

Probing the Formation of Halogenated Endohedral Metallofullerenes: Predictions Confirmed by Experiments

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Results and Discussion

Endohedral metallofullerenes (EMFs) contain metal-based clusters (e.g., Sc_3N) within the nanoscale void of their C_{80} cages. Their exceptional properties have gained intensive interest for potential applications in biomedicine and photovoltaics. For example, water-soluble EMFs are powerful MRI contrast agents. Also, the addition of a fluorine atom to the cage chemically tunes nanomaterials for use in plastic solar cell technology, technology that converts sunlight into clean energy. MagLab users from Spain have used laser-based chemical sampling techniques in the MagLab's Ion Cyclotron Resonance (ICR) facility to develop the synthesis of fluorinated molecular nanocarbon. The addition of fluorine (F) to the $\text{Sc}_3\text{N}@C_{80}$ compound has been an elusive goal, because all prior attempts have destroyed the fullerene cage. In this work, the researchers discovered a route that uses widely available and cheap polytetrafluoroethylene, more commonly known as Teflon, to selectively add one or two F atoms to the cage. The discovery and formation of these chemical compounds requires unique laser-based instrumentation coupled to analysis by high-magnetic-field FT-ICR mass spectrometry, an exclusive combination of state-of-the-art instrumentation found only in the MagLab's Ion Cyclotron Resonance facility.

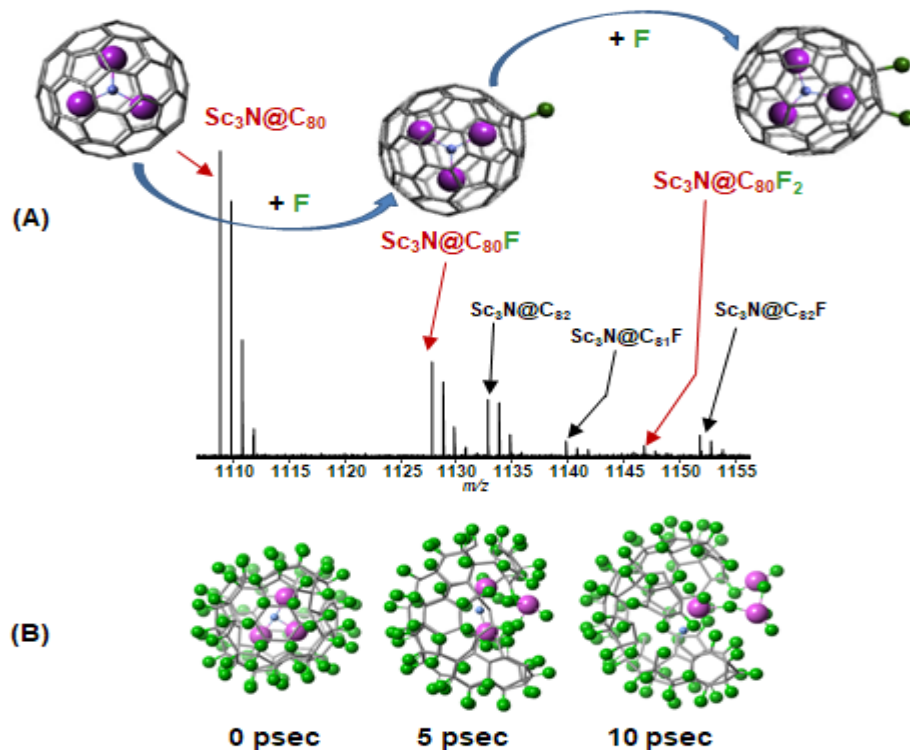


Fig. 1. (A) Up to two fluorine atoms are added to the $\text{Sc}_3\text{N}@C_{80}$ fullerene cage, as shown in the FT-ICR mass spectrum. (B) Calculations show that too many fluorine atoms (shown in green) destroy the cage (i.e., the cage opens after five picoseconds), whereas the controlled addition of only one or two fluorine atoms, as discovered in this work, keeps the nanocage intact.

Acknowledgments

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References

[1] Moreno-Vicente, A., *et al.*, Carbon **129**, 750-757 (2018).