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(54) Title: LUBRICATION SYSTEM FOR GAS TURBINE ENGINES

(57) Abstract: A lubrication system is disclosed. The lubrication system may be used in conjunction with a gas turbine engine for generating power or lift. The lubrication system utilized a flow scheduling valve which reduces lubricant flow to at least one component based on an engine load. The lubrication system may further include a main pump which may be regulated by an engine speed. Thus, a lubrication system which provides a lubricant to engine components based on the load and speed of the engine is possible. The system may improve efficiency of the engine by reducing the power previously spent in churning excess lubricant by at least one engine component as well as reducing the energy used by a lubricant cooler in cooling the excess lubricant. The lubricant cooler size may also be minimized to reduce weight and air drag due to the reduced lubricant flow.



Lubrication System for Gas Turbine Engines

Field of the Disclosure

[0001] The present disclosure generally relates to gas turbine engines and, more specifically, to the lubrication systems of gas turbine engines.

Background of the Disclosure

[0002] Gas turbine engines of modern aircraft require a supply of oil to mechanical components such as, but not limited to, bearings, seals, and the like. The oil can be used as a lubricant, a coolant, or both for these components. Typical oil systems supply the oil to a manifold which then directs the oil to different engine components. In some systems, the oil then progresses to a tank for holding the oil before it is pumped back to the components to lubricate them again. In other systems, the oil is simply pumped back to the engine components and stored in a sump at each component. When the oil leaves the tank it is filtered to remove unwanted debris and de-aerated to remove any air absorbed by the oil while lubricating and cooling the components. An oil cooler also removes additional heat gained from the lubricated components. Commonly, the fuel for the engine is used as the coolant, as the fuel moves quickly in relation to the oil allowing the fuel to absorb a large amount of heat from the oil. Other lubrication systems may have the filter, de-aerator, or cooler arranged in the system such that the oil interacts with these components after leaving the engine components but before returning to the tank or sump.

[0003] In prior art oil systems, the quantity of oil pumped to the components is typically based on a high speed and high load condition, or is regulated based on the

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speed of the engine. However, either approach often results in an oversupply of oil, at least in low load conditions, such as during cruise or a high altitude climb, for example. This reduces the efficiency of the engine in that the excess oil is churned by the engine component, imparting extra heat to the lubricant. This lubricant then needs to be cooled before being used as a coolant or lubricant for the engine components again and thereby drawing power from the engine. Additionally, the bulky coolers needed for cooling the oil increase the weight of the engine, and in turn weight of the aircraft, thereby reducing fuel economy. In light of the foregoing, it can be seen that an oil system is needed that can provide oil in the quantity needed under the specific load and speed conditions the engine is experiencing.

Summary of the Disclosure

[0004] In accordance with one aspect of the disclosure, a lubrication system for a gas turbine engine is disclosed. The lubrication system may include a main pump which may move a lubricant through a main conduit from a lubricant tank to an engine component. The system may further include a flow scheduling valve positioned in the main conduit between the main pump and the engine component. The flow scheduling valve may limit lubricant flow to the engine component based on a calculated load of the gas turbine engine and redirect excess lubricant through a return conduit to the lubricant tank.

[0005] In a refinement, the lubrication system may further include a lubricant cooler connected to the main conduit.

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[0006] In a further refinement, the cooler may be positioned between the main pump and the engine component.

[0007] In another refinement, the lubrication system may further include a fixed flow metering orifice positioned in the main conduit between the main pump and the engine component. The metering orifice may allow lubricant to bypass the engine component via a bypass conduit and return to the lubricant tank.

[0008] In another refinement, the engine load is calculated by a processor from a combustor pressure.

[0009] In yet another refinement, the engine load is calculated by a processor from a fan speed measured by a speed sensor.

[0010] In yet another refinement, the main pump may be regulated by an engine speed.

[0011] In yet another refinement, the lubrication system may further include a manifold positioned in the main conduit between the main pump and the flow scheduling valve. The manifold may be connected to the engine component via a side conduit. The side conduit may allow the engine component to receive lubricant flow not reduced by the flow scheduling valve.

[0012] In accordance with another aspect of the disclosure, a gas turbine engine is disclosed. The gas turbine engine may have an engine component requiring lubrication and further include a compressor, a combustor, a turbine, a lubrication tank, a main conduit, and a flow scheduling valve positioned in a main conduit between the lubricant tank and the engine component. The valve may limit a flow of lubricant from the lubricant tank to the engine component based on a load on the

engine component. The valve may also redirect excess lubricant through a return conduit to the lubricant tank.

[0013] In a refinement, the lubrication system may further include a main pump connected to the main conduit. The main pump may pump lubricant from the lubricant tank to the engine component.

[0014] In a further refinement, the main pump may be driven by a drivetrain mechanically connected to an engine rotor.

[0015] In another refinement, the load on the engine component may be calculated by a processor based on a parameter measured by a pressure sensor and/or speed sensor.

[0016] In another refinement, the gas turbine engine may further include a lubricant cooler.

[0017] In yet another refinement, the gas turbine engine may further include a manifold positioned in the main conduit between the lubricant tank and the flow scheduling valve. The manifold may be connected to the engine component via a side conduit. The manifold may also allow the engine component to receive a flow of lubricant not reduced by the flow scheduling valve.

[0018] In accordance with yet another aspect of the disclosure, a method of lubricating a component of a gas turbine engine is disclosed. The method may include pumping a lubricant from a lubricant tank through a main conduit to an engine component by a main pump, calculating a load condition of the engine, and limiting the flow of the lubricant to the engine component by a flow scheduling valve. The flow limitation may be based on the calculated load condition of the engine.

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[0019] In a refinement, the method may further include directing excess lubricant from the flow scheduling valve through a return conduit to the lubricant tank by way of the flow scheduling valve.

[0020] In another refinement, the method may further include measuring an engine combustor pressure and calculating the load on the engine by a processor based on the combustor pressure.

[0021] In another refinement, the method may further include measuring a fan speed and calculating the load on the engine by a processor based on the fan speed.

[0022] In yet another refinement, the method may further include regulating lubricant flow from the main pump based on an operating speed of the gas turbine engine.

[0023] In yet another refinement, the method may further include redirecting lubricant from the main conduit through a bypass conduit to the lubricant tank.

[0024] These and other aspects and features of the present disclosure will be better understood in light of the following detailed description when read in light of the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0025] FIG. 1 is a side view of a gas turbine engine built in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0026] FIG. 2 is a flow diagram of an oil lubrication system built in accordance with the present disclosure.

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[0027] FIG. 3 is a flow diagram of an oil lubrication system built in accordance with the present disclosure and depicting a manifold and a fixed flow metering orifice.

[0028] FIG. 4 is a flow chart depicting a sample sequence of steps which may be undertaken in accordance with the method of the present disclosure.

[0029] It should be understood that the drawings are not necessarily to scale and that the disclosed embodiments are sometimes illustrated diagrammatically and in partial views. In certain instances, details which are not necessary for an understanding of this disclosure or which render other details difficult to perceive may have been omitted. It should be understood, of course, that this disclosure is not limited to the particular embodiments illustrated herein.

Detailed Description

[0030] Referring now to the drawings and with specific reference to FIG. 1, a gas turbine engine 100 is shown. The engine 100 may include a fan 101, a compressor section 102, a combustor 104, and a turbine section 106 axially aligned through the engine. The fan 101 may draw in ambient air which may then be compressed by the compressor section 102, having a low and high pressure compressor. The now compressed air may be used in the combustor 104 as a coolant and as a reactant in the combustion process. The exhaust from the combustion process may exit the combustor 104 and move through the turbine section 106, causing the turbine section 106 to rotate. The turbine section 106, having a high and low pressure turbine, includes a plurality of blades 107 connected to a pair of rotating shafts 108 and 109 which are concentrically mounted, shaft 109 around shaft 108, and are in turn

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connected to the fan 101 and compressor section 102. Accordingly, when the turbine section 106 rotates so do the fan 101 and the corresponding compressors of the compressor section 102. As the exhaust exits through the turbine section 106, new ambient air is brought in and compressed by the fan 101 and the compressor section 102 to continue the cycle. While the compressor and turbine sections have been described and illustrated as a dual-spool configuration, it should be understood that any configuration of compressors and turbines are possible, such as, but not limited to, single or triple spool compressors or turbines.

[0031] Referring now to FIG. 2, the engine 100 may have at least one component 110 which needs a lubricant 112, such as an oil, to reduce friction and act as a coolant. The engine component 110 may be an engine gearbox, a shaft bearing, or the rotating shafts 108 and 109, but other engine components are possible. The lubricant 112 may be moved to each engine component 110 through a lubrication system 114.

[0032] The lubrication system 114 may include a lubricant tank 116 or sump for storing the lubricant when not being used by the engine components 110. The lubrication system 114 may have a main pump 118 to draw a constant supply of lubricant 112 from the lubricant tank 116 through a main conduit 120. Alternatively, the main pump 118 may draw a varying supply of lubricant 112. The main pump 118 may be mechanically driven by a drivetrain 119 in mechanical connection with an engine rotor, such as the compressor section 102 as in FIG. 2, to regulate the flow of lubricant 112 according to an operational speed of the engine 100. Alternatively, the main pump 118 may be regulated by a processor 121 to regulate the flow of lubricant 112 according to an operational speed of the engine 100, as in FIG. 3.

[0033] The lubrication system 114 may have a main conduit 120 from the main pump 118 to the engine component 110. The main pump 118 may pump the lubricant 112 through the main conduit 120 to each component 110. A flow scheduling valve 124 is positioned in the main conduit 120 between the main pump 118 and the engine component 110, such as the engine gearbox.

[0034] The flow scheduling valve 124 may regulate the flow of lubricant 112 directly from the main pump 118 to at least one component 110 such that all such components 110 may receive a reduced flow of lubricant 112 based on a calculated engine load. The engine load may be calculated by the processor 121 from any suitable parameter such as, but not limited to, a combustor pressure, a fan speed, an engine horsepower, or the like. The combustor pressure may be measured by a pressure sensor 125 in the combustor 104 and the fan speed may be measured by a speed sensor 127, for example. As the engine load decreases, the processor 121 may direct the valve 124 to reduce the flow of lubricant 112 to the engine component 110 by an equivalent percentage.

[0035] The lubrication system 114 may also have a scavenge conduit 132 from each of the components 110 to the lubricant tank 116 for returning the used lubricant 112 to the lubricant tank 116. At least one scavenge pump 134, for pumping lubricant 112 from the components 110 to the lubricant tank 116, may be provided in connection with the scavenge conduit 132.

[0036] A lubricant cooler 138 may be positioned in the main conduit 120 or in the scavenge conduit 132 and may remove heat gained from the engine component 110 from the lubricant 112. The lubricant cooler 138 may operate by allowing

compressed air or fuel to draw heat from the lubricant 112 through at least one wall of the lubricant cooler 138 or by any other known method. Additionally, a lubricant filter (not shown) and/or a de-aerator (not shown) may also be positioned in the main conduit 120 or the scavenge conduit 132. The lubricant filter may remove unwanted debris from the lubricant 112, such as coked lubricant, for example. The de-aerator may separate unwanted air entrained in the lubricant 112 which may have been combined while the lubricant 112 acted on the engine component 110.

[0037] The lubrication system 114 described above may be further modified as in FIG. 3. Many elements are similar to the embodiment of FIG. 2, but it will be noted that a manifold 122 may be positioned between the main pump 118 and the flow scheduling valve 124 in the main conduit 120. The manifold may direct a portion of the lubricant 112 through a side conduit 123 to a first engine component 110. Thus, the engine component 110 may receive a flow of lubricant 112 not reduced by the flow scheduling valve 124. Additionally, the flow scheduling valve 124 may redirect any excess lubricant 112 through a return conduit 126 to the lubricant tank 116.

[0038] The main conduit 120 between the flow scheduling valve 124 and the engine component 110 may have a primary conduit 128 which accepts the full flow of lubricant 112 exiting from the flow scheduling valve 124. At least one secondary conduit 130 branching from the primary conduit 128 may also be provided. Each secondary conduit 130 may lead to another engine component 110 and be constructed to receive a pre-determined percentage of the total lubricant 112 from the flow scheduling valve 124.

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[0039] Further in FIG. 3, a fixed flow metering orifice 142 may be positioned in the main conduit 120 between the main pump 118 and the engine components 110. The metering orifice 142 may allow a constant percentage of the lubricant 112 to bypass the entire lubrication system 114, which may prevent the lubricant 112 from backing up in the main conduit 120. The metering orifice 142 may allow this excess lubricant 112 to return to the lubricant tank 116 by a bypass conduit 144. Alternatively, a regulating valve may also allow the lubricant to bypass the lubrication system in a similar manner.

[0040] In operation, it can therefore be seen that the lubrication system 114 is able to lubricate the gas turbine engine 100 according to the method depicted in FIG. 4. As depicted, at a first step 200 the main pump 118 pumps lubricant 112 from the lubricant tank 116 into the main conduit 120. The lubricant is passed through the main conduit 120 to a lubricant cooler to remove excess heat from the lubricant which may have been gained by previously acting on engine components 110, as in a step 202. The cooled lubricant is then passed to the flow scheduling valve 124, as shown by a step 204.

[0041] The pressure of the combustor 104 and speed of the fan 101 are then both measured by sensors in the engine 100 as shown by steps 206 and 208, respectively, and a load condition of the engine 100 is calculated from the measured values at a step 210. If the load condition is at a maximum as determined by a step 212, all of the lubricant 112 is allowed to pass through the flow scheduling valve 124 as shown at a step 214. However, if the load condition is less than maximum the lubricant flow is reduced by the valve 124 as at step 216. In such a case, excess lubricant 112 is then

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redirected back to the lubricant tank at a step 218, while a reduced amount of lubricant 112 is passed through the valve 124. In this embodiment, all lubricant 112 passing the valve 124 flows through the main conduit 120 to the engine component 110, where the lubricant 112 lubricates or removes heat from the component 110.

[0042] Whether the engine is operating at a maximum, minimum, or anywhere in between, after passing through the flow scheduling valve 124, the used lubricant 112 is pumped from the engine components 110 into a scavenge conduit 134 at a step 220. The lubricant 112 is returned through the scavenge conduit 134 to the lubricant tank 116 at a step 222. Once the lubricant 112 reaches the tank 116 it is once again pumped into the main conduit 120 by the main pump 118.

Industrial Applicability

[0043] From the foregoing, it can be seen that the lubrication system disclosed herein has industrial applicability in a variety of settings such as, but not limited to lubricating and cooling gas turbine engines. The lubrication system may increase the efficiency of the engine by reducing energy consumption which would heretofore have been spent on churning excess lubricant during low load conditions. The lubrication system may also increase the efficiency of the engine by reducing the necessary cooling of the lubricant and thus minimizing the size of the lubricant cooler. Minimizing the size of the lubricant cooler may reduce weight of the engine and/or air drag, further improving performance.

[0044] While the present disclosure has been in reference to a gas turbine engine, one skilled in the art will understand that the teachings herein can be used in other

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applications as well. It is therefore intended that the scope of the invention not be limited by the embodiments presented herein as the best mode for carrying out the invention, but that the invention will include all embodiments falling within the scope of the claims.

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Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A lubrication system for a gas turbine engine, the system comprising:

a main pump for moving a lubricant through a main conduit from a lubricant tank to an engine component; and

a flow scheduling valve positioned in the main conduit between the main pump and the engine component, the flow scheduling valve limiting flow of the lubricant to the engine component based on a calculated load condition of the gas turbine engine, and redirecting excess lubricant through a return conduit to the lubricant tank.
2. The lubrication system of claim 1, further comprising a lubricant cooler connected to a main conduit.
3. The lubrication system of claim 2, wherein the lubricant cooler is positioned between the main pump and the engine component.
4. The lubrication system of claim 1, further comprising a fixed flow metering orifice positioned in the main conduit between the main pump and the engine component, the metering orifice allowing lubricant to bypass the engine component via a bypass conduit and return to the lubricant tank.

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5. The lubrication system of claim 1, wherein the calculated engine load is calculated by a processor based on a combustor pressure.
6. The lubrication system of claim 1, wherein the engine load is calculated by a processor based on a fan speed measured by a speed sensor.
7. The lubrication system of claim 1, wherein operation of the main pump is regulated by an engine speed.
8. The lubrication system of claim 1, further comprising a manifold positioned in the main conduit between the main pump and the flow scheduling valve, the manifold being connected to the engine component via a side conduit to allow the engine component to receive a lubricant flow not reduced by the flow scheduling valve.
9. A gas turbine engine having an engine component requiring lubrication and comprising:
 - a compressor;
 - a combustor downstream of the compressor;
 - a turbine downstream of the combustor;
 - a lubrication tank;
 - a main conduit in fluid communication with the lubrication tank; and

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a flow scheduling valve positioned in a main conduit between the lubricant tank and the engine component requiring lubrication, the flow scheduling valve limiting flow of lubricant from the lubricant tank to the engine component based on a load on the engine component and redirecting excess lubricant through a return conduit to the lubricant tank.

10. The gas turbine engine of claim 9, further comprising a main pump connected to the main conduit and adapted to pump the lubricant from the lubricant tank to the engine component.
11. The gas turbine engine of claim 10, wherein operation of the main pump is driven by a drivetrain mechanically connected to an engine rotor.
12. The gas turbine engine of claim 9, wherein the load on the engine component is calculated by a processor based on a parameter measured by one of a pressure sensor and speed sensor.
13. The gas turbine engine of claim 9, further comprising a lubricant cooler.
14. The gas turbine engine of claim 9, further comprising a manifold positioned in the main conduit between the lubricant tank and the flow scheduling valve and connected to the engine component via a side conduit, the manifold allowing the engine component to receive a flow of lubricant not reduced by the flow scheduling valve.
15. A method of lubricating a component of a gas turbine engine, comprising:

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pumping a lubricant from a lubricant tank through a main conduit to an engine component by a main pump;

calculating a load condition of the engine; and

limiting the flow of the lubricant to the engine component with a flow scheduling valve, the limiting of the flow being based on a calculated load condition of the engine.

16. The method of claim 14, further comprising directing excess lubricant from the flow scheduling valve through a return conduit to the lubricant tank by way of the flow scheduling valve.
17. The method of claim 14, further comprising measuring an engine combustor pressure and calculating the load on the engine by a processor based on the measured combustor pressure.
18. The method of claim 14, further comprising measuring an engine fan speed and calculating the load on the engine by a processor based on the measured fan speed.
19. The method of claim 14, further comprising regulating the lubricant flow from the main pump based on an operating speed of the gas turbine engine.
20. The method of claim 14, further comprising redirecting lubricant from the main conduit through a bypass conduit to the lubricant tank.

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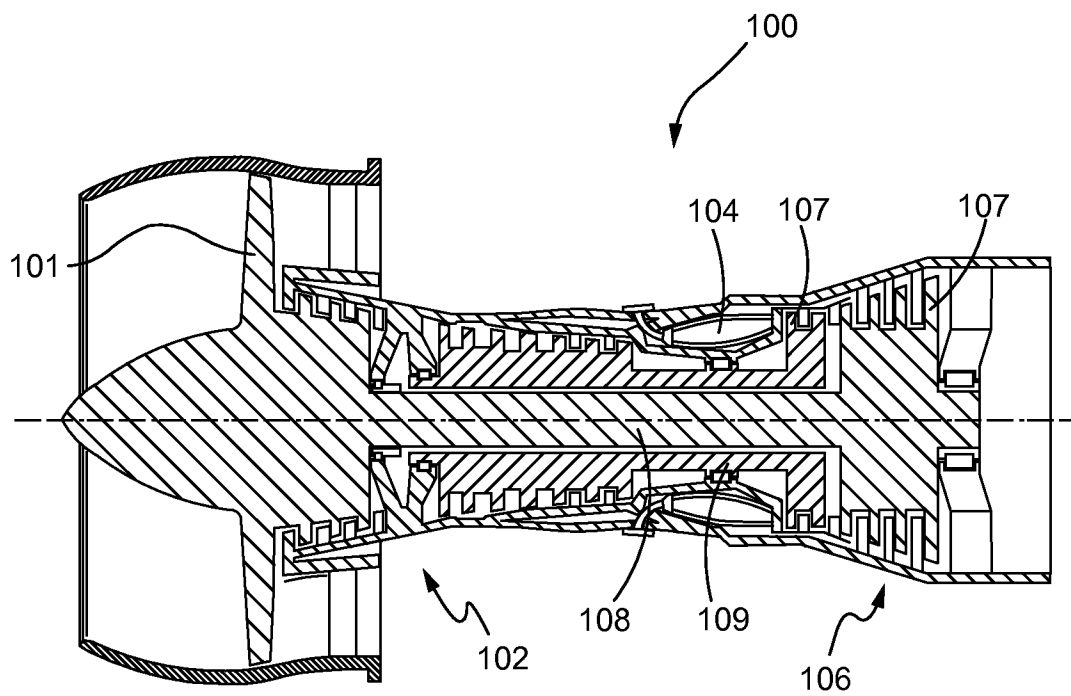
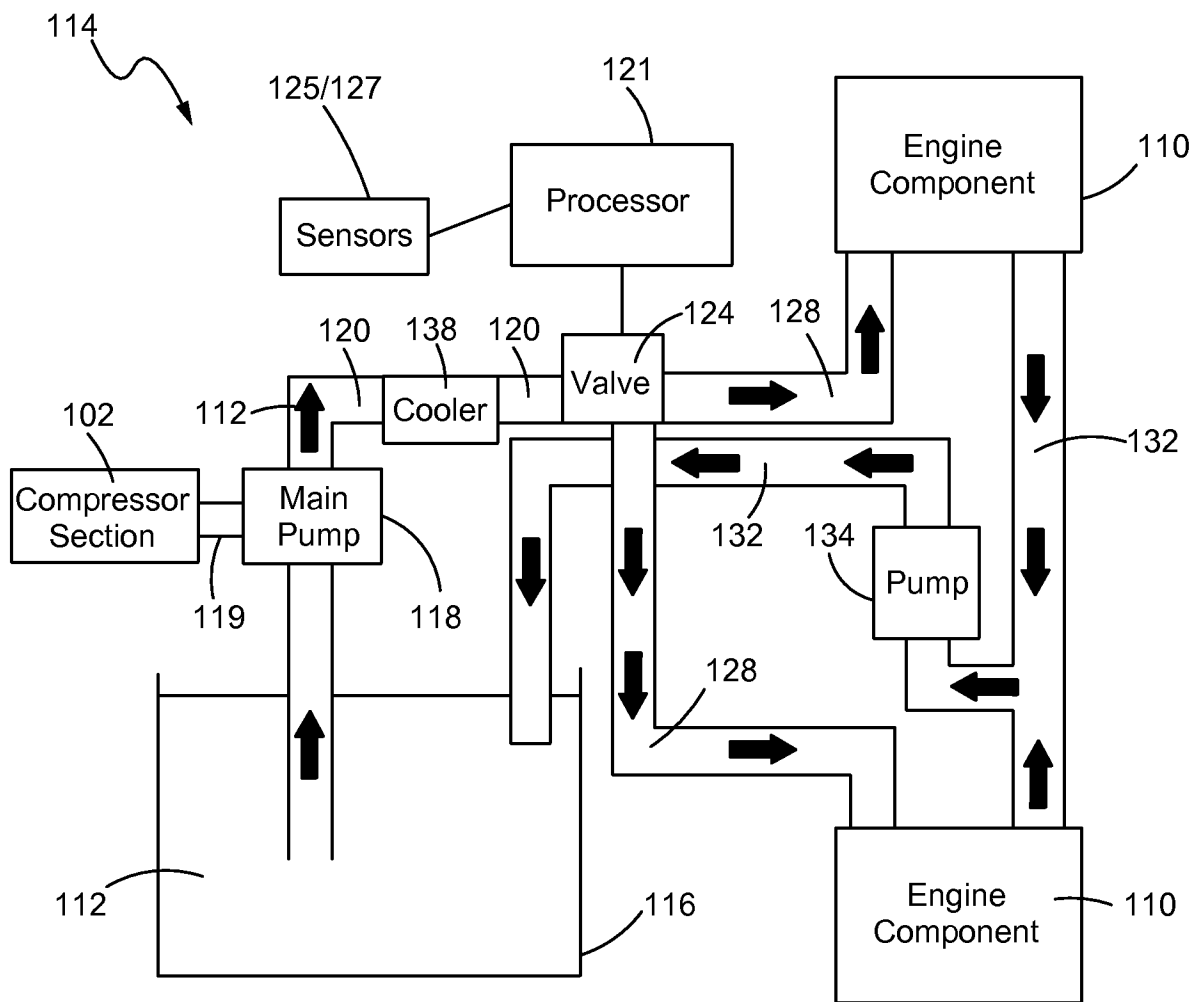
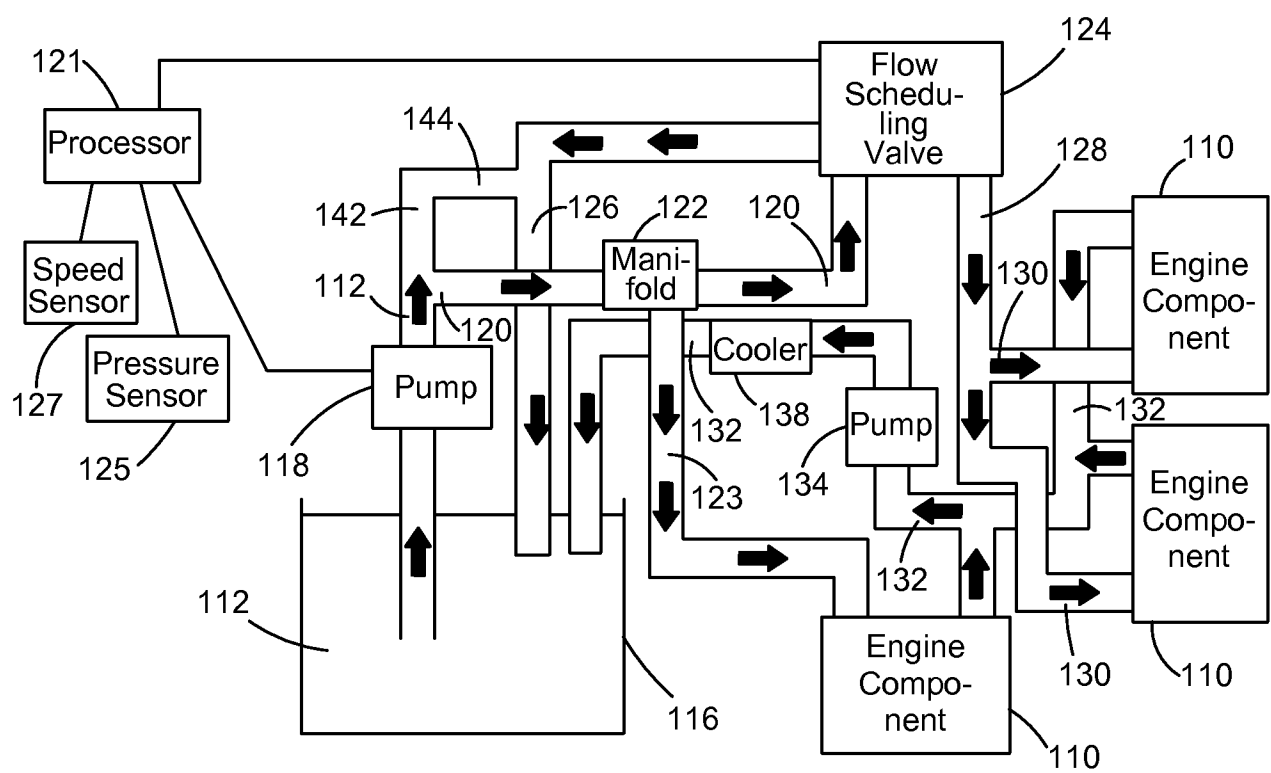


FIG. 1

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**FIG. 2**

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**FIG. 3**

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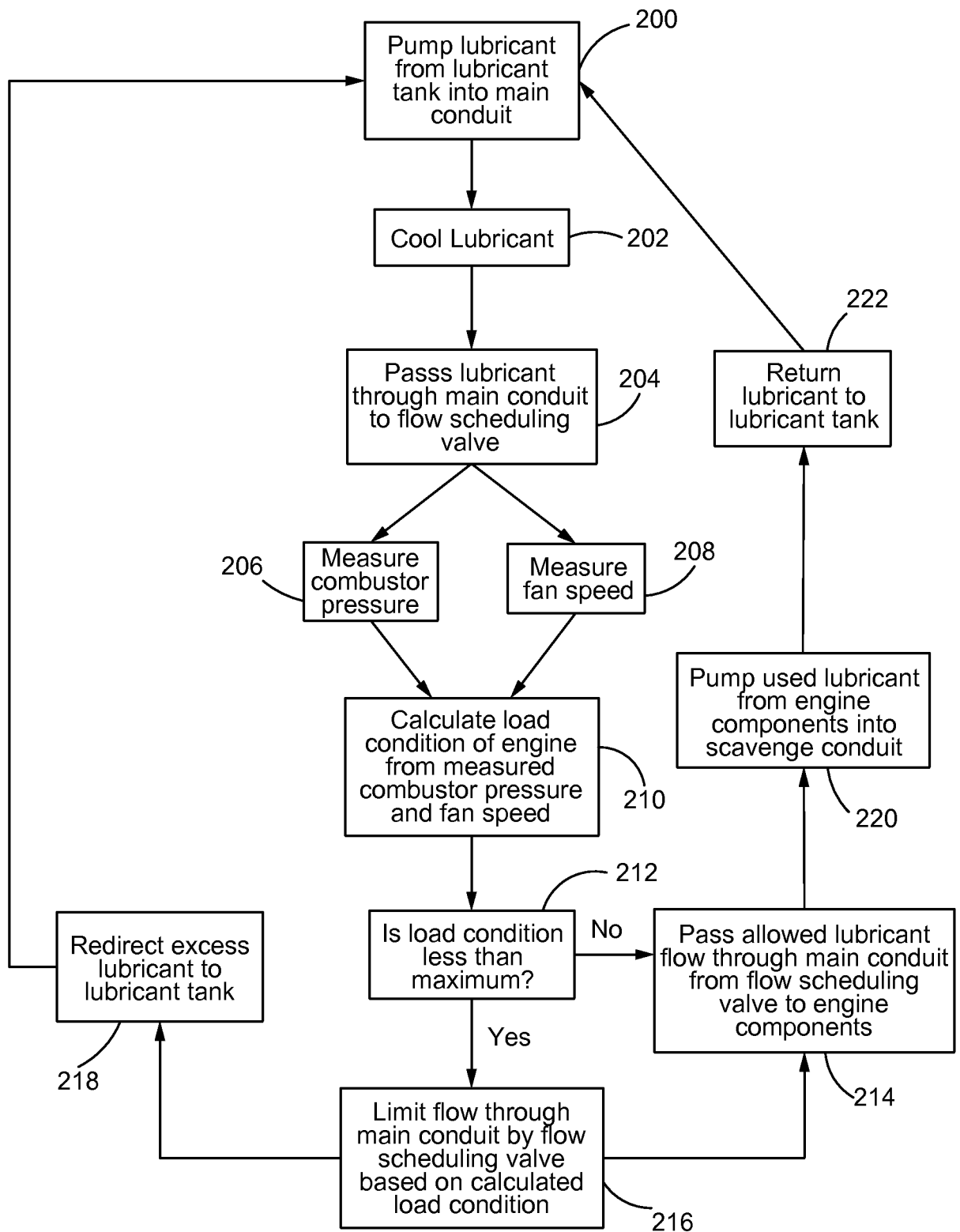


FIG. 4