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# A spatially separated $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$ anion in the cyanido-bridged uranium(IV) compound $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$

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**Abstract:** The reaction of uranium tetrabromide with potassium cyanide in anhydrous liquid ammonia at room temperature leads to the formation of brown crystals of  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$ . We determined the crystal structure of the compound by single crystal X-ray diffraction. To the best of our knowledge it contains the unprecedented spatially separated  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion and presents the first uranium(IV) cyanide compound which forms a layer structure. The compound crystallizes in the trigonal space group  $P\bar{3}m1$  (No. 164) with  $a=10.3246(13)$ ,  $c=8.4255(17)$  Å,  $V=777.8(3)$  Å<sup>3</sup>,  $Z=1$  at  $T=100$  K and is well described with

the Niggli formula  $2\left[\text{U}(\text{CN})_{\frac{3}{2}}(\text{NH}_3)_{\frac{7}{2}}\right]_2\left[\text{KBr}_6\right]_1$ .

**Keywords:** ammonia; bromide; crystal structure; cyanide; uranium.

**Dedicated to:** Professor Dr. rer. nat. Dr. h.c. mult. Arndt Simon on the occasion of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

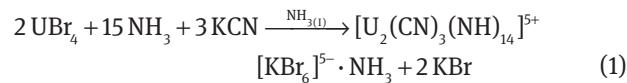
## 1 Introduction

While a multitude of cyanide complexes of the transition metals are known [1, 2], only a few cyanido complexes of uranium(IV) have been reported [3–10]. The first actinoid compound containing cyanide anions was  $\text{K}_2[\text{UO}_2(\text{CN})_4]$  described by Aloy, followed by  $\text{K}_2[\text{UO}_2(\text{CN})_2(\text{NO}_3)_2]$  [11, 12]. However, the existence of both compounds was doubted and literature suggests to regard them as non-existent [13, 14]. Besides uranium compounds containing hexacyanido complexes of group eight elements, such as  $[\text{U}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_{10}][\text{M}(\text{CN})_6]$  ( $\text{M}^{\text{II}}=\text{Fe, Ru, Os}$ ), and some

tetracyanidoplatinate(II) complexes like  $\{\text{U}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_{10}(\text{O})[\text{Pt}(\text{CN})_4]\}_3 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , also some  $\text{CN}^-$ -containing compounds with organic ligands are described [15, 16]. These are, for example  $[\text{UN}^*_{\text{3}}\text{CN}]$  ( $\text{N}^*=\text{N}(\text{SiMe}_3)_2$ ) or  $[\text{M}][(\text{UN}^*_{\text{3}})_2(\mu\text{-CN})]$  ( $\text{M}=\text{K}(18\text{-crown-6})$ ,  $\text{N}^*=\text{N}(\text{SiMe}_3)_2$ ), of which the crystal structures have been determined [8, 9]. Also, some  $\text{CN}^-$ -bridged uranium complexes with sterically demanding ligands are known [6, 7, 9, 17–19]. To the best of our knowledge a pseudo-binary uranium cyanide, such as  $\text{U}(\text{CN})_4$ , is still unknown. Our attempts and investigations on the synthesis of uranium cyanides in liquid ammonia led to the discovery of the light-green compound  $[\text{UCl}_3(\text{CN}) \cdot 4\text{NH}_3]$ , obtained from  $\text{UCl}_4$  and  $\text{NaCN}$  in liquid  $\text{NH}_3$  [3, 20]. The reaction of  $\text{UCl}_4$  with one equivalent of  $\text{KCN}$  in liquid ammonia at room temperature gave green crystals of  $[\text{U}(\text{CN})(\text{NH}_3)_8]\text{Cl}_3 \cdot \text{NH}_3$  [20]. Uranium tetraiodide,  $\text{UI}_4$ , reacts with one equivalent of  $\text{KCN}$  leading to a compound with infinite chains of cyanido- and amido-bridged uranium atoms in the crystal structure [20]. Hexaamminetricyanidouranium(IV) iodide  $[\text{U}(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_6]\text{I}$  can be obtained by increasing the concentration of  $\text{KCN}$  and heating the reaction mixture [20]. Here we present the synthesis and crystal structure of the cyanido bridged uranium(IV) compound  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$  that contains, to the best of our knowledge, an unprecedented spatially separated  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion.

## 2 Results and discussion

The reaction of  $\text{UBr}_4$  with  $\text{KCN}$  dissolved in liquid ammonia was carried out in a sealed “bomb tube” at room temperature. Over 6 months of storage and crystallization time some dark brown crystals grew of which the composition was evidenced by X-ray diffraction as tetradecaamminetricyanido- $\kappa C, \kappa N$ -diuranium(IV) hexabromidopotassiate(I) ammonia(1/1)  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$ . The formation of this compound can be described by eq. (1).



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The compound crystallizes in the trigonal space group  $\bar{P}3m1$  (No. 164) with  $a=10.3246(13)$ ,  $c=8.4255(17)$  Å,  $V=777.8(3)$  Å<sup>3</sup> and  $Z=1$  at  $T=100$  K. Selected crystallographic data and details of the structure determination are available from Table 1. Table 2 contains Wyckoff positions and atom coordinates. The crystal structure

of this compound contains the  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion and the  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}$  cation, as well as an ammonia molecule of crystallization. The  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion and the coordination sphere of the U(IV) cation are shown in Fig. 1.

The spatially separated  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion is, to the best of our knowledge, not described in the literature to date. However, a inversely comparable species has been observed in the compound  $[\text{K}_{17}(\text{Sb}_{8.2}(\text{NH}_2_2)) \cdot 17.5\text{NH}_3]$ , where  $[(\text{H}_2\text{N})\text{K}_6]$  octahedra are present that however form straight, infinite chains through *trans*-corner connections. Thus, a similarity to the crystal structure of  $\text{KNH}_2$  was noted [21]. In our case, the  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion is spatially separated and contains a potassium atom ( $1a$ ,  $\bar{3}m.$ ) as the central atom, which is surrounded by six symmetry-equivalent bromide anions ( $6i$ ,  $.m.$ ) in the shape of a distorted octahedron. The K–Br distances of such a moiety are therefore all equal with 3.2684(19) Å. This distance is in good agreement with K–Br distances observed for pure KBr (3.289(6) Å,  $T=293$  K) [22]. Interatomic distances are available from Table 3. In the compound  $\text{K}_2\text{ZnBr}_4$ , where the coordination polyhedron around  $\text{K}^+$  is a trigonal prism, the K–Br distances agree with 3.240–3.420 Å ( $T=125$  K) [23, 24]. An octahedral coordination polyhedron for potassium cations and bromide anions is also present in the compound  $\text{KInBr}_3$  [25]. There, the K–Br distances of 3.182(9) and 3.284(9) Å are also comparable with those in the spatially separated anion presented here. The Br–K–Br angles in the distorted coordination octahedron of the  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion are 102.52(4) and 77.48(4)°; in good agreement with reported data ( $\text{KInBr}_3$ : 105.09 and 74.01°) [25]. Overall, the shape of the spatially separated  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion corresponds well to the literature.

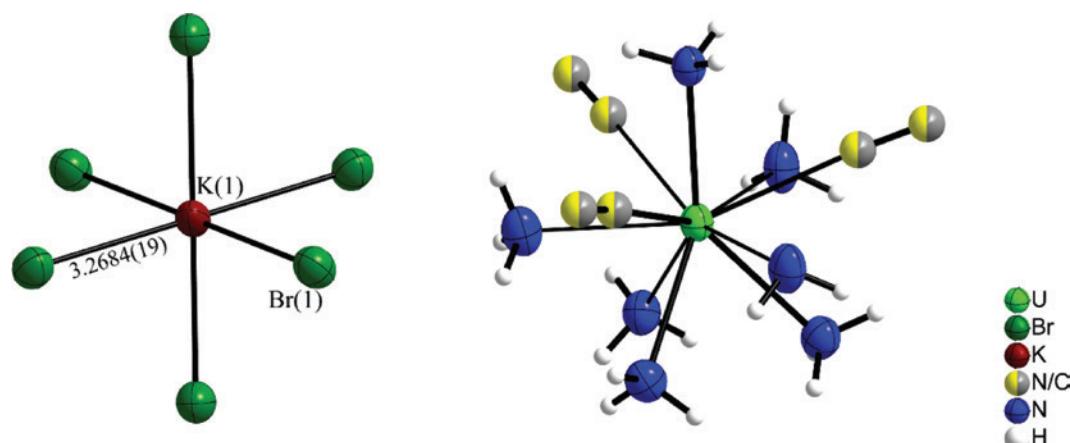
The uranium atom occupies the Wyckoff position  $2d$  ( $3m.$ ) and is surrounded by seven ammine ligands and three cyanido ligands. The coordination polyhedron can be described as a slightly distorted sphenocorona (Johnson solid  $J_{86}$ ). This sphenocorona, with a

**Table 1:** Selected crystallographic data and details of the structure determination of  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$ .

Formula	$[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$
Molar mass/g · mol <sup>-1</sup>	1328.09
Space group (No.)	$\bar{P}3m1$ (164)
$a/\text{\AA}$	10.3246(13)
$c/\text{\AA}$	8.4255(17)
$V/\text{\AA}^3$	777.8(3)
$Z$	1
Pearson symbol	$hP108$
$\rho_{\text{calcd.}}/\text{g} \cdot \text{cm}^{-3}$	2.84
$\mu/\text{mm}^{-1}$	18.3
Color	Brown
Crystal habitus	Block
Crystal size/mm <sup>3</sup>	0.1 · 0.1 · 0.05
$T/\text{K}$	100(2)
Radiation; $\lambda/\text{\AA}$	$\text{MoK}\alpha$ ; 0.71073
No. of reflections	14745
$\theta$ range/°	3.322–29.357
Range of Miller indices $hkl$	$\pm 14, \pm 14, \pm 11$
Absorption correction	multi-scan
$T_{\text{max}}; T_{\text{min}}$	0.430; 0.204
Completeness of the data set	0.995
No. of unique reflections	816
$R_{\text{int}}; R_o$	0.0556; 0.0572
No. of parameters	39
No. of restrains	0
No. of constrains	0
$S$ (all data)	1.247
$R(F)$ ( $I > 2\sigma(I)$ ; all data)	0.0555; 0.0571
$wR(F^2)$ ( $I > 2\sigma(I)$ ; all data)	0.1360; 0.1413
Extinction coefficient	0.0102(18)
$\Delta\rho_{\text{max}}; \Delta\rho_{\text{min}}/\text{e} \cdot \text{\AA}^{-3}$	2.57; -2.53

**Table 2:** Atomic coordinates and equivalent isotropic displacement parameters  $U_{\text{iso}}$  for  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$ .

Atom	Wyckoff position	$x$	$y$	$z$	$U_{\text{iso}}/\text{\AA}^2$	S.O.F.
U(1)	2d	1/3	2/3	0.35808(10)	0.0188(4)	1
N(1)	6i	0.4707(7)	-x	0.4790(14)	0.021(2)	0.5
C(1)	6i	0.4707(7)	-x	0.4790(14)	0.021(2)	0.5
N(2)	2d	1/3	2/3	0.651(2)	0.020(4)	1
N(3)	6i	0.4320(7)	-x	0.1310(14)	0.025(2)	1
N(4)	6i	0.1870(7)	2x	0.3585(16)	0.028(3)	1
N(5)	1b	0	0	1/2	0.061(13)	1
K(1)	1a	0	0	0	0.0341(18)	1
Br(1)	6i	0.16461(11)	-x	0.8313(2)	0.0417(5)	1

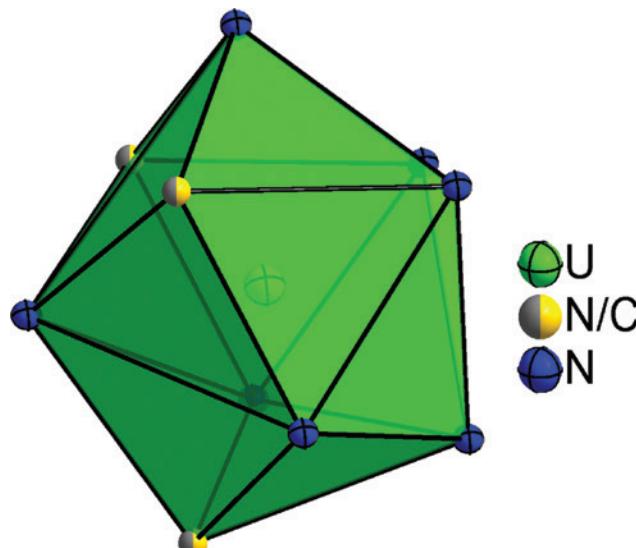


**Fig. 1:** Section of the crystal structure of  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$ , showing the octahedron-like  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion (left) and the coordination of the U(IV) cation (right). The displacement ellipsoids are shown at the 70% probability level at  $T=100$  K. As some of the H atoms show site disorder, only one set of positions is shown.

**Table 3:** Selected interatomic distances  $d$  and their multiplicities  $m$  for  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$ .

Atom1	Atom2	$m$	$d/\text{\AA}$
U(1)	N/C(1)	3	2.659(13)
	N(2)	1	2.47(2)
	N(3)	3	2.603(12)
	N(4)	3	2.616(13)
N/C(1)	N/C(1)	1	1.11(3)
K(1)	Br(1)	6	3.2684(19)

mild distortion of its top quadrangle is shown in Fig. 2. The three disordered cyanido ligands are  $\kappa C, \kappa N$ -bridging two symmetry-equivalent uranium atoms. The  $\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$  bond length of the disordered cyanido ligand is  $1.11(3)$  Å and despite the disorder it agrees well with  $\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$  bond lengths of cyanido ligands described in the literature [26–29]. Because of space group symmetry, the C and N atoms of the cyanide anion are indistinguishable and a statistical distribution with a 50:50 mixed site occupancy of the atom position  $6i$  ( $m$ ) was applied in the refinement. The cyanide anion resides symmetrically in between the bridged U atoms. The U–N distances for the seven ammine ligands range from  $2.47(2)$  to  $2.659(13)$  Å and are also in good agreement with distances observed for ammine ligands in the uranium-ammonia system [20]. Because of the different distances between the uranium atom and the ten ligands, the sphenocorona is slightly distorted. As the U atoms are bridged by the cyanido ligands, the complex cation forms corrugated infinite layers parallel to the  $ab$  plane. This connection can be described by the Niggli formula  $\left[ \left[ \text{U}(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_7 \right] \right]_2$ . A section of one



**Fig. 2:** Section of the crystal structure of  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$ , showing the coordination sphere of the uranium atom, which is surrounded by ten ligands in the shape of a slightly distorted sphenocorona (Johnson solid  $J_{86}$ ). A view along the trigonal prism of the sphenocorona is selected. The displacement ellipsoids are shown at the 70% probability level at  $T=100$  K.

layer is shown in Fig. 3 left. As every sphenocorona is connected to three others, a motif of packed sphenocoronas is obtained that reminds of the arrangement of As atoms in the crystal structure of grey arsenic (Fig. 3 right), which is best seen when viewed parallel to the  $c$  axis. Overall, the sphenocoronas show AB stacking, that is, the AB layers are stacked directly above each other and channels parallel to the  $c$  axis result (Fig. 3 right).

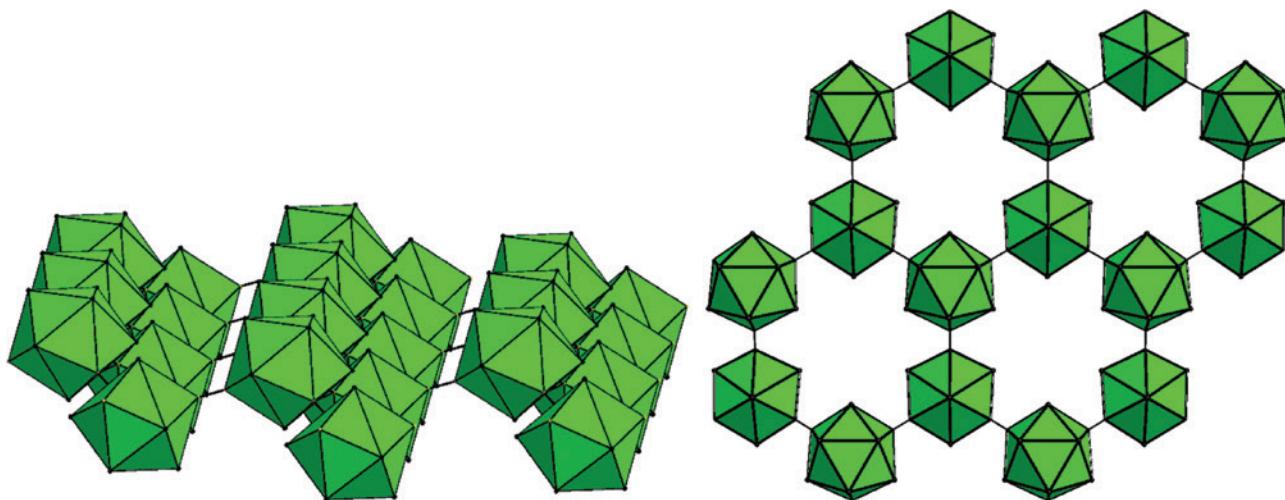


Fig. 3: Section of the crystal structure showing a corrugated  $^2\left\{ \left[ \text{U}(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_7 \right] \right\}$  layer (left) and a view along the  $c$  axis (right).

The  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anions fill the octahedral voids, with the potassium atom K(1) occupying the Wyckoff position  $1a$  ( $\bar{3}m$ ). The complex anion can be described by the Niggli formula  $^0\left\{ \left[ \text{KBr}_6 \right] \right\}$ . The motif of the arrangement of sphenocoronas and  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anions corresponds overall to an ABC-type stacking. Leaving the Br, C, and N atoms aside and looking only on the arrangement of the K and U atoms, one recognizes that the K atoms are surrounded octahedron-like by U atoms. These octahedra reside in the  $ab$  planes and share common edges corresponding to the Niggli formula  $^2\left\{ \left[ \text{KU}_6 \right] \right\}$ . The arrangement of the potassium and uranium atoms reminds of the  $\text{Ag}_2\text{F}$  structure type [30]. The ammonia molecules of crystallization, with the N(5) atom on the  $1b$  ( $\bar{3}m$ ) position, are thus also surrounded octahedron-like by six uranium atoms, however these octahedra are strongly compressed along the threefold symmetry axis parallel to the crystallographic  $c$  axis. These polyhedra form  $^2\left\{ \left[ \text{NU}_6 \right] \right\}$  layers which reside at  $z=1/2$  parallel to the  $ab$  plane. Thus, the layers of  $^2\left\{ \left[ \text{NU}_6 \right] \right\}$  octahedra are sharing common faces with the  $^2\left\{ \left[ \text{KU}_6 \right] \right\}$  octahedra. The crystal structure of the compound is shown in Fig. 4.

Between the layers of the interconnected uranium atoms and the spatially separated  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anions the only attractive interactions are  $\text{N}-\text{H} \cdots \text{Br}$  hydrogen bonds. The hydrogen atoms of the ammine ligands (N(2), N(3) and N(4)) form hydrogen bonds to the bromine atoms Br(1). The donor  $\cdots$  acceptor distances of these hydrogen bonds

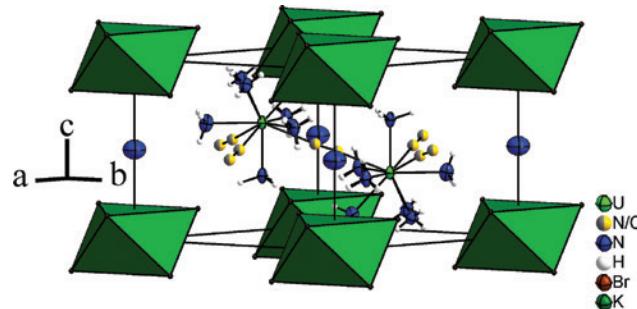


Fig. 4: Section of the crystal structure of  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$ . The  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anions are shown as dark green polyhedra. Displacement ellipsoids are shown at the 70% probability level at  $T=100$  K, H atoms isotropic with arbitrary radii. H atoms of the ammonia molecules of crystallization could not be located.

range from  $3.377(10)$  to  $3.642(8)$  Å. This is in good agreement with known  $\text{N}-\text{H} \cdots \text{Br}$  hydrogen bonds for example in  $[\text{Co}(\text{NH}_3)_6]\text{Br}(\text{S}_2\text{O}_3) \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$  ( $3.509(4)$  to  $3.539(3)$  Å,  $T=295$  K) or in  $[\text{CoCO}_3(\text{NH}_3)_5]\text{Br} \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$  ( $3.41$ – $3.63$  Å) [31, 32].

### 3 Conclusions

Single crystals of  $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$  ( $P\bar{3}m1$ , No. 164) were obtained by the reaction of  $\text{UBr}_4$  and  $\text{KCN}$  dissolved in liquid ammonia at room temperature over several months of crystallization time. The crystal structure of this compound has been determined and found to contain two peculiar building units: (i) The uranium atoms are coordinated by ten ligands in total of which seven are ammine and three are cyanido ligands. The coordination

sphere of the U atom is described best as a sphenocorona. The connection of the  $\kappa C, \kappa N$ -cyanido bridged uranium atoms leads to the formation of infinite corrugated layers of sphenocoronas. (ii) The unprecedented spatially separated, octahedron-like  $[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-}$  anion could be observed for the first time.

## 4 Experimental section

All work was carried out excluding moisture and air in an atmosphere of dried and purified argon (5.0, Praxair) using high vacuum glass lines and a glovebox (MBraun). The glass vessels were flame dried several times under vacuum before being used. Aluminum bromide (Alfa Aesar, 98%) was purified by sublimation *in vacuo*. Aluminum (Fluka, purum >99%), as well as uranyl nitrate (Riedel de Haën, zur Analyse), was used as supplied.

### 4.1 Synthesis of $\text{UO}_2$

12.8 g of  $\text{UO}_2(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (25.4 mmol) was decomposed to 7.13 g  $\text{U}_3\text{O}_8$  (8.47 mmol) by heating to 700°C in air for 12 h inside an open silica test tube. The black product was powdered in air and reduced in a stream of hydrogen at 800°C for 8 h to obtain 6.86 g (24.9 mmol, 98%) of phase pure  $\text{UO}_2$ .

### 4.2 Synthesis of $\text{UBr}_4$

$\text{UBr}_4$  was synthesized according to the literature [33]. An ampoule was charged with 1088 mg  $\text{UO}_2$  (4 mmol) and 2150 + 65 mg  $\text{AlBr}_3$  (8 mmol + transport agent) and flame sealed under vacuum ( $1 \times 10^{-3}$  mbar). The starting materials were reacted at 250°C for 12 h before the transport reaction was conducted with a source temperature of 350°C and a sink temperature of 230°C. One thousand nine hundred and seventy-eight milligram (4.3 mmol, 86%) of large brown plate-shaped crystals of  $\text{UBr}_4$  were obtained after 6 days.

### 4.3 Synthesis of $[\text{U}_2(\text{CN})_3(\text{NH}_3)_{14}]^{5+}[\text{KBr}_6]^{5-} \cdot \text{NH}_3$

Thirty milligram of  $\text{UBr}_4$  (0.05 mmol) and 13 mg of KCN (0.2 mmol, 4 eq.) were reacted with liquid ammonia in a flame sealed glass ampoule (bomb tube made of borosilicate glass, 6 mm diameter with 1.5 mm wall thickness) at room temperature for 6 months.

### 4.4 Single-crystal X-ray diffraction

A crystal of the title compound was selected under nitrogen-cooled, pre-dried perfluorinated oil and mounted using a MiTeGen loop. Intensity data of a suitable crystal was recorded with an IPDS 2T diffractometer (STOE & Cie). The diffractometer was operated with  $\text{MoK}\alpha$  radiation ( $\lambda = 0.71073$  Å, graphite monochromator) and equipped with an image plate detector. Evaluation, integration and reduction of the diffraction data was carried out using the X-AREA software suite [34]. A numerical absorption correction was applied with the modules X-SHAPE and X-RED32 of the X-AREA software suite. The structure was solved with dual-space methods (SHELXT-2014/5) and refined against  $F^2$  (SHELXL-2014/7) [35, 36]. All atoms were refined with anisotropic displacement parameters. The highest residual electron density after the final refinement was 1.142 Å distant from atom K(1).

CCDC 1959129 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif).

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