

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0925-8388(17)33315-7

DOI: [10.1016/j.jallcom.2017.09.265](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jallcom.2017.09.265)

Reference: JALCOM 43321

To appear in: *Journal of Alloys and Compounds*

Received Date: 26 May 2017

Revised Date: 20 September 2017

Accepted Date: 24 September 2017

Please cite this article as: P. Chen, S. Jing, Y. Chu, P. Rao, Improved fracture toughness of CNTs/SiC composites by HF treatment, *Journal of Alloys and Compounds* (2017), doi: 10.1016/j.jallcom.2017.09.265.

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Improved fracture toughness of CNTs/SiC composites by HF treatment

Pengcheng Chen, Siyi Jing, Yanhui Chu, Pinggen Rao*

School of Materials Science and Engineering, South China University of Technology,
Guangzhou 510640, China

Abstract

Residual oxide impurities in high-temperature structural ceramics containing carbon-based reinforcements can react with the reinforcements during sintering to weaken their toughening effect. To eliminate such effect, a simple HF treatment technique is proposed. In this work, SiC ceramics and carbon nanotubes (CNTs)/SiC ceramic composites were fabricated by spark plasma sintering. The results showed that, after HF treatment, the structure of incorporated CNTs in the composites was unaffected and a slight improvement of relative density was fulfilled. The fracture toughness improvement of the composites from $4.4 \pm 0.4 \text{ MPa} \cdot \text{m}^{1/2}$ to $5.4 \pm 0.5 \text{ MPa} \cdot \text{m}^{1/2}$ with indentation method (IM) after HF treatment was also observed due to crack branching, CNT pull-out and crack bridging.

Keywords: CNTs/SiC; Toughening; Ceramic composite; Interfacial reaction

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +86 20 22236233; fax: +86 20 87110273.
E-mail address: pgrao@scut.edu.cn (P. Rao).

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