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(54) **SHAPE MEMORY ALLOY ACTUATED
ADAPTIVE EXHAUST NOZZLE FOR JET
ENGINE**

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B63H 11/10 (2006.01)

B05B 12/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **60/771**; 60/770; 239/265.19;
239/265.33

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 60/771,
60/770, 232, 228; 239/265.19, 265.33
See application file for complete search history.

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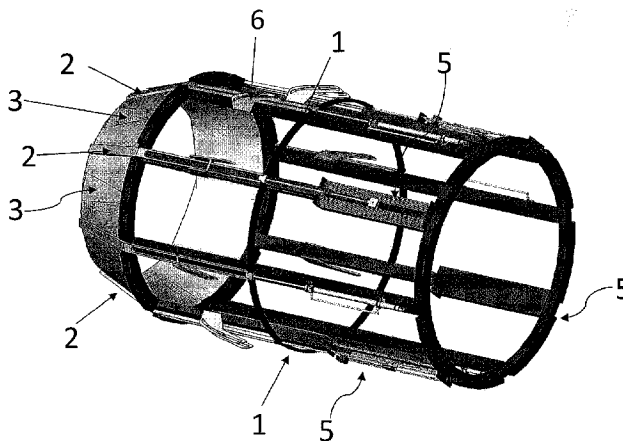
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(57)

ABSTRACT

The proposed adaptive exhaust nozzle features an innovative
use of the shape memory alloy (SMA) actuators for actively
control of the opening area of the exhaust nozzle for jet
engines. The SMA actuators remotely control the opening
area of the exhaust nozzle through a set of mechanism. An
important advantage of using SMA actuators is the reduction
of weight of the actuator system for variable area exhaust
nozzle. Another advantage is that the SMA actuator can be
activated using the heat from the exhaust and eliminate the
need of other energy source. A prototype has been designed
and fabricated. The functionality of the proposed SMA actu-
ated adaptive exhaust nozzle is verified in the open-loop tests.

5 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



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Song, et al., "Design and control of a proof-of-concept active jet engine . . .", 1st Int. Wkshp on Adv. Smart Mat. & Smart Struc. Tech., Hawaii (2004).

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Fig. 1

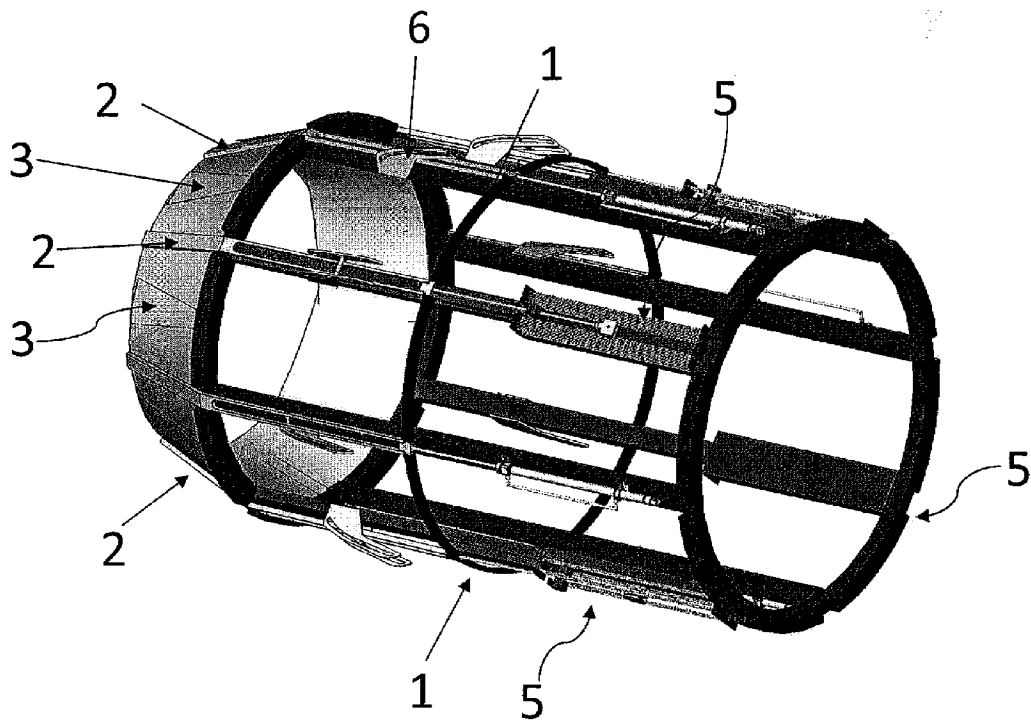


Fig. 2

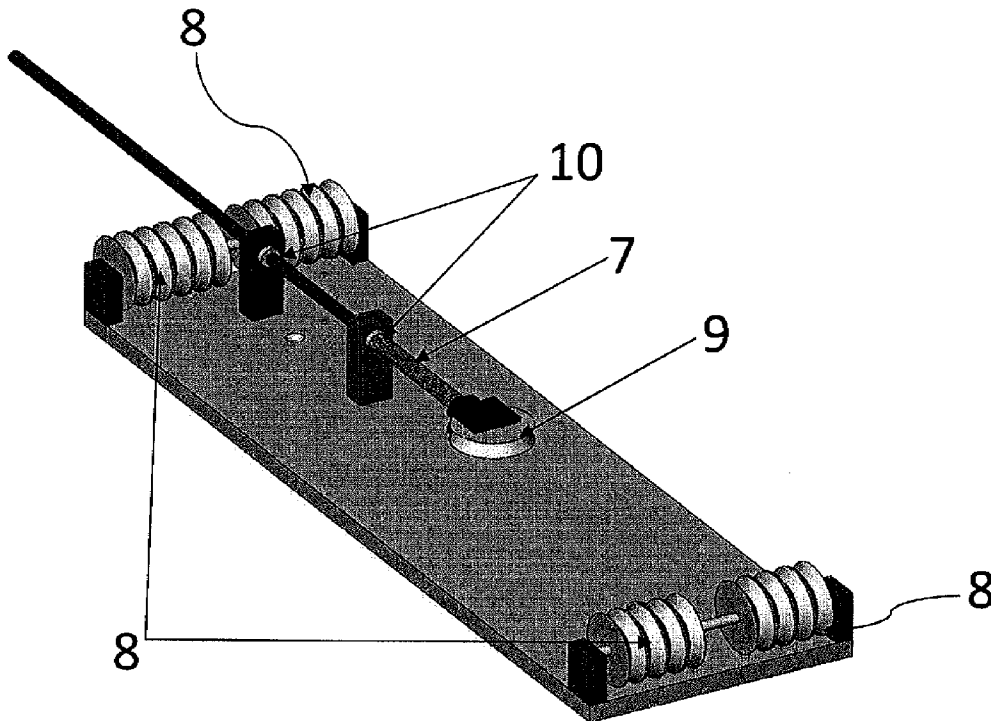


Fig. 3

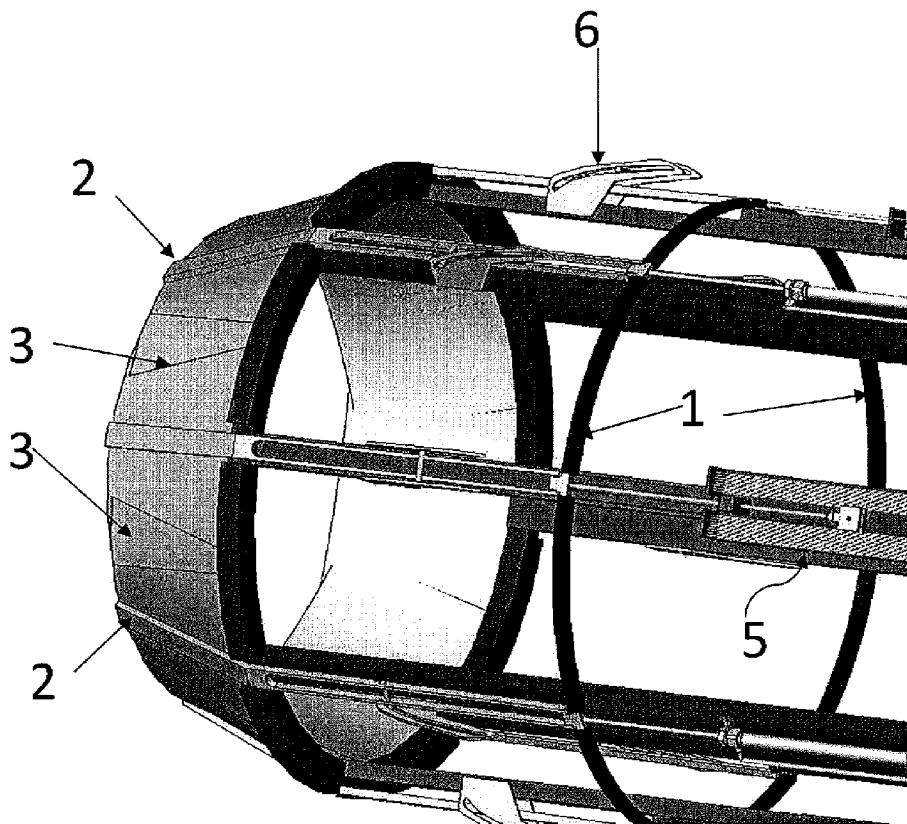


Fig. 4

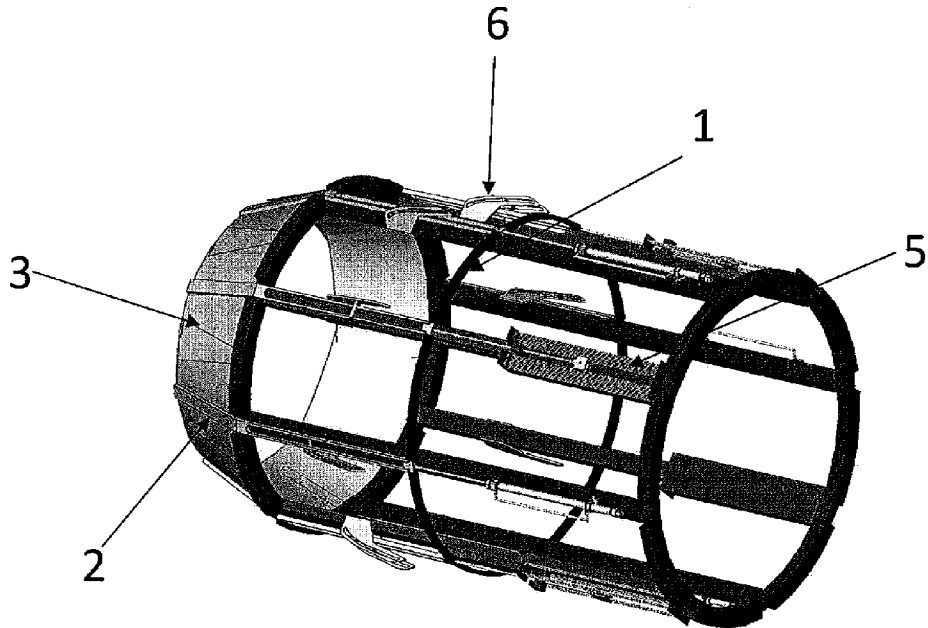


Fig. 5

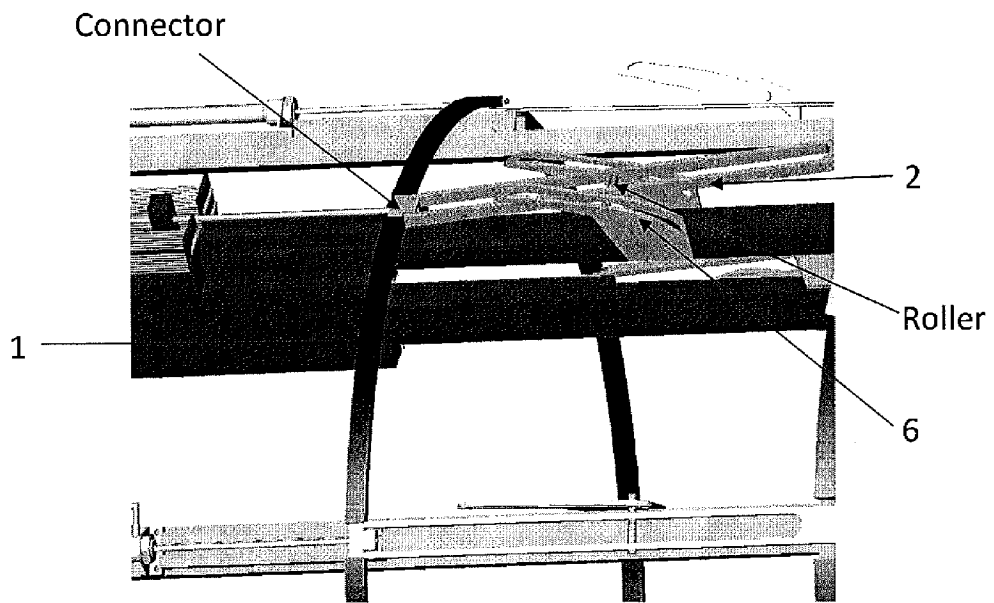
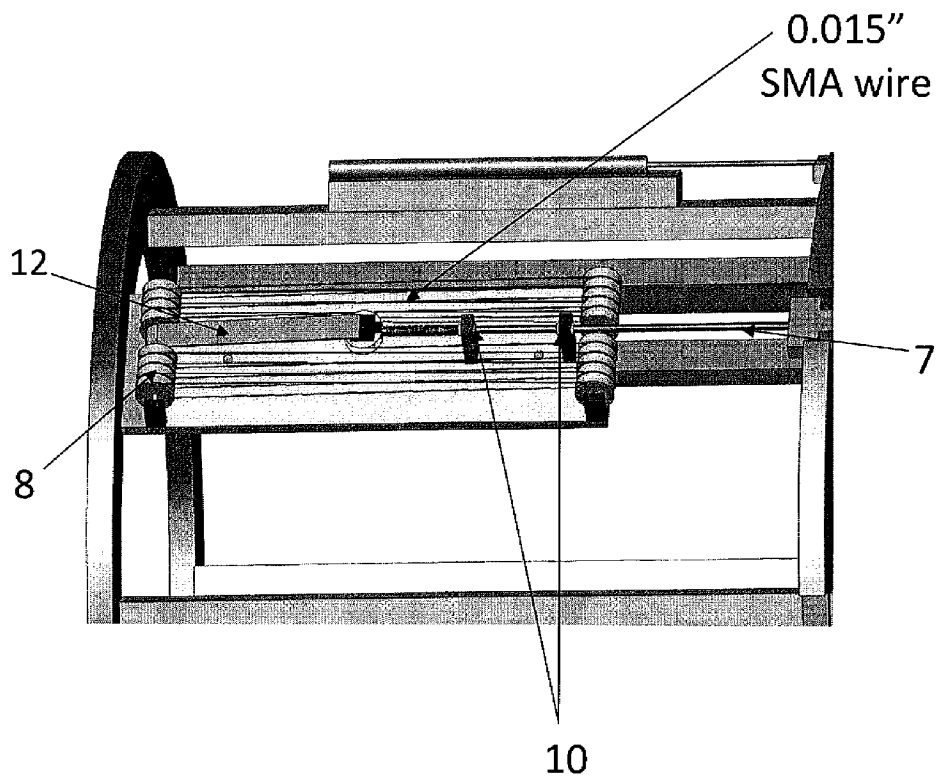


Fig. 6



SHAPE MEMORY ALLOY ACTUATED ADAPTIVE EXHAUST NOZZLE FOR JET ENGINE

This invention was made in part with government support under 1-5-53207 awarded by the NASA Glenn Research Center, Cleveland, Ohio.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the use of shape memory alloy (SMA) actuator for active control of the opening area of the exhaust nozzle for jet engines. This invention particularly relates to SMA actuators that remotely control the opening area of the exhaust nozzle through a particular mechanism.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BACKGROUND ART

Exhaust nozzle of a gas turbine engine for an aircraft exerts a considerable influence on the engine performance. In particular, the opening area of the nozzle plays an important role in engine efficiency. To improve the engine efficiency over a wider range of operation conditions, variable area exhaust nozzle is desired. Conventionally, adjustment of the opening area of the exhaust nozzle is attained by using electric motors or hydraulic actuators. Shape memory alloys have been used to simplify actuation of variable area exhaust nozzles. U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,318,070 B1 and 6,718,752 B2 are examples of such, and each is incorporated herein for all disclosed.

DESCRIPTION OF FIGURES AND TABLES

The invention is more particularly described in the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is an illustration showing the design of the adaptive exhaust nozzle model.

FIG. 2 gives a detail of design of the SMA actuator that is isolated from the whole system.

FIG. 3 shows the transmission mechanism consisting of a sliding ring, 8 supporting bars and 8 moving guides.

FIG. 4 shows another view of the exhaust nozzle.

FIG. 5 shows detail of the variable nozzle mechanism.

FIG. 6 shows another view of the SMA actuators.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invented SMA actuated adaptive exhaust nozzle utilizes improved and simplified SMA actuators in control of opening area of an exhaust nozzle to reduce the weight of the actuation system. The SMA actuator uses the Nickel-Titanium SMA wire winding through groups of pulleys to obtain required actuation displacement. A difficulty in using SMA actuators is that the temperature near the exhaust nozzle is far higher than the transformation temperature of an SMA actuator. The SMA actuators of the present invention remotely control the nozzle leaves through a specific mechanism, which involves a sliding ring, supporting bars and guide trails. Upon SMA actuation, the adjustment of the opening area of the exhaust nozzle can be achieved. The design eliminates chattering phenomenon, guarantees stability of the closed loop system, and achieves stable and precise regulation, eliminating problems in the prior art.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

As shown in FIG. 1, the SMA actuated adaptive exhaust nozzle model is comprised of four major components: a slid-

ing ring 1, eight supporting bars 2 with overlapping leaves 3, eight moving guides 6 and four SMA actuators 5 (as shown in FIG. 2).

To avoid the higher temperature region in the exhaust nozzle, the four SMA actuators 5 have to remotely control the eight overlapped curved leaves 3, which constitute the wall of the nozzle in a concentric configuration. Eight supporting bars 2 are used to link the sliding ring 1 to the leaves. As shown in FIG. 3, the eight supporting bars 2 are evenly distributed along the circumference of the sliding ring 1. One end of each supporting bar 2 is hinged on the sliding ring 1, and the other is attached to a leaf 3. The purpose of the sliding ring 1 is to ensure the simultaneous movement of the supporting bars 2. When the sliding ring 1 moves upon the SMA actuation, the supporting bars 2 move along the moving guides 6 with a desired trajectory so that the opening area of the exhaust nozzle is adjusted accordingly.

The four SMA actuators 5 are remotely connected to the sliding ring 1 through four connecting rods 7 to provide actuation. For each SMA actuator, a Nitinol SMA wire is wound through fixed pulleys 8 and a moveable pulley 9. There are a total of four moveable pulleys 9. The movement of these four pulleys 9 will result in the motion of the slide ring 1 via the four connecting rods 7. To ensure accurate movement of the connecting rod 7, each one of them is supported by two coaxial linear bearings 10. To pretension the SMA wire 11 and to provide returning force, a constant force coil spring 12 is also connected to the moveable pulley. A closed-up view of an SMA actuator is shown in FIG. 2. and FIG. 6.

When the four SMA actuators 5 contract upon heating by using electrical current or redirecting heat air from exhaust, the moveable pulleys 9 and the connecting rods 7 will push the sliding ring 1. The opening area of the nozzle will consequently be reduced as the supporting bars move along the moving guides with a desired trajectory. As the applied electrical current is cut off and the SMA wire becomes cool, the coil springs 12 pull back the moveable pulley 9 along with the connecting rod 7, sliding ring 1 and the supporting bars 2. As a result, the exhaust nozzle opens. A manually controlled open-loop testing achieved an area reduction of more than 40% for the exhaust nozzle.

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- The following documents are incorporated by reference into this application:
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All references cited herein are incorporated by reference. While this invention has been described fully and completely, it should be understood that, within the scope of the appended claims, the invention could be practiced otherwise than specifically described. Although the invention has been disclosed with reference to its preferred embodiments, from reading this description those of skill in the art can appreciate changes and modifications that may be made which do not depart from the scope and spirit of the invention as described above and claimed hereafter.

The invention claimed is:

1. An assembly utilizing shape memory alloy actuators to control the opening area of an adaptive exhaust nozzle for jet engines, comprising a plurality of moveable leaves for movement from a first open nozzle position to a second constricted nozzle position, a linkage attached to each of said leaves connected to a synchronizing element, a plurality of shape memory actuators attached to said synchronizing element, and controlled actuation signals for said shape memory alloy actuators wherein actuation signals trigger said actuators to act upon said synchronizing element to coordinate the simul-

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taneous movement of said linkages and said leaves selectively from open to closed and from closed to open wherein each of said shape memory actuators comprises wire of shape memory alloy running through an arrangement of a moveable pulley and a set of fixed pulleys, a connecting rod attached to each moveable pulley on a first end and to said synchronizing element on said second end, and a spring attached to said moveable pulley to bias said assembly toward an open nozzle configuration.

2. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said synchronizing element comprises a sliding ring.

3. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said linkage comprises a support attached to each of said leaves, a guide for each of said supporting bars, wherein each guide is attached to said synchronizing element.

4. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said actuation signals comprise temperature differentials.

5. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said actuation signals comprise electrical signals.

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