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High Bate Physical Vapor Deposition of Refractory Metals

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Mechanical properties of Mo, Nb and V bulk deposits produced by high rate physical vapor deposition techniques (HRPVD) were studied. Deposits were characterized by impurity content, grain size and morphology, yield strength, hardness and bend ductility. The lattice parameter, tensile strength and tensile ductility were also determined for Mo. They were vapor deposited at 0.371^, with Mo further studied from 0.23-0.44T_m (where T_n is the absolute melting temperature). **m m**

Yield strengths of Mo and Nb were comparable to those of wroujr* material having equivalent grain sizes. An average yield strength o^ 36.1 kg/mm² (51.5 ksi) was obtained in 7 deposits of 0.7 pa grain size,

Work performed partially under,the auspices of the United States Atomic Energy Commission.

⁺ Work performed in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the degree of Master of Science, UCLA.

vhich is well above previously reported values. This high yield strength is primarily due to grain size refinement and not the interstitial content.

Ultra fine grained refractory metals, such as the V deposits produced in this study, may greatly reduce void formation and growth in irradiated materials in fast breeder and controlled thermonuclear reactors. As void growth causes dimensional changes and degradation of mechanical properties in reactor structural components, it is desirable to reduce the problem by removing excess vacancies (produced by the neutron irradiation) which drive the void nucleation and growth process. A calculation shows that this may be accomplished by trapping the vacancies at grain boundaries. For the V of this study, at a typical operating temperature of a controlled thermonuclear reactor first wall (973K), up to 92% of the excess vacang cies are trapped at the boundaries for a dislocation density of 10 cm . This would reduce the dimensional change by an order of magnitude for a given neutron fluence. We suggest that HBFVD techniques may be used to prepare fine-grained materials having superior resistance to swelling induced by fast neutron irradiation.

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INTRODUCTION

Metals irradiated by fast neutrons between 0.3 and 0.5 of their absolute melting temperatures T_m swell by a void formation and growth process as a function of fluence, temperature, gas content, and micro**structure. This is a najor obstacle to development of fast breeder . and controlled thermonuclear reactors, due to dlmenoional changes and degradation of mechanical properties of structural, components. In addition, hydrogen embrittlement and transmutation (conversion of one isotope to another) axe expected to cause problems. For example, niobium one of the current reference structural materials for the first wall of a theta-plnch controlled thermonuclear reactor (CTR) design (Fig, 1) , is expected to suffer swelling rates of 1-5%/year, a transmutation rate (to Zr, Ho, Y) of 1.4 at.Z/year, and 890 at.ppm/** year H production (Table I) at an annual fluence of 2.84 x 10²¹ neutrons/ **2 cm . To successfully operate such a reactor will require development of first wall materials that resist swelling, to minimize their periodic and costly replacement.**

The objective of this study was to investigate the microstructure and yield strength relationships of three possible CTR first wall candidate materials-Mo, Nb and V - produced by high rate physical vapor **deposition (HKPVD) techniques at various deposition temperatures. We wanted to determine if one could use HHPVD techniques, where microstructure of deposits can be controlled, to prepare materials having superior resistance to swelling than wrought material.**

EXPERIMENTAL TECHNIQUES

- 4-

A schenatic of the vapor deposition setup is shown In Fig. 2. The evaporant stock, a 2.5 en diameter billet, Is aounted In a rod fed' electron-bean-heated evaporation source. The evaporant was condensed on direct or Indirect resistance heated substrates. The substrates were thin rolled foils of the sane material as the evaporant. The entire assembly was mounted In a stainless steel vacuum bell jar. The pressure during depositon was 1×10^{-5} to 1×10^{-4} **torr. Two chromel-alumel thermocouples were spot welded to the back side of the substrates to monitor condensation temperature.**

To synthesize these deposits, the substrates were heated to the desired deposition temperature prior to heating the evaporant billet. The electron beam was turned on to form the molten pool at the end of the billet as the vapor source, with a shutter positioned over the pool to protect the substrate from Initial spitting. Upon removing the shutter to begin the deposition, the heater current was lowered to compensate for the radiant heat transfer to the substrata from the pool. During deposition on direct resistance heated substrates, the current was gradually increased to offset the effect of increasing cross-sectional area of the condensate. After the initial temperature transient, substrate temperatures could be controlled to + 5K. Deposition rates ranged from 0.5 ya/mln. to 12.7 itm/min. tad deposit thicknesses from 25 pa to 325 lis.

Tensile specimens were cut from the center of the deposits, and machined to else with a rotary-blade carbide burr. The tensile specimen gage length was 2.5 cm, the gage width typically about 0.6i» cm, and the thickness was \sim 0.3 mm. Thickness variations in the gage length were usually 4-6Z.

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Vickers aicrohardness measurements were taken on polished metallographic specimens, with ten Indentations made on both a surface *aai* **edge of each saaple to permit a statistical treatment. Bend tests were performed 2 according to ASTM specification E290-68 .**

The lattice paraaeters of Mo deposits were aeasured for saaples deposited between 673K and 1263K. The reflections from the (200) through the (400) peaks were used, isolating the $K_{\alpha 1}$ and $K_{\alpha 2}$ reflections accord**ing to the Bachinger technique. The Nelaon-Biley extrapolation function** was used to obtain the lattice parameter, ⁴ employing a lesst squares fit in each case.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cheaical Analysis

Iapurity concentrations in the evaporants and deposits are reported in Tables II-TV. The vacuum fusion techique was used to analyze for 0_2 , N₂, and H₂, the combustion method for C, and mass spectrographic techniques **for the aetallic iapurities.**

The iapurity content of the deposits result froa the condensation of iapurities In the gas phase. The aetallic iapurities coae primarily from the melt. The interstitial impurities, 0_2 , H_{2} , H_{2} , and C_{i} are present in the gas phase from the vacuum environment (vacuum gas phase, out**gassing froa container surface, etc.) as well as due to specific re**actions occurring in the melt such as sacraficial deoxidation. 6,7

Molybdenum. Sample Mo-A-5 was synthesized from a Thermo Electron bil*lit* **and MD-B-3-3 from Climax stock. The aajor difference between the Mo deposit**

and evaporant composition is the oxygen content (Table II). The in**ereased oxygen content of the deposits is consistent with the prediction^{5,6} that a Mo malt will deoxide by Ho suboxide volatitillsation, thus trensferring oxygen to tha deposit and resulting In a higher contant relative to tha avaporant. The higher lapurlty contents in tha Mo-A-5 deposit made fro* Thermo Electron stock aa compared to Mo-E-3-3 made from** Climax Molybdenum stock suggests that the vendor analysis supplied with the former is incorrect.

Niobium, the chemical analysis of niobium evaporsnt arid deposits (Table III) show a marked pickup in 0 and Ta in tha deposits. This also agraew with the prediction ^{5,6} of sacraficial deoxidation of the melt by TaO and NbO volatilization, thus concentrating oxygen and tantalum **in the deposit as shown in tha analysis.**

Vanadium. Tha oxygen contamination of vanadium deposits during deposition 1* due to aacraficial deoxldatlon of MoO. *•»* **evidenced by the molybdenum and oxygen concentration in the deposits. Molybdenum has a much lower vapor pressure than vanadium and therefore the Mo concentration in the deposit cannot be due to evaporation of Mo atoms from the melt.**

Grain Size and Morphology

Tha morphology of deposits is strongly influenced by condensation temperature. Movehan aad Damchishin Investigated the temperature dependence of morphologlaa of HI* Ti. W. a^O^, aad Zr02 deposits. Bunshah end co-workers found this model to apply for Ti, Hi, Mi-20Cr. and TIC.

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They found three morphology zones dependent on homologous temperature (Fig. 3), with transition temperatures T, and T^ between the.zones of $T_1 = 0.3T_2$ and $T_2 = 0.3-0.45T_2$ for metals. Zone 1 (T<0.3T_a) has a **domed-surface structure with tapered grains, the dome diameter increasing** with temperature. Zone 2 (0.3T_ <T<0.45-0.5T_) exhibits a columnar grain morphology with a smooth matte surface. In zone 3 $(T>0.45-0.5T_1)$ an equiaxed structure in both surface and cross section was reported. Such transition temperatures calculated from their model for metals of interest here are given in Table V.

Holybdenum. The range of deposition temperatures investigated was 673 to 1263 K. Figure 4 shows the characteristic domed morphology as predicted by the Movchan-Deuchishin model. At higher temperatures, the columnar morphology characteristic of zone 2 is to be expected and was confirmed in the investigation for deposition temperatures of 1188-1263 K (0.41-0.44 T_{as}) with the grain size increasing with temperatures. However, in the range 973-1188 K (0.32-0.44 **T_)** epitaxial growth occurred on the rolled Mo sheet substrate, and the grain morphology was identical to the elongated grain structure typical of rolled sheet with no increase in grain dismeter with temperature. Figure 5 shows a surface view of a Mo deposit with the elongated grain morphology. Figure 6 is a crosssectional view and shows grain growth of the substrate grains into the deposit. We did not observe such epitaxial growth in V or Wo deposits in the same homologous temperature range. Nor have examples of epitaxial growth of thick deposits **gous temperature range, lor have examples o." epitaxial growth of thick-deposits**

been reported. liobium. who deposited at 0.371² (1023K), niobium exhibited at 0.371³ (1023K), niobium exhibited and an equipment of 0.371 structure in both surface and cross section (i.e., a some 3 morphology) **structure In both surf ace and cross section (i.e., a some 3 morphology) rather than the predicted columnar aorphoiogy (Fig. 7). The grain alms of** the deposits averaged 19.4 Mm. **the deposits averaged *V9.4 pm.**

•amadimm. The vaaadlmn was dteositotel at 540K (0.37Ta). Transmission electron microscopy revealed a grain else of 0.7 um in the plane of the fell (Fig. «). A member of small plamolee were Introduced dwrlmg the »n—«-g procese, showing up as white dots. **[mp.es w](http://mp.es)hite sets.**

Machanical Properties

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••;-- Molybdenum* The yield and ultinate tensile strengths are presented as a function of inverse square root of grain diameter in Figs. 9 and 10. Folia were tested at crosshead speeds of 0.05 and 0.005 cm/nln to Investigate the effect of strain rats on tensile properties. Hall ⁹ and Petch ¹⁰ proposed the following relation between grain size and yield or flow stress of polycrystalline metals:

$$
\sigma = \sigma_0 + kd^{-1/2}
$$
 (1)
where

$$
\sigma = \text{yield or flow stress,}
$$

$$
\sigma_0 = \text{function stress,}
$$

$$
k = \text{Hall-Petch slope,}
$$

$$
d = \text{grain diameter.}
$$

Ho obeys this relationship for yield and fracture at both crosshead speeds. The constants σ and k, obtained from a least squares fit, are **listed In Table VI with other mechanical property data on Mo deposits.**

The.problem of separating the effects of strain rata and iapurity content on yield and tanslle strengths is Introduced by the substantial differences la purities of deposits teeted at the different crosshead speeds. Foils synthesized froalarao llectren evaporant stock were teeted at 0.05 ca/aiB, and those frost the purer CUaex Mo at 0.0005 ca/ain. Briggs and Camshsll fownd the lower yield stress of Mo to vary linearly with the log of strain rate at room temperature, with a slope of 7.5 kg/mm² log sec^{-1.} If we assume that this holds for vapor deposited material, and **further aaewas that a decade chsmao in crosshsed speed corresponds to a** decade change in strain rate, then σ_s should be 7.5 kg/m^2 greater at 0.05 cm/min then at 0.005 cm/min. The actual change was 12.3 kg/mm². We **0.05 only all farmers to be due to the increased interstitial content and**

earnest the dlffereaee to be dae to the Increased Interstitial content and

the fact that the normalised crosahead speed (speed/gage length) is soaewhat larger than the true strain rate. The results of this work are consistent with those previously reported, ¹²⁻¹⁵ as larger strain rates **were used in those investigations, thus increasing** σ_{ρ} **.**

'12-15 Upper and lower yield strengths previously reported for Ho were not observed in the study. This may be due to a pre-strain effect introduced while flattening samples in a fixture at 473-573K to hold then in place while machining tensile specimens, thus obliterating the yield points.

Niobium. The yield strengths of niobium deposits are presented in a Hall-Petch plot (Fig. 11), with results on wrought material included for comparison. A wide range of Hall-Petch parameters σ and k_u have been **obtained due to varying strain rates and impurity contents of the** test specimens. Szkopiak ²² reviewed the effect of oxygen and nitrogen, the most prevalent interstitials, on σ and **k** . He concluded that the **Increase in yield strength for coarse-grained specimens was** 2×10^{-2} **per** wt. ppm oxygen and 4.14×10^{-4} kg/mm² per wt. ppm nitrogen, thereby increasing σ_0 and lowering k_{ϕ} . Briggs and Campbell 11 found the lower yield stress to vary non-linearly with log strain rate, gradually increasing with strain rate. As the strain rate used in this study was lower than in pre**strain rate. As the strain rate used in this study was lower than in previous .investigations, the relatively low yield strengths are consistent with these results. The absence of upper and lower yield points is thought to be due to the same prestraln effect described for molybdenum.**

Vanadium. Figure 12 presents the yield strength of vanadium deposits, 19 23 with findings of previous studies * for comparison. The large value of 0. reported by Lindley and Smallman ¹⁹ appears to be due to the high oxygen

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content (1700 ppm) of their samples. Elssaer and Horz ²⁴ determined **that the lower yield of the recrystallised material obeyed the relation:**

$$
\sigma_{\text{LY}}(\text{kg}/\text{mm}^2) = 5.0 + 2.0c_{\text{N}} + 50.0c_{\text{O}} \tag{2}
$$

where 5.0 is the value of $\sigma_{\overline{Y}Y}$ **for zero gas content, and** C_N **and** C_Q **are the nitrogen and oxygen concentrations in atom percent.**

For a deposit containing 84 wt. ppm nitrogen and 470 wt. ppm oxygen, the increase in yield from the last two terms of Eq. (2) is 7.6 kg/mm². **Extrapolation of the data of D. H. Sherman et. al.** 23 to $d^{-1/2}$ = 38 mm^{-1/2} **(.tills work) and adding the impurity correction from Eq. (2) results in** a calculated vield of 35.6 kg/mm². This is only 0.5 kg/mm² below the **measured yield, well within experimental error.**

None of the samples was loaded to fracture. However, one was strained to 14% elongation. This is somewhat more ductile than the 12% strain reported by Van Fossen 25 for $d^{-1/2}$ = 7.3 $m^{-1/2}$ at a strain rate of 0.005/min. It compares favorably with Lindley and Smallman's range ²⁶ of 6% to 22% **It compares favorably with Lindley and Smallman's range of 62 to 22% for d"¹' ² »1.97 to 11.6 mm"¹' ².**

Hardness

Holybdenum. Belomytsov et. al. ²⁷ measured the nicrohardness of Mo con-**アイレンジ・ストーン あり出す (出す) しゃかいかん (あり) (エンジン・イン・コード エンジン・エン densates** *ari.* **reported a dependence on substrate temperature. The hardness 2 was approximately 240 kg/mm (TON) above a 1023K deposition temperature, ln**creasing to 400 kg/mm² at 873K. The measurements in this study for deposition **2 temperatures of 973-1173K averaged 242 kg/mm , in- excellent agreement with the previous work.**

Niobium. The surface and edge hardness values were 115.5 and 119.5 2 28 kg/mm , respectively. These agree very well with those of Faxton and Sheehan

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who reported a Vickers hardness of 120 kg/sm² for a 350 wt. ppm oxygen **'content.**

Vanadium. Anlsotropy in hardness was observed. The average micro- 2 \sim the curses and 107 7 kg/m². **hardness is 115.3 kg/an on the surface and 107*7 kg/an on the edge.**

Bend Ductility

Molybdenum. The bend ductility of the deposits was low, with percent elongation under IX. The percent elongation is:

E - 100T/(D + T) \leq \leq

where $T = \text{thickness of dependent + substrate}$

D * mandrel diameter.

The low ductility is attributed to the carbon and oxygen, content. Barr et. al. ²⁹ found a large increase in the ductile-brittle transition temperature between 40 and 80 wt. ppm carbon. Maringer and Schwope ³⁰ reported severe grain **-boundary embrittlement of the oxygen-saturated material. As the oxygen con**tent is above the solubility limit, ³¹ the low ductility is consistent **with these reports. Deposits with much lower oxygen contents can be prepared by prior high vacuum melting of the evaporant stock. This would improve the ductility of the deposits.**

Niobium and vanadium. The niobium deposits withstood and average 9.3Z -elongation (5.4T--bend test) before cracking. • Vanadium withstood an 18.8% average longation (2.2T bend radius).

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Molvbdenum Lattice Parameter **Molybdenum Lattice Parameter**

The lattice parameter of the molybdenum sheets were found to be in-**The lattice parameter of the molybdenum sheets were found to be in**dependent of substrate temperature, as shown in Figure 13. The impurity **dependent of substrate temperature, as shown in Figure 13. The impurity** contents of the deposits are low enough (Table II) so that contamination

contents of the deposits are low enough (Table II) so that contamination

is not considered to be a significant factor, as the deposit purities (99.8857-99.9639Z) equal or better those of bulk molybdenum samples for which lattice parameters have been reported by Pearson ³². The small **variation in the lattice parameters is attributed to slight deviations from flatness. The standard deviation from the bulk material lattice** parameter at 293K (3.1468A) ³² is 7.05 x 10^{-*} A.

27 Belomytsov et. J1. have previously measured the lattice parameter of molybdenum deposits condensed over a similar temperature range (723-1373K versus 673-1263K in this work). They found a significant decrease below a deposition temperature of 1123K, the difference increasing with decreasing temperature (Fig. 13). However, deposit thicknesses and impurity contents were not reported or considered. Their work may apply only to thin **films.**

EFFECT OF GRAIN SI2& REFINEMENT ON VOID GROWTH IN nt& 'JATED METALS

Metals, when irradiated from *0,3 to* **0.5T , swell by a void formation and growth process as a function of fluence, microstructure, purity, and temperature. A fast neurton, slowing done by elastic scattering, creates a damage zone known as a displacement spike containing equal numbers of vacancies and displaced atoms in Interstitial sites. These point defects either recombine or migrate to sinks such as dislocations, grain boundaries,** and voids. Grain boundaries and dislocations are better sinks for interstitial^s **than vacancies, so that an excess of vacancies results which drives the void nudeation and growth process. By refining the grain size, as with the HRPVD produced vanadium, of this study, one increases the total**

graln boundary area and hence the effectiveness of grain boundaries as vacancy sinks relative to dislocations and voids. If one can bias vacancy migration to sinks other than voids, one reduces the void growth rate.

Harkness et. al.³³ have developed sink terms describing the flux of point defects to voids, dislocations, grain boundaries, and precipitates. The relative efficiency of a sink is simply:

and precipitates. Ihe relative efficiency of a sink is simply:

$$
f_{v, j} = Q_{v, j} / \sum_{k} Q_{v, k}
$$

where **f**_{*x*} **is the efficiency of sink j**, and $Q_{\mathbf{u},\mathbf{k}}$ is the flux of vacancies to sink k. **(4)**

Applying (4) to these flux terms, ³³ one obtains:

$$
f_{v,gb} = [1 + \pi LR_gR_g/3 \ln(R_g/R_c) + \frac{2}{3} \pi R_vX_vR_gR_g]^{-1}
$$
(5)

$$
f_{v,dis} = [1 + 3 \ln(R_g/R_c)/\pi LR_gR_g + \frac{L}{2} R_vX_vln(R_g/R_c)]^{-1}
$$
(6)

$$
f_{v,void} = [1 + 3/2\pi R_gR_gX_v + L/2R_vX_vln(R_g/R_c)]^{-1}
$$
(7)

where R_g = grain radius = 3.5 x 10⁻⁵ cm for the V produced in this **study,**

R - half the average spacing between point defect sinks $= 3. \times 10^{-6}$ cm, R_{α} = core radius of a dislocation = 10^{-7} cm, R_x = void radius = 1.15 x 10⁻⁶ cm at 873K, ³⁴ $X = \text{void density} = 3.2 \times 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-3} \text{ at } 873 \text{K},$ ³⁴**and** $L =$ **dislocation density =** 10^8 **cm⁻².**

Solving the above equations, the sink efficiencies for vanadium at 873K with a grain size of 0.7 pm are:

$$
f_{\rm oh} = 92.3\tag{8}
$$

$$
f_{\text{dis}} = 0.3\text{K} \tag{9}
$$

$$
f_{\text{void}} = 7.47 \tag{10}
$$

The void density experimentally obtained by Wiffen³⁴ was adjusted to account for the presence of a void depletion zone ad jacent to the grain boundary.³⁵

For the same material with a high dislocation density of 10^{10} **-2 en , at 873K the efficiencies become:**

$$
f_{\rm gb} = 70.82 \tag{11}
$$

$$
f_{\text{dis}} = 23.22 \tag{12}
$$

***void"⁶* ⁰* (13)**

From this calculation we see that the grain boundary area traps the bulk of the excess vacancies, reducing swelling by 70 - 92%. This effect has been experimentally demonstrated by Singh³⁶ with a fine-grained austenitic stainless steel. If one can produce deposits **fine-grained austenitic stainless steel. If one can produce deposits of refractory metals with this very small grain size, then the problem of void formation and growth in reactor structural materials**

would be greatly alleviated.

GONCLUSIONS

Three refractory metals were deposited. The mechanical properties of Ho and Kb were comparable to those of conventionally prepared material. The yield strength of V deposits was superior to wrought V because of its ultraflne (0.7 um) grain size. Calculations showed that this material should strongly resist void formation and growth when irradiated by fast neutrons at 873K due to vacancy cap-
ture by the grain boundaries. In the future, it should be possible ture by the grain boundaries. **In the function of the future** of α **to produce refractory metals and their alloys for use in reactor technology with the required property of reduced swelling using HRPVD**

techniques.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Caption Legend

- **.Figure 1. Reference Theta Pinch Keactor. Cross section of torus** (right); radial blanket segment (left).
- **Figure 2. Schematic of deposition setup.**

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- **Figure 3. Structural cones in condensates (after Movchan and Demchishln⁷).**
- **Figure 4. Surface of Molybdenum deposited at 873K. Zone 1 •orphology. 1570X.**
- **Figure 5. Surface of molybdenum deposited at 1073K showing elongated grain morphology. 408X.**
- **Figure 6. Cross section of Molybdenum deposited at 1073K showing epitaxial growth of grains. 540X.**
- **Figure 7.** Cross section of niobium showing equisied grains. 500X.
- **Figure 8. Transmission electron Micrograph of deposited vanadium. 34000X.**
- **Figure 9. Yield strength versus inverse square root of grain diameter for molybdenum.**
- **Figure 10. Fracture strength versus inverse square root of grain diameter for molybdenum.**
- **Figure 11. Yield strength versus inverse square root of grain diameter for niobium.**
- **Figure 12. Yield strength versus Inverse square root of grain diameter for vanadium.**
- **Figure 13. Lattice parameter of molybdenum condensates versus substrate temperature.**

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TABLE I

Miobium First Wall Parameters for the Controlled Thermonuclear Reactor

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TABLE II

Chanical Analysis of Molybdenum Evaporants and Deposits
(ppm by weight)

Supplier's analysis

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TABLE III

Chemical Amalysis of Niobium Eveporant and Deposits
(ppm by weight) $\bar{\lambda}$

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TABLE IV

Chemical Analysis of Vanadium Evaporant and Deposits
(ppm by weight)

TABLB V

Morphology Zone Boundary Tcnperatures

² T_a is the absolute melting temperature

Calculated Transition Tenperatures

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TABLE VI

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Mechanical Properties of Molybdenum Deposits

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Semples B-1 through B-5 synthesteed from Thermo Electron evaporant stock,

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