

AUTOMATED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM WITH GOAL DRIVEN ACTION PLANNING

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5 1. **Field:**

The subject disclosure relates generally to an aircraft and, in particular, to operating the aircraft using automated aircraft systems.

10 2. **Background:**

In operating an aircraft, many functions can be performed automatically using automated aircraft systems. For example, one automated aircraft system is an autopilot. The autopilot can control the trajectory of an aircraft without constant
15 control by a human operator such as a pilot or a co-pilot. The autopilot allows for the pilot and other flight crew members in the aircraft to focus on broader aspects of operating the aircraft such as monitoring the trajectory, weather, and other aircraft systems in the aircraft.

20 Current automated aircraft systems are rule-based systems. These automated aircraft systems use decision trees to determine what steps to perform to meet target values specified by the human operator. These types of automated aircraft systems are easy to evaluate because their behavior can be predicted when
25 traversing the decision tree. These automated aircraft systems, however, are limited in performing actions only for situations that are previously accounted for in the decision tree.

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SUMMARY

An embodiment of the subject disclosure provides a method for controlling an aircraft. A target state for the aircraft is identified. A current mission state is determined for the aircraft. A sequence of actions is selected from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft. The sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state. Actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have been met are performed. The actions are performed in an order defined by the sequence of actions.

Another embodiment of the subject disclosure provides an aircraft control system comprising a computer system and an action manager in the computer system. The action manager is configured to identify a target state for the aircraft and determine a current mission state for the aircraft from state variables received from aircraft systems in the aircraft. The action manager is configured to select a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft using a set of path planning algorithms in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state. The action manager is configured to perform actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have been met. The actions are performed in an order defined by the sequence of actions.

Still another embodiment of the subject disclosure provides an aircraft control system comprising a computer system. The computer system is configured to identify a target state for the aircraft and determine a current mission state for the aircraft. The computer system is configured to select a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft in which

the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state. The computer system is configured to perform actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have been met. The actions are performed in an order

5 defined by the sequence of actions.

The features and functions can be achieved independently in various embodiments of the subject disclosure or may be combined in yet other embodiments in which further details can be seen with reference to the following description and drawings.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed characteristic of the illustrative embodiments are set forth in the appended claims.

5 The illustrative embodiments, however, as well as a preferred mode of use, further objectives and features thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment of the subject disclosure when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

10 **Figure 1** is an illustration of a block diagram of an aircraft operation environment in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 2 is an illustration of a block diagram of a target state in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

15 **Figure 3** is an illustration of a block diagram of a state variable in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 4 is an illustration of a block diagram of an action in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

20 **Figure 5** is an illustration of nodes in paths from a current mission state to a target state in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

25 **Figure 6** is an illustration of nodes in paths from a current mission state to a target state in which a pushback from a gate occurs for an aircraft in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 7 is an illustration of a flowchart of a process for controlling an aircraft in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

30 **Figure 8** is an illustration of a flowchart of a process for determining a current mission state in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 9 is an illustration of a flowchart of a process for selecting a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions

to reach a target state from a current mission state for an aircraft in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 10 is an illustration of a flowchart for reselecting actions to reach a target state for an aircraft from a current mission state when a state variable changes in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figures 11A and **11B** are illustrations of a flowchart of a process for selecting a sequence of actions to reach a target state for an aircraft in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 12 is an illustration of a block diagram of a data processing system in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 13 is an illustration of an aircraft manufacturing and service method in accordance with an illustrative embodiment;

Figure 14 is an illustration of a block diagram of an aircraft in which an illustrative embodiment may be implemented;

Figure 15 is a view of a display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 16 is a second embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 17 is a third embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 18 is a fourth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 19 is a view of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 20 is a second view of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 21 is a third view of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 22 is a view of a second embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 23 is a second view of the second embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 24 is a third view of the second embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

5 **Figure 25** is a view of a third embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 26 is a second view of the third embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

10 **Figure 27** is a third view of the third embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 28 is a view of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 29 is a second view of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

15 **Figure 30** is a third view of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 31 is a view of a second embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

20 **Figure 32** is a second view of the second embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 33 is a third view of the second embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 34 is a view of a third embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

25 **Figure 35** is a second view of the third embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

Figure 36 is a third view of the third embodiment of a display screen with an animated graphical user interface;

30 **Figure 37** is a view of a display screen with a graphical user interface is depicted.

Figure 38 is a second embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 39 is a third embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 40 is a fourth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 41 is a fifth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

5 **Figure 42** is a sixth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 43 is a seventh embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

10 **Figure 44** is a view of a display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 45 is a second embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 46 is a third embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

15 **Figure 47** is a fourth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 48 is a view of a display screen with a graphical user interface;

20 **Figure 49** is a second embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 50 is a third embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 51 is a fourth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

25 **Figure 52** is a fifth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

Figure 53 is a sixth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface;

30 **Figure 54** is a seventh embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface; and

Figure 55 is an eighth embodiment of the display screen with a graphical user interface.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account one or more different considerations. For example, the illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account that during a flight of an aircraft, aircraft control systems using decision trees may be unable to provide actions for particular conditions not contemplated by the decision trees. The illustrative embodiments also recognize and take into account that control of functions being handled by an automated aircraft system are returned to pilot when the decision tree does not provide solutions such as actions for a particular condition. Those embodiments recognize and take into account that this situation can result in increased workloads for the flight crew.

The illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account that increased workloads can also be present in operating the automated aircraft systems that employ the decision trees. The illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account that the pilot is limited in how a goal is to be reached in the automated aircraft system. For example, the illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account that it may need to break down a goal of flying to a particular location into a tactical action such as a heading change or a series of waypoints. The illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account that these steps performed by pilots increase the workload as compared to providing a goal such as a destination. Thus, the illustrative embodiments recognize and take into account that current automated aircraft systems are less capable of supporting the pilot with actionable information and require deposits to monitor different parameters during the flight of the aircraft.

Thus, the illustrative embodiments provide a method, apparatus, and system to control the operation of an aircraft. In the illustrative examples, goals can be translated into

target states for the aircraft. Actions and an order of the actions can be selected and performed dynamically as a sequence of actions to reach the target state as the current mission state of the aircraft changes. For example, the actions can be
5 reselected based on a change in the current situation of an aircraft during operation of the aircraft without requiring the human operator to assume or take control of the aircraft. With the reselection of actions, different actions or the same actions can be selected. Further, even when the same actions
10 are selected as part of the reselection process, those actions can be in a different order to form a different sequence of actions.

In one illustrative example, a method controls an aircraft. A computer system receives a target state for the aircraft. The
15 computer system determines a current mission state for the aircraft. An artificial intelligence system in the computer system can determine actions to reach the target state based on the current mission state for the aircraft. The actions can be performed for which preconditions for the actions that have been
20 met can be performed.

Further, determining the actions to reach the target state can occur dynamically in which a determination of the actions is performed in a manner that takes into account changes in the current mission state of the aircraft. For example, the actions
25 for performance can be identified to reach the target state based on a current mission state. When the current mission state changes, the determination of the actions can be made again based on the new current mission state. As a result, the actions identified to reach the target state for the aircraft
30 can change during the flight of the aircraft as the current mission state changes.

With reference now to figures and, in particular, with reference to **Figure 1**, an illustration of a block diagram of an aircraft operation environment is depicted in accordance with an

illustrative embodiment. Aircraft **100** in aircraft control environment **102** can be operated using computer system **104** in aircraft **100**. Aircraft **100** can take a number of different forms. For example, aircraft **100** can be selected as one of an airplane, a commercial aircraft, a rotorcraft, an unmanned aircraft, an unmanned aerial vehicle, a fighter jet, a spaceplane, and other suitable aircraft.

In this illustrative example, action manager **106** in computer system **104** forms aircraft control system **107**, which is configured to control the operation of aircraft **100**. The operation of aircraft **100** can be controlled using aircraft systems **108**. In controlling the operation of aircraft **100**, action manager **106** receives information **110** from aircraft systems **108** and sends instructions **112** to aircraft systems **108**. These instructions can be commands, data, or other information that can be used to control how aircraft systems **108** operate.

As depicted, aircraft systems **108** can include at least one of a flight management system, a flight navigation system, an environmental control system, an engine, a flight control surface system, a communications system, a satellite communications system, a very high frequency (VHF) communication system, microwave-band communication system, a radar system, an autopilot, a fuel system, a weather radar, an electronic centralized aircraft monitoring (ECAM) system, a quick access data recorder (QAR), an onboard network server (ONS), an electronic flight instrument system (EFIS), or other suitable aircraft systems.

As used herein, the phrase "at least one of," when used with a list of items, means different combinations of one or more of the listed items can be used, and only one of each item in the list may be needed. In other words, "at least one of" means any combination of items and number of items may be used from the list, but not all of the items in the list are

required. The item can be a particular object, a thing, or a category.

For example, without limitation, "at least one of item A, item B, or item C" may include item A, item A and item B, or item B. This example also may include item A, item B, and item C or item B and item C. Of course, any combinations of these items can be present. In some illustrative examples, "at least one of" can be, for example, without limitation, two of item A; one of item B; and ten of item C; four of item B and seven of item C; or other suitable combinations.

In this illustrative example, action manager **106** can be implemented in software, hardware, firmware, or a combination thereof. When software is used, the operations performed by action manager **106** can be implemented in program code configured to run on hardware, such as a processor unit. When firmware is used, the operations performed by action manager **106** can be implemented in program code and data and stored in persistent memory to run on a processor unit. When hardware is employed, the hardware can include circuits that operate to perform the operations in action manager **106**.

In the illustrative examples, the hardware can take a form selected from at least one of a circuit system, an integrated circuit, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a programmable logic device, or some other suitable type of hardware configured to perform a number of operations. With a programmable logic device, the device can be configured to perform the number of operations. The device can be reconfigured at a later time or can be permanently configured to perform the number of operations. Programmable logic devices include, for example, a programmable logic array, a programmable array logic, a field programmable logic array, a field programmable gate array, and other suitable hardware devices. Additionally, the processes can be implemented in organic components integrated with inorganic components and can

be comprised entirely of organic components excluding a human being. For example, the processes can be implemented as circuits in organic semiconductors.

Computer system **104** is a physical hardware system and includes one or more data processing systems. When more than one data processing system is present in computer system **104**, those data processing systems are in communication with each other using a communications medium. The communications medium can be a network. The data processing systems can be selected from at least one of a computer, a server computer, an electronic flight bag, a tablet computer, or some other suitable data processing system.

In this illustrative example, computer system **104** can be located in at least one of the aircraft or a location remote to the aircraft. For example, all of computer system **104** can be located in aircraft **100**, all of computer system **104** can be located in one or more remote locations to aircraft **100** such as a ground location, or computer system **104** can be distributed between aircraft **100** and one or more remote locations outside of aircraft **100**.

In this illustrative example, action manager **106** is configured to identify target state **114** for aircraft **100**. Target state **114** is a data structure and can be identified based on goal **116** received from human operator **118**. In the illustrative example, goal **116** can be translated into a set of state variables **120** by action manager **106** for target state **114**.

As used herein, "a set of," when used with reference to items, means one or more items. For example, a set of state variables **120** is one or more of state variables **120**.

The set of state variables **120** has a set of values **121** that is present when target state **114** is reached. These values describe target state **114**. In this illustrative example, the set of state variables **120** contains a portion of state variables **120** with values **121** needed to describe target state **114** and does

not necessarily include all possible state variables for aircraft **100**.

For example, goal **116** can be "complete preflight phase and start passenger boarding". With this example, the set of state variables **120** for target state **114** are
5 flightPhase_preflightCompleted = true and passengersBoarding = true.

In another example, goal **116** can be "be enroute over the Atlantic before 7:45 UTC". Action manager **106** can identify the
10 set of state variables **120** for target state **114** as
flightPhase_climbOutCompleted = true (true means that currently the flight phase enroute is active) and inAtlanticAirspace = true [Time constraint: BEFORE 7:45 UTC time].

Human operator **118** can be located in aircraft **100** or can be
15 in a remote location to aircraft **100**. The remote location can be a ground location, another aircraft, or some other suitable location. In this illustrative example, human operator **118** can be a pilot in the aircraft, the pilot in a remote location, a co-pilot, an airline operator, an air traffic controller a
20 military operator, an airline employee, or some other suitable person that can set goal **116** for aircraft **100**.

In other illustrative examples, target state **114** can be received from an airline, a traffic control system, or some other suitable source. In this case, target state **114** can be
25 preselected prior to the flight or other operation of aircraft **100**. In this case, target state **114** can be transmitted to computer system **104** and aircraft **100** in a message, a set of data packets, or in some other format used to facilitate communications between computers over a communications link.

30 As depicted, action manager **106** is also configured to determine current mission state **122** for aircraft **100**. Current mission state **122** can be determined by action manager **106** from state variables **120** using information **110** received from aircraft systems **108**. In this illustrative example, information **110** can

include state variables **124** or information **110** can be used to derive or determine state variables **120**. As depicted, state variables **120** are all of the state variables for aircraft **100** rather than a subset of state variables **120**, as described with respect to target state **114**.

In the illustrative example, aircraft systems **108** are designed, modified, reconfigured, or other otherwise changed to track and send state variables **120** to action manager **106**. In this illustrative example, each aircraft system is responsible for knowing what state variables are required from other aircraft systems as well as knowing what state variables are provided to other systems, such as other aircraft systems or action manager **106**. State variables **120** can be sent to action manager **106** be at least one of being automatically sent by aircraft systems **108** to action manager **106**, being sent in response to a request from action manager **106**, or in some other manner.

In other illustrative examples, a set of aircraft systems **108** sends information **110** that can be used to derive state variables **120** in place of or in addition to sending state variables **120** in information **110**. In the illustrative example, sending a state variable means that the state variable with the value for the state variable is sent.

As depicted, action manager **106** is configured to select sequence of actions **126** from pool of potential actions **130** based on current mission state **122** to reach target state **114** based on current mission state **122** for aircraft **100**. In other words, action manager **106** can select actions **128** from pool of potential actions **130** and place actions **128** into order **134** for performance to form sequence of actions **126**.

In one illustrative example, actions **128** and sequence of actions **126** can be based on cost **136** for performing actions **128**. Cost **136** can be selected from at least one of the number of effects by an action, a monetary cost for performing an action,

time, a maintenance cost incurred, an amount of fuel to be consumed, a personnel cost connected to time, passenger comfort, a company policy, a manufacturing recommendation, or other suitable factors. In one example, an airline policy can prefer performing A over B. As a result, performing B has greater cost than performing A when taking into account the airline policy in this example. In the illustrative examples, cost **136** can be dynamic and not static in which cost **136** can change when a system state or the environment changes.

Action manager **106** is configured to perform actions **128** for which preconditions **132** for actions **128** have been met. As depicted, preconditions **132** comprise at least one of a current location of the aircraft, a performance of a selected action, a configuration of the aircraft, a position of a control surface, a weather condition, an instruction from an air traffic controller, or some other type of condition. In one illustrative example, a configuration of an aircraft can be, for example, without limitation, the landing gear being in a raised position, the landing gear being in a lowered position, the doors being closed, the flaps being extended, the air brakes in a position to increase drag, or some other configuration of components in the aircraft.

In this illustrative example, actions **128** are performed in order **134** defined by sequence of actions **126**. In other words, actions **128** are performed in the order identified in sequence of actions **128** when preconditions **132** are met for actions **128**. In some illustrative examples, one or more of actions **128** may not have a precondition. Further, sequence of actions **128** may define performing some of actions **128** in parallel or substantially at the same time.

As depicted, selecting sequence of actions **126**, by action manager **106**, from pool of potential actions **130** to reach target state **114** based on current mission state **122** for aircraft **100** can be performed using a set of path planning algorithms **138**.

In this illustrative example, the set of path planning algorithms **138** is selected from at least one an A* search algorithm, a Dijkstra's algorithm, a D*, an incremental search algorithm, a Backtracking algorithm, a Fringe search, an Any-angle path planning algorithm, an iterative deepening A* search algorithm, a Bellman-Ford search algorithm, a Floyd-Warshall algorithm, a Hill climbing algorithm, a Bidirectional search algorithm, a Johnson's algorithm, or some other suitable algorithm that can be used for path planning to reach target state **114** from current mission state **122**.

As depicted, the set of path planning algorithms **138** can select sequence of actions **126** in a manner that reduces cost **136**. For example, action manager **106** may use the set of path planning algorithms **138** to select the sequence of actions **126** from pool of potential actions **130** to reach target state **114** from current mission state **122** for aircraft **100** in which sequence of actions **126** is selected based on current mission state **122**. The selection can comprise identifying nodes **140** in path **142** from current mission state **122** to target state **114** based on nodes **140** having lowest cost **144**. In this example, lowest cost **144** comprises a set of factors selected from at least one of a number of effects of an action, a monetary cost, an amount of time, a maintenance cost incurred, an amount of fuel to be consumed, a personnel cost connected to time, or passenger comfort.

The sequence of actions **126** can be selected by action manager **106** from pool of potential actions **130** based on nodes **140** identified in path **142**.

In the illustrative example, nodes **140** illustrate potential mission states that can occur through the performance of actions **128**. In other words, current mission state **122** can change to another mission state which in turn can change to get another mission state depending on the performance of particular actions selected from pool of potential actions **130**. Each potential

mission statement represented by a node in nodes **140** is unique within nodes **140** and can be identified as having a different value for one or more state variables **124** that are present in current mission state **122**.

5 In the illustrative example, at least one of determining target state **114** from goal **116** or selecting sequence of actions **126** can be performed by action manager **106** using artificial intelligence system **146**. Artificial intelligence system **146** is a system that has intelligent behavior and can be based on the
10 function of a human brain. Artificial intelligence system **146** comprises at least one of an artificial neural network, a cognitive system, a Bayesian network, a fuzzy logic, an expert system, a natural language system, or some other suitable system. Machine learning is used to train the artificial
15 intelligence system. Machine learning involves inputting data to the process and allowing the process to adjust and improve the function of the artificial intelligence system.

 A cognitive system is a computing system that mimics the function of the human brain. The cognitive system can be, for
20 example, IBM Watson available from International Business Machines Corporation.

 For example, actions **128** and order **134** of action **128** for sequence of actions **126** can be selected from pool of potential actions **130** by artificial intelligence system **146**. Artificial
25 intelligence system **146** can implement or use the set of path planning algorithms **138**. When the set of path planning algorithms **138** is implemented in artificial intelligence system **146**, this implementation can be performed using machine learning techniques.

30 In the illustrative example, aircraft control system **107** is a dynamic system in which selection of actions **126** can be performed dynamically during the operation of aircraft **100**. In other words, once sequence of actions **126** is selected for aircraft **100** to reach target state **114**, sequence of actions **126**

can change during performance of actions **128** defined in sequence of actions **126**.

In one illustrative example, action manager **106** can select sequence of actions **126** from pool of potential actions **130** to
5 reach target state **114** from current mission state **122** for aircraft **100** using the set of path planning algorithms **138** in which sequence of actions **128** is selected based on current mission state **122** that is present when event **148** occurs. Event **148** can take a number of different forms. For example, event
10 **148** can be one of a periodic event, a non-periodic event, a current mission state change, reaching a sub target state, an expiration of a timer, a state variable, and a performance of an action.

In one illustrative example, one or more technical
15 solutions are present that overcome a technical problem with providing a desired level of automated control and operating an aircraft. As a result, one or more technical solutions can provide a technical effect of providing an ability to dynamically identify actions in an order in which the action
20 should be performed to reach a target statement from the current mission state. In the illustrate example, one or more technical solutions are provided with a technical effect of enabling control of an aircraft that results in a reduced workload on the flight crew. In the illustrative example, one or more technical
25 solutions enable selecting actions and the order of actions to form a sequence of actions that can be performed to reach a target state. In the illustrative example, this sequence of actions can be determined from the current mission state and can be re-determined any number of times based on the occurrence of
30 events during the operation of the aircraft.

Thus, an aircraft can be controlled by a computer system that provides instructions to aircraft systems in the aircraft and a pilot or other human operator entering specific values for automated systems are unnecessary to be entered by the human

operator. For example, the human operator does not need to enter information such as speed, heading, altitude, or other information. Instead, the human operator can enter a goal such as "be docked at gate B13 at Seattle Tacoma at 10:35 UTC".

5 This goal can be translated into a target state and analysis of the current mission state of the aircraft can be used to automatically identify actions in order for performing the actions to reach the target state.

10 Computer system **104** can be configured to perform at least one of the steps, operations, or actions described in the different illustrative examples using software, hardware, firmware, or a combination thereof. As a result, computer system **104** operates as a special purpose computer system in which action manager **106** in computer system **104** enables
15 controlling aircraft systems **108** to automate operation of aircraft **100** in a manner that reduces the workload on human operators in aircraft **100**. In particular, action manager **106** transforms computer system **104** into a special purpose computer system as compared to currently available general computer
20 systems that do not have action manager **106**.

 In the illustrative example, the use of action manager **106** in computer system **104** integrates processes into a practical application for controlling the operation of aircraft **100** that increases the performance of computer system **104** in controlling
25 actions **128** performed by aircraft **100**. In other words, action manager **106** in computer system **104** is directed to a practical application of processes integrated into action manager **106** in computer system **104** that controls an aircraft with a desired level of automation. In this illustrative example, the
30 practical application can be in action manager **106** in computer system **104** in which action manager **106** identifies a target state for the aircraft; determines a current mission state for the aircraft; selects a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state

for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state; and performs the actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have been met in which the actions are performed in an order defined by the sequence of actions.

These processes result in improvement in the operation of aircraft **100**. For example, computer system **104** operates with increased efficiency as compared to current systems. Further, computer system **104** automatically controls the operation of aircraft **100** in a manner that reduces the workload on a pilot, a co-pilot, or other human operator of aircraft **100**. In this manner, action manager **106** in computer system **104** provides a practical application of controlling an aircraft such that the functioning of computer system **104** is improved by at least one of identifying or initiating performance of sequence of actions **126** to reach target state **114** for aircraft **100**. The selection and performance of sequence of actions **126** is performed in a manner that reduces how often control of aircraft **100** is returned a flight crew member, such as a pilot, a co-pilot, or other human operator.

In this illustrative example, human operator **118** can interact with action manager **106** through graphical user interface **150** displayed on display system **152** for computer system **104**. As depicted, display system **152** is a physical hardware system and includes one or more display devices on which graphical user interface **150** can be displayed. The display devices can include at least one of a light emitting diode (LED) display, a liquid crystal display (LCD), an organic light emitting diode (OLED) display, a computer monitor, a projector, a flat panel display, a heads-up display (HUD), or some other suitable device that can output information for the visual presentation of information. Display system **152** is configured to display graphical user interface **150**. Human operator **118** is a person that can interact with graphical user

interface **150** through user input **154** generated by input system **156** for computer system **104**. Input system **156** is a physical hardware system and can be selected from at least one of a mouse, a keyboard, a trackball, a touchscreen, a stylus, a motion sensing input device, a cyber glove, microphone, or some other suitable type of input device.

In this illustrative example, display system **152** and input system **156** form human machine interface system **158**. Human machine interface system **158** is at least one of located in the aircraft, a remote location in communication with the aircraft, an air traffic control system, an airline system, or in some other suitable location.

For example, user input **154** can define goal **116**. Information including at least one of current mission state **122**, target state **114**, sequence of actions **126**, a location of aircraft **100**, altitude, or other suitable information can be displayed in graphical user interface **150** for viewing by human operator **118**. Target state **114** for aircraft **100** can be identified based on user input **154**, such as goal **116**, received from human machine interface system **158**.

Thus, the illustrative example provides a method, apparatus, and system in which automated aircraft systems derive a set of tactical flight actions from strategic goals set by a human operator. The actions to reach these goals can be determined using goal oriented action planning (GOAP).

With reference next to **Figure 2**, an illustration of a block diagram of a target state is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In the illustrative examples, the same reference numeral may be used in more than one figure. This reuse of a reference numeral in different figures represents the same element in the different figures.

As depicted, target state **114** can take a number of different forms. For example, target state **114** can be selected

from one of operational target state **200** and spatial target state **202**.

In this illustrative example, operational target state **200** represents a state of an operation that is desired for aircraft **100** in **Figure 1**. For example, operational target state **200** can be "the passengers deboarded". Spatial target state **202** represents a location that is desired. For example, "fly to KESA" can be spatial target state **202**.

Further, target state **114** can also include a set of constraints **204**. In this illustrative example, the set of constraints **204** is one or more restrictions. The set of constraints **204** can include at least one of a spatial constraint, an operational constraint, or a temporal constraint. The spatial constraint can be a constraint on a location. For example, a spatial constraint can be "cruise under 25,000 feet" or "avoid area along flight path".

In the illustrative example, an operational constraint can be a constraint on what operation can be performed. An operational constraint can be, for example, the position light for the aircraft must be turned on at all times.

A temporal constraint is a constraint on time. In this illustrative example, the temporal constraint can be a constraint on when an operation is performed or when the aircraft is in a particular location. A temporal constraint can include "at", "after", and "window". For example, "at" can be "depart at 9:00 UTC"; "after" can be "depart after 9:00 UTC"; and "window" can be "depart between 8:50 UTC and 9:10 UTC".

In the illustrative example, target state **114** can be formed from multiple goals such that target state **114** includes sub target states **206**. The sub target states can be selected from at least one of operational sub target state **208** or spatial sub target state **210**.

For example, operational sub target state **208** represents a state of an operation that is desired for aircraft **100**. Spatial sub target state **210** represents a location that is desired.

For example, a goal of "be docked at gate at KSEA at 9:00 local time, with passengers already deboarded" can be divided into sub goals that are represented by sub target states. For example, this goal can be translated into target state **114** with state variables **124** as follows: dockedAtGate = true; arrivedAtDestination = true [Object: KSEA - will be needed to check if the aircraft arrived at the right location]; destinationAirportSet = true [Object: KSEA]; and passengersBoarded = false [Time constraint: AT 9:00 local time].

In this illustrative example, a mix of operational and spatial goals are represented in sub target states **206** in target state **114**. For example, dockedAtGate = true is a state variable representing an operational sub target state. As depicted, destinationAirportSet = true [Object: KSEA] represents spatial sub target state. Additionally, passengersBoarded = false [Time constraint: AT 9:00 local time] represents a temporal constraint. In this example, the temporal constraint can be sent by a pilot to ensure that passengers reach a destination location a desired time.

As another example, artificial intelligence system **146** can also perform a translation of goal **116** into target state **114** and can identify sub target states **206**. In this illustrative example, artificial intelligence system **146** can include natural language processing capabilities that take goal **116** in a natural language and translate goals **116** into target state **114**, which also may include sub target states **206**. This capability can be implemented in artificial intelligence system **146** through machine learning techniques. These machines learning techniques can include, for example, known machine learning techniques, such as a supervised learning algorithm, an unsupervised learning algorithm, and a reinforcement learning algorithm.

For example, training data can be provided to artificial intelligence system **146** in which the training data includes goals in natural language for a correspondent correct output of target states and sub target states. With this type of training data, supervised learning can be used to train artificial intelligence system **146**. Other techniques can also be used depending on the implementation.

Turning now to **Figure 3**, an illustration of a block diagram of a state variable is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In this illustrative example, state variable **300** is an example of a state variable in state variables **120**.

In this illustrative example, state variable **300** comprises a number of different parameters. As depicted, state variable **300** comprises identifier **302**, value **304**, object **306**, and name and description **308**.

In the illustrative example, identifier **302** indicates a property of the data maintained in state variable **300**. Identifier **302** is a unique identifier in this example.

For example, when state variable **300** is a variable indicating whether a destination airport has been reached, identifier **302** can be "destinationAirportReached". Identifier **302** is a unique identifier in this example.

Value **304**, in this depicted example, is a Boolean value. In other illustrative examples, value **304** can be a numerical value rather than merely a Boolean value.

In this example, object **306** is an optional parameter in state variable **300**. Object **306** can be used to convey or reference additional information about state variable **300**. For example, with "destinationAirportReached", object **306** can indicate that an identifier of a destination airport should be set.

In this illustrative example, name and description **308** are parameters used to present status of state variable **300** to human

operator **118** in **Figure 1**. In other words, these parameters can be used to display information to human operator **118** in a manner that is understood by human operator **118**. For example, name and description **308** for "destinationAirportReached" can be "Has
5 destination airport been reached". These parameters can be used to display information to human operator **118**.

With reference to **Figure 4**, an illustration of a block diagram of an action is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. As depicted, action **400** is an example
10 of an action in actions **128** in **Figure 1** and a potential action in pool of potential actions **130** in **Figure 1**.

In this example, action **400** includes a number of different parameters. In this illustrative example, action **400** includes identifier **402**, a set of preconditions **404**, a set of effects
15 **406**, and status **408**.

As depicted, identifier **402** is a unique identifier for action **400** in this example. Identifier **402** can be used to identify action **400** when action **400** is present in actions **128** in sequence of actions **126** or is present in pool of potential
20 actions **130**.

In this illustrative example, the set of preconditions **404** is one or more conditions that are to be met before action **400** can be performed. For example, action **400** is not performed until all conditions in the set of preconditions **404** for action
25 **400** are met. In another example, preconditions **404** can include a precondition that specifies which ones of preconditions **404** need to be met to perform action **400**. As a result, a subset of preconditions **404** can be met to perform action **400** with this example.

The set of preconditions **404** can take a number of different forms. For example, the set of preconditions **404** can be selected from at least one of when at least 1-n conditions are met, if either one of two conditions are met, or other types of conditions. With the use of object **306** in state variable **300** in
30

Figure 3, the set of preconditions **404** can be bound by greater, less, equal, or other logic statements regarding selected system parameters. These system parameters can be, for example, groundspeed, altitude, attitude, temperature, or other suitable parameters.

In the illustrative example, the set of effects **406** is one or more changes that can occur to state variables **120** in **Figure 1** when action **400** is performed. An effect that changes a state variable is a change in a value for the state variable in response to a performance of action **400**. The performance of action **400** changes current mission state **122**, thus resulting in a new mission state becoming current mission state **122**.

In this example, actions such as action **400** can be identified and placed into pool of potential actions **130** for aircraft **100**. The actions available in pool of potential actions **130** can vary between different types and models of aircraft.

The identification of actions for use in pool of potential actions **130** can be determined in a number of different ways. For example, functional decompositions of the system and supervised learning of actions through machine learning approaches can be performed using artificial intelligence system **146**. In other illustrative examples, these actions can be manually defined by human operators.

The illustration of aircraft control environment **102** and the different components depicted in aircraft control environment **102** in **Figures 1-4** are not meant to imply physical or architectural limitations to the manner in which an illustrative embodiment may be implemented. Other components in addition to or in place of the ones illustrated may be used. Some components may be unnecessary. Also, the blocks are presented to illustrate some functional components. One or more of these blocks may be combined, divided, or combined and

divided into different blocks when implemented in an illustrative embodiment.

For example, the illustrative example can be applied to other types of vehicles in addition to aircraft **100**. For example, the planning of the sequence of actions to reach a target state can be used to operate a vehicle such as a spacecraft, a surface ship, a submarine, an autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV), a remotely operated underwater vehicles (ROV), a car, a semi-trailer truck, a tank, a train, or other suitable types of vehicles.

In the illustrative example, artificial intelligence system **146** is shown as being separate from action manager **106** in **Figure 1**. In another illustrative example, artificial intelligence system **146** can be implemented as part of action manager **106**.

Further, when computer system **104** includes components in locations remote from aircraft **100**, action manager **106** can be located in the remote location and generate sequence of actions **126** that are sent to aircraft systems **108** in aircraft **100**. With this example, information **110** and instructions **112** can be exchanged over a communications medium such as a set of wireless communications links. The set of wireless communications links can include at least one of a satellite communications link, a microwave communications link, a Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMAX) communications link, an ultra high frequency (UHF) communications link, a very high frequency (VHF) communications link, a WiFi communications link, or some other suitable type of wireless communications link.

In other examples, a wired communications link can be used when aircraft **100** is on the ground. This communications link can be used when preplanning to reach a target state from a particular target state or to transmit an initial sequence of actions determined for the target state. With this implementation, re-planning or re-determining the sequence of actions can be performed while aircraft **100** is in flight using

action manager **106**. In this example, a new sequence of actions can be dynamically selected as needed during flight of aircraft with action manager **106** located in computer system **104** in aircraft **100** and or with action manager **106** in computer system **104** in remote location and in communication with aircraft **100** through a wireless communications link.

With this type of implementation, human operator **118** can be located in a number of different locations. For example, human operator **118** can be located in aircraft **100**, on a ground location, in a ground vehicle, on another aircraft, or some other suitable location.

With reference to **Figure 5**, an illustration of nodes in paths from a current mission state to a target state is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. In this depicted example, current mission state **500** and target state **502** are depicted as nodes. Additional nodes **504** are shown between these two states.

As depicted, additional nodes **504** include node **506**, node **508**, node **510**, node **512**, and node **514**. As depicted, additional nodes **504** are examples of nodes **140** in **Figure 1**. Each of additional nodes **504** represents a potential mission state that can occur from current mission state **500**, depending on the actions performed.

These nodes are connected to each other through lines that represent actions. These lines representing the actions are referred to as edges. As depicted, action **520**, action **522**, action **524**, action **526**, action **528**, action **530**, and action **532** are shown in this illustration.

In the illustrative example, the performance of action **520** can result in current mission state **500** changing to the mission state in node **510**. As another example, the performance of action **526** can result in current mission state **500** changing to the mission state in node **514**.

In this illustrative example, action **520**, action **522**, an action **524** are a sequence of actions in path **540** from current mission state **500** to target state **502**. Action **526**, action **528**, action **530**, and action **532** are the sequence of actions that form path **542** that from current mission state **500** to target state **502**.

In this depicted example, the sequence of actions in path **540** and the sequence of actions in path **542** are not actually performed, but are potential actions that can be performed for aircraft **100** to reach target state **502** from current mission state **500**. By creating the sequences of actions, an analysis can be made as to which path is the optimal path to reach target state **502** from current mission state **500**. The particular path chosen can be based on the cost incurred in following each of the two paths. For example, the cost can be, for example, without limitation, on the number of effects each action along a path has on the mission state in the prior node to create the new node with the new current mission state. The sequence of actions in the path selected can then be performed to control the operation of aircraft **100**.

As used herein, a "number of," when used with reference to items means one or more items. For example, a number of effects is one or more effects.

For example, node **510** has all of the same variable states as node **512**. The difference between these two nodes and other nodes is the value or value state for state variables for the nodes. The performance of action **522** can change one or more values in the state variables of node **510** to create node **512**.

With reference next to **Figure 6**, an illustration of nodes in paths from a current mission state to a target state in which a pushback from a gate occurs for an aircraft is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. Current mission state **600** is an example of current mission state **122** in **Figure 1**. Target state **602** is an example of target state **114** in

Figure. In the social example, target state **602** represents a goal of a pushback of the aircraft from a gate.

In this illustrative example, node **604**, node **606**, and node **608** represent potential mission states. These nodes are located between current mission state **600** and target state **602**, which are represented as nodes in this illustration.

As depicted, actions are depicted in which the actions can be performed to reach target state **602** in which a pushback of the aircraft occurs. These are potential actions that include close doors **610**, turn lights on **612**, turn lights on **614**, close doors **616**, and request pushback **618**.

As depicted, the sequence of actions: close doors **610**, turn on lights **612**, and request pushback **618** form path **630**. The sequence of actions: turn on lights **614**, close doors **616**, and request pushback **618** form path **630**.

In the illustrative example, the difference in state variables, between current mission state **600** and node **604**, is that the state variable "doorsClosed" changes from false to true in node **604** in response to performing close doors **610**. The performance of turn lights on **612** results in node **606** in which the difference in the state variables between node **606** and node **604** is that lightsOn changes from false to true. The performance of request pushback **618** causes a change in the state variables between node **606** and target state **602** in which "pushbackClearanceAvailable" changes from false to true.

Similarly, the performance of turn lights on **614** causes the state variable "lightsOn" to become true from false in the shift from current mission state **600** to node **608**. The performance of close doors **616** causes the state variable "doorsClosed" to change from false in node **608** to true in node **606**.

As depicted, each of these actions has a cost of one. As a result, the order in which the doors are closed and the lights are turned on both have the same cost with respect to reaching target state **602** from current mission state **600**. As a result,

either path **630** or path **632** can be selected to reach target state **602**. The selection of the path can be made randomly because both paths have the same cost.

Illustrations of paths between a current mission state to a target state in **Figure 5** and **Figure 6** are presented for purposes of illustrating how actions can cause a change in the current mission state to a number of different potential mission states. The nodes present in the paths in reaching a target mission state from a current mission state can include many more nodes and actions than depicted. Further, the state variables illustrated for the nodes are only state variables relevant to the particular example. The nodes can actually contain all of the state variables that are available in an aircraft. In this illustrative example, only a few nodes and actions are depicted to avoid obscuring the concepts presented in the illustrative examples.

Turning next to **Figure 7**, an illustration of a flowchart of a process for controlling an aircraft is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The process in **Figure 7** can be implemented in hardware, software, or both. When implemented in software, the process can take the form of program code that is run by one of more processor units located in one or more hardware devices in one or more computer systems. For example, the process can be implemented in action manager **106** in computer system **104** in **Figure 1**.

The process begins by identifying a target state for an aircraft (operation **700**). The process determines a current mission state for the aircraft (operation **702**).

The process then selects a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state (operation **704**). The selection of the sequence of actions in operation **704** can be

performed using at least one of a set of path-planning algorithms or an artificial intelligence system.

The process performs actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have been met, in which the actions are performed in an order defined by the sequence of actions (operation **706**). The process terminates thereafter.

The one or more operations in the process in **Figure 7** can be performed again after the sequence of actions has been selected. For example, selecting the sequence of actions can be repeated in response to an event. In the illustrative example, the event can be selected from one of a periodic event, a non-periodic event, a current mission state change, reaching a sub target state, an expiration of a timer, a state variable change, a change in a configuration of the aircraft, a performance of an action, or some other event. As a result, the sequence of actions can change even as actions in the sequence of actions are being performed in response to the event. In this manner, in the illustrative examples, a change in the configuration of an aircraft can include at least one of a change in a control surface, a change in a gross weight of the aircraft, a change in a number of engines operating in the aircraft, or other changes in the aircraft structure or operation that may or may not be planned.

With reference to **Figure 8**, an illustration of a flowchart of a process for determining a current mission state is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The process in **Figure 8** is an example of an implementation for operation **702** in **Figure 7**.

The process begins by receiving state variables from aircraft systems in an aircraft (operation **800**). The process determines a current mission state using state variables for the current mission state (operation **802**). The process terminates thereafter.

Turning to **Figure 9**, an illustration of a flowchart of a process for selecting a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach a target state from a current mission state for an aircraft is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The process in **Figure 9** can be implemented in hardware, software, or both. When implemented in software, the process can take the form of program code that is run by one of more processor units located in one or more hardware devices in one or more computer systems. For example, the process can be implemented in action manager **106** in computer system **104** in **Figure 1**. This process in **Figure 9** is an example of an implementation of operation **704** in **Figure 7**.

The process begins by identifying nodes in a path from a current mission state to a target state based on the nodes having a lowest cost (operation **900**). The process selects a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions based on the nodes identified in the path (operation **902**). The process terminates thereafter.

With reference now to **Figure 10**, an illustration of a flowchart for reselecting actions to reach a target state for an aircraft from a current mission state when a state variable changes is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The process in **Figure 10** can be implemented in hardware, software, or both. When implemented in software, the process can take the form of program code that is run by one of more processor units located in one or more hardware devices in one or more computer systems. For example, the process can be implemented in action manager **106** in computer system **104** in **Figure 1**. This process be performed each time a state variable changes for the current mission state.

The process begins by detecting a change in a state variable (operation **1000**). The change in the state variable can occur in response to a performance of an action, an environmental change, a change in an aircraft system not caused

by the performance of the action, or some other event. For example, a weather change, fuel efficiency changing in an engine, an airport change, a flight plan change, or some other event can cause a state variable change.

5 The process identifies a set of currently performed actions (operation **1002**). In this illustrative example, The set of currently a performed action is a set of actions that was started last and has not been finished. Some actions may finish more quickly than other actions. For example, an action of
10 "turn on the landing lights" will finish before an action of "taxi out" when started at the same time.

 The system which starts the execution of an action marks the action as "in progress". In this example, all actions that are marked as "in progress" are still being performed. Once all
15 effects of the currently performed action are observed in the current mission state, the action is marked as "completed". Alternatively, an action may be reported as "completed" by a component such as an aircraft system or a sub system in the aircraft system.

20 A determination is made as to whether the change in the state variable is an expected effect from the set of currently performed actions (operation **1004**). If the change in the state variable is an expected effect from the set of currently performed actions, the process terminates. In this case, the
25 change in the state variable caused by the performance of the set of currently performed actions is normal and expected, and re-planning of actions to reach a target state is unnecessary.

 With reference again to operation **1004**, if the change in the state variable is not the expected effect from the set of
30 currently performed actions, the process reselects actions and an order of actions to form a sequence of actions to reach the target state (operation **1006**). The process terminates thereafter. In operation **1006**, a possibility exists that the reselection of the actions can result in the same sequence of

actions being selected that was present before the state variable changed.

Turning to **Figures 11A** and **11B**, illustrations of a flowchart of a process selecting a sequence of actions to reach target state for an aircraft is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The process in **Figures 11A** and **11B** can be implemented in hardware, software, or both. When implemented in software, the process can take the form of program code that is run by one of more processor units located in one or more hardware devices in one or more computer systems. For example, the process can be implemented in action manager **106** in computer system **104** in **Figure 1**. This process can be used in operation **704** in **Figure 7**.

In this illustrative example, the process illustrated in the flowchart in **Figure 7** is an implementation of a path-planning algorithm, A* search algorithm, for path-planning to identify actions that can be performed by aircraft systems to provide autonomous operation of an aircraft.

The operations in this flowchart can select actions to cause changes between multiple nodes representing hypothetical mission states of the aircraft. In this illustrative example, the hypothetical mission states in these nodes can occur when performing actions to reach a target state from a current mission state. In other words, the process in this flowchart can be used to select a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions that can be performed to reach the target state from the current mission state. The selection of the sequence of actions includes selecting the actions and selecting the order in which the actions are to be performed.

The process begins by obtaining a current mission state (operation **1100**). In this example, the current mission state can be obtained from aircraft systems in the aircraft. The information forming the current mission state can be maintained during an entire flight of the aircraft. For example, the

different aircraft systems can send the information that is stored in a central location for the current mission state.

As depicted, the current mission state obtained in operation **1100** is start state **1101**. In other words, start state **1101** is a "snapshot" or copy of the current mission state when the process in **Figures 11A** and **11B** begins. In the illustrative example, start state **1101** comprises a Boolean representation of all state variables that are in the current mission state obtained in operation **1100**. As depicted, the current location state contains all of the state variables for the particular aircraft in which the actions are to be performed.

The operations in section **1107** of this flowchart are used to process sub target states that may be present in operating the aircraft to reach the target state for the aircraft. In the illustrative example, sub target states that are reached by performing actions as part of the process for reaching the target state for the aircraft can be present. These operations can be performed for every sub target state for the aircraft that is present to reach the target state. In this illustrative example, the target state can be sent by a human operator in the form of a goal and can include sub goals, which are translated into target states and sub target states.

The process then selects a next sub target state (operation **1102**). In operation **1102**, the next sub target state is a target state that has not yet been processed. The target state can be comprised of sub target states. For example, the target state can be "docked at a gate at the Seattle airport at 9:00 am PDT". Sub target states for this target state can be, for example, "be in Seattle" and "be docked at a gate". In this illustrative example, "be in Seattle" is a spatial sub target state, and "be docked at a gate" is an operational sub target state. As depicted, "docked at 9:00 am PDT" is a constraint for the sub target state "be docked at a gate".

As depicted, the particular sub target state selected can be based on the border, in which the sub target states may need to be reached to reach the target state. For example, one sub target state may have a precondition that is based on reaching another sub target state.

The process derives state variables for the selected sub target state (operation **1104**). In this example, the state variables for the target state can be `destinationAirportReached = true; destinationAirportSet = true` with an assigned object of `AirportIdentifier = KSEA; and dockedAtGate = true`.

A determination is made as to whether any of the state variables are required in start state **1101** (operation **1106**). In the illustrative example, some sub target states may need a modification of start state **1101**. This modification may be needed because the information contained in the sub target state may be used for planning to select the actions to reach target state **1103**.

For example, `destinationAirportReached` is a state variable and is just part of target state **1103**. The goal is to reach a mission state where this condition is true, meaning that the aircraft has reached the destination. In this case, the destination is defined by `destinationAirportSet` being true and the associated object containing the airport identifier for the destination that is to be reached by the flight of the aircraft.

As depicted, `destinationAirportSet` is a state variable that contains information that is necessary for planning. This state variable cannot be part of the target state, as this situation would translate to the goal for target state **1103** being "want to have destination airport set" which would not work well in target state **1103**. As a result, this state variable is placed into start state **1101**, which is a snapshot of the current mission state. Further, `dockedAtGate` will be part of target state **1103** for the same reason as `destinationAirportReached`.

If any of the variables are required in start state **1101**, the process adds the required state variables to start state **1101** (operation **1108**). If the state variables are not required, the process adds state variables for the sub target state to
5 target state **1103** (operation **1110**). As depicted, target state **1103** contains a subset of all possible state variables. This subset includes the state variables that are needed to have a selected value to reach the sub target state.

A determination is made as to whether an unprocessed sub
10 target state is present (operation **1133**). If an additional unprocessed target state is present, the process returns to operation **1102** to select the unprocessed sub target state for processing.

With reference again to operation **1133**, if all of the sub
15 target states have been processed, an initial node is created (operation **1112**). In this illustrative example, the initial node is saved as start node **1105** and contains the current mission state. As depicted, start node **1105** and other nodes processed using this flowchart include information such as the
20 mission state at the node, the action performed to reach the node, the cost to reach the node, the cost estimated to reach the target state from the node, the total cost, and pointer to the preceding node. The total cost is a sum of the cost to reach the node and the cost estimated to reach the target state
25 from the node.

The process pushes the initial node to open list **1109** (operation **1114**). Open list **1109** is a list of nodes that have not been expanded.

In the illustrative example, a node to be expanded is
30 selected from open list **1109** based on the total cost value. In this example, the node with the lowest total cost is selected as the node to be expanded.

In this depicted example, the total cost value is the combined cost of moving to this node from the start node and the

estimated cost to get from this node to the target node. In this example, an estimated cost can be implemented with a heuristics function. With the use of the heuristics function, the criteria to meet does not overestimate the cost. Avoiding overestimation is needed for the cost to be admissible for use.

For example, the cost can be calculated via the number of effects to be caused by an action. If the action has seven effects that are caused to a mission state, the cost to perform this action is seven. The estimated cost in this example is assumed to be the number of state variables yet to be changed minus one. This results in the estimated cost being lower than the actual cost.

The cost of reaching the current node is the sum of all action costs incurred when starting from the initial node until reaching the current node that is being evaluated. In other words, the cost is the total number of effects caused so far.

In the illustrative examples, expansion is used to discover all nodes that can be reached from the currently expanded node. In this example, the mission state is stored at the currently viewed node and is used to check which actions can be performed. The actions can be analyzed to determine what nodes can be reached by the performance of particular actions. This analysis can be performed using temporary mission states such that new neighboring nodes are discovered.

This process is analogous to standing at an intersection and being either able to go into four directions or maybe only two because of a one-way street constellation, meaning that a node that is behind a one-way street cannot be reached.

The process retrieves the node having the lowest total cost from open list **1109** (operation **1116**). In this example, the node with the lowest total cost retrieved from open list **1109** is currently evaluated node **1111**. Currently evaluated node **1111** is a node that is currently being processed in this example.

A determination is made as to whether open list **1109** is empty (operation **1118**). If open list **1109** is empty, the process indicates that no solution has been discovered (operation **1120**), with the process terminating thereafter.

5 With reference again to operation **1116**, if open list **1109** is not empty, the process obtains the node mission state (operation **1122**). In this illustrative example, the node mission state in operation **1122** is from mission state node **1113** for currently evaluated node **1111** that was retrieved from open
10 list **1109**.

In this illustrative example, mission state node **1113** is the mission state that is present by applying all of the actions performed for nodes in a path from currently evaluated node **1111** back to start node **1105**.

15 A determination is made as to whether mission state node **1113** is the same as target state **1103** (operation **1124**). If mission state node **1113** is the same as target state **1103**, the process indicates that a solution has been discovered (operation **1126**), with the process terminates thereafter.

20 In operation **1126**, the actions in the analysis can be actually performed during the operation of the aircraft to reach the target state from the current mission state. This process can be repeated any number of times during the flight of the aircraft to determine whether different actions should be
25 performed to reach the target state from the current mission state.

The operations performed in section **1123** are performed to identify possible actions that can be performed to move the mission state towards the target state. The operations
30 performed in section **1123** are performed to check the available action against the mission state for currently evaluated node **1111**. When the action can be performed, the effects of those actions are applied and a temporary node is generated. After the evaluation is performed for currently evaluated node **1111**

using all available actions, this node is put into closed list **1121**.

With reference again to operation **1124**, if mission state node **1113** is not target state **1103**, the process obtains the next
5 action (operation **1128**). In operation **1128**, the next action is obtained from available actions **1115**.

A determination is made as to whether a precondition has been met for the next action obtained (operation **1130**). If the precondition has not been met, the process then returns to
10 operation **1128** to obtain a next action for processing.

With reference again to operation **1130**, if the precondition for the action is met, the process applies the effects of the action (operation **1132**). In this illustrative example, temporary mission state **1117** is created by applying the effects
15 of the action to the state stored at the node.

For example, the state at Node B is lightsOn = false and doorsClosed = true. The effects of the action "LightsOn" is lightsOn = true. In this example, temporary mission state **1117** with applied effects is the state of Node B + effects of action
20 lightsOn = true and action doorsClosed = true.

In this example of temporary mission state **1117**, other variables are not changed. Temporary mission state **1117** can be kept until the process knows that either (a) the state is unknown and a new node is generated or (b) the state was already
25 discovered, which would trigger a comparison of cost values.

A determination is made as to whether the mission state has already been discovered through another path (operation **1134**). If the mission state has been discovered through another path, a determination is made as to whether new node **1119** has a lower
30 total cost (operation **1136**). New node **1119** is created using temporary mission state **1117**. If new node **1119** does not have a lower total cost, the process returns to operation **1128**. In this example, all possible actions are being performed with each of them yielding a new mission state which has not been

discovered before in the current mission state. A new node can be generated for each action that can be performed, resulting in nodes such as nodes **608** and node **604** in **Figure 6**.

Otherwise, when new node **1119** has a lower total cost, the
5 process creates and replaces the current node with new node **1119**
and pushes new node **1119** to open list **1109** when new node **1119**
has a lower cost (operation **1138**). New node **1119** can be created
from temporary mission state **1117**. If the mission state of a
prior node had a higher total cost, the process removes the
10 prior node and creates a new node with the same state, but
storing another path and another cost value there. This new
node is created from temporary mission state **1117**.

This other path for the new node is identified from a
reference to a previous node or action. With reference again to
15 operation **1134**, if the mission state is not already discovered
through another path, the process also proceeds to operation
1138.

The process then pushes the evaluated node to closed list
1121 (operation **1140**). As depicted, closed list **1121** is a list
20 of all nodes that have been expanded. These nodes are ones that
have a lowest cost in this example. All available actions that
met preconditions for the nodes on this list led to discovery
neighboring nodes.

In this illustrative example, neighboring nodes are all
25 nodes that are reachable from the just expanded node. In other
words, a neighboring node is discovered for every action that
can be performed on the state that is stored at the currently
expanded node. Performing the action and applying effects of the
action to the expansion node's state will yield new states and
30 thus potentially new nodes. The process then returns to
operation **1116** to obtain a node with a lowest cost from open
list **1109**.

The flowcharts and block diagrams in the different depicted
embodiments illustrate the architecture, functionality, and

operation of some possible implementations of apparatuses and methods in an illustrative embodiment. In this regard, each block in the flowcharts or block diagrams can represent at least one of a module, a segment, a function, or a portion of an operation or step. For example, one or more of the blocks can be implemented as program code, hardware, or a combination of the program code and hardware. When implemented in hardware, the hardware can, for example, take the form of integrated circuits that are manufactured or configured to perform one or more operations in the flowcharts or block diagrams. When implemented as a combination of program code and hardware, the implementation may take the form of firmware. Each block in the flowcharts or the block diagrams can be implemented using special purpose hardware systems that perform the different operations or combinations of special purpose hardware and program code run by the special purpose hardware.

In some alternative implementations of an illustrative embodiment, the function or functions noted in the blocks may occur out of the order noted in the figures. For example, in some cases, two blocks shown in succession may be performed substantially concurrently, or the blocks may sometimes be performed in the reverse order, depending upon the functionality involved. Also, other blocks may be added in addition to the illustrated blocks in a flowchart or block diagram.

For example, cost in **Figures 11A** and **11B** can be calculated using other factors other than the number of effects. For example, an airline may want to actually have the cost reflect the actual cost incurred in a monetary sense. The cost can be inferred indirectly using a cost function that incorporates factors selected from at least one of time, a maintenance cost incurred, an amount of fuel to be consumed, a personnel cost connected to time, passenger comfort, a company policy, a manufacturing recommendation, or other suitable factors. In one example, a company policy can refer to performing A over B. As

a result, performing B has greater cost than performing A in this example. In the illustrative examples, cost can be dynamic and not static in which the cost can change on when a system state or the environment changes.

5 Turning now to **Figure 12**, an illustration of a block diagram of a data processing system is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. Data processing system **1200** can be used to implement one or more data processing systems in computer system **104** in **Figure 1**. In this illustrative example,
10 data processing system **1200** includes communications framework **1202**, which provides communications between processor unit **1204**, memory **1206**, persistent storage **1208**, communications unit **1210**, input/output (I/O) unit **1212**, and display **1214**. In this example, communications framework **1202** takes the form of a bus
15 system.

Processor unit **1204** serves to execute instructions for software that can be loaded into memory **1206**. Processor unit **1204** includes one or more processors. For example, processor unit **1204** can be selected from at least one of a multicore
20 processor, a central processing unit (CPU), a graphics processing unit (GPU), a physics processing unit (PPU), a digital signal processor (DSP), a network processor, or some other suitable type of processor.

Memory **1206** and persistent storage **1208** are examples of
25 storage devices **1216**. A storage device is any piece of hardware that is capable of storing information, such as, for example, without limitation, at least one of data, program code in functional form, or other suitable information either on a temporary basis, a permanent basis, or both on a temporary basis
30 and a permanent basis. Storage devices **1216** may also be referred to as computer-readable storage devices in these illustrative examples. Memory **1206**, in these examples, can be, for example, a random-access memory or any other suitable volatile or non-volatile storage device. Persistent storage

1208 can take various forms, depending on the particular implementation.

For example, persistent storage **1208** may contain one or more components or devices. For example, persistent storage **1208** can be a hard drive, a solid-state drive (SSD), a flash memory, a rewritable optical disk, a rewritable magnetic tape, or some combination of the above. The media used by persistent storage **1208** also can be removable. For example, a removable hard drive can be used for persistent storage **1208**.

Communications unit **1210**, in these illustrative examples, provides for communications with other data processing systems or devices. In these illustrative examples, communications unit **1210** is a network interface card.

Input/output unit **1212** allows for input and output of data with other devices that can be connected to data processing system **1200**. For example, input/output unit **1212** can provide a connection for user input through at least one of a keyboard, a mouse, or some other suitable input device. Further, input/output unit **1212** can send output to a printer. Display **1214** provides a mechanism to display information to a user.

Instructions for at least one of the operating system, applications, or programs can be located in storage devices **1216**, which are in communication with processor unit **1204** through communications framework **1202**. The processes of the different embodiments can be performed by processor unit **1204** using computer-implemented instructions, which can be located in a memory, such as memory **1206**.

These instructions are referred to as program code, computer usable program code, or computer-readable program code that can be read and executed by a processor in processor unit **1204**. The program code in the different embodiments can be embodied on different physical or computer-readable storage media, such as memory **1206** or persistent storage **1208**.

Program code **1218** is located in a functional form on computer-readable media **1220** that is selectively removable and can be loaded onto or transferred to data processing system **1200** for execution by processor unit **1204**. Program code **1218** and computer-readable media **1220** form computer program product **1222** in these illustrative examples. In the illustrative example, computer-readable media **1220** is computer-readable storage media **1224**.

In these illustrative examples, computer-readable storage media **1224** is a physical or tangible storage device used to store program code **1218** rather than a medium that propagates or transmits program code **1218**.

Alternatively, program code **1218** can be transferred to data processing system **1200** using a computer-readable signal media.

The computer-readable signal media can be, for example, a propagated data signal containing program code **1218**. For example, the computer-readable signal media can be at least one of an electromagnetic signal, an optical signal, or any other suitable type of signal. These signals can be transmitted over connections, such as wireless connections, optical fiber cable, coaxial cable, a wire, or any other suitable type of connection.

In this illustrative example, program code **1218** can include instructions for action manager **106** in **Figure 1**. Program code **1218** can also include instructions for artificial intelligence system **146** and a set of path planning algorithms **138** in **Figure 1**.

The different components illustrated for data processing system **1200** are not meant to provide architectural limitations to the manner in which different embodiments can be implemented. In some illustrative examples, one or more of the components may be incorporated in or otherwise form a portion of, another component. For example, memory **1206**, or portions thereof, can be incorporated in processor unit **1204** in some illustrative examples. The different illustrative embodiments can be

implemented in a data processing system including components in addition to or in place of those illustrated for data processing system **1200**. Other components shown in **Figure 12** can be varied from the illustrative examples shown. The different embodiments can be implemented using any hardware device or system capable of running program code **1218**.

Illustrative embodiments of the disclosure may be described in the context of aircraft manufacturing and service method **1300** as shown in **Figure 13** and aircraft **1400** as shown in **Figure 14**.

Turning first to **Figure 13**, an illustration of an aircraft manufacturing and service method is depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. During pre-production, aircraft manufacturing and service method **1300** may include specification and design **1302** of aircraft **1400** in **Figure 14** and material procurement **1304**.

During production, component and subassembly manufacturing **1306** and system integration **1308** of aircraft **1400** in **Figure 14** takes place. Thereafter, aircraft **1400** in **Figure 14** can go through certification and delivery **1310** in order to be placed in service **1312**. While in service **1312** by a customer, aircraft **1400** in **Figure 14** is scheduled for routine maintenance and service **1314**, which may include modification, reconfiguration, refurbishment, and other maintenance or service.

Each of the processes of aircraft manufacturing and service method **1300** may be performed or carried out by a system integrator, a third party, an operator, or some combination thereof. In these examples, the operator may be a customer. For the purposes of this description, a system integrator may include, without limitation, any number of aircraft manufacturers and major-system subcontractors; a third party may include, without limitation, any number of vendors, subcontractors, and suppliers; and an operator may be an airline, a leasing company, a military entity, a service organization, and so on.

With reference now to **Figure 14**, an illustration of an aircraft is depicted in which an illustrative embodiment may be implemented. In this example, aircraft **1400** is produced by aircraft manufacturing and service method **1300** in **Figure 13** and
5 may include airframe **1402** with plurality of systems **1404** and interior **1406**. Examples of systems **1404** include one or more of propulsion system **1408**, electrical system **1410**, hydraulic system **1412**, environmental system **1413** and avionics **1416**. Any number of other systems may be included. Although an aerospace example
10 is shown, different illustrative embodiments may be applied to other industries, such as the automotive industry. Avionics **1416** can include a computer system such as computer system **104** in which action manager **106** is located.

Apparatuses and methods embodied herein may be employed
15 during at least one of the stages of aircraft manufacturing and service method **1300** in **Figure 13**. For example, a computer system implemented to include processes in the illustrative examples, such as those performed by hardware or software for actions manager **106** in **Figure 1** can operate during in service
20 **1312** to control the operation of aircraft **1400**.

In one illustrative example, components or subassemblies produced in component and subassembly manufacturing **1306** in **Figure 13** can be fabricated or manufactured in a manner similar to components or subassemblies produced while aircraft **1400** is
25 in service **1312** in **Figure 13**. As yet another example, one or more apparatus embodiments, method embodiments, or a combination thereof can be utilized during production stages, such as component and subassembly manufacturing **1306** and system integration **1308** in **Figure 13**. One or more apparatus
30 embodiments, method embodiments, or a combination thereof may be utilized while aircraft **1400** is in service **1312**, during maintenance and service **1314** in **Figure 13**, or both. The use of a number of the different illustrative embodiments may

substantially reduce of operating the cost of aircraft **1400** and increase the efficiency in which aircraft **1400** operates.

With reference to **Figures 15-55**, illustrations of display screens or portions of display screens that can be displayed on human machine interface system **158** are depicted. These figures are some illustrative examples of display screens or portions of display screens that can be displayed in graphical user interface **150** on display system **152** in human machine interface system **158** in **Figure 1**.

These illustrative display screens or portions of displays screens in **Figures 15-55** provide some examples of how information can be displayed in graphical user interface **150** and are not meant limit the manner in which information can be displayed in graphical user interface. For example, the display screens portions of displays screens depicted in these figures can be displayed in conjunction with other graphical displays to at least one of display information or receive user input.

As depicted, **Figures 15-18** are illustrations of a display screen or a portion thereof with different embodiments of a graphical user interface depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The broken lines showing a display screen or a portion thereof in all views are for the purpose of illustrating environment and form no part of the claimed design. The broken lines of text, numbers, icons, and boxes demonstrating portions of a graphical user interface displayed on the display screen in all views are for illustrative purposes only and form no part of the claimed design. The diagonal lines in all views represents a color or shaded portion of the graphical user interface. The diagonal lines do not imply or claim a specific color. An ornamental design for a display screen with a graphical user interface is shown and described in **Figures 15-18**.

Figures 19-27 are illustrations of a display screen or a portion thereof with different embodiments of an animated

graphical user interface depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The broken lines showing a display screen or a portion thereof in all views are for the purpose of illustrating environment and form no part of the claimed design.

5 The broken lines of text, numbers, icons, and boxes demonstrating portions of the animated graphical user interface displayed on the display screen in all views are for illustrative purposes only and form no part of the claimed design. The diagonal lines in all views represents a color or shaded portion of the animated graphical user interface. The diagonal lines do not imply or claim a specific color. An ornamental design for a display screen with an animated graphical user interface is shown and described in **Figures 19-27**. The appearance of the animated images sequentially transitions between the images shown in **Figures 19-21, Figures 22-24, or Figures 25-27**. The process or period in which one image transitions to another forms no part of the claimed design.

Figures 28-36 are illustrations of a display screen or a portion thereof with different embodiments of an animated graphical user interface depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The broken lines showing a display screen or a portion thereof in all views are for the purpose of illustrating environment and form no part of the claimed design.

25 The broken lines of text, numbers, icons, and boxes demonstrating portions of the animated graphical user interface displayed on the display screen in all views are for illustrative purposes only and form no part of the claimed design. The diagonal lines in all views represents a color or shaded portion of the animated graphical user interface. The diagonal lines do not imply or claim a specific color. An ornamental design for a display screen with an animated graphical user interface is shown and described in **Figures 28-36**. The appearance of the animated images sequentially

transitions between the images shown in **Figures 28-30, Figures 31-33, or Figures 34-36.** The process or period in which one image transitions to another forms no part of the claimed design.

5 **Figures 37-43** are illustrations of a display screen or a portion thereof with different embodiments of a graphical user interface depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The broken lines showing a display screen or a portion thereof in all views are for the purpose of illustrating
10 environment and form no part of the claimed design. The broken lines of text, numbers, icons, and boxes demonstrating portions of a graphical user interface displayed on the display screen in all views are for illustrative purposes only and form no part of the claimed design. An ornamental design for a display screen
15 with a graphical user interface is shown and described in **Figures 37-43.**

Figures 44-47 are illustrations of a display screen or a portion thereof with different embodiments of a graphical user interface depicted in accordance with an illustrative
20 embodiment. The broken lines showing a display screen or a portion thereof in all views are for the purpose of illustrating environment and form no part of the claimed design. The broken lines of text, numbers, icons, and boxes demonstrating portions of a graphical user interface displayed on the display screen in
25 all views are for illustrative purposes only and form no part of the claimed design. An ornamental design for a display screen with a graphical user interface is shown and described in **Figures 44-47.**

Figures 48-55 are illustrations of a display screen or a
30 portion thereof with different embodiments of a graphical user interface depicted in accordance with an illustrative embodiment. The broken lines showing a display screen or a portion thereof in all views are for the purpose of illustrating environment and form no part of the claimed design. The broken

lines of text, numbers, icons, and boxes demonstrating portions of a graphical user interface displayed on the display screen in all views are for illustrative purposes only and form no part of the claimed design. An ornamental design for a display screen with a graphical user interface is shown and described in

Figures 48–55.

Thus, the illustrative embodiments provide a method, apparatus, and system for controlling and aircraft. In those examples, the aircraft can be controlled by a computer system that provides instructions to aircraft systems in aircraft. With one or more illustrative examples, specific values for automated systems are unnecessary to be entered by a human operator.

For example, the human operator does not need to enter information such as speed, heading, altitude, or other information. Instead, the human operator can enter a goal such as "be docked at gate B13 at Seattle Tacoma at 10:35 UTC". This goal can be translated into a target state, and the current mission state of the aircraft can be used to automatically identify actions and an order for performing the actions for a sequence of actions to reach target state. Further, the sequence of actions can be performed automatically without intervention of the pilot or other flight crew, thus resulting in increased automation of processes or functions for operating an aircraft.

Additionally, the processes in the illustrative examples are dynamic such that the selection of actions can be performed again to identify a new sequence of actions while the current sequence of actions is still being performed. In this manner, those examples provide capability to take into account events that may change what actions are performed to reach the target state.

As a result, unforeseen changes can be taken and handled as compared to current systems using decision trees. Thus, control

of functions being handled by the automated aircraft system is less likely to be returned to the pilot in the illustrative examples as compared to systems using a decision tree. As a result, workloads for the pilot and other flight crew members can be reduced with greater predictability.

In the illustrative example, features of the illustrative examples are described in the following clauses. These clauses are examples of features not intended to limit other illustrative examples.

Clause 1.

A method comprising:

identifying, by a computer system, a target state for an aircraft;

determining, by the computer system, a current mission state for the aircraft;

selecting, by the computer system, a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state; and

performing, by the computer system, actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have been met, in which the actions are performed in an order defined by the sequence of actions.

Clause 2.

The method of clause 1, wherein the actions and the sequence of actions are selected based on a cost of performing the actions.

Clause 3.

The method of clause 1 or 2, wherein the actions and the sequence of actions is selected from the pool of potential actions by an artificial intelligence system.

Clause 4.

The method of clause 1, 2, or 3, wherein determining, by the computer system, the current mission state for the aircraft comprises:

receiving state variables from aircraft systems in the aircraft; and

determining the current mission state using the state variables for the current mission state.

Clause 5.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, or 4, wherein the selecting the sequence of actions, by the computer system, from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state comprises:

identifying nodes in a path from the current mission state to the target state based on the nodes having a lowest cost; and

selecting the sequence of actions from the pool of potential actions based on the nodes identified in the path.

Clause 6.

The method of clause 5, wherein a cost used to determine the lowest cost comprises a set of factors selected from at least one of a number of effects of an action, a monetary cost, an amount of time, a maintenance cost to be incurred, an amount of fuel to be consumed, a personnel cost connected to time, or passenger comfort.

Clause 7.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, wherein selecting the sequence of actions, by the computer system, from the pool

of potential actions to reach the target state to reach the current mission state for the aircraft comprises:

selecting the sequence of actions, by the computer system, from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state
5 based on the current mission state for the aircraft using a set of path planning algorithms.

Clause 8.

The method of clause 7, wherein the set of path planning
10 algorithms is selected from at least one an A* search algorithm, a Dijkstra's algorithm, a D*, an incremental search algorithm, a Backtracking algorithm, a Fringe search, an Any-angle path planning algorithm, an iterative deepening A* search algorithm, a Bellman-Ford search algorithm, a Floyd-Warshall algorithm, a
15 Hill climbing algorithm, a Bidirectional search algorithm, or a Johnson's algorithm.

Clause 9.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 further
20 comprising:
responsive to an event, selecting the sequence of actions, by the computer system, from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state based from the current mission state in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current
25 mission state.

Clause 10.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9, wherein the event is selected from a periodic event, a non-periodic
30 event, a current mission state change, reaching a sub target state, an expiration of a timer, a state variable change, a change in a configuration of the aircraft, and a performance of an action.

Clause 11.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10, wherein the current mission state of the aircraft comprises set of state variables for the aircraft.

5

Clause 12.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 , or 11, wherein the preconditions comprise at least one of a current location of the aircraft, a performance of a selected action, a configuration of the aircraft, a position of a control surface, a weather condition, or an instruction from an air traffic controller.

10

Clause 13.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12, wherein the target state is one of an operational target state and a spatial target state.

15

Clause 14.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13, wherein the target state comprises a set of state variables with a set of values for the target state.

20

Clause 15.

The method of clause 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, or 14 further comprising:

25

defining the target state for the aircraft based on user input received from a human machine interface system.

Clause 16.

30

The method of clause 15, wherein the human machine interface system is at least one of located in the aircraft, a remote location in communication with is remotely coupled to the aircraft, an air traffic control system, or an airline system.

Clause 17.

An aircraft control system comprising:

a computer system; and

5 an action manager in the computer system, wherein the action manager is configured to:

identify a target state for an aircraft;

determine a current mission state for the aircraft from state variables received from aircraft systems in the aircraft;

10 select a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft using a set of path planning algorithms in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state; and

15 perform actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have been met in which the actions are performed in an order defined by the sequence of actions.

20 Clause 18.

The aircraft control system of clause 17, wherein the action manager selects the sequence of actions from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft using the set of path planning

25 algorithms in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state when an event occurs.

Clause 19.

30 The aircraft control system of clause 17 or 18, wherein the set of path planning algorithms comprises at least one of an A* search algorithm, a Dijkstra's algorithm, a D*, an incremental search algorithm, a Backtracking algorithm, a Fringe search, an Any-angle path planning algorithm, an iterative deepening A* search algorithm, a Bellman-Ford search algorithm, a Floyd-

Warshall algorithm, a Hill climbing algorithm, a Bidirectional search algorithm, or a Johnson's algorithm.

Clause 20.

5 The aircraft control system of clause 18 or 19, wherein the event is one of periodic event, a non-periodic event, a current mission state change, reaching a sub target state, an expiration of a timer, a state variable change, a change in a configuration of the aircraft, and a performance of an action.

10

Clause 21.

 An aircraft control system comprising:

 a computer system configured to identify a target state for an aircraft; determine a current mission state for the aircraft;
15 select a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state; and perform actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have
20 been met in which the actions are performed in an order defined by the sequence of actions.

Clause 22.

 The aircraft control system of clause 21, wherein the
25 actions and the sequence of actions are selected based on a cost of performing the actions.

Clause 23.

 The aircraft control system of clause 21 or 22, wherein the
30 actions and the sequence of actions are selected from the pool of potential actions by an artificial intelligence system.

Clause 24.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, or 23,
wherein in determining, by the computer system, the current
mission state for the aircraft, the computer system is
configured to receive state variables from aircraft systems in
the aircraft and determine the current mission state using the
state variables for the current mission state.

Clause 25.

The aircraft control system of clause 24, wherein the
aircraft systems are selected from at least one of a flight
management system, a flight navigation system, an environmental
control system, an engine, a flight control surface system, an
auto pilot, a communications system, a satellite communications
system, a very high frequency communication system, microwave-
band communication system, a radar system, an autopilot, a fuel
system, a weather radar, an electronic centralized aircraft
monitoring system, a quick access data recorder, an onboard
network server, an electronic flight instrument system.

Clause 26.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, or
25, wherein in selecting the sequence of actions from the pool
of potential actions to reach the target state from the current
mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions
is selected based on the current mission state, the computer
system is configured to identify nodes in a path from the
current mission state to the target state based the nodes having
a lowest cost using an artificial intelligence system and select
the sequence of actions from the pool of potential actions based
on the nodes identified in the path .

Clause 27.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25,
or 26, wherein a cost used to determine the lowest cost

comprises a set of factors selected from at least one of a number of effects of an action, a monetary cost, an amount of time, a maintenance cost incurred, an amount of fuel to be consumed, a personnel cost connected to time, or passenger
5 comfort.

Clause 28.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, or 27, wherein in selecting the sequence of actions from the
10 pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state, the computer system is configured to select the sequence of actions from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state
15 based on the current mission state for the aircraft using a set of path planning algorithms.

Clause 29.

The aircraft control system of clause 28, wherein the set
20 of path planning algorithms comprises at least one an A* search algorithm, a Dijkstra's algorithm, a D*, an incremental search algorithm, a Backtracking algorithm, a Fringe search, an Any-angle path planning algorithm, an iterative deepening A* search algorithm, a Bellman-Ford search algorithm, a Floyd-Warshall
25 algorithm, a Hill climbing algorithm, a Bidirectional search algorithm, or a Johnson's algorithm.

Clause 30.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, or 29, wherein the computer system selects the
30 sequence of actions from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft using a set of path planning algorithms in which the sequence of

actions is selected based on the current mission state when an event occurs.

Clause 31.

5 The aircraft control system of clause 30, wherein the event is selected from a periodic event, a non-periodic event, a current mission state change, reaching a sub target state, an expiration of a timer, a state variable change, a change in a configuration of the aircraft, and a performance of an action.

10

Clause 32.

 The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, or 31, wherein the current mission state of the aircraft comprises state variables for the aircraft.

Clause 33.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, or 32, wherein the preconditions comprise at least one of a current location of the aircraft, a performance of a selected action, a configuration of the aircraft, a position of a control surface, a weather condition, or an instruction from an air traffic controller.

Clause 34.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, or 33, wherein the target state is one of an operational target state and a spatial target state.

Clause 35.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, or 34, wherein the target state comprises a set of state variables with a set of values for the target state.

Clause 36.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, or 35, wherein the computer system defines the target state for the aircraft based on user input received from a human machine interface system.

Clause 37.

The aircraft control system of claim 36, wherein the human machine interface system is at least one of located in the aircraft, a remote location in communication with is remotely coupled to the aircraft, an air traffic control system, or an airline system.

Clause 38.

The aircraft control system of clause 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, or 37, wherein the computer system includes at least one of a flight management system, a line replaceable unit, a tablet computer, or an electronic flight bag.

The description of the different illustrative embodiments has been presented for purposes of illustration and description and is not intended to be exhaustive or limited to the embodiments in the form disclosed. The different illustrative examples describe components that perform actions or operations. In an illustrative embodiment, a component can be configured to perform the action or operation described. For example, the component can have a configuration or design for a structure that provides the component an ability to perform the action or operation that is described in the illustrative examples as being performed by the component. Further, To the extent that terms "includes", "including", "has", "contains", and variants thereof are used herein, such terms are intended to be inclusive in a manner similar to the term "comprises" as an open transition word without precluding any additional or other elements.

Many modifications and variations will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. Further, different illustrative embodiments may provide different features as compared to other desirable embodiments. The embodiment or embodiments selected are chosen and described in order to best explain the principles of the embodiments, the practical application, and to enable others of ordinary skill in the art to understand the disclosure for various embodiments with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated.

CLAIMS:

1. A method comprising:

identifying, by a computer system, a target state for an
5 aircraft;

determining, by the computer system, a current mission
state for the aircraft;

selecting, by the computer system, a sequence of actions
from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from
10 the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence
of actions is selected based on the current mission state; and

performing, by the computer system, actions in the sequence
of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have
been met, in which the actions are performed in an order defined
15 by the sequence of actions.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the actions and the sequence
of actions are selected based on a cost of performing the
actions.

3. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the actions and the
sequence of actions is selected from the pool of potential
actions by an artificial intelligence system.

4. The method of any one of claims 1-3, wherein determining,
by the computer system, the current mission state for the
aircraft comprises:

receiving state variables from aircraft systems in the
aircraft; and

determining the current mission state using the state
variables for the current mission state.

5. The method of any one of claims 1-4, wherein the selecting
the sequence of actions, by the computer system, from the pool

of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state comprises:

identifying nodes in a path from the current mission state

5 to the target state based on the nodes having a lowest cost; and

selecting the sequence of actions from the pool of potential actions based on the nodes identified in the path, and

optionally wherein a cost used to determine the lowest cost comprises a set of factors selected from at least one of a

10 number of effects of an action, a monetary cost, an amount of time, a maintenance cost to be incurred, an amount of fuel to be consumed, a personnel cost connected to time, or passenger comfort.

15 6. The method of any one of claims 1-5, wherein selecting the sequence of actions, by the computer system, from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state to reach the current mission state for the aircraft comprises:

selecting the sequence of actions, by the computer system,

20 from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state based on the current mission state for the aircraft using a set of path planning algorithms, and

optionally wherein the set of path planning algorithms is selected from at least one an A* search algorithm, a Dijkstra's

25 algorithm, a D*, an incremental search algorithm, a Backtracking algorithm, a Fringe search, an Any-angle path planning

algorithm, an iterative deepening A* search algorithm, a Bellman-Ford search algorithm, a Floyd-Warshall algorithm, a

Hill climbing algorithm, a Bidirectional search algorithm, or a

30 Johnson's algorithm.

7. The method of any one of claims 1-6, further comprising:

responsive to an event, selecting the sequence of actions, by the computer system, from the pool of potential actions to

reach the target state based from the current mission state in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state,

optionally wherein the event is selected from a periodic event, a non-periodic event, a current mission state change, reaching a sub target state, an expiration of a timer, a state variable change, a change in a configuration of the aircraft, and a performance of an action.

8. The method of any one of claims 1-7, wherein the current mission state of the aircraft comprises set of state variables for the aircraft.

9. The method of any one of claims 1-8, wherein the preconditions comprise at least one of a current location of the aircraft, a performance of a selected action, a configuration of the aircraft, a position of a control surface, a weather condition, or an instruction from an air traffic controller.

10. The method of any one of claims 1-9, wherein the target state is one of an operational target state and a spatial target state.

11. The method of any one of claims 1-10, wherein the target state comprises a set of state variables with a set of values for the target state.

12. The method of any one of claims 1-11, further comprising:

defining the target state for the aircraft based on user input received from a human machine interface system, wherein the human machine interface system is at least one of located in the aircraft, a remote location in communication with the aircraft, an air traffic control system, or an airline system.

13. An aircraft control system comprising:
a computer system; and
an action manager in the computer system, wherein the
action manager is configured to:

5 identify a target state for an aircraft;
 determine a current mission state for the aircraft
 from state variables received from aircraft systems in the
 aircraft;
 select a sequence of actions from a pool of potential
10 actions to reach the target state from the current mission
 state for the aircraft using a set of path planning
 algorithms in which the sequence of actions is selected
 based on the current mission state; and
 perform actions in the sequence of actions for which
15 preconditions for the actions that have been met in which
 the actions are performed in an order defined by the
 sequence of actions.

14. The aircraft control system of claim 13, wherein the action
20 manger selects the sequence of actions from the pool of
 potential actions to reach the target state from the current
 mission state for the aircraft using the set of path planning
 algorithms in which the sequence of actions is selected based on
 the current mission state when an event occurs, and optionally
25 at least one of:

 wherein the set of path planning algorithms comprises at
 least one of an A* search algorithm, a Dijkstra's algorithm, a
 D*, an incremental search algorithm, a Backtracking algorithm, a
 Fringe search, an Any-angle path planning algorithm, an
30 iterative deepening A* search algorithm, a Bellman-Ford search
 algorithm, a Floyd-Warshall algorithm, a Hill climbing
 algorithm, a Bidirectional search algorithm, or a Johnson's
 algorithm; or

wherein the event is one of periodic event, a non-periodic event, a current mission state change, reaching a sub target state, an expiration of a timer, a state variable change, a change in a configuration of the aircraft, and a performance of an action.

15. An aircraft control system comprising:

a computer system configured to identify a target state for an aircraft; determine a current mission state for the aircraft; select a sequence of actions from a pool of potential actions to reach the target state from on the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state; and perform actions in the sequence of actions for which preconditions for the actions that have been met in which the actions are performed in an order defined by the sequence of actions.

16. The aircraft control system of claim 15, wherein the actions and the sequence of actions are selected based on a cost of performing the actions.

17. The aircraft control system of claim 15 or 16, wherein the actions and the sequence of actions are selected from the pool of potential actions by an artificial intelligence system.

18. The aircraft control system of any one of claims 15-17, wherein in determining, by the computer system, the current mission state for the aircraft, the computer system is configured to receive state variables from aircraft systems in the aircraft and determine the current mission state using the state variables for the current mission state, and optionally wherein the aircraft systems are selected from at least of a flight management system, a flight navigation system, an environmental control system, an engine, a flight control

surface system, an auto pilot, a communications system, a satellite communications system, a very high frequency communication system, microwave-band communication system, a radar system, an autopilot, a fuel system, a weather radar, an electronic centralized aircraft monitoring system, a quick access data recorder, an onboard network server, an electronic flight instrument system.

19. The aircraft control system of any one of claims 15-18, wherein in selecting the sequence of actions from the pool of potential actions to reach the target state from the current mission state for the aircraft in which the sequence of actions is selected based on the current mission state, the computer system is configured to identify nodes in a path from the current mission state to the target state based the nodes having a lowest cost using an artificial intelligence system and select the sequence of actions from the pool of potential actions based on the nodes identified in the path.

20. The aircraft control system of any one of claims 15-19, wherein a cost used to determine a lowest cost comprises a set of factors selected from at least one of a number of effects of an action, a monetary cost, an amount of time, a maintenance cost incurred, an amount of fuel to be consumed, a personnel cost connected to time, or passenger comfort.