UHTC Research at NASA Ames

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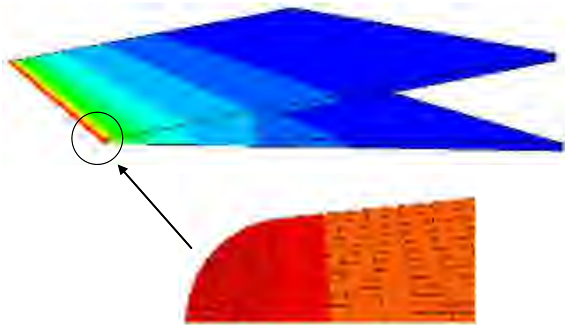
Sharp Leading Edge Technology

- For enhanced aerodynamic performance
- Materials for sharp leading edges can be reusable but need different properties because of geometry and very high temperatures
- Require materials with significantly higher temperature capabilities, but for short duration
  - Current shuttle RCC leading edge materials: T~1650°C
  - Materials for vehicles with sharp leading edges: T>2000°C



High Temperature at Tip

Steep Temperature Gradient

Passive cooling is simplest option to manage the intense heating on sharp leading edges.

UHTCs are candidate materials

Some UHTC Development History

- Hf and ZrB_2 materials investigated in early 1950s as nuclear reactor material
- Extensive work in 1960s & 1970s (by ManLabs for Air Force) showed potential for HfB_2 and ZrB_2 for use as nosecones and leading edge materials (Clougherty, Kaufman, Kalish, Hill, Peters, Rhodes et al.)
- Gap in sustained development during 1980s and most of 1990s
  - AFRL considered UHTCs for long-life, man-rated turbine engines
- During late 1990s, NASA Ames revived interest in HfB_2/SiC, ZrB_2/SiC ceramics for sharp leading edges
- Ballistic flight experiments: Ames teamed with Sandia National Laboratories New Mexico, Air Force Space Command, and TRW
  - SHARP*-B1 (1997) UHTC nosetip & SHARP-B2 (2000) UHTC strake assembly
- Space Launch Initiative (SLI) ,NGLT, UEET programs: 2001-5
- NASA's Fundamental Aeronautics Program funded research until 2009
- Substantial current ongoing effort at universities, government agencies, & international laboratories

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* Slender Hypervelocity Aerothermodynamic Research Probes

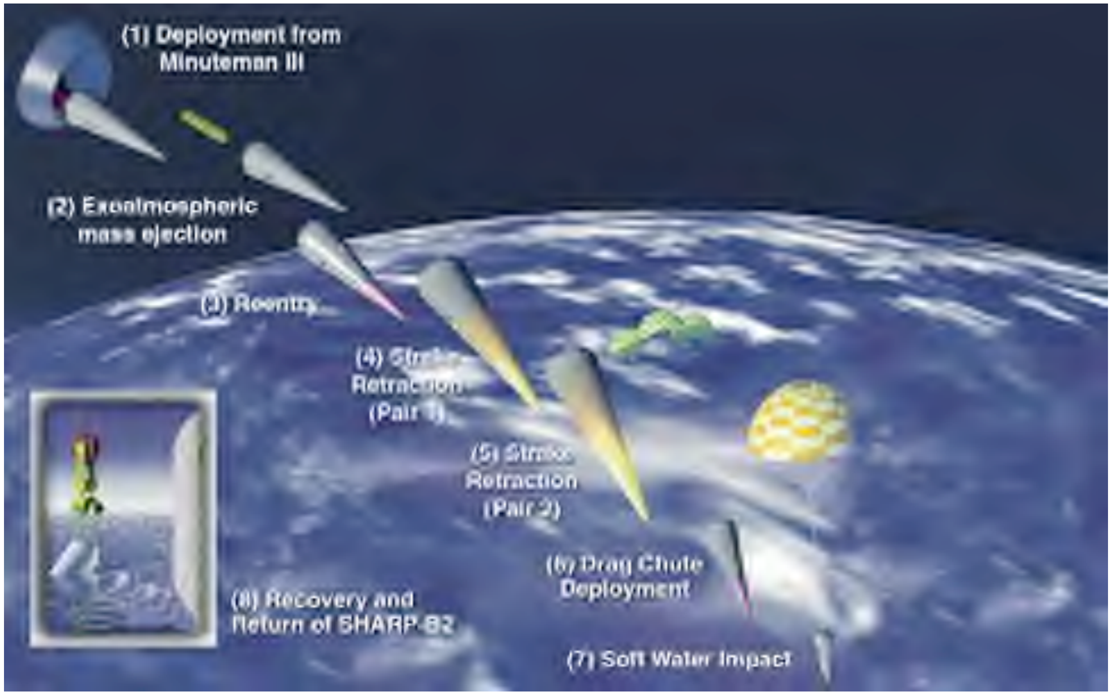
Flight Hardware

SHARP-B1 May 21, 1997

SHARP-B2 Sept. 28, 2000

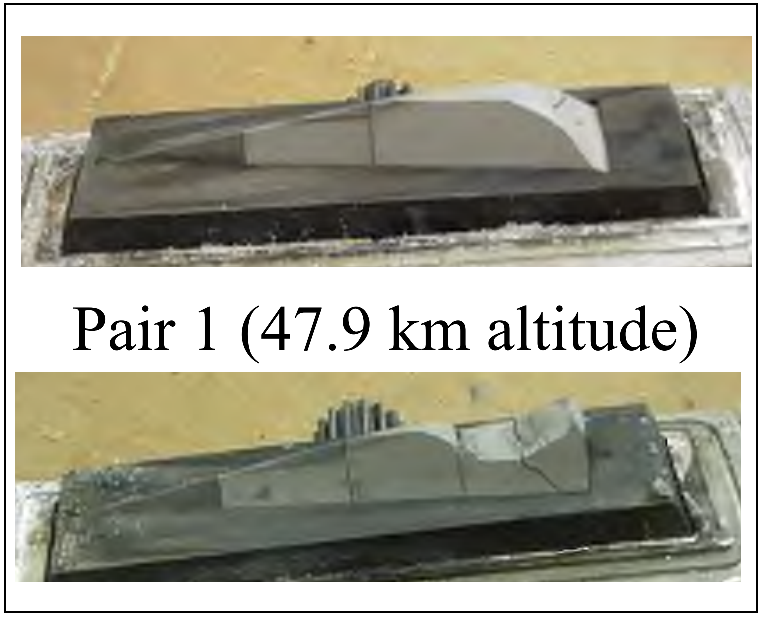
SHARP-B2

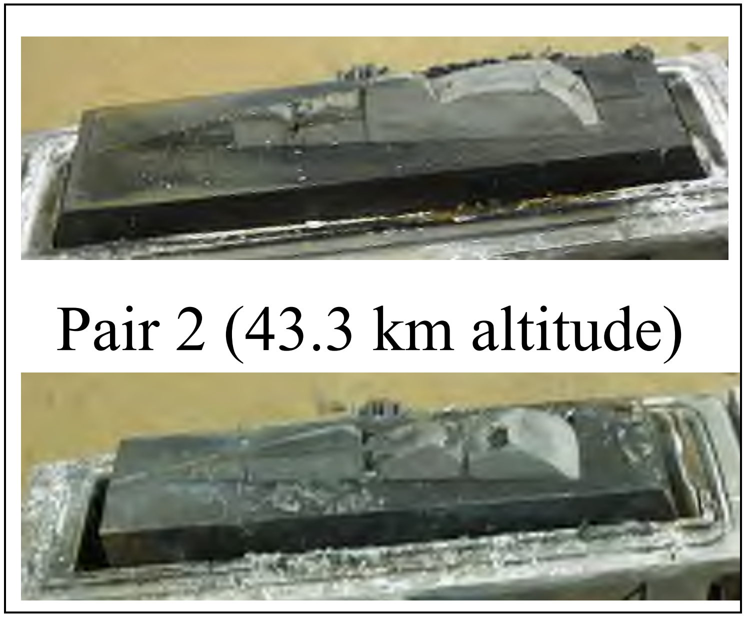
- Flight test designed to evaluate three different compositions of UHTCs in strake (fin) configuration exposed to ballistic reentry environment.
- Strakes exposed as vehicle reentered atmosphere, then retracted into protective housing.
- ***Material recovered. Led to new effort in UHTCs / decision to bring development in-house and improve processing.***



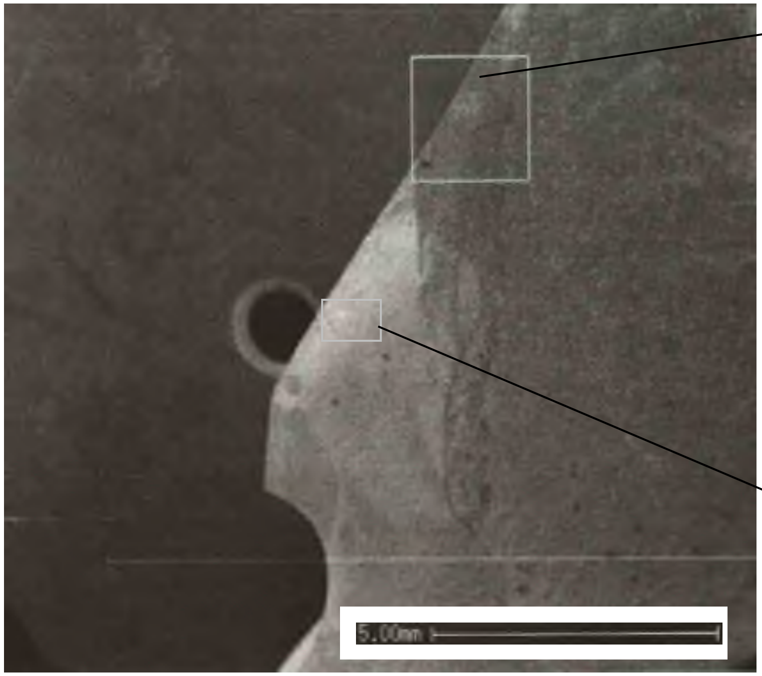
Recovered UHTC Strakes

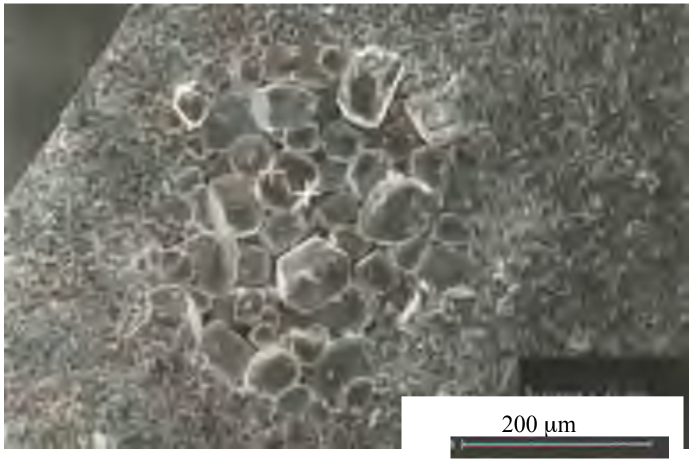
- Post-flight recovery showed that all four HfB_2-SiC aft-strake segments suffered similar, multiple fractures.
- No evidence of severe heating damage (for example, ablation, spallation, or burning) was observed.
- Defects inherent in material lot are present on fracture surfaces.
- Actual material properties exhibit wider scatter and greater temperature dependence than those assumed in design.


Pair 1 (47.9 km altitude)

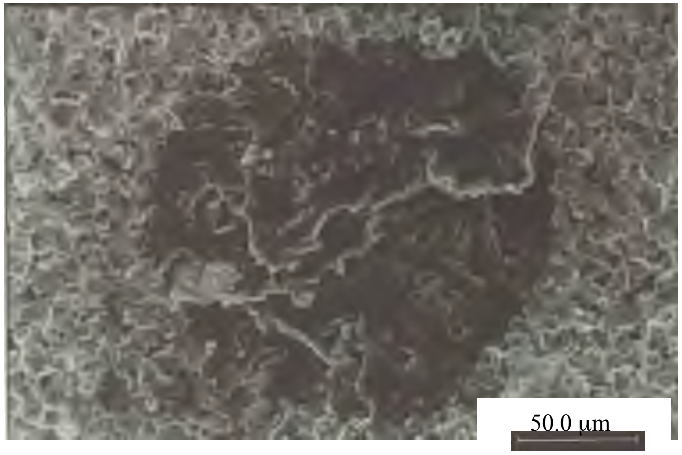

Pair 2 (43.3 km altitude)

Processing Defects on Fracture Surface of Aft-Segment, Strake 2



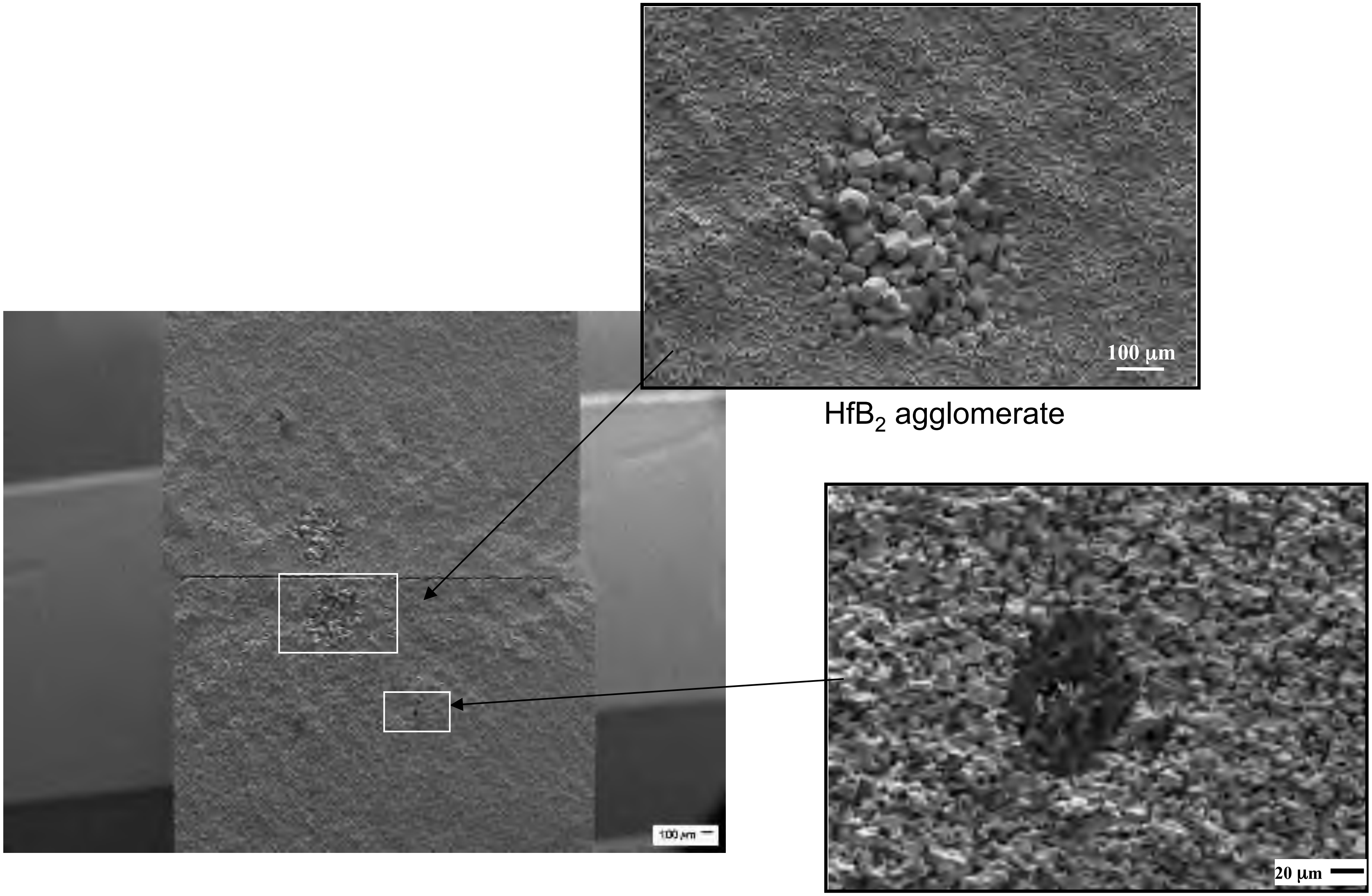


HfB_2 agglomerate



SiC agglomerate

Processing Defects in HfB_2-SiC Flexure Specimens

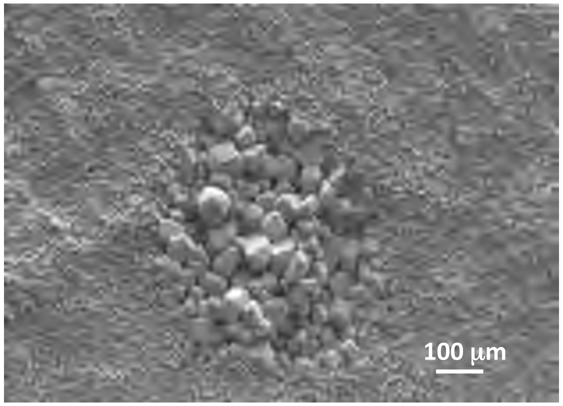


HfB_2 agglomerate

Grafoil™ agglomerate

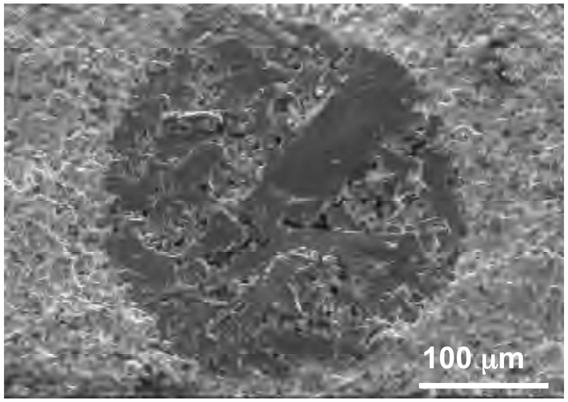
A Cautionary Tale

- Materials did not have expected fracture toughness, strength, or reliability (Weibull modulus).
- Unexpected fractures were due to poor materials processing by external vendor.
- SHARP B-2 underlined importance of controlling materials development, processing methodologies, and resulting material properties if we are to get the maximum value from an experiment.



Large HfB_2 agglomerate

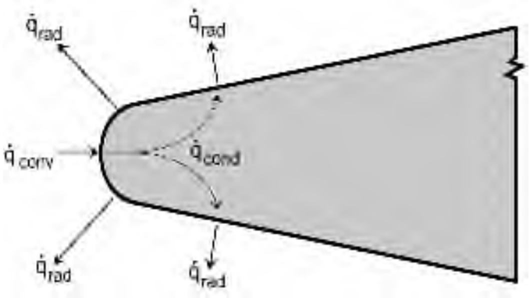
Poorly processed $HfB_2 20v\%SiC$



Large SiC-rich agglomerate

Sharp Leading Edge Energy Balance

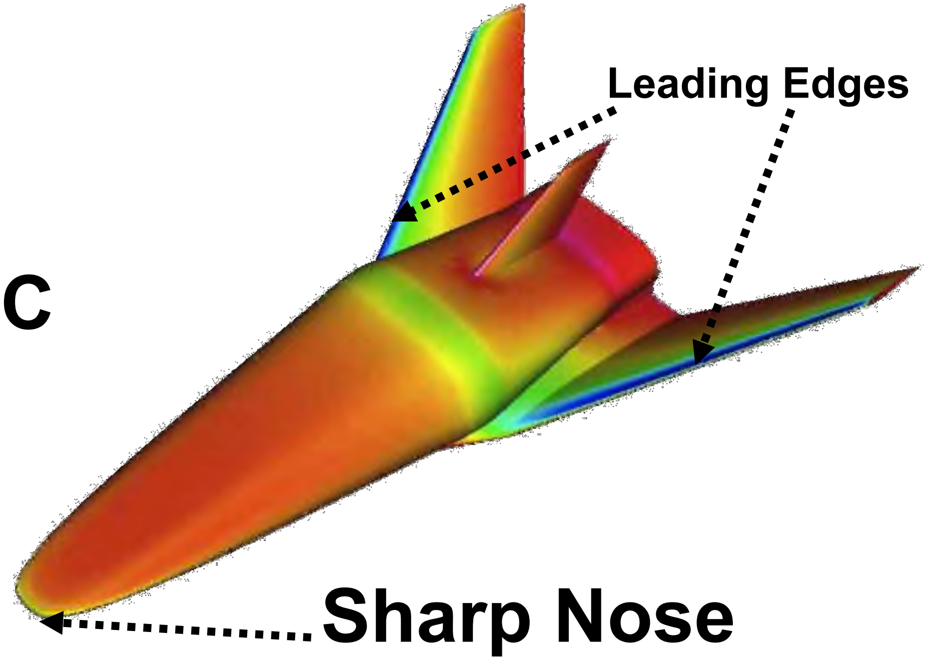
Sharp Nose



UHTC

High Thermal
Conductivity

$$\dot{q}_{conv} = \dot{q}_{rad} + \dot{q}_{cond}$$



Leading Edges

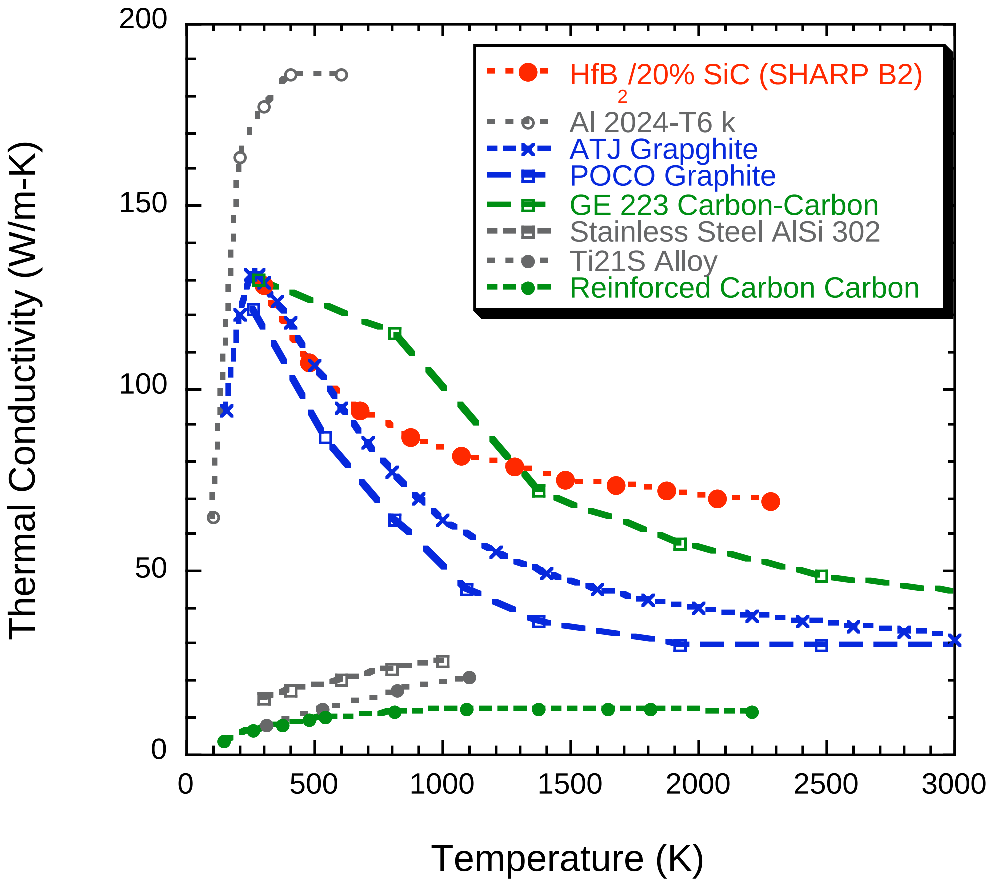
Sharp Nose

Insulators and UHTCs manage energy in different ways:

- Insulators store energy until it can be eliminated in the same way as it entered
- UHTCs conduct energy through the material and reradiate it through cooler surfaces

Dean Kontinos, Ken Gee and Dinesh Prabhu. “Temperature Constraints at the Sharp Leading Edge of a Crew Transfer Vehicle.” AIAA 2001-2886 35th AIAA Thermophysics Conference, 11-14 June 2001, Anaheim CA

Thermal Conductivity Comparison



HfB_2/SiC materials have relatively high thermal conductivity

- ! HfB_2/SiC thermal conductivity was measured on material from the SHARP-B2 program.
- ! Thermal Diffusivity and Heat Capacity of HfB_2/SiC were measured using Laser Flash.

HfB$_2$-SiC

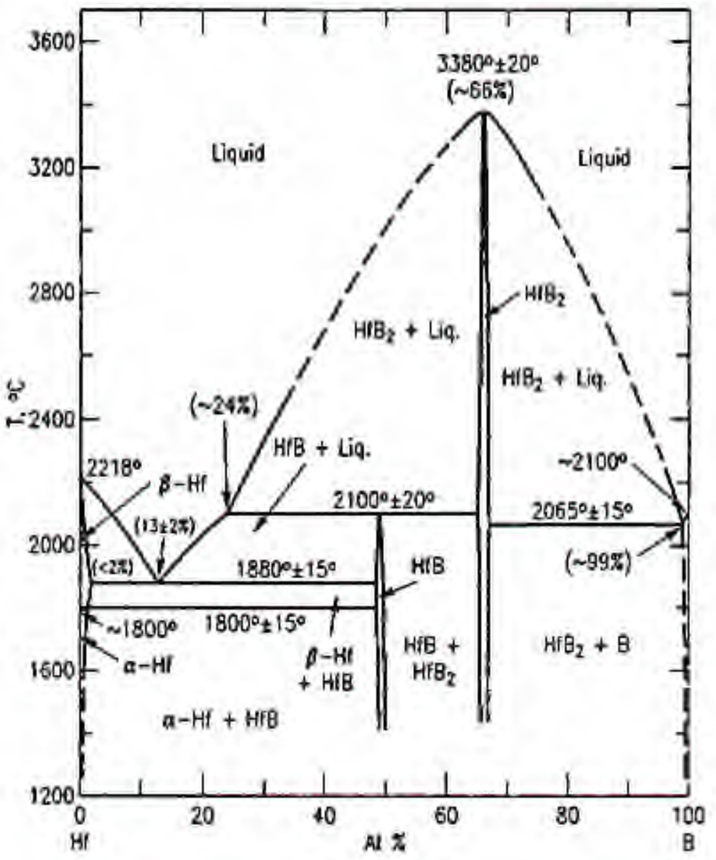
- **HfB$_2$** has a narrow range of stoichiometry with a melting temperature of 3380°C

  Density = 11.2 g/cm^3

- **Silicon carbide** is added to boride powders
  - Promotes refinement of microstructure
  - Decreases thermal conductivity of HfB$_2$
  - 20v% may not be optimal but is common amount added
  - SiC will oxidize either passively or actively, depending upon the environment

  Density = 3.2 g/cm^3

HfB$_2$



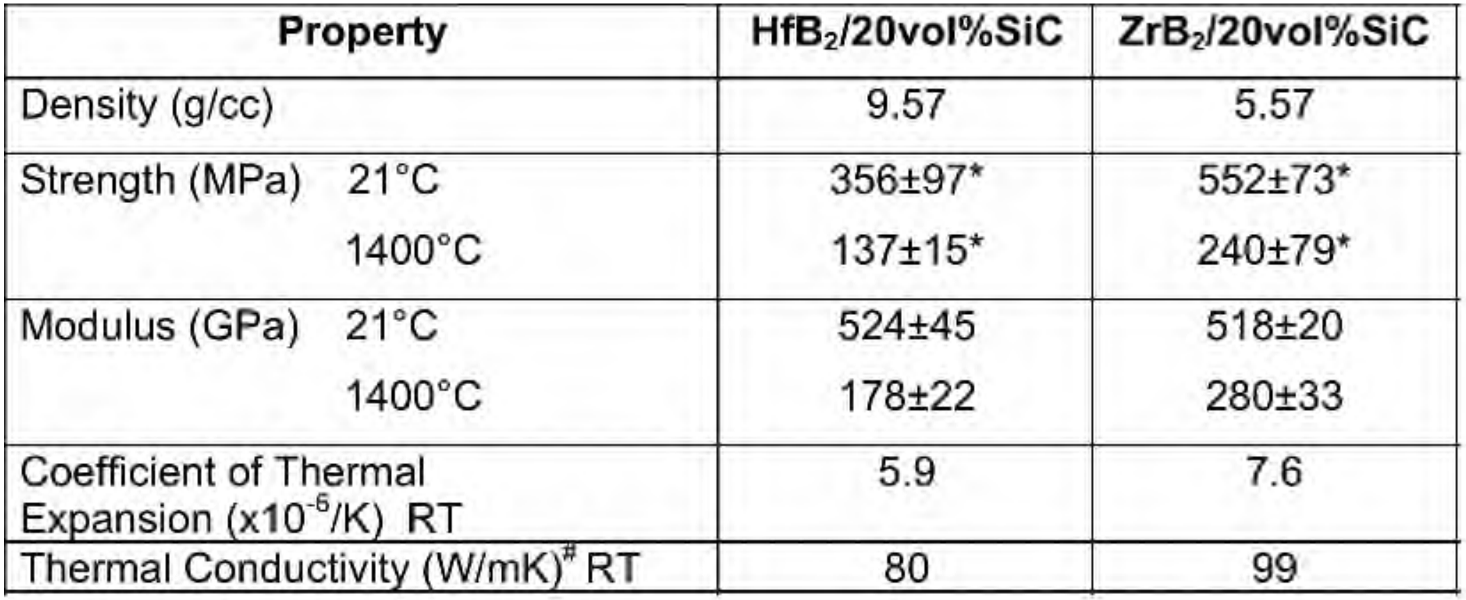
UHTC Material Properties

Sharp leading edges require :

•! High thermal conductivity (directional)

•! High fracture toughness/mechanical strength/hardness

•! Oxidation resistance (in reentry conditions)



Property	HfB_2/20vol%SiC	ZrB_2/20vol%SiC
Density (g/cc)	9.57	5.57
Strength (MPa) 21°C	356±97*	552±73*
1400°C	137±15*	240±79*
Modulus (GPa) 21°C	524±45	518±20
1400°C	178±22	280±33
Coefficient of Thermal Expansion ($x10^{-6}$/K) RT	5.9	7.6
Thermal Conductivity (W/mK)[#] RT	80	99

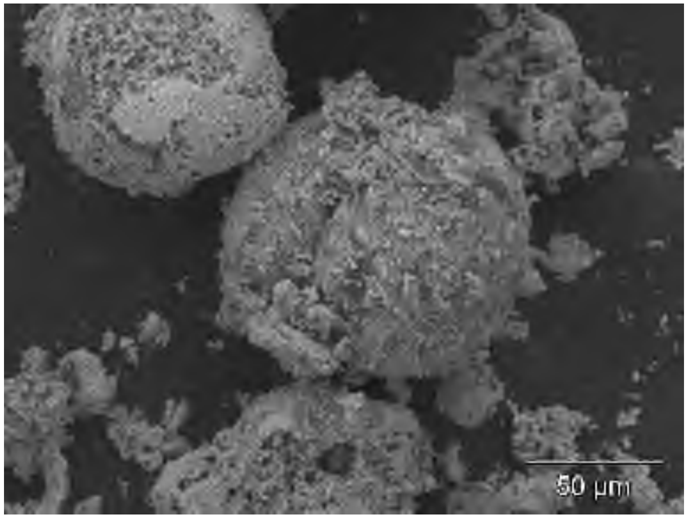
Source: ManLabs and Southern Research Institute

* Flexural Strength

R. P. Tye and E. V. Clougherty, "The Thermal and Electrical Conductivities of Some Electrically Conducting Compounds." Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium on Thermophysical Properties, The American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Sept 30 – Oct 2 1970. Editor C. F. Bonilla, pp 396-401.

Improving Processing and Microstructure

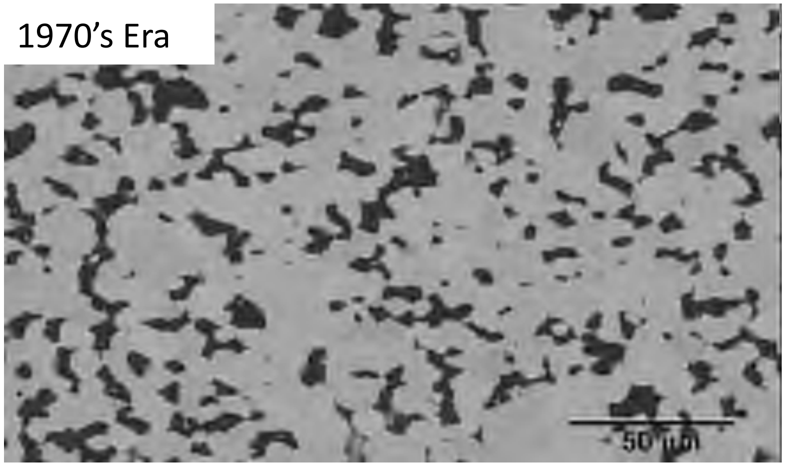
- Initial focus on improving material microstructure and strength
- HfB_2/20vol%SiC selected as baseline material for project constraints
- Major issue was poor mixing/processing of powders with different densities
  - Used freeze-drying to make homogenous powder granules
  - Developed appropriate hot pressing schedules



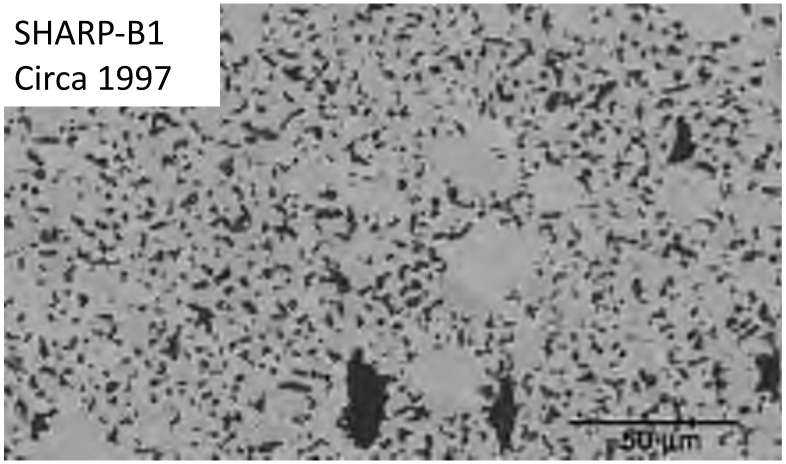
Granulated HfB_2/SiC Powder

Early Progress in Processing of HfB$_2$ - 20% SiC Materials

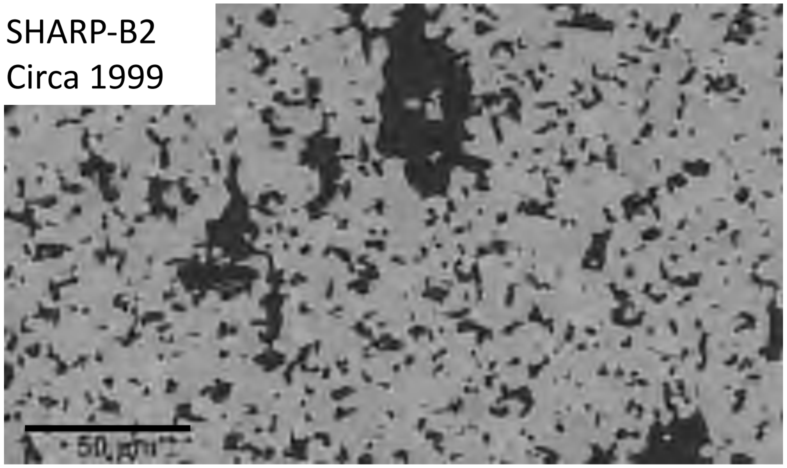
1970's Era



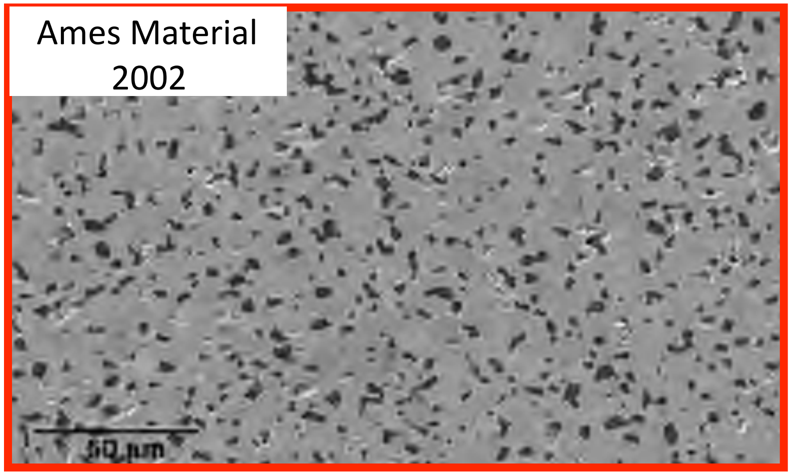
SHARP-B1
Circa 1997



SHARP-B2
Circa 1999

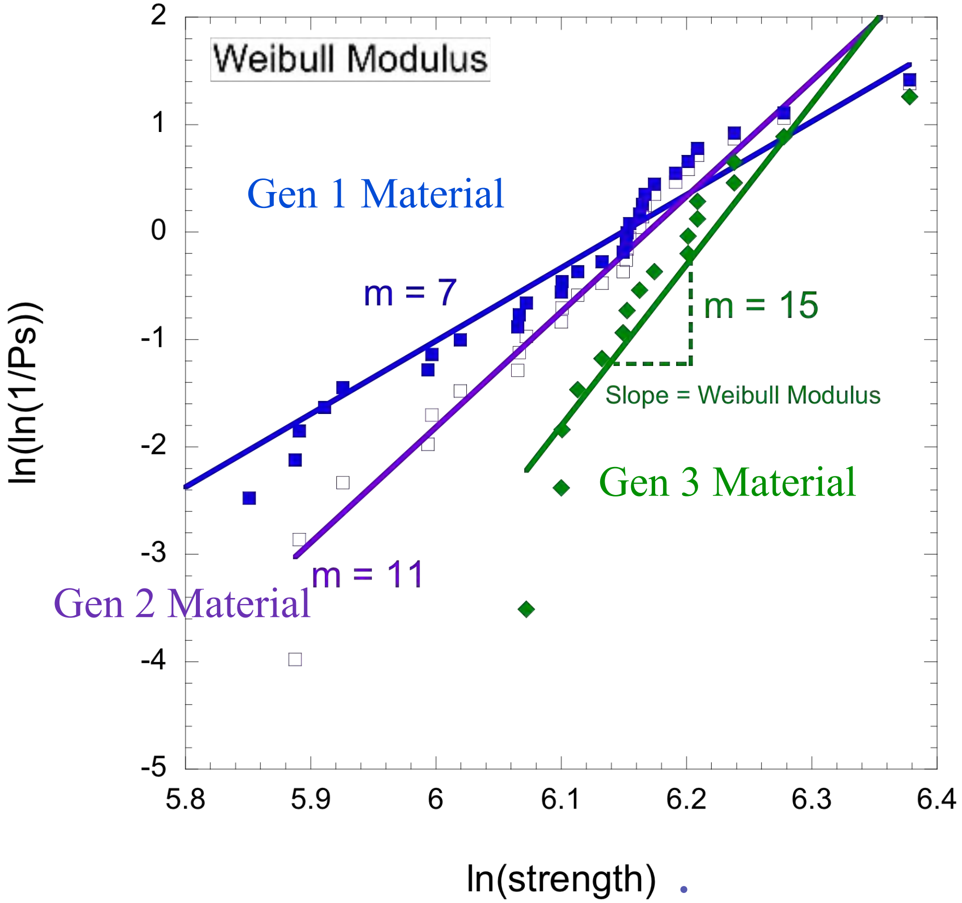


Ames Material
2002



- Early and SHARP materials made by an outside vendor
- Improvements in powder handling provide a more uniform microstructure

Weibull Modulus of Ames HfB_2/SiC Improved Compared to Previous Materials



Weibull Modulus SHARP B2 Materials ~4

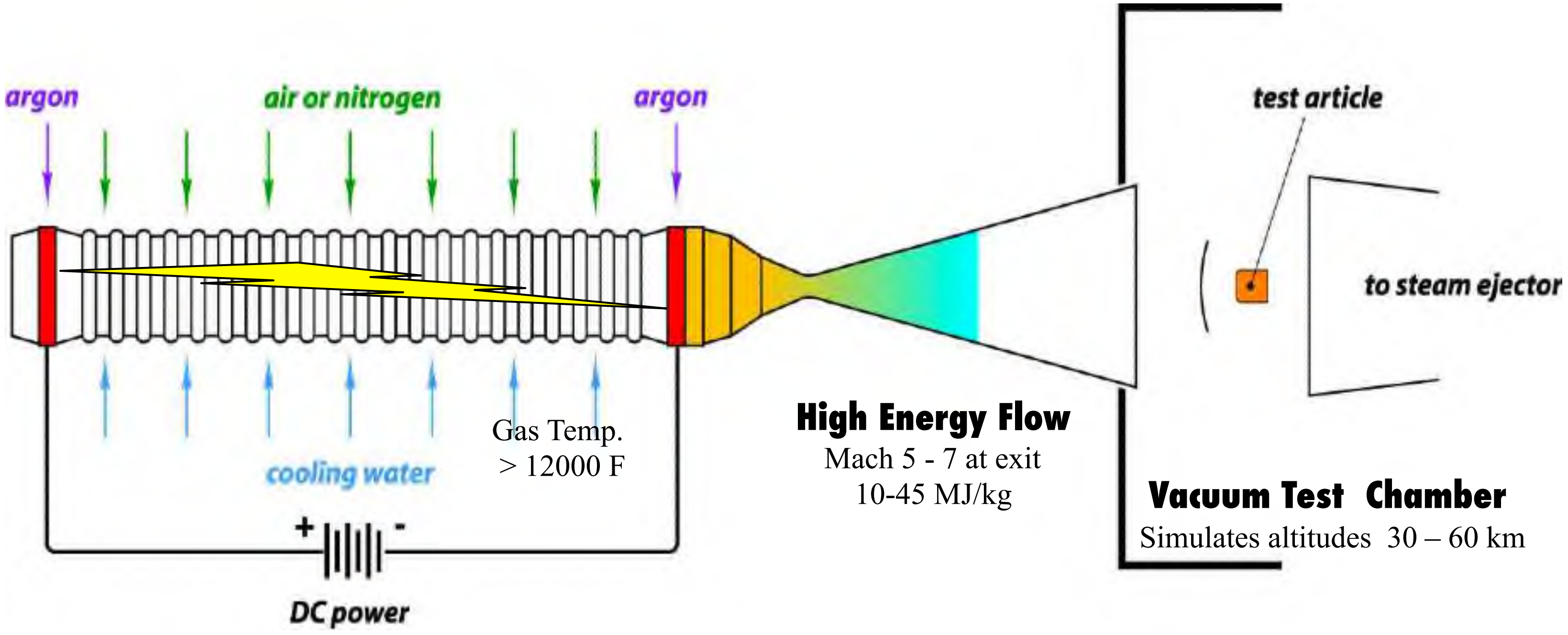
Increased Weibull Modulus to ~15 with processing improvements

Need for Arc Jet Testing

- Arc jet testing is the best **ground-based method** of evaluating a material's oxidation/ablation response in re-entry environments
- A material's oxidation behavior when heated in static or flowing air at ambient pressures is likely to be significantly different than in a re-entry environment.
- In a re-entry environment:
  - Oxygen and nitrogen may be dissociated
    - Catalycity of the material plays an important role
    - Recombination of O and N atoms adds to surface heating
  - Stagnation pressures may be less than 1 atm.
    - Influence of active to passive transitions in oxidation behavior of materials
      - SiC materials show such a transition when the protective SiO_2 layer is removed as SiO

Arc Jet Schematic

Simulates reentry conditions in a ground-based facility



Gas Temp.
> 12000 F

High Energy Flow
Mach 5 - 7 at exit
10-45 MJ/kg

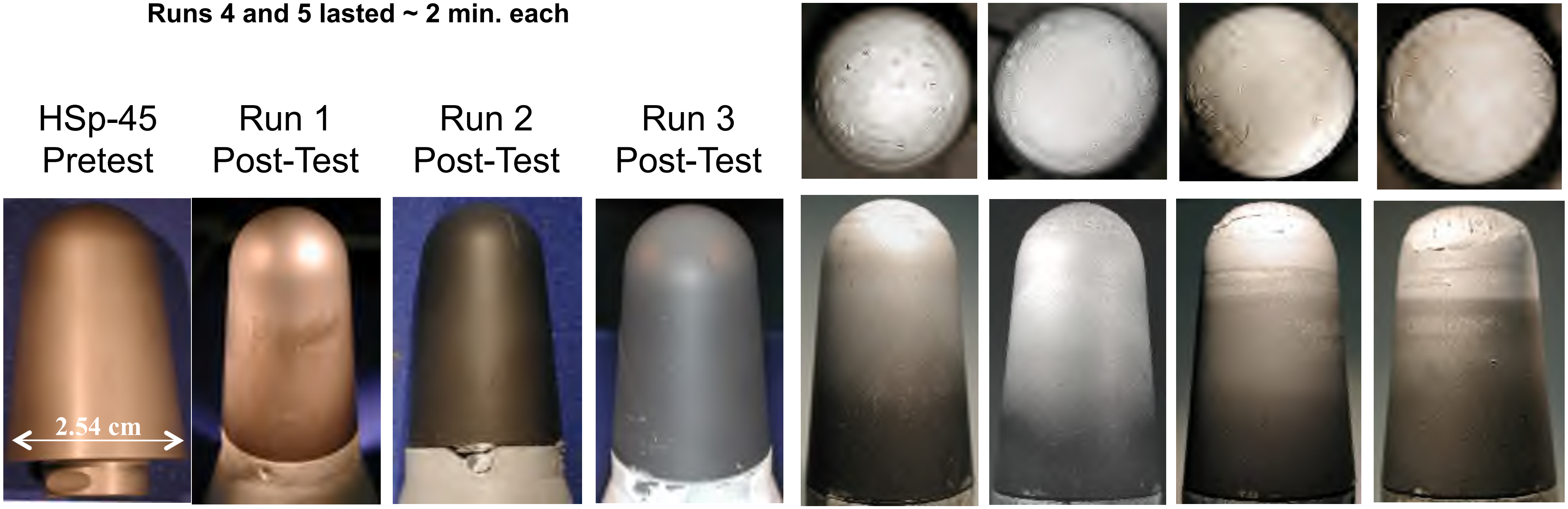
Vacuum Test Chamber
Simulates altitudes 30 – 60 km

Method: Heat a test gas (air) to plasma temperatures by an electric arc, then accelerate into a vacuum chamber and onto a stationary test article

Stine, H.A.; Sheppard, C.E.; Watson, V.R. Electric Arc Apparatus. U.S. Patent 3,360,988, January 2, 1968.

UHTC Cone After 9 Arc Jet Exposures (89 minutes total run time)

Runs 4 and 5 lasted ~ 2 min. each



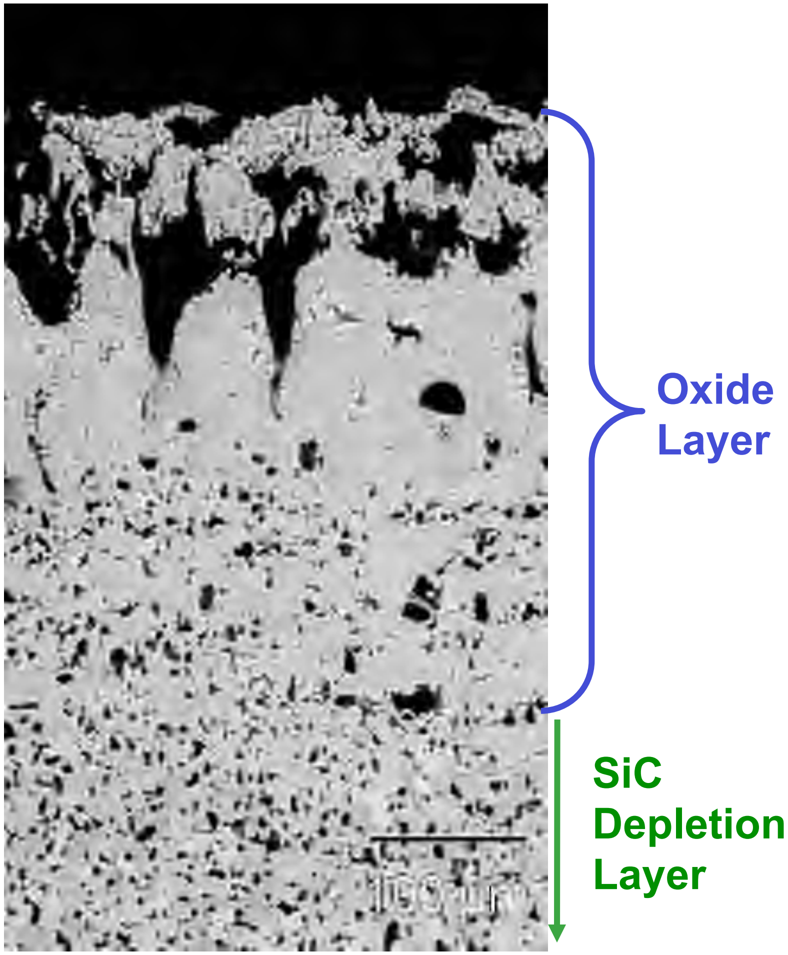
Run 1	Run 2	Run 3	Run 6	Run 7	Run 8	Run 9
300 sec	600 sec	600 sec	600 sec	1200 sec	1200 sec	600 sec
$\% \Delta wt = 0$	$\% \Delta wt = 0$	$\% \Delta wt = 0$	$\%\Delta wt = -0.06$	$\%\Delta wt = -0.2$	$\%\Delta wt = -0.32$	$\%\Delta wt = -1.24$
$T_{ss} = 1280°C$	$T_{ss} = 1220°C$	$T_{ss} = 1325°C$	$T_{ss} = 1970°C$	$T_{ss} > 2000°C$	$T_{ss} > 2000°C$	$T_{ss} > 2000°C$

Increasing heat flux

Reducing Oxide Formation

* Post-test arc jet nosecone model after a total of 80 minutes of exposure. Total exposure the sum of multiple 5 and 10 minute exposures at heat fluxes from 200W/cm^2

- In baseline material:
  - SiC depleted during arc jet testing
  - Surface oxide is porous
- Potential solution: Reduce amount of SiC below the percolation threshold while maintaining mechanical performance



$q_{CW} = 350\ W/cm^2,\ P_{stag} = 0.07$ atm

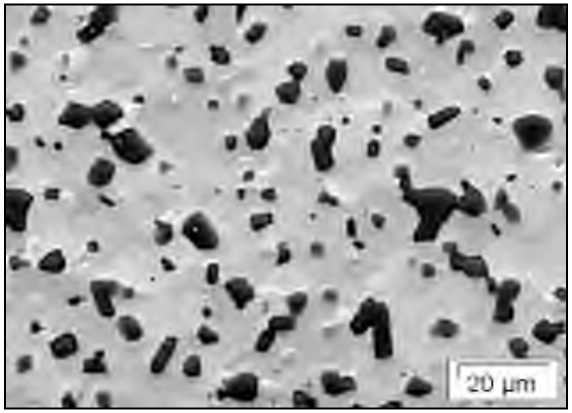
*Arc jet test data from Space Launch Initiative program

Controlling Microstructure & Composition

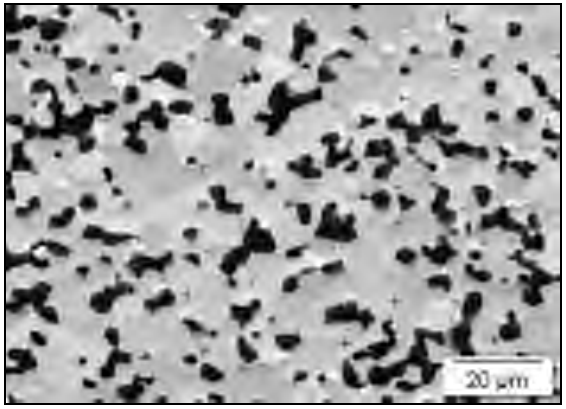
- Goal for UHTCs for TPS has been to improve:
  - **Fracture toughness**
  - Strength
  - Thermal conductivity
  - **Oxidation resistance — arcjet performance**
- Properties controlled by processing, microstructure, and composition
  - **Grain Size**
    - **Additives (Ir additions)**
    - **Processing by field-assisted sintering (FAS)**
  - **Grain Shape**
    - **Addition of preceramic polymers**
    - Particle coatings (Fluidized Bed CVD)
  - Purity (grain boundaries)
    - Addition of preceramic polymers
    - Processing (FB CVD)
    - Self-propagating reactions
  - **Oxide formation**
    - **Increase oxide stability / emissivity (additives)**
    - Reduce amount of SiC

Control of Grain Size

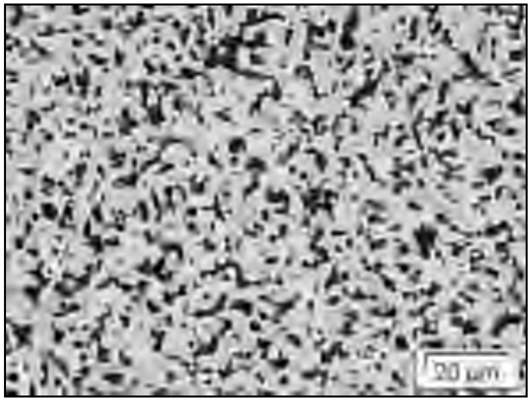
HfB_2/20v%SiC
Hot Pressed
(long process)



HfB_2/20v%SiC
Hot Pressed
(short process)

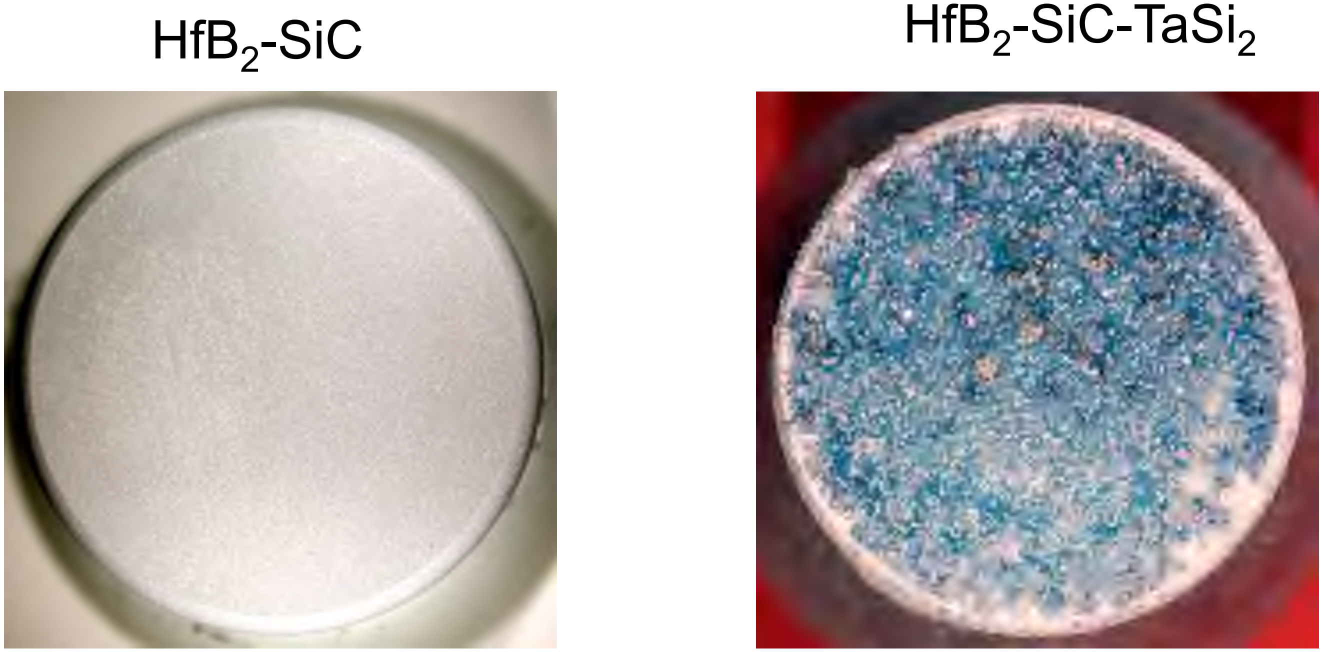


HfB_2/20v%SiC
Spark Plasma Sintered



Third-Phase Additions

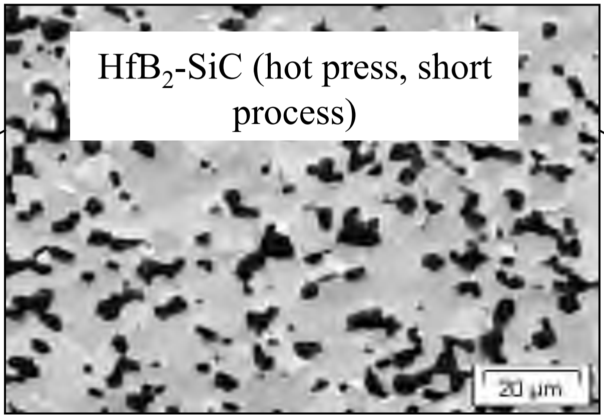
- Explore effect of additional refractory phases (Ir and $TaSi_2$) on microstructure and oxidation behavior of baseline material (HfB_2-20 vol% SiC)



HfB_2/SiC/$TaSi_2$ clearly has a higher post-test emissivity than HfB_2/SiC and demonstrated lower surface temperatures

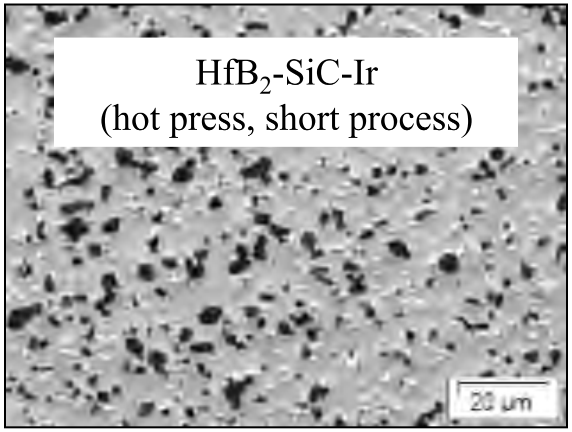
Opila, E. and Levine, S., “Oxidation of ZrB_2- and HfB_2-based ultra-high temperature ceramics: Effect of Ta additions,” *Journal of Materials Science* 39 (2004) 5969–5977

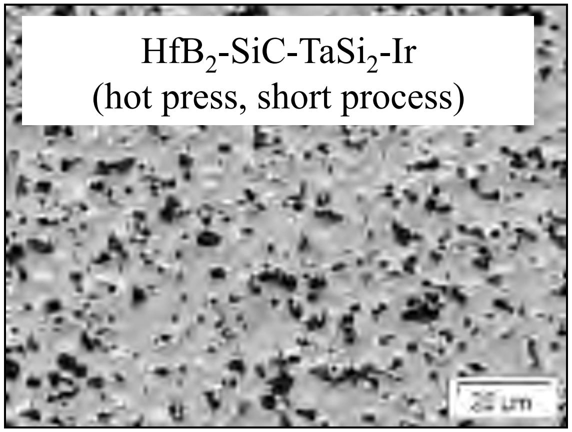
Effect of Additives on Microstructure


HfB_2-SiC (hot press, short process)

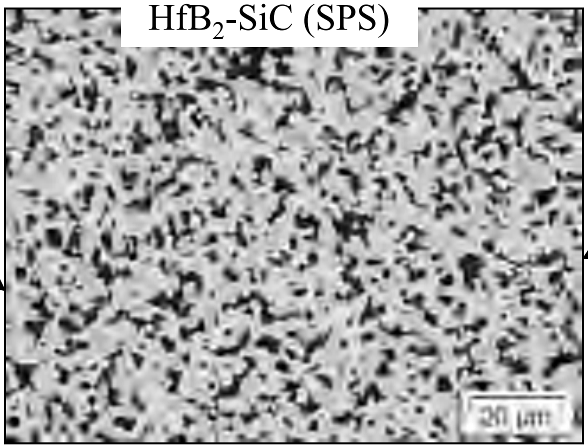
Addition of Ir
(short process)

Addition of Ir and $TaSi_2$
(short process)


HfB_2-SiC-Ir
(hot press, short process)


HfB_2-SiC-$TaSi_2$-Ir
(hot press, short process)

Samples processed with additional phases show less grain growth


HfB_2-SiC (SPS)

Similar microstructure

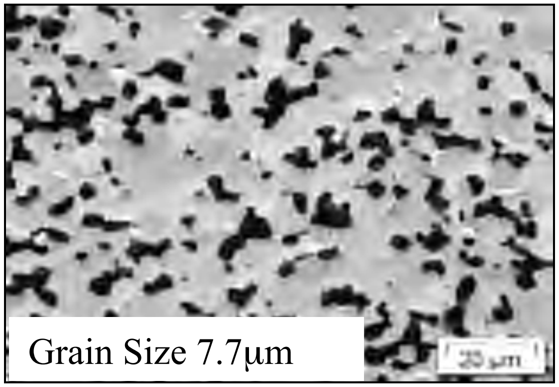
Similar microstructure

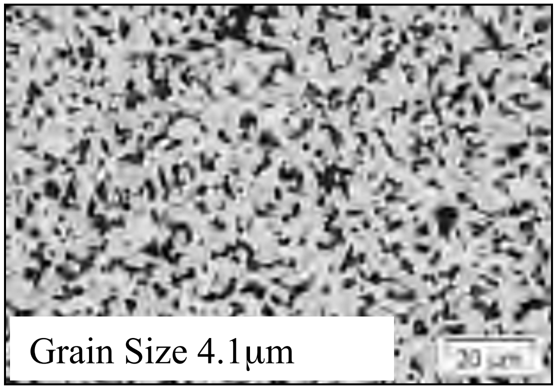
Physical Characterization: Microstructure

Hot Pressed

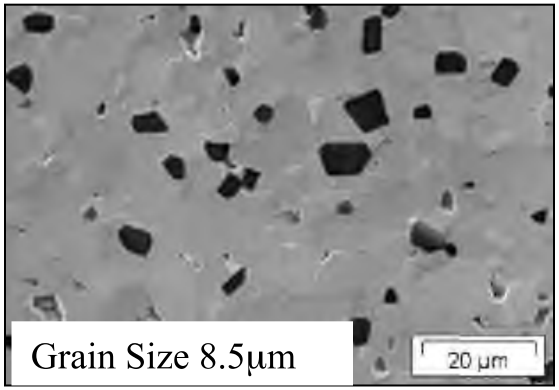
Spark Plasma Sintered (SPS)

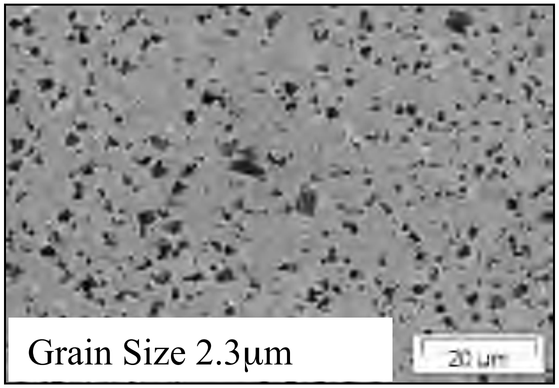
HfB_2-SiC Baseline



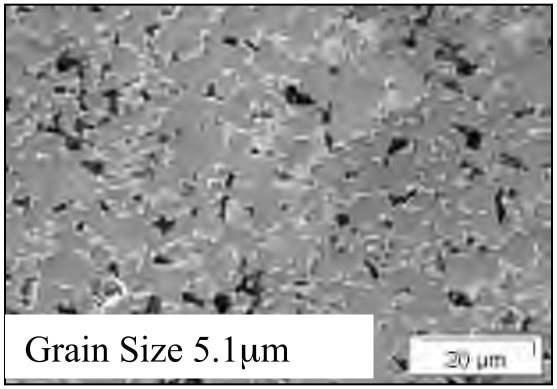


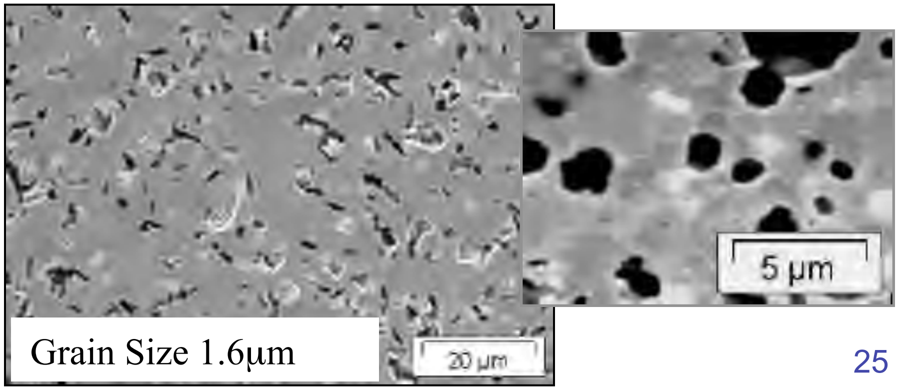
HfB_2-SiC-$TaSi_2$





HfB_2-SiC-$TaSi_2$-Ir

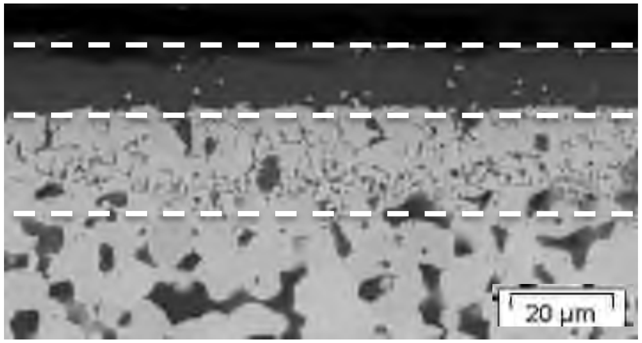


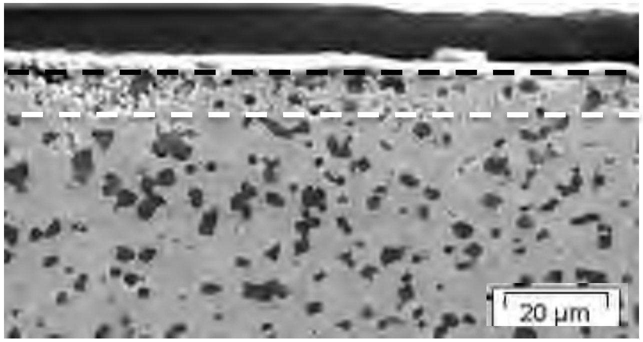


Arc Jet Characterization: Additives & Influence of Microstructure

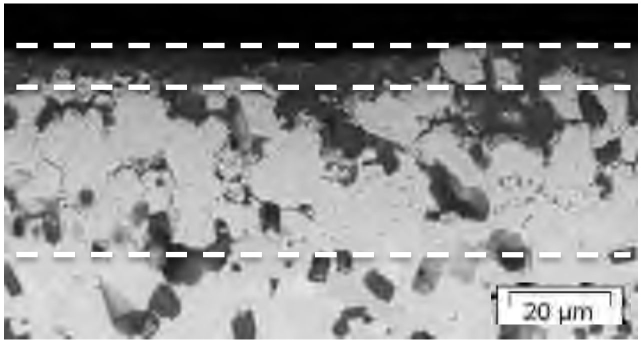
Hot Pressed | **Spark Plasma Sintered**

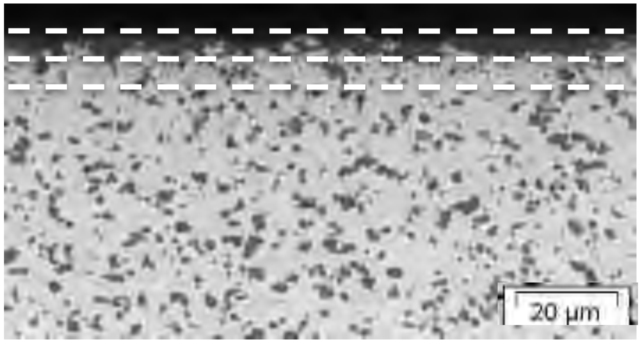
HfB_2-SiC Baseline



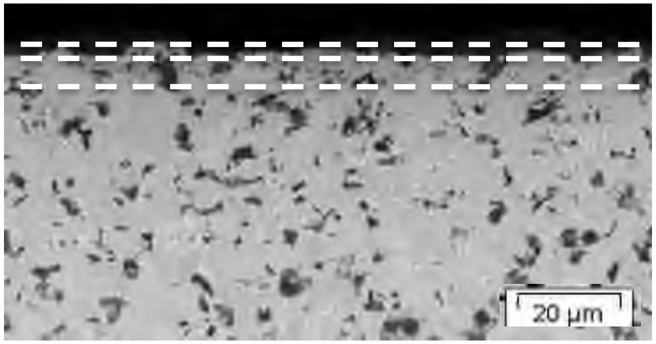


HfB_2-SiC-$TaSi_2$





HfB_2-SiC-$TaSi_2$-Ir

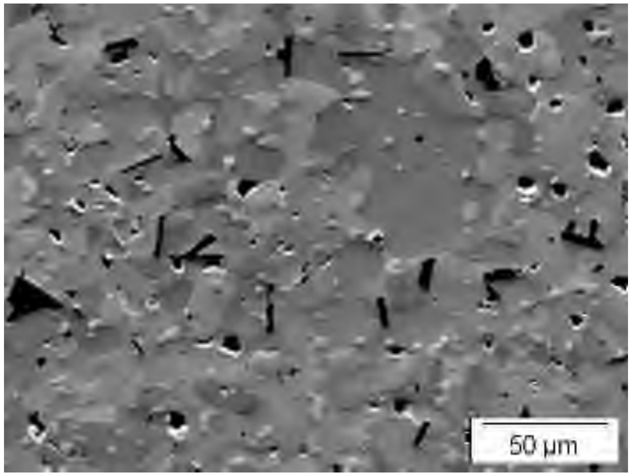


Both oxide scale and depletion zone can be reduced.

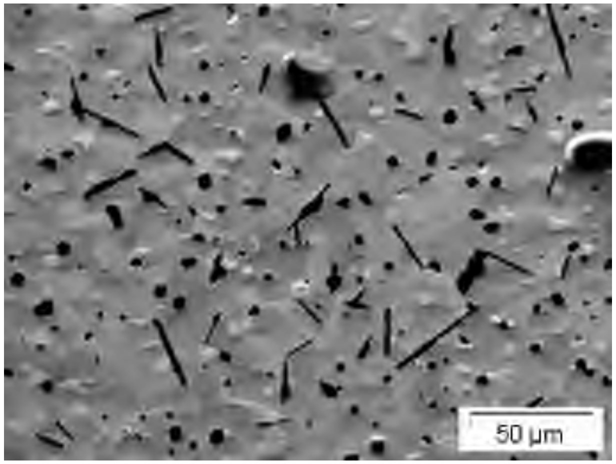
Preceramic Polymers Can Control Grain Shape

- Conventional source of SiC is powder.
- SiC from a preceramic polymer source:
  - Will affect densification and morphology.
  - May achieve better distribution of SiC source through HfB_2.
  - Previous work shows that preceramic polymers can enhance growth of acicular particles
    (for fracture toughness).
- Potential to improve mechanical properties with reduced amount of SiC and also potentially improve oxidation behavior.

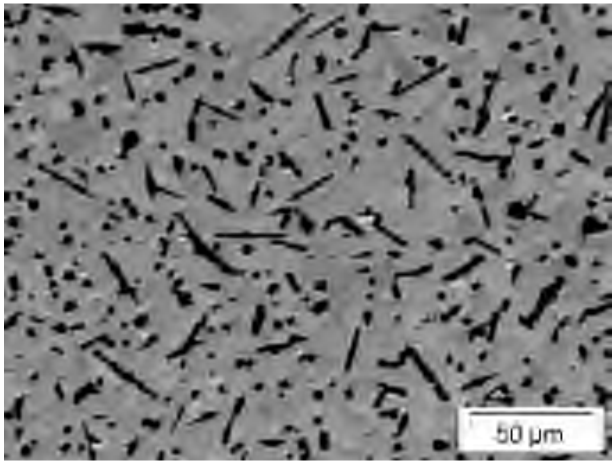
Growth of Elongated SiC Grains



5%* SiC



10%* SiC — Rod diameter ~2µm



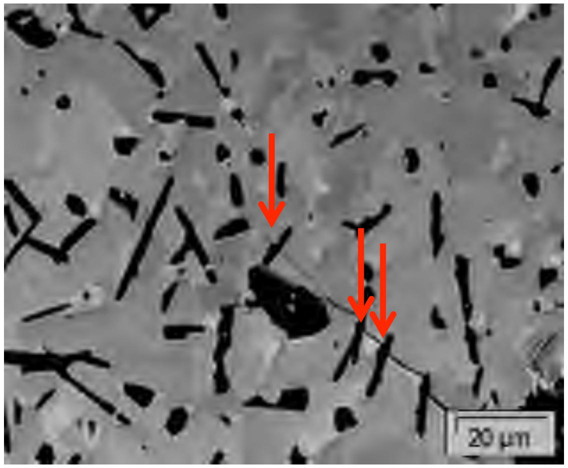
15%* SiC — Rod diameter ~5µm

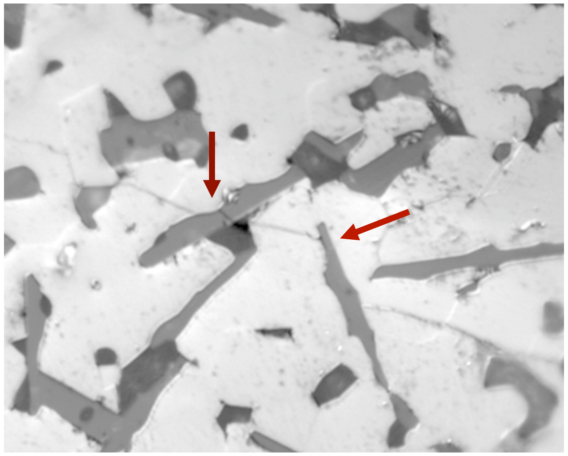
SiC Preceramic Polymer Promotes Growth of Acicular Grains

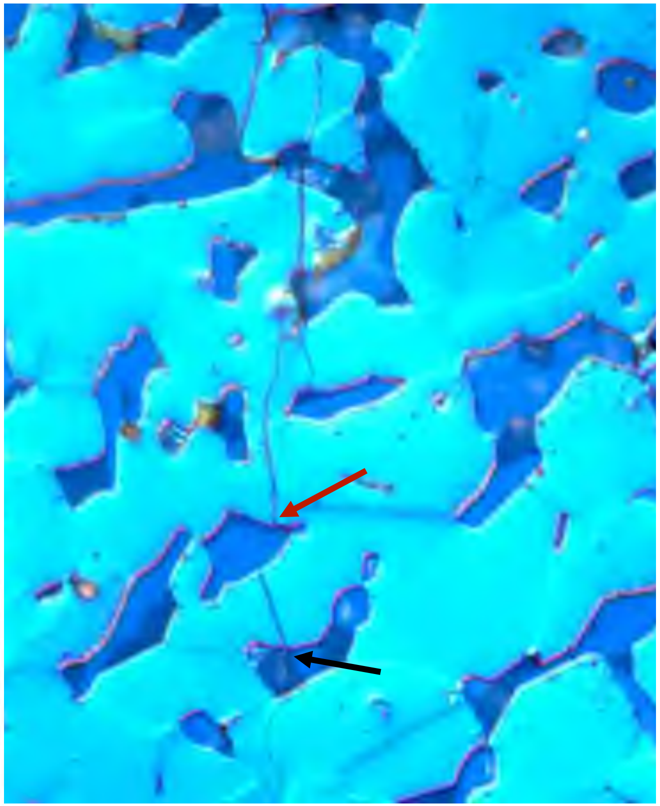
- Samples processed with 5 to >20 volume % SiC
- Can adjust volume of SiC in the UHTC without losing the high l/d architecture
- Amount of SiC affects number and thickness (but not length) of rods — length constant (~20–30µm)
- Possible to obtain dense samples with high-aspect-ratio phase
- Hardness of high-aspect-ratio materials comparable to baseline material

* Precursor added in amounts sufficient to yield nominal amounts of SiC

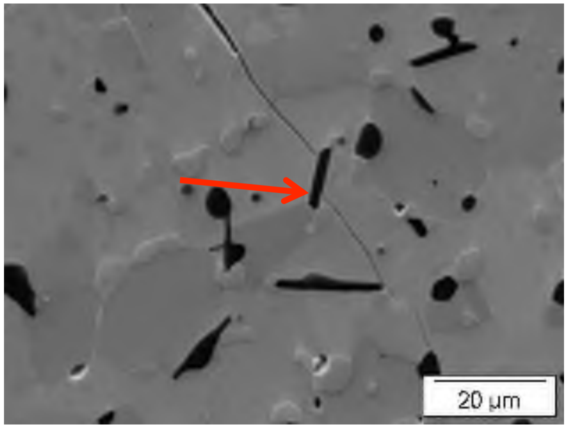
In Situ Composite for Improved Fracture Toughness







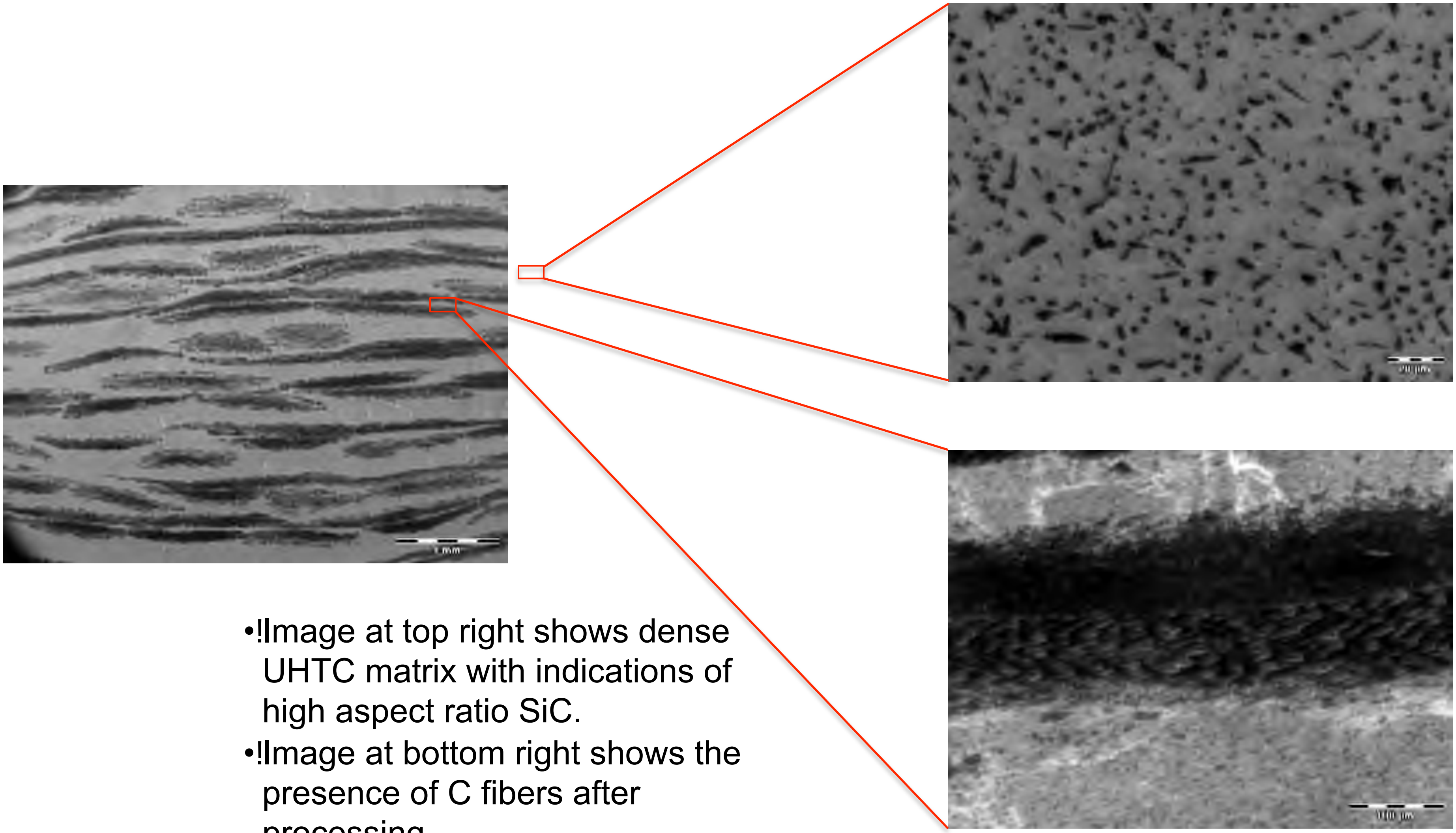
Oak Ridge National Laboratory



SiC Content	Fracture Toughness ($MPam^{1/2}$)
5%	3.61
10%	4.06
15%	4.47
Baseline UHTC (20%)	4.33

Evidence of crack growth along HfB_2-SiC interface, with possible SiC grain bridging

Ultra High Temperature Continuous Fiber Composites



- !Image at top right shows dense UHTC matrix with indications of high aspect ratio SiC.
- !Image at bottom right shows the presence of C fibers after processing.

UHTC Challenges

1. **Fracture toughness**

   Composite approach is required

   •! Integrate understanding gained from monolithic materials

   •! Need high temperature fibers

2. **Oxidation resistance in reentry environments**

   Promising approaches but challenge is active oxidation of materials containing SiC

3. **Modeling is critical**

   Shorten development time, improve properties, design

Some Recent Research Efforts in UHTCs: Materials and Properties

ZrB_2 Based Ceramics	**Catalytic Properties of UHTCs**
Missouri University of Science & Technology	PROMES-CNRS Laboratory, France
US Air Force Research Lab (AFRL)	CNR-ISTEC
NASA Ames & NASA Glenn Research Centers	CIRA, Capua, Italy
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	SRI International, California
Harbin Institute of Technology, China	**Imaging and Analysis (Modeling)**
Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC)	University of Connecticut
NIMS, Tsukuba, Japan	AFRL
Imperial College, London, UK	NASA Ames Research Center
Korea Institute of Materials Science	Teledyne (NHSC-Materials and Structures)
CNR-ISTEC	**Oxidation of UHTCs**
HfB_2 Based Ceramics	AFRL
NASA Ames Research Center	NASA Glenn Research Center
NSWC—Carderock Division	Georgia Institute of Technology
Universidad de Extramdura, Badajoz, Spain	Missouri University of Science & Technology
CNR-ISTEC, Italy	Texas A & M University
Fiber Reinforced UHTCs	CNR-ISTEC, Italy
Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shenyang	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan
University of Arizona	NSWC—Carderock
MATECH/GSM Inc., California	Harbin Institute of Technology, China
AFRL	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Some Recent Research Efforts in UHTCs: Processing

Field Assisted Sintering	**UHTC Polymeric Precursors**
University of California, Davis	SRI International, California
Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL)	University of Pennsylvania
CNR-ISTEC, Italy	Missouri University of Science & Technology
Stockholm University, Sweden	MATECH/GSM Inc., California
NIMS, Tsukuba, Japan	Teledyne (NHSC)
Pressureless Sintering	Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany
Missouri University of Science & Technology	**Nano & Sol Gel Synthesis of UHTCs**
Politecnico di Torino, Italy	Loughborough University, U.K.
Reactive Hot-Pressing	IGIC, Russian Academy of Science
Shanghai Institute of Ceramics, China	University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany
NASA Ames Research Center	Korea Institute of Materials Science
National Aerospace Laboratories, India	Iran University of Science and Technology
Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico	
McGill University, Montreal, Canada	
University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany	