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## Falloff curves and mechanism of thermal decomposition of CF<sub>3</sub>I in shock waves†

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The falloff curves of the unimolecular dissociation CF<sub>3</sub>I (+Ar) → CF<sub>3</sub> + I (+Ar) are modelled by combining quantum-chemical characterizations of the potential energy surface for the reaction, standard unimolecular rate theory, and experimental information on the average energy transferred per collision between excited CF<sub>3</sub>I and Ar. The (essentially) parameter-free theoretical modelling gives results in satisfactory agreement with data deduced from earlier shock wave experiments employing a variety of reactant concentrations (between a few ppm and a few percent in the bath gas Ar). New experiments recording absorption–time signals of CF<sub>3</sub>I, I<sub>2</sub>, CF<sub>2</sub> and (possibly) IF at 450–500 and 200–300 nm are reported. By analysing the decomposition mechanism, besides the unimolecular dissociation of CF<sub>3</sub>I, these provide insight into the influence of secondary reactions on the experimental observations.

### 1. Introduction

The thermal decomposition of CF<sub>3</sub>I has attracted considerable interest for a number of reasons. On the one hand, it has served as a source of CF<sub>3</sub> radicals in shock waves.<sup>1–3</sup> On the other hand, with its weak C–I bond in the presence of strong C–F bonds, it represents a prototype of a unimolecular dissociation reaction of simple bond-fission character.<sup>4–15</sup> Furthermore, its secondary reactions are related to processes of importance in chemical lasers and laser-induced isotope separation.<sup>16,17</sup> The role of secondary reactions, in flow system studies of CF<sub>3</sub>I dissociation up to about 800 K, remained unclear for quite some while. Only shock wave experiments, using iodine atom resonance absorption spectroscopy (ARAS) and employing very low reactant CF<sub>3</sub>I concentrations,<sup>13,15</sup> directly led to the rate constant of the unimolecular reaction. Although some modelling of this rate constant in its falloff range had been made in earlier work, only with the ARAS results such modelling could be put on a safe basis.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the theoretical approach to the falloff curves left something to be desired. First, it was based on only simplified versions of Rice–Ramsperger–Kassel–Marcus (RRKM) theory. This approach in the present work is extended by accounting for the finer details of the potential energy surface along the reaction coordinate. Second and more seriously,

the average energy ⟨ΔE⟩ transferred per collision between the bath gas M and excited CF<sub>3</sub>I (or the equivalent collision efficiency β<sub>c</sub>) was only treated as a fit parameter. It was overlooked that ⟨ΔE⟩ (for the bath gas M = Ar) had been measured directly in IR-multiphoton excitation experiments.<sup>18–21</sup> With the background of the mentioned experimental and theoretical studies, it appeared attractive to us to investigate the reaction again and in greater detail. We model the rate constant in terms of loose-activated complex unimolecular rate theory, determining the required molecular parameters by quantum-chemical calculations. After introducing the experimental ⟨ΔE⟩, falloff curves are constructed and expressed in the form recommended in ref. 22 and 23. The influence of uncertainties in the C–I bond energy is also investigated. Finally, a comparison with the ARAS shock wave results is made.

Having established reliable falloff curves, new shock wave experiments were performed using alternatives to the ARAS detection method. While the ARAS experiments used reactant concentrations as low as 1–4 ppm of CF<sub>3</sub>I in Ar<sup>15</sup> (or in Kr<sup>13</sup>), the present work employs mixtures with 100–1500 ppm (mostly about 500 ppm). The present experiments were able to monitor CF<sub>3</sub>I concentrations with considerably reduced reactant concentrations in comparison to earlier shock tube work (employing reactant concentrations of 0.5–5%<sup>6,9,14</sup>). Within the present range of reactant concentrations, the onset of secondary reactions can be monitored. Insight into the complex thermal decomposition mechanism is obtained with the help of absorption spectroscopy in the ranges 200–300 and 450–500 nm. On the basis of the detailed reaction mechanism (being probably still incomplete), the previous high-concentration shock wave experiments could also be reinterpreted. Finally, the identification of species with so far unknown high-temperature absorption coefficients

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was facilitated by quantum-chemical calculations of oscillator strengths.

## II. Modelling of dissociation rate constants

Our modelling of rate constants for the unimolecular dissociation of the C–I bond in  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ , first, focussed on the properties of the minimum-energy path (MEP) potential  $V(r)$  of the reaction and the change of transitional mode quanta  $\nu(r)$  along the MEP reaction coordinate  $r$ .  $V(r)$  and  $\nu(r)$  were derived by quantum-chemical calculations. A 6-311G(d) basis set for I atoms as tabulated in ref. 24 and 25 and a 6-311+G(3df) basis set for C and F atoms were employed. With these basis sets optimized structures and vibrational frequencies were calculated at the M06-2X level (for details of our approach, see *e.g.* ref. 26–30; more details are given in the ESI†).  $V(r)$  (computed at the CCSD(T)/M06-2X level) could be approximated using a Morse function (with the Morse parameters  $\beta \approx 1.45 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$ ,  $r_e \approx 2.16 \text{ \AA}$ , and  $D_e = 225.9 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ ). The transitional mode quanta  $\nu(r)$  were found to decay exponentially along the MEP (with decay parameters  $\alpha \approx 0.59$  and  $0.61 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$ , such that the ratio  $\alpha/\beta$  is not far from the “standard value”  $\alpha/\beta \approx 0.5^{31}$ ). The calculation of the rotational contributions requires the determination of centrifugal maxima along the MEP. This was done with the  $r$ -dependence of the rotational constant of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  (being approximated using  $(B + C)/2 \approx 0.0505 \text{ cm}^{-1}/[1 + 0.551(r - 2.16 \text{ \AA}) + 0.138(r - 2.16 \text{ \AA})^2]$ ). Graphical representations of  $V(r)$ ,  $\nu(r)$ , and  $(B + C)/2$  for the  $\text{CF}_3\text{–I}$  bond are given in Fig. S1–S3 of the ESI†.

The pseudo-first order rate constant  $k_1$  of the unimolecular dissociation  $\text{CF}_3\text{I} \rightarrow \text{CF}_3 + \text{I}$  is expressed in its usual form  $k_1/k_{1,\infty} = [x/(1+x)]F(x)$ , with  $x = k_{1,0}/k_{1,\infty}$  (the limiting low-pressure rate constant  $k_{1,0}$  being proportional to the bath gas concentration  $[\text{M}] = \text{Ar}$ , while the limiting high-pressure rate constant  $k_{1,\infty}$  is independent of  $[\text{M}]$ ;  $F(x)$  denotes a suitable “broadening factor”, see below).

With the information obtained and using the statistical adiabatic channel model (in its classical trajectory version, SACM/CT, from ref. 32), limiting high-pressure rate constants

$$k_{1,\infty} = 5.9 \times 10^{15} (T/1000 \text{ K})^{-2.2} \exp(-28930 \text{ K}/T) \text{ s}^{-1} \quad (1)$$

were derived (for a value of the reaction enthalpy at 0 K of  $\Delta H_0^\circ = 224.7 \text{ kJ mol}^{-133}$ ). Using  $\langle \Delta E \rangle / hc \approx -100 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  independent of temperature, such as that determined experimentally for  $\text{M} = \text{Ar}$  in ref. 21, and employing the formalism of ref. 34, limiting low-pressure rate constants

$$k_{1,0} = [\text{Ar}] 5.4 \times 10^{21} (T/1000 \text{ K})^{-10.5} \exp(-31360 \text{ K}/T) \text{ cm}^3 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1} \quad (2)$$

were calculated (the given value of  $\langle \Delta E \rangle$  between 750 and 2000 K corresponds to the collision efficiency  $\beta_c \approx 0.076(1000 \text{ K}/T)^{1.2}$ , see the ESI†). The construction of falloff curves following ref. 22 and 23, furthermore, requires information on center broadening factors of the falloff curves  $F_{\text{cent}} = F(x = 1)$ .<sup>34</sup> These were derived with the method proposed in ref. 23 and 35

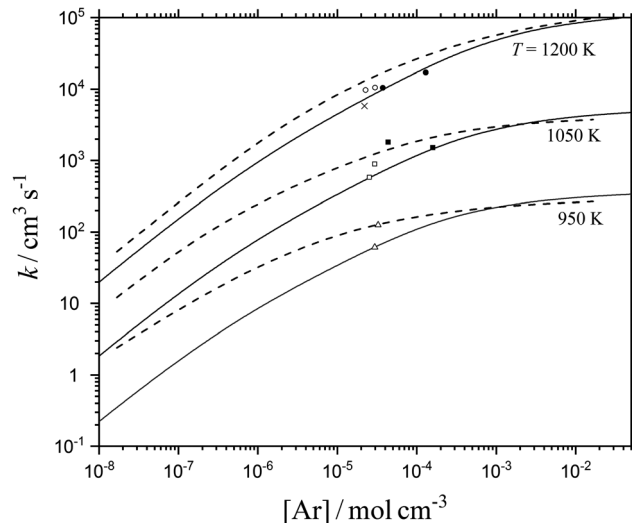


Fig. 1 Falloff curves for the unimolecular dissociation  $\text{CF}_3\text{I} \rightarrow \text{CF}_3 + \text{I}$  (full lines: modelling from this work (see Section III), dashed lines: modelling from ref. 15; experimental results from this work: ● (1200 K), ■ (1050 K); from ref. 15: ○ (1200 K), □ (1050 K), △ (950 K); from ref. 8: × (1200 K, reevaluated); influence of secondary reactions in the present work and in ref. 8 accounted for: see Section III).

(leading to  $F_{\text{cent}} = 0.20, 0.16, 0.14$ , and  $0.14$  at  $T/\text{K} = 750, 1000, 1500$ , and  $2000$ , respectively). Fig. 1 shows the corresponding falloff curves for selected temperatures. The latter were chosen to be 950, 1050, and 1200 K, in order to compare with the modelling from ref. 15 (which used variational RRKM theory for  $k_{1,\infty}$ , while  $k_{1,0}$  was derived following ref. 34 with an assumed  $\beta_c \approx 100 \text{ K}/T$  and  $F_{\text{cent}} = 0.188$ ). Fig. 1 shows that the limiting values of the present falloff curves differ considerably from those of ref. 15. The figure also includes experimental ARAS results from ref. 15 (the measured points were corrected for slight temperature “mismatch” using the modelled temperature dependence of the rate constants at the given  $[\text{Ar}]$ ). The agreement between the ARAS data and the modelled falloff curves appears quite satisfactory. While the differences in the modelled  $k_{1,\infty}$  are only small, larger discrepancies are observed in the modelled limiting low-pressure rate constants  $k_{1,0}$ . This could be due to differences in several input factors (see the basic formalism from ref. 34). The most probable reason seems to us to be that centrifugal barriers were accounted for in the present work (on the basis of Fig. S3 of the ESI†), while this was not done or done differently in ref. 15. This reduces the rotational factors  $F_{\text{rot}}$  in  $k_{1,0}$ . A further analysis of the difference does not appear warranted at this stage.

We also inspected the influence of uncertainties in the reaction enthalpy. Increasing  $\Delta H_0^\circ$  by  $4 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  decreases  $k_1$  (at  $[\text{Ar}] = (5 \times 10^{-5} - 1.5 \times 10^{-4}) \text{ mol cm}^{-3}$ ) by a factor of 1.5–2 (decreasing  $\Delta H_0^\circ$  by  $4 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  increases  $k_1$  by the same factor). Measurements and modelled (unadjusted) falloff curves, therefore, agree better than this uncertainty and confirm the validity of the thermochemistry used in the literature.<sup>33,36,37</sup> Nevertheless, the finer details of the shape of the falloff curves should also be noted. In particular, different approaches of  $k_1$  toward the



limiting low- and high-pressure rate constants ( $k_{1,0}$  and  $k_{1,\infty}$ , resp.) are to be accounted for when the more recent falloff expressions from ref. 22 and 23 are used instead of the older forms from ref. 34. The modelling of the falloff curves and their comparison with the ARAS results from ref. 15 in the foregoing section has been described in detail, because it forms the basis for an analysis of the decomposition mechanism under conditions of higher reactant concentrations. This analysis will be made after new experiments are described in the following section.

### III. Experimental $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ absorption signals

Experiments in the present work were performed in incident and in reflected shock waves in the bath gas Ar. The progress of reaction was followed by recording absorption–time profiles at selected wavelengths in the ranges 200–300 nm and 450–500 nm. Details of our experimental technique have been described before and need not be repeated here (see, e.g., ref. 27–30 and 38–40). Our experiments used reaction mixtures prepared in large mixing vessels before being introduced into a shock tube. Mixtures of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  (99% purity, from Sigma-Aldrich) and Ar (99.9999% purity, from Air Liquide) with reactant concentrations between about 100 and 1500 ppm of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Ar (mostly about 500 ppm) were employed. The chosen concentrations are of importance for the analysis of the dissociation mechanism, see below.

In the first part of our experiments we followed the progress of reaction by monitoring the concentration of the decomposing  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ , recording absorption signals near the absorption maximum at 271 nm.<sup>6</sup> Two examples of the recorded absorption–time profiles are shown in Fig. 2 and 3. The absorption increases abruptly at the arrival of the incident shock, marked by the first Schlieren peak. The second Schlieren peak indicates the arrival of the reflected shock. The second absorption rise then is followed by the decay of the  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  absorption due to reaction. The evaluation of the signals requires careful reconstruction of the room temperature absorption level before the arrival of the incident shock. One also has to reconstruct the absorption level

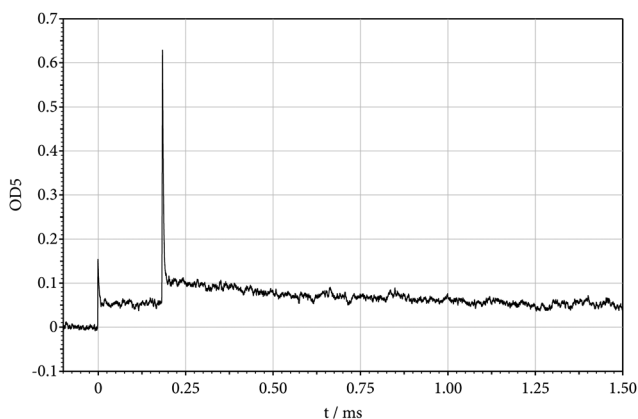


Fig. 2 Absorption–time profile of decomposing  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ , recorded at 271 nm (532 ppm of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Ar,  $T = 1031$  K,  $[\text{Ar}] = 1.56 \times 10^{-4}$  mol  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ ).

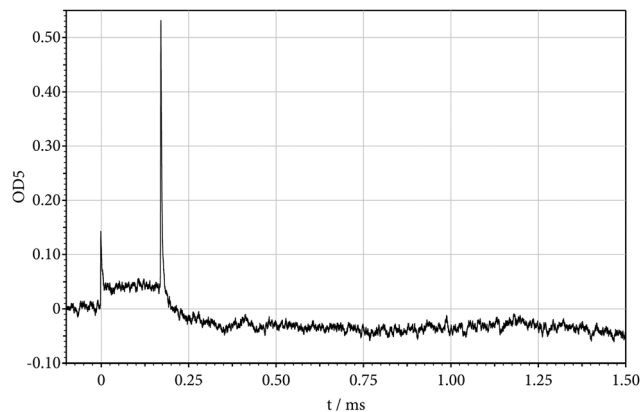


Fig. 3 As Fig. 2, but at higher temperatures (536 ppm of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Ar,  $T = 1219$  K,  $[\text{Ar}] = 1.27 \times 10^{-4}$  mol  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ ).

directly behind the reflected shock in order to separate the absorption step and Schlieren peak. These operations could be done with the help of the temperature-dependent absorption coefficients of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  determined in ref. 6 and 41. Finally, the zero-absorption line also had to be reconstructed. A temperature of 622 K behind the incident shock in Fig. 2 is too low to produce substantial dissociation of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  before the arrival of the reflected shock. At a temperature of 1030 K behind the reflected shock, however, the dissociation of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  sets in. It is important to note that the dissociation is not complete within the observation time of about 1.3 ms. This is of relevance when the reaction mechanism is considered in more detail, see below. It is also important to note that the disappearance of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Fig. 2 and 3 considerably slows with increasing reaction time and does not reach the zero-absorption line.

The initial rate of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  disappearance was represented by a first-order rate law,

$$[\text{CF}_3\text{I}] \approx [\text{CF}_3\text{I}]_{t=0} \exp(-kt) \quad (3)$$

with an apparent rate constant  $k$ . Experimental values of  $k$  were derived from reflected shocks (for  $[\text{Ar}]$  larger than  $10^{-4}$  mol  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ ) and from incident shocks (for  $[\text{Ar}]$  in the range of  $(2\text{--}4) \times 10^{-5}$  mol  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ ). In spite of the similarity of the recorded signals shown in Fig. 2 and 3 to the signal reported in ref. 8 (for 20 times larger  $[\text{CF}_3\text{I}]_{t=0}$ ), it is by no means clear that the apparent initial rate constant  $k$  corresponds to the rate constant  $k_1$  for the unimolecular dissociation of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ . This interpretation requires further analysis of the decomposition mechanism given below.

The thermal decomposition of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  traditionally has been discussed in terms of the reactions summarized in Table 1. For the high-temperature conditions of the present work, a number of aspects are important to note. First, the reverse reactions of all reactions have to be included (this was done here with equilibrium constants from the tabulations in ref. 33). Second, information on the two primary secondary reactions of I (reaction (R2)) and  $\text{CF}_3$  (reaction (R4)) with  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  is needed. As this is available only for low temperatures,<sup>12,42–44</sup> the corresponding rate constants  $k_2$  and  $k_4$  here were treated as uncertain



**Table 1** Mechanism of the thermal decomposition of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  (notes: (a)  $k_1 = 4.0 \times 10^{12} \exp(-22790 \text{ K}/T) \text{ s}^{-1}$  modelled with  $\Delta H_0^\ddagger = 224.7 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for  $[\text{Ar}] \approx 1.5 \times 10^{-4} \text{ mol cm}^{-3}$  over the range 1000–1050 K; (b) reverse reaction: equilibrium constant from ref. 33; (c)  $k_2 = 7.6 \times 10^{12} \exp(-9500 \text{ K}/T) \text{ cm}^3 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$  for 400–900 K, from ref. 42–44; (d)  $k_3 = [\text{Ar}] 8.8 \times 10^{13} \exp(-14950 \text{ K}/T) \text{ s}^{-1}$  for 1080–1570 K and  $[\text{Ar}] = (0.3-1) \times 10^{-6} \text{ mol cm}^{-3}$ , from ref. 45 and 46; (e)  $k_4 \leq 1.2 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$  for 300 K, from ref. 16; (f)  $k_{-5} \leq 1.2 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^3 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$  for 1200 K and  $[\text{Ar}] = 10^{-4} \text{ mol cm}^{-3}$  from ref. 47–49)

Number	Reaction	Notes
R1	$\text{CF}_3\text{I} \rightarrow \text{CF}_3 + \text{I}$	a, b
R2	$\text{I} + \text{CF}_3\text{I} \rightarrow \text{I}_2 + \text{CF}_3$	c, b
R3	$\text{I}_2 + \text{Ar} \rightarrow 2\text{I} + \text{Ar}$	d, b
R4	$\text{CF}_3 + \text{CF}_3\text{I} \rightarrow \text{C}_2\text{F}_6 + \text{I}$	e, b
R5	$\text{CF}_3 + \text{CF}_3 \rightarrow \text{C}_2\text{F}_6$	f, b

parameters and their influence was investigated.  $k_3$  was taken unchanged from ref. 45 and  $k_5$  from ref. 39. Simulating the kinetics of the reactions given in Table 1 leads to concentration–time profiles of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  such as those shown in Fig. 4. The plot of  $[\text{CF}_3\text{I}]/[\text{CF}_3\text{I}]_{t=0}$  as a function of  $k_1 t$  well reproduces the experimentally observed slowing of the  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  decomposition rate with time  $t$ . It is essential not to increase the fitted rate constant  $k_1$  beyond the given value because this would strongly reduce the overall yield of the reaction (a decrease of  $k_{-1}$  on the other hand would have no influence). An increase of  $k_2$  by a factor of 10 reduces the calculated half-life of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  by only 4% while an increase of  $k_4$  by a factor of 10 has an even smaller effect. The concentration–time profiles of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  thus are unsuitable for fitting  $k_2$  and  $k_4$ . Extracting  $k_1$  from the  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  profiles, however, required accounting for the slowing of the decomposition. As the  $[\text{CF}_3\text{I}]/[\text{CF}_3\text{I}]_{t=0}$  profile as a function of  $k_1 t$  hardly varies with temperature (see Fig. 4), the profile shown in Fig. 4 could be used for extracting  $k_1$  from the initial rate constant  $k$  of eqn (3) or, better,

**Table 2** Experimental rate constants  $k_1$  for the unimolecular dissociation  $\text{CF}_3\text{I} \rightarrow \text{CF}_3 + \text{I}$  (present work, evaluated with the reaction mechanism of Section III)

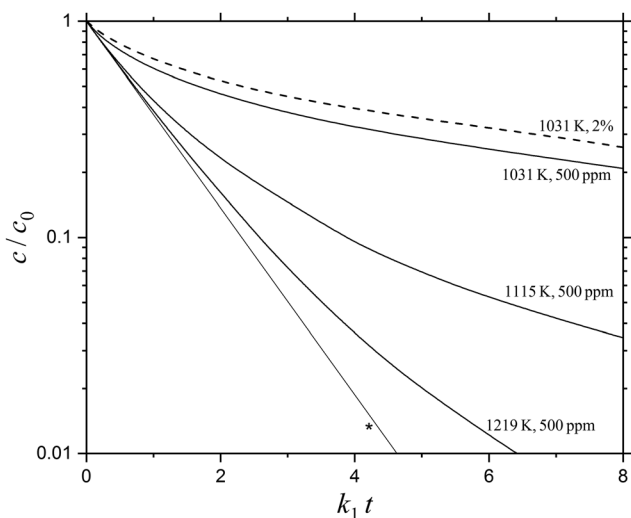
$T/\text{K}$	$[\text{Ar}]/\text{mol cm}^{-3}$	$k_1/\text{s}^{-1}$
1005	$3.2 \times 10^{-5}$	$5.5 \times 10^2$
1031	$1.6 \times 10^{-4}$	$6.0 \times 10^2$
1045	$6.5 \times 10^{-5}$	$1.3 \times 10^3$
1076	$5.8 \times 10^{-5}$	$4.5 \times 10^3$
1130	$5.7 \times 10^{-5}$	$6.5 \times 10^3$
1152	$2.5 \times 10^{-5}$	$5.6 \times 10^3$
1160	$1.4 \times 10^{-4}$	$1.3 \times 10^4$
1195	$9.0 \times 10^{-5}$	$7.8 \times 10^3$
1219	$1.3 \times 10^{-4}$	$2.5 \times 10^4$
1220	$1.3 \times 10^{-4}$	$2.0 \times 10^4$

from a fit of the complete measured  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  profile to the kinetics simulation. The resulting  $k_1$  values are summarized in Table 2. Selected values are included in Fig. 1 and compared with the ARAS data from ref. 15 and the modelled falloff curves. All data are consistent with each other. Increasing the reactant concentration from the 532 ppm of Fig. 2 and 3 to the 2% in ref. 8 has a noticeable effect: it increases the  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  half-life by a factor of 1.6. The correspondingly reevaluated value is included in Fig. 1; it agrees well with the other results shown (the agreement with the data from ref. 6 is less satisfactory, because full  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  profiles were not reported in ref. 6).

Although the measured  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  absorption–time profiles of the present work appear consistent with the modelling of  $k_1$ , additional measurements of  $\text{I}_2$  signals as described in the following section raise questions, suggesting that further reactions need to be considered. At this moment it appears uncertain whether they have an influence on kinetics simulations of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  profiles such as those shown in Fig. 4. Because the agreement of experimental and modelled  $k_1$  values in Fig. 1 looks satisfactory, one is tempted to assume that this is not the case.

## IV. Experimental $\text{I}_2$ absorption signals

The simulation of the  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  profiles described in Section III indicated that conclusions on the rate constants  $k_2$  and  $k_4$  of reactions (R2) and (R4) could be drawn only to a limited extent, while the  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  profiles independent of uncertainties in the mechanism led to  $k_1$ . In order to learn more about  $k_2$  and  $k_4$ , profiles of intermediate reaction species should be measured. Information on  $\text{CF}_3$ -profiles would be difficult to obtain, because the absorption coefficient of this intermediate in the investigated spectral range (at wavelengths larger than 200 nm) is only a small value.<sup>50</sup> We have, furthermore, extended the measurements of absorption coefficients of  $\text{CF}_2$  to wavelengths near 200 nm ( $\text{CF}_2$  prepared by the thermal decomposition  $\text{CHF}_3 \rightarrow \text{CF}_2 + \text{HF}$ ,<sup>38</sup> see also ref. 27 and 51). We found that  $\text{CF}_2$  (from reactions not included in Table 1) or the strong absorber CF (which forms at considerably higher temperatures in the thermal decomposition of  $\text{CF}_2$ <sup>40</sup>) would not contribute to absorption signals of the present work. In contrast to this,  $\text{I}_2$  should be detectable, either in the intense Cordes bands near 200 nm or in the visible range 450–500 nm. Fig. 5 and 6 show



**Fig. 4** Kinetics simulation of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  concentration–time profiles ( $c = [\text{CF}_3\text{I}]$ ,  $c_0 = [\text{CF}_3\text{I}]_{t=0}$ , full lines: simulation with reactions of Table 1 for 500 ppm of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Ar, dashed line: for 2% of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Ar; \*: profile without secondary reactions,  $k_1 =$  rate constant for unimolecular dissociation of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ ,  $t =$  time, see Section III).



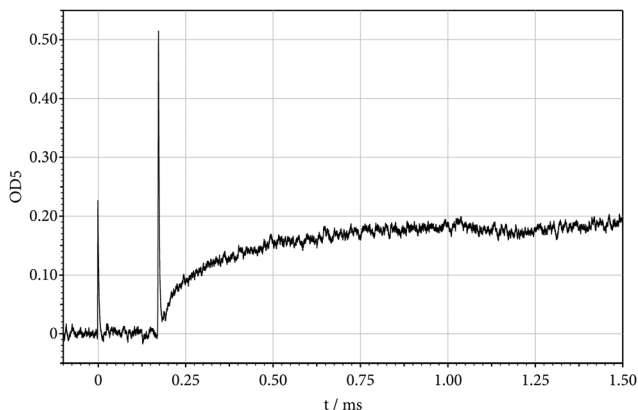


Fig. 5 Absorption signal recorded at 487 nm during the thermal decomposition of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  (1485 ppm of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Ar,  $T = 1197\text{ K}$ ,  $[\text{Ar}] = 1.25 \times 10^{-4}\text{ mol cm}^{-3}$ , see Section IV).

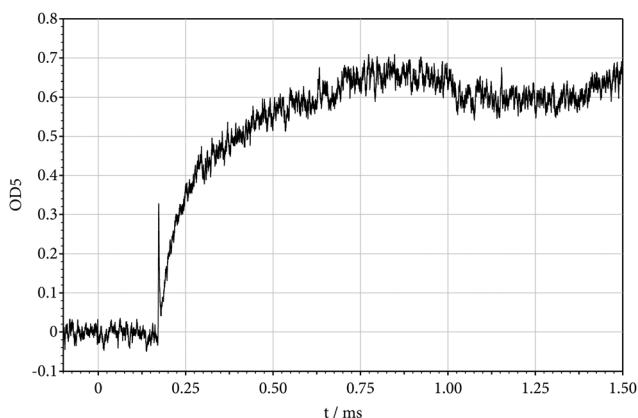


Fig. 6 Absorption signal recorded at 200 nm during the thermal decomposition of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  (529 ppm of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Ar,  $T = 1188\text{ K}$ ,  $[\text{Ar}] = 1.31 \times 10^{-4}\text{ mol cm}^{-3}$ , see Section IV).

examples for 200 and 487 nm under similar experimental conditions. While the  $\text{I}_2$  absorption coefficients at 487 nm are observed under shock wave conditions,<sup>45,46</sup> they are observed near 200 nm only at near room temperature.<sup>51–54</sup> Fig. 5 and 6 show the absorption signals from  $\text{I}_2$ , one then could calibrate the high temperature absorption coefficients of  $\text{I}_2$  near 200 nm against those from 450 to 500 nm. However, this procedure faces the following problem. Fig. 7 shows an absorption signal at 487 nm for conditions close to those of Fig. 2. The kinetics simulation predicts a profile such as that included in Fig. 7. This considerably differs from the observations. Furthermore, absorption signals at the wavelengths of Fig. 5–7 were still observable at temperatures in the range of 1300–1600 K where  $\text{I}_2$  should have disappeared by thermal decomposition (at even higher temperatures these signals finally disappeared). Apparently besides  $\text{I}_2$  an additional species must have contributed to the signals shown in Fig. 5–7 and it has similar spectral properties to  $\text{I}_2$ , but is thermally more stable. Quantum-chemical calculations of oscillator strengths (for IF,  $\text{I}_2$ , CF, CFI,  $\text{CF}_2\text{I}$ ,  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ , and  $\text{CF}_2$ , see the ESI†) indicated that this can only be IF. This species is thermally more stable than  $\text{I}_2$  (dissociation enthalpy

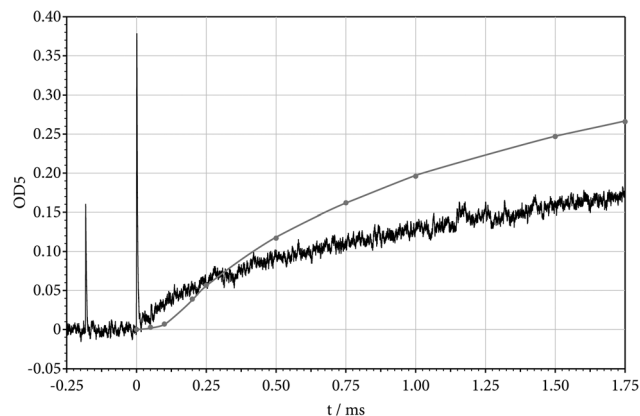
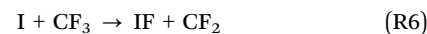


Fig. 7 Absorption signal recorded at 487 nm during the thermal decomposition of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in comparison to the simulated  $\text{I}_2$  profile (1485 ppm of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  in Ar,  $T = 1048\text{ K}$ ,  $[\text{Ar}] = 1.49 \times 10^{-4}\text{ mol cm}^{-3}$ ,  $t = 1\text{ ms}$  corresponds to  $t = 1.441/k_1$  from Section III).

$\Delta H_0^\circ = 277.3\text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for IF instead of  $148.8\text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for  $\text{I}_2$ <sup>33</sup>). Its calculated oscillator strength is even larger than that of  $\text{I}_2$  in the range of the visible spectrum (see the ESI†). Unfortunately, so far only information from the emission spectra of IF at 450–650 nm is available (see, e.g. ref. 55 and 56), but this looks consistent with the present identification of the additional species. IF might be formed in the reaction



followed by reactions consuming  $\text{CF}_2$  and the dissociation of IF. An alternative could be a second, high energy, dissociation channel of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  leading to  $\text{CF}_2 + \text{IF}$ . A problem might be seen in the endothermicity of reaction (R6), with  $\Delta H_0^\circ = 85.0\text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ .<sup>33</sup> However, this appears not to be too relevant for the high temperatures of the present work. Nevertheless, our identification of an additional absorber in Fig. 5–7 remains uncertain, such that more work is required here.

## V. Conclusions

After analysis of the decomposition mechanism of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ , the recorded absorption–time profiles of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$  of the present work lead to rate constants for the unimolecular dissociation of  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}$ . Within the experimental uncertainty of the C–I bond energy, experiments with various reactant concentrations and different detection methods are in agreement with the theoretically modelled rate constants. The latter confirm that all experiments correspond to the central part of the falloff curves of the unimolecular dissociation. Implementing experimental information on collisional energy transfer of vibrationally highly excited  $\text{CF}_3\text{I}^{18–21}$ , the modelling then is essentially free from adjustable parameters. In this respect, the present work goes beyond the usual modelling of other unimolecular reaction rate constants.

The present work also provides evidence for the intermediate formation of a species with larger thermal stability than  $\text{I}_2$  but having similar spectral features. Tentatively this species is



identified to be IF. The importance of various secondary reactions of the decomposition was discussed, but for definite conclusions we need to wait for a confirmation of the identity of IF. The comparison of the present theoretical modelling of falloff curves for CF<sub>3</sub>I dissociation with that from ref. 15 showed major differences in the extrapolated limiting low-pressure rate constants. Our detailed analysis such as that described in the ESI† proposes that this is due to the exclusion of centrifugal barriers in ref. 15.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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