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(54) **FUEL PROCESSING SYSTEM AND RELATED METHODS**

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See application file for complete search history.

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C10L 3/10 (2006.01)

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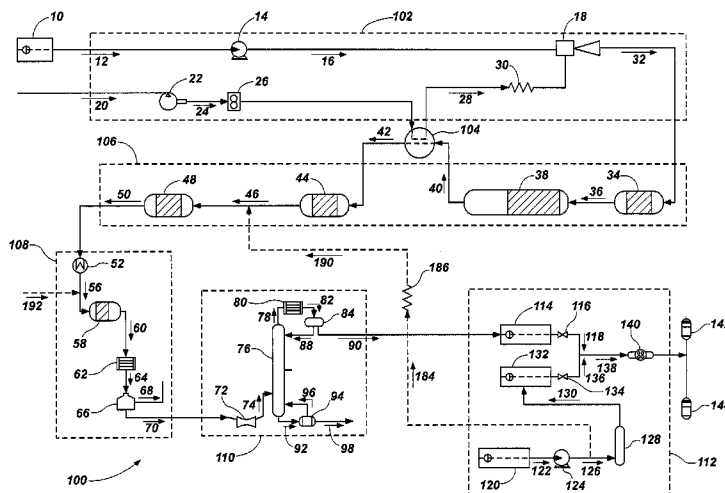
ABSTRACT

A fuel processing system for converting a logistical fuel and air into a liquid product comprising methanol. One such system comprises a fuel injection system configured to combine a logistical fuel and ambient air to produce a logistical fuel and air mixture, a synthesis gas production system configured to convert the logistical fuel and air mixture to synthesis gas, and a methanol synthesis system configured to convert the synthesis gas to a crude methanol liquid. Related methods are additionally disclosed.

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC A01N 59/00; A01N 37/16; B01J 19/00;

29 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



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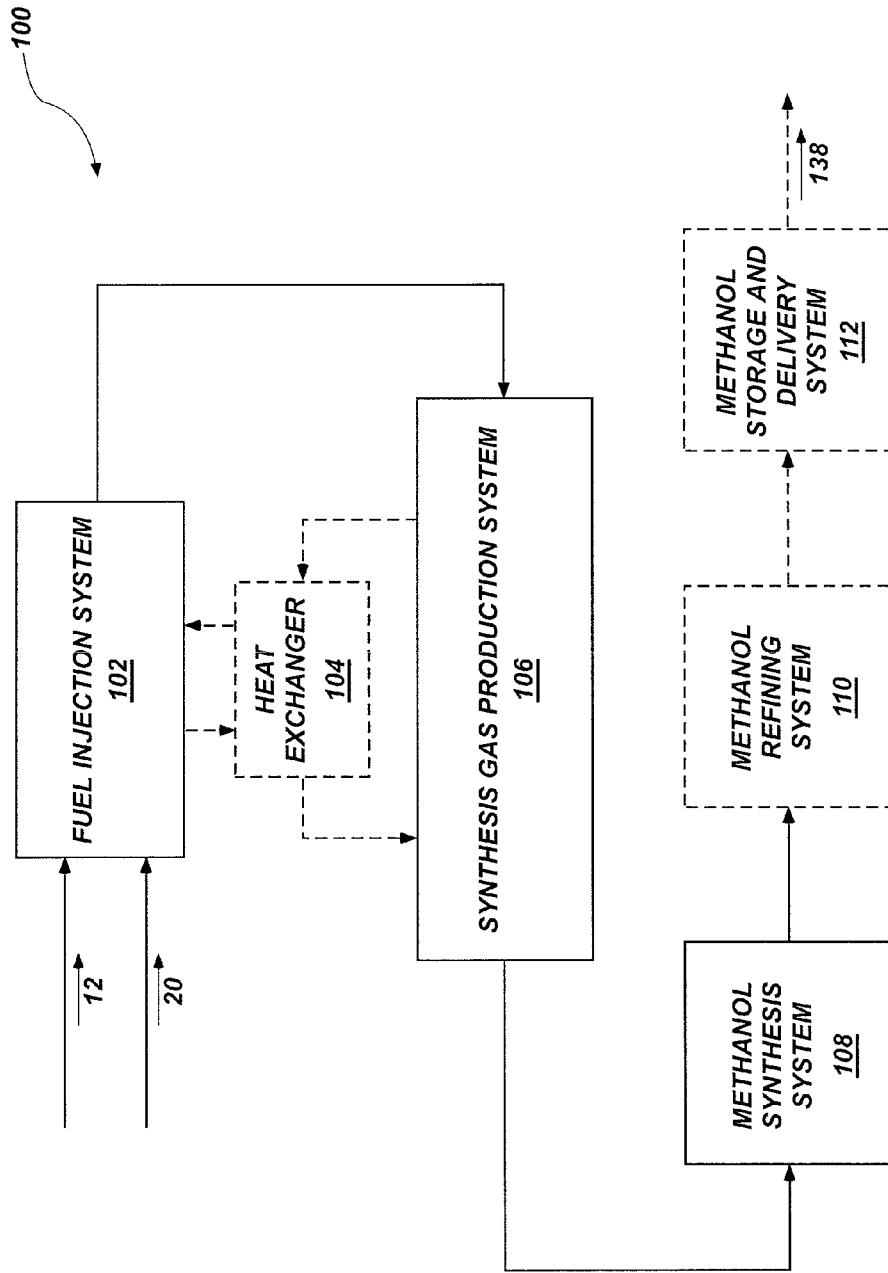
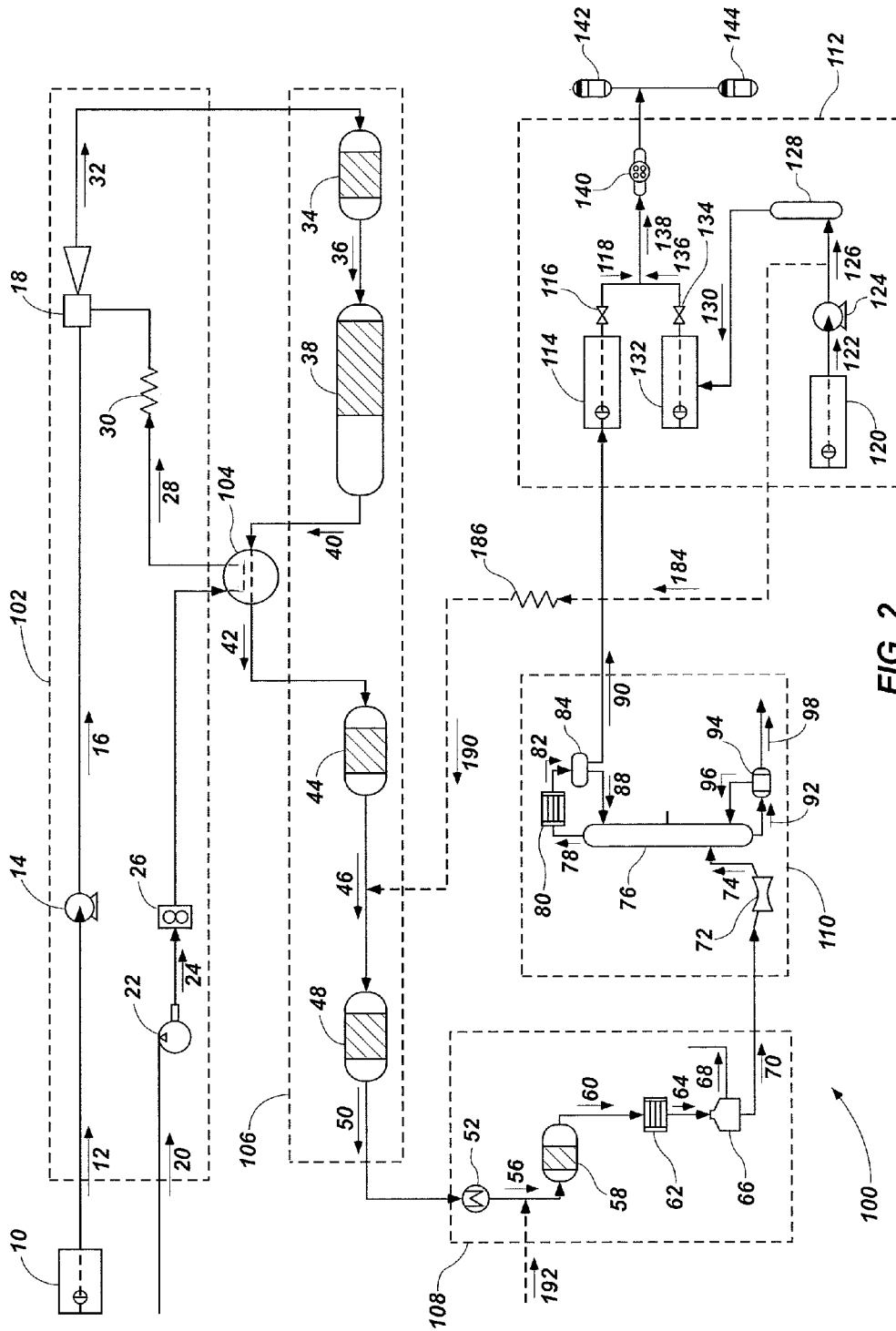


FIG. 1



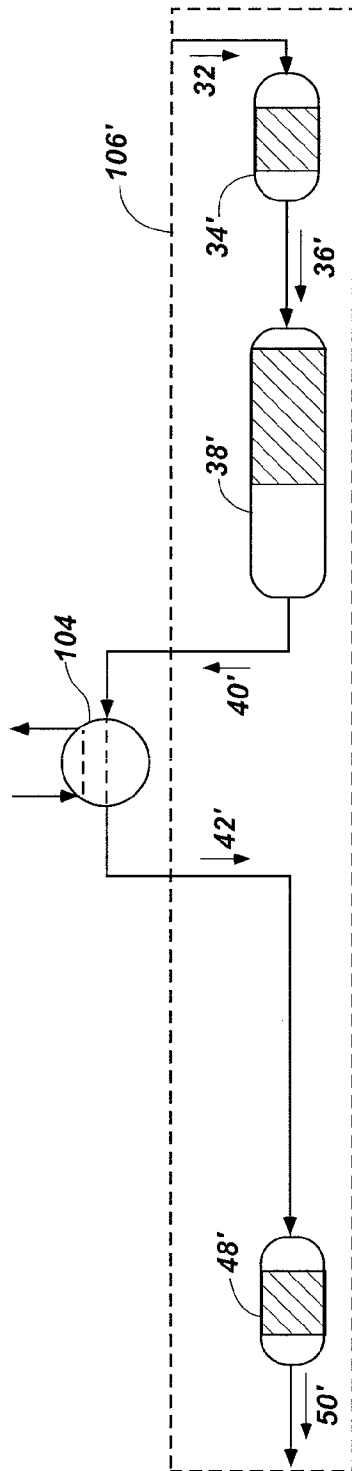


FIG. 3

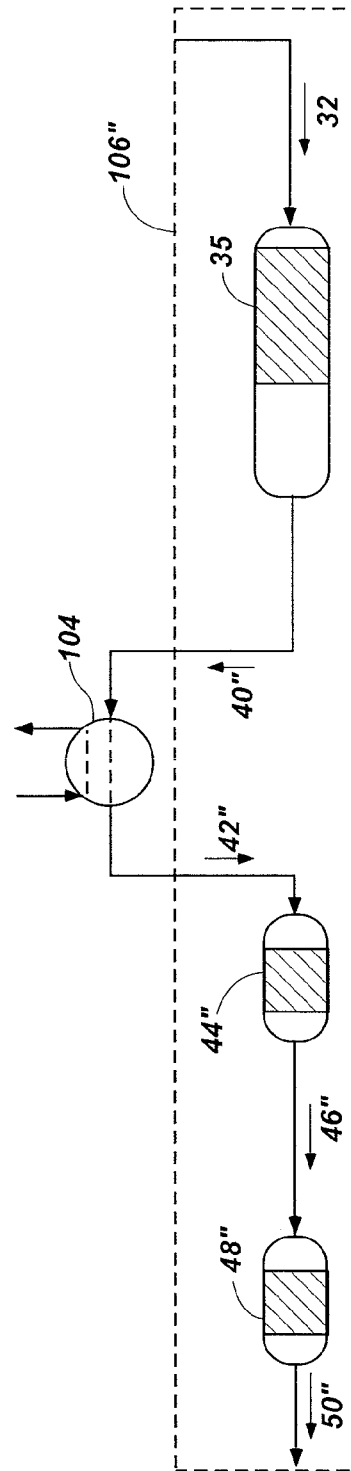


FIG. 4

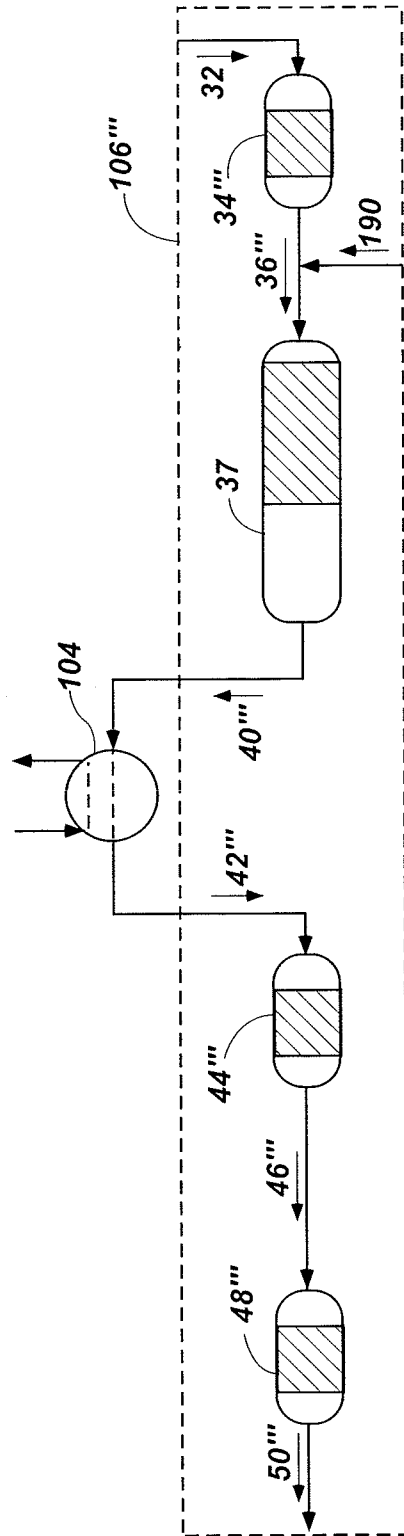


FIG. 5

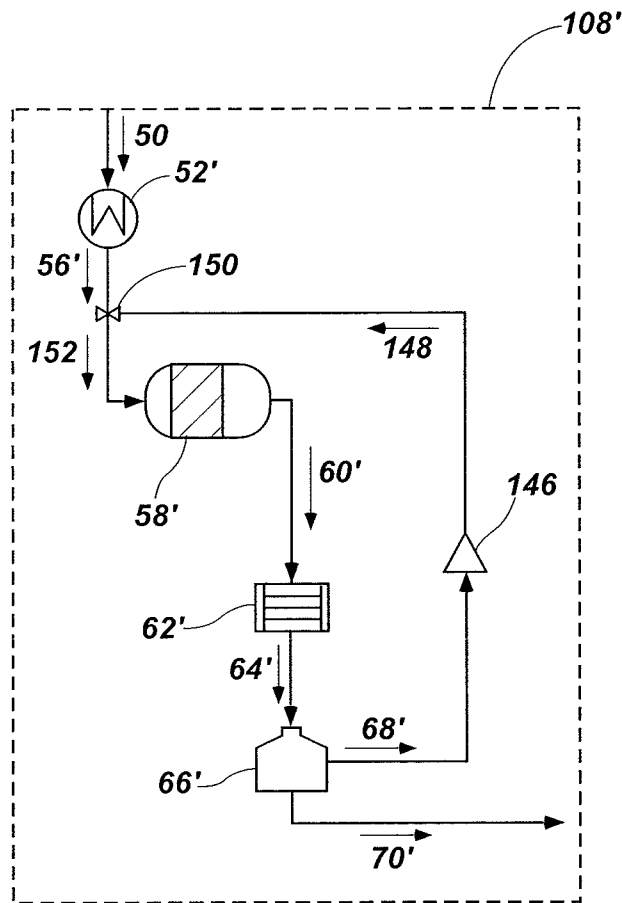


FIG. 6

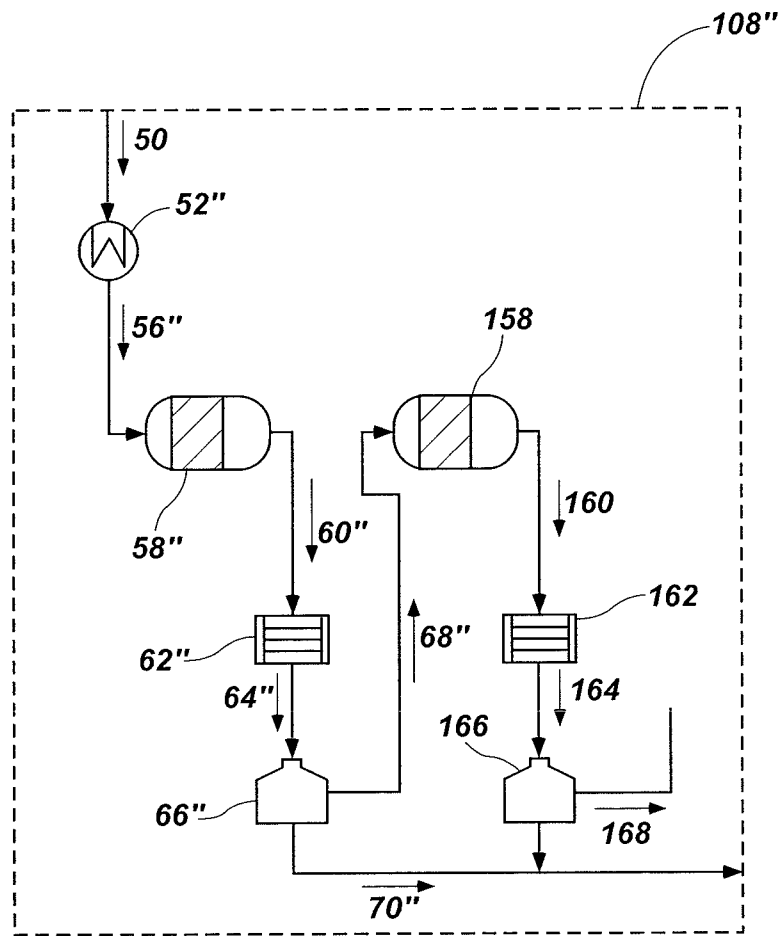


FIG. 7

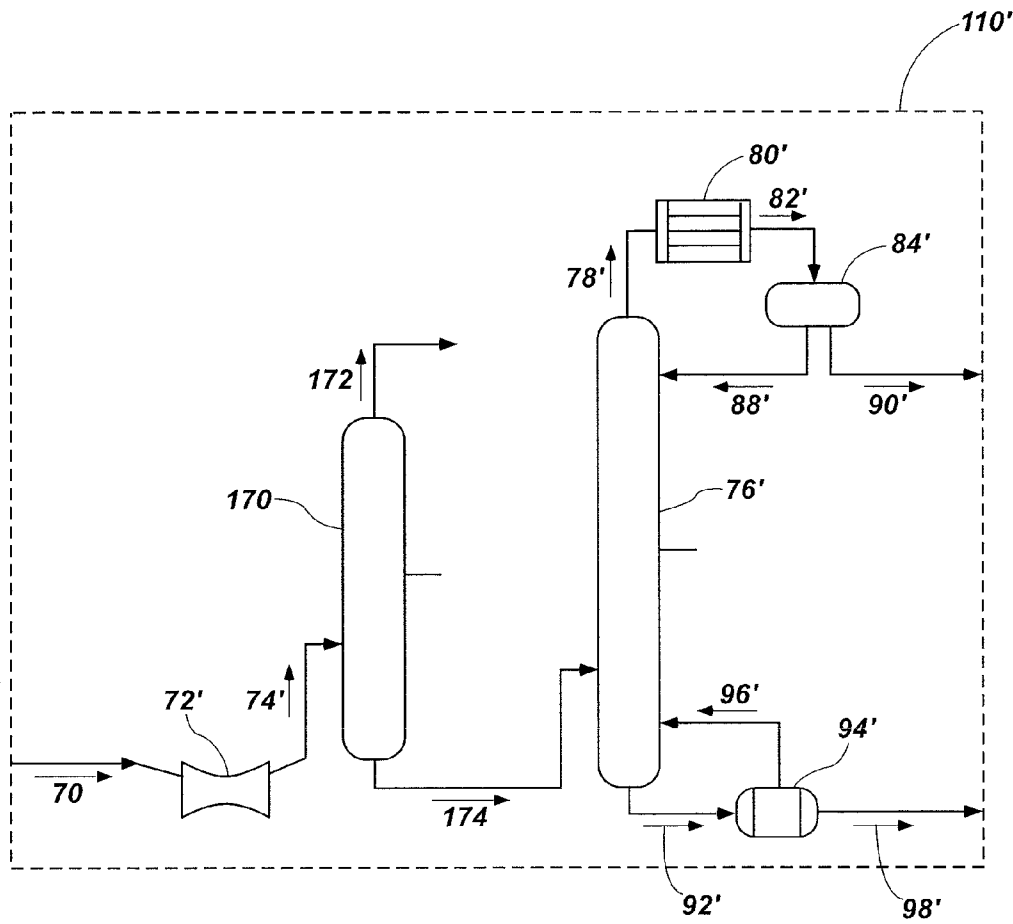


FIG. 8

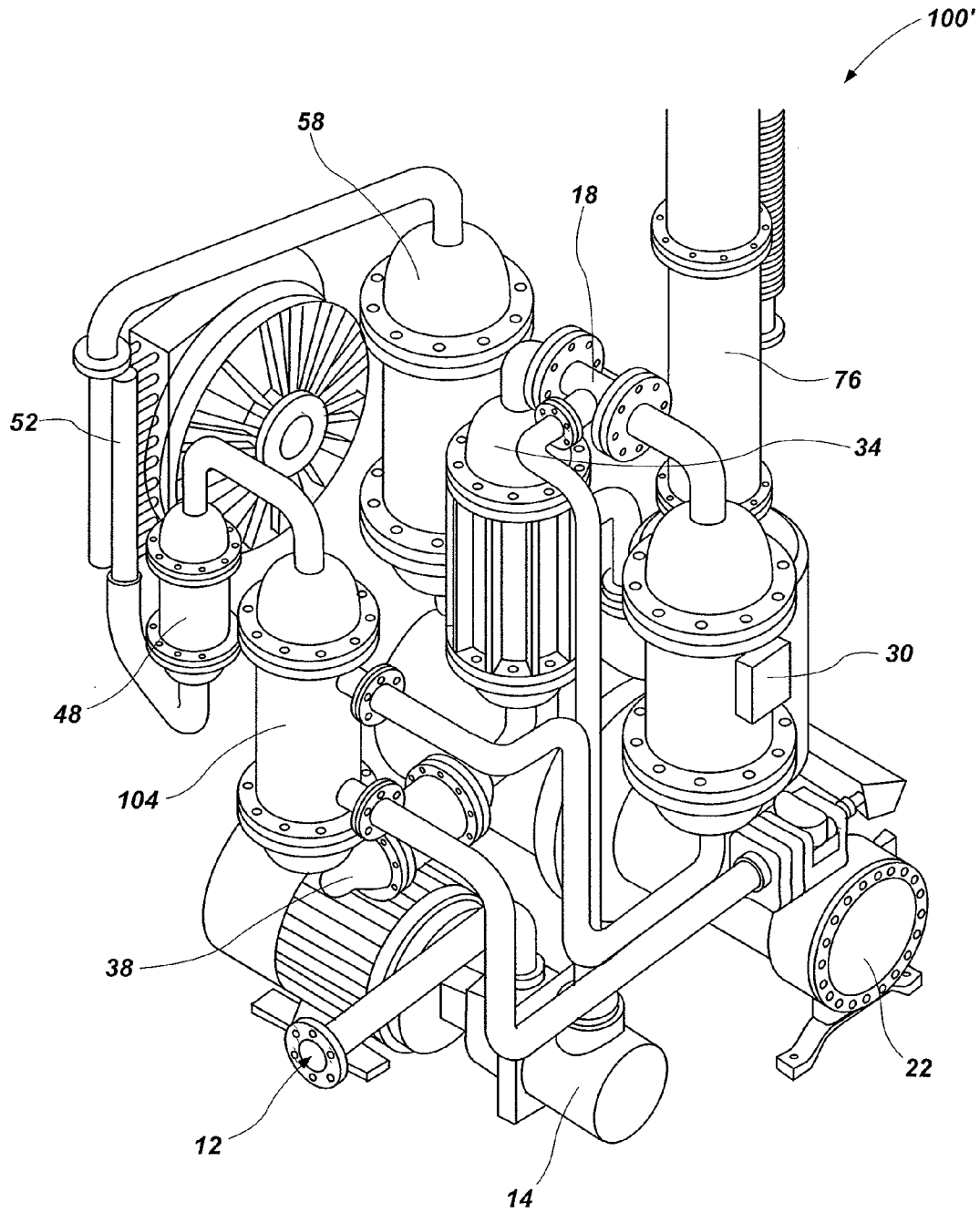


FIG. 9

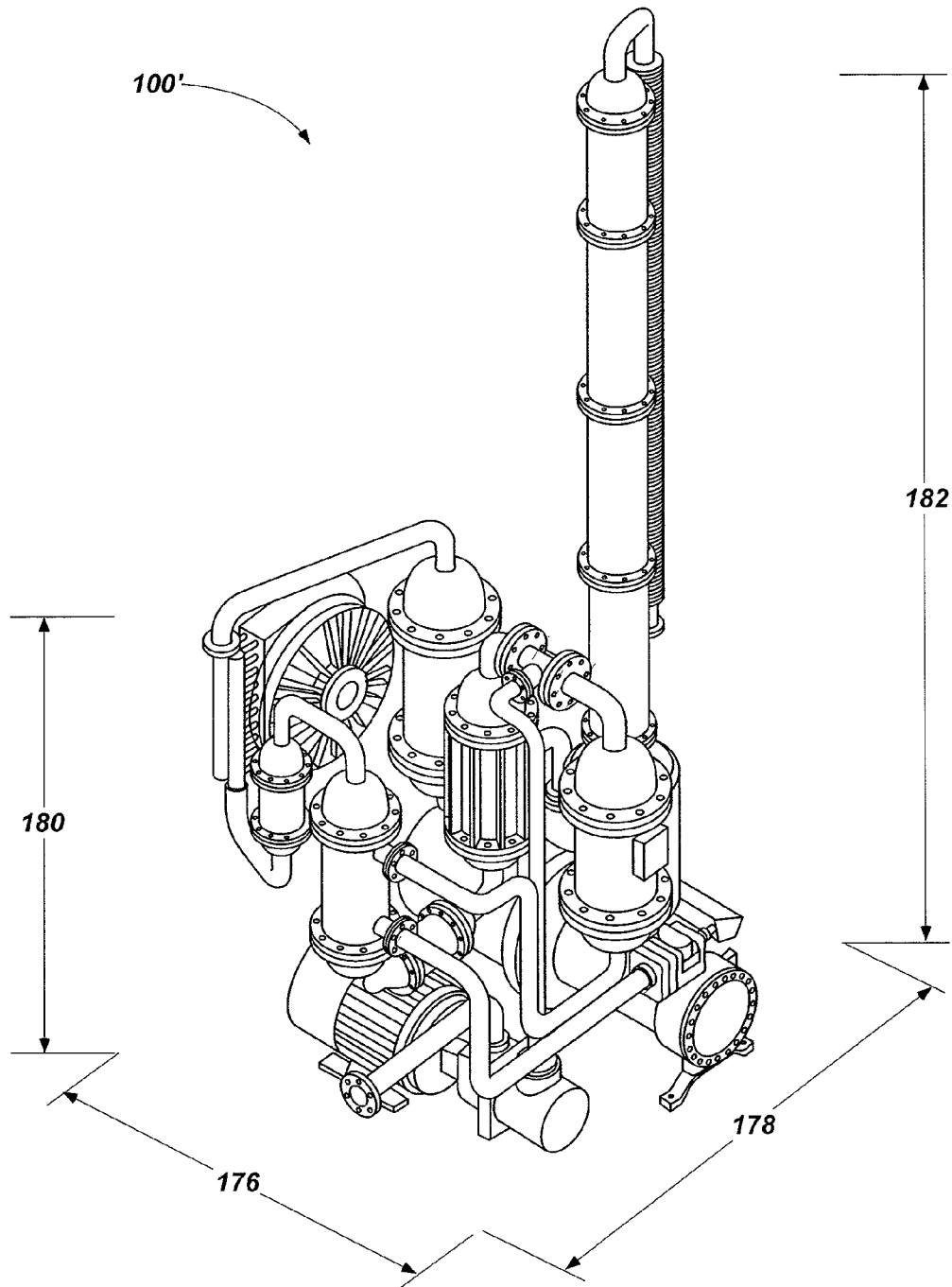


FIG. 10

FUEL PROCESSING SYSTEM AND RELATED METHODS

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure relates to a system and a method of producing methanol. More specifically, embodiments of the present disclosure relate to a system and a method of converting a mixture of air and logistical fuel into a liquid product comprising methanol.

BACKGROUND

Methanol, the simplest alcohol, is a commodity chemical that is used in a wide range of applications. For example, methanol may be used in the production of other chemicals (e.g., formaldehyde, gasoline, dimethyl ether), as a biological food source for bacteria (e.g., to support sewage treatment facilities), and as a fuel source for a direct methanol fuel cell (DMFC).

The production of substantially pure methanol has been known since 1661 when Robert Boyle produced it through the distillation of boxwood. Since that time, the production of methanol has expanded, and today methanol is generally produced on a very large scale. Conventional methanol production facilities can produce 1000 metric tons of methanol per day. For example, a methanol production facility in Al Jubail, Saudi Arabia, has been reported to produce approximately 850,000 tons per year of methanol. Such production of methanol is typically facilitated through the catalyst-assisted steam reformation of natural gas or coal to form synthesis gas. The synthesis gas is then reacted over a catalyst at high pressure at conversions typically less than 20%. Large facilities require recycle loops. However, preparing methanol using conventional production methods at small scales is not commercially feasible. The produced methanol may then be conventionally distributed as demand requires.

However, in certain, specialized situations the use of conventional methanol production processes may not be a viable option. Such situations may, for example, include scenarios where the transport or delivery of methanol is in some way precluded and/or where the on-site production of methanol through conventional fuels (e.g., natural gas, coal) is not possible. A non-limiting example of such a situation may be current U.S. military operations.

In 1988, the U.S. Army adopted a so-called "single fuel forward" initiative generally mandating the use of only one fuel in its operations. That fuel is currently a kerosene-based fuel known as Jet Propellant 8 (JP-8). Disadvantageously, the initiative is not readily compatible with some methanol-based technologies that may be of interest to the U.S. military, including DMFCs. DMFCs, which attempt to harness the theoretical 6100 W h/kg at 25° C. energy density of methanol, have been examined as a potential replacement for the numerous batteries (rechargeable and non-rechargeable) currently used in U.S. military operations. A methanol-containing DMFC cartridge typically offers more stored power than a battery, and using DMFCs may reduce various logistical and transportation concerns currently associated with the use of batteries.

Therefore, in at least some specialized situations, there remains a need for a portable fuel processing system that uses a logistical fuel, such as JP-8, to manufacture methanol products. Such a system may bridge the gap between the methanol that may be required and the logistical fuel that may be available.

BRIEF SUMMARY

Embodiments described herein include systems for producing methanol from a logistical fuel, and related methods.

For example, in accordance with one embodiment described herein, a fuel processing system may comprise a fuel injection system configured to combine a logistical fuel and ambient air to produce a logistical fuel and air mixture, a synthesis gas production system positioned downstream of the fuel injection system and configured to convert the logistical fuel and air mixture to synthesis gas, and a methanol synthesis system positioned downstream of the synthesis gas production system and configured to convert the synthesis gas to a crude methanol liquid.

In additional embodiments, a method of manufacturing a liquid product comprising methanol may comprise combining a logistical fuel and ambient air to produce a logistical fuel and air mixture, converting the logistical fuel and air mixture into synthesis gas comprising carbon monoxide and hydrogen, converting the synthesis gas to a crude methanol liquid, processing the crude methanol liquid to produce a purified methanol liquid, and directing at least the purified methanol liquid into a dispensing valve to generate the liquid product comprising methanol and water.

In yet additional embodiments, a method of manufacturing a fuel for use in a direct methanol fuel cell may comprise processing a logistical fuel and ambient air to produce a purified methanol liquid, combining the purified methanol liquid with water to produce a liquid product, and delivering the liquid product into at least one empty direct methanol fuel cell cartridge.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

While the specification concludes with claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming that which is regarded as the invention, advantages of the invention can be more readily ascertained from the following detailed description when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a simplified block flow diagram of a fuel processing system for converting a logistical fuel and air into a methanol product, in accordance with embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 2 is a schematic view of the fuel processing system of FIG. 1, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 3 is a schematic view of an embodiment of a synthesis gas production system portion of the fuel processing system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is a schematic view of an embodiment of a synthesis gas production system portion of the fuel processing system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is a schematic view of an embodiment of a synthesis gas production system portion of the fuel processing system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 6 is a schematic view of an embodiment of a methanol synthesis system portion of the fuel processing system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 7 is a schematic view of an embodiment of a methanol synthesis system portion of the fuel processing system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 8 is a schematic view of an embodiment of a methanol refusing system portion of the fuel processing system of FIG. 1.

FIGS. 9 and 10 are perspective views of a portion of the fuel processing system of FIG. 2, lacking a methanol storage and delivery system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following description provides specific details, such as catalyst types, fuel compositions, and processing conditions (e.g., temperatures, pressures, flow rates, etc.) in order to provide a thorough description of embodiments of the present disclosure. However, a person of ordinary skill in the art will understand that the embodiments of the present disclosure may be practiced without employing these specific details. Indeed, the embodiments of the present disclosure may be practiced in conjunction with conventional systems and methods employed in the industry. In addition, only those process components and acts necessary to understand the embodiments of the present disclosure are described in detail below. A person of ordinary skill in the art will understand that some process components (e.g., pipelines, line filters, valves, temperature detectors, flow detectors, pressure detectors, and the like) are inherently disclosed herein and that adding various conventional process components and acts would be in accord with the present disclosure. The drawings accompanying the present application are for illustrative purposes only, and are not meant to be actual views of any particular material, device, or system. Additionally, elements common between figures may retain the same numerical designation.

Methods and systems of producing methanol from a logistical fuel are described. The logistical fuel is reformed to synthesis gas, which is converted to methanol. The systems and methods of embodiments of the present disclosure may be used to produce methanol at a small-scale, such as about 0.1 metric ton per day, rather than producing large amounts of methanol as is done by conventional systems and methods. The methanol produced by the methods and systems of embodiments of the present disclosure may be produced at the point-of-use, rather than at a remote facility.

FIG. 1 is a simplified block diagram of a fuel processing system 100 in accordance with the present disclosure. The fuel processing system 100 functions to convert ambient air 20 and a logistical fuel (i.e., a liquid logistical fuel stream 12) into a liquid product 138 that includes methanol. The fuel processing system 100 may include a fuel injection system 102, optionally, a heat exchanger 104, a synthesis gas production system 106, a methanol synthesis system 108, optionally, a methanol refining system 110, and, optionally, a methanol storage and delivery system 112. The fuel processing system 100 may be sized and configured to produce a desired output of the liquid product 138, such as within the range of from about 1.0 L/hr to about 50.0 L/hr, or from about 7.5 L/hr to about 14.5 L/hr. The logistical fuel may include at least one of JP-8, Jet-A, JP-4, JP-5, kerosene, naphtha, diesel, marine, gasoline, and other hydrocarbon fuels. In one embodiment, the logistical fuel is JP-8. JP-8 is a kerosene-based jet fuel and includes icing inhibitors, corrosion inhibitors, antioxidants, lubricants, biocides, thermal stability agents, and antistatic agents. The kerosene includes C₉-C₁₆ hydrocarbon compounds, such as a mixture of isooctane, methylcyclohexane, m-xylene, cyclooctane, decane, butylbenzene, 1,2,4,5-tetramethylbenzene, tetralin, dodecane, 1-methylnaphthalene, tetradecane, and hexadecane. In at least some embodiments, the fuel processing system 100 may be configured and operated to convert other fuels, such as natural gas, into the liquid product 138.

One embodiment of the present disclosure will now be described with reference to FIG. 2, which schematically illustrates a fuel processing system 100. As shown in FIG. 2, the fuel injection system 102 may include a fuel pump 14, an air compressor 22, a mass flow controller 26, an air heater 30, and a fuel injector 18. The fuel pump 14 receives a logistical fuel stream 12 from a storage vessel 10 and raises the pressure of the logistical fuel. The logistical fuel stream 12 may be in a liquid form. A pressurized liquid logistical fuel stream 16 is then directed out of the fuel pump 14 and into the fuel injector 18. In at least some embodiments, a fuel pressure regulator (not shown) may be provided downstream of the fuel pump 14 to further control the pressure of the pressurized liquid logistical fuel stream 16. The air compressor 22 may receive ambient air 20 and may raise the pressure of the ambient air 20 to be within an operative pressure range of the mass flow controller 26. Pressurized air 24 may then be directed out of the air compressor 22 and into the mass flow controller 26. The mass flow controller 26 may control the flow rate of the pressurized air 24 in a manner that accords with a desired mixture ratio of logistical fuel to air to be achieved via the fuel injector 18. The pressurized air 24 may then be directed into the heat exchanger 104. In the heat exchanger 104 the pressurized air 24 may be heated. Heated and pressurized air 28 may then be directed out of the heat exchanger 104 and into the air heater 30. The air heater 30 may increase the temperature of the heated and pressurized air 28 to a pre-determined set-point. In one or more embodiments, at least one of the heat exchanger 104 and the air heater 30 may be omitted. Therefore, the heat exchanger 104 and the air heater 30 may each be optional. In at least some embodiments, the temperature of the heated and pressurized air 28 may be greater than or equal to about 160° C., such as greater than or equal to about 300° C., or greater than or equal to about 350° C. The heated and pressurized air 28 may then be directed out of the air heater 30 and into the fuel injector 18.

The fuel injector 18 may facilitate the mixing of the pressurized liquid logistical fuel stream 16 and the heated and pressurized air 28. After receiving the pressurized logistical fuel stream 16 and the heated and pressurized air 28, the fuel injector 18 may be "opened," to force the logistical fuel and air through an atomizing nozzle. This process may create a logistical fuel/air mixture 32 that includes small droplets of liquid logistical fuel dispersed in air. The logistical fuel/air mixture 32 may have an oxygen to carbon ratio of between about 0.4 and about 1.25. In at least some embodiments, the temperature of the logistical fuel/air mixture 32 may be greater than or equal to about 160° C., such as greater than or equal to about 300° C., or greater than or equal to about 350° C. The flow rate and flow regularity of the logistical fuel/air mixture 32 may be modified as desired by adjusting the pressure of the pressurized liquid logistical fuel stream 16, the amount of time that the fuel injector 18 remains open, and the frequency with which the fuel injector 18 is opened. The logistical fuel/air mixture 32 may be directed to the synthesis gas production system 106.

The synthesis gas production system 106 may include desulfurization units 34 and 44, a catalytic partial oxidation (CPDX) reactor 38, and, optionally, a water gas shift (WGS) reactor 48. The logistical fuel/air mixture 32 may be received by the desulfurization unit 34. The desulfurization unit 34 may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for reducing the sulfur content of a hydrocarbon, such as the logistical fuel. The desulfurization unit 34 may reduce the sulfur content of the logistical fuel/air mixture 32 to a level that substantially reduces or eliminates catalyst poisoning within the CPDX reactor 38. In at least some embodiments,

the desulfurization unit **34** may facilitate a reaction with the logistical fuel/air mixture **32** to produce a desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture **36** including less than about 50 ppm sulfur. The desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture **36** may then be directed into the CPDX reactor **38**. In at least some embodiments, the temperature of the desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture **36** may be within a range of from about 175° C. to about 450° C., such as from about 300° C. to about 425° C., or from about 350° C. to about 400° C. In at least some embodiments, the sulfur content of the logistical fuel and/or the configuration of the CPDX reactor **38** may enable the desulfurization unit **34** to be omitted from the synthesis gas production system **106**, and the logistical fuel/air mixture **32** may be directed into the CPDX reactor **38**. Therefore, the desulfurization unit **34** may be optional.

Optionally, to increase the percentage of O₂ in the desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture **36**, a suitable oxygen concentrator, such as at least one of a pressure swing adsorption (PSA) system (not shown) and a molecular sieve (not shown), may be provided upstream of the CPDX reactor **38**.

The CPDX reactor **38** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for the catalytic partial oxidation of a hydrocarbon. The CPDX reactor **38** may be configured and operated to reform the desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture **36** into a synthesis gas according to the following general equation, where, for a given hydrocarbon, “n” corresponds to an integer within the range of from 1 to 50 and “m” corresponds to an integer within the range of from 1 to 100:



The catalytic partial oxidation may be conducted over a catalyst including at least one of Fe, Ru, Os, Co, Rh, Ir, Ni, Pd, Pt, Cu, Ag, and Au. In one embodiment, the catalyst includes at least one of Rh and Pt. The CPDX reactor **38** may have an operating temperature within a range of from about 600° C. to about 1600° C., such as from about 800° C. to about 1250° C., or from about 900° C. to about 1100° C. The synthesis gas may include additional components, such as N₂, CO₂, H₂O and trace amounts of small hydrocarbons. A synthesis gas **40** may exit the CPDX reactor **38** and may then be directed into the heat exchanger **104**.

The heat exchanger **104** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for exchanging heat from one fluid or gas to another fluid or gas. By way of non-limiting example, the heat exchanger **104** may be a recuperative heat exchanger, which functions to cool the synthesis gas **40** while heating the pressurized air **24**. In one or more embodiments, the heat exchanger **104** may cool the synthesis gas **40** from a temperature within a range of from about 600° C. to about 1600° C. to a temperature within a range of from about 200° C. to about 350° C., such as from about 250° C. to about 340° C. In at least some embodiments, one or more flow control devices (not shown) may be positioned proximate at least one of an inlet and an outlet of the heat exchanger **104** to control the flow rate of at least one of the synthesis gas **40** and the pressurized air **24** and regulate the heat exchange rates thereof. Upon exiting the heat exchanger **104**, a cooled synthesis gas **42** may be directed into the desulfurization unit **44**. In at least some embodiments, the heat exchanger **104** may be omitted, and the synthesis gas **40** may be cooled by some other known device or apparatus, or not at all. Therefore, the heat exchanger **104** may be optional.

The desulfurization unit **44** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for reducing the sulfur content of a gas. The desulfurization unit **44** may be similar to or different than the desulfurization unit **34**. The desulfurization unit **44** may substantially reduce the sulfur content of the cooled synthesis gas **42**. A desulfurized synthesis gas **46** may exit the desulfurization unit **44** and may then be directed into the WGS reactor **48**, if present. The temperature of the desulfurized synthesis gas **46** may be within the range of from about 200° C. to about 350° C., such as from about 300° C. to about 350° C.

The WGS reactor **48** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for reacting CO₂ and H₂ to produce CO and H₂O. The WGS reactor **48** may be configured and operated to process the desulfurized synthesis gas **46** according to the following equation:



The operating temperature of the WGS reactor **48** may be within a range of from about 200° C. to about 400° C., such as from about 300° C. to about 375° C. or from about 325° C. to about 350° C. A treated synthesis gas **50** that may exit the WGS reactor **48** may have a molar ratio of H₂ to CO in the range of from about 1.0 to about 3.0, such as from about 1.5 to about 2.5, or about 2.0. In one or more embodiments, the WGS reactor **48** may be omitted, in which case desulfurized synthesis gas **46** is directed into the methanol synthesis system **108**. The treated synthesis gas **50** may exit the WGS reactor **48** and may then be directed into the methanol synthesis system **108**.

Optionally, steam **190** may be added to the synthesis gas production system **106** at a location upstream of the WGS reactor **48**. Adding the steam **190** functions to increase the molar ratio of H₂ to CO in the treated synthesis gas **50**. As shown in FIG. 2, a water stream **122** from a second storage vessel **120** may be delivered to a pump **124**, which may pressurize the water stream **122**. A pressurized water stream **126** may exit the pump **124** and may be at least partially directed, as a second pressurized water stream **184**, to a water heater **186**. The water heater **186** may increase the temperature of the second pressurized water stream **184** to generate the steam **190**. The steam **190** may have a temperature that is compatible with a desired molar ratio of H₂ to CO in the treated synthesis gas **50**. The steam **190** may exit the water heater **186** and may then be combined with the desulfurized synthesis gas **46**.

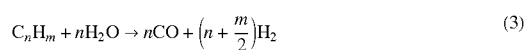
To decrease the concentration of at least one of H₂O and CO₂ in the treated synthesis gas **50**, various conventional means, such as at least one of a PSA system (not shown) and a molecular sieve (not shown) may, optionally, be provided upstream of the methanol synthesis system **108**.

In additional embodiments, the synthesis gas production system **106** may be configured and operated as depicted in FIG. 3, in which the desulfurization unit **44** may be omitted from the synthesis gas production system **106'**. The desulfurization unit **34'** may reduce the sulfur content within the logistical fuel/air mixture **32** to a sufficient extent that the desulfurization unit **44** may be omitted. After passing through the CPDX reactor **38'** and the heat exchanger **104**, the cooled synthesis gas **42'** may be directed into the WGS reactor **48'**.

In further embodiments, the synthesis gas production system **106** may be configured and operated as depicted in FIG. 4. As shown in FIG. 4, the synthesis gas production system **106''** may include a thermal partial oxidation (TPDX) reactor **35** in place of the CPDX reactor **38**, and desulfurization unit **34** may not be included. The TPDX reactor **35** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for the produc-

tion of a synthesis gas from the catalyst-free partial oxidation of a hydrocarbon. The logistical fuel and air mixture **32** may be delivered into the TPDX reactor **35** without prior desulfurization at least because the TPDX reactor **35** does not include a catalyst, which can be poisoned by any sulfur content of the logistical fuel/air mixture **32**. However, in at least some embodiments, a desulfurization unit (not shown, refer to the desulfurization unit **34** depicted in FIG. 2) may be provided upstream of TPDX reactor **35**. The TPDX reactor **35** may have an operating temperature within a range of from about 800° C. to about 1600° C., such as from about 1000° C. to about 1600° C. or from about 1200° C. to about 1600° C. Residence time within the TPDX reactor **35** may be within the range of from about 1×10^{-4} s to about 1×10^4 s, more particularly from about 1×10^{-3} s to about 1000 s, and even more particularly from about 0.01 s to about 500 s. In at least some embodiments, the synthesis gas **40** may be passed through a particulate separation unit (not shown) such as a high temperature (e.g., ceramic) filter or cyclone separator to substantially reduce any soot levels in the synthesis gas **40** prior to further processing.

In yet further embodiments, the synthesis gas production system **106** may be configured and operated as depicted in FIG. 5. As shown in FIG. 5, the synthesis gas production system **106** may include an autothermal reactor (ATR) **37** in place of the CPDX reactor **38**. Steam **190** may be added to the desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture **36**, which may then be directed into the ATR **37**. In at least some embodiments, the ATR **37** may receive the desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture **36** and the steam **190** separately. The ATR **37** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for the production of a synthesis gas via the catalytic partial oxidation and steam reformation of a hydrocarbon. The ATR **37** may be configured and operated to reform the desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture **36** into a synthesis gas according to general equation (1) and the following general equations, where, for a given hydrocarbon, "n" corresponds to an integer within the range of from 1 to 50 and "m" corresponds to an integer within the range of from 1 to 100:



In at least some embodiments, the ATR **37** may be an apparatus such as that disclosed in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2011/0038762, which describes an ATR including a housing, a first plate having a first plurality of fin structures, and a second plate having a second plurality of fin structures assembled such that the first plurality of fin structures is interleaved with the second plurality of fin structures. The fin structures may be coated with a suitable catalyst material, which may include Pt, Pd, and alloys thereof. The synthesis gas **40** exiting the ATR **37** may have a temperature of less than or equal to 400° C., such as less than or equal to 350° C., or less than or equal to 310° C. The disclosure of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2011/0038762 is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

Returning to FIG. 2, the methanol synthesis system **108** may include a heat exchanger **52**, a methanol synthesis reactor **58**, a condensing unit **62**, and a liquid collection unit **66**. The treated synthesis gas **50** may be received by the heat exchanger **52**. The heat exchanger **52** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for cooling a gas flow, such as an air blast heat exchanger. The heat exchanger **52**

may decrease the temperature of the treated synthesis gas **50** to a temperature suitable for the synthesis of crude methanol in the methanol synthesis reactor **58**. A cooled and treated synthesis gas **56** may exit the heat exchanger **52** and may then be directed into the methanol synthesis reactor **58**.

The methanol synthesis reactor **58** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for producing methanol from the catalyst-assisted reaction of synthesis gas components according to the following equations:



The methanol synthesis may be typically be conducted using a catalyst including at least one oxide of Cu, Zn, Mg, Al, Cr, Ag, Mo, W, Ti, Zr, Hf, B, Mn, V, Ga, Pd, Os, or combinations thereof, such as at least one of at least one of CuO, ZnO, Al₂O₃, and Cr₂O₃. In at least some embodiments, the methanol synthesis reactor **58** may include at least one catalyst such as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,921,733, which discloses a liquid phase catalyst prepared from the reaction of a transition metal having coordinating ligands and an alkoxide dissolved in either methanol or methanol and a co-solvent. The transition metal is a metal from Group 6, Group 8, Group 9, Group 10, Group 11, Group 12, or mixtures thereof, such as Mo, W, Fe, Ru, Os, Co, Rh, Ir, Ni, Pd, Pt, Cu, Au, Zn, Cd, or mixtures thereof. The coordinating ligands may include N-donor ligands, P-donor ligands, O-donor ligands, C-donor ligands, halogens, or mixtures thereof, such as chloride, acetylacetonate, 2,2'-dipyridyl (Bipy), bis(cyclooctadiene), 1,10-phenanthroline, 1,2-bis(diphenylphosphinethane), or mixtures thereof. Co-solvents may include saturated hydrocarbons, amine based solvents, ethers, esters, alkyl polyethers, hydroxyalkylpolyethers, and alcohols. Use of such a catalyst may enable conversion rates of from about 80% to about 90% with non-ideal stoichiometry ratios.

The operating temperature of the methanol synthesis reactor **58** may be within a range of from about 20° C. to about 350° C., such as from about 100° C. to about 280° C. In at least some embodiments, the operating temperature of the methanol synthesis reactor **58** may be within the range of from about 100° C. to about 150° C. The operating pressure of the methanol synthesis reactor **58** may be within a range of from about 3 atm to about 250 atm, such as from about 7 atm to about 150 atm, or from about 7 atm to about 80 atm. In one or more embodiments, the operating pressure of the methanol synthesis reactor **58** may be within the range of from about 4 atm to about 11 atm. The gas hourly space velocity (GHSV) through the catalyst may be adjusted to achieve a desired conversion efficiency. The methanol synthesis reactor **58** may have a single pass conversion efficiency of greater than about 10%, such as greater than about 40%, or greater than about 75%. In at least some embodiments, the methanol synthesis reactor **58** may have a single pass conversion efficiency within the range of from about 90% to about 99%.

A crude methanol stream **60**, which may include at least one of liquid methanol and gaseous methanol, along with one or more reaction byproducts, unreacted components, and catalyst, may exit the methanol synthesis reactor **58** and may then be directed to the condensing unit **62**. The condensing unit **62** may include any device or apparatus known in the art (e.g., an electric precipitator) that may be configured and operated to cool the crude methanol gas **60** and liquefy the methanol therein. In at least some embodiments, the condensing unit **62** may be configured and operated to liquefy any gaseous methanol and any gaseous components with a boiling point higher than methanol (e.g., H₂O, ethanol, if present)

while components with lower boiling points (e.g., methyl formate, dimethyl ether, if present) may remain in a gaseous state. A cooled crude methanol stream **64** may exit the condensing unit **62** and may then be directed to a liquid collection unit **66**. The liquid collection unit **66** may collect any liquid components of the cooled crude methanol stream **64** and may vent any gaseous components as offgas **68**. The liquid components may exit the liquid collection unit **66** as a crude methanol liquid **70** and may then be directed into the methanol refining system **110**. In at least some embodiments, the crude methanol liquid **70** may be substantially pure methanol, such as greater than or equal to about 95% methanol.

In additional embodiments, the methanol synthesis system **108** may be configured and operated as depicted in FIG. 6. As shown in FIG. 6, the methanol synthesis system **108'** may include a gas compressor **146** and a valve, such as a three-way valve **150**, which may recycle the offgas **68'** back to an inlet of the methanol synthesis reactor **58'** for additional methanol synthesis processing. The offgas **68'** may be received by the gas compressor **146**, which may compress and pressurize the gas. A pressurized offgas **148** may exit the gas compressor **146** and may then be directed to the three-way valve **150** where the gas may be combined with the cooled and treated synthesis gas **56'**. A combined synthesis gas **152** may exit the three-way valve **150** and may then be directed into the methanol synthesis reactor **58'**.

In yet further embodiments, the methanol synthesis system **108** may be configured and operated in a manner as depicted in FIG. 7. As shown in FIG. 7, the methanol synthesis system **108''** may include a second methanol synthesis reactor **158**, a second condensing unit **162**, and a second liquid collection unit **166** to provide additional methanol synthesis processing of the offgas **68''**. The offgas **68''** may be received by the second methanol synthesis reactor **158**. In at least some embodiments, a heat exchanger (not shown) may be provided upstream of the second methanol synthesis reactor **158** to bring the offgas **68''** to an appropriate temperature. The second methanol synthesis reactor **158** may be any suitable apparatus or device known in the art for producing methanol from the catalyst-assisted reaction of synthesis gas according to equations (5) and (6). The second methanol synthesis reactor **158** may be configured and operated in a manner that is either similar to or different than that of the methanol synthesis reactor **58''**. The second methanol synthesis reactor **158** may react at least a portion of the unreacted synthesis gas components of the offgas **68''** to produce a second crude methanol stream **160**. The second crude methanol stream **160** may exit the second methanol synthesis reactor **158** and may then be directed to the second condenser unit **162**, which may cool the second crude methanol stream **160** and liquefy any gaseous methanol therein. A second cooled crude methanol stream **164** may then be directed to the second liquid collection unit **166**. The second liquid collection unit **166** may collect any liquid components of the second cooled crude methanol stream **164** and may vent any gaseous components as second offgas **168**. The liquid components may exit the second liquid collection unit **166** and may be combined with the crude methanol liquid **70''**. In at least some embodiments, one or more methanol synthesis reactors, condensing units, and liquid separators may be provided downstream of the second collection unit **166** to permit methanol synthesis of any unreacted synthesis gas components remaining in the second offgas **168**.

Returning to FIG. 2, the methanol refining system **110** may include a pressure throttle valve **72**, a distillation column **76**, a condenser **80**, a reflux unit **84**, and a partial reboiler **94**. The crude methanol stream **70** from the methanol synthesis sys-

tem **108** may be received by the pressure throttle valve **72**, which may control the flow of the crude methanol stream **70** to accord with the operational parameters of the distillation column **76**. A regulated crude methanol stream **74** may exit the pressure throttle valve **72** and may then be directed into the distillation column **76**.

The distillation column **76** may be configured and operated to produce a gaseous tops distillate **78** and a liquid bottoms distillate **92**. The gaseous tops distillate **78**, which includes methanol, may be directed to a condenser **80** that cools the gaseous top distillate **78** to substantially liquefy any methanol therein. A liquefied methanol stream **82** may exit the condenser **80** and may then be directed into the reflux unit **84**. A predetermined portion of the liquefied methanol within reflux drum **84** may be directed back to the distillation column **76** as reflux recycle **88** to assist with the cooling and condensation of upflowing gases in the distillation column **76**. Any liquefied methanol within the reflux drum **84** that is not directed back to the distillation column **76** may be directed into the methanol storage and delivery system **112** as a purified methanol liquid **90**. The purified methanol liquid **90** may be substantially pure methanol, such as greater than or equal to about 95% methanol. The liquid bottoms distillate **92** may include components having higher boiling points than methanol (e.g., H₂O, higher alcohols, carboxylic acids) and may be directed to a partial reboiler **94**, which may operate at a temperature that enables some of the lighter (i.e., lower boiling point) components to boil. These components may be directed back into the distillation column **76** as gaseous reboiler recycle **96**. The heavier (i.e., higher boiling point) components of the liquid bottoms distillate **92** may be removed as a refined bottoms liquid **98** and may be utilized or disposed of as desired.

In additional embodiments, the methanol refining system **110** may be configured and operated as depicted in FIG. 8. As shown in FIG. 8, the methanol refining system **110'** may include a topping distillation column **170**. The topping distillation column **170** may produce a gaseous distillate **172** and a liquid distillate **174**. The gaseous distillate **172** may include at least some components of the regulated crude methanol stream **74'** having a lower boiling point than that of methanol (e.g., ketones, aldehydes, ethers, unreacted synthesis gas). The gaseous distillate **172** may be utilized or disposed of as desired. The liquid distillate **174** may include methanol and at least some components of the regulated crude methanol stream **74'** having a higher boiling point than methanol (e.g., higher alcohols, H₂O). The liquid distillate **174** may be directed into the distillation column **76'** for processing similar to that previously presented in relation to FIG. 2.

In at least some embodiments, such as where the crude methanol liquid **70** exiting the methanol synthesis system **108** is substantially pure methanol (i.e., greater than or equal to about 95% methanol), the methanol refining system **110** may be optional (i.e., the methanol refining system **110** may be omitted), in which case the crude methanol liquid **70** may be directed into the methanol storage and delivery system **112**.

Returning to FIG. 2, the methanol storage and delivery system **112** may include a first storage vessel **114**, a first flow control valve **116**, a second storage vessel **120**, a pump **124**, a purification unit **128**, a third storage vessel **132**, a second flow control valve **134**, and a dispensing valve **140**. The first storage vessel **114** may receive and hold the purified methanol liquid **90** from the methanol refining system **110**.

A water supply held within the second storage vessel **120** may be directed to the pump **124** as a water stream **122**. The pump **124** may raise the pressure of the water and a pressurized water stream **126** may be directed out of the pump **124**

and into the purification unit **128**. The purification unit **128** may be any device, apparatus, combination of devices, or combination of apparatuses known in the art for reducing or removing undesired materials (e.g., chemical and biological contaminants) from a water source. By means of non-limiting example, the purification unit **128** may include at least one of a rapid sand filtering system, a granular activated carbon filtering system, a reverse osmosis system, a distillation system, and an ion exchange system. A first purified water stream **130** may exit the purification unit **128** and may then be directed into the third vessel **132**, which may hold the purified water. In at least some embodiments, one or more of the second storage vessel **120**, the pump **124**, the purification unit **128**, the third storage vessel **132**, and the second control valve **134** may be optional.

A methanol liquid **118** may be directed from the first storage vessel **114** by opening the first flow control valve **116**. A second purified water stream **136** may be directed from the purified water storage vessel **132** by opening the second flow control valve **134**. The second purified water stream **136** and the methanol liquid **118** may be mixed to form a liquid product **138** including methanol and water that may be dispensed as desired via the dispensing valve **140**. However, in at least some embodiments, the liquid product **138** may be substantially free of water. The concentration of methanol in the liquid product **138** may be modified as desired by adjusting the flow of the second purified water stream **136** relative to the flow of the methanol liquid **118** via the first flow control valve **116** and the second flow control valve **134**. In at least some embodiments, the liquid product **138** may have a methanol concentration within a range of from about 0.1 M to about 7.0 M, such as from about 0.5 M to about 5.0 M, or from about 1.0 M to about 5.0 M. In additional embodiments, the liquid product **138** may be substantially pure methanol. The liquid product **138** may, for example, be dispensed into one or more empty DMFC cartridges **142** to produce one or more full DMFC cartridges **144** (i.e., cartridges that are ready for use in a DMFC).

In at least some embodiments, the methanol storage and delivery system **112** may be optional (i.e., the methanol storage and delivery system **112** is omitted), in which case the purified methanol liquid **90** exiting the methanol refining system **110** may be utilized as desired. In one or more embodiments, both the methanol refining system **110** and the methanol storage and delivery system **112** may be omitted, in which case the crude methanol liquid exiting the methanol synthesis system **108** may be utilized as desired.

Optionally, a second synthesis gas **192**, produced via a biomass gasification system (not shown), may be conventionally delivered into the fuel processing system **100** at a location upstream of the methanol synthesis reactor **58**. By means of non-limiting example, as shown in FIG. 2, the second synthesis gas **192** may be combined with the cooled and treated synthesis gas **56** in the methanol synthesis system **108**. The biomass gasification system may be any suitable system known in the art for converting a biomass feedstock into a synthesis gas. Suitable systems may be commercially available, such as from Community Power Corporation, Littleton, Colo. and W2E USA Inc., Chicago, Ill. The biomass gasification system may use at least one of logistical fuel and biomass/waste (e.g., wood, paper, food waste, municipal solid waste) as the biomass feedstock. Delivering the second synthesis gas **192** into the fuel processing system **100** may advantageously offset the amount of logistical fuel required to produce the liquid product **138**.

FIGS. 9 and 10 are simplified perspective views of a fuel processing system **100'** that is substantially similar to the fuel

processing system **100** of FIG. 2, absent some devices or apparatuses, such as the methanol storage and delivery system **112**. FIGS. 9 and 10 generally depict how the fuel processing system **100'** may be configured for portability. FIG. 9 shows how at least some of the devices or apparatuses of the fuel processing system **100'** may be physically positioned therein. FIG. 10 shows at least some of the general physical dimensions of the fuel processing system **100'**, including a width **176**, a length **178**, a first height **180**, and a second height **182**. The width **176** may be within the range of from about 3.5 feet to about 7.5 feet, such as from about 4.5 feet to about 6.5 feet, or from about 5.0 feet to about 6.0 feet. The length **178** may be within the range of from about 6.0 feet to about 10.0 feet, such as from about 7.0 feet to about 9.0 feet, or from 7.5 feet to about 8.5 feet. The first height **180** may be within the range of from about 5.5 feet to about 9.5 feet, such as from about 6.5 feet to about 8.5 feet, or from about 7.0 feet to about 8.0 feet. The second height **182** may be within the range of from about 12.5 feet to about 16.5 feet, such as from about 13.5 feet to about 15.5 feet, or from about 14.0 feet to about 15.0 feet. In one or more embodiments, at least a portion of the fuel processing system **100, 100'** may be provided upon a suitable platform (not shown). As used herein, the term "suitable platform" means and includes any material base that is mechanically compatible with the fuel processing system **100, 100'** and that enables at least a portion of the fuel processing system **100, 100'** to be readily transported, including but not limited to, a structural steel I-beam matrix.

The invention of the present disclosure advantageously permits the efficient, onsite production of methanol. Unlike conventional methanol production systems, the fuel processing system **100, 100'** does not rely on traditional fuel sources (e.g., natural gas, coal), and may be smaller in size and scale of methanol production (e.g., about 0.1 metric tons per day, as opposed to a typical commercial scale production of about 1000 metric tons per day, or even a typical pilot scale production of about 175 metric tons per day). As a result, the fuel processing system **100, 100'** may be more portable than conventional methanol production systems and, thus, is more adaptable to the logistical limitations (e.g., location and/or policy based restrictions on the transport or delivery of methanol) and technological interests of various specialized operations. By means of non-limiting example, under the "single fuel forward" initiative, the U.S. Military uses JP-8 in its operations and, therefore, currently lacks an infrastructure conducive to the use of methanol-related technologies, such as DMFCs. However, DMFCs are of interest to the U.S. Military as a means of eliminating or reducing the problems associated with conventional batteries. Conventional batteries are unable to support 72 hour missions without recharge/resupply, have relatively long recharge times, suffer from an overabundance of variety, require special electrochemical storage and disposal considerations, and subject the U.S. Military to the additional costs and vulnerabilities of an additional logistics trail. Conversely, DMFCs offer increased energy density, support 72 hour missions without resupply, have relatively short refill times, support a standard power system for multiple devices, do not rely on hazardous electrochemicals (i.e., methanol is a biodegradable chemical with a 17 day half-life), may reduce power system weight, and, when enabled by the present disclosure, do not require an additional logistics trail. The present disclosure will advantageously enable the U.S. Military to benefit from DMFC technology while adhering to a JP-8 logistic framework.

While the present invention may be susceptible to various modifications and alternative forms, specific embodiments have been shown by way of example in the drawings and have

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been described in detail herein. However, it should be understood that the invention is not intended to be limited to the particular forms disclosed. Rather, the invention includes all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives falling within the scope of the invention as defined by the following appended claims and their legal equivalents. For example, elements and features disclosed in relation to one embodiment may be combined with elements and features disclosed in relation to other embodiments of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A fuel processing system, comprising:
 - a fuel injection system configured to combine ambient air and a logistical fuel to produce a logistical fuel and air mixture;
 - a reactor positioned downstream of the fuel injection system and configured to convert the logistical fuel and air mixture to synthesis gas, the reactor selected from the group consisting of a catalytic partial oxidation reactor, a thermal partial oxidation reactor, and an autothermal reactor;
 - a recuperative heat exchanger positioned downstream of the reactor and configured to cool the synthesis gas produced by the reactor with the ambient air of the fuel injection system to produce a cooled synthesis gas;
 - a water gas shift reactor positioned downstream of the recuperative heat exchanger and configured to treat the cooled synthesis gas to produce additional carbon monoxide; and
 - a methanol synthesis system positioned and configured to convert the cooled, treated synthesis gas to a crude methanol liquid.
2. The fuel processing system of claim 1, further comprising a methanol refining system positioned downstream of the methanol synthesis system and configured to process the crude methanol liquid to produce a liquid comprising methanol.
3. The fuel processing system of claim 2, wherein the methanol refining system comprises a single distillation column.
4. The fuel processing system of claim 2, wherein the methanol refining system comprises:
 - a first distillation column; and
 - a second distillation column located along a flow path of a liquid distillate of the first distillation column.
5. The fuel processing system of claim 1, further comprising a methanol storage and delivery system positioned downstream of the methanol refining system and configured to store the liquid comprising methanol and a water supply comprising a water purification unit and to produce a liquid product comprising methanol.
6. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein the reactor comprises a catalytic partial oxidation reactor, and further comprising a desulfurization unit positioned upstream of the catalytic partial oxidation reactor and configured to remove at least a portion of sulfur from the logistical fuel and air mixture.
7. The fuel processing system of claim 6, further comprising another desulfurization unit positioned downstream of the catalytic partial oxidation reactor and upstream of the water gas shift reactor.
8. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein the reactor comprises a thermal partial oxidation reactor, and further comprising a desulfurization unit positioned downstream of the recuperative heat exchanger and upstream of the water gas shift reactor and configured to remove at least a portion of sulfur from the cooled synthesis gas.

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9. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein the methanol synthesis system comprises:
 - a heat exchanger configured and positioned to further cool the cooled, treated synthesis gas;
 - a methanol synthesis reactor located downstream of the heat exchanger and configured to produce methanol from the further cooled, treated synthesis gas;
 - a condensing unit located downstream of the methanol synthesis reactor; and
 - a liquid collection unit located downstream of the condensing unit.
10. The fuel processing system of claim 9, wherein the methanol synthesis system further comprises at least one additional methanol synthesis reactor located downstream of the liquid collection unit.
11. The fuel processing system of claim 9, wherein the methanol synthesis reactor comprises a liquid phase catalyst therein.
12. The fuel processing system of claim 9, wherein the methanol synthesis reactor exhibits a single pass conversion efficiency of greater than about 40%.
13. The fuel processing system of claim 9, wherein the methanol synthesis system is configured to receive the cooled, treated synthesis gas produced by the Water gas shift reactor and to receive additional synthesis gas produced by a biomass gasification system.
14. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein the fuel injection system comprises a fuel injector configured to produce the logistical fuel and air mixture, the logistical fuel and air mixture comprising droplets of liquid logistical fuel dispersed in air.
15. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein the fuel injection system comprises:
 - a pump configured to increase the pressure of the logistical fuel to produce pressurized logistical fuel;
 - a compressor configured to increase the pressure of the ambient air to produce pressurized air; and
 - a fuel injector configured to combine the pressurized logistical fuel and the pressurized air to produce the logistical fuel and air mixture.
16. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein the reactor comprises an autothermal reactor, and further comprising a desulfurization unit positioned upstream of the autothermal reactor and configured to remove at least a portion of sulfur from the logistical fuel and air mixture to form a desulfurized logistical fuel and air mixture.
17. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein at least one of the fuel injection system, the reactor, the water gas shift reactor, and the methanol synthesis system is located on and attached to a platform configured for transporting the at least one of the fuel injection system, the synthesis gas production system, and the methanol synthesis system.
18. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein the fuel processing system is sized and configured to produce between about 1.0 liters per hour of a liquid product comprising methanol and about 50 liters per hour of the liquid product.
19. The fuel processing system of claim 1, further comprising the logistical fuel, the logistical fuel selected from the group consisting of Jet-A, JP-4, and JP-5.
20. The fuel processing system of claim 1, wherein the fuel injection system comprises a fuel injector positioned downstream of the recuperative heat exchanger, the fuel injector configured to combine heated ambient air from the recuperative heat exchanger and the logistical fuel to produce the logistical fuel and air mixture.

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21. A method of manufacturing a liquid product comprising methanol, the method comprising:

combining ambient air and a logistical fuel in a fuel injection system to produce a logistical fuel and air mixture; converting the logistical fuel and air mixture into synthesis gas in a reactor positioned downstream of the fuel injection system, the reactor selected from the group consisting of a catalytic partial oxidation reactor, a thermal partial oxidation reactor, and an autothermal reactor; cooling the synthesis gas produced by the reactor in a recuperative heat exchanger with the ambient air of the fuel injection system to produce a cooled synthesis gas; treating the cooled synthesis gas in a water gas shift reactor positioned downstream of the recuperative heat exchanger to produce additional carbon monoxide; converting the cooled, treated synthesis gas to a crude methanol liquid in a methanol synthesis system; processing the crude methanol liquid to produce a purified methanol liquid; and directing at least the purified methanol liquid into a dispensing valve to generate the liquid product comprising methanol and water.

22. The method of claim **21**, wherein converting the logistical fuel and air mixture into synthesis gas in a reactor positioned downstream of the fuel injection system comprises:

desulfurizing the logistical fuel and air mixture to produce an at least substantially desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture; and

reforming the at least substantially desulfurized logistical fuel/air mixture in a catalytic partial oxidation reactor to produce the synthesis gas comprising hydrogen and carbon monoxide.

23. The method of claim **21**, further comprising: desulfurizing the cooled synthesis gas in a desulfurization unit; and

processing the cooled synthesis gas in the water gas shift reactor after desulfurizing the cooled synthesis gas.

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24. The method of claim **21**, wherein converting the cooled, treated synthesis gas to a crude methanol liquid in a methanol synthesis system comprises:

further cooling the cooled, treated synthesis gas in a heat exchanger;

reacting the further cooled, treated synthesis gas in a methanol synthesis reactor to produce a crude methanol stream;

reducing the temperature of the crude methanol stream to produce a cooled crude methanol stream; and delivering the cooled crude methanol stream into a liquid collection unit.

25. The method of claim **21**, further comprising reacting at least one gaseous component of the cooled crude methanol stream in at least one additional methanol synthesis reactor.

26. The method of claim **21**, wherein processing the crude methanol liquid to produce the purified methanol liquid comprises purifying the crude methanol liquid in a single distillation column.

27. The method of claim **21**, wherein processing the crude methanol liquid to produce the purified methanol liquid comprises separating at least some components of the crude methanol liquid having a boiling point lower than methanol in a first distillation column and separating at least some components of the crude methanol liquid having a boiling point higher than methanol in a second distillation column.

28. The method of claim **21**, wherein directing at least the purified methanol liquid into a dispensing valve to generate the liquid product comprises combining the purified methanol liquid with water at a location upstream of the dispensing valve.

29. The method of claim **28**, wherein directing at least the purified methanol liquid into a dispensing valve to generate the liquid product comprising methanol and water comprises producing the liquid product comprising a methanol concentration within a range of from about 0.1 M to about 7.0 M.

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