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Radio frequency waveguide system nodes

Abstract

A node of a radio frequency system can include a signal splitter, a power rectifier and conditioner, a communication filter, and a network processor. The signal splitter is configured to split a radio frequency transmission between a power path and a communications path within the node. The power rectifier and conditioner are configured to produce a conditioned power signal based on power received through the power path. The communication filter of the communications path is configured to produce a filtered communication signal. The network processor is powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to extract encoded information from the filtered communication signal.

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Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS (1) This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 17/497,616 filed Oct. 8, 2021, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

- (1) This disclosure relates to electromagnetic communication, and more particularly to a radio frequency waveguide system with nodes.
- (2) As control and health monitoring systems become more complex, the interconnect count between system components increases, which also increases failure probabilities. With the increase in interconnects, large amounts of cabling may be used to connect sensors and actuators to controllers and/or diagnostic units of a machine. Long cable runs, including multiple wires, can add substantial weight and may increase susceptibility to noise effects and/or other forms of signal degradation. Increased wire connections can also result in a larger number of wire harnesses to remove and attach when servicing machine components. A larger number of wires and wire harnesses can increase the possibility of damage at pin/socket interconnects, particularly when the wire harnesses are attached and detached from components.
- (3) To achieve desired control and/or health monitoring, sensing systems may need information from locations that can be difficult to access due to moving parts, internal operating environment or machine configuration. The access limitations can make wire routing bulky, expensive, and potentially vulnerable to interconnect failures. Sensor and interconnect operating environments for desired sensor locations may exceed the capability of interconnect systems. In some cases, cable cost, volume, and weight may exceed desired limits for practical applications. Placement options and total number of sensors and actuators that may be installed in a machine can be limited by wiring and connector impacts on weight, reliability, physical sizing, and operating temperature limitations.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

- (4) According to one embodiment, a radio frequency system can include a signal splitter, a power rectifier and conditioner, a communication filter, and a network processor. The signal splitter is configured to split a radio frequency transmission between a power path and a communications path within the node. The power rectifier and conditioner are configured to produce a conditioned power signal based on power received through the power path. The communication filter of the communications path is configured to produce a filtered communication signal. The network processor is powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to extract encoded information from the filtered communication signal.
- (5) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include a control processor configured to interface with a sensor and/or an actuator and to communicate with the network processor, where the control processor is powered by the conditioned power signal.
- (6) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include a sensor/actuator interface interposed between the control processor and the sensor and/or the actuator, where the sensor/actuator interface is powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to provide power to the sensor and/or the actuator.
- (7) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include a power filter of the power path.
- (8) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include where the power rectifier and conditioner includes a power splitter coupled to two or more rectification paths.
- (9) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include a power threshold trigger configured to selectively output the conditioned power signal based on a power level output exceeding a power threshold.
- (10) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include where the communication filter is configured to extract the filtered communication signal from a portion of the radio frequency transmission.

(11) According to another embodiment, a system for a machine can include a network of a plurality of nodes distributed throughout the machine, each of the nodes associated with at least one sensor and/or actuator of the machine and operable to communicate through one or more radio frequencies. At least one of the nodes includes: a signal splitter configured to split a radio frequency transmission between a power path and a communications path within the node, a power rectifier and conditioner configured to produce a conditioned power signal based on power received through the power path, a communication filter of the communications path configured to produce a filtered communication signal, and a network processor powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to extract encoded information from the filtered communication signal.

(12) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include where the at least one of the nodes includes a control processor configured to interface with a sensor and/or an actuator of the at least one sensor and/or actuator of the machine and to communicate with the network processor, where the control processor is powered by the conditioned power signal.

(13) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include where the at least one of the nodes includes a sensor/actuator interface interposed between the control processor and the sensor and/or the actuator, where the sensor/actuator interface is powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to provide power to the sensor and/or the actuator.

(14) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include where the at least one of the nodes includes a power filter of the power path.

(15) According to another embodiment, a method can include receiving a radio frequency transmission at a node in a radio frequency system comprising a plurality of nodes. The radio frequency transmission can be split between a power path and a communications path within the node. Power rectification and conditioning can be applied to power received through the power path to produce a conditioned power signal. Power can be provided to a network processor of the node based on the conditioned power signal. A communication filter can be applied to a communications path signal of the communications path to produce a filtered communication signal. The filtered communication signal can be provided to the network processor of the node to extract encoded information.

(16) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include interfacing a control processor with the network processor and a sensor and/or an actuator, where the control processor is powered by the conditioned power signal.

(17) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include performing power filtering of the power path.

(18) In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments may include outputting the conditioned power signal based on a power threshold trigger detecting a power level output exceeding a power threshold.

(19) A technical effect of the apparatus, systems and methods is achieved by a radio frequency waveguide system as described herein.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

(1) The following descriptions should not be considered limiting in any way. With reference to the accompanying drawings, like elements are numbered alike:

(2) FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a gas turbine engine as an example of a machine;

- (3) FIG. 2 is a schematic view of a guided electromagnetic transmission network in accordance with an embodiment of the disclosure;
- (4) FIG. 3 is a schematic view of a configuration including an interface node of a radio frequency waveguide system configured to communicate with end nodes through a wired interface in accordance with an embodiment of the disclosure;
- (5) FIG. 4 is a schematic view of a configuration including an interface node of a radio frequency waveguide system configured to communicate with an end node through a pin adapter interface in accordance with an embodiment of the disclosure;
- (6) FIG. 5 is a schematic view of a configuration including an interface node of a radio frequency waveguide system combined with an end node in accordance with an embodiment of the disclosure;
- (7) FIG. 6 is a schematic view of a portion of a radio frequency waveguide system in accordance with an embodiment of the disclosure;
- (8) FIG. 7 is a schematic view of a portion of a node of a radio frequency waveguide system in accordance with an embodiment of the disclosure; and
- (9) FIG. 8 is a flow chart illustrating a method in accordance with an embodiment of the disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- (10) A detailed description of one or more embodiments of the disclosed apparatus and method are presented herein by way of exemplification and not limitation with reference to the Figures.
- (11) Various embodiments of the present disclosure are related to electromagnetic communication through and to components of a machine. FIG. 1 schematically illustrates a gas turbine engine **20** as one example of a machine as further described herein. The gas turbine engine **20** is depicted as a two-spool turbofan that generally incorporates a fan section **22**, a compressor section **24**, a combustor section **26** and a turbine section **28**. The fan section **22** drives air along a bypass flow path B in a bypass duct to provide a majority of the thrust, while the compressor section **24** drives air along a core flow path C for compression and communication into the combustor section **26** then expansion through the turbine section **28**. Although depicted as a two-spool turbofan gas turbine engine in the disclosed non-limiting embodiment, it should be understood that the concepts described herein are not limited to use with two-spool turbofans as the teachings may be applied to other types of turbine engines including three-spool architectures or any other machine that requires sensors to operate with similar environmental challenges or constraints. Additionally, the concepts described herein may be applied to any machine or system comprised of control and/or health monitoring systems, for instance, in an aerospace environment. Other examples of machines in which embodiments can be implemented include an internal combustion engine, manufacturing machinery, submarine, aircraft, automobile, or any other machine with control and sensing components.
- (12) With continued reference to FIG. 1, the exemplary engine **20** generally includes a low speed spool **30** and a high speed spool **32** mounted for rotation about an engine central longitudinal axis A relative to an engine static structure **36** via several bearing systems **38**. It should be understood that various bearing systems **38** at various locations may alternatively or additionally be provided, and the location of bearing systems **38** may be varied as appropriate to the application.
- (13) The low speed spool **30** generally includes an inner shaft **40** that interconnects a fan **42**, a first (or low) pressure compressor **44** and a first (or low) pressure turbine **46**. The inner shaft **40** is connected to the fan **42** through a speed change mechanism, which in exemplary gas turbine engine **20** is illustrated as a geared architecture **48** to drive the fan **42** at a lower speed than the low speed spool **30**. The high speed spool **32** includes an outer shaft **50** that interconnects a second (or high) pressure compressor **52** and a second (or high) pressure turbine **54**. A combustor **56** is arranged in exemplary gas turbine engine **20** between the high pressure compressor **52** and the high pressure turbine **54**. A mid-turbine frame **58** of the engine static structure **36** is arranged generally between the high pressure turbine **54** and the low pressure turbine **46**. The mid-turbine frame **58** further

supports bearing systems **38** in the turbine section **28**. The inner shaft **40** and the outer shaft **50** are concentric and rotate via bearing systems **38** about the engine central longitudinal axis A which is collinear with their longitudinal axes.

(14) The core airflow is compressed by the low pressure compressor **44** then the high pressure compressor **52**, mixed and burned with fuel in the combustor **56**, then expanded over the high pressure turbine **54** and low pressure turbine **46**. The mid-turbine frame **58** includes airfoils **60** which are in the core airflow path C. The turbines **46**, **54** rotationally drive the respective low speed spool **30** and high speed spool **32** in response to the expansion. It will be appreciated that each of the positions of the fan section **22**, compressor section **24**, combustor section **26**, turbine section **28**, and fan drive gear system **48** may be varied. For example, gear system **48** may be located aft of combustor section **26** or even aft of turbine section **28**, and fan section **22** may be positioned forward or aft of the location of gear system **48**. In direct drive configurations, the gear system **48** can be omitted.

(15) The engine **20** in one example is a high-bypass geared aircraft engine. Low pressure turbine **46** pressure ratio is pressure measured prior to inlet of low pressure turbine **46** as related to the pressure at the outlet of the low pressure turbine **46** prior to an exhaust nozzle. A significant amount of thrust can be provided by the bypass flow B due to the high bypass ratio. The example low pressure turbine **46** can provide the driving power to rotate the fan section **22** and therefore the relationship between the number of turbine rotors **34** in the low pressure turbine **46** and the number of blades in the fan section **22** can establish increased power transfer efficiency.

(16) The disclosed example gas turbine engine **20** includes a control and health monitoring system **64** (generally referred to as system **64**) utilized to monitor component performance and function. The system **64** includes a network **65**, which is an example of a guided electromagnetic transmission network. The network **65** includes a controller **66** operable to communicate with nodes **68a**, **68b** through electromagnetic signals. The nodes **68a**, **68b** can be distributed throughout the gas turbine engine **20** or other such machine. Node **68a** is an example of an actuator node that can drive one or more actuators/effectors of the gas turbine engine **20**. Node **68b** is an example of a sensor node that can interface with one or more sensors of the gas turbine engine **20**. Nodes **68a**, **68b** can include processing support circuitry to transmit/receive electromagnetic signals between sensors or actuators and the controller **66**. A coupler **67** can be configured as a splitter between a waveguide **70** coupled to the controller **66** and waveguides **71** and **72** configured to establish wireless communication with nodes **68a** and **68b** respectively. The coupler **67** can be a simple splitter or may include a repeater function to condition electromagnetic signals sent between the controller **66** and nodes **68a**, **68b**. In the example of FIG. 1, a radio frequency-based repeater **76** is interposed between the coupler **67** and node **68b**, where waveguide **72** is a first waveguide coupled to the coupler **67** and radio frequency-based repeater **76**, and waveguide **73** is a second waveguide coupled to the radio frequency-based repeater **76** and node **68b**. Collectively, waveguides **70**, **71**, **72**, **73** are configured to guide transmission of the radio frequencies (e.g., electromagnetic signals) between the controller **66** and one or more of the nodes **68a**, **68b**. The transmission media within waveguides **70-73** may include dielectric or gaseous material. In embodiments, the waveguides **70-73** can be hollow metal tubes. The waveguides **70-73** may be rigid or may include flexible material. The disclosed system **64** may be utilized to control and/or monitor any component function or characteristic of a turbomachine, aircraft component operation, and/or other machines.

(17) Prior control & diagnostic system architectures utilized in various applications include a centralized system architecture in which the processing functions reside in an electronic control module. Actuator and sensor communications were accomplished through analog wiring for power, command, position feedback, sensor excitation and sensor signals. Cables and connections include shielding to minimize effects caused by electromagnetic interference (EMI). The use of analog wiring and the required connections can limit application and capability of such systems due to the ability to locate wires, connectors and electronics in harsh environments that experience extremes

in temperature, pressure, and/or vibration. Exemplary embodiments can use radio frequencies guided by the waveguides **70-73** in a wireless architecture to provide both electromagnetic communication signals and power to the individual elements of the network **65**.

(18) The use of electromagnetic radiation in the form of radio waves (MHz to GHz) to communicate and power the sensors and actuators using a traditionally complex wired system provides substantial architectural simplification, especially as it pertains to size, weight, and power (SWaP). Embodiments provide extension of a network where reduced SNR may compromise network performance by trading off data rates for an expansion of the number of nodes and distribution lines; thereby providing more nodes/sensors, with greater interconnectivity.

(19) Referring to FIG. 2, a guided electromagnetic transmission network **100** is depicted as an example expansion of the network **65** of FIG. 1. The guided electromagnetic transmission network **100** can include the controller **66** coupled to coupler **67** through waveguide **170**. The coupler **67** is further coupled to coupler **67a** through waveguide **171** and to coupler **67b** through waveguide **172**. Coupler **67a** is further coupled to three nodes **68a** through waveguides **173a**, **173b**, **173c** in parallel. Each of the nodes **68a** can interface or be combined with multiple actuators **102**. Coupler **67b** is also coupled to two nodes **68b** through waveguides **174a**, **174b** in parallel. Each of the nodes **68b** can interface or be combined with multiple sensors **104**. Although the example of FIG. 2 depicts connections to actuators **102** and sensors **104** isolated to different branches, it will be understood that actuators **102** and sensors **104** can be interspersed with each other and need not be isolated on dedicated branches of the guided electromagnetic transmission network **100**. Couplers **67**, **67a**, **67b** can be splitters and/or can incorporate instances of the radio frequency-based repeater **76** of FIG. 1. Further, one or more instances of the radio frequency-based repeater **76** can be installed at any of the waveguides **170**, **171**, **172**, **173a-c**, and/or **174a-b** depending on the signal requirements of the guided electromagnetic transmission network **100**.

(20) Nodes **68a**, **68b** can be associated with particular engine components, actuators or any other machine part from which information and communication is performed for monitoring and/or control purposes. The nodes **68a**, **68b** may contain a single or multiple electronic circuits or sensors configured to communicate over the guided electromagnetic transmission network **100**.

(21) The controller **66** can send and receive power and data to and from the nodes **68a**, **68b**. The controller **66** may be located on equipment near other system components or located remotely as desired to meet application requirements.

(22) A transmission path (TP) between the controller **66** and nodes **68a**, **68b** can be used to send and receive data routed through the controller **66** from a control module or other components. The TP may utilize waveguides for electromagnetic communication including radio frequency/microwave electromagnetic energy. The interface between the controller **66** and nodes **68a**, **68b** can transmit power and communication signals.

(23) The example nodes **68a**, **68b** may include radio-frequency identification devices along with processing, memory and/or the interfaces to connect to conventional sensors or actuators, such as solenoids or electro-hydraulic servo valves. The waveguides **170**, **171**, **172**, **173a-c**, and/or **174a-b** can be shielded paths that support electromagnetic communication, including, for instance, radio frequency, microwaves, magnetic or optic waveguide transmission. Shielding can be provided such that electromagnetic energy or light interference **85** with electromagnetic signals **86** (shown schematically as arrows) are mitigated in the guided electromagnetic transmission network **100**. Moreover, the shielding provides that the electromagnetic signals **86** are less likely to propagate into the environment outside the guided electromagnetic transmission network **100** and provide unauthorized access to information. In some embodiments, guided electromagnetic radiation is in the range 1-100 GHz. Electromagnetic radiation can be more tightly arranged around specific carrier frequencies, such as 3-4.5 GHz, 24 GHz, 60 GHz, or 76-77 GHz as examples in the microwave spectrum. One or more carrier frequencies can transmit electric power, as well as communicate information, to multiple nodes **68a**, **68b** using various modulation and signaling

techniques.

(24) The nodes **68a** with actuators **102** may include control devices, such as a solenoid, switch or other physical actuation devices. Radio frequency identification, electromagnetic or optical devices implemented as the nodes **68b** with sensors **104** can provide information indicative of a physical parameter, such as pressure, temperature, speed, proximity, vibration, identification, and/or other parameters used for identifying, monitoring or controlling component operation. Signals communicated in the guided electromagnetic transmission network **100** may employ techniques such as checksums, hash algorithms, error control algorithms and/or encryption to mitigate cyber security threats and interference.

(25) The guided electromagnetic transmission network **100** may be installed in a mixed temperature environment, such as a machine having a hotter portion and a cooler portion. In reference to the example of FIG. **1**, the fan section **22** and compressor section **24** of the gas turbine engine **20** can be designated as cooler portions relative to hotter portions of the gas turbine engine **20**, such as the combustor section **26** and turbine section **28**. To further accommodate the temperature variations within the gas turbine engine **20**, a variety of approaches can be used. As one example, electronics devices within the nodes **68a**, **68b**, actuators **102**, and/or sensors **104** can include wide band gap semiconductor devices, such as silicon carbide or gallium nitride devices supporting higher operating temperatures than typical semiconductor devices. Placement of the nodes **68a**, **68b** can also impact performance capabilities in the hotter portion of the machine. Where actuators **102** or sensors **104** are needed at locations that would potentially exceed the desired operating temperature of the nodes **68a**, **68b** that directly interface with the actuators **102** or sensors **104**, relatively short wired connections, referred to as “pigtailed” can be used between the nodes **68a**, **68b** and the actuators **102** or sensors **104**. The pigtail wiring can provide thermal separation and may support the use of legacy wired actuators **102** and sensors **104** to connect with nodes **68a**, **68b**. Further temperature accommodations may include cooling systems, heat sinks, and the like.

(26) In some embodiments, shielding in the guided electromagnetic transmission network **100** can be provided such that power and communication signals are shielded from outside interference, which may be caused by environmental electromagnetic or optic interference. Moreover, the shielding limits intentional interference **85** with communication at each component. Intentional interference **85** may take the form of unauthorized data capture, data insertion, general disruption and/or any other action that degrades system communication. Environmental sources of interference **85** may originate from noise generated from proximate electrical systems in other components or machinery along with electrostatic and magnetic fields, and/or any broadcast signals from transmitters or receivers. Additionally, environmental phenomena, such as cosmic radio frequency radiation, lightning or other atmospheric effects, could interfere with local electromagnetic communications.

(27) It should be appreciated that while the system **64** is explained by way of example with regard to a gas turbine engine **20**, other machines and machine designs can be modified to incorporate built-in shielding for monitored or controlled components in a guided electromagnetic transmission network. For example, the system **64** can be incorporated in a variety of harsh environment machines, such as manufacturing and processing equipment, a vehicle system, an environmental control system, and all the like. As a further example, the system **64** can be incorporated in an aerospace system, such as an aircraft, rotorcraft, spacecraft, satellite, or the like. The disclosed system **64** includes the network **65**, **100** that provides consistent communication with electromagnetic devices, such as the example nodes **68a**, **68b**, and removes variables encountered with electromagnetic communications such as distance between transmitters and receiving devices, physical geometry in the field of transmission, control over transmission media such as air or fluids, control over air or fluid contamination through the use of filtering or isolation and knowledge of temperature and pressure.

(28) The system **64** provides for a reduction in cable and interconnecting systems to reduce cost and increases reliability by reducing the number of physical interconnections. Reductions in cable and connecting systems further provides for a reduction in weight while enabling additional redundancy. Moreover, additional sensors can be added without the need for additional wiring and physical connections to the controller **66**, which may provide for increased system accuracy and response. Embodiments can provide a “plug-n-play” approach to add a new node, potentially without a requalification of the entire system but only the new component; thereby greatly reducing qualification burdens.

(29) FIG. **3** is a schematic view of a configuration **200** including an interface node **68** of a radio frequency waveguide system, such as system **64** of FIG. **1**, configured to communicate with end nodes **202** through a wired interface **204**. The interface node **68** can be a generalized example of nodes **68a**, **68b** of FIGS. **1** and **2**, where the end nodes **202** may include one or more actuators **102**, one or more sensors **104**, or a combination thereof. The interface node **68** can also be generally referred to as a node **68**. The wired interface **204** may be a pigtail connection allowing for a relatively short length of wire to connect the interface node **68** with the end nodes **202**. For instance, the length of the wired interface **204** may enable the interface node **68** to be placed in a relatively cooler portion of a machine than where the end nodes **202** are located, such as in a bypass duct or proximate to a cooling side of a heat exchanger. The wired interface **204** enables the interface node **68** to electrically interface with the end nodes **202** while supporting radio frequency communication **206** with other system components through one or more waveguides **208**, **210**, **212**, couplers **67**, and other such system elements as previously described with respect to FIGS. **1** and **2**.

(30) FIG. **4** is a schematic view of a configuration **300** including an interface node **68** of a radio frequency waveguide system, such as system **64** of FIG. **1**, configured to communication with an end node **202** through a pin adapter interface **302**. The interface node **68** can be a generalized example of nodes **68a**, **68b** of FIGS. **1** and **2**, where the end node **202** may be an actuator **102** or sensor **104**. The pin adapter interface **302** can enable a direct connection between the interface node **68** and the end node **202** without a larger physical separation of the wired interface **204** of FIG. **3**. The pin adapter interface **302** may have a socket connection to support in-field replacement of the end node **202** without replacing the interface node **68**. Alternatively, the pin adapter interface **302** may be more securely coupled, for instance, by soldering or otherwise coupling pins of the end node **202** to the interface node **68**. The pin adapter interface **302** enables the interface node **68** to electrically interface with the end nodes **202** while supporting radio frequency communication **206** with other system components through one or more waveguides **208**, **210**, **212**, couplers **67**, and other such system elements as previously described with respect to FIGS. **1** and **2**. The pin adapter interface **302** may be a lighter weight than the wired interface **204** of FIG. **3**. In contrast, the interface node **68** in configuration **300** may be placed in closer proximity to a same temperature environment of end node **202** than in configuration **200** of FIG. **3**.

(31) FIG. **5** is a schematic view of a configuration **400** including an interface node **68** of a radio frequency waveguide system, such as system **64** of FIG. **1**, disposed in a shared housing **402** with an end node **202**. The interface node **68** can be a generalized example of nodes **68a**, **68b** of FIGS. **1** and **2**, where the end node **202** may include one or more actuators **102**, one or more sensors **104**, or a combination thereof within the shared housing **402**. The shared housing **402** combines the interface node **68** and end node **202** as a line replaceable unit. The interface node **68** and end node **202** may be electrically coupled within the shared housing **402**, while the interface node **68** supports radio frequency communication **206** with other system components through one or more waveguides **208**, **210**, **212**, couplers **67**, and other such system elements as previously described with respect to FIGS. **1** and **2**.

(32) FIG. **6** is a schematic view of a portion of a radio frequency waveguide system **500** illustrating further details of controller **66**, interface node **68**, and end nodes **202**. In the example of FIG. **6**, the controller **66** is depicted as a dual channel controller, where a first channel **502** and a second

channel **504** can each include a communication interface **506**, a processing system **508**, and a memory system **510**. The communication interface **506** can use a software defined radio or other protocol to support communication using electromagnetic signals. The processing system **508** can include any type or combination of central processing unit (CPU), including one or more of: a microprocessor, a digital signal processor (DSP), a microcontroller, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a field programmable gate array (FPGA), or the like supported in the expected operating environment. The memory system **510** may include random access memory (RAM), read only memory (ROM), or other electronic, optical, magnetic, or any other computer readable medium onto which data and algorithms are stored in a non-transitory form.

(33) A radio frequency communication link **512** between the controller **66** and interface node **68** can be shared by both the first channel **502** and second channel **504**, or each channel **502**, **504** may have independent radio frequency communication links **512** to one or more instances of the interface node **68**. The controller **66** may also provide a power link **514** to the interface node **68**. The radio frequency communication link **512** and power link **514** can be transmitted through radio frequencies within a same waveguide **516**.

(34) The interface node **68** can include a waveguide interface **519** configured to receive a radio frequency transmission through waveguide **516** in the radio frequency waveguide system **500**. The waveguide interface **519** can include one or more radio frequency antennas **520** to receive and/or send transmissions between the interface node **68** and the controller **66** and/or other nodes. The waveguide interface **519** need not include the one or more radio frequency antennas **520** but may instead use a rectenna, a transformer, a waveguide adaptor, or other such structure to support signal/power transmission and reception through the waveguide **516**. The interface node **68** can also include a signal splitter **522** configured to split the radio frequency transmission between a power path **524** and a communications path **526** within the node **68**. A power filter **528** of the power path **524** is configured to produce a filtered power signal **530**. A power rectifier **532** and conditioner **534** (also referred to as power conditioning circuit **534**) are configured to produce a conditioned power signal **536**. A communication filter **538** of the communications path **526** can be configured to produce a filtered communication signal **540**. The power filter **528** and/or the communication filter **538** can be implemented using various filter components and structures. For example, the power filter **528** and/or the communication filter **538** can be implemented using bulk acoustic wave filters, feedthrough filters, waveguide filters, metallization-based filters, and other such structures. As such, a portion of the filtering may be performed external to the interface node **68**, such as, within the waveguide **516** coupled to the waveguide interface **519**.

(35) The interface node **68** can also include a network processor **542** powered by the conditioned power signal **536** and configured to extract encoded information from the filtered communication signal **540**. A control processor **544** can be configured to interface with one or more sensors **104** and/or actuators **102** and to communicate with the network processor **542**. The control processor **544** can be powered by the conditioned power signal **536**. A sensor/actuator interface **546** can be interposed between the control processor **544** and the sensors **104** and/or the actuators **102**. The sensor/actuator interface **546** can be powered by the conditioned power signal **536** and configured to provide power to the sensors **104** and/or the actuators **102**, for instance, through electrical interfacing **554**, **552** respectively. The electrical interfacing **554**, **552** can include use of the wired interface **204** of FIG. 3, the pin adapter interface **302** of FIG. 4, and/or a direct connection within the shared housing **402** of FIG. 5. In some embodiments, the conditioned power signal **536** may receive power from an alternate or supplemental source **550**. For example, a battery backup or external power supply can be used as the alternate or supplemental source **550** to supplement power transmissions through the radio frequency waveguide system **500**.

(36) Electrical components within the interface node **68** can be made of high-temperature capable materials using, for example passive elements and/or semiconductor diodes to survive high temperatures, such as an engine core. For instance, components can be made of one or more wide

band gap semiconductors. Materials for high-temperature application can include silicon carbide, gallium nitride, aluminum nitride, aluminum scandium nitride, and other such materials. This can enable the interface node **68** to be placed in a hotter portion of a machine, such as the gas turbine engine **20**, while the controller **66** may be at a cooler location, such as on a fan case of the fan section **22**.

(37) Processing performed by the control processor **544** can include signal filtering, engineering unit conversion, fault detection, fault isolation, and built-in test, for example. The network processor **542** can perform communication management for receiving and sending data on the radio frequency communication link **512**. Depending on the processing capacity of the control processor **544** and network processor **542**, more advanced sensing and detection algorithms can be locally incorporated to offload some processing burdens of the controller **66**. Lower-level signal conditioning can be handled by the sensor/actuator interface **546**, such as analog filtering, sampling, conversions, excitation signal generation, and other such functions. Although depicted separately, the network processor **542**, the control processor **544**, and/or the sensor/actuator interface **546** can be combined or further subdivided.

(38) FIG. 7 depicts an example of a portion of the interface node **68** of the radio frequency waveguide system **500** of FIG. 6 in greater detail. An antenna feed **602** can link the waveguide interface **519** of FIG. 6, such as one or more radio frequency antennas **520** of FIG. 6, to the signal splitter **522** that performs power and signal splitting with respect to the power path **524** and the communications path **526**. The power filter **528** can be implemented, for example, as a bandpass filter formed as a first metallization pattern on a circuit board **600** of the interface node **68** in the example of FIG. 7. Alternatively, the power filter **528** may be omitted or implemented using other filter structures/components, such as a combination of high pass and low pass filters or a combination of stopband filters. The power filter **528** can be omitted, for instance, where the signal and power splitter **522** is implemented as a diplexer that incorporates splitting and filtering components. The power rectifier **532** and conditioner **534** can be implemented, for example, as a power splitter **606** coupled to two or more rectification paths **608**, and each of the rectification paths **608** can be coupled to a power conditioning circuit **534**. The power splitter **606** can receive the filtered power signal **530** from the power filter **528**. The two or more rectification paths **608** can include a second metallization pattern on the circuit board **600** of the interface node **68** or be implemented using other filter structures/components. For instance, the use of metallization patterns in the two or more rectification paths **608** can incorporate rectification filters. The power conditioning circuitry **534** can include a power threshold trigger **612** configured to selectively output the conditioned power signal **536** of FIG. 6 based on a power level output exceeding a power threshold. The power threshold trigger **612** can help to ensure that components of the interface node **68** are not partially powered which could result in an indeterminant or error state of operation. Further, the communication filter **538** can be configured to extract the filtered communication signal **540** of FIG. 6 from a portion of the radio frequency transmission received at the radio frequency antenna **520**. Where the signal and power splitter **522** is implemented as a diplexer that incorporates splitting and filtering components, the communication filter **538** may be omitted or modified. A board-to-board jumper **616** can be used to connect the output of the communication filter **538** to another printed circuit board that may include devices and interfaces, such as the network processor **542**, control processor **544**, and sensor/actuator interface **546** of FIG. 6. The combined printed circuit boards may have a compact footprint, such as about 1.2 inches by 1.2 inches (i.e., about 3 cm by 3 cm). Although the example of FIG. 7 depicts two rectification paths **608**, embodiments can include any number of rectification paths as needed depending on power level requirements and other such constraints.

(39) FIG. 8 is a flow chart illustrating a method **700** of establishing electromagnetic communication through one or more nodes in a machine, such as the gas turbine engine **20** of FIG. 1 in accordance with an embodiment. The method **700** of FIG. 8 is described in reference to FIGS.

1-7 and may be performed with an alternate order and include additional steps. Further steps can be performed in parallel and are not necessarily sequential actions. For purposes of explanation, the method **700** is primarily described in reference to FIG. **6** but can also be implemented on the system **64** of FIG. **1**, the guided electromagnetic transmission network **100** of FIG. **2**, and other network variations and a variety of machines. The machine may operate in or produce a mixed temperature environment including higher temperatures (e.g., >150 degrees C.) beyond the normal range of microelectronics, which is typically less than 100 degrees C. The local temperature at different sections of the machine can vary substantially, such as upstream from combustion, at a fuel combustion location, and downstream from combustion.

(40) At block **702**, a radio frequency transmission is received through a waveguide **516** at a waveguide interface **519**, such as at one or more radio frequency antennas **520** of a node **68** in a radio frequency waveguide system **500** that can include a plurality of nodes. Examples can include nodes **68**, **68a**, **68b**, and the machine can be the gas turbine engine **20** of FIG. **1**.

(41) At block **704**, the radio frequency transmission is split between a power path **524** and a communications path **526** within the node **68**.

(42) At block **706**, a power filter **528** can be applied to a power path signal of the power path **524** to produce a filtered power signal **530**. Alternatively, power filtering can be performed integrally with other components.

(43) At block **708**, power rectification and conditioning can be applied by power rectifier **532** and conditioner **534** to produce a conditioned power signal **536** based on power received through the power path **524**. For instance, the filtered power signal **530** can be rectified and further conditioned using one or more bandpass filters.

(44) At block **710**, power can be provided to a network processor **542** of the node **68** based on the conditioned power signal **536**.

(45) At block **712**, a communication filter **538** can be applied to a communications path signal of the communications path **526** to produce a filtered communication signal **540**.

(46) At block **714**, the filtered communication signal **540** can be provided to the network processor **542** of the node **68** to extract encoded information. A control processor **544** can be interfaced with the network processor **542** and a sensor **104** and/or an actuator **102**. The control processor **544** can be powered by the conditioned power signal **536**.

(47) In embodiments, the nodes **68**, **68a**, **68b** can be portions of a network **65** configured to communicate through a plurality of electromagnetic signals, where the nodes **68**, **68a**, **68b** are distributed throughout the machine, such as the gas turbine engine **20**. Multiple nodes **68**, **68a**, **68b** can be used in a complete system **64** to take advantage of architecture scalability. Each of the nodes **68**, **68a**, **68b** can be associated with at least one actuator **102** or sensor **104** of the gas turbine engine **20**. For example, one or more of the nodes **68**, **68a**, **68b** can be located at one or more of a fan section **22**, a compressor section **24**, a combustor section **26**, and/or a turbine section **28** of the gas turbine engine **20**.

(48) A variety of node configurations can be supported, and the node configurations can be mixed within the network. For example, at least one of the nodes **68a**, **68b** can be an interface node **68** that communicates with one or more end nodes **202**. One or more end nodes **202** can be coupled to the interface node **68** through a wired interface **204**. As further example, the one or more end nodes **202** can be coupled to the interface node **68** through a pin adapter interface **302**. As another example, the one or more end nodes **202** can be coupled to the interface node **68** and disposed in a shared housing **402**.

(49) The term “about” is intended to include the degree of error associated with measurement of the particular quantity based upon the equipment available at the time of filing the application. For example, “about” can include a range of $\pm 8\%$ or 5% , or 2% of a given value.

(50) The terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only and is not intended to be limiting of the present disclosure. As used herein, the singular forms “a”, “an”

and “the” are intended to include the plural forms as well, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. It will be further understood that the terms “comprises” and/or “comprising,” when used in this specification, specify the presence of stated features, integers, steps, operations, elements, and/or components, but do not preclude the presence or addition of one or more other features, integers, steps, operations, element components, and/or groups thereof.

(51) While the present disclosure has been described with reference to an exemplary embodiment or embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the scope of the present disclosure. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the present disclosure without departing from the essential scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended that the present disclosure not be limited to the particular embodiment disclosed as the best mode contemplated for carrying out this present disclosure, but that the present disclosure will include all embodiments falling within the scope of the claims.

Claims

1. A node of a radio frequency system, the node comprising: a signal splitter configured to split a radio frequency transmission between a power path and a communications path within the node; a power rectifier and conditioner configured to produce a conditioned power signal based on power received through the power path; a communication filter of the communications path configured to produce a filtered communication signal; and a network processor powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to extract encoded information from the filtered communication signal.
2. The node of claim 1, further comprising: a control processor configured to interface with a sensor and/or an actuator and to communicate with the network processor, wherein the control processor is powered by the conditioned power signal.
3. The node of claim 2, further comprising: a sensor/actuator interface interposed between the control processor and the sensor and/or the actuator, wherein the sensor/actuator interface is powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to provide power to the sensor and/or the actuator.
4. The node of claim 1, further comprising a power filter of the power path.
5. The node of claim 4, wherein the power rectifier and conditioner comprises a power splitter coupled to two or more rectification paths.
6. The node of claim 5, further comprising a power threshold trigger configured to selectively output the conditioned power signal based on a power level output exceeding a power threshold.
7. The node of claim 1, wherein the communication filter is configured to extract the filtered communication signal from a portion of the radio frequency transmission.
8. A system for a machine, the system comprising: a network of a plurality of nodes distributed throughout the machine, each of the nodes associated with at least one sensor and/or actuator of the machine and operable to communicate through one or more radio frequencies, wherein the at least one of the nodes comprises: a signal splitter configured to split a radio frequency transmission between a power path and a communications path within the node; a power rectifier and conditioner configured to produce a conditioned power signal based on power received through the power path; a communication filter of the communications path configured to produce a filtered communication signal; and a network processor powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to extract encoded information from the filtered communication signal.
9. The system of claim 8, wherein the at least one of the nodes comprises: a control processor configured to interface with a sensor and/or an actuator of the at least one sensor and/or actuator of the machine and to communicate with the network processor, wherein the control processor is powered by the conditioned power signal.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein the at least one of the nodes comprises: a sensor/actuator interface interposed between the control processor and the sensor and/or the actuator, wherein the sensor/actuator interface is powered by the conditioned power signal and configured to provide power to the sensor and/or the actuator.
 11. The system of claim 8, wherein the at least one of the nodes comprises a power filter of the power path.
 12. The system of claim 11, wherein the power rectifier and conditioner comprises a power splitter coupled to two or more rectification paths.
 13. The system of claim 12, wherein the at least one of the nodes comprises: a power threshold trigger configured to selectively output the conditioned power signal based on a power level output exceeding a power threshold.
 14. The system of claim 8, wherein the communication filter is configured to extract the filtered communication signal from a portion of the radio frequency transmission.
 15. A method comprising: receiving a radio frequency transmission at a node in a radio frequency system comprising a plurality of nodes; splitting the radio frequency transmission between a power path and a communications path within the node; applying power rectification and conditioning to power received through the power path to produce a conditioned power signal; providing power to a network processor of the node based on the conditioned power signal; applying a communication filter to a communications path signal of the communications path to produce a filtered communication signal; and providing the filtered communication signal to the network processor of the node to extract encoded information.
 16. The method of claim 15, further comprising: interfacing a control processor with the network processor and a sensor and/or an actuator, wherein the control processor is powered by the conditioned power signal.
 17. The method of claim 15, further comprising performing power filtering of the power path.
 18. The method of claim 17, wherein the power rectification and conditioning are performed by a power splitter coupled to two or more rectification paths.
 19. The method of claim 18, further comprising: outputting the conditioned power signal based on a power threshold trigger detecting a power level output exceeding a power threshold.
 20. The method of claim 15, wherein the communication filter is configured to extract the filtered communication signal from a portion of the radio frequency transmission.
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