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Pressure induced half-collapsed-tetragonal phase in CaKFe₄As₄

Udhara S. Kaluarachchi^{1,2}, Valentin Taufour^{2,*}, Aashish Sapkota^{1,2}, Vladislav Borisov³, Tai Kong^{1,2,†},

William R. Meier^{1,2}, Karunakar Kothapalli², Benjamin G. Ueland², Andreas Kreyssig^{1,2}, Roser

Valentí³, Robert J. McQueeney^{1,2}, Alan I. Goldman^{1,2}, Sergey L. Bud'ko^{1,2}, Paul C. Canfield^{1,2} ¹Department of Physics and Astronomy, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011, USA

²Ames Laboratory, U.S. DOE, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011, USA and

³Institute of Theoretical Physics, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, D-60438 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

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We report the temperature-pressure phase diagram of CaKFe₄As₄ established using high pressure electrical resistivity, magnetization and high energy x-ray diffraction measurements up to 6 GPa. With increasing pressure, both resistivity and magnetization data show that the bulk superconducting transition of CaKFe₄As₄ is suppressed and then disappears at $p \ge 4$ GPa. High pressure x-ray data clearly indicate a phase transition to a collapsed tetragonal phase in CaKFe₄As₄ under pressure that coincides with the abrupt loss of bulk superconductivity near 4 GPa. The x-ray data, combined with resistivity data, indicate that the collapsed tetragonal transition line is essentially independent of pressure, occuring at 4.0(5) GPa for temperatures below 150 K. Density functional theory calculations also find a sudden transition to a collapsed tetragonal state near 4 GPa, as As-As bonding develops across the Ca-layer. Bonding across the K-layer only occurs for $p \ge 12$ GPa. These findings demonstrate a new type of collapsed tetragonal phase in CaKFe₄As₄: a half-collapsed-tetragonal phase.

Discovery of superconductivity in FeAs-based compounds [1–4] opened a new chapter in high temperature superconductor research. Among them the $AEFe_2As_2$ (AE = alkaline earth), so called 122 systems, gained attention [5, 6] due to the ease of growing large, highquality, single crystals and the relative simplicity of the structure. At ambient pressure, the parent compounds adopt the ThCr₂Si₂-type structure and, in most cases, undergo structural and magnetic transitions upon lowering of the temperature [5, 6]. Application of pressure or chemical doping generally suppresses the structural/magnetic transitions and reveals superconductivity [5–12]. Although chemical substitution is an effective way to alter the lattice parameters and the density of states at the Fermi energy, it also introduces disorder that can effect the physics in uncontrollable ways. Therefore physical pressure is one of the cleaner ways to perturb these systems and understand their intertwined and competing phase transitions.

The Ca^{2+} ionic radius in Ca122[5, 13, 14] is the smallest of the AE122 family and Ca122 is exceptionally sensitive to pressure [5, 7, 15, 16]. Application of less than 0.5 GPa pressure suppresses the first order structural/magnetic transition and reveals a transition to a non-magnetic, collapsed-tetragonal phase [5, 7, 15, 16]. In contrast, at ambient pressure K122 shows superconductivity with a relatively low $T_{\rm c}$ [17–19] without any structural/magnetic transition. The effect of pressure on K122 has attracted attention due to the unusual "V-shaped" [20–22] pressure dependence of T_c with a minimum in $T_{\rm c}$ near 1.8 GPa. At higher pressures, a collapsed-tetragonal phase was observed for $p \ge 16 \text{ GPa}$ at room temperature [23–26].

Recently a new superconductor with a related, struc-

ture, $CaAFe_4As_4$ (A=K,Rb,Cs), was discovered by Iyo et al. [27]. Unlike a $(Ca_{1-x}K_x)122[28]$ solid solution, which has the I4/mmm body-centered-tetragonal space group, CaKFe₄As₄ [27, 29] has separate, unique crystallographic sites for the alkaline and alkaline-earth atoms, and possesses in the primitive tetragonal P4/mmm space group. At ambient pressure, CaKFe₄As₄ shows bulk superconductivity below $T_{\rm c} \sim 35 \,{\rm K}$ in zero applied field or below 700 kOe $\leq H_{c2} \leq 900$ kOe at low temperatures [29]. Initial pressure work up to $\sim 4 \,\mathrm{GPa} \,[29]$ has shown that $T_{\rm c}$ is suppressed to 28.5 K by 3.9 GPa. To further determine and understand the p-T phase diagram of this system, higher-pressure studies are needed.

In this Letter we present resistivity, magnetization and structural measurements of CaKFe₄As₄ under pressures up to 6 GPa and find a half-collapsed-tetragonal (hcT) phase stabilized for $p \gtrsim 4$ GPa. Above this pressure there is an ≈ 2.6 % decrease in the *c*-axis lattice parameter and an $\approx 0.4\%$ increase in the *a*-lattice parameter. This hcT phase transition coincides with the abrupt loss of bulk superconductivity in the magnetization and the resistance measurements. Similar collapsed tetragonal phase is observed under pressure in both CaFe₂As₂ and KFe₂As₂. In the case of $CaFe_2As_2$, it is not superconducting even before the collapsed tetragonal (cT) transition. However, relatively low $T_{\rm c} \sim 3 \,{\rm K}$ of KFe₂As₂ at ambient pressure is killed by the cT transition. In the present case, $T_{\rm c} \sim 35 \, {\rm K}$ in the superconducting phase, and this relatively high-Tc superconductivity is killed by the hcT. Density functional theory (DFT) calculations show that, for $p \gtrsim 4$ GPa, As-As bonding takes place across the Ca-layer with much higher pressures needed to cause such bonding to span the larger K-layer. Taken together CaKFe₄As₄ undergoes a simultaneous structural collapse and loss of superconductivity with As-As bond formation across the Ca- but not K- layers.

CaKFe₄As₄ single crystals were grown using hightemperature solution growth technique described in Ref. 29 and 30. Temperature dependent magnetization and resistance were carried out using a Quantum Design(QD) Magnetic Property Measurement System(MPMS) and a QD Physical Property Measurement System(PPMS) respectively. The ac resistivity was measured by the standard four-probe method with the current in the *ab* plane. Four Pt wires, with diameters of $25\,\mu\mathrm{m}$, were soldered to the sample using a Sn:Pb-60:40 alloy. For the resistivity measurements, pressure was applied at a room temperature using a modified Bridgman cell [31] with a 1:1 mixture of n-pentane: iso-pentane as a pressure medium [32]. The pressure was determined at low temperature by monitoring the superconducting transition temperature of Pb [33, 34]. High pressure magnetization measurements were carried out using a moissanite anvil cell [35] with Daphne 7474 as a pressure medium [36]. The pressure was applied at a room temperature and the ruby fluorescence technique [37] at 77 K was used to determine the pressure. See Supplemental Material [38] for further details.

High-energy x-ray diffraction measurements were performed on a six-circle diffractometer at end station 6-ID-D at the Advanced Photon Source, using an x-ray energy of $E = 100.33 \,\text{keV}$ and a beam size of $100 \times 100 \,\mu\text{m}^2$. Single-crystal samples were loaded into a double-membrane-driven [39] copper-beryllium diamondanvil cell (DAC). Helium was used as the pressuretransmitting medium and loaded to a pressure of 0.7 GPa at 300 K. Ruby spheres and silver foil were also mounted in the DAC for pressure determination. The DAC was attached to the cold finger of a He closed-cycle refrigerator. Diffraction patterns were recorded using a MAR345 image plate detector positioned at 1.494 m from the sample position. The distance was determined from measurement of powder patterns of a CeO_2 standard from the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The detector was operated with a pixel size of $100 \times 100 \,\mu m^2$, and patterns were recorded while rocking the sample through two independent angles up to $\pm 3.6^{\circ}$ about the axes perpendicular to the incident beam. The measurement was performed in the (H, K, H) scattering plane [38].

In order to investigate the electronic and structural properties of CaKFe₄As₄, we performed density functional theory (DFT) relativistic calculations using the Vienna Ab initio Simulation Package (VASP) [40–42] with the projector-augmented wave (PAW) basis [43, 44] in the generalized-gradient approximation (GGA). In order to take into account, in the first approximation, the paramagnetic fluctuations that preserve the tetragonal symmetry of the lattice (a = b), we consider a model with a "frozen", twisted, long-range magnetic order which is one of the lowest-energy configurations with this symmetry. Pressure-dependent structures were obtained by fixing the components of the stress tensor to the given value (equal to the external pressure) and fully relaxing the lattice parameters and the internal atomic positions with the conjugate-gradient method [45–47]. The integration over the irreducible Brillouin zone was realized on the Γ -centered (10 × 10 × 10) k-mesh [38].

Figures 1(a) - (b) show the zero-field-cooled (ZFC) magnetization data, M(T), on single crystaline samples of CaKFe₄As₄ under pressure below 40 K. These data have been normalized to the ZFC data of a larger sample at ambient pressure [29]. The low field M(T) data in Fig. 1 (a) show a clear diamagnetic signal below $T_{\rm c}$. $T_{\rm c}$ monotonically decreases with the pressure up to 3.9 GPa. Upon further increase of pressure, there is a broader and reduced diamagnetic anomaly below 20 K. The appearance of a small diamagnetic signal above 3.9 GPa can be related to non-bulk/filamentary superconductivity and can often be easily eliminated by the application of a small (1000 $\text{Oe} \ll H_{c2}$) [29] magnetic field [Fig. 1 (b)] where the observation of a clear diamagnetic signal can be found only up to 3.9 GPa. This suggests non-bulk superconductivity for pressures above 3.9 GPa.

A similar decrease in the superconducting transition temperature is observed in the resistivity measurements under pressure [Fig. 1 (c)]. The sharp superconducting transition found at low pressures becomes broadened at higher pressures. The superconducting transition temperature is parameterized by three different criteria, $T_{\rm c}^{\rm onset}$, $T_{\rm c}^{\rm offset}$ and $T_{\rm c}^{0}$ as shown by arrows in Fig.1(c) and its insets. In contrast to the loss of superconducting signature in M(T), $\rho(T)$ shows zero resistivity up to 5.78 GPa. This is due to the fact that resistivity measurements are known to be more susceptible to filamentary superconductivity, thus, application of a magnetic field helps to separate it from bulk superconductivity. The left and right insets of Fig 1 (c) show the temperature dependent resistivity under pressure for 0 Oe and 30 kOe fields. The clear observation of non-zero resistivity at 5.78 GPa at 30 kOe again confirms the non-bulk nature of the higher pressure superconductivity.

In order to determine the transition from bulk to nonbulk superconductivity in the electrical resistivity data we focus on the transition widths. The superconducting transition width, $\Delta T = T_c^{\text{onset}} - T_c^{\text{offset}}$, is broadened with the increase of pressure as illustrated by Fig. 1 (d), but this can be, in part, due to pressure inhomogeneities in the pressure medium, rather than represent any sort of phase transition. In order to search for a possible transition we compare zero field and moderate, but finite field $(H = 30 \text{ kOe} \ll H_{c2})$ resistive transition width data. Any broadening due to inhomogeneous pressure should be equally present in the H = 0 Oe and H = 30 kOe data. To determine the field contribution of the transition width, we calculated the difference of the transition widths, $\Delta T(H) - \Delta T(0)$ [inset of Fig. 1 (d)]. $\Delta T(H) - \Delta T(0)$ remains constant until near 4 GPa and then starts to increase significantly for pressures above that. This critical pressure is consistent with the pressure at which the magnetization data shows a loss of bulk superconductivity.



FIG. 1. (Color online) The zero-field-cooled (ZFC) M(T) data for (a) 20 Oe and (b) 1000 Oe applied field. (c) The temperature dependent resistivity at representative pressures. Arrows for the 5.78 GPa curve indicate $T_c^{\rm onset}$, $T_c^{\rm offset}$ and T_c^0 criteria used in this paper. The left and right insets show the temperature dependent resistivity under pressure for 0 Oe and 30 kOe applied fields respectively. (d) Superconducting transition widths, $\Delta T = T_c^{\rm onset} - T_c^{\rm offset}$, for 0 and 30 kOe. The inset shows the difference of transition width, $\Delta T({\rm H}) - \Delta T(0)$, where $\Delta T({\rm H})$ is the transition width at 30 kOe



FIG. 2. (Color online) Temperature-pressure phase diagram of CaKFe₄As₄, constructed from magnetization, resistivity and x-ray diffraction measurements under pressure. Solid and opened symbols represent T_c for bulk and filamentary superconductivity respectively. Red color square symbols are from Ref. 29. The green and blue color data represent T_c^{offset} and T_c^{onset} respectively. The light-red color shaded area represent the bulk superconductivity region. Half filled pentagon and squares represent the data from high pressure x-ray diffraction and the resistivity anomaly as seen in Fig. 3 (a) and Fig. 4

Although broadening of the superconducting transition in field can be also due to the thermal fluctuation of the vortex system, the observation, in magnetization data, of a loss of diamagnetic signal at 1000 Oe eliminates this possibility.

The data in Fig. 1 can be summarized in a pressure dependence of T_c phase diagram as shown in Fig. 2. The solid and open symbols represent the bulk and non-bulk superconductivity. Bulk superconductivity persists up to a critical pressure of ~4 GPa. The faint signatures of superconductivity appearing above 4 GPa in this phase diagram are due to strain-induced, filamentary superconductivity. The sudden and discontinuous disappearance of superconductivity for $p \ge 4$ GPa is very suggestive of what is found for Ca(Fe_{1-x}Co_x)₂As₂ both as a function of x [48] and as a function of p [49], i.e. superconductivity suddenly and discontinuously disappears when a collapsed tetragonal, non-magnetic phase is stabilized

To further pursue these findings, we examined the pressure dependence of the lattice parameters from the diffraction study for temperatures near 130 K [Fig. 3 (a)]. We observed an abrupt enhancement of the *a*-lattice parameter simultaneous to a significant reduction of the *c*-lattice parameter near 4 GPa without any crystallographic symmetry change. This indicates a pressure induced phase transition from a tetragonal to a collapsed tetragonal phase, similar to the observation in other 122 systems [15, 23, 24, 50–56]. The change of the *a*-lattice parameter is about ≈ 0.016 Å (0.4%) while the *c*-

lattice parameter decreases by ≈ 0.31 Å (2.6%) (raw data are shown in Fig. S1 in the Supplemental Material [38]). For both CaFe₂As₂ and KFe₂As₂ *c*-lattice parameter decreases by ≈ 1 Å (8.6%) [15, 23] at the fully-collapsed state. This value is much larger than the CaKFe₄As₄.

DFT calculations manifest a very similar expansion in a of ≈ 0.015 Å (0.4%) while c drops by ≈ 0.17 Å (1.5%) at the critical pressure of 4 GPa as shown in Fig. 3 (b). As can be seen in Fig. 2, this collapsed-tetragonal transition point is positioned directly above the disappearance of bulk superconductivity at lower temperatures.



FIG. 3. (Color online) (a) Pressure dependent a (left axis) and c (right axis) lattice parameters obtained from the high pressure x-ray diffraction study. The solid symbols represent the data measured within the temperature range of 130(25) K and open symbols are for higher or lower temperature than this range. The lattice parameters are obtained after fitting the one-dimensional (0,2,0) and (1,0,1) peaks. The onedimensional peak is obtained from two-dimensional pattern after selecting the region of interest around the peak and integrating azimuthally. The dashed-verticle lines markes the bound of the transition and represent as the error bar in Fig. 2. (b) Theoretical a (left axis) and c (right axis) lattice parameters represented with the same scale as (a). (c) Change of the As-As distances across the K (left axis) and Ca (right axis) cationic layers under the transition to the collapsed tetragonal phase. Dashed lines are guides for the eye.

Analysis of the orbital-resolved band structures at different pressures near this transition confirms its collapsed nature [38]. The As antibonding molecular orbitals shift above the Fermi energy upon crossing 4 GPa (Figs. S4 in the Supplemental Material [38]). This is in accordance with a jump-like reduction of the As-As bond length across the Ca layer by ~ 0.05 Å [Fig. 3(c)] and an increase in the As- $4p_z$ electron density between the two As ions (Fig. S4 in the Supplemental Material [38]). A second collapse associated with As-As bonding across the K-laver is found for $p \sim 12$ GPa [38]. The transition at ~ 4 GPa then is associated with a half-collapsed-tetragonal (hcT) phase. Similar effects in the As- $4p_z$ bands were observed in CaFe₂As₂ at the collapsed phase and further study of the second half-collapse might be promising in view of the qualitatively different high-pressure behavior of the pure KFe₂As₂ compound, compared to the CaFe₂As₂.

Whereas our scattering data point is for T = 130(25) K, the DFT calculations are formally for T = 0 K and our T_c data is for $T \sim 30$ K. This begs the question of whether a half-collapsed-tetragonal phase line can be detected for $p \sim 4$ GPa below 150 K. Figures 4 (a) - (b) show temperature dependent resistivity, under various pressures, data sets measured from 300 K to 1.8 K. At ambient pressure CaKFe₄As₄ shows metallic behavior and becomes super-



FIG. 4. (Color online) (a) - (b) Evolution of the temperature dependent resistivity of CaKFe₄As₄ with pressure for two samples. (c) - (d) Pressure dependence of resistivity at fixed temperature for same two samples. The arrow indicates the observed resistivity anomaly at p^* .

conducting below 35 K. With increase of pressure, the resistivity at room temperature monotonically decrease up to 5.6 GPa. However, the resistivity data at lower temperature, in the normal state $(\geq 40 \text{ K})$, show a nonmonotonic pressure evolution. No clear anomaly is visible in the temperature dependent resistivity, suggesting that any phase transition line will be near vertical as shown in Fig. 2. To see this transition line more clearly, we plotted resistivity vs pressure at fixed temperatures [Figs. 4(c)-(d)]. At higher temperatures, the resistivity monotonically decreases with pressure. However, below 160 K we see a jump in resistivity developing near $p^* \sim 4$ GPa. This can be related to the collapsed tetragonal phase transition as seen in high pressure x-ray measurement. Similar features in the resistivity have been observed in K122 [25] with no clear features in $\rho(T)$ data, but V-shape minimum in $\rho(p)$.

The composite p - T phase diagram of CaKFe₄As₄ is shown in the Fig. 2. The $p^*(T)$ data inferred from the Figs. 4 (c) - (d) (p^* being mid point of rise in $\rho(p)$ data and error bars being width of rise) clearly links the highertemperature x-ray data to the lower temperature loss of superconductivity and the T = 0 DFT results. Figure 2 shows that the transition of Tet \rightarrow hcT is nearly vertical.

To summarize, the bulk superconducting transition temperature of tetragonal CaKFe₄As₄ is gradually suppressed under pressure up to $\sim 4 \,\mathrm{GPa}$ and then discontinuously disappears. High pressure x-ray measurements combined with DFT calculations identify the phase transition from a tetragonal to a half-collapsed tetragonal phase near 4 GPa. From the diffraction study at 130 K, we find an abrupt enhancement in a-lattice parameter (0.4%) and a reduction in c-lattice parameter (2.6%) near 4 GPa. A reduction of the c-lattice parameter in Ca122 and K122 is much higher (8.6%) than the CaKFe₄As₄ (2.6%), and this provides additional evidence for the half collapsed scenario. Specifically with As-As bond formation across the Ca-layer, but not K-layer. Indeed, DFT calculations show that the first collapse occurs on across the Ca-layer near 4 GPa followed by a second collapse, on across the K-layer, at higher pressures. Both transitions are accompanied by the typical enhancement of the corresponding As-As bonding. Although only half of the As-As bonding is collapsing at 4 GPa, when the superconducting state is fully suppressed.

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* Current affiliation: Department of Physics, University of California, Davis, California 95616, USA.

[†] Current affiliation: Department of Chemistry, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544, USA.

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