# 526. The Crystal Structures of Anhydrous Nitrates and Their Complexes. Part I. The a Form of Copper(II) Nitrate 

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#### Abstract

Copper(II) nitrate in the $\alpha$ form crystallises with four $\mathrm{Cu}\left(\mathrm{NO}_{3}\right)_{2}$ in each unit cell of dimensions $a=11 \cdot 12 \pm 0.02, b=5.05 \pm 0.01, c=8.28 \pm 0.02 \AA$ and space group $P m n 2_{1}$. Each copper atom is co-ordinated by six oxygen atoms from five different nitrate groups in a distorted octahedral $[4+1+1]$ manner. Each nitrate group forms a bridge between two copper atoms and one of the nitrates forms, in addition, the moderately weak and the weak $[1+1]$ bonds in opposite directions from the third oxygen atom. The refinement of the atomic positions following the preliminary report of the structure ${ }^{\mathbf{1}}$ has thus resulted in a different and more normal co-ordination.


Until the preparation by Addison and Hathaway ${ }^{2}$ of anhydrous copper(II) nitrate, it was considered that nitrate groups must be weak ligands. This view was disproved by the chemical stability in anhydrous conditions of copper(II) nitrate; this stability permits it, for instance, to be sublimed without dissociation of the molecules in the vapour phase. The determination of its structure was undertaken to investigate the nature of the bonding in the solid state.

At a late stage in the structure determination, it was realised that solid $\mathrm{Cu}\left(\mathrm{NO}_{3}\right)_{2}$ may be obtained in two crystalline forms, which are very similar in appearance. The preliminary Note ${ }^{1}$ and this Paper are both concerned with the $\alpha$ form, which has only been obtained as a single phase in powder form by heating the compound $\mathrm{Cu}\left(\mathrm{NO}_{3}\right)_{2} \cdot \mathrm{~N}_{2} \mathrm{O}_{4}$ in vacuo to about $100^{\circ}$. It is obtained as single crystals by subliming this powder slowly, e.g., in dry air at moderate temperatures, but the sublimate contains a proportion of the $\beta$ form, which increases on increasing the speed of sublimation. Sublimation at $200^{\circ}$ in vacuo produces only the $\beta$ form, and the $\alpha$ form is also transformed into the $\beta$ form on heating (the conversion being rapid above about $150^{\circ}$ ). The characteristic features in the infrared spectra and in the powder diffraction patterns, by which the two forms may be recognised, have been reported in a separate Note. ${ }^{3}$

The preliminary report ${ }^{1}$ of the structure of the $\alpha$ form emphasised the strong covalent bonding in chains of alternate copper atoms and nitrate groups, but drew what are now found to be incorrect conclusions about the nature of the cross-linking between the chains by further nitrate groups. More recently, an electron diffraction study ${ }^{4}$ has shown that distinct $\mathrm{Cu}\left(\mathrm{NO}_{3}\right)_{2}$ units exist in the vapour phase, in which each $\mathrm{NO}_{3}$ acts as a bidentate ligand giving either a flattened tetrahedral or a square co-ordination of the copper atom with covalent $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}$ bonds of length $2 \cdot 0 \AA$ making $\mathrm{O}-\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}$ angles of about $70^{\circ}$.

## Experimental

Anhydrous copper(II) nitrate was prepared as previously described, ${ }^{2}$ and crystals of a suitable size for $X$-ray photography were obtained by sublimation of the powdered material at approximately $180^{\circ}$ in dry air at atmospheric pressure in a tube protected from atmospheric moisture by a guard tube containing phosphorus pentoxide. These crystals were either loaded directly into thin Pyrex capillary tubes in a dry box, or first mounted on glass fibres before being placed in the capillaries when alternative crystal orientations were required. In either case, the capillaries were sealed in a small flame within a few seconds of removal from the dry box. Because of the difficulty of handling the crystals, it was necessary to determine $X$-ray
${ }^{2}$ C. C. Addison and B. J. Hathaway, Proc. Chem. Soc., 1957, 19; J., 1958, 3099.
${ }^{3}$ C. C. Addison, N. Logan, W. B. Simpson, and S. C. Wallwork, Proc. Chem. Soc., 1964, 341.
${ }^{4}$ R. E. La Villa and S. H. Bauer, J. Amer. Chem. Soc., 1963, 85, 3597.
intensities on crystals of irregular and inconvenient shapes, for which the calculation of absorption corrections would have been too involved. At first only $a$ - and $c$-axis oscillation and zerolayer Weissenberg photographs were taken and the corresponding intensities estimated. Later, oscillation and Weissenberg photographs were obtained with the crystals rotating about each of the three crystallographic axes, and intensities for the layer lines $0 k l, h 0 l$ to $h 2 l$, and $h k 0$ to $h k 4$ were measured by a photometer method ${ }^{5}$ involving the multiple film technique. ${ }^{6}$ These intensities were corrected for Lorentz and polarisation effects and converted into $F_{o}$ values in the usual way.

The crystal data are as follows: $\alpha-\mathrm{Cu}\left(\mathrm{NO}_{3}\right)_{2}, M=187.55$, orthorhombic, $a=11 \cdot 12 \pm$ $0.02, b=5.05 \pm 0.01, \varepsilon=8.28 \pm 0.02 \AA, U=465 \AA^{3}, D_{m} \simeq 2.5$ (by displacement), $Z=4$, $D_{c}=2 \cdot 68, F(000)=364$. Space group $\operatorname{Pmn} 2_{1}$ (No. 31) or Pmnm (No. 59). Cu- $K_{\alpha}$-radiation, $\mu=66.8 \mathrm{~cm} .^{-1}$.

## Structure Determination

Examination of the Patterson projections on (100) and (001) showed that the copper atoms must be near to the positions $\frac{1}{4} \frac{3}{4} \frac{1}{4}, \frac{3}{4} \frac{3}{4} \frac{1}{4}, \frac{3}{4} \frac{1}{4} \frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{4} \frac{1}{4} \frac{3}{4}$, or positions related to these by a change of origin, in either of the two possible space groups, and a number of possible positions for the nitrate groups were also indicated. The $0 k l$ and $h k 0$ structure factors were calculated for a number of possible trial structures with small movements of the copper atoms in various permitted directions from the special positions mentioned. Comparison with the corresponding $F_{o}$ values (which were the only ones that had been estimated at that time) showed that the space group Pmnm did not allow sufficient movement of the copper atoms from the special positions to make it possible to derive any trial structure giving satisfactory agreement between $F_{\mathrm{o}}$ and $F_{\mathrm{c}}$. This, together with indications of a centric distribution for the $h k 0$ intensities and a non-centric distribution for the $0 k l$ intensities, permitted the rejection of the centrosymmetric space group $P m n m$. A trial structure having the space group $P m n 2_{1}$ and derived from Fourier electron density projections on (100) and (001), phased by the copper atoms only, was refined ${ }^{1}$ in these two projections to give $R=0 \cdot 20$. However, attempts to refine this structure further with partial three-dimensional values uncovered difficulties arising from the false symmetry described below. It was therefore decided to make a fresh start with the structure determination using all the intensity data that were available.

Use was made of a programme named "FATAL" newly developed by Hodgson, Rollett and Stonebridge ${ }^{7}$ for the MERCURY computer; in this the structure factors are calculated for the input atomic positions and these are used to calculate a three-dimensional Fourier electron density function, which is then scanned for peaks. The output gives the co-ordinates and approximate electron counts of all the peaks above a predetermined size. It also notes the approximate positions of all the peaks that are not locatable by a 19 -point routine and gives the interatomic distances between all possible pairs of peaks. Starting only with the copper atom in the position previously determined, most of the peaks found that were above $4 \mathrm{e}^{-3}$ corresponded with some of the previous light-atom positions and with related false peaks generated by the two extra approximate mirror planes caused by the nearly special position of each copper atom. Several of these possible peaks could be eliminated as being too close to the copper atom. Other peaks, which were taken to be spurious owing to diffraction effects from the restriction of the intensity data, were in positions related to those of the copper atoms by translations of either $a / 4$ or $b / 2$. The two strongest of the remaining peaks were related by one of the false mirror planes, and each was used in turn as an input atomic position, combined with the copper atom. This use of one position from a pair partly removed the false symmetry, and resulted in two equally acceptable sets of peaks, which could correspond to light atom positions. These peaks still included some related by false symmetry elements, and, in order to find which peaks were genuine, all the possibilities in each set were included in a separate siteoccupation least-squares analysis. ${ }^{7}$ In one case, 4 cycles of least-squares reduced $R$ from 0.34 to 0.27 and in the other case 4 cycles reduced $R$ from 0.33 to 0.20 . Structure factors and a scan of the Fourier electron-density peaks corresponding to each set of output positions were then obtained by using the "FATAL" programme. The set of peaks obtained from the
${ }^{5}$ S. C. Wallwork and K. J. Standley, Acta Cryst., 1954, 7, 272.
${ }^{6}$ J. J. De Lange, J. M. Robertson, and I. Woodward, Proc. Roy. Soc., 1939, A, 171, 398; J. M. Robertson, J. Sci. Instr., 1943, 20, 175.
${ }^{7}$ L. I. Hodgson, J. S. Rollett, and B. R. Stonebridge, to be published.
sites giving $R=0.20$ corresponded closely with the atomic positions in the previous partial refinement based on the $0 k l, h 0 l, h 1 l, h k 0, h k 1$ and $h k 2$ data, with the addition of some extra peaks, which were either too near to the copper atom or too low in electron count to be acceptable. The acceptable peaks were subjected to a normal least-squares refinement, ${ }^{8}$ with isotropic temperature factors, using all the available structure factors, with weights $\sqrt{ } w=1$ if $\left|F_{\mathrm{o}}\right|>50$, otherwise $\sqrt{ } w=50 /\left|F_{\mathrm{o}}\right| . \quad R$ dropped smoothly in five cycles of refinement to $0 \cdot 14$. The set of peaks obtained from the application of the "FATAL" programme to the sites having $R=0.27$ did not correspond to a satisfactory system of interatomic distances. More prolonged attempts at refinement did not reduce $R$ below 0.18 and still resulted in unsatisfactory interatomic distances. This set of possible atomic positions was therefore rejected in favour of the other set corresponding to $R=0 \cdot 14$.

By contrast with the previous attempt to refine the acceptable atomic positions with mainly projection data, the temperature factors in the new least-squares output were quite reasonable. Further refinement, with the more appropriate weighting scheme $\sqrt{ } w=\left[1+\left(\left|F_{0}\right| / 20\right)^{2}\right]^{-\frac{1}{2}}$ and with anisotropic temperature factors for all atoms, led to the final set of atomic positions given in Table 1 and to the structure factors of Table 4, which have an agreement index $R$ of $0 \cdot 117$. In view of the rather limited data obtained from crystals of different shapes and dimensions and the lack of correction for absorption, high accuracy in atomic positions cannot be expected and no significance can be attached to the anisotropy of the temperature factors. In Table 1 an equivalent isotropic temperature factor is quoted, and was obtained by taking the mean of the magnitudes of the principal axes of each vibration ellipsoid. The standard deviations of atomic positions derived from the normal equations matrix are also represented by average isotropic values in Table 1.

Table 1
Final fractional atomic co-ordinates and isotropically averaged standard deviations and temperature factors

|  | Atom | $x / a$ | $y / b$ | $z / c$ | $\sigma_{\text {av }}(\AA)$ | $B_{\text {av }}\left(\AA^{2}\right)$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Cu |  | 0.7487 | $0 \cdot 7692$ | $0 \cdot 2469$ | $0 \cdot 008$ | 1.9 |
| O(1) | . | $0 \cdot 775$ | $0 \cdot 295$ | $0 \cdot 275$ | 0.023 | $1 \cdot 4$ |
| $\mathrm{O}(2)$ | ................ | 0.801 | 0.388 | 0.533 | 0.024 | $1 \cdot 6$ |
| $\mathrm{O}(3)$ | . | $0 \cdot 782$ | -0.011 | $0 \cdot 445$ | 0.025 | $1 \cdot 4$ |
| $\mathrm{O}(4)$ |  | 0.902 | 0.838 | $0 \cdot 149$ | 0.025 | 1.5 |
| $\mathrm{O}(5)$ |  | 0.596 | $0 \cdot 667$ | $0 \cdot 347$ | 0.026 | 1.7 |
| $\mathrm{O}(6)$ |  | 0.000 | $0 \cdot 655$ | 0.341 | 0.043 | $2 \cdot 5$ |
| $\mathrm{O}(7)$ |  | $0 \cdot 500$ | 0.971 | $0 \cdot 203$ | 0.049 | $3 \cdot 3$ |
| $\mathrm{N}(1)$ |  | 0.784 | $0 \cdot 225$ | $0 \cdot 408$ | 0.028 | $1 \cdot 3$ |
| $\mathrm{N}(2)$ |  | 0.000 | 0.760 | 0.210 | 0.029 | $0 \cdot 4$ |
| N(3) |  | $0 \cdot 500$ | 0.784 | 0.278 | 0.055 | $3 \cdot 0$ |

## Description and Discussion of the Structure

The atoms are shown in their final least-squares positions, together with the final Fourier electron-density projections along each of the three axes in Figure 1. A general view of the structure is shown in Figure 2, the viewpoint being the same as that for the corresponding view in the previous note, to show the changes in atomic positions that have taken place subsequently. Although these changes are small for all atoms apart from $O(4)$ and $O(6)$, they lead to a different interpretation of the bonding in the structure. There are still chains parallel to the $a$ axis of alternate copper atoms and nitrate groups strongly bonded together, but it is now seen that these chains are also linked sideways by strong bonds between alternate copper atoms and nitrate groups. This sideways linking runs in a zig-zag manner, for example from $\mathrm{Cu}^{\prime \prime}$ near $\frac{3}{4}, \frac{5}{4}, \frac{3}{4}$ to Cu near $\frac{3}{4}, \frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{4}$ and back to the repeat of $\mathrm{Cu}^{\prime}$ by the $c$ translation, giving rise to corrugated sheets of strongly bound copper atoms and nitrate groups with the average plane of each sheet parallel to (010). The $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}$ bonds within each corrugated sheet form the usual approximately squareplanar arrangement, round each copper atom with a mean length of $1.98 \AA$.
${ }^{\mathbf{s}}$ R. Pepinsky, J. M. Robertson, and J. C. Speakman, " Computing Methods and the Phase Problem in X-ray Crystal Analysis," Pergamon Press, Oxford, London, New York, Paris, 1961, p. 107.

Between these sheets there is weaker $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}$ bonding through $\mathrm{O}(1)$. This atom is situated at a distance of $2.68 \AA$ from the copper atom to which the nitrate group, of which it is part, is already linked by the $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}(3)$ bond, but it is also $2 \cdot 43 \AA$ from the adjacent copper atom in the next sheet, this copper atom being the repeat of the previous one by the $b$ translation. If significant bonding properties are attributed only to the $2 \cdot 43 \AA$ bond, each copper atom has a co-ordination number of 5 , better expressed by the symbol $[4+1]$. If the $2 \cdot 68 \AA$ distance is also regarded as a bond, then each copper atom has a co-ordination

(a)

(b)

(c)

Figure 1. Fourier electron density projections along each of the three crystallographic axes and projections of the atoms in their final least-squares positions. Contours for $h k 0$ and $h 0 l$ projections (a) and (b) at $5,10,20,30,50,70$ e. $\AA^{-2}$; for $0 k l$ projection (c) at $10,20,30,50,70,90,110 \mathrm{e} . \AA^{-2}$


Figure 2. General view of the structure. Broken lines indicate the weaker $\mathrm{Cu} \cdots \mathrm{O}$ interactions



Figure 3. Bond lengths in $(\AA)$ and bond angles
number of 6 , which differs from the more usual $[4+2]$ in having unequal weak bonds, and is better expressed as $[4+1+1]$. In any case, the nitrate group $\mathrm{N}(1) \mathrm{O}(1) \mathrm{O}(2) \mathrm{O}(3)$ forms a bridge between three copper atoms and, if the copper atom co-ordination is taken as being $[4+1+1]$, then the extra weak bond $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}(1)$ together with the strong bond $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}(3)$ gives some bidentate character to the bonding of this nitrate group. This is thought to be the first example of this type of bonding by a nitrate group, and it emphasises the strong ligand properties of this group. The other nitrate groups in the structure perform the more usual function of bridging pairs of copper atoms.

The details of the environment of each copper atom and the bond distances and most of the bond angles are given in Figure 3. The bond angles that are not illustrated in this figure are given in Table 2. Average standard deviations for bonds between light atoms

Table 2
Further $\mathrm{O}^{-} \mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}$ angles (degrees)

|  | $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}(1)$ |  | $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}\left(\mathrm{l}^{\prime \prime}\right)$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}\left(1^{\prime \prime}\right)$ | 163 |  | 0 |
| $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}(2)^{\prime}$ | 74 |  | 120 |
| $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}\left(3^{\prime \prime}\right)$ | 116 |  | 50 |
| $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}(4)$ | 96 |  | 76 |
| $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}(5)$ | 79 |  | 109 |
| $\mathrm{O}\left(2^{\prime}\right)-\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}\left(3^{\prime \prime}\right)$ |  | 169 |  |
| $\mathrm{O}(4)-\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}(5)$ |  | 175 |  |

and for $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}$ bonds are 0.04 and $0.03 \AA$, respectively Since these may be underestimates, in view of the nature of the initial data, it is not appropriate to discuss the bonding


Figure 4. Three possible idealised arrangements of a layer of copper atoms and nitrate groups such that each nitrate group is linked to three copper atoms
(c)
in detail. However, there is no doubt that the four strong $\mathrm{Cu}^{-} \mathrm{O}$ bonds with an average length of $1.98 \AA$ can be distinguished from the two weaker ones, and that the latter are unequal in length. Also, as might be expected, the $\mathrm{N}-\mathrm{O}$ bonds to oxygen atoms that are strongly bound to copper are consistently longer than those to oxygen atoms that are not strongly bound, the average lengths for the two types of bond being 1.30 and $1.16 \AA$, respectively.

It is possible, by means of the following argument, to gain some insight into the way in which the structure arises. The maximum co-ordination numbers of copper atoms and nitrate groups can be taken as 6 and 3, respectively, and, if these were realised, the correct stoicheiometric ratio would be obtained. However, if the nitrate group is too bulky to permit the attachment of six different nitrate groups to each copper atom, the next-best choice is to have each copper atom attached to five different nitrate groups by allowing half the nitrates to form three $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}$ bonds and half to form only two such bonds. This is the actual situation in the structure of $\alpha-\mathrm{Cu}\left(\mathrm{NO}_{3}\right)_{2}$. The layers perpendicular to the $a$ axis consist of a pseudo-hexagonal array of copper atoms and nitrate groups each with a co-ordination number of 3 within the layer. The linking into chains parallel to the $a$ axis through nitrate groups each with co-ordination number 2 then increases the copper co-ordination number to five.

The simplest way of building up the pseudo-hexagonal layers is shown in an idealised manner in Figure $4(a)$. This involves a trigonal arrangement round each copper atom, which would not be consistent with the usual tendency to octahedral co-ordination for copper atoms without bending the bonds so much out of the plane that the oxygen atoms would be brought too close together. Two possible arrangements involving linear $\mathrm{O}-\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}$ bonds are shown in Figures $4(b)$ and (c). In (b) an anti-arrangement is maintained for each pair of nitrate groups, and it can be seen that this leads to a cyclic structure that is too open in character and only permits a two-fold co-ordination within the layer for each copper atom. The corresponding structure with each pair of nitrates in a syn-arrangement is shown in Figure 4(c). This allows each copper atom to be co-ordinated by three different nitrate groups and gives a closely packed structure. Slight rotations of the nitrate groups in the directions indicated by arrows allow each copper atom to form a fourth weak bond within the layer as indicated by the dotted lines. This is the structure actually adopted in the $\alpha$ form of anhydrous $\mathrm{Cu}\left(\mathrm{NO}_{3}\right)_{2}$, as can be seen by comparing the unit cell indicated by broken lines in Figure 4(c) with Figure 1(c). This comparison also shows that the bridging nitrate groups above and below the layer take up positions such that the oxygen atoms that are bonded to each copper atom are as remote as possible from the oxygen atoms in the layer. Nevertheless, there are a number of oxygen-oxygen contacts of less than $3.0 \AA$, as listed in Table 3. It is presumably the repulsive forces resulting when this crystal

Table 3
O . . O contacts less than $3 \cdot 0 \AA$ between different nitrate groups

structure is formed (in order to satisfy the bonding requirements of both the copper atoms and the nitrate groups), which cause its instability. The structure in the vapour phase ${ }^{4}$ has the lower co-ordination numbers of 4 and 2 for the copper atoms and nitrate groups respectively. The repulsion is relieved, but the $\mathrm{Cu}-\mathrm{O}-\mathrm{N}$ angle of about $85^{\circ}$ is less favourable than the average of $114^{\circ}$ in the crystal structure of the $\alpha$ form. It is presumably for this reason that nitrate ligands are rarely bidentate in the solid state and usually perform the function of bridging groups. A determination of the crystal structure of $\beta-\mathrm{Cu}\left(\mathrm{NO}_{3}\right)_{2}$ is in progress.

Table 4
Observed structure amplitudes compared with final calculated structure amplitudes and phases


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