### Title

**ACOUSTIC PROPERTIES OF SONAR DOME MATERIALS**

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ACOUSTIC PROPERTIES OF SONAR DOME MATERIALS

by

Dr. Jacques Yves Guigné¹, Dr. Jeff P. Szabo² and Mr. Quanshun Liu¹

1. Guigné International Ltd., 82 St. Thomas Line, Paradise, Newfoundland, Canada A1L 1C1
2. Defense Research Establishment Atlantic (DREA), Dockyard Laboratory, HMC Dockyard, Bldg D-17, FMO Halifax, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3K 2X0

ABSTRACT

As part of a development project sponsored by DRDM and DMCS on Spectra Fiber composite sonar domes, DREA has been tasked to provide data on the acoustic properties of glass and Spectra Fiber based composite panels in a 2 - 10 kHz range. The low frequency and high level of accuracy desired presented a number of challenges for carrying out insertion loss measurements. This paper introduces the use of parametric arrays to generate broad frequency responses off sonar dome materials. Particular attention is placed on the generation of low kHz signals in a laboratory limited tank setting and the resultant measurements produced.

INTRODUCTION

The two main functions of a sonar dome are to protect hull-mounted sonar equipment from physical damage as a ship moves through the water, and to displace the turbulent boundary layer away from the ship hull to reduce flow noise. Ideally, the dome should have a minimal effect on the propagation of sound from the target to the ship and from the ship to the target. This may be achieved by using materials for dome construction that have a low insertion loss, IL, defined as the reduction in sound pressure resulting from insertion of a test panel between a source and a receiver. Unfortunately, materials which have low insertion losses, such as elastomers, are usually not stiff enough to be self-supporting and do not have the required strength for sonar domes. One solution is to use fibre-reinforced plastic (FRP) composite materials with high strength-to-weight ratios, which enable thin panels with relatively low insertion loss to be used. In addition to low insertion loss, FRPs may offer better noise characteristics than metallic structures due to higher internal damping, since the dome itself may contribute to the noise level via flow excitation at resonances within the structure.

This paper focuses on the acoustic characterization of several candidate materials being considered as sonar dome construction materials. In addition to metallic-based panels and glass-reinforced materials, composites reinforced with Spectra Fiber were examined. Spectra Fiber, from Allied Signal Corporation, is polyethylene prepared in such a manner that it is highly crystalline, with
the crystals aligned along the fiber axis. Examination of the acoustic properties of Spectra Fiber panels is part of a larger effort to develop Spectra Fiber sonar domes, sponsored by Chief Research and Development and Director Maritime Combat Systems.

**COMPOSITE PANELS**

Spectra Fiber composite panels were prepared by Advanced Composite Technology (ACT), Sparks, Nevada using two different resin systems and two different weaves, Table 1. The resin systems used for the prepregs were based either on a cyanate ester (BTCY-3) or an epoxy, Shell EPON 828 (BT250F). The plasma treated Spectra Fiber reinforcing fibres were configured in either a 985-8H satin weave or a 988-4H satin weave, as shown in Table 1. In each case, the panels contained 50% ± 2% by weight resin, and were 1 m x 1 m x 10 mm in size.

Glass reinforced composite panels were fabricated by ACT using the same resin systems (cyanate and epoxy) as the Spectra Fiber panels, using an 8H satin weave.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION</th>
<th>Weave</th>
<th>DIMENSION (MM)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spectra Fiber Composite Panels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>985PT/BT250E (Epoxy-based)</td>
<td>8H</td>
<td>1005 x 1005 x 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>988PT/BT250E (Epoxy-based)</td>
<td>4H</td>
<td>1005 x 1005 x 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>985PT/BTCY-3 (Cyanate-based)</td>
<td>8H</td>
<td>1005 x 1005 x 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>988PT/BTCY-3 (Cyanate-based)</td>
<td>4H</td>
<td>1005 x 1005 x 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRP Panels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7H5100LN016/001 (Epoxy-based)</td>
<td>8H</td>
<td>1020 x 1080 x 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7H5100LN016/002 (Cyanate-based)</td>
<td>8H</td>
<td>1010 x 1255 x 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Calibration Panel</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stainless Steel Plate</td>
<td></td>
<td>1219 x 1168 x 0.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXPERIMENTAL FACILITY

This investigation required acoustic measurements of sound, propagated at normal incidence to a panel immersed in water. The use of a parametric source was strategic to the study. With conventional sources, measurements on panels of limited size are affected by diffraction from the edges of the test panels. At low frequency ranges, approaching 1 kHz, diffraction is most pronounced, making it difficult to resolve the diffracted signal from the main transmitted signal. To minimize such effects, the energy at the edge must be reduced. With conventional acoustic transmission, it is very difficult to generate small spot insonification at low frequencies; directionality is a function dictated by frequency.

In view of this, a parametric source was designed and developed with a small beam cross-section. The basic principles of a parametric source can be found in Westervelt (1963), Clay and Medwin (1977), Berkley et al. (1979) and Humphrey (1985). Briefly, when two intense sound waves of slightly different frequencies are generated coaxially in water, they interact to produce secondary signals that contain a band of frequencies. These include both the sum and difference frequencies. Of particular importance are the low difference frequency signals generated. These signals possess many attractive attributes suited for material testing which include narrow beamwidth, no sidelobes, and broadband capabilities even at the lower kHz range. Therefore, material testing in a small tank is possible with parametric arrays since diffraction and sidelobe interference problems are made negligible. In addition, the broad bandwidth inherent in the parametric source allows material testing over a wide range of frequencies to be executed with a single small transducer.

In the experiments, a process called "self-demodulation" was used to create the secondary signals of the parametric array. In this method, a pulse-modulated carrier wave is radiated from the acoustic transducer with nonlinear interactions occurring in the water between all the frequencies radiated to yield a band of secondary frequencies.

The source for the study involved a wideband transducer resonant at 500 kHz, driven by a modulated carrier waveform obtained from the transmitting electronics. A short carrier pulse with a smooth envelope was transmitted. A "raised cosine bell" was generated as the modulating function. For our application, the parametric source was deliberately truncated within the Rayleigh distance by placing a "low-pass acoustic filter" across the primary beam at one metre from the transducer. This approach attenuated the higher frequency primary waves while transmitting the low-frequency secondary waves without significant loss. The truncator design was not a trivial task, but involved careful matching of characteristics of the primary beam to minimize spreading of the secondary wave after termination. Distances between hydrophones and panels had to be considered in the design of the truncator panel. A plate made of 20 gauge stainless steel was used as truncator.

Newfoundland's Marine Institute's flume laboratory was the site for the tests. Its dimensions consisted of a large, rectangular concrete windowed tank; 21.5 metres long, 8 metres wide and 4 metres deep, ideal for low frequency material evaluation.
The general geometry used in the study is shown in Figure 1A with a time history example of a signal received after the test panel exhibited in Figure 1B.

**MEASUREMENTS**

The setup for making the loss measurements is shown in Figure 2. A reference signal was first acquired; the transmitted signal was then recorded with the test panel placed between the truncator and hydrophone. The echo reduction measurements utilized a similar experimental setting (see Figure 3). Once a reference signal was recorded without the panel being present, then reflected signals could be captured with the same hydrophone placed in front of the test panel.

The insertion loss of a panel was defined in terms of the complex incident sound pressure and complex transmitted sound pressure:

\[
IL = 20 \log_{10} \left| \frac{\text{incident sound pressure } p_i}{\text{transmitted sound pressure } p_t} \right| = 20 \log_{10} \left| \frac{1}{T} \right|
\]

\( T \) is the complex transmission coefficient.

The echo reduction \((ER)\) of a panel was also defined in terms of its complex incident sound pressure and complex reflected sound pressure:

\[
ER = 20 \log_{10} \left| \frac{\text{incident sound pressure } p_i}{\text{reflected sound pressure } p_r} \right| = 20 \log_{10} \left| \frac{1}{R} \right|
\]

\( R \) is the complex reflection coefficient and the function \(| * |\) represents the magnitude.

Computations of the complex reflection and transmission coefficient were performed in the frequency domain via the Fast Fourier Transform (FFT). In each case, the complex Fourier coefficients for each pulse were used in the division. In addition, the Hilbert Transform was employed to better display and calculate changes in the waveform. Such a response analysis involves taking the imaginary part of the signal along with the real part. The resulting analytic signal is displayed as time or frequency envelopes. Such transformed data allows for precise time
representation of both the peak values and instantaneous phases of the signal. The Hilbert-transformed series were detrended and the energy envelopes were log transformed (see Figure 1B). (Guigné et al. (1991) and Guigné and Chin (1989) provide details on the application of the Hilbert Transform to underwater acoustics).

RESULTS

Ideally, the properties of a sonar dome would be such as to allow the propagation of acoustic radiation through with minimal reflection, absorption, or distortion. Examination of the Hilbert Transforms is one way of determining the amount of distortion due to the panel. The shape of the transmitted waveforms for the cyanate-based Spectra Fiber panels (Figures 4A, 5A and 6A) are very close to those of the Reference waveforms, while the epoxy-based Spectra Fiber and GRP panel waveshapes are slightly more distorted (Figures 7A, 8A and 9A). The Hilbert Transform of a thin (0.92 mm) stainless steel panel is shown for comparison in Figure 10A. Note how the waveshape is altered considerably more than for the composite panels.

The amount of reflection and absorption may be quantified by their echo reduction and insertion loss spectra, shown in Figures 11 and 12 for the panels listed in Table 1. The Spectra Fiber panels had relatively flat insertion loss spectra of less than 1dB up to 35 kHz (Figure 12), whereas the GRP panels had losses that increased more sharply with frequency, with values of 2.5 - 3.5 dB at the higher end of the frequency range examined (40kHz). The cyanate-based panels had slightly better (lower insertion losses) performance than the epoxy-based panels for Spectra Fiber panels, but the opposite was true for the GRPs (i.e. the epoxy resins were superior). The 8H weave was found to have slightly lower insertion losses than the 4H weave for the Spectra Fiber/cyanate resin system. The Spectra Fiber panels also had low reflectivity, or high echo reduction, in the 1 - 40 kHz frequency range (Figure 11). The least reflective panel was the 8H cyanate resin Spectra Fiber panels, which had echo reductions of 15 - 22 dB.

SUMMARY

From the data collected, it is clear that the Spectra Fiber Composite Panels have very low insertion losses compared to the glass fiber composites of the same thickness. In particular, the 988 PT/BT250E epoxy-based panel and 985PT/BTCY3 cyanate-based panel have remarkable responses producing very little waveshape distortion and losses (see Figure 12). The Spectra Fiber echo reduction characteristics also concurred with the goal for the sonar dome material to remain low in reflectivity.

Overall, it would appear that significant gains would be made using Spectra Fiber Composite materials over glass fiber and metallic composite sonar domes. In addition to being non-corroding and having high strength to weight ratio, their acoustic properties appear well-matched in impedance to water, and also appear well suited to low frequency propagation.
REFERENCES:


A

Truncator 3"x3" 20 gauge stainless steel with an aluminum frame
Receiver B&K 8103

Water surface

Testing panel

Time: Ymin, Ymax = -8.7 5.1 <Max at 271.5>

Signals received after test panel

Real Part

Env: Ymax = 1.4e+002 at 271.0

Hilbert Transformed

Figure 1
Setup for Insertion Loss Measurements

Reference

Transmitter Truncator Hydrophone

Test Panel

Insertion Loss

Figure 2
Setup for Reflection Loss Measurements

Reference

Dummy Hydrophone
Hydrophone

Transmitter
Truncator

Hydrophone
Test Panel

Reflection Loss

Figure 3
Figure 4
Figure 5
Reference and Transmitted Signal Envelope for Panel #988PT/BTCY3

Reference and Reflected Signal Envelope for Panel #988PT/BTCY3

Figure 6
Figure 7

Reference and Transmitted Signal Envelope for Panel #985PT/BT250E

Reference and Reflected Signal Envelope for Panel #985PT/BT250E
Reference and Transmitted Signal Envelope for GRP Panel #1 Blue

Reference and Reflected Signal Envelope for GRP Panel #1 Blue

Blue - Epoxy

Figure 8
Reference and Transmitted Signal Envelope for GRP Panel #2

Reference and Reflected Signal Envelope for GRP Panel #2

Brown - Cyanate

Figure 9
Reference and Transmitted Signal Envelope for SS Panel

Reference and Reflected Signal Envelope for SS Panel

SS - Stainless Steel

Figure 10
Echo Reduction Measurements on Test Panels

- Echo Reduction [dB]
- Frequency (Hz) x 10^4

1. SFC Panel 988PT/BT250E
2. SFC Panel 985PT/BTCY-3
3. SFC Panel 988PT/BTCY-3
4. Blue GRP - Epoxy
5. Brown GRP - Cyanate
6. SS Panel - Stainless Steel

Figure 11
Figure 12

Insertion Loss Measurements on Test Panels

1 SFC Panel 988PT/BT250E
2 SFC Panel 985PT/BTCY-3
3 SFC Panel 988PT/BTCY-3
4 Blue GRP - Epoxy
5 Brown GRP - Cyanate
6 SS Panel - Stainless Steel
Dr. A.M. Abdel-Latif
Quality Engineering Test Establishment
Materials Engineering and Applied Physics
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0K2

David Allison
(Non-Metallic Materials, Paints, etc)
Head, Section 114
Director of Naval Architecture
Ministry of Defence
Block F. Foxhill
Bath
UK BA1 5AB

Dr. M.N. Bassim
Dept. of Mechanical Engineering
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 5V6

Ray Beazley
Bldg D200
Welding Supervisor
Fleet Engineering Maintenance Unit
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Mr. Jorgen Bernt and Mr. Dat Nguyen
J.O.Bernt and Associates Limited,
3375 Laird Road, Unit 3
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
L5L 5R7

Ms Teresia Betancourt
Nova Scotia Research Foundation
100 Fenwick St. Box 790
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2Y 3Z7

Charles Billard
MetaSoudage
c/o Centre R & D Metallurgie
MIL Davie Inc.
Case Postale 130
22 Geo D. Davie
Levis, Quebec, G6V 6N7

Mr. Mike Brauss
Proto Manufacturing Ltd.
2175 Solar Cr.
Oldcastle, Ontario N0R 1L0

Dave Brennan
Martec Ltd. Suite 400
1888 Brunswick St.
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3F 3F8

Larry Brown
Annapolis Detachment
Caederock Division
Naval Surface Warefare Center
Code 2815
Annapolis Maryland 21402-5067

Mr. Bob Caswell
Canadian Patrol Frigate Detachment
Brunswick House Suite 500
44 Chipman Hill
St John New Brunswick E2L 2A9

Dr. M.K. Chernuka
Martec Ltd. Suite 400
1888 Brunswick St.
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3F 3F8

Capt(N) G.D. Humby
Commanding Officer
Ship Repair Unit Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Mr. Perry Clarke
Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.
Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories
Chalk River, Ontario N0R 1L0

Terry Culliton
Saint John Shipbuilding Ltd.
Bayside Drive
P.O.Box 300
St John, New Brunswick E2L 4E5

Dr Virginia DeGiorgi
Code 6382
Naval Research Laboratory
Washington, D.C.
USA 20375-5000

Johnnie DeLoach
Annapolis Detachment
Caederock Division
Naval Surface Warefare Center
Annapolis Maryland 21402-5067

R. DeNale
Annapolis Detachment
Caederock Division
Naval Surface Warefare Center
Annapolis Maryland 21402-5067
Mr Duane Tuttle/
Mr Duane Griffin/
Mr Ralph Wallis/
Mr Sean Bartlett
Mr Fred Grainger
NDT D200
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Mr Stephane Garneau
DSE National Defence Headquarters
101 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2

Mr Jim Gianetto
Metals Technology Labs
Energy Mines and Resources Canada
555 Booth St.
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G1

Dr. Andrey Ginovker
Dalhousie University
Department of Physics
Halifax, N.S.
B3H 3J5

Mr. Sherman Goucher
Canadian Patrol Frigate Program
Brunswick House Suite 501
44 Chipman Hill
St John New Brunswick E2L 2A9

Dr. Jacques Guigné
Guigné International Limited
82 St. Thomas Line
RR#1, P.O. Box 13, Site 21
Paradise, Newfoundland A1C 1C1

Mr Randy Haggett
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Craig Hamm
Guigné International Limited
82 St. Thomas Line
RR#1, P.O. Box 13, Site 21
Paradise, Newfoundland A1C 1C1

Dr. Bob Hay
President
Tektrrend International Ltd.
2755 Pitfield
Ville St. Laurent, Quebec H4S 1G3

John Hewitt
The Laser Institute
9924-45 Ave
Edmonton Alta T6E 5J1

Dr John Hiltz
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Dr. Roger S. Hollingshead
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Mr. Paul Holsberg
Annapolis Detachment
Caederock Division
Naval Surface Warefare Center
Code 2810
DTNSRDC
Annapolis, Maryland 21402

Mr Don Hussey
Donelad Ltd.
Suite 720 Sun Tower
1550 Bedford Highway
Bedford N.S. B4A 1E6

Dr Calvin Hyatt
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax, N.S. B3K 2X0

Head/Hydronautics Section
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
P.O.Box 1012
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2Y 3Z7

Dr. S. Das Gupta and Mr. S. Johar
Electrofuel Manufacturing Company Ltd.
21 Hanna Avenue
Toronto, Ont., Canada
M6K 1W8

Dr. R.L. Jones
Materials Engineering Division
Admiralty Research Establishment
Holtown Heath
Poole
Dorset, U.K. BH16 6JU
Mr Ken Karis Allen
Facts Engineering
P.O.Box 20039
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3R 2K9

Lt(N) Kirk Kirkoff
DSE 5-3-3 National Defence Headquarters
101 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2

Ms Carol Lebowitz
Annapolis Detachment Caedrock Division
Naval Surface Warfare Center
Code 2815
Annapolis Maryland 21402-5067

Kelly-Anne Lively
10 Jersey Drive
Dartmouth N.S. B2W 1V6

Quan Shun Liu
Guigné International Limited
82 St. Thomas Line
RR#1, P.O. Box 13, Site 21 Paradise, Newfoundland A1C 1C1

Gord MacDonald
Welding Officer
Fleet Engineering Maintenance Unit
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Dr. L. Malik
Materials Technology Centre
311 Legget Drive
Kanata, Ontario K2K 1Z8

Terri Ann Marsico
Applied Research Laboratory
The Pennsylvania State University
P.O. Box 30
165 Applied Science Building
State College
University Park PA 16804

Dr. James R. Matthews
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Lt(N) L.M. Maxwell
Canadian Patrol Frigate Detachment
Brunswick House Suite 500
44 Chipman Hill
St John New Brunswick E2L 2A9

Dr. K.M. Valter McConville
Aastra Aerospace Inc.,
1685 Flint Rd.
Downsvew, Ont M3J 2W8

Brian McGrath
St.John Ship Building Ltd.
300 Union St.
P.O. Box 5111
St. John N.B.
E2L 4L4

Ken McRae
Esquimalt Defence Research Detachment
FMO Esquimalt
Victoria, B.C. V0S 1B0

Dr. Richard Morchat
DRDM 8 National Defence Headquarters
101 Colonel By Dr
Ottawa Ontario

Dr. M.K. Murthy
MKM Consultants International
10 Avoca Avenue, Unit 1906
Toronto, Ont.
M4T 2B7

LCdr D. Peer
Industrial Engineering
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Bob Pemberton
Bldg D166
Fleet Engineering Maintenance Unit
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Mr. John Porter
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0
Rajean Rene
Centre R & D Metallurgie
MIL Davie Inc.
Case Postale 130
22 Geo D. Davie
Levis, Quebec, G6V 6N7

Mr. Richard Robicheau
216-55 Highfield Park Drive
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B3A 4S3

Dr. Alan Russell
Head/Materials Engineering Section
Esquimalt Defence Research Detachment
FMO Esquimalt
Esquimalt, British Columbia V0S 1B0

Dr. Mahi Sahoo
Metals Technology Labs
Energy Mines and Resources Canada
555 Booth St.
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G1

Frank Smith
German Marine
71 Ilsley Avenue
Dartmouth N.S.
B3B 1L5

Dr. Jeff Szabo
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Mr. Dwight Veinot
Defence Research Establishment Atlantic
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Mr. Tom West
FEMU
FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2X0

Richard Yee
Materials Technology Centre
311 Legget Drive
Kanata, Ontario K2K 1Z8