

PORTABLE AND MODULAR WASTE LIQUID SEPARATOR/COLLECTOR DEVICE**TECHNICAL FIELD**

The present disclosure relates to aircraft engine washing, and in particular to devices usable for collecting waste water from washing.

BACKGROUND

Over the last decade the assignee of the present application, Gas Turbine Efficiency Sweden AB, has developed proprietary technology relating to aircraft turbine engine washing. This technology comprises applying pressurized water or washing fluid to the aircraft engines at the air inlet end and collecting the waste fluid at the exhaust outlet end, and a number of devices and methods have been claimed in several patents and patent applications.

Nevertheless, there is still room for further development in this field. In particular the accessibility of aircraft engines varies substantially between aircraft types and models. Thus, for rear engines that are mounted centrally on the aircraft it is difficult to gain appropriate access in order to attach and/or position the washing equipment using the current state of the art technology. In particular, rear engines can be located as high up as at about 30-40 feet above ground, which makes it difficult to use standard lifting means available at the airports. One would need to have access to a crane or similar heavy duty machinery in order to lift the apparatus to this height.

SUMMARY

Therefore, in order to overcome the problems of accessibility the inventors have devised a portable and modular separator/collector apparatus for collecting waste liquid during a washing operation of a rear mounted turbo jet engine.

The modular waste liquid separator and collector device according to the disclosure comprises as individual modules a support structure, a droplet separator connectable to said support structure, and a waste liquid chute device, wherein said component modules are individually portable.

An advantage of having a modular and portable device is that it can be handled manually, i.e. operators can hand carry the components to the place of use, and assemble it on the spot. This means that it can be used in places where it is difficult or even impossible to physically locate a large apparatus, which normally requires powerful lifting means such as fork lifts, hydraulic manipulation arms etc. for positioning the apparatus.

With the modular device according to the disclosure each module can easily be moved to the place of use by the operators, and assembled.

In another aspect of the disclosure there is provided a method of providing a waste liquid separator and collector device, comprising providing a support structure module, providing a droplet separator module connectable to said support structure module, providing a waste liquid collector module, locating said modules individually at a place of use, and assembling said modules to an operative unit.

Further scope of applicability of the present disclosure will become apparent from the detailed description given hereinafter and the accompanying drawings which are given by way of illustration only, and are thus not to be considered limiting on the present invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 shows an exemplary assembled device according to the disclosure ready for use on a work platform at the rear engine of an aircraft.

Fig. 2 shows an exemplary foldable frame.

Fig. 3 shows an exemplary droplet separator.

Fig. 4 shows an exemplary waste liquid collector, a so called drip pan.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Fig. 1 shows a modular device according to one example of the disclosure in a mounted state and in position for use in the figure the device is located on a work platform specially designed for enabling maintenance work to be performed on a rear mounted engine of a turbo jet powered aircraft at a high elevation, for example, of around 30-40 feet above ground.

The modular device according to the disclosure, indicated at 10 in Fig. 1, generally comprises a foldable support structure 12, a droplet separator 14 attachable to the support structure 12 so as to be carried on the support structure 12, and a waste liquid chute device 16 (also referred to as a drip pan), which may also be foldable. The individual components are sufficiently light-weight that they can be easily carried, such as by two persons up the stairs (or in a lift) to the work platform, where the components are assembled to a functional separator/collector and put into use.

The device 10 is used in a washing operation performed on the engine, the washing involves attaching a nozzle manifold to the air inlet end (not shown) of the engine, and applying high pressure water to the interior structure of the engine. This process will

efficiently remove fouling substances and objects from the fans and walls in the interior of the engine. During this process the engine will normally be cranked, i.e. it will be driven by means of pressurized air at various possible speeds of rotation.

5 The waste liquid, i.e. water in the form of minute liquid droplets having passed through the engine including entrained particles and fouling material of various kinds, will hit the separator 14 in the device 10 according the disclosure. According to use of one exemplary separator 14 droplets will coalesce and trickle downwards, under the influence of gravity. Eventually the water falls onto the drip pan 16. The collected liquid can suitably be conveyed by appropriate tubing (not shown) down to a tank located on the
10 ground.

Now the individual components of the modular device according to the disclosure will be described in more detail.

Referring to Fig. 2 an exemplary embodiment of a support structure 12 is disclosed.

15 This embodiment comprises a separate frame 20 and a foot structure 22. In one embodiment the frame 20 and the foot structure 22 are rigidly connectable to each other so as to form a combination where the frame has an upright orientation and the foot structure is horizontally oriented.

There may also be provided a locking and stabilizing device 24 for locking
20 and stabilizing the foot 22 and the frame 20 in a first position in which they are in a generally perpendicular orientation with respect to each other. In the embodiment shown in Fig. 2 this locking and stabilizing device comprises diagonal braces 24 connecting the frame 20 and the foot structure 22. The braces 24 may be pivotally connected at one end, either to a frame part 20 or to a foot part 22, and comprises a locking element at the other end, such
25 that the braces will secure the perpendicular orientation of the frame 20 and foot 22 with respect to each other.

Alternatively, the braces 24 can be separate members that are connected by locking element at both ends to the frame 20 and foot 22, in a diagonal orientation.

In the shown embodiment the frame 20 is essentially rectangular, having two
30 side bars 26 and at least one cross-bar 27 connecting the side bars 26. The foot structure 22 comprises two foot bars 28 pivotally coupled at a position P between the ends of the respective foot bar 28, to one end of each of the side bars 26.

Suitably the frame 20 and the foot structure 22 are made of metal bars or steel or possibly aluminum. However, they could equally well be manufactured from sheet metal suitably pressed to provide reinforcement profiles in the sheet or other suitable materials. The foot structure 22 could thereby comprise a flat structure, suitably reinforced for stability, instead of comprising two distinct “feet” 28, as shown in Fig. 2.

Any other design of the support structure is of course equally possible as long as it meets the requirement of being capable of carrying the separator.

For connecting the separator (to be described below) to the frame 20 of the support 12 there are suitable coupling means provided. Such means can be of any design as long as they maintain the separator in its position on the frame in a secure manner.

A simple coupling comprises hook members on the frame and mating recesses in the separator. Other simple means for fastening could be elastic straps attached on one part and secured to the other on a hook.

A skilled person would be able to design numerous variations of attachment means.

Fig. 3 discloses an example of a droplet separator 14 usable in the present disclosure.

Droplet separators are known per se. However, in an exemplary embodiment a droplet separator 14 comprises a frame having upper and lower frame segments 30, 31 and side segments 32 connecting said upper and lower segments. There are droplet separating elements provided in the frame. These elements are capable of deflecting the flow of a mixture of gas and liquid emanating from the exhaust outlet of the engine, whereby the liquid loses momentum, and coalesces on the elements. The coalesced liquid in the form of larger droplets is conveyed downwards by gravity, and are collected in the lower frame segment 31. The lower frame segment 31 comprises a drain 34 for draining liquid that has collected in the lower frame segment 31. There is also suitably provided tubing 35 coupled to the drain 34 for conveying the waste liquid to a waste liquid reservoir, located on the ground. Other suitable droplet separators or other devices for removing the liquid from the air flow may also be used.

Turning now to Fig. 4 an exemplary embodiment of the waste liquid collecting drip pan 16 is shown.

A drip pan 16 usable in the disclosure comprises two main parts 42, 44, pivotally connected so as to be foldable. These parts 42, 44 form a respective “waste liquid

chute” for collecting waste liquid emanating from the various points on the engine during a washing operation. A first chute, the rear chute 42 below, is adapted to be positioned with its free end, i.e. the end opposite to the end where the two main parts 42, 44 are connected, in front of and in suitably in contact with the droplet separator (although being in contact is not a requirement). This rear chute 42 will receive liquid emanating from bottom of the droplet separator 14, and direct it towards the lowest point of the chute 42 where it is drained off. It will also act as a guide for liquid coming directly from the engine, entrained with the flowing air but missing the separator 14 and splashing against the rear chute 42. Thus, it will act as a “splash stop” preventing liquid to end up at unwanted areas on the working platform.

A second chute 44, referred to as the front chute below, extends away from the rear chute 42 in an unfolded state and is adapted to be located under the engine housing for collecting liquid trickling through the housing and emanating from various holes and recesses in said engine housing.

As can be best seen in Fig. 1, the two waste liquid chutes are positioned so as to be inclined in order to enable water to collect by running down the chutes 42, 44 and down into the region where the chutes 42, 44 are connected. In this region there is suitably provided a drain 46 to which a tubing 48 is coupled and through which the water is conveyed further down to a tank on the ground.

The tubing from the chute and the tubing from the separator can be connected via T-coupling to a common tubing or alternate arrangements.

The rear chute 42 for collecting liquid from the separator has steeper slope/inclination than the front chute 44 in Fig. 4. This is simply an adaptation to the geometry of the engine.

In order to position the chutes 42, 44 in their inclined positions, various means can be provided. For the first chute 42, in the one exemplary embodiment thereof, it simply rests against the separator 14, as indicated in the figure. However, there may be suitable means for attaching it to the frame 22 of the support 12 or to the separator 14 or both. However, this is not strictly necessary. Instead there could be provided a support strut resting against the floor or against some part of the foot of the support.

The front chute 44 is suitably provided with a separate support member. In the shown embodiment this support comprises a pivotable yoke like device 48, attached to

the sides of the chute 44 and extending underneath it. It can be locked in a plurality of different positions causing different inclinations and heights of the chute 44.

5 In accordance with the disclosure there is also provided a new method of providing a waste liquid separator and collector device. The method comprises, in one example, providing a support structure module, a droplet separator module connectable to said support structure module, and a waste liquid collector module, as individual components. Said modules are located individually at a place of use and then the modules are assembled to an operative unit. The modules may be carried by hand to the place of use, and they can also be transported to the place of use by mechanical means such as by means
10 of a fork lift, a crane or hydraulic apparatus.

The foregoing examples are provided merely for the purpose of explanation and are in no way to be construed as limiting. While reference to various embodiments are shown, the words used herein are word so description and illustration, rather than words of limitation. Further, although reference to particular means, materials, and embodiments are
15 shown, there is no limitation to the particulars disclosed herein. Rather, the embodiments extend to all functionally equivalent structures, methods, and uses, such as are within the scope of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

1. A modular waste liquid separator and collector device, comprising the following component modules: a support structure comprising: a frame and a foot structure pivotally coupled to the frame, the foot structure being movable between a first position wherein it is essentially parallel with the frame and a second position in which it is essentially perpendicular to the frame; and a locking and stabilizing device for locking and stabilizing the foot structure and the frame in said essential perpendicular orientation; a droplet separator connectable to said support structure; and a waste liquid chute device; wherein said component modules are individually portable.

2. The device according to claim 1, wherein the support structure and the waste liquid collector are foldable with respect to each other.

3. The device according to claim 1, wherein the frame is essentially rectangular, having two side bars and at least one cross-bar connecting the side bars, and wherein the foot structure comprises two foot bars pivotally coupled between the ends of the respective foot bar, to one end of each of the side bars, and wherein there is provided at least one stabilizing strut connected or connectable to the frame and a foot bar, respectively, so as to lock the frame and foot bar in said essentially perpendicular orientation with respect to each other.

4. The device according to claim 1, wherein the droplet separator comprises a frame having upper and lower frame segments and side segments connecting said upper and lower segments, and droplet separating elements provided in the frame, said droplet separating elements capable of conveying droplets downwards by gravity so as to collect In the lower segment, the droplets being separated from a flow of a mixture of liquid and gas impacting said separating elements during use.

5. The device according to claim 4, wherein said lower frame segment comprises a drain for draining liquid that has collected in the lower frame segment.

6. The device according to claim 5, further comprising tubing coupled to the drain for conveying the waste liquid to a waste liquid reservoir.

7. The device according to claim 1, wherein the waste liquid collector comprises at least two parts, pivotally connected so as to be foldable, a first part adapted to be positioned with its free end adjacent to the front side of the droplet separator, and a second part adapted to extend away from the first part in an unfolded state.

8. The device according to claim 7, wherein the waste liquid collector is connectable to the frame or to the separator or both.

9. A method of providing a waste liquid separator and collector device, comprising

- providing a support structure module;
- providing a droplet separator module connectable to said support structure module;
- providing a waste liquid collector module;
- locating said modules individually at a place of use; and
- assembling said modules to an operative unit, wherein the support structure module further comprises a frame and a foot structure and the step of locating said modules includes the step of rotating the frame about a pivot axis located on the foot structure.

10. The method according to claim 9, comprising hand carrying said modules to the place of use.

11. The method according to claim 9, comprising transporting said modules to the place of use by mechanical means.

12. The method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of locking the frame in place with respect to the foot structure.

13. A modular waste liquid separator and collector device, comprising the following component modules: a support structure comprising: a separate frame and a foot structure rigidly connectable to each other so as to form a combination comprising an upright frame and a horizontal foot, and a locking and stabilizing device for locking and stabilizing the foot and frame structures in an essentially perpendicular orientation with respect to each other; a droplet separator connectable to said support structure; and a waste liquid chute device; wherein said component modules are individually portable.

14. The device according to claim 13, wherein the support structure and the waste liquid collector are foldable with respect to each other.

15. The device according to claim 13, wherein the frame is essentially rectangular, having two side bars and at least one cross-bar connecting the side bars, and wherein the foot structure comprises two foot bars pivotally coupled between the ends of the respective foot bar, to one end of each of the side bars, and wherein there is provided at least one stabilizing strut connected or connectable to the frame and a foot bar, respectively, so as to lock the frame and foot bar in said essentially perpendicular orientation with respect to each other.

16. The device according to claim **13**, wherein the droplet separator comprises a frame having upper and lower frame segments and side segments connecting said upper and lower segments, and droplet separating elements provided in the frame, said droplet separating elements capable of conveying droplets downwards by gravity so as to collect in the lower segment, the droplets being separated from a flow of a mixture of liquid and gas impacting said separating elements during use.

17. The device according to claim **16**, wherein said lower frame segment comprises a drain for draining liquid that has collected in the lower frame segment.

18. The device according to claim **17**, further comprising tubing coupled to the drain for conveying the waste liquid to a waste liquid reservoir.

19. The device according to claim **13**, wherein the waste liquid collector comprises at least two parts, pivotally connected so as to be foldable, a first part adapted to be positioned with its free end adjacent to the front side of the droplet separator, and a second part adapted to extend away from the first part in an unfolded state.

20. The device according to claim **19**, wherein the waste liquid collector is connectable to the frame or to the separator or both.