

Integrated GPS/TOA Navigation using a Positioning and Communication Software Defined Radio

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BIOGRAPHY

Alison Brown is the President and Chief Executive Officer of NAVSYS Corporation. She has a PhD in Mechanics, Aerospace, and Nuclear Engineering from UCLA, an MS in Aeronautics and Astronautics from MIT, and an MA in Engineering from Cambridge University. In 1986, she founded NAVSYS Corporation. She was a member of the GPS-3 Independent Review Team and the Interagency GPS Executive Board Independent Advisory Team, and is an Editor of GPS World Magazine. She is an ION Fellow and an Honorary Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

Janet Nordlie is a Program Manager at NAVSYS Corporation. She has a BSEE from Southern Methodist University. She has been involved in GPS system design, development and test since 1999.

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ABSTRACT

While GPS is the natural choice for providing navigation in an outdoors environment, it experiences significant challenges when operating in an urban environment where the GPS signals can be significantly attenuated, often completely blocked, inside buildings or in urban canyons. In this paper a networked radionavigation approach is described that augments the GPS signals with Time of Arrival (TOA) observations using a Software Defined Radio (SDR). Simulation and test results are included to demonstrate the GPS/TOA network-aided positioning solution can be derived.

INTRODUCTION

A software defined radio (SDR) provides a flexible architecture that allows the same radio components to be reconfigured to perform different functions. The SDR can be designed to operate at different RF frequencies (receive and transmit) by configuring the radio with multiple digital antenna elements (DAEs) that perform digital/RF signal conversion. The waveforms generated by the SDR can be selected through the firmware downloaded to the Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA) card. The SDR configuration and operation modes can be controlled through the software loaded on the Host Computer.

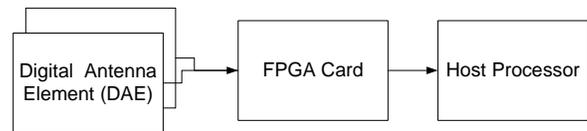


Figure 1 Software Defined Radio (SDR) Architecture

NAVSYS has developed a Software Defined Radio that includes the capability to operate both as a GPS receiver and also as a 900 MHz transceiver operating within the Industrial, Scientific and Medical (ISM) band. Since both the GPS and communications functions reside within common radio hardware, this positioning and communications (POSCOMM) device can use the GPS and communications functionality to provide a positioning capability that leverages both the GPS derived pseudorange and carrier phase observations and also Time-Of-Arrival (TOA) observations derived from the communications channel. The design of the POSCOMM Software Defined Radio is described in this paper.

The POSCOMM SDRs are designed to operate in a networked architecture, as shown in Figure 2, where “Master” units are designated as transmitters to provide TOA augmented navigation to “Slave” units operating as receivers in a GPS denied urban environment. The

Master units transmit a TOA message which includes a pseudorange sequence from which the time of arrival at the "Slave" unit can be precisely determined. A message is also sent including the precise time of transmission of the TOA message and the precise location of the Master unit based on the GPS observations. The time-of-arrival differenced with the time-of-transmission provides the Slave unit with a pseudorange observation from each of the Master units' locations. This can be used to solve for the position of the Slave either using the TOA updates alone or using a combination of both the GPS and TOA observations.

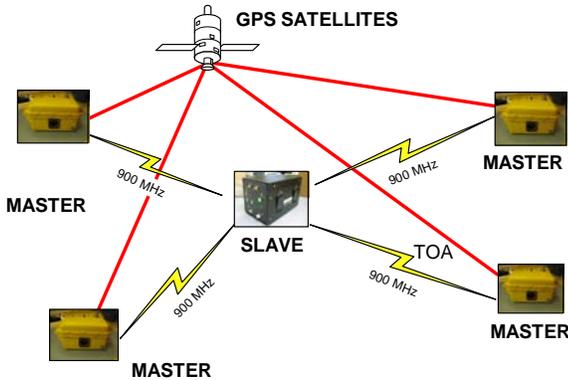


Figure 2 POSCOMM TOA NETWORK^[1]

POSCOMM SOFTWARE DEFINED RADIO

The POSCOMM GPS/TOA navigation solution was implemented using NAVSYS' Software Defined Radio test bed shown in Figure 4. This has been developed using a modular PC/104 configuration to facilitate rapid prototyping and testing of SDR software applications to support advanced positioning and communications functions. Previously, this SDR has been used for demonstrating a Software GPS Receiver (SGR) API^[2], Network Assisted GPS operation using the Military P(Y) code GPS signals^[3], and also integrated GPS/inertial operation including Ultra-Tightly-Coupled (UTC) GPS/inertial tracking^[4].



Figure 3 POSCOMM SDR

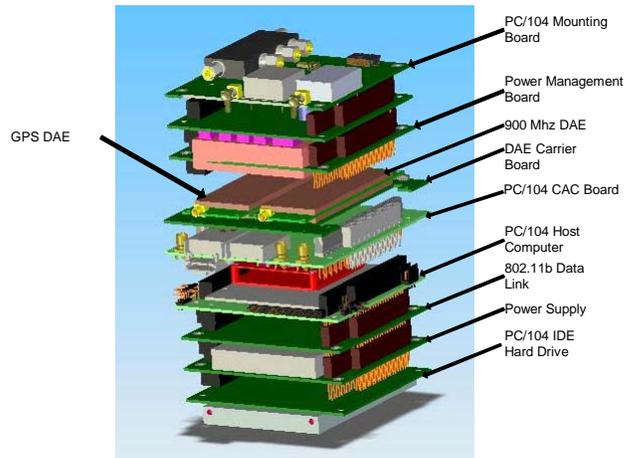


Figure 4 POSCOMM SDR Components

The POSCOMM SDR PC/104 stack shown in Figure 4 is packaged in the enclosure shown in Figure 3 and includes the following main components.

- GPS Digital Antenna Element. This is used to receive and track the GPS signals.
- GPS 900 MHz Digital Antenna Element. This includes a 900 MHz receive and transmit channel that is used for either broadcasting or receiving the TOA-aided data. This could also be configured for use in communicating between the POSCOMM units. 900 MHz was selected as this lies in the unlicensed ISM band. The DAE transceiver can be configured though to work at other frequencies.
- 802.11b Data Link. This was used to provide the inter-unit communications link during this phase of testing.
- PC/104 CAC Card. This is a NAVSYS designed card that includes three Spartan FPGAs and a PCI interface to the Host Computer. This interfaces directly with the DAE receive and transmit channels through an adapter board, as shown in Figure 5.
- Host Computer, Hard Drive and Power Supply. These are COTS components that include a PC/104 form-factor Pentium-M Single Board Computer, power supply and 80 GByte Hard Drive

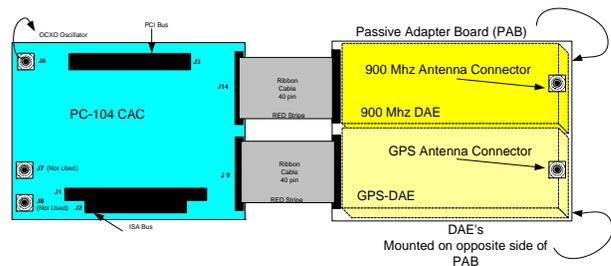


Figure 5 PC/104 CAC to DAE Interfaces

POSCOMM SDR OPERATION

The POSCOMM SDRs are configured through software to operate as either a Master (Transmit) or Slave (Receiver) mode of TOA operation.

Master units are required to be tracking at least one GPS satellite to allow the time of the TOA transmission to be synchronized precisely with GPS time. These units send TOA Assistance messages across the network which tells the Slave units what TOA observations are available for use in aided navigation and also provide the location of the Master units that are providing the TOA aiding.

Slave units will default to GPS tracking if satellites are in view, but are not required to track any GPS satellites for them to operate. At start-up, they initialize time across the network using Network Time Protocol (NTP). On receipt of the TOA Assistance messages from the Master units, the Slave unit will then initiate tracking of the TOA observations which will be used, in combination with any observed GPS satellites, to compute the aided navigation solution.

The GPS/TOA solution accuracy is a function of the following components which are addressed in the POSCOMM SDR design and described in the following sections of this paper.

- Accuracy of the GPS time and position mark at the Master unit.
- Geometry provided by the TOA observations.
- Accuracy of the TOA observations

Table 1 TOA Acknowledge Message

Field Name	Units	Description
Time	Week secs	GPS time of week of first TOA being transmitted
PRN		ID of PRN code
Period	ms	Interval between TOA signals
Duration	ms	Duration of TOA ranging signal
Freq	MHz	RF Frequency of TOA signal

TOA TRANSMISSIONS

The SDR architecture allows for a variety of different waveforms to be used to provide TOA assistance. The key feature of the POSCOMM SDR approach is that the design of the SDR DAEs and firmware allows the timing of the TOA transmission to be precisely locked in time to the received GPS signals. For the POSCOMM testing we implemented a combined Code-Division Multiple Access (CDMA), Time-Division Multiple Access (TDMA), and Frequency-Division (FDMA) approach for sharing the spectrum between the multiple Master Units providing TOA assistance. This provides maximum flexibility in configuring the POSCOMM TOA Assistance network to

optimize performance and share limited bandwidth for both positioning and communications functionality. The CDMA, TDMA and FDMA parameters that specify the TOA signal characteristics are all defined using configuration parameters and are defined in the TOA ACK Message sent by the Master Units (see Table 1).

GEOMETRY OF TOA-AIDED SOLUTION

The horizontal and vertical accuracy of a GPS TOA-aided solution is a function of the TOA dilution of precision (DOP) scaled by the TOA observation accuracy. The worst-case performance occurs when no GPS satellites can be tracked and only TOA observations are available for navigation.

If only ground-based TOA Transmitters are used, then the 3-D TOA solution is indeterminate and the DOP approaches infinity (Figure 6). If altitude-aiding is used, for example from a baro-altimeter, then a 3-D solution can be calculated. Figure 7 shows the simulated dilution of precision with 4 transmitters located around a 3-story building where HDOP<1 and VDOP<1.

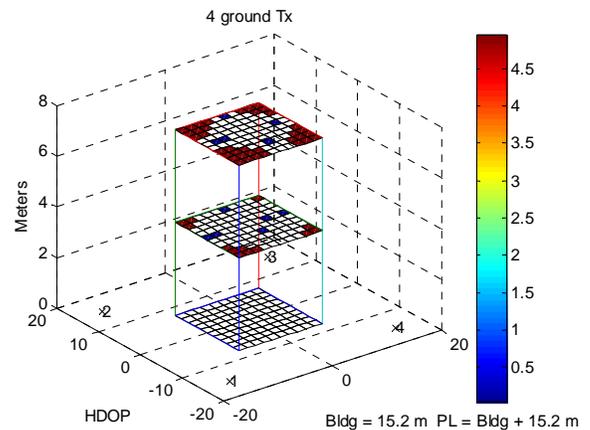


Figure 6 HDOP with 4 Ground-Based Transmitters

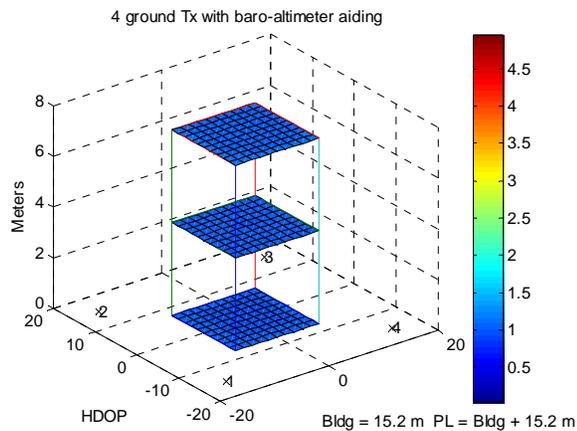


Figure 7 HDOP with 4 Ground-based Transmitters and Altitude-aiding

TOA OBSERVATIONS

The accuracy of the TOA observations are a function of the waveform characteristics, the tracking loops employed and the environment. The main challenge faced for the TOA ranging signal design is to provide robust and accurate performance in the presence of multipath.

To evaluate the multipath environment and the ability of the TOA tracking loops to handle these errors, four Master units were set up around the NAVSYS building shown in Figure 8 with the test layout shown in Figure 9. Test results were collected from units operating both outside the building, where GPS could be used as a truth reference, and inside the building. In both cases, the TOA signals were passing through multiple different types of construction. The West end of the building is metal construction while the Center and East end is brick construction.

A maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) algorithm is used to estimate the TOA from the correlation results generated from the 900 MHz received signal correlated with the modulated PRN code. The algorithm detects the peak of the correlation from the closest in signal detected. This will result in detecting the correlation peak of the signal from the direct path from the transmitter rather than a multipath signal that arrived from an indirect path. Figure 10 shows the correlation results from four transmitters when the receiver has a direct line-of-sight to the transmitters. All four signals have a strong detected correlation peak with a received RF signal of around -16 dBm. Figure 11 and Figure 12 show the correlation results from signals received through the NAVSYS building. In these cases, the building can significantly attenuate the received signal power and also strong multipath signals are present, which appear as peaks showing to the left of the direct signal peak. The MLE

algorithm used to perform the TOA tracking detects the closest peak in each case shown.



Figure 8 NAVSYS Building (Southwest View)

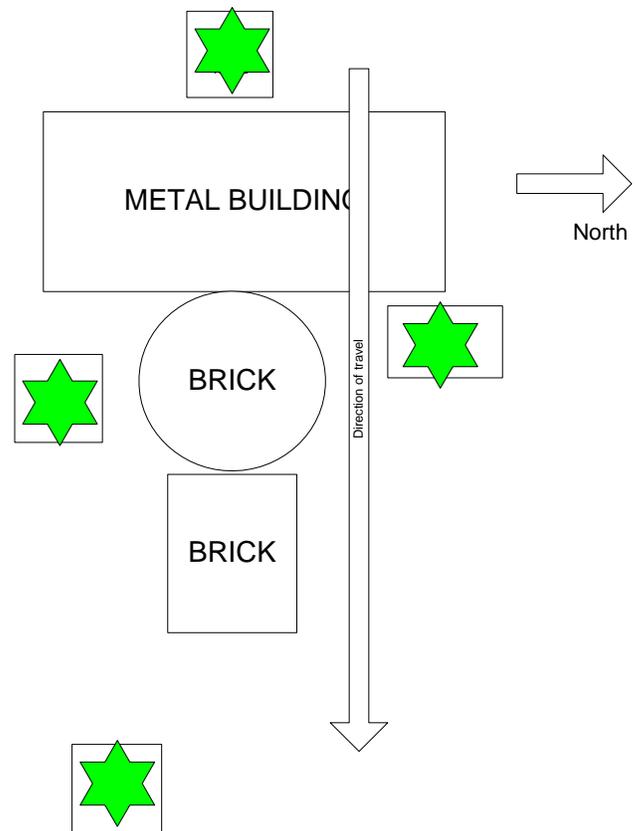


Figure 9 Indoor Test Pseudolite Layout

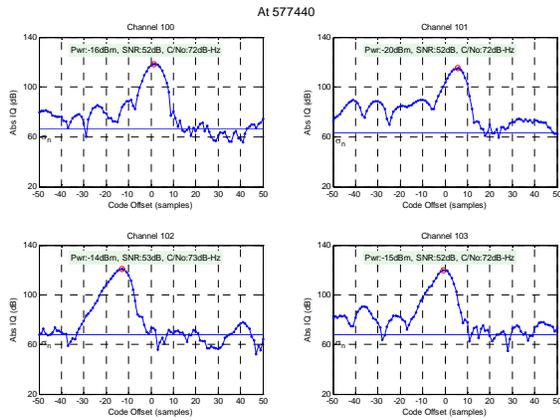


Figure 10 MLE Estimation of Shortest TOA Pseudorange (outdoor testing)

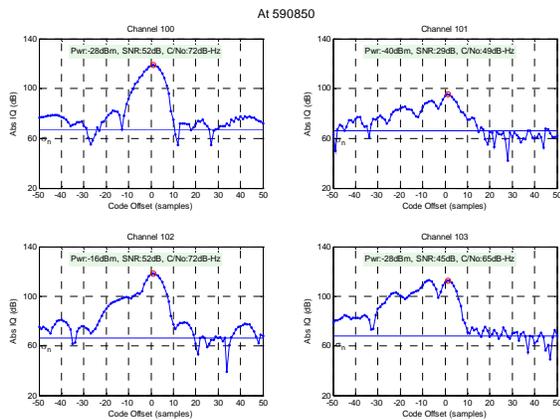


Figure 11 MLE Estimation of Shortest TOA Pseudorange (indoor testing)

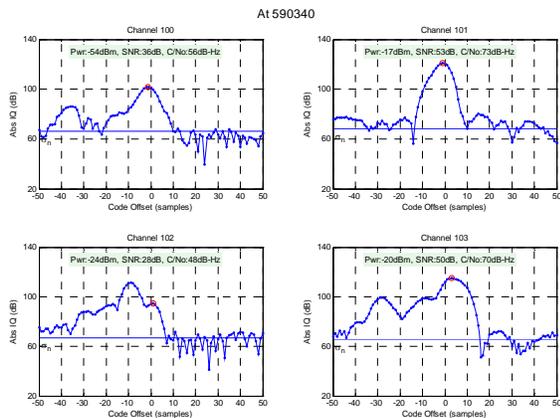


Figure 12 MLE Estimation of Shortest TOA Pseudorange (indoor testing)

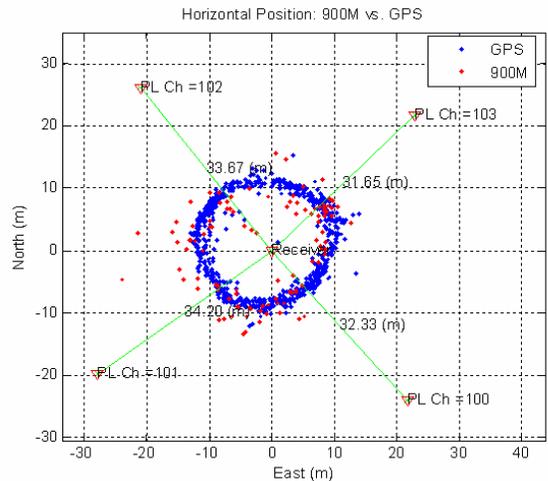


Figure 13 TOA Navigation Solution

TOA-AIDED NAVIGATION TEST DATA

The TOA observations were processed and compared with GPS as truth data to analyze the performance of a TOA navigation solution. The results are shown in Figure 13. The POSCOMM navigation solution computed from four TOA observations agreed with the GPS truth solution to within 5 meters except for a few excursions. Further improvements are being added to the design of the Master and Slave POSCOMM SDRs to improve on the accuracy of these initial results. In the next phase of the project we will also be integrating a MEMS IMU with the POSCOMM SDR to assist in filtering and tracking the TOA observations.

CONCLUSION

The POSCOMM units are being developed to provide a robust urban navigation solution that can provide precise positioning inside buildings where the GPS signals cannot be received. Military applications for this technology include improved military operations in urban terrain (MOUT). Commercial applications include firefighters as well as other first responders. Rex Systems Incorporated has expanded on the basic POSCOMM positioning capabilities provided by NAVSYS and are partnering with NAVSYS to develop the First Responder System shown in Figure 14. This project will give firefighters, police officers and emergency officials an electronic vest and eyepieces that will provide their commanders with their location and their vital signs, as well as real-time video of their surroundings.

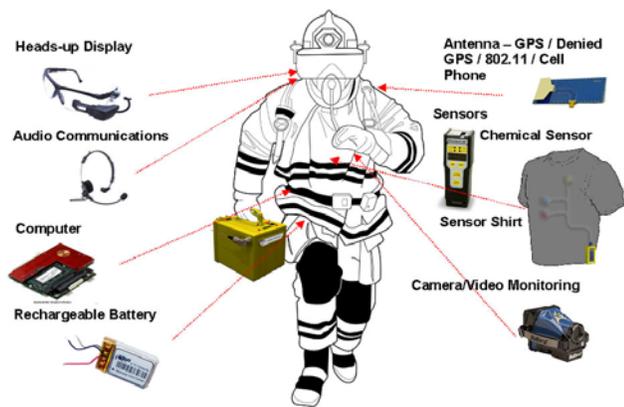


Figure 14 First Responder^[5]

The initial tracking and positioning results shown in this paper show the capability provided by the POSCOMM SDR to augment GPS signal tracking in the challenging urban environment with TOA aiding from an alternative RF source. This technology offers the capability to provide access to GPS-like quality of service both outside and inside buildings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- ⁴ “Performance Test Results of an Integrated GPS/MEMS Inertial Navigation Package,” A. Brown and Y. Lu, Proceedings of ION GNSS 2004, Long Beach, CA, Sept. 2004
- ⁵ First Responder System being developed by Rex Systems Incorporated