REPLY TO
ATTN OF: GP

TO: XXX/Scientific & Technical Information Division
Attn: Miss Winnie M. Morgan

FROM: GP/Office of Assistant General Counsel for Patent Matters

SUBJECT: Announcement of NASA-Owned U.S. Patents in STAR

In accordance with the procedures agreed upon by Code GP and Code KSI, the attached NASA-owned U.S. Patent is being forwarded for abstracting and announcement in NASA STAR.

The following information is provided:

U.S. Patent No. : 4,201,468

Government or Corporate Employee : CALTECH/SPL

Source (if applicable) : Pasadena, CA

NASA Patent Case No. : NPO-14524-1 W/ 14527-1

NOTE - If this patent covers an invention made by a corporate employee of a NASA Contractor, the following is applicable:

YES [ ] NO [ ]

Pursuant to Section 305(a) of the National Aeronautics and Space Act, the name of the Administrator of NASA appears on the first page of the patent; however, the name of the actual inventor (author) appears at the heading of column No. 1 of the Specification, following the words "...with respect to an invention of..."
A method and apparatus for frequency modulating radiation, such as from a laser, for optoacoustic detectors, interferometers, heterodyne spectrometers, and similar devices using two oppositely reciprocating cat's-eye retroreflectors to Doppler modulate the radiation. By reciprocally moving both retroreflectors, the center of mass is maintained constant to permit smooth operation at many Hertz. By slightly offsetting the axis of one retroreflector relative to the other, multiple passes of a light beam may be achieved for greater Doppler shifts with the same reciprocating motion of the retroreflectors. A Doppler shift of $2(v/c)v$ occurs for each pass where $v$ is the velocity of each retroreflector, $c$ is the speed of light, and $v$ is the frequency of radiation.
FIG. 4

MEASURE OF WIND VELOCITY

SHAFT ENCODER

MIN. OR MAX. DETECTOR

SIGNAL FROM DETECTOR 30 (FIG. 4)

VELOCITY REG.

FIG. 5a

FIG. 5b
METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DOPPLER FREQUENCY MODULATION OF RADIATION

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION
This invention relates to a method and apparatus for Doppler frequency modulation of radiation.

Various instruments, such as interferometers, heterodyne spectrometers, FM Lidar (laser radar) optoacoustic detectors and the like, require frequency modulation of radiation, such as a laser beam. In such instruments, one practice has been to impart controlled reciprocating motion to a reflector in the radiation path of the instrument, thereby Doppler modulate the radiation frequency. The problem has been in obtaining sufficiently high amplitude frequency modulation. Moreover, the single moving mirror is mechanically asymmetric and unbalanced. Frequency modulation of the type required can be supplied by the Doppler modulator herein described.

OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of this invention is to provide frequency modulation of radiation with a minimum of intensity modulation.

A further object of this invention is to provide for large scale frequency modulation of radiation without severe mechanical vibration.

Yet another object is to provide a Doppler radiation modulator which may be applied to the remote measurement of atmospheric winds.

These and other objects of the invention are achieved by reciprocally moving opposing retroreflectors using means to vary the distance between them sinusoidally. The opposing reciprocal motion effectively prevents shifting of the center of mass to avoid any vibration of the instrument using the modulator. By offsetting the axis of one retroreflector relative to the other, a beam may be caused to make multiple passes, thereby multiplying the Doppler modulation by a factor equal to the number of passes. In that manner, the Doppler modulation may be increased by increasing the rate of reciprocating motion, or offsetting the axes of the retroreflectors, or doing both. This Doppler modulation is used with an absorption reference cell in an instrument for measuring remote atmospheric winds by so modulating radiation received from the atmosphere as to cancel Doppler shift in the radiation by the winds. This cancellation is detected by a radiation detector in combination with a minimum (null) or maximum (peak) detector operating on the output of the radiation detector. A minimum detector is used in the case of Doppler modulation of an emission spectrum, and a maximum detector is used in the case of Doppler modulation of an absorption spectrum. The point of minimum or maximum correlation with the reference cell yields a measure of wind velocity by reading out the velocity of the reciprocating retroreflectors at the instant of correlation.

The novel features of the invention are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. The invention will be best understood from the following description when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of the basic method of the present invention for Doppler modulation of a radiation beam.

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating the basic method of FIG. 1 with multiple Doppler modulation passes.

FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram which illustrates an extension of the multiple-pass technique of FIG. 2 to a very large number of passes, and, thereby, a very large variable Doppler shift.

FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram which illustrates the application of the basic method to a technique for remote measurement of atmospheric winds.

FIGS. 5a and 5b are schematic diagrams illustrating an exemplary implementation of the technique illustrated in FIG. 1.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to the drawings, FIG. 1 illustrates a technique for modulating the frequency of a light beam by reciprocally moving two coaxial and opposing "cat's eye" retroreflectors 10 and 11 comprised of primary parabolic reflectors M1 and M2, respectively, mounted to receive an incident beam, parallel to its axis, and small secondary reflectors M1' and M2', respectively, mounted to receive an incident beam, parallel to its axis, and small secondary reflectors M1' and M2' mounted on the axis and facing the primary reflectors. The distance between the retroreflectors is varied sinusoidally by mechanical means (not shown) for moving the retroreflectors alternately toward and away from each other to Doppler modulate light entering through a reflector M1 and exiting through a reflector M4. As the retroreflectors move toward each other, the frequency of the light beam increases, and as they move away from each other, the frequency decreases.

The motion of the retroreflectors is made symmetrical, i.e., made to be at the same rate at all times so as to prevent shifting the center of mass. The modulator can then be operated at hundreds of cycles per second with minimal vibration. In that manner, two retroreflectors M1 and M2 engaged in opposing motion Doppler modulates light which enters the system through reflector M3 and is retroreflected and displaced symmetrically about the coaxial optic axis. The beam is then extracted through the reflector M4 with a peak frequency shift of $2(v/c)v$ where $v$ is the peak velocity of each retroreflector and $v$ is the beam frequency. The peak is twice $2(v/c)v$ because there are two retroreflectors in motion, and there is a Doppler shift of $2(v/c)v$ for each retroreflection.

The foregoing illustrates the basic principle of operation of the invention. Doppler modulation may be enhanced by making the radiation undergo more retroreflections, thereby creating larger Doppler shifts. This can be accomplished by a slight modification of the apparatus, as illustrated in FIG. 2, where light enters at reflector M1, is directed toward retroreflector 11 where it is retroreflected about an axis offset from the axis of retroreflector 10 so that it enters reflector M1 closer to its axis than it was before. The beam is then extracted by the reflector M4 in a new position. Since there have been three retroreflections, the peak Doppler shift is three times $2(v/c)v$. The process could be repeated a number of times, i.e., repeated through each retroreflec-
A suitable mechanism which may be used to drive the retroreflector to achieve the appropriate opposing sinusoidal motion is illustrated in FIGS. 5a and 5b. The retroreflectors 10 and 11 are mounted on blocks 41 and 42 which are slidably movable on rails 43. The drive means for moving the blocks symmetrically may consist of a rotating drive wheel 44 and two links 45 and 46 hinged at pins a, b, c and d. The wheel is then rotated at some constant rate by a suitable motor through a suitable gear train represented by a dotted line 48 so designed as to not interfere with the links. The drive wheel thus effectively provides two synchronized cranks for driving the blocks in and out on the rails in opposing directions. The rails are secured to a stationary support frame as are the mirrors M1 and M2 at the end of small boom 49. Reflectors M1' and M2' are secured in position relative to the parabolic reflectors M1 and M2 on inverted L shaped rods 50 and 51. FIG. 5b shows the arrangement in FIG. 5c from a right hand end view.

As noted hereinbefore, Doppler modulation is at all times directly related to the linear velocity of the retroreflectors. Since the linear velocity of each retroreflector depends upon angular position of the rotating drive wheel 44, shaft encoder 52 is used to provide a linear velocity output for the Doppler modulation necessary to cancel out the Doppler shift of incoming radiation due to the motion of the atmosphere relative to the instrument. That output is thus a measure of the radial component of wind velocity, and can be calibrated to read wind velocity in appropriate units, such as knots, miles per hour or feet per second, as required. The correlation between the atmospheric spectrum and reference cell spectrum is simply a minimum in the detector output, in the case of an atmospheric thermal emission spectrum, or a maximum, in the case of an atmospheric absorption spectrum. At the moment of correlation determined by a detector 53, the output of the shaft encoder 52 is read into a register 54 as a measure of wind velocity that needs only suitable scaling.

There is a relationship between the region of the atmosphere sensed, the dimensions of the gas reference cell, and the chemical species selected for the reference cell. The quantities to be considered for a proper experimental design are: The degree of saturation of the spectral lines in the thermal emission spectrum, the wavelength of the thermal emission spectrum, the vertical distribution of the species involved in the thermal emission, the pressure broadened width of the spectral lines, the amount of gas required in the reference cell to produce a proper correlation signal and interfering spectra from other atmospheric constituents. A great variety of gases are available for use in the reference cell, and these include all the isotropic variations of the normal atmospheric gases. An example of possible choices for these parameters for measurement of wind in the earth's atmosphere from a satellite is as follows:

- Reference cell gas: N2O, 20 millibars
- Reference cell length: 1 centimeter
- Bandpass central wavelength: 7.7 microns
- Measurement height range: 30-50 kilometers

The altitude at which the radial component of wind velocity is determined can be controlled. An indirect way is to filter the light into the Doppler modulator. The detector 50 functions as a radiometer, and as such is designed to be sensitive to thermal emission of the gases in the atmosphere. The radiation emitted in different parts of the emission band appear to come from different parts of the atmosphere according to well known weighting functions. By careful selection of the
wavelength used, different altitudes may be probed. Thus a wheel containing filter elements could be used to determine the altitude probed, and to select different altitudes for a thermal altitude profile of wind velocity. The same type of wheel could be used with five reference cells loaded with gas appropriate to the pressure altitudes to be probed. Alternatively, the pressure of a single cell can be altered by using a molecular sieve.

Although particular embodiments of the invention have been described and illustrated herein, it is recognized that modifications and variations may readily occur to those skilled in the art. Consequently, it is intended that the claims be interpreted to cover such modifications and equivalents.

We claim:

1. A method for Doppler frequency modulating radiation using two opposing retroreflectors and reciprocally moving both retroreflectors towards each other and away from each other, said retroreflectors having their optical axis parallel to each other, using a first reflector to direct radiation from outside a space between said retroreflectors into one of said retroreflectors, and using a second reflector to direct radiation from one of said retroreflectors to outside said space between said retroreflectors.

2. A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the optical axis of one retroreflector is offset from the optical axis of the other retroreflector for multiple retroreflectors, thereby to achieve higher Doppler frequency modulation of radiation than would be achieved with a single retroreflector for the same velocity of reciprocal motion of said retroreflectors.

3. A method as defined in claim 2 for remote measurement of atmospheric winds wherein radiation received through said first reflector is from the atmosphere of said winds, and including the step of directing Doppler frequency modulated radiation from said second reflector through a reference cell filled with a gas of known chemical composition and through a spectral filter in series into a detector for detection of correlation between the atmospheric spectrum and reference cell spectrum, and determining the velocity of said retroreflectors at the instant of correlation as a measure of atmospheric winds.

4. A method as defined in claim 3 wherein the chemical composition of said gas in said cell is selected for the particular atmosphere of interest at a predetermined range of altitude above the earth's surface.

5. A method as defined in claim 1 for frequency modulation of radiation by reciprocally moving opposing retroreflectors toward and away from each other to vary the distance between them sinusoidally, wherein said retroreflectors reflecting radiation toward each other with parallel optical axes are provided with the mass of one reciprocating retroreflector equal to the mass of the other to effectively prevent shifting of the center of mass, thereby to avoid any vibration of the instrument.

6. A method as defined in claim 5 wherein the optical axes of said retroreflectors are offset for multiple passes of a beam through different optical paths.

7. A method as defined in claim 6 for remote measurement of atmospheric winds wherein radiation received through said first reflector is from the atmosphere of said winds, and including the step of directing Doppler frequency modulated radiation from said second reflector through a reference cell filled with a gas of known chemical composition and through a spectral filter in series into a detector for detection of correlation between the atmospheric spectrum and reference cell spectrum, and determining the velocity of said retroreflectors at the instant of correlation as a measure of atmospheric winds.

8. A method as defined in claim 7 wherein the chemical composition of said gas in said cell is selected for the particular atmosphere of interest at a predetermined range of altitude above the earth's surface.

9. Apparatus for frequency modulation of radiation comprising first and second reciprocating retroreflectors disposed to reflect radiation towards each other, said retroreflectors being arranged with their axes parallel, means for reciprocally moving both retroreflectors in synchronism at the same rate over the same distance to periodically vary the distance between them, first reflecting means for directing light into one of said retroreflectors from outside a path between said retroreflectors, and second reflecting means for directing light out from a path between said retroreflectors.

10. Apparatus as defined in claim 9 wherein the mass of said retroreflectors is substantially the same for both, whereby the center of mass is maintained constant to permit smooth operation.

11. Apparatus as defined in claim 9 wherein said retroreflectors are disposed with their axis offset for multiple retroreflections between said retroreflectors through a plurality of different paths.

12. Apparatus as defined in claim 9 to provide Doppler radiation modulation for remote measurement of atmospheric winds including a radiation detector, a reference cell, and a spectral filter, said reference cell and spectral filter being arranged to pass Doppler frequency modulated light from said second reflecting means into said radiation detector, means for detecting a selected minimum or maximum output of said detector, and means for determining the velocity of said retroreflectors at the instant of detected minimum or maximum as a measure of atmospheric wind velocity.