DYNAMIC TRANSMISSION CONTROL FOR A WIRELESS NETWORK

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CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/241,854, filed on 09/11/2009, by Grabowsky, et al., entitled DYNAMIC TRANSMISSION CONTROL FOR A WIRELESS NETWORK, herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0001] Small Unmanned Vehicle Systems, such as UAVs, can accomplish their missions using Digital Data Link (DDL) communications. For example, an unmanned aerial vehicle or UAV transmits via the DDL a large amount of data (video) to a ground controller, with a small amount of data being transmitted to the UAV. Since the unmanned vehicles are typically power constrained, the bulk of the DDL data, video data from the UAV, is transmitted by the power constrained UAV.

[0002] Moreover, it is critical that many of the DDL signals be real time. To control a remotely piloted vehicle, the operator receives, views, and mentally processes real time video, and then physically responds, i.e. moves a control stick, to transmit control signals to the vehicle, which are acted upon by the vehicle. It requires full motion real time data in both directions.

[0003] Traditional systems, WiMax, cellular phone, are optimized without regard to power constraints, and without regard to critical timing constraints based on the nature of the information within the signal. With traditional systems, for high quality video, time is not critical, so it is typically buffered, to take advantage of time gaps. In a UAV, such buffering is not possible due to the critical nature of the response to the video signal. With packet voice or video telephony, the data is heavily compressed, with lower data rates, and not full motion high quality real time data. With UAVs, however, the data needs to be

transmitted to the operator quickly, when ready, and not buffered for when it is convenient for the medium or the protocol.

[0004] In addition, for UAVs, the DDL must satisfy a number of operational scenarios not present in traditional system.

[0005] What is needed are planned DDL services and features that enable aircraft and ground devices to fulfill their missions.

SUMMARY

[0006] In one possible embodiment, a wireless network with dynamic transmission control is provided that includes a multiple of nodes. The nodes include an arbiter and multiple client nodes. The arbiter is configured to control operation of the client nodes by defining communications operation cycles and allocating bandwidth to each of the client nodes on a cycle by cycle basis in response to requests for bandwidth from the client nodes.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The features and advantages of the present invention will be better understood with regard to the following description, appended claims, and accompanying drawings where:

[0008] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram illustrating an example DDL environment.

[0009] **FIG. 2** illustrates a network architecture and the protocol layers.

[00010] **FIGS. 3A** and **3B** show block diagrams of node addressing for a sample DDL session, from the perspective of a laptop connected to a ground control station.

[00011] **FIGS. 4A** and **4B** show a block diagram showing transmit slot allocations of arbiter cycles over a mission lifetime for one aircraft being controlled by one ground control station.

[00012] **FIGS. 5A** and **5B** is a block diagram illustrating transmit slot allocations of arbiter cycles over a mission lifetime for an example video relay scenario.

[00013] **FIGS. 6A** and **6B** is a block diagram illustrating transmit slot allocations of arbiter cycles over a portion of a mission for an example video relay scenario.

DESCRIPTION

[00014] In various embodiments, a wireless network has multiple nodes (transmitters/receivers controlled by an operating system) where one of the nodes functions as an arbiter to control operation of the other nodes. The arbiter defines operation cycles which are each divided up into a set of time segments. The arbiter also assigns to each node in the network a transmission start time (a time segment) and transmission duration for each cycle (number of time segments). The transmission start time and the duration can be changed for each node and for each cycle (thus dynamic) by the arbiter. The nodes can be ground control stations GCUs, unmanned vehicles, such as unmanned aerial vehicles or UAVs, or the like. In some embodiments, the ground station may operate as the arbiter and the UAVs will be the nodes being given varying transmission times. Since small UAVs require very scarce radio spectrum, this allows the allocated radio spectrum to be efficiently shared by multiple nodes (potentially multiple UAVs and ground systems) by adjusting the bandwidth allocated to each node depending on the instantaneous demand by the node as well as the need of the operator. This allows the operator to control whether each UAV either, transmits full video, transmit degraded video or still pictures, or does not transmit any imagery, maximizing the bandwidth available for the most desired transmission purpose, and reducing the bandwidth for the less desired purposes.

[00015] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram illustrating an example DDL environment 10. In one DDL session 15 in a frequency band x, the DDL environment 10 incorporates unmanned vehicles UAV1 and UAV2, such as aerial vehicles, each containing a DDL node 100 and 300, respectively. The DDL environment 10 may further incorporate manned ground stations GCU1 and GCU2, each containing a DDL node 200 and 400, respectively. Handheld controllers 205 and 405 connected to GCU1 and GCU2, respectively, are used by the operator (not shown) to generate control signals for UAV1 or UAV2. Optionally, the DDL environment 10 may also incorporate external devices 210 and 410, such as laptops, physically connected to a DDL node 200 and 400, respectively, such as via Ethernet connections 215 and 415. Moreover, one or more optional remote viewing terminal(s) RVT containing a DDL node 500 may be included. The remote viewing terminal(s) and/or ground stations may optionally contain push-to-talk or PTT voice communications capability (not illustrated) in FIG. 1. In addition to the DDL session 15, other DDL sessions 25, operating in other operating frequency bands, also may be present in the DDL environment 10.

[00016] The DDL environment 10 and associated architecture show in **FIG. 1** is for illustration purposes and allows multiple devices, components, or items of the various types discussed above, or other device or item types. Furthermore, several of the devices, components, or items may be combined or omitted as desired. For example, the ground station GCU1 and the handheld controller 205 may be combined into a single device. Or, for example the external device 210 may be omitted, or may be a device other than a laptop computer device.

[00017] The DDL system may contain various functional and design constraints, depending on the embodiment. In various embodiments, the DDL system should provide some or all of the following functions:

- DDL Nodes should be able to address each other.
- Laptops (or Hand Controllers) should be able to address their local DDL Node. This is the node within the ground station that the laptop plugs into.
- Laptops (or Hand Controllers) should be able to address all DDL Nodes (not just the local DDL Node).
- Laptops should be able to address other Laptops (which are plugged in to other DDL Nodes).
- The DDL LAN should support a router connected to a local DDL Node and also to a Wide-Area-Network to provide connectivity between the two.

Moreover, in various embodiments, the DDL system design my conform to some or all of the following constraints:

- The Hand Controller is optional. The local DDL Node should be capable of connecting to a DDL network without a Hand Controller.
- The Laptop is optional. The local DDL Node should be capable of connecting to a DDL network without a Laptop.
- Operator setup should not be required. Basic DDL scenarios can be satisfied without requiring an Operator to pre-configure DDL Nodes. Advanced scenarios may require minimal Operator setup.
- Non-standard laptop software should not be required. Normal operating system software is sufficient to connect a Laptop to the DDL network. Controlling aircraft requires special software.

- Introduction of DDL Nodes or attachment of external devices should not cause service disruptions.

Example DDL Scenarios

[00018] The list of example scenarios in **Table 1** below represent the various missions, and portions of missions, for which DDL may operate, in various UAV embodiments. Other embodiments and scenarios are possible. The scenarios that are portions of missions can occur as part of multiple other missions. For example, the GCS Handoff Scenario may occur during the mission represented by the Classic Scenario, in which case both scenarios impose requirements on the DDL design.

[00019] As shown in **Table 1**, there are multiple scenarios envisioned for operating a DDL network. Some scenarios comprise an entire mission, and other scenarios consist of one portion of a mission. Some scenarios can be components of many missions. The following list in **Table 1** is a collection of scenarios that elucidate features applicable to a DDL network design.

TABLE 1

Import-ance	Name	Scenario Description	VBW Split	GCS	AC	EXT	BW Cfg
HIGH	Classic	Traditional scenario - one pilot controls one aircraft. BW is devoted to direct aircraft video to ground leg.	1	1	1		Auto
HIGH	Autonomous Continuation	Aircraft commanded to continue mission without continuous control.	1	0	1		Auto
HIGH	GCU Hand-Off	Aircraft mission continues during handoff from one GCU to another.	1	2	1		Auto
HIGH	Shared Video with Push-To-Talk	Traditional scenario, plus multiple RVTs that have PTT voice party line.	1	1	1	9	Auto
HIGH	Video Relay	Pilot launches relay aircraft which orbits autonomously, then launches and flies sensor aircraft. BW is split between sensor to relay leg, and relay to ground leg.	2	1	2		Auto
MEDIUM	Multiple Pairs	Pilot 1 controls aircraft 1, and Pilot 2 controls aircraft 2, on same channel. BW is split between both aircraft video and relay to ground leg.	3	2	2		Auto
MEDIUM	Data Relay –	Pilot launches relay aircraft which	0	1	1	9	Opr

	Small	orbits autonomously, relay devoted to relaying data between external clients. (See Comm Relay - Large)					
MEDIUM	Relay Relief	Launch relief aircraft to take over as relay and as Arbiter upon battery low.		1	3		Opr
MEDIUM	Ground Robot	Pilot launches relay aircraft, then another driver controls robot via relay. BW is split between robot video to relay, and relay to ground, and aircraft video to ground.	3	1	1	2	Tech
MEDIUM	Swarm	Swarm of aircraft fly around single GCU, within direct downlink range (no relay). GCU surfs the video streams.	4	1	1	2	Opr
LOW	Data Relay – Large	Pilot launches relay aircraft which orbits autonomously, relay devoted to relaying data between external clients.	0	1	1	100	Tech
LOW	Multi-Hop Relay	Aircraft relay chain beyond direct range of first relay.	3+	1	3+		Tech
LOW	Peer-Peer Direct	Nodes that can hear each other directly, suppress the Arbiter rebroadcast.	0				Tech
LOW	Mesh	No Arbiter. Nodes repeat any packet they hear, decrementing the Time-To-Live count to zero.	9	1	9	0	Tech

TABLE 1 KEY

VBW Split	Denotes how many video stream bandwidths need to be accommodated. Direct aircraft to ground would be a split of 1, relay would be a split of 2, relay from distant aircraft plus direct from near aircraft would be 3.
GCS	Number of Ground Stations (GCUs) transmitting to control aircraft.
AC	Number of Aircraft transmitting video and TM.
EXT	Number of External data devices, each requiring a ground station for transmitting.
BW Cfg	Auto = BW allocation fully automatically ("Split among controlled aircraft")
	Opr = BW allocation per high-level operator policy ("Split" or "Focus-On-One")
	Tech = BW allocation specified quantitatively, in detail, by technician

Network Protocol Layers

[00020] Network architectures are comprised of a number of protocol layers as shown in **FIG. 2**. As illustrated in **FIG. 2**, the DDL network can be viewed as a vertical stack from the lowest physical layer up to the standard network layer. The layers are:

Network Layer- The highest layer transfers Ethernet packets between external devices connected to DDL nodes. Packets have MAC addresses which are used by the external devices to communicate with each other. Normal internet traffic enters the DDL network via one edge DDL node, and exits from all other edge DDL nodes, providing a channel for those external devices to communicate with each other. In the network layer, external devices communicate with other external devices.

Link Layer- This middle layer transfers DDL packets between DDL nodes. These packets have DDL addresses, consisting of a DDL RUID (Random Unit Identifier), sometimes alternatively referred to as a SUID (Session User Identifier), that identifies the DDL node, and a DDL port which identifies a particular input/output port of that DDL node.

Physical Layer- The lowest layer handles timing of transmissions and preparing the data for modulating into RF energy radiated by a transmitter and intercepted and processed by multiple receivers.

Arbiter

[00021] Referring to **FIG. 1**, each DDL network session 15 is coordinated by one of the DDL nodes 100, 200, 300, 400, or 500, operating in the role of "arbiter." This arbiter node is usually onboard an aircraft UAV1 or UAV2 to benefit from the advantaged position up in the air. In various other network environments (not shown), for example in a totally ground based network environment, the arbiter may be in a node that is advantageously positioned to, capable of, or particularly effective at communicating with the other nodes. Or, it may be in a node in secure location, if desired. In FIG. 1, DDL node 100 in UAV1 is illustrated in the role of arbiter. The primary duty of the arbiter is to schedule time slots during which each node is allowed to transmit. Sharing of a communications channel by time scheduling is known as "Time Division Multiple Access" (TDMA).

[00022] The arbiter 100 controls the bandwidth for each of the client nodes 200, 300, 400, and 500. The arbiter 100 sets the bandwidth for each node 200, 300, 400, and 500. If the bandwidth allocated by the arbiter 100 is not required by any of the nodes 200, 300, 400, and 500, the arbiter gives the bandwidth to another of the nodes 200, 300, 400, or 500. The arbiter moves the bandwidth allocation around. This allows the arbiter 100 to allocate to one node a large bandwidth, and to another node a small bandwidth, based on the

needs of each of the nodes 100, 200, 300, 400, and 500. Thus, the arbiter 100 controls all communication in the network session 15.

[00023] Further, all communication is between a DDL node 200, 300, 400, or 500, and the arbiter 100. Generally the arbiter 100 is in an airplane, but anyone of the nodes 200, 300, 400, or 500 could be the arbiter. The arbiter 100 could be on the ground, but generally it is placed in an aircraft because an aircraft has the best line of sight for transmitting wireless signals. As shown in **FIG. 1**, a node 300 in another airplane UAV2 may relay through the arbiter 100 in airplane UAV1 to the other nodes 200, 400, or 500. In this embodiment, in addition to being the arbiter, DDL node 100 may also have its own session video, vehicle control data, or other data to communicate. Thus, the DDL node 100 also participates in the allocation of bandwidth at the arbiter 100.

[00024] In conventional TDMA applications, a predetermined cycle is used. In various embodiments of the present application, the arbiter 100 can set up a regular cycle for transmission, but it is able to vary bandwidth allocated to each node 200, 300, 400, or 500 based on the session 15 bandwidth needs. The arbiter 100 is not locked into a predetermined cycle. The bandwidth for each node 200, 300, 400, or 500 can change from burst to burst. The decision making on how to allocate bandwidth is by the arbiter 100. If there is low bandwidth data, such as only voice data, the arbiter could set up a more structured network analogous to a TDMA. If the data requirements change the arbiter 100 can change bandwidth allocation. For example, sometimes the arbiter 100 may require high bandwidth to send a whole new full frame of new video to a ground station GCU1, or and thereafter it may just need to send low bandwidth incremental video to the ground station GCU1. As the amount of data changes, the arbiter 100 can vary the allocation to each node 200, 300, 400 and 500. The arbiter 100 can be reactive to the data transmission needs within the session 15.

Node Addressing

[00025] **FIGS. 3A** and **3B** show block diagrams of node addressing for a sample DDL session 16, from the perspective of LAPTOP1 connected to ground control station GCU1. FIG. 3A shows a block diagram of illustrating the Random Unit Identifiers (RUID) and the specific input/output channels or ports of the DDL nodes 100, 200, 300, 400, and 500. For communication between the DDL nodes 100, 200, 300, 400, and 500, the Random Unit Identifiers (RUID) (sometimes alternatively referred to as Session User

Identifiers (SUID)) and the specific input/output channels are designated by DDL port numbers: 01 for DDL Control, 11 for Ethernet, 21 for Serial communications, 31 for LVDS or Low Voltage Differential Signals, and 02 for the Arbiter are used.

[00026] For communication, the ground control station DDL node to which a laptop is connected maps known DDL nodes into IP port number ranges to allow software on the laptop to address the DDL nodes using conventional IP address and port number pairs. **FIG. 3B** shows a block diagram illustrating an example of mapping of know network nodes 100, 200, 300, 400, and 500 within a network session 16 by the ground control station DDL node 200. LAPTOP1 210 is connected, into IP port number ranges for use by LAPTOP1 210. This allows software on the LAPTOP1 210 to address the DDL nodes using conventional IP address and port number pairs. The conventional IP address (xxx.xxx.xxx.xxx) and the base port addresses are generated by the GCL1 DDL node 200 to provide to the LAPTOP1 210. The DDL Network Table 202 show and example of the conventional IP addresses (xxx.xxx.xxx.xxx) with the base port addresses, i.e. 5000, 50100, 5200, 5300, and 50400, that are assigned by the GCL1 DDL node 200 to provide to the LAPTOP1 210 for the session 16. The DDL node 200 uses the RUID addresses and port numbers shown in FIG. 3A to communicate with the other DDL nodes 100, 300, 400, and 500.

[00027] Referring to **FIG. 3A**, the Arbiter 101 and the UAV1 systems 102 have separate RUID addresses, 0 and 47034, respectively, in this example. Thus, the Arbiter 101 and the UAV systems 102 are assigned distinct base ports 50000 and 50100.

[00028] Note that in the example of **FIG. 3B**, DDL node 500 is a passive listener so is note addressable by LAPTOP1 210, so does not appear in the DDL Network Table 201. In other embodiments, RTV 500 may be addressable. Similarly, LAPTOP2 410 is not addressable in this example, but may be in other embodiments. For example, in some embodiments, RTV 500, or LAPTOP2 410 may be addressable to communicate text or other messages.

[00029] Referring to **FIG. 3B**, each DDL node that has a laptop attached generates its own DDL Network Table (not show) for its respective laptop. As such, a different DDL Network Table (not shown) would be generated by the GCU2 DDL node 400 for laptop 410.

Messages and Packets

[00030] DDL Messages convey commands between DDL nodes. Bandwidth allocation strategies govern how DDL nodes share the RF channel to communicate with other DDL nodes, and support connections to and between external devices. Communication between DDL nodes is conveyed in a small set of packets with specific header information and message content. DDL nodes communicate with each other via messages described in **Table 2**. Note that data from an external device is carried in one of these messages.

[00031] Referring to **FIG. 1**, in various implementations, each node 200, 300, 400, and 500 requests from the arbiter 100 the amount of bandwidth it needs. As shown below in **Table 2**, the nodes 200, 300, 400, and 500 request a desired amount of bandwidth that it would like or Desired BW, and also a minimum amount of bandwidth that it requires or Required BW. Further, in various embodiments, the nodes 200, 300, 400, and 500 may request a service interval, the longest time to wait before sending more data using Slot start and Slot duration, and request a preferred allocation size or Allocated BW, because some data may have an inherent size associated with it. Based on these requests, the arbiter 100 controls the bandwidth with each of the nodes 200, 300, 400, and 500.

TABLE 2 - DDL Messages

Meaning	Source	Destination	Parameters	Exported to Ethernet
Request BW	Client	Arbiter	RUID	no
			Type (1=GCU, 2=A/C, 3=External)	
			Name (32 characters)	
			Required BW (Kb/sec)	
			Desired BW (Kb/sec)	
Slot Allocation	Arbiter	All	RUID	no
			Allocated BW (Kb/s)	
			Slot start (usec after cycle sync)	
			Slot duration (usec)	
Data	Client	All	various video, TM, or external data	yes
Control	Client	Client	various autopilot commands	no

Limit BW	Client	Client	Limit BW(Kb/sec)	no
	Above message commands that client to adjust its requested BW, to accommodate other clients.			
Assume Arbiter	Client	Client		no
Release Arbiter	Client	Arbiter		no
Publish Arbiter	Arbiter	All		no
Change Channel	Client	Client	New channel number	no
		or	New band number	
		All	Timeout (msec)	

[00032] The messages of **Table 2** are transmitted as DDL packets, which also include the fields described in **Table 3** below. DDL Messages include the fields shown in **Table 3** to assist the receiver.

TABLE 3 - DDL Message Control Fields

Parameter	Explanation
Message Type	Selects from the set of defined messages.
Sequence Counter	Incremented by 1 for each message generated by a node. This reveals if messages arrive out of order, or are lost.
Time to Live	Number of relay hops remaining. Zero means done.

Example Scenarios and Messages

One Aircraft and One GCS

(FIGS. 4A and 4B)

[00033] **FIGS. 4A** and **4B** show a block diagram showing transmit slot allocations of arbiter cycles over a mission lifetime for one aircraft being controlled by one GCU. In this example communications in a simple mission scenario 600 where an operator powers up one UAV and one GCU, preflights the aircraft, launches and flies it to the area of interest, observes those areas, flies back home, and lands.

[00034] In this scenario 600, the aircraft listens to determine if there is a session in progress at block 610, and upon hearing no existing session in progress, initiates its

own session by taking on the role of arbiter for this channel, in this geographic area of reception. The arbiter session is ready to accept any UAVs and GCUs which might check in, at any time. The arbiter will allocate in frame 620 (Frame No. 1), the maximum bandwidth to block 624 for the UAV downlink video stream. This is because initially, the only other demands on the channel are relatively low: flight commands uplink from the GCU 1 to the aircraft, and contention slots 625 allocated by the arbiter for new nodes to check in and request bandwidth.

[00035] The GCU 1 hears the arbiter, and in frame 630 (Frame M), joins the session to obtain a bandwidth allocation. In frame 630 (Frame M), the GCU1 issues a request 636 in contention slot 635 and takes control of the UAV in frame 640 (Frame M+1), which it will retain for the duration of the mission.

[00036] The request 636 by the GCU1 is granted slot 646 in frame 640 (Frame M+1) and the GCU1 issues a command 647 in contention slot 645. The command 647 is granted slot 657 in frame 650 (Frame M+2). The GCU1 issues a command 648 in contention slot 655. The GCU1 transmits the command data 657 but does not need the entire slot 657 so the arbiter ends frame 650 at 650e and starts the next frame 660 (Frame M+3), where the command 658 is granted slot 667. The arbiter offers contention slot 665 for new requesters.

[00037] The RVTs which tune to this channel and which have the correct encryption key for this session can view the video transmitted down from the UAV 1.

Video Relay: Two Aircraft and one GCS

(FIGS. 5A and 5B)

[00038] **FIGS. 5A** and **5B** is a block diagram illustrating transmit slot allocations of arbiter cycles over a mission lifetime for an example video relay scenario 700. In this example, an operator uses one UAV1 as a "relay" to communicate with a second remote "sensor" UAV2. The sensor UAV2 cannot communicate with the GCU1 directly because it is either beyond radio range of the GCU1, or not in line-of-sight of the GCU1. The operator first powers up the GCU1 and the relay UAV1, and flies it to a relay station from which it can communicate with both the GCU1 and with the sensor UAV2 when it arrives in its planned area of operation. The operator then powers up the sensor UAV2, flies it to its area of operation, and operates it. Upon completion of the mission, the sensor UAV2 is recovered first, followed by the relay UAV1. Extended relay mission durations can be

achieved by relieving the relay UAV1 when it approaches battery exhaustion: this is described below in the Relay Relief scenario **FIGS. 6A** and **6B**.

[00039] Upon first powering up, the relay UAV2 hears no existing session in progress and initiates its own session by taking on the role of arbiter for this channel, within this geographic area of reception. The arbiter session is ready to accept additional UAVs and additional GCUs that might check in at any time. Shown in frame 710 (Frame M), GCU1 is controlling UAV1, while UAV1 is transmitting high bandwidth video in slot 714. The arbiter will initially allocate maximum bandwidth to video slot 714 to the downlink video stream from its own UAV1, since the only other demands on the channel are the flight command 716 uplink from the GCU1 to the UAV1 and contention slot 725 opportunities allocated by the arbiter for new nodes to check in and request bandwidth, shown in frame 720 (Frame M+1). This allocation continues while the relay UAV1 is flown to its relay station.

[00040] When the relay UAV1 is airborne, the operator can power up the sensor UAV2, preflight it, launch it, and fly it out to its area of operations. Upon powering up, the sensor UAV2 hears the existing session conducted by the relay UAV1, and checks in with a request 726 for high bandwidth to support its video stream. In this example, in frame 720 (Frame M+1), the arbiter invites new requests in slot 725 and UAV2 request moderate bandwidth video 726, but it exceeds capacity. Having previously granted maximum bandwidth to the relay UAV1 video at 724, the arbiter must now adjust the bandwidth allocations to satisfy the sensor UAV2 request. The arbiter adjusts the bandwidth allocations based on the bandwidth policy in effect at that time, typically reducing the allocation of current streams and granting an allocation to the sensor UAV2. The allocation for the sensor UAV2 video stream will be set cognizant of the need for the relay UAV1 to receive the sensor UAV1 stream and retransmit it.

[00041] In frame 730 (Frame M+2), GCU1 controls UAV2 and sends pilot commands in slot 737. In frame 740 (Frame M+3), UAV2 transmits telemetry and very low bandwidth video in slots 748 and 749, respectively. In frame 750 (M+4), GCU1 commands UAV1 to reduce to minimum bandwidth in slot 757. In frame 760 (Frame M+5), UAV2 transmits telemetry and moderate bandwidth video in slot 768 and 769, respectively. In frame 770 (Frame M+6), UAV2 transmits telemetry 778 and video 779 but does not need entire slot 775 so the frame 770 (Frame M+6) ends at 770e. The arbiter starts the next frame 780 (Frame M+7) early. In frame 780 (Frame M+7), GCU1 sends pilot commands in slot

787 to UAV2. In frame 790 (Frame M+8), UAV2 transmits telemetry and moderate bandwidth video in slots 798 and 799, respectively.

[00042] The arbiter controls the session, thus, the arbiter grants GCU1 bandwidth in frame 710. The arbiter invites new requests in frame 720. In frame 730, the arbiter grants GCU1 bandwidth. In frame 740, the arbiter grants UAV2 available bandwidth. At frame 750, the arbiter grants GCU1 bandwidth. The arbiter grants UAV2 moderate bandwidth in frames 760 and 770. Then, at frame 780, the arbiter grants the GCU1 bandwidth. Thereafter, the arbiter again grants UAV2 moderate bandwidth at frame 790.

[00043] RVTs which tune to this channel and have the correct encryption key for this session can view the video transmitted down from the Relay aircraft.

Relay Relief: 2 Aircraft/2 GCS

(FIGS. 6A and 6B)

[00044] **FIGS. 6A** and **6B** is a block diagram illustrating transmit slot allocations of arbiter cycles over a portion of a mission for an example video relay scenario 800. In this example, transmit slot allocations of arbiter cycles over the portion of mission when a new aircraft UAV2 relieves a relay aircraft UAV1. An operator is using one aircraft as a "Relay" to communicate with other aircraft or GCUs, and that Relay aircraft reaches its limit of endurance. The operator powers up the relief UAV2 and flies it to the relay station, where it downloads the session information from the relay UAV1, and assumes the duties of arbiter.

[00045] In frame 810 (Frame M), the arbiter grants GCU1 bandwidth in slot 816 and GCU1 forwards data at 816 from its external client to GCU2 for its external client. In frame 820 (Frame M+1), the arbiter grants GCU2 bandwidth in slot 826. GCU2 is forwarding data 826 from it external client to GCU1 for its external client. In frame 830 (Frame M+2), the arbiter invites new requests, so UAV2 having turned on and detected the session in progress, UAV2 waits for a contention slot 835 and then requests in slot 836, bandwidth for transmitting its telemetry. In frame 840 (Frame M+3), the arbiter grants UAV2 bandwidth and UAV2 transmits its telemetry in slot 846.

[00046] Prior to frame 850 (Frame N), UAV2 launches and climbs to station. At frame 850 (Frame N), the arbiter grants GCU1 bandwidth and GCU1 commands UAV2 to assume arbiter at 856. In frame 860 (Frame N+1), the arbiter in UAV1 grants UAV2

bandwidth and UAV2 requests the arbiter in UAV1 to relinquish the role of session arbiter at 866. In frame 870 (Frame N+2) there is no grant of allocation slots by the arbiter in UAV1 as the arbiter in UAV1 transmits its arbiter table in slot 876 to allow UAV2 to assume the role of arbiter without forcing clients to check-in again. In frame 880 (Frame N+3), UAV2 has assumed the role of arbiter and grants GCU2 bandwidth and GCU2 forwards data at 896 from its external client to GCU1 for its external client. At frame 890 (Frame N+4), the arbiter in UAV2 grants GCU1 bandwidth and GCU1 forwards data at 896 from its external client to GCU2, for it external client.

[00047] It is worthy to note that any reference to "one embodiment" or "an embodiment" means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment may be included in an embodiment, if desired. The appearances of the phrase "in one embodiment" in various places in the specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment.

[00048] The illustrations and examples provided herein are for explanatory purposes and are not intended to limit the scope of the appended claims. This disclosure is to be considered an exemplification of the principles of the invention and is not intended to limit the spirit and scope of the invention and/or claims of the embodiment illustrated.

[00049] Those skilled in the art will make modifications to the invention for particular applications of the invention.

[00050] The discussion included in this patent is intended to serve as a basic description. The reader should be aware that the specific discussion may not explicitly describe all embodiments possible and alternatives are implicit. Also, this discussion may not fully explain the generic nature of the invention and may not explicitly show how each feature or element can actually be representative or equivalent elements. Again, these are implicitly included in this disclosure. Where the invention is described in device-oriented terminology, each element of the device implicitly performs a function. It should also be understood that a variety of changes may be made without departing from the essence of the invention. Such changes are also implicitly included in the description. These changes still fall within the scope of this invention.

[00051] Further, each of the various elements of the invention and claims may also be achieved in a variety of manners. This disclosure should be understood to encompass each such variation, be it a variation of any apparatus embodiment, a method embodiment, or

even merely a variation of any element of these. Particularly, it should be understood that as the disclosure relates to elements of the invention, the words for each element may be expressed by equivalent apparatus terms even if only the function or result is the same. Such equivalent, broader, or even more generic terms should be considered to be encompassed in the description of each element or action. Such terms can be substituted where desired to make explicit the implicitly broad coverage to which this invention is entitled. It should be understood that all actions may be expressed as a means for taking that action or as an element which causes that action. Similarly, each physical element disclosed should be understood to encompass a disclosure of the action which that physical element facilitates. Such changes and alternative terms are to be understood to be explicitly included in the description.

[00052] Having described this invention in connection with a number of embodiments, modification will now certainly suggest itself to those skilled in the art. The example embodiments herein are not intended to be limiting, various configurations and combinations of features are possible. As such, the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments, except as required by the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A wireless network with dynamic transmission control comprising an arbiter and a plurality of client nodes, the arbiter being configured to control an operation of the client nodes by defining communications operation cycles and allocating a bandwidth to each of the plurality of client nodes on a cycle by cycle basis in response to requests for bandwidth from the plurality of client nodes, wherein the arbiter is configured to vary the operation cycles based the requests for bandwidth, and wherein the arbiter is further configured to define a duration of an operation cycle by varying a frame length in response to requests for bandwidth from the plurality of client nodes and to begin a new frame if a client node does not need an entire slot.

2. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the arbiter is configured to prioritize the requests for bandwidth from the plurality of client nodes and to allocate bandwidth in an operation cycle based on a priority of each request.

3. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the arbiter is configured to prioritize the requests for bandwidth from the plurality of client nodes and to allocate bandwidth in an operation cycle based on a priority of each request.

4. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the arbiter is configured to relinquish control as session arbiter to another node upon request.

5. The wireless network of Claim 4, wherein the arbiter is configured to transmit an arbiter table upon request prior to relinquishing control as session arbiter so as to allow a new session arbiter to assume a role of arbiter without forcing the client nodes to check-in.

6. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein each operation cycle is divided up into a set of time segments, and wherein allocating the bandwidth comprises assigning a transmission start time and a transmission duration for each of the plurality of client nodes requesting bandwidth and changing the transmission start time and the transmission duration for each of the plurality of client nodes requesting bandwidth in response to the requests for bandwidth from the plurality of client nodes.

7. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the arbiter comprises a ground station and the plurality of client nodes comprises an unmanned vehicle.

8. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the plurality of client nodes comprises a plurality of unmanned vehicles.

9. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the arbiter comprises an unmanned vehicle and the plurality of client nodes comprises a ground station.

10. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the plurality of client nodes further comprises an unmanned vehicle.

11. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the arbiter is configured such that allocating the bandwidth comprises assigning a transmission start time and a transmission duration to the plurality of client nodes and changing the transmission start time and the transmission duration for the plurality of client nodes in response to requests from the plurality of client nodes.

12. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the arbiter is configured such that assigning the bandwidth comprises assigning the bandwidth in response to an operator.

13. The wireless network of Claim 12, wherein the arbiter is configured such that assigning the bandwidth comprises controlling the video quality transmit by each of the plurality of client nodes.

14. The wireless network of Claim 13, wherein the arbiter is configured such that assigning the bandwidth comprises allocating bandwidth for at least one of: a) full video; b) degraded video; c) still pictures; or d) no video imagery for a client node requesting bandwidth.

15. The wireless network of Claim 1, wherein the nodes comprise transceivers controlled by an operating system.

16. A wireless network with dynamic transmission control comprising an arbiter and a plurality of client nodes, the arbiter being configured to control an operation of the client nodes by defining communications operation cycles and allocating a bandwidth to each of the plurality of client nodes on a cycle by cycle basis in response to requests for bandwidth from the plurality of client nodes, wherein the arbiter is configured to relinquish control as session arbiter to another node upon request, and wherein the arbiter is configured to transmit an

arbiter table upon request prior to relinquishing control as session arbiter so as to allow a new session arbiter to assume a role of arbiter without forcing the client nodes to check-in.

17. A wireless network with dynamic transmission control comprising an arbiter and a plurality of client nodes, the arbiter being configured to control an operation of the client nodes by defining communications operation cycles and allocating a bandwidth to each of the plurality of client nodes on a cycle by cycle basis in response to requests for bandwidth from the plurality of client nodes, wherein the arbiter is configured such that assigning the bandwidth comprises assigning the bandwidth in response to an operator, and wherein the arbiter is configured such that assigning the bandwidth comprises controlling the video quality transmit by each of the plurality of client nodes, and wherein the arbiter is further configured to define a duration of an operation cycle by varying a frame length in response to requests for bandwidth from the plurality of client nodes and to begin a new frame if a client node does not need an entire slot.

18. The wireless network of Claim 17, wherein the arbiter is configured such that assigning the bandwidth comprises allocating bandwidth for at least one of: a) full video; b) degraded video; c) still pictures; or d) no video imagery for a client node requesting bandwidth.

19. A method for communicating on a wireless network having a plurality of nodes, the method comprising:

selecting a node to function as an arbiter for controlling communication of at least one non-arbiter node of the plurality of nodes on the wireless network;

receiving at the arbiter requests for a desired bandwidth from the at least one non-arbiter node;

adjusting dynamically the bandwidth allocated to the at least one non-arbiter node based on the requests, comprising using the arbiter to define operation cycles and assign a transmission start time and duration for each cycle to the at least one non-arbiter node;

wherein selecting a node to function as an arbiter comprises powering up a node and monitoring for an existing DDL session and assuming the role of arbiter if no DDL session is in progress; and

wherein selecting a node to function as an arbiter comprises selecting an unmanned vehicle as the arbiter.

20. The method of Claim 19, wherein monitoring for an existing DDL session comprises monitoring within a channel, and wherein assuming the role of arbiter comprises initiating a DDL session within the channel if no DDL session is detected within the channel.

21. The method of Claim 19, further comprising relaying data between at least two non-arbiter nodes using the arbiter.

22. The method of Claim 21, wherein relaying data between at least two non-arbiter nodes comprises relaying data comprising at least one of: (a) vehicle controls; (b) video, (c) other sensor or sensor derived data; (d) voice; (e) instant messaging; or (f) mission information.

23. The method of Claim 22, wherein adjusting the bandwidth further comprising prioritizing the data for relaying and controlling the flow of the data based on a priority of the data.

24. The method of Claim 22, wherein adjusting the bandwidth further comprising prioritizing requests for bandwidth and allocating bandwidth in an operation cycle based on a priority of the data.

25. The method of Claim 19, wherein adjusting the bandwidth further comprising prioritizing requests for bandwidth and allocating bandwidth in an operation cycle based on a priority of each request .

26. The method of Claim 19, wherein adjusting the bandwidth comprises using the arbiter to define the operation cycles comprising dividing the operation cycles into a set of time segments and assigning to the at least one non-arbiter node in the wireless network a starting time segment and a number of time segments.

27. The method of Claim 19, wherein the at least one non-arbiter node comprises multiple non-arbiter nodes such that selecting comprises selecting a node to function as an arbiter for controlling communication on the wireless network of the multiple non-arbiter nodes, and receiving comprises receiving at the arbiter requests for a desired bandwidth from the multiple non-arbiter nodes, and adjusting comprises adjusting dynamically the bandwidth allocated to the multiple non-arbiter nodes based on the requests, comprising using the arbiter

to define operation cycles and assign a transmission start time and duration to each cycle of each of the multiple non-arbiter nodes.

28. A method for communicating on a wireless network having a plurality of nodes, the method comprising:

selecting a node to function as an arbiter for controlling communication of at least one non-arbiter node of the plurality of nodes on the wireless network;

receiving at the arbiter requests for a desired bandwidth from the at least one non-arbiter node;

adjusting dynamically the bandwidth allocated to the at least one non-arbiter node based on the requests, comprising using the arbiter to define operation cycles and assign a transmission start time and duration for each cycle to the at least one non-arbiter node;

wherein receiving requests comprises receiving an initial request for the desired bandwidth allocation from a non-arbiter node and granting bandwidth allocation in response to the initial request to allow the requesting non-arbiter node to join a DDL session; and

wherein the arbiter is further configured to define a duration of an operation cycle by varying a frame length in response to requests for bandwidth from the at least one non-arbiter node and to begin a new frame if a client node does not need an entire slot.

29. The method of Claim 28, wherein the arbiter is an unmanned vehicle and the non-arbiter node is a ground unit, and further comprising receiving vehicle control commands for the unmanned vehicle from the non-arbiter node and maneuvering the arbiter according to the vehicle control commands from the non-arbiter node.

30. The method of Claim 28, wherein the arbiter is a first unmanned vehicle and the non-arbiter node is a ground unit, and further comprising receiving vehicle control commands for a second unmanned vehicle from the non-arbiter node and passing the vehicle control commands to the second unmanned vehicle.