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Compact dual-channel transceivers

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Weller et al.

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(54) **COMPACT DUAL-CHANNEL
TRANSCIVERS**

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(21) Appl. No.: **15/277,329**

Primary Examiner — Mohammed Rachedine

(22) Filed: **Sep. 27, 2016**

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LLP

(57)

ABSTRACT

In one embodiment, a method for monitoring a structure
includes associating a passive sensor with the structure, the
sensor being configured to measure a physical parameter of
the structure that is indicative of the structure's condition,
associating a dual-channel transceiver with the structure, the
transceiver having a sensing repeater that operates on a first
channel and a reference repeater that operates on a second
channel, wherein the sensing repeater is connected to the
passive sensor, receiving with a receive antenna of the
reference repeater an interrogation signal transmitted from
an interrogation device, multiplying a frequency of the
received interrogation signal with the reference repeater to
generate a reference response signal having a multiplied
frequency, and transmitting the reference response signal
with the reference repeater to the interrogation device.

Related U.S. Application Data

(62) Division of application No. 14/090,277, filed on Nov.
26, 2013, now Pat. No. 9,485,037.

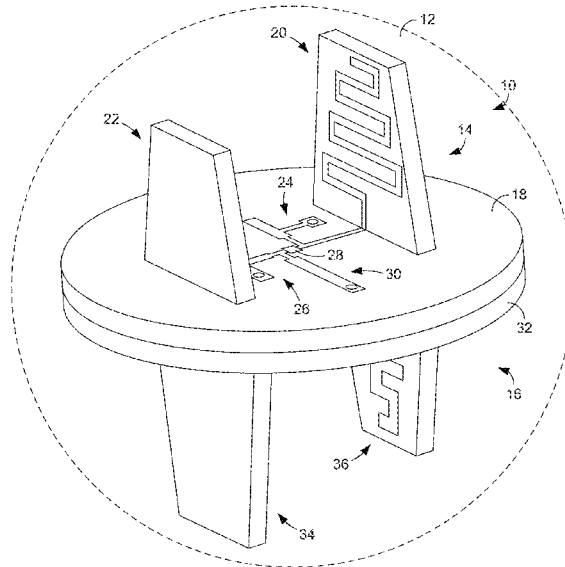
(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04B 1/60 (2006.01)
H04B 17/40 (2015.01)
H04B 1/40 (2015.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **H04B 17/40** (2015.01); **H04B 1/40**
(2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
None

See application file for complete search history.

13 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



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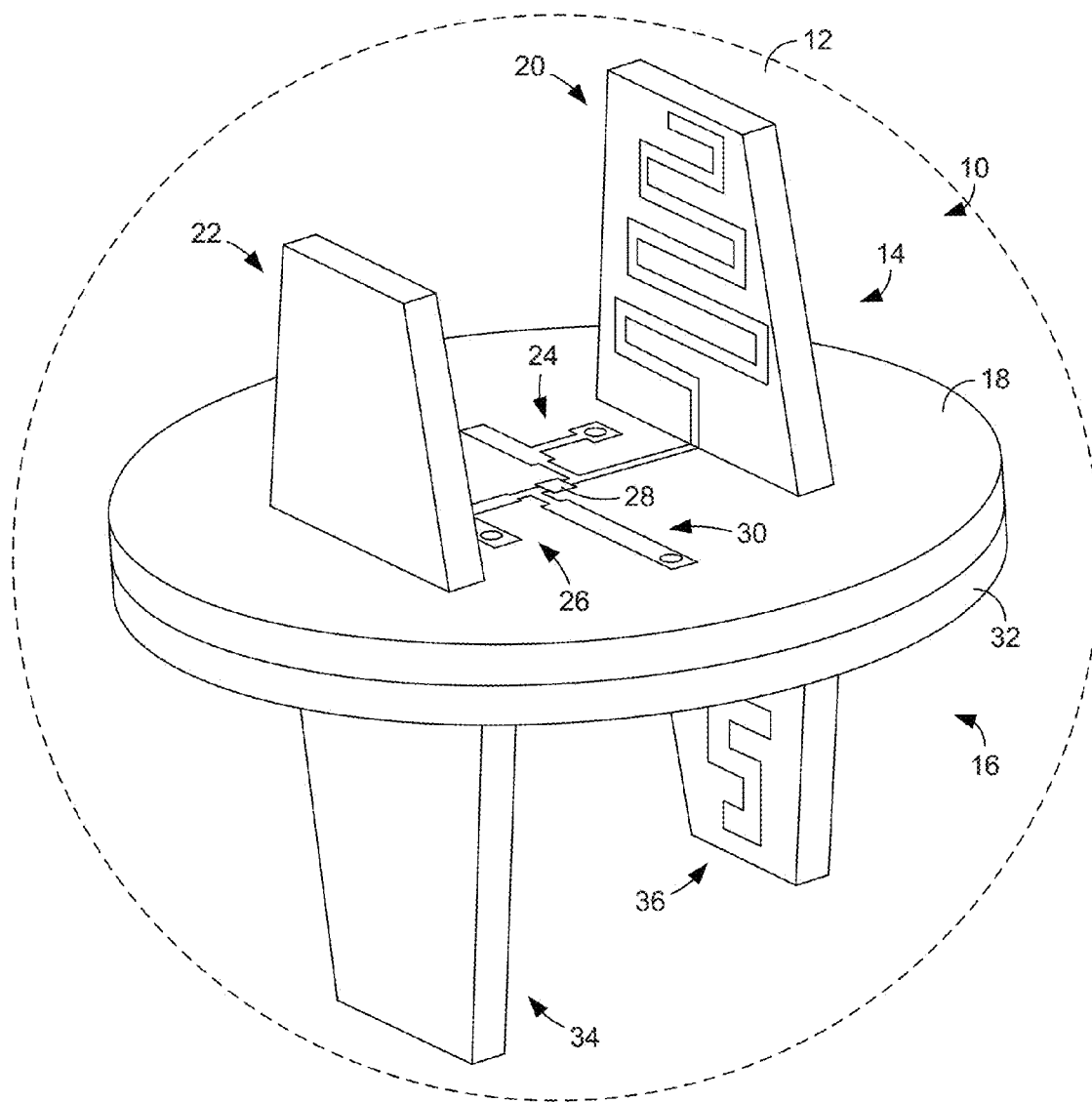


FIG. 1

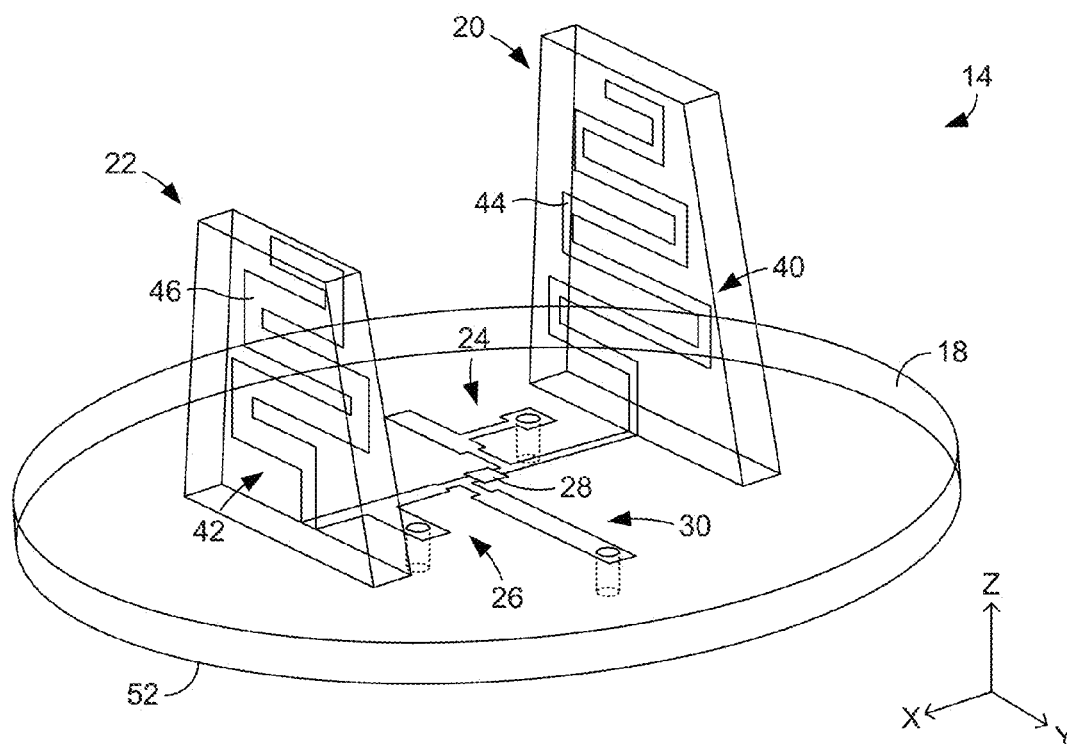


FIG. 2A

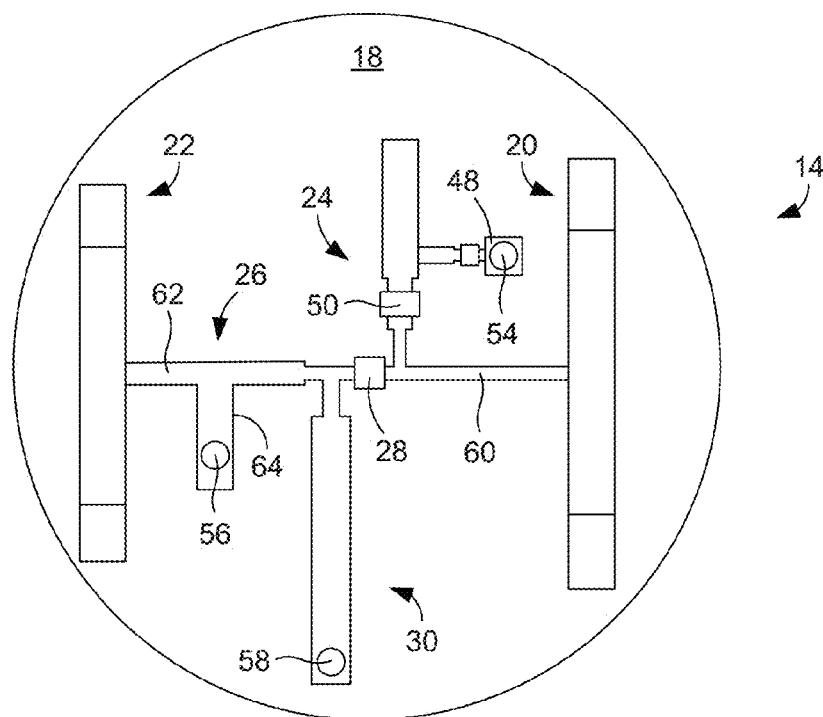
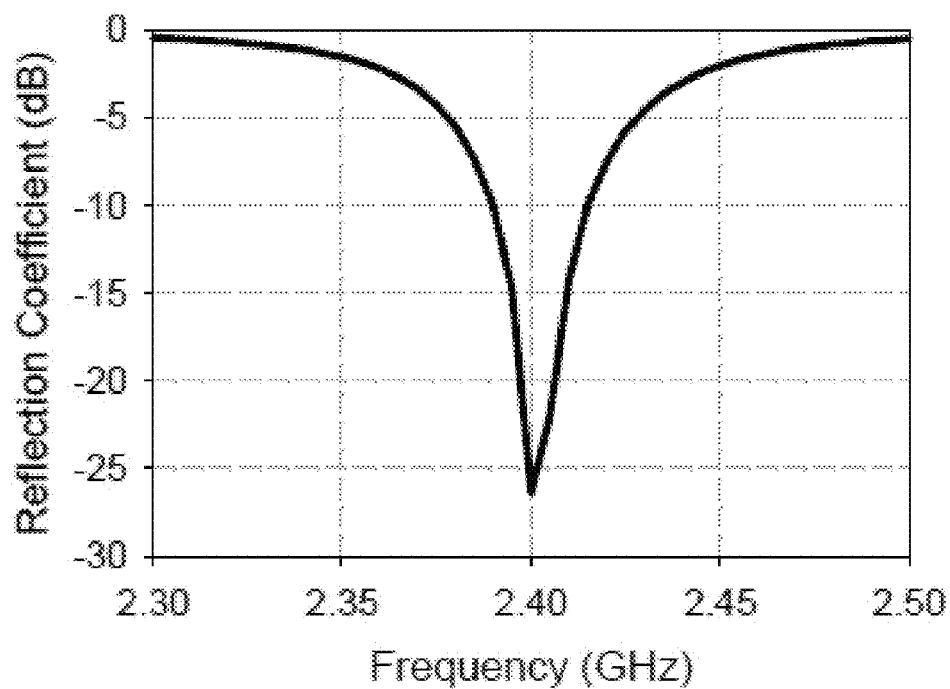
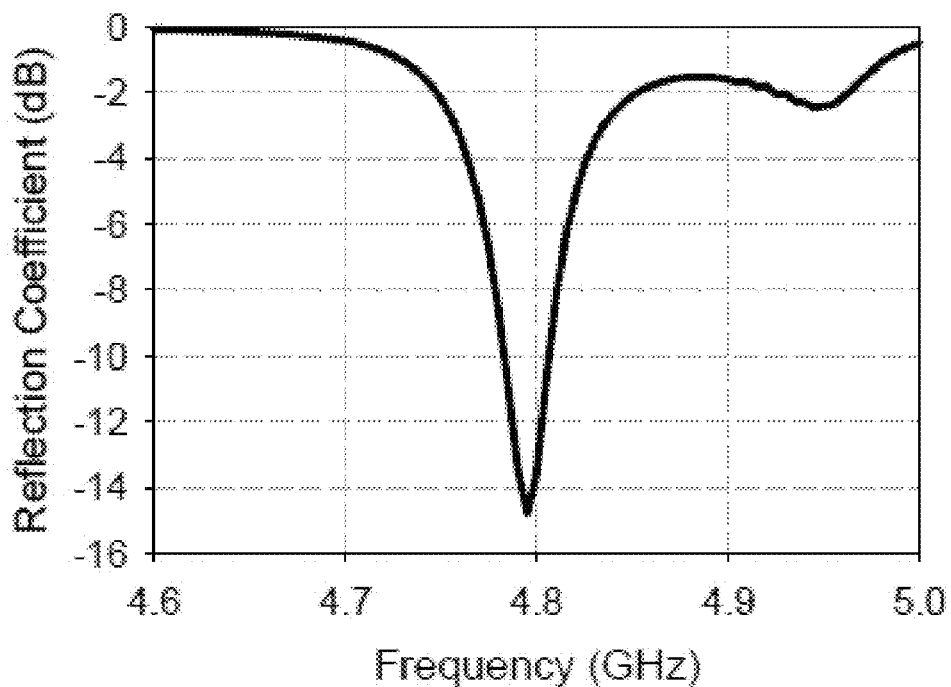


FIG. 2B

**FIG. 3A****FIG. 3B**

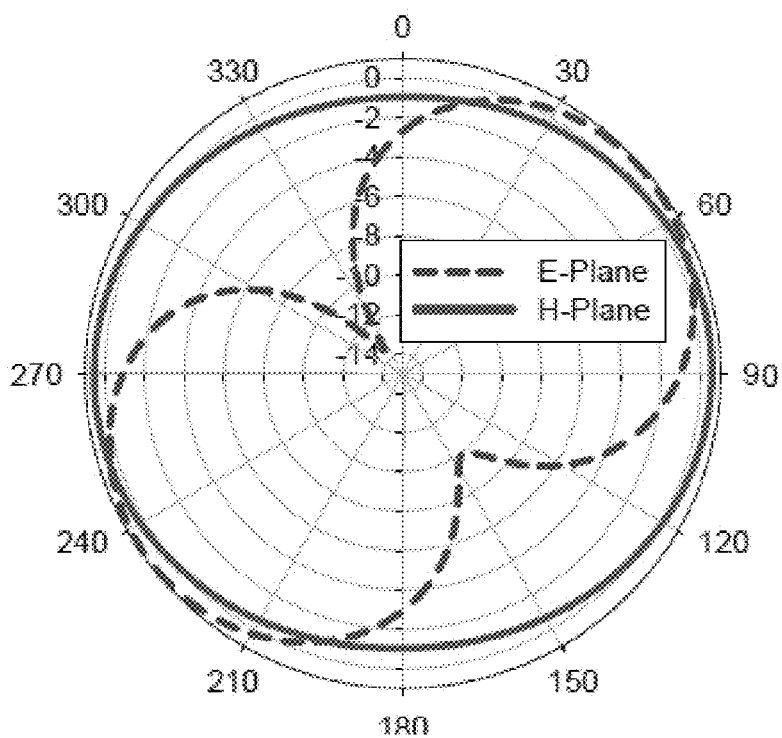


FIG. 4A

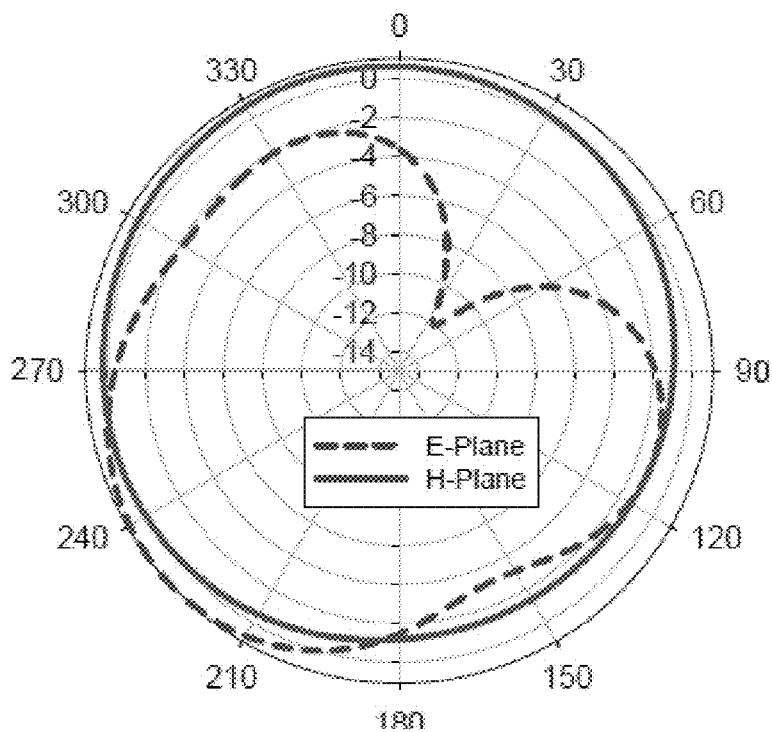


FIG. 4B

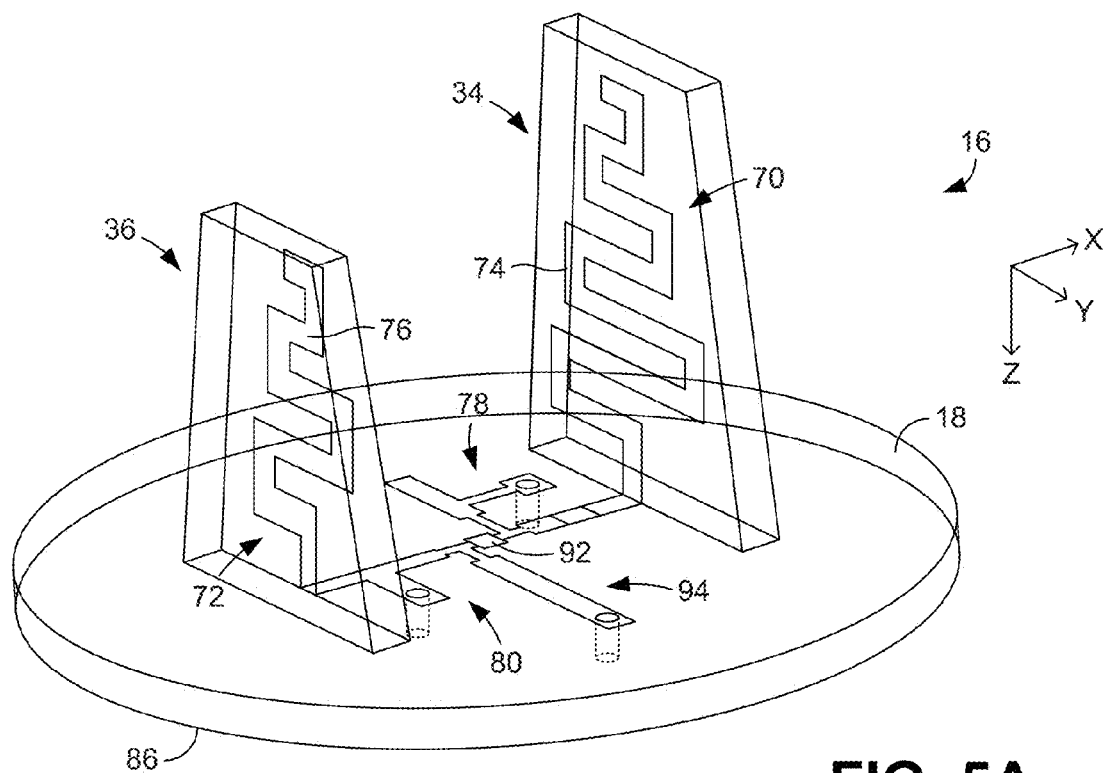


FIG. 5A

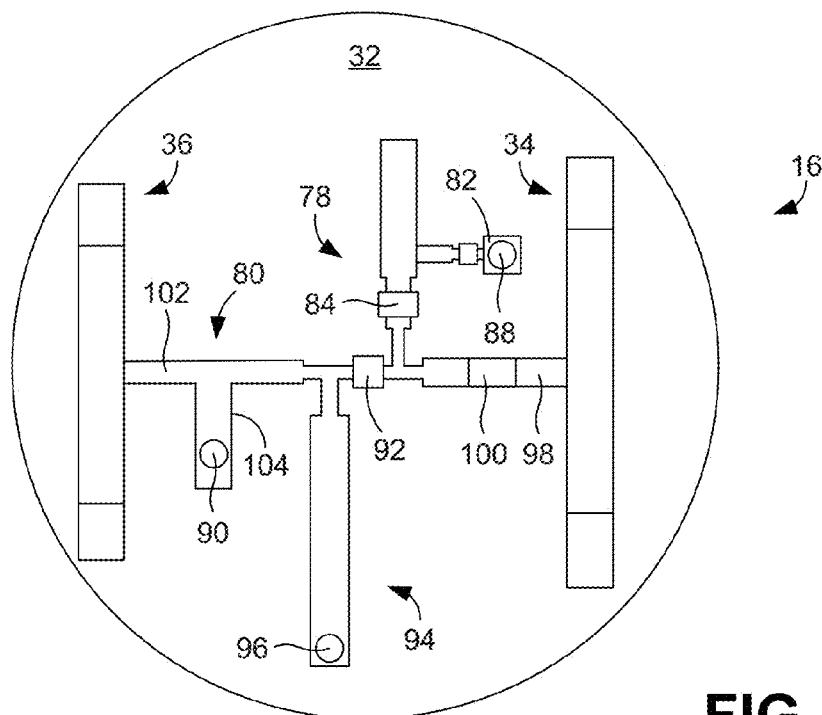
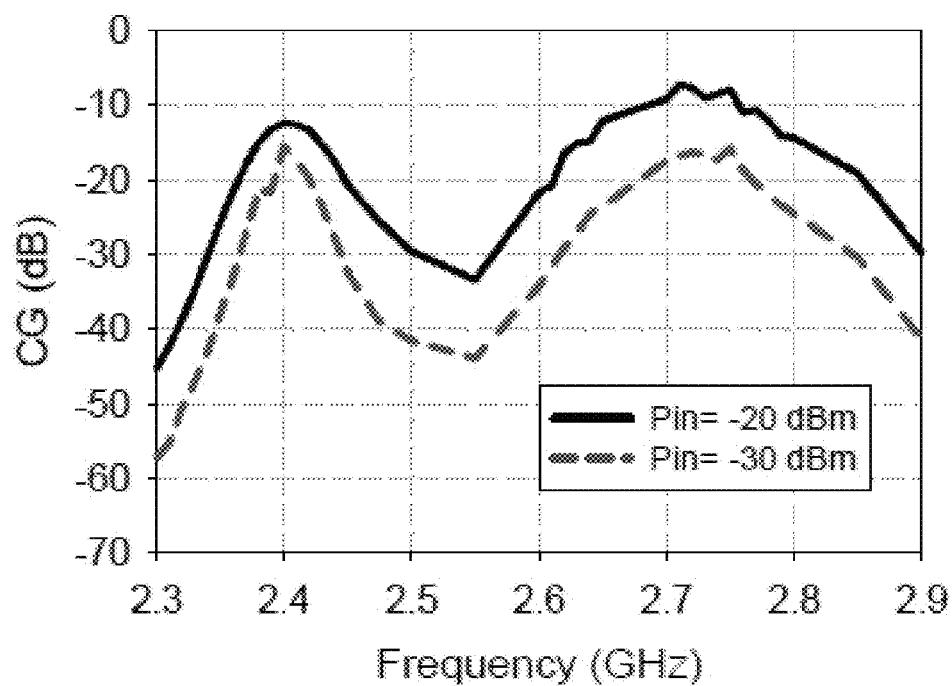
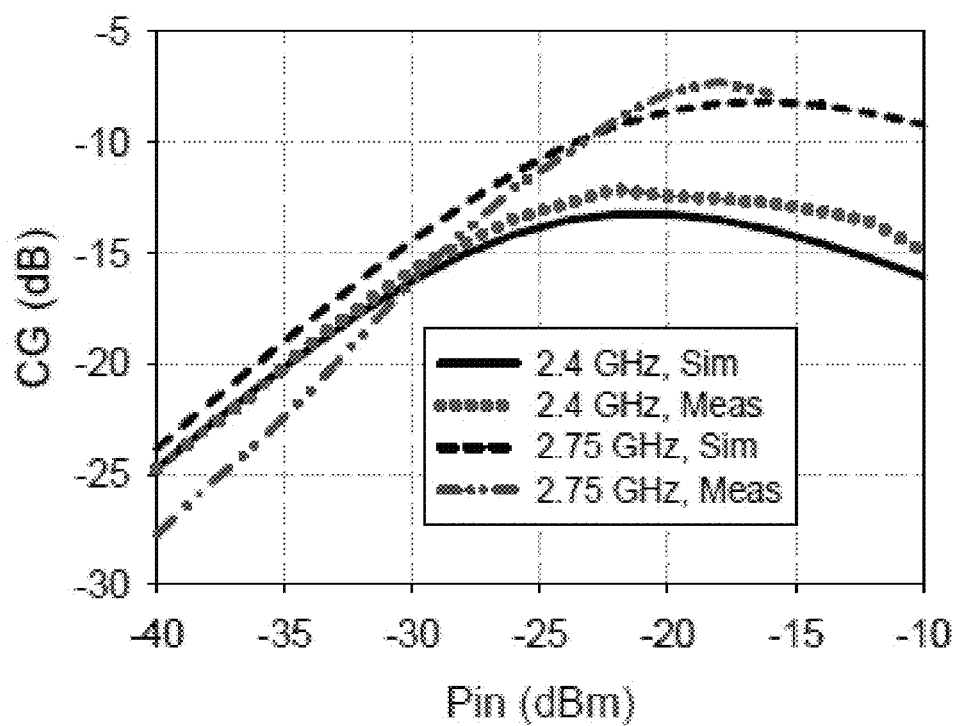
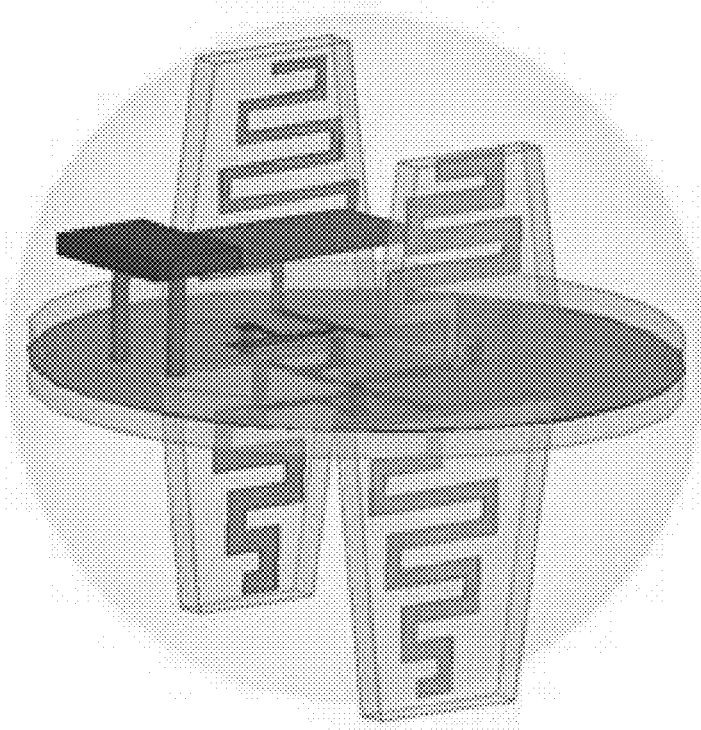
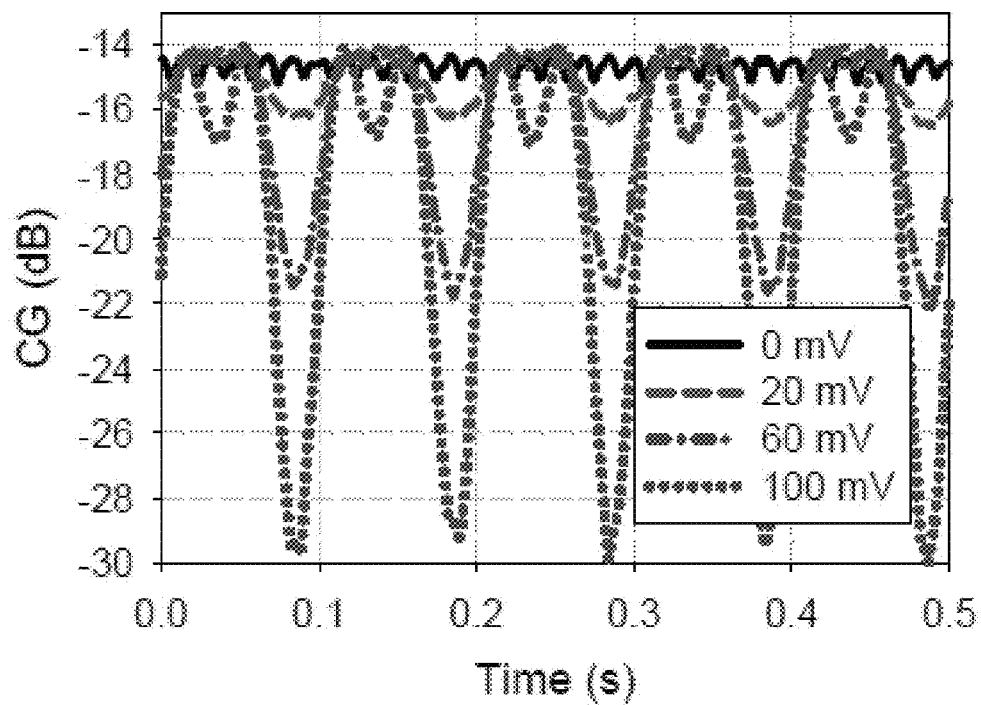
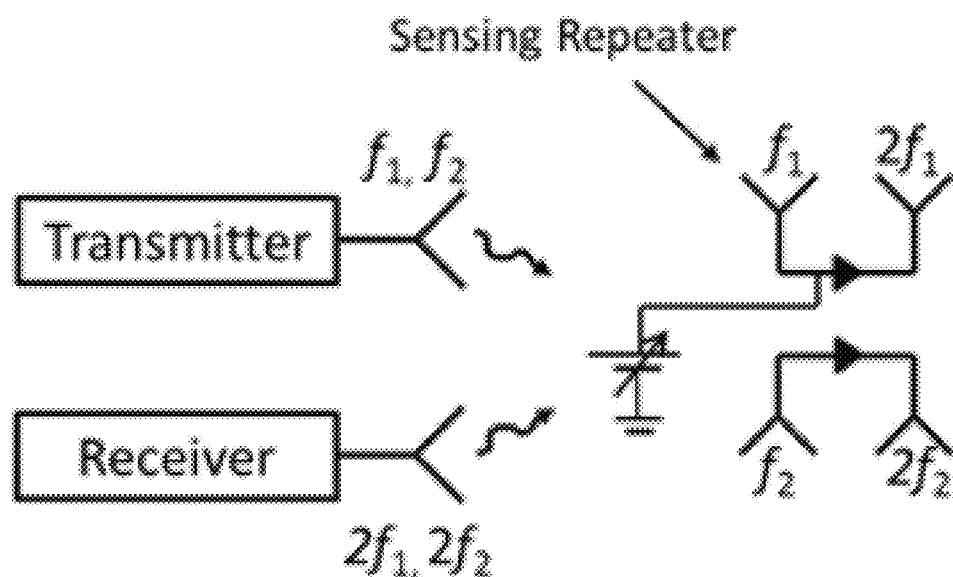
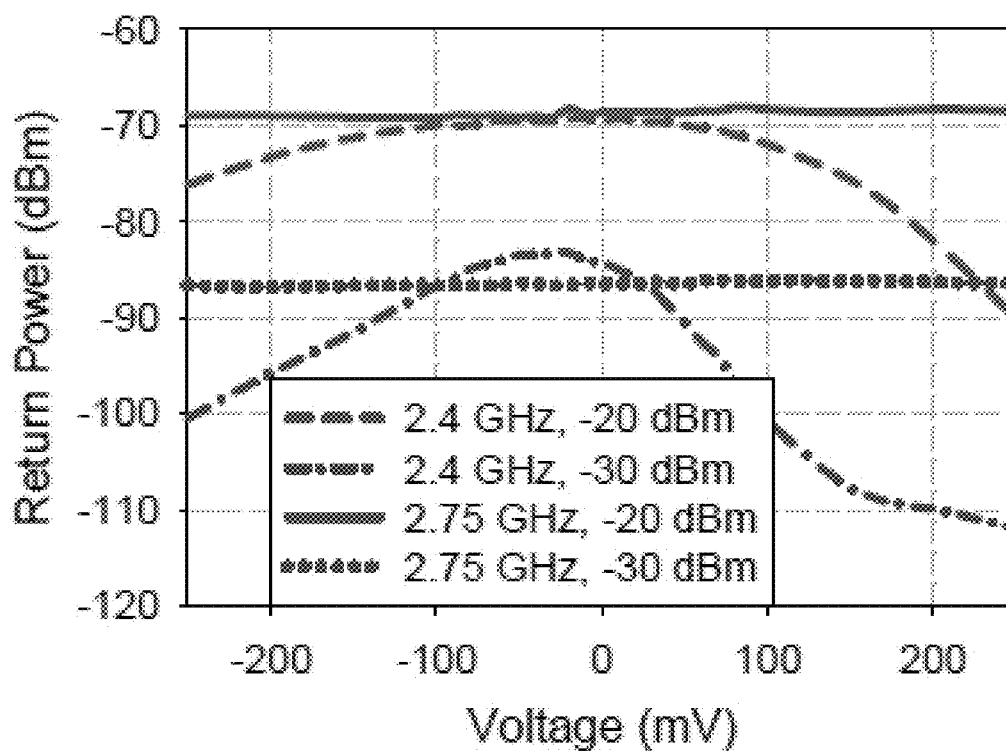


FIG. 5B

**FIG. 6A****FIG. 6B**

**FIG. 7A****FIG. 7B**

**FIG. 8A****FIG. 8B**

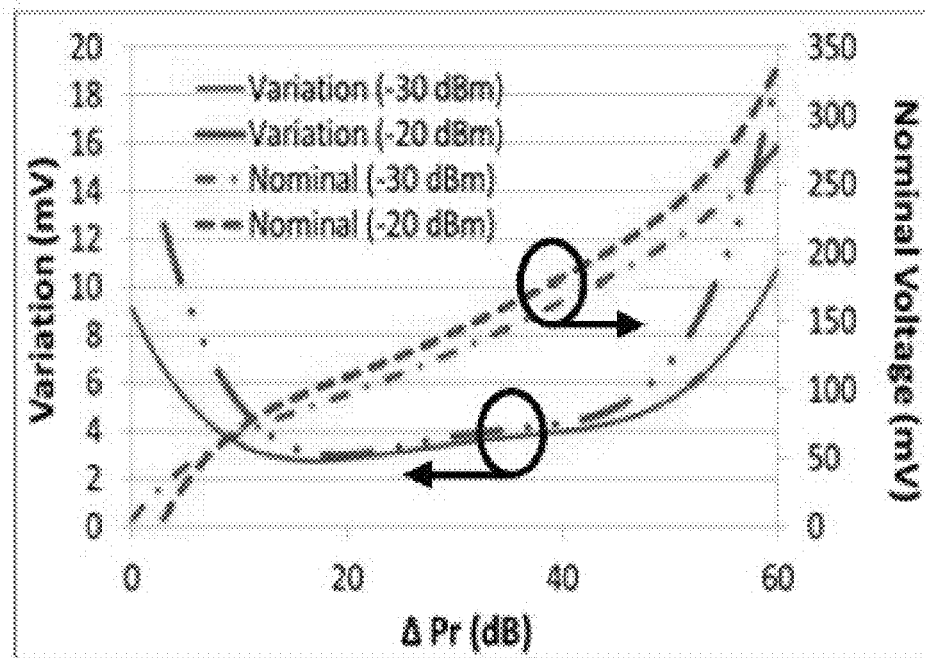


FIG. 9A

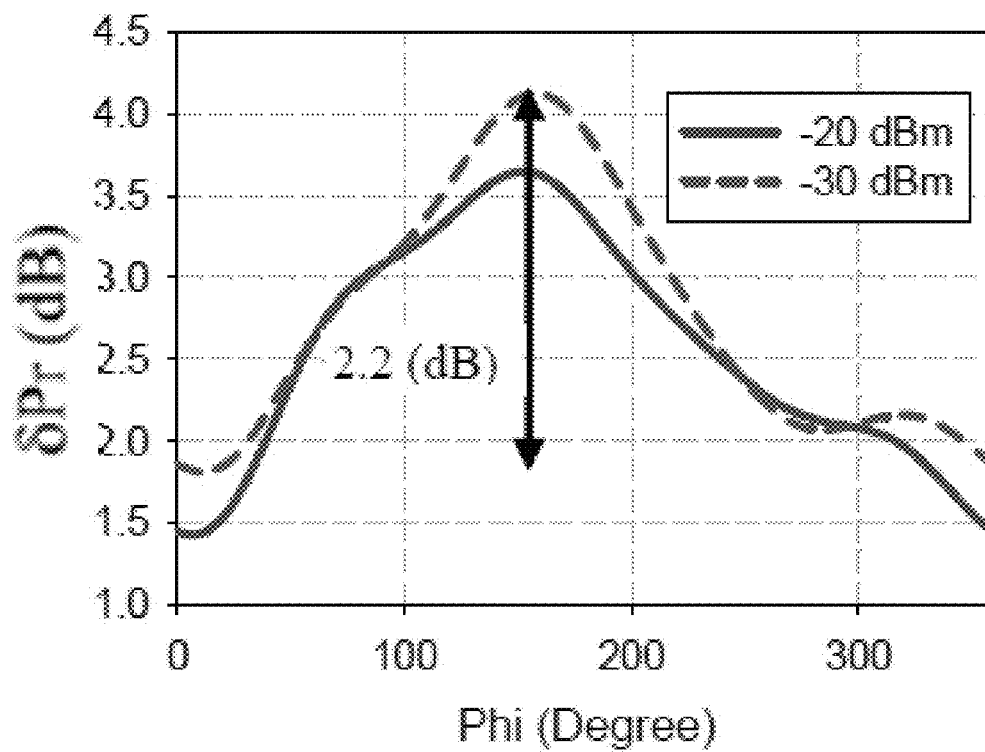
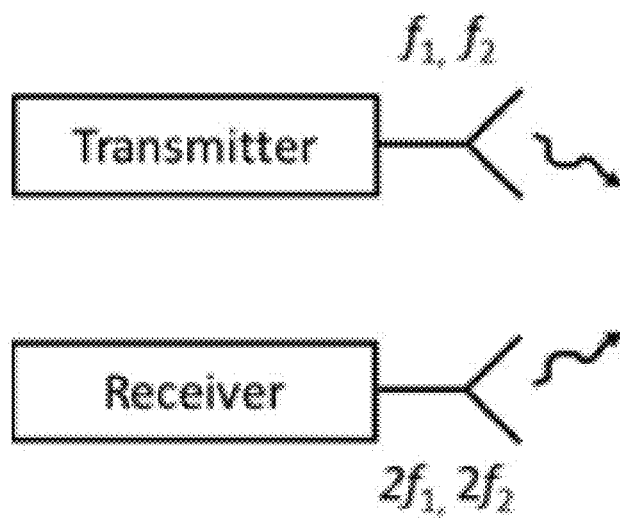
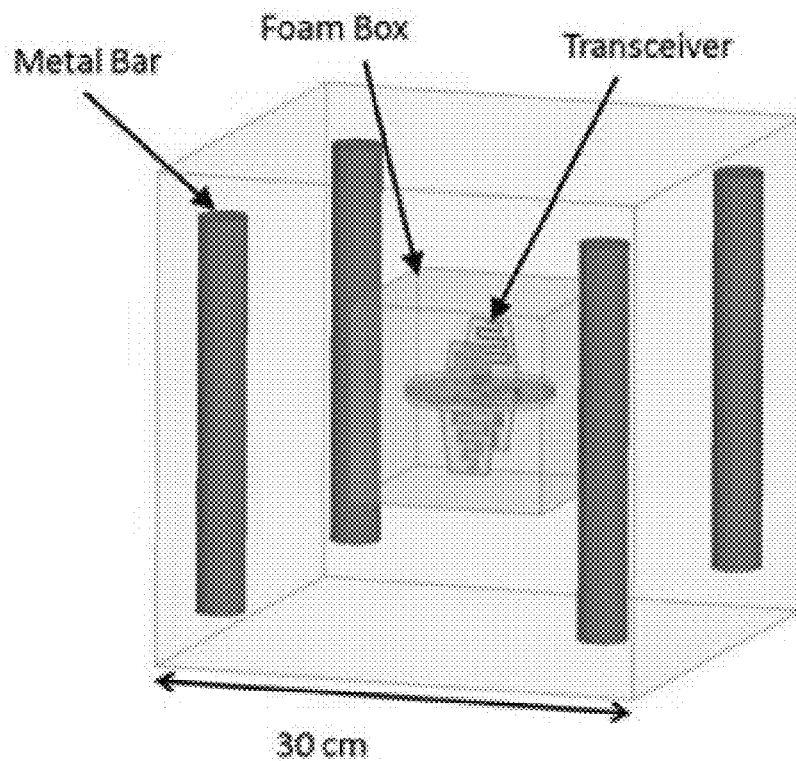


FIG. 9B

**FIG. 10A****FIG. 10B**

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COMPACT DUAL-CHANNEL TRANSCIVERS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a divisional of co-pending U.S. Non-Provisional application entitled, "Compact Dual-Channel Transceivers," having Ser. No. 14/090,277, filed Nov. 26, 2013, which is hereby incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

NOTICE OF GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED RESEARCH

This invention was made with Government support under grant contract numbers 0925929 and 1232183 awarded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The Government has certain rights in the invention.

BACKGROUND

Our society is increasingly dependent upon larger and more complex networks of civil infrastructure that are costly to maintain. These infrastructures, especially those for transportation, are deteriorating due to factors such as corrosion of the steel reinforcement and high continuous vibration. This type of degradation has motivated research activity on distributed wireless sensors that enable low-cost, near continuous, and near real-time, non-destructive monitoring.

In order to efficiently provide such monitoring capabilities, it is preferred to have the sensor node embedded within the structure in direct proximity of the physical or chemical activity of interest. Embedding the sensor node requires the device to be passive or recharged externally to extend the lifetime because of the difficult accessibility, and to have a compact geometry to avoid compromising the structural integrity and to facilitate the deployment of the node into the preferred location. In order to communicate with embedded sensor nodes over a long distance and from a convenient location, the sensing device should require low radio frequency (RF) activation power and be energy efficient.

Another challenge associated with passive embedded wireless monitoring is remote channel calibration. When the sensor node is deployed in a structure, it is of concern to periodically calibrate the propagation channel (between the interrogator and the node) to obtain a proper reading from the sensor and confirm that the node is functioning properly. Although such calibration can be obtained by placing a reference node in close proximity to the sensor node, the requirement for an additional node to be placed close to each sensing node is undesirable.

From the above discussion, it can be appreciated that it would be desirable to have alternative apparatus that enables remote channel calibration of an embedded sensor node.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present disclosure may be better understood with reference to the following figures. Matching reference numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the figures, which are not necessarily drawn to scale.

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a compact dual-channel transceiver for use in embedded sensing applications.

FIG. 2A is a perspective view of a first (sensing) repeater of the transceiver of FIG. 1.

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FIG. 2B is a plan view of the first repeater of FIG. 2A.

FIGS. 3A and 3B are graphs that show (A) the simulated reflection coefficient between a receive antenna and a multiplier input and (B) between a transmit antenna and a multiplier output of the sensing repeater at -30 dBm input power and 0 V bias.

FIGS. 4A and 4B are the simulated E- and H-plane radiation patterns of (A) the receive antenna at 2.4 GHz and (B) the transmit antenna at 4.8 GHz.

FIG. 5A is a perspective view of a second (reference) repeater of the transceiver of FIG. 1.

FIG. 5B is a plan view of the second repeater of FIG. 5A.

FIGS. 6A and 6B are graphs that show (A) the measured conversion gain (CG) of a dual-channel transceiver versus frequency for different received powers and (B) the simulated and measured CG versus received power at an f_1 of 2.4 GHz and 2.75 GHz.

FIG. 7A is a perspective view of a dual-channel transceiver similar to that of FIG. 1, shown connected to a sensor.

FIG. 7B is a graph that shows the measured CG versus time for modulation signals of frequency of 10 Hz and different amplitudes at an f_1 of 2.4 GHz and received power of -30 dBm for the transceiver shown in FIG. 7A.

FIG. 8A illustrates a calibration measurement setup that was used for evaluation of a dual-channel transceiver.

FIG. 8B is a graph that shows the measured return power for different values of f_1 versus bias voltage applied to the sensing repeater at -30 dBm input power for the setup of FIG. 8A.

FIGS. 9A and 9B are graphs that show (A) the variation in extracted sensor voltage versus ΔP_r for different received power due to angle of incidence uncertainty and (B) δP_r for different azimuth angle and received power at 0 V bias.

FIGS. 10A and 10B illustrate an embedded sensor experimental setup.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As described above, it would be desirable to have apparatus that enables remote channel calibration of an embedded sensor node. Disclosed herein is a sensor node that has integrated means for calibrating the node. In some embodiments, the sensor node comprises a compact three-dimensional dual-channel transceiver that includes separate harmonic repeaters for sensing and providing a reference signal so as to enable remote calibration and identification. In some embodiments, each repeater comprises separate receive and transmit antennas that are coupled to a frequency multiplier that multiplies the frequency of an interrogation signal that is received by the receive antenna. The sensing repeater is coupled to a sensor that modulates the interrogation signal so that a response signal is reflected back to the interrogation device that is indicative of a sensed parameter (e.g., temperature, vibration, etc.).

In the following disclosure, various specific embodiments are described. It is to be understood that those embodiments are example implementations of the disclosed inventions and that alternative embodiments are possible. All such embodiments are intended to fall within the scope of this disclosure.

FIG. 1 illustrates an embodiment of a compact three-dimensional dual-channel transceiver 10. In some embodiments, the transceiver 10 is configured to fit within the volume of a sphere 12 having a diameter of approximately 1.5 to 4 cm (e.g., 3 cm). As shown in FIG. 1, the transceiver 10 generally comprises a first harmonic repeater 14, which can be used for sensing (i.e., a sensing repeater), and second

harmonic repeater **16**, which can be used to provide a reference signal (i.e., a reference repeater). The first repeater **14** comprises a base substrate **18** as well as first and second antenna supports **20** and **22** that extend upward (vertically) from the base substrate. In some embodiments, the supports **20**, **22** are substrates having the same construction as the base substrate **18** and lie in planes that are orthogonal to the plane in which the base substrate lies. By way of example, the substrates can be constructed of Rogers/RT Duroid 6006 material and have a nominal relative dielectric constant (ϵ_r) of 6.5 and a thickness of 50 mils (1.27 mm). As described below, each support **20**, **22** supports an antenna of the repeater **14**.

As is further indicated in FIG. 1, formed on the base substrate **18** are first and second feeding networks **24** and **26** that are coupled to the antennas formed on the antenna supports **20**, **22**, respectively. Joining the feeding networks **24**, **26** is a frequency multiplier **28**, that multiplies the frequency of an input signal, such as a received interrogation signal. In some embodiments, the frequency multiplier **28** comprises a GaAs Schottky diode (e.g., Agilent HSCH-9161) that doubles the frequency of the input signal. In such cases, the frequency multiplier **28** can be referred to as a frequency doubler. As is also shown in FIG. 1, also formed on the base substrate **18** is a direct current (DC) bias network **30** that is coupled to the second feeding network **26**.

The second repeater **16** is similar in configuration to the first repeater **14**. Accordingly, the second repeater **16** generally comprises a base substrate **32** as well as first and second antenna supports **34** and **36** that extend upward (vertically) from the base substrate (see FIG. 5A). In some embodiments, the supports **34**, **36** are substrates having the same construction as the base substrate **32** and lie in planes that are orthogonal to the plane in which the base substrate lies. By way of example, the substrates can be constructed of Rogers/RT Duroid 6006 material and have a nominal relative dielectric constant (ϵ_r) of 6.5 and a thickness of 50 mils (1.27 mm). Irrespective of their construction, each support **34**, **36** supports an antenna of the repeater **16**.

As is further shown in FIG. 1, the first repeater **14** and the second repeater **16** are physically connected together to form an integrated device. As indicated in the figure, the base substrates **18**, **32** can be connected to each other so that the first and second repeaters **14**, **16** have an inverted orientation relative to each other. In the orientation shown in FIG. 1, the antenna supports **20**, **22** extend in an upward direction and the antenna supports **34**, **36** extend in an opposite, downward direction.

FIGS. 2A and 2B show the first (sensing) repeater **14** in greater detail. More particularly, FIG. 2A shows the repeater **14** in a perspective view and FIG. 2B shows the repeater in a top (plan) view. As is apparent from FIG. 2A, each antenna support **20**, **22** is generally triangular in shape and therefore has a relatively wide base that narrows in the direction away from the base substrate **18** because of angled edges of the support. In the illustrated embodiment, the first antenna support **20** is larger than the second antenna support **22**. By way of example, the first antenna support **20** can be approximately 12 mm tall and its distal tip can be approximately 8 mm wide, while the second antenna support **22** can be approximately 10 mm tall and its distal tip can be approximately 7 mm wide.

Each antenna support **20**, **22** comprises an inner side upon which an antenna is formed. Specifically, a receive antenna **40** is formed on the inner side of the first antenna support **20** and a transmit antenna **42** is formed on the inner side of the second antenna support **22**. In the illustrated embodiment,

each antenna comprises a meandered monopole antenna including a meandered conductor trace **44** and **46** that is wider near the base (near the base substrate **18**) and narrower near the tip (away from the base substrate).

FIG. 2B shows the feeding networks **24** and **26** of the first repeater **14** more clearly. As indicated in this figure, the first feeding network **24** comprises a bias network that includes a bypass capacitor **48** and an RF choke **50**. Extending downward through the base substrate **18** to a ground plane **52** formed on the bottom of the base substrate **18** (FIG. 2A) is a via **54**. The second feeding network **26** also comprises a via **56** that extends downward through the base substrate **18** to the ground plane **52**. In addition, the second feeding network **26** comprises a shunt-shortened stub **64** that includes a via **56** that extends downward through the base substrate **18** to the ground plane **52**.

In some embodiments, the first repeater **14** operates by receiving a signal at an f_1 of 2.4 GHz and transmitting a return signal at $2 \cdot f_1$ of 4.8 GHz. With further reference to FIG. 2B, the receive antenna **40** is fed by a microstrip line **60** that can have a characteristic impedance (Z_o) of 76 Ω and electrical length of $\lambda_g/16$. The transmit antenna **42** is fed by a microstrip line **62** that can have a length of $\lambda_g/13$ and Z_o of 74 Ω and a $\lambda_g/20$ shunt-shortened stub **64** that can have a Z_o of 63 Ω . The bias network **30** is added to provide an interface with the embedded sensor (not shown), as is discussed below. By way of example, the bias network **30** can comprise a 27 nH series inductor (Coilcraft 0402) and 8.2 pF shunt capacitor (Johanson 0201).

An Advanced Design System (ADS) 2009u1 schematic was used to simulate the frequency multiplier **28** and find the optimum impedances that the antennas **40**, **42** need to present to the multiplier input/output to provide the best conversion gain (CG) at -30 dBm input power. The CG is defined herein as the ratio of the return power at 4.8 GHz to the received power at 2.4 GHz. Based on the simulation, it was found that the receive antenna **40** needs to present an impedance of 93+j358 Ω at 2.4 GHz and the transmit antenna **42** needs to present an impedance of 25+j200 Ω at 4.8 GHz. To provide these impedances, the High Frequency Structure Simulator (HFSS) **14** was used to optimize parameters such as the number of the monopole meandered sections, width of the sections, spacing of the sections, and the feeding network parameters. The complete transceiver configuration shown in FIG. 1 was used for these simulations. A $\lambda_g/10$ 64 Ω shunt-shortened stub **30** was added to the multiplier circuit to fine tune the impedance match. This short-shortened stub **30** also provides a DC path for the diode return current. FIGS. 3A and 3B show the reflection coefficient between the receive antenna **40** and the multiplier input, and the transmit antenna **42** and the multiplier output, respectively, at -30 dBm input power. As shown in those figures, the reflected power at the fundamental frequency is very low.

One of the antenna design goals was to minimize size without significantly degrading the H-plane gain variation (the omni-directional pattern) to facilitate interrogation. This was achieved by minimizing the size of the antenna supports **20**, **22** supporting the antennas **40**, **42** to reduce edge diffraction and by reducing the coupling between the antennas. The coupling was reduced by optimizing (1) the size of the ground plane **52**, (2) the distance between the antennas **40**, **42**, and (3) the height of the antennas. In addition, the meander pattern of the antenna traces **44**, **46** and the location of each antenna **40**, **42** significantly contribute to the coupling. As shown in FIG. 1, the receive and transmit antennas **40**, **42** are positioned at opposite ends of the base substrate **18** and the meandering directions were chosen so that the

induced near-field currents on each parasitic antenna oppose the current direction on each driven antenna, thus self-canceling unwanted radiated far-fields. Reducing the coupling provides the additional benefit of having the reference signal independent of the modulated return signal.

FIGS. 4A and 4B show the simulated radiation patterns of the receive and transmit antennas **40**, **42** at 2.4 GHz and 4.8 GHz, respectively. The antennas **40**, **42** are linearly polarized along the Z-axis relative to the coordinate system shown in FIG. 2A. As shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B, the antennas **40**, **42** demonstrate omni-directional patterns in the XY plane. The gain variation over the receive antenna H-plane is 1.6 dB, while it is 2 dB for the transmit antenna **42**. The receive antenna peak gain is 0.9 dB with a simulated radiation efficiency of 78.5%. The peak gain and radiation efficiency of the transmit antenna **42** are 1.1 dB and 67%, respectively. The distortion shown in the pattern, especially the E-plane, is due to (1) the relatively small ground plane size, (2) coupling from the other antennas, and (3) operating the antenna off resonance. For the same reasons, the radiation efficiency and gain were degraded.

FIGS. 5A and 5B show the second (reference) repeater **16** in greater detail. More particularly, FIG. 5A shows the repeater **16** in a perspective view and FIG. 5B shows the repeater in a top (plan) view. As is apparent from FIG. 5A, each antenna support **34**, **36** is generally triangular in shape and therefore has a relatively wide base that narrows in the direction away from the base substrate **32** because of angled edges of the support.

In the illustrated embodiment, the first antenna support **34** is larger than the second antenna support **36**. By way of example, the first antenna support **34** can be approximately 14 mm tall and its distal tip can be approximately 8 mm wide, while the second antenna support **22** can be approximately 11 mm tall and its distal tip can be approximately 7 mm wide.

Each antenna support **34**, **36** comprises an inner side upon which an antenna is formed. Specifically, a receive antenna **70** is formed on the inner side of the first antenna support **34** and a transmit antenna **72** is formed on the inner side of the second antenna support **36**. In the illustrated embodiment, each antenna **70**, **72** comprises a meandered monopole antenna including a meandered conductor trace **74** and **76** that is wider near the base (near the base substrate **32**) and narrower near the tip (away from the base substrate).

FIG. 5B shows feeding networks **78** and **80** that are coupled to the first and second antennas **70**, **72**, respectively. As indicated in this figure, the first feeding network **78** comprises a bias network that includes a bypass capacitor **82** and an RF choke **84**. Extending downward through the base substrate **18** to a ground plane **86** formed on the bottom of the base substrate **32** (FIG. 5A) is a via **88**. The second feeding network **80** also comprises a via **90** that extends downward through the base substrate **32** to the ground plane **86**. Joining the feeding networks **78**, **80** is a frequency multiplier **92**, that multiplies the frequency of an input signal. In some embodiments, the frequency multiplier **92** comprises a GaAs Schottky diode (e.g., Agilent HSCH-9161) that doubles the frequency of the input signal. As is also shown in FIG. 5B, the second feeding network **80** comprises a shunt-shortened stub **104** that includes a via **90** that extends down to the ground plane **86**.

In some embodiments, the second repeater **16** is designed to receive a signal at an f_1 of 2.75 GHz and transmit a signal back at $2 \cdot f_1$ of 5.5 GHz. Based on simulated data, the frequency separation between the first (sensing) repeater **14** and the second (reference) repeater **16** can be reduced to 200

MHz at the fundamental frequency without a significant increase in the coupling between the antennas. If smaller frequency spacing is required, the distance between the antennas and the ground plane size can be increased. The receive antenna **70** is fed by a $\lambda_g/14$ 69 Ω microstrip line **98** and a 3.9 nH series inductor **100** (e.g., Coilcraft 0402). The transmit antenna **76** is fed by a $\lambda_g/11$ 69 Ω microstrip line **102** and a $\lambda_g/18$ shunt-shortened stub **104** with a Z_o of 64 Ω . Similar to the multiplier circuit of the first repeater **14**, an additional shunt-shortened stub **94** of an electrical length of $\lambda_g/9$ and Z_o of 64 Ω was added to fine tune the impedance match. In the case of the second repeater **16**, the bias network is included in the design for measurement purposes only.

Based on the ADS simulation, it was found that the receive and transmit antennas **70**, **72** should present an impedance of $67 + j250\Omega$ at 2.75 GHz and an impedance of $30 + j160\Omega$ at 5.5 GHz, respectively. The reference repeater reflection coefficients between the antennas **70**, **72** and multiplier circuit, as well as the radiation patterns, are similar to those of the first repeater **14**. The variation over the receive antenna H-plane is 1 dB, while it is 0.8 dB for the transmit antenna **72**. The receive antenna peak gain is 1.8 dB with a simulated radiation efficiency of 94.5%. The peak gain and radiation efficiency of the transmit antenna **72** are 2 dB and 98%, respectively. The antennas **70**, **72** have better gain and efficiency performance than those of the first repeater **14** because of the relative increase in the occupied electrical size.

The performance of the transceiver design described above was characterized inside an anechoic chamber. The measurements were performed by transmitting a signal at an f_1 , which was generated by a vector network analyzer (VNA), and measuring the return signal at $2 \cdot f_1$ using a spectrum analyzer. The transmit and receive interrogator antennas were placed at a distance of 1 m from the transceiver under test and separated by 1.5 m. Low-pass filters were used in the transmit side to filter out the VNA-generated harmonics. FIGS. 6A and 6B show the measured and simulated CG performance for different input power levels and f_1 . The simulated CG of the entire repeater was calculated by adding the sum of antenna gains to the simulated CG curve of the multiplier alone. For an input power of -30 dBm, the CG maxima are -15.5 dB at an f_1 of 2.4 GHz, and -15.7 dB at an f_1 of 2.75 GHz. The 3 dB CG bandwidth is 2% and 1.25% at f_1 of 2.4 GHz and input powers of -20 dBm and -30 dBm, respectively. At an f_1 of 2.75 GHz, the 3 dB CG bandwidth is -2.5% for input powers of -20 dBm and -30 dBm. As shown in FIG. 6B, the measured CG versus received power at an f_1 of 2.4 GHz is well matched with the simulated curve while there is a difference between the measured and simulated curves at an f_1 of 2.75 GHz at low power. This difference can be attributed to fabrication and assembly errors.

Integration of a sensor into the transceiver node was also studied. In order to illustrate the ability to modulate the return signal, a function generator was used to apply a sinusoidal 10 Hz signal at the frequency doubler input through the bias network and the power level of the return signal was measured versus time (FIG. 7B). This applied AC waveform represents the signal that would be provided by a sensor. This measurement was performed for an RF input power level of -30 dBm. As shown in FIG. 7B, when the amplitude of the AC signal is set to 0 V, the return signal level is constant. By applying a low-level signal (20 mV), an amplitude modulated return signal can be detected. Increasing the amplitude of the AC signal increases the variation of

the return signal level. In order to determine the sensitivity of the transceiver to housing a sensor within the structure, full-wave simulations were performed that included a physical model for a commercial piezo thin film vibration sensor (MiniSense 100NM from Measurement Specialties) as shown in FIG. 7A. The presence of the sensor causes a frequency shift of 10 MHz and 1% reduction in the radiation efficiency of the receive antenna and 1 dB increase in the gain variation over the transmit antenna H-plane. This degradation can be mitigated by re-optimizing the design while the sensor is included.

Table I shows a comparison of the maximum CG, operating power, and electrical size (ka) of the presented transceiver design and other single-channel harmonic repeater tags from the prior art. Ka represents the size of the overall structure, where $k=2\pi/\lambda$, λ =free space wavelength at f_1 and a =radius of the smallest sphere enclosing the maximum dimension of the tag. As shown in Table I, although the proposed design contains integrated two repeaters, the CG performance and overall electrical occupied volume compare well with the compact, most efficient single channel designs. In addition, the proposed dual-channel transceiver provides omnidirectional interrogation capability which facilitates the deployment of the node and the interrogation. The expected communication at f_1 of 2.4 GHz range using an interrogator with an effective isotropic radiated power (EIRP) of 2 W and 15 dBi gain antenna on the receive side is 45 m in free space.

TABLE I

Comparison Of The CG And Electrical Size With Others From Literature				
Parameter	Max CG (dB)	RF Power (dBm)	ka	f_1 (GHz)
Presented Design	-7.2	-18	0.78	2.4
[13]	-8.4	-20	0.75	2.4
[9]	-19.7	-15	0.78	1.3
[10]	-35.4	-19.5	0.76	1.3
[11]	-11	-41	0.83	5.9

Calibration of the propagation channel becomes a practical challenge for the implementation of a long-range passive embedded monitoring system. Such calibration is required when the exact characteristics of the interrogator-node link are unknown or vary with time. When the signal that is returned from the sensing repeater slowly changes over time, as would occur for a temperature sensor, the reference repeater can be used to provide a constant signal level to compare with the sensor activity. For the sensors that provide a relatively high-frequency modulated return signal, the reference signal can be used to ensure that the node is operable and to determine the location of the node. For both of these scenarios, the reference signal can also be used to identify the node.

FIG. 8B illustrates the measured return power level at an f_1 of 2.4 GHz and an f_2 of 2.75 GHz for different applied bias voltage to the sensing repeater and different received power. This measurement was performed as illustrated in FIG. 8A. As shown in FIG. 8B, when interrogating the transceiver with a signal frequency of 2.75 GHz, the reference repeater provides a nearly constant return signal at $2 \cdot f_1$ of 5.5 GHz that is unaffected by the bias on the sensing repeater. The variation of the 5.5 GHz signal amplitude is only ± 0.5 dB and ± 0.3 dB for RF input power of -20 and -30 dBm, respectively. Conversely, interrogating the transceiver with a signal frequency f_1 of 2.4 GHz provides a return signal at

$2 \cdot f_1$ of 4.8 GHz that is highly sensitive to the applied DC voltage; 0.1 V bias decreases the return signal by >16 dB. By subtracting the amplitude of the 5.5 GHz return signal from the 4.8 GHz return signal, the modulated return signal can be corrected for channel effects, in practice providing a calibrated sensor reading. This difference between the return signal from the reference and sensing repeaters is referred to as ΔP_r .

Because the H-plane radiation patterns at the sensing and reference repeater frequencies have a gain difference that changes versus angle, the calibrated sensor reading can have uncertainty. That is, in addition to the sensor activity, ΔP_r will vary depending on the angle of incidence (φ) of the interrogation signal, which may not be known to high accuracy. Based on the simulated radiation patterns, the maximum AP variation (δP_r) at 0 V bias versus angle is found to be -2.2 dB for RF input power of -20 dBm and -30 dBm (FIG. 9B). Using the data in FIG. 8B, ΔP_r can be superimposed on ΔP_r to determine the corresponding variation that would be found in the extracted value of the sensor-provided voltage (FIG. 9A). For sensors that generate voltage between 60-200 mV, the maximum voltage variation is 5 mV and 6.5 mV for RF input power of -30 dBm and -20 dBm, respectively. This variation assumes that the angle of incidence may vary between 0° and 360° , however, in an actual application the angular uncertainty may be much less than 45° . For simplification, it was assumed in this assessment that the sensor provides only positive voltages.

A method for identifying individual nodes, when no or very limited signal processing is possible at the node, was also investigated. Different approaches can be used to address this challenge, such as introducing time or phase delay between the nodes or through frequency diversity. Due to potentially severe multi-path propagation environments, however, the frequency diversity method is more viable for embedded sensing. With the disclosed dual-channel transceiver, identification can be performed if a unique design frequency is chosen for the reference repeater of each node. In operation, the interrogation frequency can be swept until the return signal peaks and the node is identified. Given the narrowband characteristics of the nodes, the identification signal from the interrogator is easily isolated from the sensor activity. Furthermore, both the reference and sensing repeater frequencies can be selectable, which squares the number of unique node identifications (IDs). The use of high Q filters to further reduce the CG bandwidth of the repeater would noticeably degrade the CG efficiency.

One approach that can further increase the ID count without affecting performance is to combine polarization and frequency diversity. The antennas used in the transceiver are linearly polarized and, when deployed, adjacent nodes can be oriented to have a given amount of polarization mismatch. A conservative estimate is that 5 dB of mismatch would be sufficient to distinguish between adjacent nodes. Due to the non-linear CG versus power slope, the measured co-pol to cross-pol ratio was found to be at least 40 dB. Therefore, polarization diversity can increase the number of IDs by a factor of 8.

Table II provides the expected number of IDs assuming the interrogator operating bandwidth is 2-3 GHz and the amplitude isolation between the nodes is required to be 5 dB. As shown in the table, by changing the node polarization and the reference repeater frequency, the number of nodes is 48 and 56 for RF power levels of -20 dBm and -30 dBm received at the node, respectively. These numbers are calculated using the interrogator bandwidth divided by the repeater bandwidth (both in MHz) multiplied by 8 for the

polarization diversity factor. Cases with <200 MHz separation between the sensing and reference frequencies were excluded. Changing both the reference and sensing repeater operating frequencies and the polarization will increase the number of IDs to 768 and 2112 for RF power levels of -20 dBm and -30 dBm, respectively. Employing frequency diversity to both channels has the additional significant benefit of allowing different nodes located within the interrogator beam angle to be identified, thus overcoming the limitations on the distance between the deployed nodes, interrogation distance, and interrogator antenna design (directivity, beam width and size).

TABLE II

Number Of Node IDs Using A 2-3 GHz Interrogator For Different RF Power Levels (With Polarization Diversity)		
	-20 dBm	-30 dBm
5 dB CG BW (sensing repeater)	5%	3.2%
5 dB CG BW (reference repeater)	3%	1.6%
Min no. of nodes, changing reference repeater frequency	48	56
Min no. of nodes, changing sensing and reference repeater frequency	768	2112

A preliminary study of the impact of embedding the proposed transceiver was also performed. FIGS. 10A and 10B illustrate the experimental setup that was used. The transceiver is buried in the middle of a box which was filled with dry sand and has four cylindrical metal bars. The metal bars were inserted to better represent a structure with rebar enforcement. The side dimension of the sand box was 30 cm and the bars had a diameter of 1 cm and height of 20 cm. To protect the transceiver from damage and to reduce the effect of the sand direct dielectric loading, the transceiver was placed inside a 5×5×5 cm³ foam box (electrical properties similar to air). During the measurement, the transceiver was oriented to achieve the maximum CG. The CG maxima occurred at shifted f_1 frequencies of 2.39 GHz and 2.72 GHz with similar bandwidths to what was measured in air. The frequency shifts can be corrected for by optimizing the design to operate in a sand environment. The embedding also caused degradation in the CG by 1 dB (at 2.39 GHz) and 6 dB (at 2.72 GHz) for -20 dBm input power. The degradation was approximately 2 dB higher at each frequency for -30 dBm input power. This degradation was due to attenuation through the sand layer and the frequency shift that cause differences in the impedance match conditions. For these reasons the degradation at 2.72 GHz is much higher. In addition, the embedding experiment illustrated a decrease in the co-pol to cross-pol isolation by 8 dB. This decrease was due to signal diffraction at the air/sand interfaces and multi-path reflections of the experiment setup.

The effect of the surrounding medium on the frequency of the CG maxima and the polarization of the return signal will cause uncertainty in the node ID and will require the frequency spacing and polarization mismatch level between the IDs to be larger. For certain sensing environments in which the multi-path and interference levels are high, difficulties in the proposed remote channel calibration approach will also be introduced.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method for monitoring a structure, the method comprising:

associating a passive sensor with the structure, the sensor being configured to measure a physical parameter of the structure that is indicative of the structure's condition;

associating a dual-channel transceiver with the structure, the transceiver having a sensing repeater that operates on a first channel and a reference repeater that operates on a second channel, wherein the sensing repeater is connected to the passive sensor;

receiving with a receive antenna of the reference repeater an interrogation signal transmitted from an interrogation device;

multiplying a frequency of the received interrogation signal with the reference repeater to generate a reference response signal having a multiplied frequency; and

transmitting the reference response signal with the reference repeater to the interrogation device.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein associating a sensor with a structure comprises associating with the structure a sensor configured to measure temperature or vibration of the structure.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein associating a dual-channel transceiver with the structure comprises embedding the dual-channel transceiver within the structure.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein multiplying a frequency of the received interrogation signal comprises multiplying the frequency with a harmonic repeater.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein multiplying a frequency of the received interrogation signal comprises doubling the frequency.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein doubling the frequency comprises doubling the frequency with a Schottky diode.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving the reference response signal with the interrogation device and calibrating a propagation channel between the interrogation device and the dual-channel transceiver with the response signal.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving the reference response signal with the interrogation device and determining a location of the dual-channel transceiver using the response signal.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving with a receive antenna of the sensing repeater a second interrogation signal transmitted from the interrogation device;

multiplying a frequency of the received second interrogation signal on the sensing repeater to generate a second response signal;

modulating the second response signal with an output from the sensor; and

transmitting a modulated response signal with the sensing repeater to the interrogation device.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein multiplying a frequency of the received second interrogation signal comprises multiplying the frequency with a harmonic repeater.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein multiplying a frequency of the received second interrogation signal comprises doubling the frequency.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein doubling the frequency comprises doubling the frequency with a Schottky diode.

13. The method of claim 9, further comprising determining a physical parameter of the structure from the modulated response signal.