

An aerial photograph of a forest, likely a cedar forest, with a grid overlay. The grid lines are thin and light-colored, creating a pattern over the dense green and brown foliage. The text is overlaid on this image.

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TerraSAR-X DInSAR image of Tokyo Station, Japan and its surrounding area

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ORAL SESSION

<b>I01: Development of Circularly Polarized Synthetic Aperture Radar onboard Small Satellite</b>	.....	1
<i>Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo (Chiba University, Japan)</i>		
<b>I02: Approach of AIT on Remote Sensing and GIS Capacity Building in Asia</b>	.....	5
<i>Lal Samarakoon (Geoinformatics Center, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand)</i>		
<b>I03: Introduction of Advanced Small Satellite for Earth Observation</b>	.....	28
<i>Tomoki Takegai et al. (NEC, Japan)</i>		
<b>I04: Development of Micro-satellite Technology at the Indonesian National Institute of Aeronautics and Space (LAPAN)</b>	.....	32
<i>Robertus Heru Triharjanto (Lapan, Indonesia)</i>		
<b>I05: Trend on Polarimetric Synthetic Aperture Radar Techniques</b>	.....	40
<i>Boerner Martin Wolfgang (University of Illinois Urbana, USA)</i>		
<b>I06: MMU UAVSAR: A Miniature C-band Synthetic Aperture Radar for Remote Sensing</b>	.....	69
<i>Koo Voon Chet (Multimedia University, Malaysia)</i>		
<b>I07: Polarimetric Synthetic Aperture Radar : Theory and Application</b>	.....	73
<i>Yoshio Yamaguchi (Niigata University, Japan)</i>		
<b>I08: Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar Processor (SARPROZ)</b>	.....	77
<i>Daniele Perissin (Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hongkong)</i>		
<b>I09: Chemistry of stratosphere and mesosphere revealed by ISS/JEM/SMILES for Earth Diagnosis</b>	.....	96
<i>Suzuki Makoto (ISAS-JAXA)</i>		

### POSTER SESSION

<b>P01: Simulation of direct and indirect effects of aerosol on ground radiative fluxes in Chiba City region</b>	.....	110
<i>Gerry Bagtasa, Naohiro Manago, Naoko Saitoh and Hiroaki Kuze</i>		
<b>P02: Direct sunlight-DOAS measurement of aerosol and NO2 using a non-scanning fiber sensor</b>	.....	114
<i>Ilham Alimuddin, Tomoaki Tanaka, Hiroshi Hara, Yusaku Mabuchi, Naohiro Manago, Tatsuya Yokota, and Hiroaki Kuze</i>		

<b>P03: Monitoring Land subsidence of The City of Makassar using JERS-1 SAR data</b>	.....	118
<i>Ilham Alimuddin, Luhur Bayuaji, Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo and Hiroaki Kuze</i>		
<b>P04: UAVSAR Processing System with Virtex-6 FPGA Board</b>	.....	122
<i>Kazuteru Namba, Takuma Kusama, Koshi Oishi, Kei Iizuka, Hideo Ito and Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo</i>		
<b>P05: Measurement of trace gases in the lower troposphere using visible and near-infrared light sources</b>	.....	126
<i>Kenji Kuriyama, Hayato Saito, Yusaku Mabuchi, Naohiro Manago, Ippei Harada and Hiroaki Kuze</i>		
<b>P06: Determination of Dielectric Constants using Reflection Coefficient Measurement and its Application to Snow and Ice Monitoring</b>	.....	130
<i>Kohei Osa, Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo and Fumihiko Nishio</i>		
<b>P07: Tsunami Inundation Hazard Map and Evacuation Route Assessment as Disaster Mitigation Using Remote Sensing and Geographic Information System Application in Parangtritis Coastal Area, Indonesia</b>	.....	134
<i>Ratih Fitria Putri and Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo</i>		
<b>P08: Continous investigation of Metropolitan city land deformation by DInSAR technique on L, C and X-band SAR data, case study: Jakarta city, Indonesia</b>	.....	138
<i>Luhur Bayuaji, Bambang Setiadi and Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo</i>		
<b>P09: Design of a Broadband Antenna for CP-SAR Installed on Unmanned Aerial Vehicle</b>	.....	144
<i>Yohandri, Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo, and Hiroaki Kuze</i>		
<b>P10: SAR Imaging Technology using Reflected GNSS Signal</b>	.....	148
<i>Yoshinori Mikawa, Takuji Ebinuma and Shinichi Nakasuka</i>		
<b>P11: Assessment of scene changes in multi-sensor and multi-temporal fusion images of very high resolution satellite imagery</b>	.....	152
<i>Yuhendra, Ilham Alimuddin, Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo and Hiroaki Kuze</i>		
<b>P12: Development of 9.41 GHz Weather Radar</b>	.....	156
<i>Adiya Sugar, Josaphat Tetuko Sri Sumantyo, Osa Kohei and Hiroaki Kuze</i>		

# *Design of a Broadband Antenna for CP-SAR Installed on Unmanned Aerial Vehicle*

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## **Abstract**

A broadband antenna for circularly polarized synthetic aperture radar (CP-SAR) sensor has been designed. This L-band sensor is projected to reduce the Faraday rotation effect and generate the axial ratio image (ARI), which is a new data that expectantly will reveal unique various backscattering characteristics. The sensor will be installed onboard unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) which will be aimed for fundamental research and applications. To satisfy the requirements of the CP-SAR system onboard UAV, a new broadband microstrip antenna design is presented in this paper. The finite-element method is employed for optimizing the design and achieving a good circular polarization at the center frequency of 1.27 GHz. The broadband axial ratio bandwidth and reasonable gain indicate that this antenna is promising for the CP-SAR sensor. This research will contribute to the field of radar for remote-sensing technology.

**Keywords:** Synthetic aperture radar, Circular polarization, Broadband antenna

## **1. Introduction**

The role of Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) is critical in currently remote-sensing applications due to ability penetrate the cloud, operate in all-weather condition at night and day time. Various applications of SAR data can be found in many areas such as for determination land subsidence [1], volume change estimation of land deformation [2] and, etc.. However, the today SAR with linear polarization has limited information data, which consists of amplitude and phase. To obtain a more thorough measurement data, a SAR sensor with more information will be contributed. Hence, we propose the new SAR system called Circularly Polarized Synthetic Aperture Radar (CP-SAR).

A CP-SAR sensor is projected to generate the axial ratio image, which is a new data that expectantly will reveal unique various backscattering characteristics. In other hands, the CP-SAR sensor also can be applied to reduce the Faraday rotation effect occurring in linear polarization when propagates through the ionosphere [3-5]. The L-band (1.27 GHz) CP-SAR sensor will be installed on an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). In UAV experiment, the microwave signal from UAV platform is transmitted by either the left-hand or right-hand circularly polarized (LHCP or RHCP) antenna. The backscattering signal from the target is captured by both the LHCP and RHCP antennas to generate the axial ratio image (see Figure 1). The CP-SAR parameters,

including size, weight, power consumption, etc. have been thoroughly considered to achieve the CP-SAR measurement while maintaining the aerodynamic stability of the UAV system. This sensor is intended for several targets such as land cover and snow cover mapping, oceanography, and disaster monitoring.

To realize this CP-SAR sensor, the link budget calculation of the system has been done in the Microwave Remote Sensing Laboratory (MRSL), Chiba University. The key parameters of the system are presented as listed in Table 1. Based on these parameters, the CP-SAR system and a circularly polarized (CP) antenna are designed.

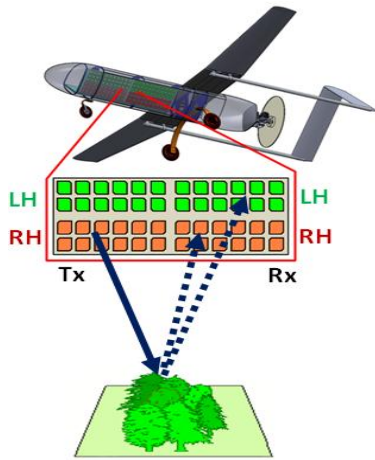
In previous research, a number of CP microstrip antennas for CP-SAR have been developed [6-10]. Nonetheless, the axial ratio bandwidth of these antennas is quite narrow ( $\leq 1\%$ ). In CP-SAR system onboard UAV, the broadband axial ratio antenna is required to maintain the fine resolutions of the sensor. Therefore, the purpose of the present paper is to describe the design of a broadband CP microstrip antenna for CP-SAR installed on UAV.

## **2. CP-SAR Sensor System and UAV**

Generally, the major parts of the sensor system are composed of a transmitter (Tx), a receiver (Rx) and antennas. The transmitter sub-system consists of a chirp generator, band - pass filters (BPF), an up-converter, a

**Table 1** The key antenna parameters for CP-SAR sensor onboard UAV[11].

Parameters	Specification
Frequency center (GHz)	1.27
Pulse Bandwidth (MHz)	233.31
Axial ratio (dB)	$\leq 3$
Antenna efficiency	$> 80\%$
Antenna gain (dBic)	14.32
Azimuth beamwidth	$6.77^\circ$
Elevation beamwidth	$3.57^\circ - 31.02^\circ$
Antenna size (m)	1.5 x 0.4
Polarization (Tx/Rx)	RHCP + LHCP



**Fig. 1** Transmitting and receiving signal on UAV.

power amplifier (PA), a local oscillator (LO), and a switch that chooses either the LHCP or RHCP transmitted from the UAV platform. Thus, the receiver sub-system is capable of processing both the LHCP and RHCP signals simultaneously. Major components of the receiver subsystem are a low-noise amplifier (LNA), two BPFs, two I/Q demodulators, 4 channel analog to digital converters (ADCs) and a data recorder (memory).

The UAV platform has 4.75 m main body length and 6 m wingspan, with a maximum payload of 25 kg. General specifications of the UAV are described in Table 2.

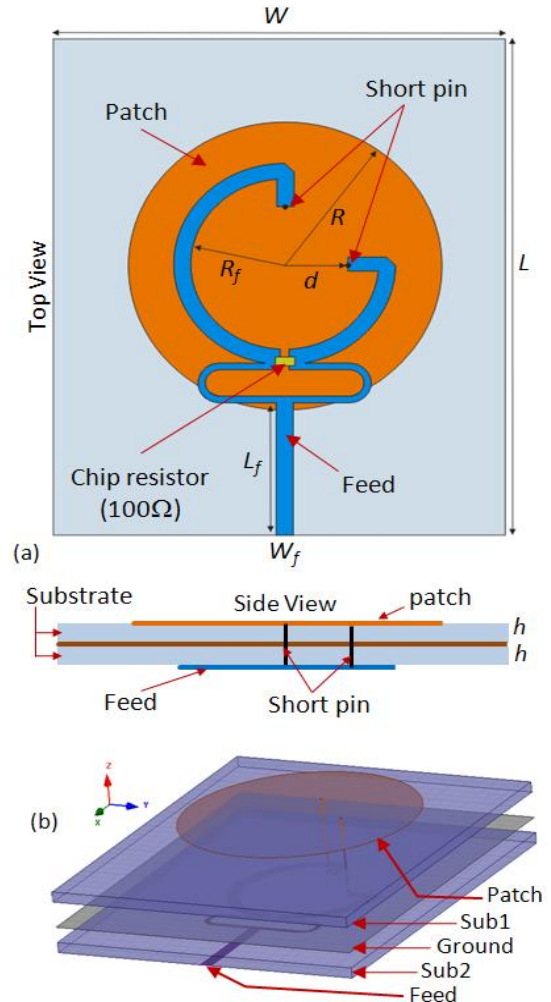
**Table 2** General specification of the UAV.

Parameters	Specification
Payload (kg)	20-25
Endurance (hrs)	4-6
Altitude (m)	1000-4000
Speed (km/h)	100-120

### 3. Antenna Geometry Design

The geometry of the proposed antenna is shown in Figure 2, where Figure 4(a) gives the top and side view structure, and 4(b) show the 3D view of the antenna structure. The circular microstrip antenna is designed on two layers substrate (NPC-H220A, Nippon Pillar) having a permittivity  $\epsilon_r = 2.17$  and a loss tangent  $\delta = 0.0005$ . In addition, to obtain a broadband antenna, a Wilkinson power divider is implemented on the feed structure.

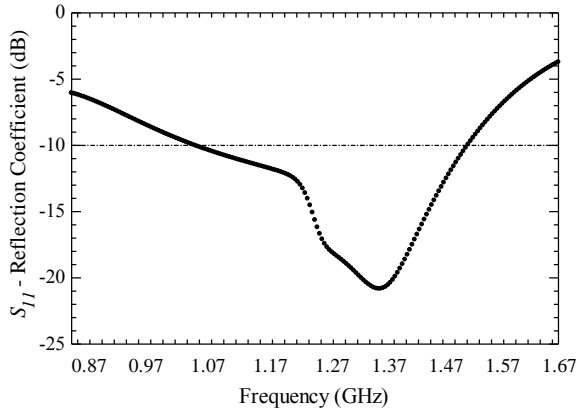
The proposed antenna is optimized using Ansoft High Frequency Structure Simulator (HFSS). Based on the simulated result, the optimum geometry parameters of the antenna are the following:  $L = 148$  mm,  $W = 124$  mm,  $h = 1.60$  mm,  $W_f = 4.70$  mm,  $L_f = 40.0$  mm,  $R = 46.0$  mm,  $R_f = 25.7$  mm, and  $d = 17.7$  mm.



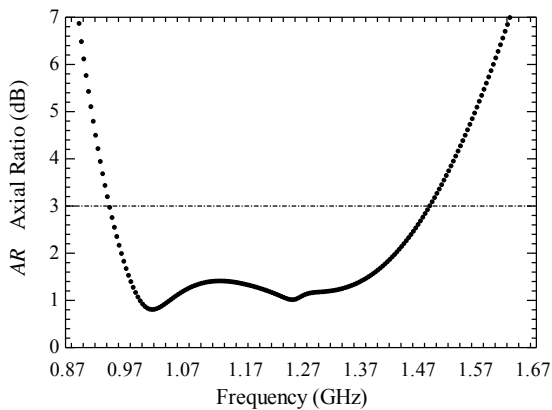
**Fig. 2** Geometry design of the proposed antenna: (a) Top and side view, and (b) 3D view.

#### 4. Simulation Results and Discussion

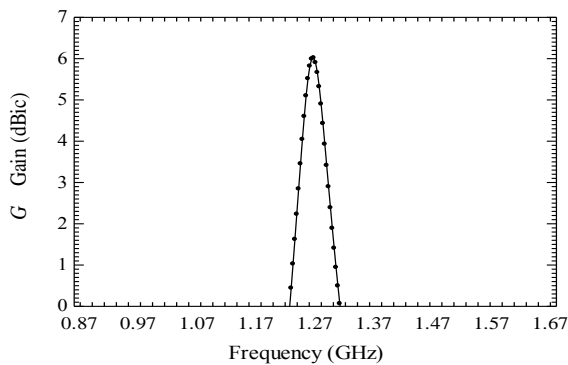
Figures 3 to 8 shows the reflection coefficient ( $S_{11}$ ), axial ratio (AR), gain ( $G$ ), and radiation pattern of the antenna. The broadband CP antenna characteristic can be achieved as shown in Fig. 4.



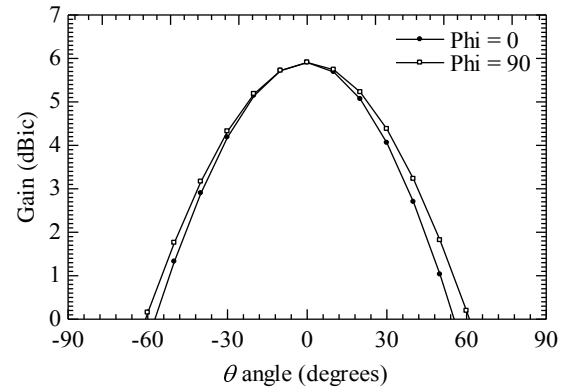
**Fig. 3** Reflection coefficient plotted as a function of frequency.



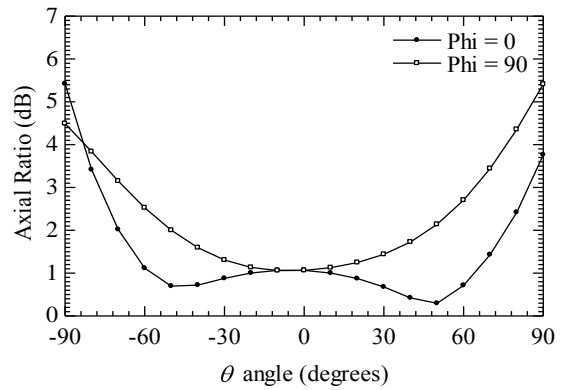
**Fig. 4** Axial ratio (AR) plotted as a function of frequency.



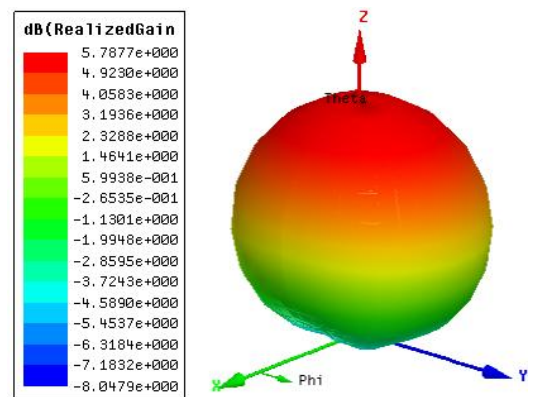
**Fig. 5** Relationship between antenna gain and frequency at  $\theta$  angle =  $0^\circ$ .



**Fig. 6** Radiation pattern of the antenna at  $f = 1.27$  GHz.



**Fig. 7** Axial ratio plotted as a function of theta angle.



**Fig. 8** A 3D beam pattern of the antenna at  $f = 1.27$  GHz.

#### 5. Summary

The design of a broadband antenna for CP-SAR sensor onboard an unmanned aerial vehicle has been presented in this paper. The good CP performance has been attained over a 3-dB axial ratio bandwidth of around 540 MHz (42.5%), with fairly high gain of about 6.02 dBic in the operating band (1.27 GHz). In general, the simulated result performance in terms of return losses, axial ratio, and radiation patterns, mostly satisfy the requirements for the CP-SAR sensor

onboard UAV. In the future work, the fabrication and array configuration of the broadband antenna will be realized and installed onboard UAV.

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