Fluorination and reduction of CaCrO$_3$ by topochemical methods$^\dagger$

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Topochemical reactions between CaCrO$_3$ and polyvinylidene difluoride yield the new fluorinated phase CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$, which was characterized by powder synchrotron X-ray diffraction, X-ray photoemission spectroscopy, and magnetic susceptibility measurements. The reaction proceeds via reduced oxide intermediates, CaCrO$_{2.6}$ and CaCrO$_{2.5}$, in which CrO$_6$ octahedral and CrO$_4$ tetrahedral layers are stacked in a different manner along the c axis of CaCrO$_3$. These two intermediate phases can be selectively synthesized by the carbothermal reduction with g-C$_3$N$_4$. Both CaCrO$_3$ and CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$ adopt the same orthorhombic space group, Pbnm; however, the fluorinated phase has decreased Cr–O–Cr bond angles as compared to the parent compound in both the ab plane and along the c-direction, which indicates an increased orthorhombic distortion due to the fluorination. While the oxygen vacancies are ordered in both intermediate phases, CaCrO$_{2.6}$ and CaCrO$_{2.5}$, a site preference for fluorine in the oxyfluoride phase cannot be confirmed. CaCrO$_3$ and CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$ undergo antiferromagnetic phase transitions involving spin canting, where the fluorination causes the transition temperature to increase from 90 K to 110 K, as a result of the competition between the increased octahedral tilting and the enhancement of superexchange interactions involving Cr$^{3+}$ ions in the CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$ structure.

Introduction

Recently, the development of topochemical techniques has allowed for the facile synthesis of phases with new anion lattices or metal coordination geometries in oxides, the synthesis of which has been central in solid state chemistry, as it expands our knowledge of structure–property relationships. A number of oxygen deficient or oxyfluoride phases have been obtained by treating oxides normally obtained easily by solid state reactions with either a reducing or fluorinating agent. Topochemical reduction using an alkali/alkaline hydride yields novel oxyhydrides and oxygen-vacancy ordered compounds. For example, LaSr$_2$NiRuO$_4$H$_4$ with metal hydride sheets and AFeO$_2$ (A = Ca, Sr, Ba) with square-planar oxides$^4$ are obtained from the corresponding oxide phases.$^5$–$^7$ Low-temperature fluorination reactions using fluorne gas, fluropolymer or a binary metal fluoride also allow for unique anion-lattice modification via the substitution of fluorine for oxygen and/or fluorine insertion,$^8$ as exemplified by the synthesis of superconducting Sr$_2$CuO$_2$F$_2$,$^9$–$^11$ Applied these topochemical methods to materials obtained from high-pressure synthesis, a ‘hard–soft’ synthetic approach, is under explored and can lead to the exploration of metal coordination environments that aren’t readily accessible at ambient pressures. For example, it is well known the tetravalent chromium cation strongly favors tetrahedral coordination over octahedral coordination and the ionic radius is too small to be incorporated into perovskite structures, although these observations are not without exceptions.$^{10}$ Previously, alkaline chromium oxide perovskites such as Acro$_3$ (A = Ca, Sr) have been stabilized under high pressures,$^{11,12}$ and Arevalo-Lopez and Attfield et al. have discovered new oxygen-vacancy ordered phases CaCrO$_{3.3}$–$x$ (x = 0.33, 0.4, 0.5)$^{13,14}$ and SrCrO$_{3.1}$–$x$ (y = 0.2, 0.25),$^{15}$ which were synthesized by reduction of ACrO$_3$ (A = Ca, Sr) with hydrogen gas. CaCrO$_{2.5}$ was found to adopt the brownmillerite structure. These oxygen deficient layers depend on the A site cations: vacancies in CaCrO$_{3.3}$–$x$ are formed in the...
(001) plane of the cubic perovskite structure, but vacancies in SrCrO$_{3-x}$ are formed in the (111) plane (Fig. 1).

Very recently, our research group reported the topochemical fluorination of SrCrO$_3$ with polyvinylidene difluoride (PVDF), which involved the formation of SrCrO$_{2.8}$ as an intermediate oxide.

The layers of tetrahedrally coordinated Cr$^{4+}$ in SrCrO$_{2.8}$ create a pathway for the subsequent fluorine insertion, and the resulting oxyfluoride phase was the cubic SrCrO$_{2.8}$F$_{0.2}$ with fluoride ions randomly distributed in the structure. Furthermore, SrCrO$_{2.8}$ could be isolated for the first time by topochemical reduction with g-C$_3$N$_4$.

It should be noted that the degree of fluorination in SrCrO$_3$ seems to be restricted by the amount of the oxygen deficiencies in the intermediate phase. Thus, to gain deeper understanding of the fluorination mechanism for SrCrO$_3$, it is useful to perform chemical substitution in the parent materials and explore the different types of oxygen deficient phases obtained by reduction.

In this study, we report the fluorination and reduction of CaCrO$_3$ with PVDF and g-C$_3$N$_4$, which revealed stepwise fluorination processes similar to that for SrCrO$_3$, but different pathways for oxygen removal and fluorine insertion as well as higher degree of fluorination.

**Results and discussion**

**Synthesis**

CaCrO$_3$ powder was obtained using a multi-anvil high-pressure method previously reported by Weiher *et al.*

CaCO$_3$ was heated over night at 1000 °C in air to obtain CaO, which was combined stoichiometrically with CrO$_2$ (Aldrich) in an Ar filled glovebox and loaded into a Pt capsule. The Pt capsule was loaded into a high-pressure cell and heated at 900 °C under a pressure of 5 GPa for 1 h before quenching to room temperature by turning off the heat before releasing the pressure. The black polycrystalline product, CaCrO$_3$, contained a CaCr$_2$O$_4$ impurity (13 wt%) and was fluorinated using PVDF (Aldrich) in molar ratios of 0.1 to 0.5 (PVDF/CaCrO$_3$). PVDF and CaCrO$_3$ were mixed, pelletized, and sealed in a glass tube under vacuum before heating at temperatures of 350, 370, and 400 °C. CaCrO$_3$ was also reduced using g-C$_3$N$_4$ (synthesized in house) in ratios of 0.25 (C$_3$N$_4$/CaCrO$_3$) following a similar procedure.

**Structure**

The structures of the resulting powders were analyzed by Rietveld refinement using synchrotron X-ray powder diffraction (SXRD) data collected at room temperature using one-dimensional X-ray detectors installed on BL15XU, NIMS beamline at SPring-8 in Japan. The synchrotron radiation X-rays were monochromatized to the wavelength of 0.65298 Å. The samples were loaded in glass capillaries with an inner diameter of 0.1 mm, and the diffraction data were recorded in 0.003° increments over the range of 4° ≤ 2θ ≤ 60°. Structure refinements were performed using the Rietveld method with the program RIETAN-FP.

X-ray Photoemission spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were performed by using Mg Kα X-ray source (JEOL JPS-9010MC). The Fermi level was calibrated using the C 1s signal.

**Experimental**

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**Results and discussion**

**Synthesis**

For both post-synthetic fluorination and reductive reactions, a temperature of 400 °C produced better results, although the reactions can be carried out at 350 and 370 °C but the reactions did not reach completion at these temperatures. The reactions of CaCrO$_3$ with PVDF at different ratios show a stepwise fluorination of CaCrO$_3$, where CaCrO$_3$ is first reduced to CaCrO$_{2.67}$ and CaCrO$_{2.5}$, before the fluorinated phase forms (see Fig. 2). At ratios of 0.1 and 0.2 (PVDF/CaCrO$_3$) CaCrO$_{2.67}$ and CaCrO$_{2.5}$ are formed, and these phases disappear as the fluorinated phase, CaCrO$_{3-x}$F$_x$, begins to form at a ratio of 0.3 (PVDF/CaCrO$_3$). These behaviors suggest that fluorine is inserted into the tetrahedral layers of CaCrO$_{2.5}$. The fluorinated phase obtained at 0.5 (PVDF/CaCrO$_3$) can be assigned to an orthorhombic cell with $a = 5.34098(9)$ Å, $b = 5.40324(9)$ Å, and $c = 7.53180(10)$ Å. Low-temperature reduction using g-C$_3$N$_4$ was also examined on CaCrO$_3$, which resulted in the successful isolation of CaCrO$_{2.3}$ and CaCrO$_{2.67}$ under controlled reaction temperatures, although a few uncharacterized peaks, which disappear at higher temperatures, were detected in CaCrO$_{2.67}$ as indicated in the right panel of Fig. 2. We notice that both the fluorination and reduction of CaCrO$_3$...
causes peak broadening, which is probably due to a reduced crystallinity through the topochemical reactions.

**Structure**

Fig. 3 shows the result of Rietveld refinement against the PXRD data collected from the product obtained by the reaction of CaCrO$_3$ with PVDF at 400 °C. Even after the fluorination reaction, the structure retained the orthorhombic space group Pbnm, but the lattice constants increased by 0.98, 1.60, and 0.60% along $a$, $b$, and $c$ directions, respectively. The variation in volume ($\Delta V/V$) is 3.2%, which is larger than the volume change between SrCrO$_3$ and SrCrO$_{2.8}$F$_{0.2}$ (2.5%) but smaller than that between SrFeO$_3$ and SrFeO$_{2}$F (8.2%).$^{15,16}$ No additional peaks associated with O/F anion ordering were detected. For structural refinement of the oxyfluoride phase, the crystal structure of CaCrO$_3$ was used as a starting model. No attempt was made to distinguish oxide and fluoride ions because of their similar X-ray scattering factors. CaCr$_2$O$_4$ and CaF$_2$ were also added to the refinement as secondary phases. The refinement readily converged well to $R_{wp} = 2.01\%$ and $R_B = 3.73\%$. No anion-site deficiencies were found within the error margin, indicating that the oxygen vacant sites in CaCrO$_{2.5}$ were completely filled with fluoride ions. Thus, the expected chemical composition is CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$, implying higher degree of fluorination than that for SrCrO$_3$.$^{16}$ Rietveld refinements were performed on PXRD data collected on the parent structure, CaCrO$_3$, and the reduced structure, CaCrO$_{2.5}$, and are shown in Fig. S1 and S2,$^\dagger$ although there are no new results considering both structures have previously been thoroughly characterized.$^{11,14,18}$ The refined atomic coordinates for CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$, CaCrO$_3$, and CaCrO$_{2.5}$ are shown in Tables S1–3.$^\dagger$

We investigated the change in oxidation state of the chromium ions due to the fluorination of CaCrO$_3$ by XPS measurements. Fig. 4 shows the Cr 2p spectra collected from CaCrO$_3$ and its fluorinated phase. The Cr 2p$^{3/2}$ spectrum of CaCrO$_3$ is decomposed into three components which could be assigned as Cr$^{3+}$, Cr$^{4+}$, and Cr$^{6+}$ with binding energies of 576.38, 578.96, and 582.35 eV, respectively.$^{19}$ The trivalent and tetravalent chromium should be derived from CaCr$_2$O$_4$ and CaCrO$_3$, respectively. The atomic ratio of Cr$^{3+}$ to Cr$^{4+}$ estimated from the spectral area is 0.15 : 0.80, which agrees well with that obtained from the Rietveld analysis (0.17 : 0.83). The Cr$^{6+}$ species, which were not detected by the SXRD pattern, should be attributed to surface defects. For the oxyfluoride phase, the Cr 2p$^{3/2}$ spectrum can be decomposed into Cr$^{3+}$ and Cr$^{4+}$ species in an atomic ratio of 0.40 : 0.60. The increase in the Cr$^{3+}$ component is consistent with O-to-F substitution in...
CaCrO₃. However, the atomic ratio of Cr³⁺ to Cr⁴⁺ determined by XPS (0.40 : 0.60) deviates from that estimated from the PXRD analysis (0.50 : 0.50) assuming the oxyfluoride phase as CaCrO₂.₅F₀.₅. This discrepancy is likely due to the low signal-to-noise ratio caused by residual C–F species from the fluorinating agent, as seen from the wide-scan spectra in Fig. S3.†

The structure of CaCrO₃ is well studied and adopts the ABO₃ perovskite structure with an orthorhombic distortion due to the small size of the Ca²⁺ ion, as compared to the cubic SrCrO₃, and crystallizes in the Pbnm space group with lattice parameters a = 5.28912(1) Å, b = 5.31796(1) Å, and c = 7.48677(1) Å. The oxygen vacancies are ordered in CaCrO₂.₅ and CaCrO₂.₆₇, creating layers of Cr octahedra and tetrahedra (Fig. 5). In CaCrO₂.₆₇, the tetrahedral layer occurs every third layer, while in CaCrO₂.₅, which adopts the brownmillerite structure, it occurs every other layer. The relationship of the octahedral layers to the tetrahedral layers can be understood as the removal of every other infinite layer. The relationship of the octahedral layers to the tetrahedral layers is expressed as the removal of every other infinite chain of oxygen atoms as illustrated in Fig. 5. This reduces the coordination of Cr from 6 to 4, and as a result the Cr–O–Cr bond which is nearly linear in the octahedral layers contracts to form the approximately 109° bond angle found in tetrahedral coordination environments.

Rietveld refinement against the SXRD data of CaCrO₂.₅F₀.₅ revealed all of the anion sites in the ABO₃ structure were fully occupied upon fluorination and CaCrO₂.₅F₀.₅ adopted the same space group of the parent compound. The structure symmetry allows anions to occupy two unique sites, namely the sites on the ab plane (X₁) and along the c axis (X₂). Thus, the existence of a selective fluorine distribution over the anion sites cannot be ruled out. To examine the possible anion ordering of O/F ions, bond-valence-sum (BVS) calculations were carried out on the assumption of three types of fluorine distribution, namely, on X₁, X₂, or both sites. The BVS values for all atoms are summarized in Table S4.† Unfortunately, we could not conclude any types of anion ordering: the BVS values for X₁ and X₂ sites as well as Ca and Cr sites were consistent with the assumed fluorine distribution patterns.

Fig. 6 shows a comparison between the refined crystal structures of CaCrO₃ and CaCrO₂.₅F₀.₅. Hereafter, the full anion disordered model is employed to discuss the structure and properties of the oxyfluoride phase, since no selective fluorine distribution was observed. All the Cr–F/O bond lengths are increased from 1.9002(4), 1.911(1), and 1.912(1) Å to 1.935(1), 1.960(4), and 1.919(4) Å (see Fig. 6). These behaviors are consistent with the increased Cr³⁺/Cr⁴⁺ via the substitution of fluorine for oxygen. The oxyfluoride structure also contains tightened Cr–O/F–Cr bond angles of 156.6(2) and 153.3(3)° as compared to 157.70(8) and 160.13(13)° in the parent structure. A higher degree of the octahedral tilting in the fluorinated perovskite can be accounted for by considering Goldschmidt’s tolerance factor (t), which is expressed as \( t = (r_A + r_X)/\sqrt{2(r_B + r_X)} \). The \( t_A \), \( r_B \), and \( r_X \) are the Shannon’s ionic radii of A-site cation, B-site cation, and X-site anion. The calculated t factor of CaCrO₂.₅F₀.₅ is 0.979, lower than more ideal value of CaCrO₃ (t = 0.994). Although no examples of B–O–B bond angle compression upon fluorination could be found for chromium oxides, LaSrCoFeO₆ contains tightened (Co/Fe)–(O/F)–(Co/Fe) bond angles as compared to the oxygen-stoichiometric oxide LaSrCoFeO₆, both of which adopt the trigonal space group R3c.²³ La₀.₅Sr₀.₅FeO₂.₅F₀.₅, which crystallizes in the lower symmetry Pnma as compared to the oxide which adopts the R3c space group, also exhibits similar changes in local coordination around the metal center where the Fe–O–Fe bond angles contract from 167.0(3) to 163.39(11) and 159.68(13) and the Fe–O bond distances increase from 1.9567(6) to 1.996(4), 1.9996(6), and 1.986(4), upon fluorination.²⁴
Reaction pathway

CaCrO$_3$ exhibited stepwise fluorination processes as observed in SrCrO$_3$.$^{16}$ However, the important differences between the fluorination mechanisms of CaCrO$_3$ and SrCrO$_3$ are as follows, (1) the degree of fluorination for CaCrO$_3$ is higher than that for SrCrO$_3$, (2) the formation of two intermediate oxide phases of $x = 0.33$ and 0.5 are involved, and (3) the plane where oxygen removal and fluorine insertion occurs is (001) for CaCrO$_3$ but (111) for SrCrO$_3$. It is apparent that the larger amount of fluorine atoms inserted into CaCrO$_3$ is attributable not only to its deoxidation capacity but also the reducing power of PVDF. Indeed, the first reduced phase CaCrO$_{2.67}$ is subsequently reduced to CaCrO$_{2.5}$ prior to the fluorination, whereas for the fluorination of SrCrO$_3$ the first reduced phase SrCrO$_{2.8}$ is not further reduced to SrCrO$_{2.75}$ but directly fluorinated to SrCrO$_{2.8}$F$_{0.2}$. The pathway of the oxygen removal and fluorine insertion for CaCrO$_3$, which is different from those for SrCrO$_3$, also play an important role in the formation of the highly fluorinated phase CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$. The fluorine insertion mechanism remains an open question. If fluorine atoms simply occupy the oxygen vacant sites, a partial O/F order on the X1 sites is realized. In contrast, fluorine insertion involving migration of apical oxygen, which was observed for layered perovskite compounds,$^{9,25}$ would result in a partial anion order on the X2 sites or the full anion disorder. Mitra et al. investigated the oxygen diffusion pathways in brownmillerite SrCoO$_{2.5}$ by first-principle calculations, and found that the one-dimensional-ordered oxygen vacant channels in the CoO$_4$ tetrahedral layers provide the easiest diffusion pathway compared with the directions perpendicular to the vacant channels.$^{25}$ Based on this study, it is likely that fluorine also migrates and resides in the CrO$_4$ tetrahedral layers. Similar to the observed O/F disorder in SrCrO$_{2.8}$F$_{0.2}$, the oxygen-deficiency ordered structures do not influence the fluorine sites, perhaps due to the transformation of the Cr coordination from tetrahedron to octahedron which causes the rearrangement of the fluorine atom positions. Similar fluorine migration during fluorination reaction is observed in related perovskite compounds.$^{9,26,27}$

Magnetism

Fig. 7 shows the temperature dependence of the magnetic susceptibility $\chi = M/H$ of CaCrO$_3$, CaCrO$_{2.5}$, and CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$, measured under zero-field-cooled (ZFC) and field-cooled (FC) conditions in the temperature range between 5 and 300 K. Anomalies in the magnetic susceptibility of the samples, or the inverse, from the magnetic impurity, CaCr$_2$O$_4$, with features at 100 K and 21 K,$^{28}$ were not observed indicating that CaCr$_2$O$_4$ did not significantly impact the susceptibility data. The $\chi(T)$ of CaCrO$_3$ exhibited a sudden increase at $T_N = 90$ K followed by a divergence between ZFC and FC data. These behaviors can be accounted for by a canted antiferromagnetism.$^{18}$ The weak temperature dependence above $T_N$, which does not obey the Curie–Weiss law, is consistent with the metallic state unambiguously characterized by spectroscopic techniques.$^{20,29}$ For CaCrO$_{2.5}$, a small cusp associated with an antiferromagnetic...
ordering was observed at around 240 K in the ZFC data. The $T_N$ value is close to that determined by the neutron diffraction analysis in Attfield et al.\textsuperscript{14} The small anomaly in the susceptibility at $T_N$ is probably due to the decrease in crystallinity during the reductive reaction. In contrast to CaCrO$_{2.5}$, the $\chi(T)$ of CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$ is similar to that of CaCrO$_3$: an antiferromagnetic phase transition involving spin canting was observed at 110 K. The moderate increase in $\chi(T)$ below $T_N$ suggests decreased spin canting angles between Cr ions. It should be noted that the high temperature data above $T_N$ cannot be described again by the Curie–Weiss law, although it is somewhat more dependent on temperature than that of CaCrO$_3$. In fact, the Curie–Weiss fit gave the Curie constant $C = 4.17(1)$ (emu K)$^{-1}$, which is unphysically large compared to the value expected from localized magnetic moments of Cr($\text{III}$) with $S = 3/2$ and Cr($\text{IV}$) with $S = 1$. This behavior suggests that the oxyfluoride has a metallic state like CaCrO$_3$ or insulating state located near the border between metallic and insulating phases. Unfortunately, even the cold-pressed sample after fluorination was so fragile that electrical measurements could not be performed. In light of the fact that CaCrO$_3$ resides near the crossover regime from itinerant to localized electron system,\textsuperscript{15} the O-to-F substitution involving a decrease in the Cr–O–Cr tilt angles and lowered $pd$ hybridization $via$ more electronegative fluoride would shift the chromium perovskite to an insulating phase. Similar enhanced Pauli paramagnetic behaviors are observed in early 3d-transition metal insulators such as LaTiO$_3$ and LaVO$_3$,\textsuperscript{20,31} which are assumed to be near the metal-insulator transition.

The impact of fluorination on the magnetism greatly differs between CaCrO$_3$ and SrCrO$_3$.\textsuperscript{16} In SrCrO$_3$, showing a Pauli paramagnetic behavior, replacement of 6.7% of oxygen sites with fluorine induces an antiferromagnetic ordered state with $T_N = 230$ K. In contrast, the fluorination of CaCrO$_3$ increased the magnetic ordering temperature by only 20 K despite the substitution of 16.7% oxygen for fluorine. The difference can be rationalized by considering variations in Cr–(O/F)–Cr bond angles and the oxidation number of Cr ions. In SrCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.2}$ with a cubic structure, the Cr–(O/F)–Cr bond angles are 180°, which maximizes the superexchange interactions between Cr ions. Moreover, the presence of Cr$^{3+}$ ions $via$ the fluorination insertion contributes to the enhancement of magnetic interactions. As a result, the high Néel ordering temperature is obtained. In CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$, however, Cr–(O/F)–Cr bond angles both along the $c$ axis and on the $ab$ plane become smaller $via$ fluorination, which weakens the nearest neighbor interactions. Thus, the moderate increase in $T_N$ observed in CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$ should result from a competition between the increased octahedral tilting and the enhancement of superexchange interactions involving Cr$^{3+}$ ions.

Conclusion

In this study, the new fluorinated phase, CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$, was isolated by reacting CaCrO$_3$ with PVDF at 400 °C. This reaction proceeds $via$ reduced oxide intermediate phases CaCrO$_{2.67}$ and CaCrO$_{2.5}$, which can be obtained by reacting CaCrO$_3$ with g-C$_3$N$_4$. The degree of fluorination for CaCrO$_3$ is higher than that for SrCrO$_3$, which is attributed to the deoxidation capacity that is more easily maximized by PVDF. The structure of CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$ was characterized by synchrotron powder diffraction and adopts the same structure as CaCrO$_3$ with slightly larger lattice parameters with no detectable O/F ordering. This structure is supported by the XPS results which reveal Cr$^{3+}$/Cr$^{4+}$ ratios close to the expected value of 0.5/0.5 for the proposed CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$ structure based on full anion site occupancy. Magnetic measurements reveal that the fluorinated product has an increased spin-canted antiferromagnetic phase transition temperature as compared to CaCrO$_3$, which is due to the competition between the increased octahedral tilting and the enhancement of superexchange interactions involving Cr$^{3+}$ ions in the CaCrO$_{2.5}$F$_{0.5}$ structure.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the JSPS KAKENHI (Grant No. JP15H02024, JP16H06438, JP16H06441, JP19H02594, 19H04711, 16H06439, 16K21724), a research grant from Innovative Science and Technology Initiative for Security, ATLA, Japan. The SXRD experiments at SPring-8 were performed with the approval of JASRI (Proposal No. 2019A4501). C. Juillerat was additionally supported by an NSF IGERT Graduate Fellowship under grant number 1250052 and by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Basic Energy Sciences, Division of Materials Sciences and Engineering under Award DE-SC0016574.

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