Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0042-207X(15)00043-3

DOI: 10.1016/j.vacuum.2015.01.032

Reference: VAC 6545

To appear in: Vacuum

Received Date: 26 August 2014

Revised Date: 29 January 2015

Accepted Date: 30 January 2015

Please cite this article as: Sari AH, Astashynski VM, Kostyukevich EA, Uglov VV, Cherenda NN, Alloying of Austenitic Steel Surface with Zirconium Using Nitrogen Compression Plasma Flow, *Vaccum* (2015), doi: 10.1016/j.vacuum.2015.01.032.

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Alloying of Austenitic Steel Surface with Zirconium Using Nitrogen Compression Plasma Flow

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Abstract:

In this study, the effect of a nitrogen compression plasma flow on the microstructural and mechanical properties, as well as on the elemental and phase compositions of a Zr/chromium-nickel steel system has been investigated. The Zr/steel system was exposed to a single pulse of the compression plasma flow or to a series of pulses. The samples were characterized by scanning electron microscopy, Auger electron spectroscopy, X-ray diffraction, and energy dispersive X-ray analyses, and subjected to a Vickers microhardness test. The findings showed the formation of a surface modified layer alloyed by Zr with the thickness of up to ~12 μ m. The modified layer contains α - and γ -iron-based solid solutions, the Fe₂₃Zr₆ intermetallic compound, and ZrN and Cr₂N nitrides due to nitrogen diffusion. The microhardness of the modified layer increased by a factor of ~2.

Keywords: compression plasma flow; surface alloying; austenitic steel; zirconium

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