HIGH-RESOLUTION NEAR-INFRARED SPECTROSCOPY OF $He/N_2/H_2$ POSITIVE-COLUMN PLASMAS

JENNIFER L. GOTTFRIED, CHRISTOPHER P. MORONG, and TAKESHI OKA, *Department of Chemistry, Department of Astronomy & Astrophysics, and the Enrico Fermi Institute, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637*.

Like its isoelectronic cousins BH_2^- and CH_2, the amidogen cation NH_2^+ has a quasilinear ground state $\widetilde{X}^3B_1$ with a low barrier to linearity (155 cm^{-1}) and metastable excited electronic states $\widetilde{a}^1A_1$ and $\widetilde{b}^1B_1$ that become degenerate ($^1\Delta$) at linearity. In addition to its theoretical interest (due to the quasilinearity and the Renner effect), NH_2^+ is one of the most fundamental molecular ions that exist abundantly in laboratory plasmas containing hydrogen and nitrogen. Despite this, only two high-resolution experimental detections of NH_2^+ have been reported (the observation of the antisymmetric N-H stretch[a] at 3360 cm^{-1}, and four hot bands[b] from 2900-3500 cm^{-1}).

In an attempt to observe the predicted near-infrared electronic absorption spectrum of NH_2^+,[c] we have recently obtained new spectra of positive ions in a liquid-nitrogen-cooled positive column $He/N_2/H_2$ plasma. The spectra were recorded using a high-resolution, high-sensitivity spectrometer based on a Ti:sapphire laser (11,000-13,000 cm^{-1}) and incorporating velocity modulation, phase modulation with heterodyne detection, noise subtraction, and optical multi-passing. The observation and assignment of the spectra is complicated by the presence of thousands of lines from the $A^2\Pi_u - X^2\Sigma_g^+$ system of N_2^+. We will report the results of our analysis of the new spectra.

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