

DELFT UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

LASER SWARM

FINAL REPORT

DESIGN SYNTHESIS EXERCISE

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June 7, 2010

Preface

This final document contains our evaluation of the Laser Swarm concept. Ten weeks have passed and we are finally ready to present our conclusions.

We did not, however, do everything by ourselves, and this is a good place to thank those who have been so kind as to give us some of their precious time.

First I want to mention professor Edoardo Charbon, who kindly explained and showed to us the workings of his Single Photon Avalanche Diode (SPAD)¹: without his help we would be hopelessly in the dark on these fascinating devices. From this place I also want to thank professor Kourosh Khoshelham for helping us to some valuable material on remote sensing. I also want to thank Jasper Bouwmeester, who provided us with some helpful information on solar panel pricing.

And finally I thank our tutor, professor Ben Gorte, who was very generous to us with his time and has been very supportive of the entire project.

I hope you will have as much fun reading this report, as we had in making it!

Yours sincerely,

Co Florijn,
Chairman

¹See [4, 98-105], [3] and [2]

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List of Symbols

Symbol	Description	SI units
A	accuracy	rad
A	area	m^2
a	semimajor axis	km
C_D	drag coefficient	—
D	air drag	N
e	eccentricity	—
\dot{e}	time rate of change of the eccentricity	s^{-1}
g	gravitational acceleration	m/s^2
I_{rt}	round-trip interactivity loss	Watt
I_{sp}	specific impulse	s
i	inclination	rad
i_R	relative inclination	rad
\dot{i}	time rate of change of the inclination	rad/s
J_{ii}	inertia tensor for i	m^4
J_2	second zonal coefficient	0.001082645 —
J_3	third zonal coefficient	0.000002546 —
M_C	torque about c	N/m
m	mass	kg
m_f	fuel mass	kg
m_p	payload mass	kg
m_0	dry mass	kg
N	angular seperation	rad
n	nr of energy levels	—
n	mean motion	$7.292 \cdot 10^{-5} \text{ rad/s}$
n_e	refractive index	—
P	power	Watt
$p_{p,th}$	threshold power	Watt
R	mass ratio	—
R_C	radius of the orbit of the center of mass	km
R_E	earth equitorial radius	6378 km
s	variable in the Laplace equation	—
T	temperature	K
T_i	period of i	s
V	velocity	m/s
V_a	voltage at a	V
V_B	voltage at B	V
W	weight	N
η	pump efficiency	—
θ_i	angle w.r.t. rotation axis i	rad
θ_{man}	manoeuvre angle	rad
λ	wavelength	m
μ	gravitational constant of the Earth	$398600 \cdot 10^9 \text{ m}^3/s^2$
ν	true anomaly	rad
ρ	density	kg/m^3
s	stimulated emission cross-section	m^2
t	upper level lifetime	s
ϕ	phase angle	rad
ϕ_R	relative phase angle	rad

Ω	right ascension of the ascending node	rad
$\dot{\Omega}_{J_2}$	rate of precession	rad/s
ω	argument of perigee	rad
$\dot{\omega}$	time rate of change of the argument of perigee	rad/s

List of Acronyms

EOL	End-of-Life
GLAS	Geoscience Laser Altimeter System
LiDAR	Light Detection And Ranging
SPAD	Single Photon Avalanche Diode

Abstract

In February 2010 the ICESat mission ended after 7 years of measuring ice sheet mass balance, cloud and aerosol heights, as well as land topography and vegetation characteristics using a space based Light Detection And Ranging (LiDAR) system. ICESat used only one of the possible approaches for LiDAR, namely the use of a high energy laser and a large receiver telescope. The other approach is using a high frequency, low energy laser and a single photon detector. The advantage of the latter approach is that it has a much lower mass, but it is uncertain if even a single photon per pulse reaches the receiver. One possible solution could be to use a swarm of satellites around the emitter, each equipped with a single photon detector. However, the technical feasibility of this concept has not yet been proven.

This report briefly highlights different ways in which such a mission could be accomplished, and then decides what way will be the most likely to succeed.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In February 2010 the ICESat mission ended after 7 years of measuring ice sheet mass balance, cloud and aerosol heights, as well as land topography and vegetation characteristics. To do all this, ICESat had only one instrument on board: a space based LiDAR system (Geoscience Laser Altimeter System (GLAS)), allowing for an unprecedented 3D view of the Earth's surface and atmosphere. The laser lifetimes, however, were severely limited because of manufacturing errors in one of the laser components.

ICESat followed only one of the possible approaches for LiDAR, namely the use of a high energy laser and a large receiver telescope. The other approach is using a high frequency, low energy laser and a single photon detector. The advantage of the latter approach is that it has a much lower mass, but it is uncertain if even a single photon per pulse reaches the receiver. One possible solution could be the use of a swarm of satellites around the emitter, each equipped with a single photon detector. However the technical feasibility of this concept has not yet been proven.

In this mid term review some options for this concept are proposed and traded off so as to find the best fit for the mission. This tradeoff is what the bulk of this report is about. Also described are the workings and results from the simulator, as well as the project and risk management. Chapters on operation and logistics, stability and control and sustainability are included too.

Chapter 2

Launch and Astrodynamic Characteristics

This chapter explains the characteristics of the launch and space segments of the mission. Section 2.1 describes the three main characteristics of bringing the swarm into the orbit: launch vehicle, launch location and orbit insertion. Section 2.2 discusses all the aspects of the constellation and its configuration, and delves into estimations of ΔV and needed propellant. Finally, section 2.3 deals with the hazardous space environment and ways of protecting the satellites against it.

2.1 Launch Segment

The launch segment of the mission includes the selection of the launch vehicle, the launch location and the procedure of inserting the satellites into their respective orbits. The following subsections discuss all of these aspects.

2.1.1 Launch Vehicle

HERE ADD VIBRATION ANALYSIS

2.1.1.1 Cost and Reliability Analysis

The costs of launch vary greatly between different vehicles. Table 2.1 on page 3 lists approximate total launch costs of respective platforms. The prices are given in Fiscal Year 2000 dollars for consistency.

Based on the information in the above table it is possible to single out a few platforms which will be affordable for the purpose of this feasibility study. The Ariane V launcher is the most expensive option by far and would push the budget quite heavily, with an estimated cost of launch almost half of the total budget. However the payload capabilities of the Ariane V launcher far outweigh that of all other platforms, thus making it possible for a combined launch with other satellites, leading to shared costs. This however could jeopardize the mission in the sense that it becomes secondary priority. If that happens, the constellation would have have have higher requirements for orbit acquisition: an extra booster stage or higher onboard fuel capacity for the altitude and/or plane shift, which is not feasible. The Ariane V is therefore an unsuitable

Platform	Operator	Price (FY00\$m)
Ariane V	ESA	97.96
Soyuz	Starsem	8.16 - 22.1
Vega	European and Italian SA	15.1
Falcon 1E	SPACEX	8.89
PSLV	ISRO	13.88 - 16.33
Rokot	Eurokot	9.8 - 11.4

Table 2.1: Estimated price comparison of different launch vehicles. *Source: various.*

platform for this project.

The rest of the launchers can be analyzed with respect to reliability. All of the launch vehicles have been tested, with the exception of the Vega system, which is yet to make its maiden flight. The Vega is therefore not suitable for the analysis at this time. It is for this reason that the project will no longer consider this system at all. However, better data should be available in the near future which should allow for the Vega platform to be reevaluated.

The same goes for the Falcon - 1e system. The launcher is still under development. Furthermore, the predecessor of the 1e system is the Falcon - 1, which out of total of five launches only had two successful, fails to make a favorable impression.

Table 2.2 on page 3 shows some reliability statistics for the remaining 3 vehicles.

Platform	Total No. of Launches	Total Failures	Reliability	No. of Successful Launches Since Last Failure
Soyuz	1754	88	95%	57
PSLV	16	1	94%	15
Rokot	17	2	88%	6

Table 2.2: Reliability figures for

The Soyuz launch vehicle presents itself as the most reliable platform, with a track record that far surpassed all other options. This launch vehicle will be the one considered for this project. In the next section, its payload capabilities are discussed.

2.1.1.2 Soyuz LV Payload Capability Analysis

There is a large selection of Soyuz vehicles available for consideration. For the purpose of this project, the newest modification - Soyuz-ST will be used. This vehicle is part of the Soyuz-2 family, which are technologically superior to the older Soyuz-U and U2 launchers. An illustration and technical parameters of the Soyuz-ST can be found in Appendix A on page 9 [1].

2.1.1.3 Conclusion

2.1.2 Launch Site

The selection of the launch site relies on several factors:

- Availability of attainable inclinations from launch.
- Compatibility with the launch vehicle.
- Accessibility and cost.
- Security and political reasons.

The first factor is crucial. It is paramount that the satellites are injected into their final inclinations at launch and do not have to perform any inclination change maneuvers, which require a substantial ΔV . With this in mind choosing a launch site closer to the equator is necessary. Launch sites at higher latitudes would need to sacrifice velocity and thus payload mass because of their location. Table ?? on page ?? shows a number of possible launch sites and their locations [5]. It is also very important that the selected launcher can be used on the given location.

2.1.3 Orbit Acquisition

Once the final stage of the launch vehicle has reached desired orbit altitude and inclination, preparations can start for proper separation maneuvers. This maneuver has to be designed in such a way as to accommodate all phase shifts required by the satellite orbits. Using the

2.2 Space Segment

2.2.1 Emitter Orbit

bla

2.2.2 Receiver Orbits

b lss

2.2.3 Collision Avoidance

bla

2.2.4 Stationkeeping

bla

2.3 Space Environment and Shielding

Bla

Chapter 3

Sustainable Development Strategy

In this chapter the Sustainable Development Strategy is discussed in the order of production (section 3.1), operations (section 3.2) and End-of-Life (EOL) (section 3.3).

3.1 Production and Logistics

The design is aimed at a swarm of mostly identical satellites. This may allow for series production which is more efficient in terms of resources than a one-of large satellite with a lot of unique components. This also implies that the number of different spare parts could be reduced. Smaller satellites could also use smaller facilities for production and testing.

Transportation can be split up into two parts: transportation to the launch site and the launch from the surface to the final orbit in space. On both occasions the system can again profit from its small size. If the satellites are not launched all together, they can “piggyback” on another satellite’s launcher.

Spreading the swarm, i.e. piggybacking using different launchers, has several advantages. First of all, the emissions are lower than in case of a dedicated launcher. Also, if the first satellite fails before the launch of the rest of the swarm, the others can be repaired and thus less resources are wasted.

3.2 Operations

Once in orbit, the satellite’s influence on the Earth is very limited. The only real concern is the debris it leaves behind during launch and deployment, which can be dangerous to other satellites orbiting the Earth. However, the deployment mechanism, which is responsible for most of the debris, is not included in this technical feasibility study. Later studies developing the ideas from this feasibility study should take it into account, since more satellites could mean more deployment mechanisms and hence more waste. One aspect that can be dealt with is the efficient use of resources. The swarm can be designed in such a way that if one of the satellites fails a replacement satellite can be sent, whilst any remaining satellites can be reused.

3.3 End of Life

Each satellite will be at the end of its life if it cannot perform its function anymore. It is important that after the mission is over all satellites are removed from their orbit and burn up in the atmosphere so that they do not pose any danger to other satellites. Final decommissioning of the swarm will be more complex than for a regular satellite, since every individual satellite has to be decommissioned separately.

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Appendix A

AppA