A barrier layer for a silicon containing substrate which inhibits the formation of gaseous species of silicon when exposed to a high temperature aqueous environment comprises a calcium aluminosilicate.
FIG. 1
SILICON BASED SUBSTRATE WITH CALCIUM ALUMINOSILICATE/THERMAL BARRIER LAYER

This is a Division of application Ser. No. 09/292,350 filed Apr. 15, 1999.

This invention was made with government support under Contract No. NAS3-26385 awarded by NASA. The government may have certain rights in the invention.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an article comprising a substrate containing silicon and a barrier layer which functions as a protective environmental/thermal barrier coating and, more particularly, a barrier layer which inhibits the formation of gaseous species of Si, particularly Si(OH), when the article is exposed to a high temperature, aqueous environment and thereby reduce recession and mass loss. It is believed that the process involves oxidation of the silicon carbide to form silica on the surface of the silicon carbide followed by reaction of the silica with steam to form volatile species of silicon such as Si(OH),. Naturally it would be highly desirable to provide an external barrier coating for silicon containing substrates which would inhibit the formation of volatile silicon species, Si(OH), and SiO, and thereby reduce recession and mass loss.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an article comprising a silicon containing substrate having a barrier layer on the substrate, wherein the barrier layer functions to both inhibit the formation of gaseous species of silicon when the article is exposed to a high temperature, aqueous environment and to provide thermal protection.

The present invention relates to an article comprising a silicon containing substrate and a barrier layer, wherein the barrier layer functions to both inhibit the formation of gaseous species of silicon when the article is exposed to a high temperature, aqueous environment and to provide thermal protection when the article is exposed to a high temperature, aqueous environment as defined above.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment, calcium aluminosilicate barrier layer is characterized by a coefficient of thermal expansion which is within plus or minus 3.0 ppm per degree centigrade of the coefficient of expansion of the silicon containing substrate. The preferred barrier layer in accordance with the present invention is a calcium aluminosilicate barrier layer. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention the article can include one or more intermediate layers between the silicon based substrate and the barrier layer. The intermediate layer(s) serve(s) to provide enhanced adherence between the barrier layer and the substrate and/or to prevent reactions between the barrier layer and the substrate.

The invention further relates to a method for producing an article comprising a silicon containing substrate and a barrier layer which inhibits the formation of gaseous species of silicon and/or provides thermal protection when the article is exposed to a high temperature, aqueous environment as defined above.

Further objects and advantages of the present invention will appear hereinbelow from the following detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a graph showing the stability of the barrier layer of the present invention with respect to recession and mass loss, and

FIG. 2 is a photomicrograph through a sample of the barrier layer of the present invention on a silicon carbide substrate.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention relates to an article comprising a silicon substrate and a barrier layer, wherein the barrier layer inhibits the formation of gaseous species of silicon when the article is exposed to a high temperature, aqueous environment. The invention also relates to a method for producing the aforesaid article. In addition, it should be appreciated that while the barrier is particularly directed to an environmental barrier layer, the barrier layer also functions as a thermal barrier layer and thus the present invention broadly encompasses the use of environmental/thermal barrier layers on silicon containing substrates and on substrates having comparable thermal expansion coefficients.

According to the present invention, the silicon containing substrate may be a silicon ceramic substrate or a silicon containing metal alloy. In a preferred embodiment, the silicon containing substrate is a silicon containing ceramic material as, for example, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, silicon carbon nitride, silicon oxynitride, and silicon alumino nitride. In accordance with a particular embodiment of the present invention, the silicon containing ceramic substrate comprises a silicon containing matrix with reinforcing materials such as fibers, particles and the like and, more particularly, a silicon based matrix which is fiber-reinforced. Particularly suitable ceramic substrates are a silicon carbide coated silicon carbide fiber-reinforced silicon carbide particle and silicon matrix, a carbon fiber-reinforced silicon carbide matrix and a silicon carbide fiber-reinforced silicon nitride matrix. Particularly useful silicon-metal alloys for use as substrates for the article of the present invention include molybdenum-silicon alloys, niobium-silicon alloys and iron-silicon alloys.

Barrier layers particularly useful in the article of the present invention include alkaline earth metal aluminosilicates. In accordance with a preferred embodiment, calcium aluminosilicates are preferred. In a particular embodiment,
the barrier layer comprises greater than about 20% by weight CaO, greater than about 38% by weight Al₂O₃, and greater than about 30% by weight SiO₂. A particularly suitable barrier layer for use on silicon containing ceramic compositions in the article of the present invention comprises about 24% by weight CaO, about 40% by weight Al₂O₃, and about 36% by weight SiO₂. Non-stoichiometric calcium aluminosilicate is preferred.

It is an important feature of the present invention to maintain compatibility between the coefficient of thermal expansion of the silicon containing substrate and the barrier layer. In accordance with the present invention it has been found that the coefficient of thermal expansion of the barrier layer should be within ±3.0 ppm per degrees centigrade, preferably ±0.5 ppm per degrees centigrade, of the coefficient of thermal expansion of the silicon containing substrate. When using a silicon containing ceramic substrate such as a silicon carbide or a silicon nitride matrix with or without reinforcing fibers as described above in combination with the preferred calcium aluminosilicate barrier layer of the present invention, the desired thermal compatibility with respect to expansion coefficient between the silicon containing substrate and the barrier layer should be ±2.00 ppm per degrees centigrade.

The barrier layer should be present in the article at a thickness of greater than or equal to about 0.5 mils (0.0005 inch), preferably between about 3 to about 30 mils and ideally between about 3 to about 5 mils. The barrier layer may be applied to the silicon containing substrate by any suitable manner known in the art, however, it is preferable that the barrier layer be applied by thermal spraying as will be described hereinbelow.

In a further embodiment of the article of the present invention, an intermediate layer can be provided between the silicon containing substrate and the barrier layer. The intermediate layer(s) serve(s) to provide enhanced adhesion between the barrier layer and the substrate and/or to prevent reactions between the barrier layer and the substrate. The intermediate layer consists of, for example, SiO₂, mullite, mullite-barium strontium aluminosilicate, mullite-yttrium silicate, mullite-calcium aluminosilicate, and silicon metal. Mullite has been found to be a particularly useful intermediate layer; however, mullite by itself tends to be cracked as the result of thermal spraying fabrication processing. Accordingly, it is preferred that the barrier layer comprises mullite-barium strontium aluminosilicate, mullite-yttrium silicate, or mullite-calcium aluminosilicate in an amount of about 40 to 80 wt. % mullite and between about 20 to 60 wt. % barium strontium aluminosilicate or yttrium silicate or calcium aluminosilicate. The thickness of the intermediate layer is typical to those described above with regard to the barrier layer and the intermediate layer may likewise be disposed in any manner known in the prior art, however, preferably by thermal spraying as described hereinbelow.

In addition to the intermediate layer, a bond layer may be provided between the silicon containing substrate and the intermediate layer. A suitable bond layer includes silicon metal in a thickness of 3 to 6 mils. Alternatively, the silicon based substrate may be pre-oxidized to provide a SiO₂ bond layer prior to application of the intermediate layer.

The method of the present invention comprises providing a silicon containing substrate and applying a barrier layer wherein the barrier layer inhibits the formation of gaseous species of silicon when the article is exposed to a high temperature, aqueous environment. In accordance with the present invention it is preferred that the barrier layer be applied by thermal spraying. It has been found that the barrier layer should be thermal sprayed at a temperature of about 870°C to 1200°C in order to help equilibrate as-sprayed, splat quenched, microstructure and to provide a means to manage stresses which control delamination.

The silicon containing substrate should be cleaned prior to application of the barrier layer to remove substrate fabrication contamination. It is preferred that the silicon based substrate be subjected to a grit blasting step prior to application of the barrier layer. The grit blasting step must be carried out carefully in order to avoid damage to the surface of the silicon-containing substrate such as silicon carbide fiber reinforced composite. It has been found that the particles used for the grit blasting should be hard enough to remove the undesired contamination but not as hard as the substrate material to prevent erosive removal of the substrate. Further, the particles must be small to prevent impact damage to the substrate. When processing an article comprising a silicon carbide ceramic substrate, it has been found that grit blasting should be carried out with Al₂O₃ particles, preferably of a particle size of ≤30 microns and, preferably, at a velocity of about 150 to 200 m/sec. In addition to the foregoing, it may be particularly useful to preoxidize the silicon based substrate prior to application of the intermediate and/or barrier layer in order to improve adherence. It has been found that bond layers of between 100 nanometers to 2000 nanometers are preferred. SiO₂ bond layers of the desired thickness can be achieved by preoxidizing the silicon-carbide substrate at a temperature of between 800°C to 1200°C for about 15 minutes to 100 hours.

The silicon bond layer may be applied directly to the grit blasted surface by thermal spraying at approximately 870°C to a thickness of 3 to 6 mils. Intermediate layers may be applied between the substrate and/or bond layer and the barrier layer by thermal spraying in the same manner described above with respect to the barrier layer. As noted above, the preferred intermediate layers include mullite, mullite-barium strontium aluminosilicate, mullite-yttrium silicate, and mullite-calcium aluminosilicate.

After application of the desired layers to the silicon-based substrate material, the article is subjected to a heat treatment step in order to provide stress relief to the thermal sprayed structure, and to promote bonding between the sprayed powder particles and between the layers and the substrate. Broadly, the heat treatment step requires a controlled heating of the article over time in a manner which allows for crystallization of the calcium aluminosilicate without swelling and/or formation of pores by the barrier layer. Preferably, the article is heated from room temperature to a temperature of between about 1275°C to about 1300°C at a rate of between about 5°C/minute to about 10°C/minute and held at intermediate temperatures wherein the total treatment time is greater than or equal to 68 hours. Specifically, for a barrier layer which comprises non-stoichiometric calcium aluminosilicate, the following heat treatment has been found to be particularly useful for obtaining a non-swelled, substantially porous free barrier layer.

a) room temperature to 700°C @ 10°C/minute, hold 4 hrs.
b) 700°C to 800°C @ 10°C/minute, hold 8 hrs.
c) 800°C to 900°C @ 10°C/minute, hold 16 hrs.
d) 900°C to 1000°C @ 10°C/minute, hold 16 hrs.
e) 1000°C to 1100°C @ 10°C/minute, hold 8 hrs.
Pressing inkgon at 1400°C for 2 hours and then submitted A12°3 and 36% SiO2 by weight were fabricated via hot�
ppml C. the coefficient of thermal expansion of the sub-
posite using the following parameters:

with 27 micron alumina particles at an impact velocity of
for high steam thermal cycle testing at 1200°C for up to 250 15 applying the barrier layer,
the appended claims, and all changes which come within
meaning and range of equivalency are intended to be
essential characteristics thereof. The present embodiment is
Of
prior to coating the substrate was cleaned by grit blasting 40 layer is non-stoichiometric calcium aluminosilicate.
5
Prior to coating the substrate was cleaned by grit blasting with 27 micron alumina particles at an impact velocity of
150 to 200 mps. The ns-CAS powder was obtained from
Specialty Glass as a free flowing -200+400 mesh powder.
15
FIG. 2 is a cross section of a 4 mil thick ns-CAS coating
on 4 mils of mullite on SiC composite. The ns-CAS and
mullite were thermal sprayed onto the silicon carbide com-
posing the following parameters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plasma torch</td>
<td>Metco JM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nozzle</td>
<td>G1H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anode</td>
<td>std.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>powder port</td>
<td>metco #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary gas</td>
<td>Ar @ 80 Metco gage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary gas</td>
<td>H2 @ Metco gage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>substrate temp.</td>
<td>850°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carrier gas</td>
<td>Ar @ 37 Metco gage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>powder feed</td>
<td>15 to 25 gpm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intermed.</td>
<td>surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power 30 kw</td>
<td>25 kw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stand-off 2.5-3&quot;</td>
<td>5&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This invention may be embodied in other forms or carried
out in other ways without departing from the spirit or
essential characteristics thereof. The present embodiment is
therefore to be considered as in all respects illustrative and
not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by
the appended claims, and all changes which come within the
meaning and range of equivalency are intended to be
embraced therein.

What is claimed is:
1. A method for preparing an article comprising the steps of:
   providing a substrate comprising silicon; and
   applying a calcium containing gaseous species of Si
formation inhibiting barrier layer to the substrate
wherein the barrier layer inhibits the formation of
gaseous species of Si when the article is exposed to a
high temperature, aqueous environment.
2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the coefficient of
   thermal expansion of the barrier layer is within ±3.0
   ppm/°C the coefficient of thermal expansion of the sub-

3. A method according to claim 1 wherein the coefficient of
   thermal expansion of the barrier layer is within ±0.5
   ppm/°C. the coefficient of thermal expansion of the sub-

4. A method according to claim 1 further including the step of
grit blasting the substrate prior to applying the barrier
layer.
5. A method according to claim 4 including grit blast with
alumina particles having a particle size of ≤ 30 microns.
6. A method according to claim 5 including grit blasting
at a velocity of between about 150 m/sec to 200 m/sec.
7. A method according to claim 1 including applying the
barrier layer by thermal spraying.
8. A method according to claim 1 including the step of
preoxidizing the substrate to form a layer of SiO2 prior to
applying the barrier layer.
9. A method according to claim 8 wherein the preoxidiz-
comprises heating the substrate at a temperature of
between about 800°C to 2000°C for about 15 minutes to
100 hours.
10. A method according to claim 11 including the step of,
after applying the barrier layer, heat treating the article.
11. A method according to claim 1 including thermal spray-
ing at a temperature of between about 800°C to 1200°C.
12. A method according to claim 1 wherein the coefficient
of thermal expansion of the barrier layer is within ±0.5
ppm/°C. the coefficient of thermal expansion of the sub-
strate.
13. A method according to claim 1 wherein the coefficient
of thermal expansion of the barrier layer is within ±3.0
ppm/°C. the coefficient of thermal expansion of the sub-
strate.
14. A method according to claim 1 wherein the barrier
layer comprises greater than about 20% by weight CaO,
greater than about 38% by weight Al2O3 and greater than
about 30% by weight SiO2.
15. A method according to claim 1 wherein the barrier
layer comprises about 24% by weight CaO, about 40% by
weight Al2O3 and about 36% by weight SiO2.
16. A method according to claim 1 wherein the barrier
layer is non-stoichiometric calcium aluminosilicate.
17. A method according to claim 14 including heat treat-
ing said article over time to a temperature which allows
for crystallization of the calcium aluminosilicate without
swelling and/or the formation of pores by the barrier layer.
18. A method according to claim 17 including heating the
article form room temperature to a temperature of about
1275°C to about 1300°C over a time period of at
least 68 hours.
19. A method according to claim 18 wherein the article is
heated in a stepwise manner at a heat rate of between about
50°C/min to about 3°C/min and held at least at one
intermediate temperature.
20. A method according to claim 19 wherein said article is
heat treated as follows:
a) room temperature to 700°C @ 10°C/min, hold 4 hrs.;
b) 700°C to 800°C @ 10°C/min, hold 8 hrs.;
c) 800°C to 900°C @ 10°C/min, hold 16 hrs.;
d) 900°C to 1000°C @ 10°C/min, hold 16 hrs.;
e) 1000°C to 1100°C @ 10°C/min, hold 8 hrs.;
f) 1100°C to 1200°C @ 10°C/min, hold 8 hrs.;
g) 1200°C to 1225°C @ 5°C/min, hold 2 hrs.;
h) 1225°C to 1250°C @ 5°C/min, hold 2 hrs.;
i) 1250°C to 1275°C @ 5°C/min, hold 2 hrs.;
j) 1275°C to 3000°C @ 5°C/min, hold 2 hrs.; and
k) furnace cool to room temperature.

* * * * *
UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,284,325 B1
DATED : September 4, 2001
INVENTOR(S) : Harry Edwin Eaton, Jr. et al.

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Title page,
Item [54], Title, after “ALUMINOSILICATE” and before the “/” insert -- ENVIRONMENTAL --.

Column 1,
Line 40, after “Si (OH) x” delete the “,".
Line 63, after “Si (OH) x” delete the “,”.

Column 6,
Line 18, correct “2000°C” to -- 1200°C --.
Line 20, correct “11” to read -- 1 --.
Line 22, correct “1” to read -- 7 --.
Line 64, correct “3000°C” to read -- 1300°C --.

Signed and Sealed this Twenty-sixth Day of November, 2002

Attest:

JAMES E. ROGAN
Attesting Officer
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office