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PRODUCTION AND SOME PROPERTIES OF THE NUCLIDES FERMIUM-250, 251, AND 252

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Publication Date

1956-12-01

UCRL 3610 *few*
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Radiation Laboratory
Berkeley, California

Contract No. W-7405-eng-48

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B. G. Harvey, L. W. Holm,^{IV} and S. G. Thompson

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Printed for the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission

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University of California, Berkeley, California

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ABSTRACT

The nuclides Fm^{250} , Fm^{251} , and Fm^{252} were produced by alpha bombardment of Cf^{249} . The excitation functions for their formation as well as some of their nuclear properties, were measured.

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INTRODUCTION

In a previous paper from this laboratory¹ the production of some einsteinium isotopes by alpha bombardment of a target of Bk^{249} was described. Bk^{249} decays with a half-life of 280 days by beta emission to the 5×10^2 -year alpha emitting Cf^{249} . This paper will describe some studies of reactions of the type (α, xn) brought about by bombarding Cf^{249} with helium ions in the energy region 20 to 40 Mev. The experimental technique, as fully described earlier,¹ involved catching the reaction products recoiling from the thin target in a separate gold foil. Thus, it is possible to use the same target for several bombardments. The target used in the present experiments was the same one as used in the irradiations of Bk^{249} although it now contained about 10^{13} atoms of Cf^{249} grown in from the original 3×10^{13} atoms of Bk^{249} . In fact, this target has been subjected to about 100 bombardments or a total of roughly 1000 μAh .

The chemical purification and separation of the products involved mainly ion exchange techniques and electroplating as described before.¹

RESULTS

The fermium isotopes produced and studied in these experiments were Fm^{250} , Fm^{251} , and Fm^{252} . Of these Fm^{250} has earlier been produced at Stockholm and later at Berkeley by oxygen bombardment of uranium² and Fm^{252} at Berkeley by several of the above authors by alpha bombardment of targets containing the

isotopes Cf^{249} , Cf^{250} , Cf^{251} and Cf^{252} . However, the mass assignments are not certain on the basis of this work.

The element identification was established by means of a cation exchange column separation using alpha-hydroxy isobutyric acid as eluant.³ Mass assignments were based on the excitation functions. The properties of these nuclides are summarized in Table I. The half-lives given are good to about $\pm 10\%$ and the alpha particle energies to ± 0.05 Mev.

Table I. Nuclear Properties of Light Fermium Isotopes

Isotope	Type of decay	Half life	Alpha particle energy	Branching ratio electron capture/alpha
Fm^{250}	α , EC?	30 m	7.43	EC not observed
Fm^{251}	EC, α	7 h	6.89	~ 100
Fm^{252}	α	30 h	7.05	β -stable ⁴

The amounts of Fm^{250} produced correspond to about 40 alpha counts per minute at the end of the bombardment in the best experiments. After the comparatively long time (2 to 2.5 h) required to make a complete chemical separation from fission products and other activities no electron-capture activity with a 30 minute half-life was found. Thus, the branching ratio (EC/ α) for Fm^{250} is probably less than 10 in agreement with predictions.⁴

Figure 1 shows the excitation functions for the formation of Fm^{250} , Fm^{251} , and Fm^{252} through (α ,n), (α ,2n) and (α ,3n) reactions. The curve for the (α ,3n) reaction is a lower limit since it was calculated as if Fm^{250} were β -stable, which certainly is not true. The similarity both qualitatively and quantitatively between these curves and the corresponding ones for the einsteinium isotopes¹ is striking. They show the same long "tails" towards high energies suggesting direct interaction mechanisms. The difference in shape between the excitation function for formation of Fm^{250} and that for E^{250} is due mainly to the fact that for former is formed only through an (α ,3n) reaction whereas other processes, mainly (α ,t), contribute to the yield of E^{250} .

The fact that no Fm^{249} was observed does not contradict the prediction of its properties ($t_{1/2} = 5\text{m}$; EC/ $\alpha = 1/6$)⁴ assuming the cross section for the (α ,4n) reaction not to be greater than that for the (α ,3n) reaction.

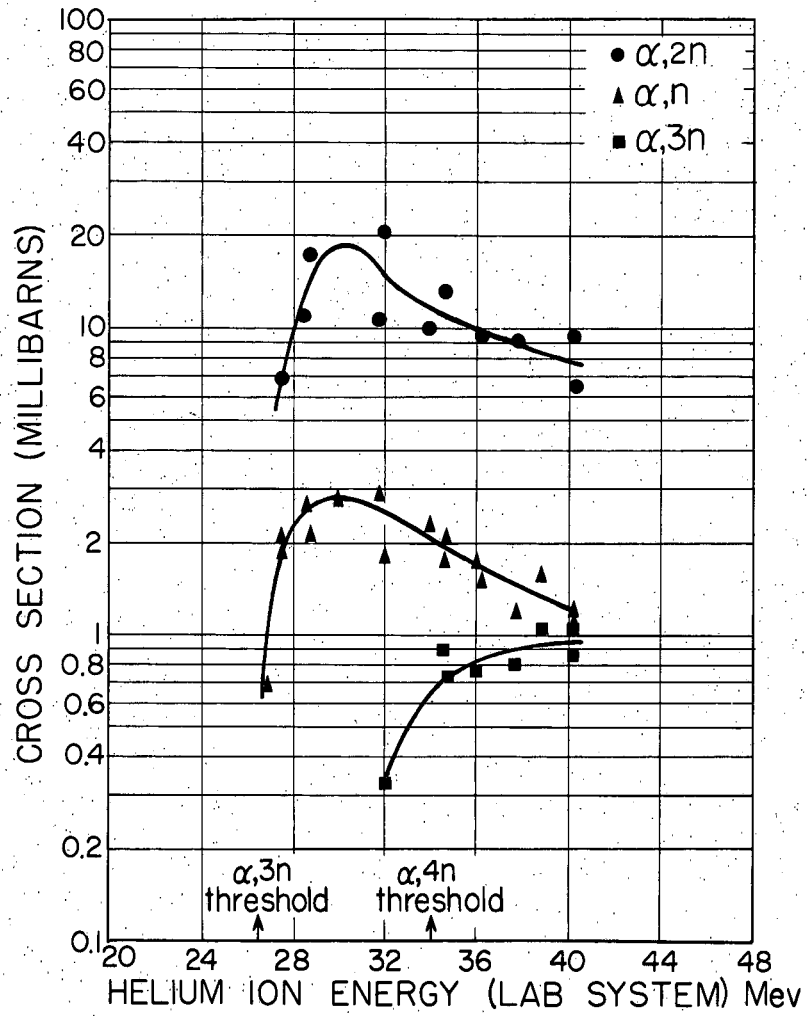
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to thank the crew of the 60-inch cyclotron for their extremely careful and skillful operation of the machine during the bombardment. We wish to thank Professor Glenn T. Seaborg for his continued interest.

We are especially indebted to Thomas C. Parsons for the production and primary purification of the Bk²⁴⁹ - Cf²⁴⁹ target sample.

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MU-12523

Fig. 1 Excitation functions for the formation of fermium isotopes.