

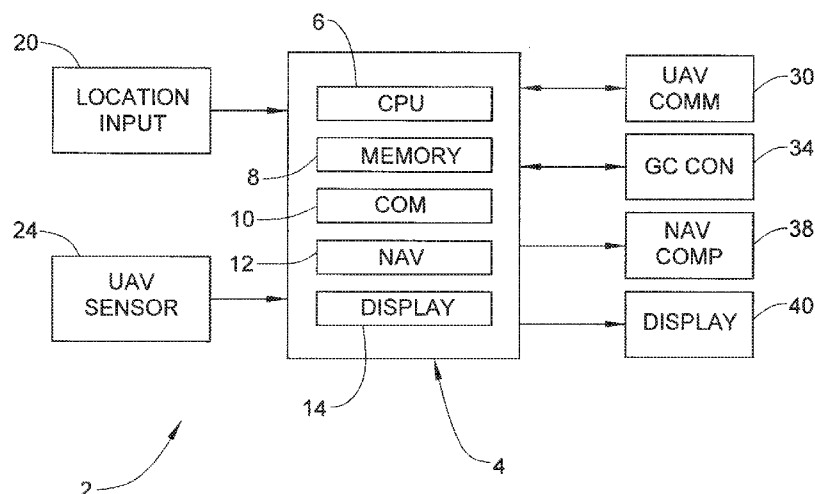


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- Declarations under Rule 4.17:**
— *as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a
patent (Rule 4.17(ii))*

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR TEAMING MANNED AND UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES

FIG. 1



(57) Abstract: A method of teaming a manned aerial vehicle and an unmanned aerial vehicle includes inputting to a controller in a manned vehicle coordinates for an area of interest, plotting a course to the area of interest in a navigation computer operatively connected to the controller, identifying one or more unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) near the area of interest, communicating to a ground controller rendezvous coordinates for one of the one or more UAVs, and negotiating a control hand-off of the one of the one or more UAVs from the ground controller to the controller.



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- *as to the applicant's entitlement to claim the priority of the earlier application (Rule 4.17(iii))*
- *of inventorship (Rule 4.17(iv))*
- Published:**
- *with international search report (Art. 21(3))*

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR TEAMING MANNED AND UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Exemplary embodiments pertain to the art of aerial vehicles and, more particularly, to a method and system for teaming manned and unmanned aerial vehicles.

[0002] Manned aerial vehicles, such as helicopters, are often times employed in unplanned missions to access an area of interest not readily available to ground vehicles. In some cases, the area of interest may represent a hostile environment such as a battle zone. In other cases, the areas may represent a busy or clustered environment such as a heavily populated urban zone or city. In either case, in most cases a nearby, safe landing zone must be identified to allow personnel to egress from the aerial vehicle and access the area.

[0003] For example, rescue personnel may need to egress from a helicopter to access and aid an individual(s) that may be suffering from a battle wound, a motor vehicle injury, or the like. In many cases, the aerial vehicle may need to circle the area of interest to locate a landing zone that is away from hostile fire or that provides sufficient room to allow for landing. Circling an area of interest to locate a desirable landing area could take time and therefore delay providing assistance to a person in the area of interest.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0004] Disclosed is a method of teaming a manned aerial vehicle and an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The method includes inputting, to a controller in a manned vehicle, coordinates for an area of interest (AOI), plotting a course to the area of interest in a navigation computer operatively connected to the controller, identifying one or more unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) near the area of interest, communicating to a ground controller rendezvous coordinates for one of the one or more UAVs, and negotiating a control hand-off of the one of the one or more UAVs from the ground controller to the controller.

[0005] In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments include guiding the UAV to the area of interest with the controller.

[0006] In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments include guiding the UAV about the area of interest with the controller.

[0007] In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments include controlling a camera on the UAV with the controller.

[0008] In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments include displaying images from the UAV in the manned aerial vehicle.

[0009] In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments include guiding the UAV back to the ground controller with the controller.

[0010] In addition to one or more of the features described above or below, or as an alternative, further embodiments include negotiating a control hand-off from the controller to the ground controller.

[0011] Also disclosed is a system in a manned aerial vehicle for teaming with an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The system includes at least one central processing unit (CPU) including a plurality of cores. The at least one CPU is interconnected functionally to a communication module, a navigation module, one or more display modules, and at least one memory device thereupon stores a set of instructions. The set of instructions, when executed by the at least one CPU, causes the system to input to the navigation module coordinates for an area of interest, plot a course to the area of interest in the controller, identify one or more unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) near the area of interest, communicate to a ground controller rendezvous coordinates for one of the one or more UAVs, and negotiate a control hand-off of the one of the one or more UAVs from the ground controller to the controller.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The following descriptions should not be considered limiting in any way. With reference to the accompanying drawings, like elements are numbered alike:

[0013] FIG. 1 is a block diagram depicting a system in a manned aerial vehicle for teaming with an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV); and

[0014] FIG. 2 is a flow diagram illustrating a method of teaming a manned aerial vehicle and a UAV.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0015] 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.

[0016] A manned/unmanned teaming (MUMT) control system, in accordance with an exemplary embodiment, is indicated generally at 2, in FIG. 1. MUMT control system 2 includes a controller 4 having a central processing unit (CPU) 6 and a memory 8. MUMT controller 4 may also include a communication module 10, a navigation module 12, and a display module 14. As will be discussed more fully below, MUMT controller 4 may be operatively connected to a location input system 20 and an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) detection system 24. MUMT control system 2 may also be operatively connected to a UAV communications system 30, a ground controller (GC) communications system 34, a navigational computer 38, and one or more displays 40. As will also be discussed more fully below, MUMT controller 4 provides an aircrew with rapid unplanned mission deployment and location intelligence. For example, the MUMT control system 2 may aid a medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) team in locating and retrieving a wounded soldier from a hostile environment.

[0017] FIG. 2 depicts a method 100 of teaming a manned aerial vehicle with a UAV through MUMT control system 2 in accordance with an aspect of an exemplary embodiment. An alert, such as a 9-line or MEDEVAC request may be received such as indicated in block 102. Upon receipt of a 9-line, location information, such as global positioning system (GPS) coordinates of an area of interest (AOI), are input to MUMT control system 2 through location input system 20 in block 104 and passed to navigational computer 38. In block 110, navigational computer 38 plots a course to the AOI. Navigation information and course may be plotted and set before, during and/or after lift-off of the manned aerial vehicle.

[0018] MUMT control system 2 locates one or more UAV assets (not shown) and corresponding ground controllers (GCs) (also not shown) near the AOI in block 114. A determination is made which of the UAV assets may be deployed to the AOI and MUMT control system 2 establishes a communication link with the associated GC in block 118. Rendezvous coordinates are calculated and passed to the GC in block 120. The rendezvous coordinates establish a hand-over point in which control of the UAV will pass from the GC to MUMT control system 2. In block 124 a control hand-off from the GC to MUMT control system 2 is negotiated and control of the UAV passes to the manned aerial vehicle in block 130.

[0019] In block 140, MUMT control system 2 directs the UAV to the AOI. The UAV passes images, captured by a camera, back to MUMT controller 4 in block 160. The images, still and/or video, are passed to one or more displays 40 through display module 14. At this point, crew members in the manned aerial vehicle may view details of the AOI prior to arrival. Approach headings and/or landing locations may be determined prior to arrival. Further, medical personnel may be able to view the source of the 9-line call and prepare to treat any injured at the AOI. Once landing zones have been identified, consideration can be made to guide the UAV back to a rendezvous with the GC in block 180. A hand-off is negotiated from MUMT control system 2 back to the GC in block 190. The UAV may be set back to the GC prior to landing at the AOI, or the UAV may continue to monitor the AOI until evacuation is complete.

[0020] At this point it should be understood that exemplary embodiments describe a manned/unmanned teaming (MUMT) controller that teams a manned aerial vehicle and an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) forming a mission synergy. The mission synergy may be advantageously employed during unplanned missions but could also be used during planned missions when a manned/unmanned aerial vehicle teaming could prove desirable. Further, while described as a MEDEVAC mission, it should be understood that the MUMT controller may be employed in a wide array of missions both planned and unplanned.

[0021] While the invention 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 invention. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the invention without departing from the essential scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended that the invention not be limited to the particular embodiment disclosed as the best mode contemplated for carrying out this invention, but that the invention will include all embodiments falling within the scope of the claims.

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A method of teaming a manned aerial vehicle and an unmanned aerial vehicle, the method comprising:

inputting to a controller in a manned vehicle coordinates for an area of interest;

plotting a course to the area of interest in a navigation computer operatively connected to the controller;

identifying one or more unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) near the area of interest;

communicating to a ground controller rendezvous coordinates for one of the one or more UAVs; and

negotiating a control hand-off of the one of the one or more UAVs from the ground controller to the controller.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising: guiding the UAV to the area of interest with the controller.

3. The method of claims 1 or 2, further comprising: guiding the UAV about the area of interest with the controller.

4. The method of claims 1 or 2, further comprising: controlling a camera on the UAV with the controller.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising: displaying images from the UAV in the manned aerial vehicle.

6. The method of claims 1 or 2, further comprising: guiding the UAV back to the ground controller with the controller.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising: negotiating a control hand-off from the controller to the ground controller.

8. A system in a manned aerial vehicle for teaming with an unmanned aerial vehicle, the system comprising:

at least one central processing unit (CPU) including a plurality of cores, the at least one CPU being interconnected functionally to:

a communication module;

a navigation module;

one or more display modules; and

at least one memory device thereupon stored a set of instructions which, when executed by the at least one CPU, causes the system to:

input to the navigation module coordinates for an area of interest;

plot a course to the area of interest in the controller;
identify one or more unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) near the area of interest;
communicate to a ground controller rendezvous coordinates for one of the one or more UAVs; and
negotiate a control hand-off of the one of the one or more UAVs from the ground controller to the controller.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the set of instructions which, when executed by the at least one CPU, causes the system to guide the UAV to the area of interest with the controller.

10. The system of claims 8 or 9, wherein the set of instructions which, when executed by the at least one CPU, causes the system to guide the UAV about the area of interest with the controller.

11. The system of claims 8 or 9, wherein the set of instructions which, when executed by the at least one CPU, causes the system to control a camera on the UAV with the controller.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the set of instructions which, when executed by the at least one CPU, causes the system to display images from the UAV in the manned aerial vehicle.

13. The system of claims 8 or 9, wherein the set of instructions which, when executed by the at least one CPU, causes the system to guide the UAV back to the ground controller with the controller.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the set of instructions which, when executed by the at least one CPU, causes the system to negotiate a control hand-off from the controller to the ground controller.

FIG. 1

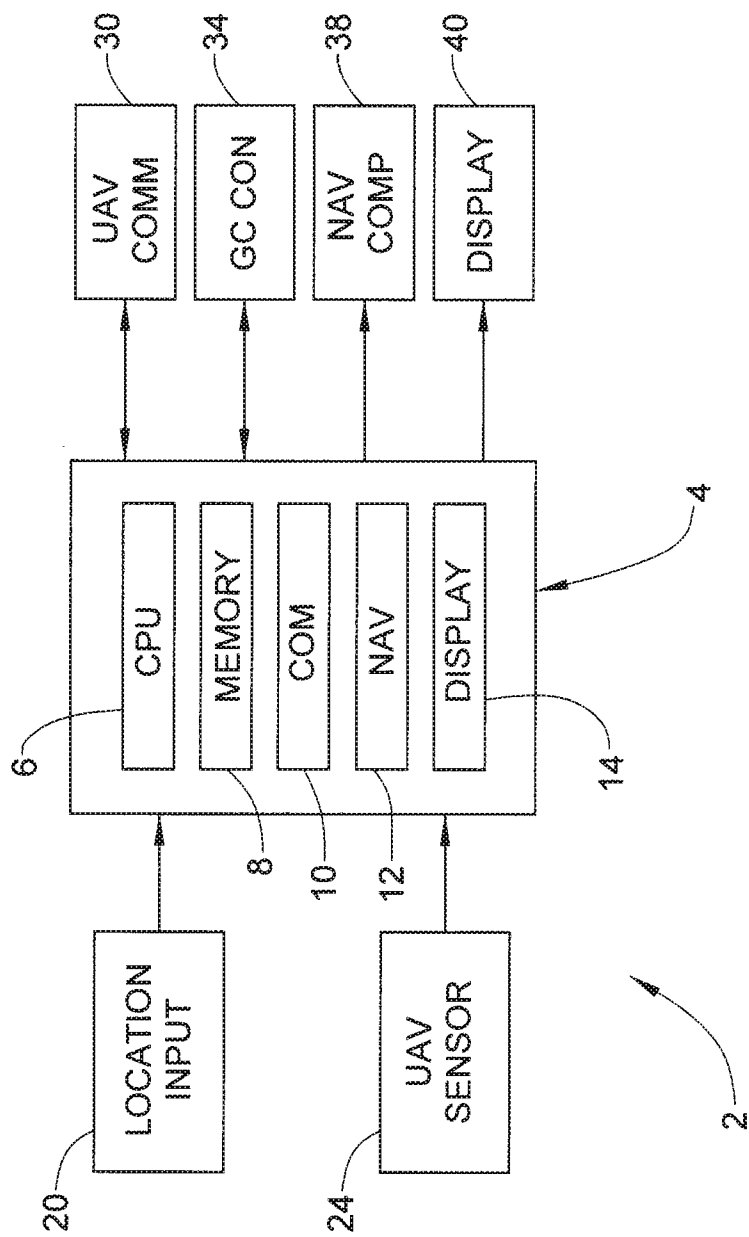
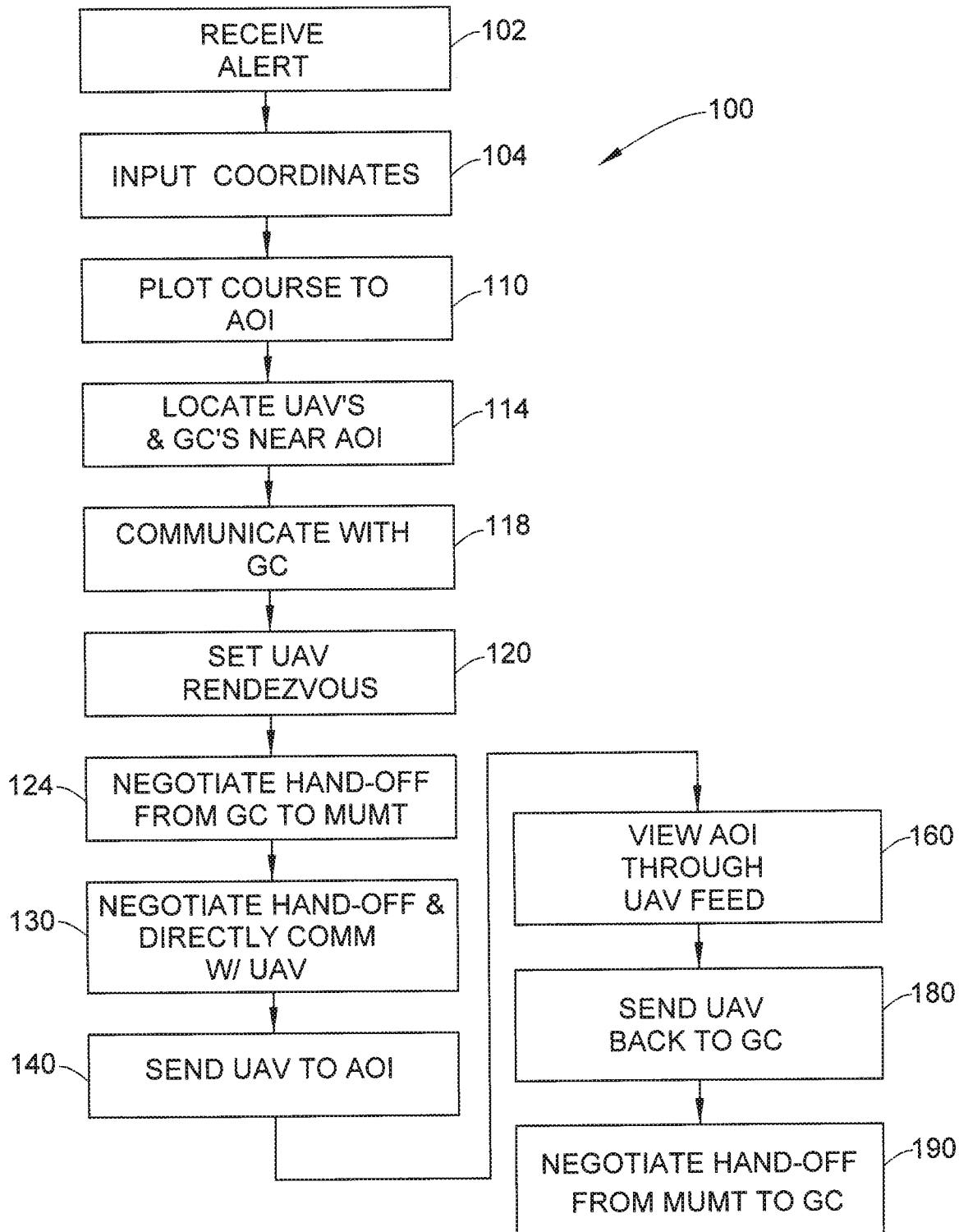


FIG. 2



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2015/065727

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC(8) - B64C 19/00 (2016.01) CPC - B64C 19/00 (2016.01) According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC(8) - B64C 19/00; G05D 1/00; G06F 17/00 (2016.01) CPC - B64C 19/00; G05D 1/0038, 1/0077, 1/0088 (2016.01) Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched USPC - 244/50; 701/3, 23 (Keyword delimited) Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) Orbit, Google Patents, Google Scholar, Google. Search terms used: controller, UAVs, manned, unmanned, ground controller.		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2013/0311009 A1 (HONEYWELL INTERNATIONAL INC.) 21 November 2013 (21.11.2013) entire document	1-14
A	US 8,543,265 B2 (EKHAGUERIE et al) 24 September 2013 (24.09.2013) entire document	1-14
A	US 2013/0345920 A1 (L3 HMMANNED SYSTEM, INC.) 26 December 2013 (26.12.2013) entire document	1-14
A	US 8,219,799 B1 (LUCCHESI et al) 10 July 2012 (10.07.2012) entire document	1-14
A	US 8,079,545 B2 (RENSHAW) 20 December 2011 (20.12.2011) entire document	1-14
A	US 2012/0261144 A1 (VIAN et al) 18 October 2012 (18.10.2012) entire document	1-14
☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.		
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Name and mailing address of the ISA/ Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 Facsimile No. 571-273-8300		Authorized officer Blaine R. Copenheaver PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300 PCT OSP: 571-272-7774