Frequency-Agile LIDAR Receiver for Chemical and Biological Agent Sensing

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Overview

- **Objective:** Improve standoff range and chem-bio agent detection limits of direct detection LWIR differential absorption LIDAR systems
  - Standoff range: ~ 2x increase for fixed chem-bio sensitivity; scales as $1/\sqrt{\text{NEP}}$
  - CB agent sensitivity: ~ 4x increase for fixed standoff range, scales as NEP
  - Compatible with 200 Hz line-tuned CO$_2$ laser

- **Technical Approach:**
  - Develop ultra-low noise receiver module (RM)
  - Critical elements of receiver design – required to achieve objectives:
    - Reduce baseline (background) photon flux on detector: Tunable Fabry-Perot etalon in optical train
    - Reduce input-referenced amplifier noise: custom amplifier
    - Reduce detector dark current: High impedance detector

- **Performance Metrics:**
  - Noise equivalent power of receiver system (NEP)
  - Etalon tuning speed/bandwidth and wavelength positioning accuracy
  - Electronics bandwidth
LIDAR Receiver Concept

Conceptual Design

- Single element detector (HgCdTe) with band pass filter coupled to low noise custom amplifier $\rightarrow$ reduce $\text{NEP}_{Jsn+Amp+Leak}$

- Insert tunable Fabry-Perot etalon in afocal region of optical train to reduce baseline flux on detector ($\sim$30x reduction) $\rightarrow$ reduce $\text{NEP}_{BLIP}$
  - Etalon tracks 200 Hz CO$_2$ laser emission wavelength
  - Tunable etalon is PSI innovation

- f/0.9 optical system for full integration with the existing 14” Cassegranian telescope currently employed in the ECBC’s FAL system

\[
\text{NEP}_{total} = \left[ \text{NEP}_{Jsn+Amp+leak}^2 + \text{NEP}_{BLIP}^2 \right]^{1/2}
\]
Fabry-Perot Etalon: Overview

- Reduction of baseline flux on detector via tunable etalon insertion reduces system noise
  - Photon statistical noise: $\text{NEP} \propto (\text{flux})^{0.5} / (\text{optics transmission})$

- Transmission maxima fulfill Fabry-Perot resonance condition:
  $$\lambda_m = \frac{2d}{m}$$

- Tuning range = Free Spectral Range:
  $$\Delta \lambda \equiv \lambda_{\text{max},m} - \lambda_{\text{max},m+1} \approx \frac{\lambda_{\text{max},m}}{m+1}$$

- PSI etalon design:
  - **Optics**: 50 mm dia x 8 mm thick ZnSe, central 36 mm HR-coated
  - **Electronics**: FPGA-based control system increases the bandwidth of the etalon control loop and maintains active, continuous alignment of the etalon mirrors (control bandwidth between 2 kHz and 5 kHz)
Fabry-Perot Etalon: Spectral Performance Characteristics

1559 Etalon Performance, December 09

- **Conclusions:**
  - Transmission ~ 80% for all orders across tuning range
  - FWHM (m=2): 15 – 19 cm\(^{-1}\)
  - FWHM (m=3): 10 – 14 cm\(^{-1}\)
  - FWHM (m=4): 8 – 11 cm\(^{-1}\)
Fabry-Perot Etalon: Derived Requirements

- Etalon transmission fringe needs to track CO₂ emission wavelength
  - 200 Hz laser → etalon needs to reach commanded wavelength in < 5 msec
  - CO₂ laser lines:
    - Four branches: 9R, 9P, 10R, 10P
      - ~ 50% CO₂ lines require < 5 cm⁻¹ jumps
      - ~ 80% CO₂ lines require < 10 cm⁻¹ jumps
- Achieve < 1% transmission error due etalon wavelength position uncertainty
  - If the transmission varies from shot to shot, then the wavelength variation aliases as measurement noise and degrades CB agent detection sensitivity
  
\[ \sigma_p \propto \sigma_{I/I_0} \left(\frac{I}{I_0}\right) = \frac{\sigma_T}{T} \]
Fabry-Perot Etalon: Tuning Speed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m=2</th>
<th>m=3</th>
<th>m=4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5cm(^{-1}) Jump</td>
<td>&lt; 4ms</td>
<td>&lt; 3.5ms</td>
<td>&lt; 3ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10cm(^{-1}) Jump</td>
<td>&lt; 5ms</td>
<td>&lt; 4ms</td>
<td>&lt; 4ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40cm(^{-1}) Jump</td>
<td>&lt; 10ms</td>
<td>&lt; 15ms</td>
<td>&lt; 20ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECBC Wavelength List</td>
<td>&lt; 5ms (80%)</td>
<td>&lt; 5ms (85%)</td>
<td>&lt; 5ms (85%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Etalon Tuning Performance:**
  - Less than 5 ms convergence time for 10cm\(^{-1}\) and smaller jumps
  - Technical requirement successfully achieved
  - Non-lasing laser trigger pulses are required for jumps greater than 10cm\(^{-1}\)
    - Slightly reduced the system duty cycle
Fabry-Perot Etalon: Transmission Uncertainty Measurements (1)

- Make use of Quantum Cascade Laser (QCL, Maxion P/N M784) which emits at 9.6 μm
  - Direct measurement of the desired performance one can expect with the ECBC’s FAL CO₂ laser
  - Multiple etalon scans over laser line

- Laser output was directed onto a roughened gold scattering screen
  - QCL was mounted to a cooling block and directed through a collimating lens onto the screen
  - A N₂(l)-cooled LWIR camera was used to monitor the onset of lasing and to adjust the lens

- The laser power supply was modulated with a square wave to +/- 30mA at 10 kHz
  - Laser turned on and off in a binary fashion with a 50% duty cycle
  - Produced a detectable AC signal well above the detector’s high pass cutoff frequency of 500 Hz
Fabry-Perot Etalon: Transmission Uncertainty Measurements (2)

- The QCL emission is significantly narrower than the etalon transmission bandwidth
  - Shape of the peak represents the etalon transmission function

- Each wavelength data point is an average of 32 separate measurements (etalon scans) and error bars are the standard deviation:
  \[
  \%Error = \left( \frac{\sigma\text{(std dev)}}{\text{Mean}} \right) \cdot 100
  \]

- The transmission error due to etalon wavelength position uncertainty is ~ 0.5%
  - Successfully meet derived requirement

- The etalon convergence criteria is determined based on optimization of both tuning speed and position accuracy
Detector

- Judson single element PVMCT, 0.5 mm diameter
  - Capacitance ~ 200 pF
  - 77K resistance @ 0 VDC: 11 kΩ

- The detector mounting bracket was custom designed to support the integration of the collection lens assembly inside the dewar for reduction of self-radiance of optical components
The transimpedance preamplifier architecture was optimized around the selected IR detector diode
- Input-referenced noise density of 0.8 nV/Hz^{0.5}

A portion of the preamplifier was physically located within the cryogenic dewar with the IR photodiode
- Stage consists of a JFET transistor with the detector attached to its gate
  - Thermal noise from this stage and any stray capacitance at the input are reduced
  - Reductions help to lower the input referred noise added by the preamplifier.

The other portion of the preamplifier was located directly outside the dewar and was operated at room temperature
- The majority of the preamplifier circuitry is located on this PCB
  - Circuitry to control and adjust bias condition
  - Monitor dewar temperatures
  - Buffer the preamplifier output
Optical Layout:
Designed for Retrofitting into Existing FAL Receiver

14” Nearly Afocal Telescope

1st Intermediate Focus

1:1 Focal Compensator

ND Filter Wheel

AIRIS Assembly

Cryogenic Dewar

Image Plane

2nd Intermediate Focus
Assembly designed for ease of integration into FAL system
Detector mounted on a Yaw, Tilt, XYZ translation stage for easy optical alignment
Model system performance
- Model developed in Matlab
- Model calculates $\text{NEP}_{\text{BLIP}}$ given specific system input parameters

System NEP improvement most significant when observing warmer backgrounds which add significantly to the BLIP noise
- ~37% improvement at $T_{\text{bkgd}}=400\text{K}$
- ~6% improvement at $T_{\text{bkgd}} = 266\text{K}$

Experimentally determine system NEP for an electronic bandwidth of 5 MHz and compare with model predictions
FAL Receiver Module: NEP Asymptote Measurement

- Measure NEP contributed by detector thermal noise and preamp. noise (Johnson, voltage, current and leakage noise) – no BLIP noise
  - Replace cooled lens with blackened piece of aluminum

- Capture noise density using spectrum analyzer (PSD)

\[
NEP_{total} = \left[ NEP_{Thermal+AmpV,I,Js+Leak}^2 + NEP_{BLIP}^2 \right]^{\frac{1}{2}}
\]

\[
NEP_{total} = \frac{1}{R} \left[ \int_{0}^{5MHz} PSD(f)df \right]^{\frac{1}{2}}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gain (Low)</th>
<th>Gain (High)</th>
<th>Bandwidth</th>
<th>NEP (@ 80K)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Ended</td>
<td>52.98kΩ</td>
<td>213.1kΩ</td>
<td>~16MHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential</td>
<td>4.64kΩ</td>
<td>18.56kΩ</td>
<td>~20MHz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FAL Receiver Module: NEP\textsubscript{BLIP} Measurement

- Measure noise baseline by observing gold mirror (looking at ~77K target) positioned in front of detector window
- Tune Etalon to a single wavelength and observe 400K Blackbody
- Measure total NEP using noise PSD captured by spectrum analyzer (or RMS noise on O-scope) with and without etalon inserted in the optical train
- Calculate NEP\textsubscript{BLIP} with and without etalon

\[ NEP_{BLIP} (nW) = \frac{\sqrt{(RMS_{Total})^2 - (RMS_{Gold\_Mirror})^2}}{D_{\text{responsivity}} \cdot (A/W) \cdot \text{Gain}(k\Omega) \cdot 10^6} \]
FAL Receiver Module: Performance Characterization Summary

- **Objective:** NEP ≤ 1.5nW for 5 MHz bandwidth
- **Overall NEP** is ~13% higher than design goal
  - Higher detector capacitance than expected increased NEP
- **Measured NEP improvement** through the use of etalon consistent with expected performance
  - ~ 37% NEP improvement when $T_{\text{bkgd}}$=400K

### Table: NEP at $5\text{MHz}$, $T_{\text{bkgd}}=400\text{K}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m=2</th>
<th>m=3</th>
<th>m=4</th>
<th>No Etalon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEP-Det/Preamp</td>
<td>1.54nW</td>
<td>1.54nW</td>
<td>1.54nW</td>
<td>1.54nW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEP-Blip (Measured)</td>
<td>0.73nW</td>
<td>0.64nW</td>
<td>0.61nW</td>
<td>1.86nW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEP-Blip (Modeled)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.48 nW</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.59nW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measured NEP$_{\text{total}}$</td>
<td>1.70nW</td>
<td>1.67nW</td>
<td>1.66nW</td>
<td>2.42nW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeled NEP$_{\text{total}}$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.61nW</td>
<td>2.21nW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RM Integration into FAL System

- Receiver Module (RM) transported to ECBC for full system integration
  - Dec 16 – 18, 2009

- Successfully performed system optical alignment
  - Developed alignment procedure
  - Demonstrated the ability to remove RM in & out and retain the integrity of the optical alignment

- Successfully integrated RM/TFM with FAL software/hardware
  - Confirmed TFM can be controlled by FAL software
    - Using DLL functions developed by PSI
  - Characterized integrated TFM operation (with FAL laser on)
    - TFM Convergence time and sigma values
    - Burst and Laser Triggers – with non-lasing triggers inserted
    - Etalon scanning and transmission measurements error against known FAL laser line/s
RM/FAL System: Performance Characterization

- **Performed system characterization**
  - Goal: Characterize FAL/RM system noise and overall improvement due to the use of the etalon

- **Targets:**
  - Hard target @ ~ 400 m (tree branch)
  - $T_{\text{bkgd}} \sim 266K$

- **System Measurements:**
  - Single laser shots (10R20) with etalon fixed at 975 cm$^{-1}$
  - Single laser shots (10R20) with etalon tuning across the laser line
  - Laser scanning (9 lines) with etalon synched and scanning

- **Blip noise measurements are made by analyzing the noise in the digitizer’s traces in the absence of laser light**

- **Analyzed noise gives a good estimation of the Noise Equivalent Voltage, which can be converted to NEP**
  - It is important that laser returns be negligible by $t_1$ so that the time dependent laser return signal does not contribute to the measured noise.
  - Results demonstrate a ~ 6% NEP improvement through the use of PSI’s etalon in the FAL system
  - Results consistent with modeling predictions when system observing a $T_{\text{bkgd}} \sim 270K$

- **RM successfully demonstrated expected BLIP noise reduction**
Conclusions

- Successfully developed low noise receiver module for FAL
- Receiver module is fully compatible with 200 Hz line tuned CO₂ laser
- Receiver module achieves total system NEP ~ 1.7 nW for an electronic bandwidth of 5 MHz
- $\text{NEP}_{\text{Bllp}}$ reduction consistent with modeling predictions
- Receiver module was successfully integrated with the ECBC’s FAL system