ON THE PRODUCTION OF N$_2$O FROM THE REACTION OF O($^1$D) WITH N$_2$

by

R. Simonaitis, Eduardo Lissi and Julian Heicklen

February 22, 1972

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IONOSPHERE RESEARCH LABORATORY

University Park, Pennsylvania
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ABSTRACT

Ozone was photolyzed at 2537 Å and 25°C in the presence of 42-115 torr of O₂ and about 880 torr of N₂ to test the relative importance of the two reactions

\[ \text{O}(^1\text{D}) + \text{N}_2 + \text{M} \rightarrow \text{N}_2\text{O} + \text{M} \]  

1

\[ \text{O}(^1\text{D}) + \text{N}_2 \rightarrow \text{O}(^3\text{P}) + \text{N}_2 \]  

2

N₂O was not found as a product. Thus from our detectability limit for N₂O (0.3 μ), an upper limit to the efficiency of the first reaction relative to the second of 2.5 x 10⁻⁶ at 1000 torr total pressure was computed. This corresponds to \( k_1 / k_2 < 0.8 \times 10^{-25} \text{ cm}^3 / \text{particle} \).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPERIMENTAL</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ii
INTRODUCTION

The source of N$_2$O in the earth's upper atmosphere is still an unsolved problem. Some time ago Bates and Witherspoon\(^1\) considered the reaction

$$\text{O}(^1\text{D}) + \text{N}_2 + \text{M} \rightarrow \text{N}_2\text{O} + \text{M}$$  \hspace{1cm} \text{(1)}

but more recently Bates and Hayes\(^2\) ignored this reaction because it was negligible compared to the deactivation of O($^1\text{D}$) by N$_2$.

$$\text{O}(^1\text{D}) + \text{N}_2 \rightarrow \text{O}(^3\text{P}) + \text{N}_2$$  \hspace{1cm} \text{(2)}

However very recently Nicolet\(^3\) has again considered reaction (1), and has concluded that if it occurs $10^{-4}$ as often as reaction (2), it should be the principle source of N$_2$O in the stratosphere.

There is experimental evidence that reaction (1) does occur. Groth and Schierholz\(^4\) photolyzed O$_2$ at 1470 A and 7 torr pressure in the presence of 419 torr of N$_2$ and found that about $10^{-4}$ of the oxygen atoms reacted with N$_2$ to produce N$_2$O. However, Katakis and Taube\(^5\) photolyzed O$_3$ at 2537 A at pressures of 10-100 torr in the presence of 300-500 torr of N$_2$, and could not find any oxides of nitrogen; under their conditions, the quantum yield of N$_2$O formation, $\Phi$\{N$_2$O\}, was < $10^{-4}$.

DeMore and Raper\(^6\) examined the photolysis of O$_3$ in liquid N$_2$ and found that for incident radiation between 2480 and 3000 A, $\Phi$\{N$_2$O\} = 0.014. This value is then the upper limiting value, since it was obtained in the condensed phase at $-196^\circ$C, conditions which tend to favor reaction (1) over reaction (2); in the gas phase at more elevated temperatures, the yield must be considerably smaller.
We have re-examined this problem in order to resolve the discrepancy between the results of Groth and Schierholz and of Katakis and Taube and to obtain a more accurate value for the efficiency of reaction 1 in the gas phase. At 1000 torr total pressure ($N_2 + O_2$, mostly $N_2$), we have found no evidence for $N_2O$ formation. Consequently the upper limit for the efficiency of reaction 1 at 1000 torr is $< 2.6 \times 10^{-6}$ compared to reaction 2. This upper limit for the efficiency for this reaction has thus been reduced by a factor of 40.
EXPERIMENTAL

Matheson O\textsubscript{2} and Prep. Grade N\textsubscript{2} were purified by passage over traps maintained at \(-196^\circ\text{C}\). Both the N\textsubscript{2} and O\textsubscript{2} contained each other as impurities but this is irrelevant. Ozone was prepared by passing an electric discharge through the O\textsubscript{2}. The O\textsubscript{3} produced was collected at \(-196^\circ\text{C}\), and the excess O\textsubscript{2} pumped away. The O\textsubscript{3} was then distilled at \(-186^\circ\text{C}\), stored at \(-196^\circ\text{C}\), and degassed at this temperature before each run.

A conventional high-vacuum line utilizing Teflon stopcocks with Viton "O" rings was used. Both mercury and stopcock grease were vigorously excluded. Pressures of O\textsubscript{3} were measured on a sulfuric acid manometer; N\textsubscript{2} and O\textsubscript{2} pressures, on a NRL alphatron gauge. The reaction cell was a cylindrical quartz cell 10 cm long and 5 cm in diameter. During a run the O\textsubscript{3} was monitored by light absorption. Dark decomposition of the O\textsubscript{3} was negligible.

A Hanovia flat-spiral low-pressure Hg resonance lamp Model No. Z1400-013 was used as a radiation source. A Corning 7-54 filter, which removes wavelengths below 2200 and above 4000 A was used.

After irradiation, the mixture was passed through three traps at \(-196^\circ\text{C}\), the first trap being filled with glass wool. The non-condensable gases were removed. The remaining fraction was analyzed for N\textsubscript{2}O by gas chromatography on a Porapak Q column, 1/4-inch in diameter by 24 ft. long operated at room temperature. Blank runs which were not irradiated gave \(\sim 0.2 - 0.3 \mu\) of N\textsubscript{2}O.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Experiments were done in which the incident radiation was from a filtered mercury resonance lamp, so that the only effective wavelength was at 2537 Å. Ozone at 5-12 torr pressure was photolyzed for 9-24 hours in the presence of 31 to 155 torr O₂ and 870-1050 torr N₂. The purpose of the added O₂ was to reduce the net rate of O₃ consumption by introducing reaction 3.

\[ O(^3P) + O_2 + M \rightarrow O_3 + M \]  

Thus, for example, in the absence of added O₂, 2 torr of O₃ is completely consumed in 2 minutes; whereas, if 100 torr of O₂ is present it takes 24 hours to completely consume the ozone. Based on a total of 6 experiments, no N₂O above that present as background (0.3 μ) was observed. Consequently, the upper limit for the N₂O yield is ~0.3 μ.

In order to be certain that the small amount of N₂O is not lost during analysis control experiments were done in which several μ of N₂O were added to an identical gas mixture as in an actual run. Complete recovery of the added N₂O was achieved. Finally, 10.5 μ of N₂O were added to a mixture of O₃ - O₂ - N₂ (13.5:42:880 torr) and photolyzed for 24 hours with no change in N₂O concentration to be certain that N₂O is not consumed by the O(¹D) atoms produced from O₃ photolysis via the reactions

\[ O(¹D) + N_2O \rightarrow N_2 + O_2 \]
\[ O(¹D) + N_2O \rightarrow 2NO \]
Consequently, $N_2O$ consumption for $N_2O$ pressures $\leq 10\mu$ via the above reactions is not important.

The known mechanism of $O_3$ photolysis at 2537 A and in the presence of $O_2$ and $N_2$ is the following:\textsuperscript{7}

\begin{align*}
O_3 + hv & \rightarrow O_2(1\Delta) + O(1D) \quad \text{Rate} = I_a \\
O(1D) + N_2 + M & \rightarrow N_2O + M \quad \text{1} \\
O(1D) + N_2 & \rightarrow O(3P) + N_2 \quad \text{2} \\
O(1D) + O_3 & \rightarrow O_2 + O_2^* \quad \text{3a} \\
O(1D) + O_3 & \rightarrow 2O_2 \quad \text{3b} \\
O(1D) + O_2 & \rightarrow O(3P) + O_2(1\Sigma) \quad \text{4} \\
O_2(1\Delta), O_2(1\Sigma) \text{ or } O_2^* + O_3 & \rightarrow 2O_2 + O(3P) \quad \text{5} \\
O(3P) + O_3 & \rightarrow 2O_2 \quad \text{6} \\
O(3P) + O_2 + M & \rightarrow O_3 + M \quad \text{7}
\end{align*}

where $O_2^*$ is an unspecified electronic state of $O_2$ (see reference 7).

With the realization that reaction 1 is unimportant, the mechanism leads to the expression

\begin{equation}
k_1[M]/k_2 = \frac{n\{N_2O\}}{n\{O(1D)\}} \left( 1 + \frac{k_3[O_3]}{k_2[N_2]} + \frac{k_4[O_2]}{k_2[N_2]} \right) \quad \text{I}
\end{equation}

where $n\{N_2O\}$ and $n\{O(1D)\}$ are the quantities of $N_2O$ and $O(1D)$ atoms produced. $n\{O(1D)\}$ is obtained by graphical integration from Eqn. II.

\begin{equation}
n\{O(1D)\} = I_a \int_0^t \frac{I_a}{t} \, dt \quad \text{II}
\end{equation}
where \( I_a/I_o \) is the fraction of light absorbed, \( I_a' \) is the absorbed light intensity for \( I_a/I_o = 1.0 \), and \( t \) is the irradiation time.

A typical graph of \( I_a/I_o \) vs. \( t \) is shown in Figure 1. The quantity \( I_a' \) was found to be 200 ± 30 μ/min from the photolysis of \( O_3 \) alone, where the quantum yield of \( O_3 \) disappearance is 5.5 for small conversions.\(^7\)

Values obtained for \( n\{O(1D)\} \) are shown in Table I.

In order to compute \( k_1[M]/k_2 \) from Eqn. I, values of \( k_3/k_2 = 11.0 \)\(^7,8\) and \( k_4/k_2 = 0.8 \)\(^9-11\) were used. These values are averages of those given in the references. In computing \( k_1[M]/k_2 \) from Eqn. I, average values of \( [O_3] \) were used, since the term \( k_3[O_3]/k_2[N_2] \) is small. The value of \(< 2.5 \times 10^{-6} \) for the experiment at the highest \( O_2 \) pressure can be taken as the upper limit for the efficiency of reaction 1 compared to reaction 2 at 25°C and 1000 torr total pressure (87% \( N_2 \)).

If reaction 1 is entirely in the third order regime, then \( k_1/k_2 \approx 0.8 \times 10^{-25} \text{cm}^3/\text{particle} \). The known value for \( k_2 \) is \( 9 \times 10^{-11} \text{cm}^3/\text{particle-sec} \),\(^10\) and is probably accurate to better than a factor of two. Thus \( k_1 < 0.7 \times 10^{-35} \text{cm}^6/\text{particle-sec} \). At stratospheric pressures of 30-50 torr, reaction 1 occurs no more than \( 2 \times 10^{-7} \) as often as reaction 2. This is about a factor of 500 smaller than the value estimated by Nicolet\(^3\) to be necessary for reaction 1 to be an important atmospheric source of \( N_2O \).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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REFERENCES

7. For a recent review see E. Lissi and J. Heicklen, J. Photochem., in press (1972).
<p>| [O$_3$]$^<em>$ | [O$_2$], | [N$_2$], | Irradiation | n(O(1D)$^</em>$) | $10^6 k_1 [M]/k_2^b$ |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Torr</th>
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<tr>
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<td>47</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>115</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>&lt; 2.5</td>
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</tbody>
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$^a$ O$_3$ always completely consumed.

$^b$ upper limit calculated from Eqn. I and the upper limit for the N$_2$O yield of 0.3 µ.
FIGURE CAPTION

Figure 1  Plot of the fraction of light absorbed vs. irradiation time for the photolysis at 2537 Å and 25°C of a mixture consisting initially of 9.6 torr O₃, 115 torr O₂, and 870 torr N₂.
Figure 1