

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0925-8388(18)30645-5

DOI: [10.1016/j.jallcom.2018.02.194](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jallcom.2018.02.194)

Reference: JALCOM 45070

To appear in: *Journal of Alloys and Compounds*

Received Date: 23 September 2017

Revised Date: 18 January 2018

Accepted Date: 15 February 2018

Please cite this article as: H. Jin, H. Shu, G. Bai, D. Chen, Q. Zeng, In situ synthesis of CNTs in HfB₂ powders by chemical vapor deposition of methane to fabricate reinforced HfB₂ composites, *Journal of Alloys and Compounds* (2018), doi: 10.1016/j.jallcom.2018.02.194.

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In situ synthesis of CNTs in HfB₂ powders by chemical vapor deposition of methane to fabricate reinforced HfB₂ composites

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Abstract

Carbon nanotubes (CNTs) were synthesized over a Ni/Y₂O₃/HfB₂ catalyst by chemical vapor deposition of methane at temperatures ranging from 800 °C to 1200 °C. Results of X-ray diffraction, scanning electron microscopy, transmission electron microscopy, and Raman spectroscopy indicated that 1100 °C was the most suitable synthesis temperature for the CNT growth using the Ni/Y₂O₃/HfB₂ catalyst. Spark plasma sintering was then conducted on the well-synthesized composite powder at 1600 °C for 10 min under a uniaxial load of 30 MPa in vacuum to obtain fully dense bulk composite. The flexural strength and fracture toughness of the in situ synthesized CNT(Ni/Y₂O₃)–HfB₂ composite were increased to 942 ± 34 MPa and 9.2 ± 0.5 MPa·m^{1/2}, respectively. These values were considerably higher than those of traditional HfB₂-based composites. Crack deflection, crack bridging, CNTs debonding, and pull-out were identified as the main reinforcing mechanisms for the improvement of mechanical properties.

Keywords: A. Ceramics; B. Sintering; C. Mechanical properties; C. Microstructure

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