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VERSATILE HIGH PERFORMANCE HOLOGRAPHIC OPTICAL COATINGS

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Conventional Holographic Coatings (HC) have been fabricated for use in high energy lasers, integrated optics, and in filters designed to reduce background clutter in surveillance and laser radar systems. In most of these cases, the coatings are nearly periodic and designed to reflect radiation over a narrow spectral bandwidth. The goal of the current program is to develop a relatively simple technique for fabricating HC's with nearly any desired reflectivity spectral profile. These components could be used as matched filters to greatly increase the signal-to-clutter ratio (SCR) in tracking and surveillance. Dim targets viewed against low contrast backgrounds could be more easily detected using these filters, if the target and backgrounds had different spectral profiles.

Conventional fabrication of HCs cannot produce coatings with an arbitrary spectral profile. Figure 1 illustrates one approach for fabricating the complex HCs needed for arbitrary matched filters. A laser, after reflection from a turning mirror ("rotating mirror"), is used to record a reflection hologram. For a fixed incident angle of the beam on the holographic recording material, the developed hologram will only reflect strongly at one particular incident wavelength. In one version of the proposed concept, the turning mirror is rotated during the HC exposure, thus generating a continuum of different holographic grating periods within the photosensitive material. The intensity of the recording laser is modulated during the exposure in order to produce a HC with a specified reflectivity profile. In the second approach being investigated, the hologram is only exposed at several discrete angles, rather than a continuum of angles. This would normally produce a "comb" reflectivity profile, as shown in figure 2a. It is possible, however, to expose and then develop the photosensitive material to produce a series of chirped coatings so that the desired reflectivity profile can be approximated (figure 2b).

If the matched filter HCs can be produced, they can be used to improve the detection of targets (e.g. boosters or even aircraft against an Earth background) or background material of interest (e.g. specific vegetation or minerals from satellites).

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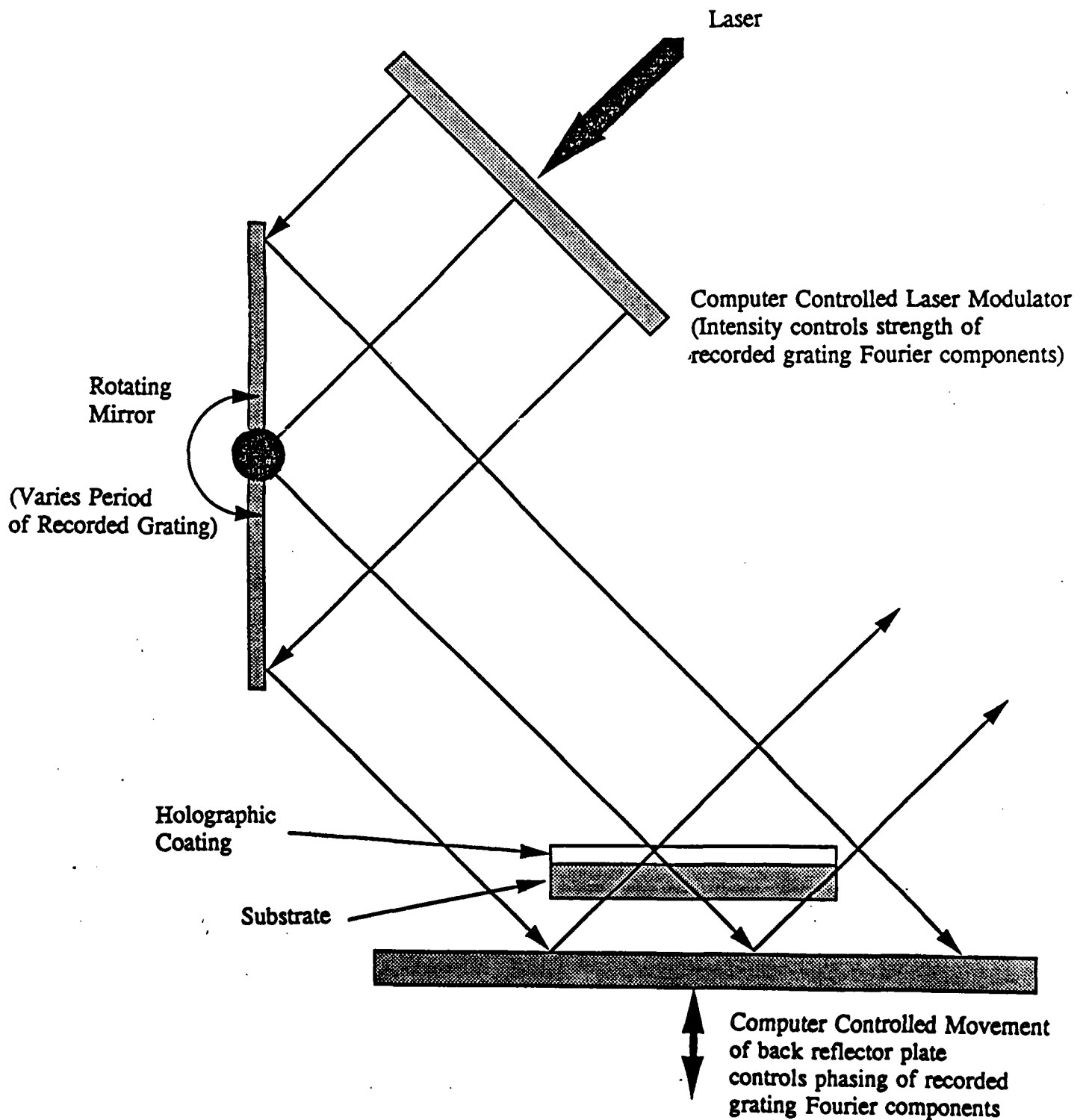


Figure 1. Holographic Matched Filter Recording Concept for Improved Target Detection Capability.

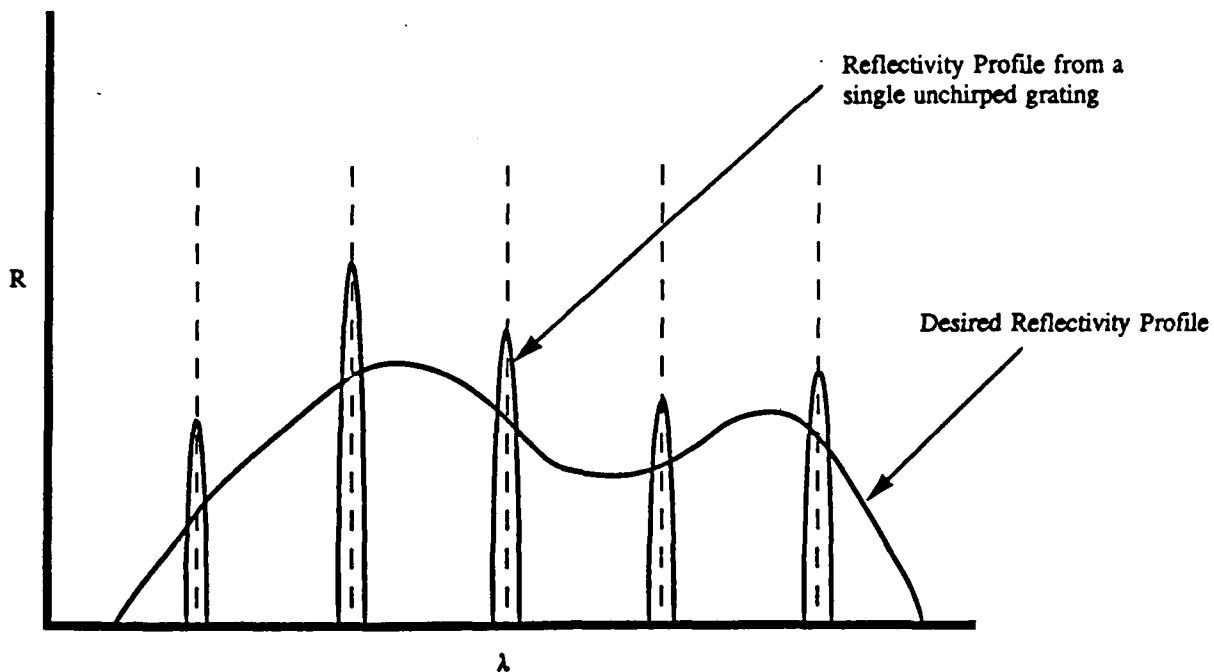


Figure 2a

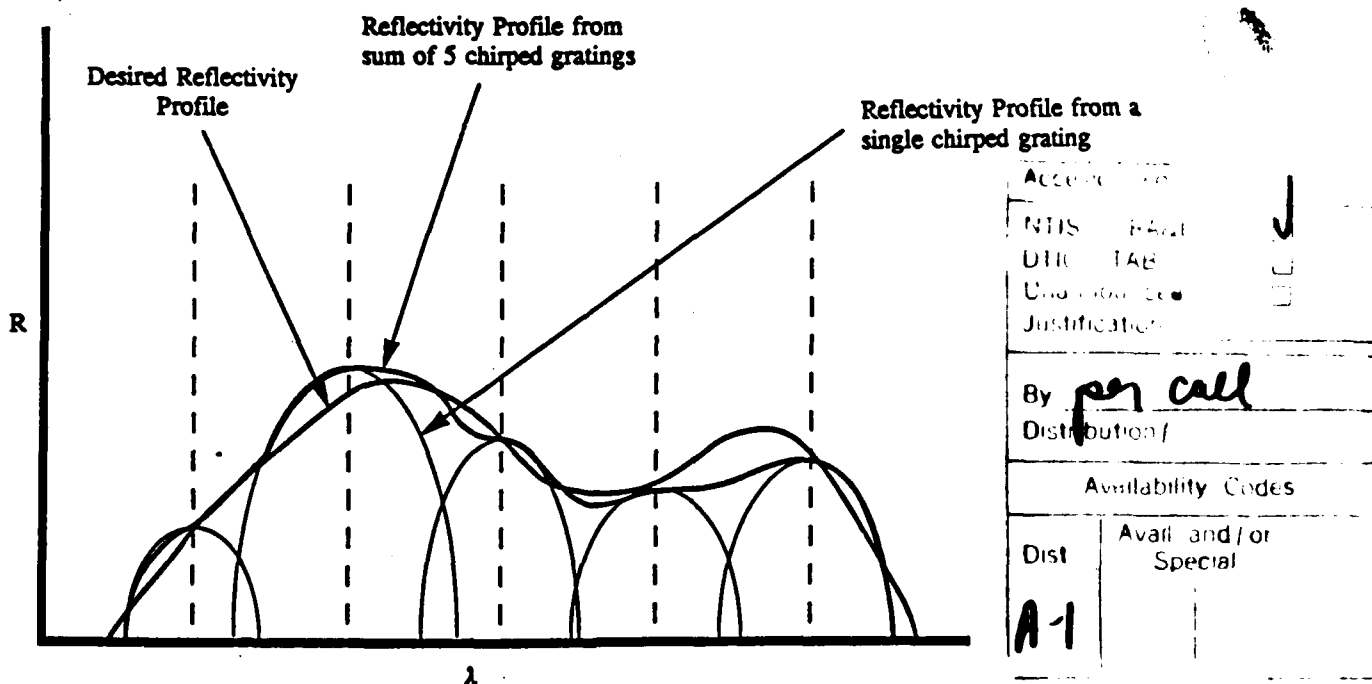


Figure 2b

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Figure 2. Conventional recording and development of a series of holographic gratings cannot be used to accurately represent a desired spectral reflectivity profile (Figure 2a). Novel techniques for recording and development of gratings with a chirped profile allow the convenient fabrication of filters with any desired reflectivity profile (Figure 2b).

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