to said distance of said object from said micro-radar by updating at least one of a traffic monitoring system, a traffic control system, a parking management system, and/or a production management system;
- second operating said micro-radar based upon said first DAC output and/or said second DAC output to insure said sweep delay T_m corresponds to a specific distance T_0 of said object;
- third operating said micro-radar based upon said first DAC output and/or said second DAC output to generate said IF signal dominated by a background noise to create a background noise estimate;
- using said background noise estimate to adjust a detect threshold of said object; and/or
- detecting said object based upon said ADC reading and said detect threshold.

14. The apparatus of claim **13**, wherein the program step of operating said micro-radar further comprises at least one of the program steps of

- controlling said first DAC output and said second DAC output to generate said sweep delay for said object;
- setting said second DAC output to generate said IF signal for said background noise to dominate; and
- calibrating said first DAC output to establish said IF frequency.

15. The apparatus of claim **13**, further comprising:

- at least one of said traffic monitoring system, said traffic control system, said parking management system, and/or said production management system is adapted to communicate with at least one of said micro-radar, said

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wireless sensor node, said wireline sensor node, said processor, said access point and/or said server.

16. The apparatus of claim **1**, wherein said compression ratio is one million to within one thousand.

17. The apparatus of claim **1**, wherein said antenna output is compliant with an Ultra-Wide Band (UWB) signal protocol.

18. The apparatus of claim **1**, wherein said IF signal has a frequency of between 6 Kilo (K) Hertz (Hz) and 7 KHz.

19. A method, comprising the step of:

- operating a micro-radar transmitting an antenna output through an antenna to an object and receiving a Radio Frequency (RF) reflection off of said object, further comprising the steps of:

- responding to a first Digital to Analog Converter (DAC) output to generate a transmit signal with a first edge and a duty cycle;

- responding to a second DAC output to generate a reception signal with a second edge at a delay from said transmit first edge, where said delay sweeps through a short delay to a long delay over a time interval;

- operating a RF transceiver/mixer (RFTM) to generate a transmit RF burst in response to said first edge of said transmit signal;

- generating a reception pulse in response to said second edge of said reception signal; and

- operating said RFTM to mix said transmit RF burst and a received RF reflection in response to said reception pulse to generate an Intermediate Frequency (IF) signal with a peak amplitude at a sweep delay T_m for a distance T_0 of said object from said antenna.

20. The method of claim **19**, wherein the step of operating said micro-radar further comprises at least one of the steps of:

- calibrating said first DAC output based upon a duty cycle of said transmit pulse;

- calibrating said second DAC output based upon a compression ratio of said time interval divided by a difference between said long delay subtracted from said short delay;

- setting said second DAC output beyond said long delay to generate a background noise estimate from an Analog to Digital Converter (ADC) reading of said IF signal;

- processing said ADC reading to estimate said sweep delay T_m and/or said distance T_0 ;

- processing said ADC reading based upon said background noise estimate to estimate said sweep delay T_m and/or said distance T_0 .

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