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Removing small scale space debris by using a hybrid ground and space based

laser system

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Abstract: High power pulsed laser orbiting debris removal is considered as one of the most efficient and feasible

methods to mitigate the threat from the small scale space debris. It is divided into two methods in accordance with its

placement of the laser system, i.e. the ground-based system and the space-based system. However, each of the systems

has its inherent advantages and drawbacks. Therefore, this article combined the advantages of both laser systems to

propose a hybrid ground and space based laser system. First, we established a laser ablation impulse coupling model

according to the analysis of the rotation characteristic of the small scale space debris. Then, a momentum transfer

model of space debris orbit was built up through the analysis of orbit transfer. Finally, the proposed scheme is

investigated by numerical simulation, and the small scale space debris in typical altitude of 800 km was removed

through 1553 laser pulses by using the hybrid laser system within one pass. The simulation results shown that, the

proposed system can effectively remove the small scale space debris.

Key words: space debris; laser irradiation; laser system; orbit transfer

1. Introduction

Currently, the increasing number of space debris poses a considerable danger to orbiting satellites, humans in

space and further space exploration activities. Especially, the small scale space debris can be neither monitored and

tracked, nor shielded from orbiting spacecraft, posing a significant hazard for its large kinetic energy [1-3]. Hence,

small scale space debris is considered as the most dangerous debris in Low Earth Orbit (LEO). It is urgent to remove

small scale space debris in LEO actively to guarantee space environment security [4-6]. At present, the proposed

solutions of space debris active removal mainly include chasing and grappling the objects, deploying nets to capture

objects, attaching an electrodynamics tether and pulsed laser orbiting debris removal [7-9]. Pulsed laser orbiting debris

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