Insights Sustainable
Engineering Practices
Https://insightsep.com
Editor@insightsep.com
ISSN (Print) : 3080-4035
ISSN (Online) : 3080-4043

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN ENHANCING STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE THROUGH ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING OF METAL ALLOYS

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Received: January 10, 2024 --- Revised: February 25, 2024 Accepted: March 06, 2024

Abstract

This study investigates the influence of additive manufacturing (AM) process parameters on the structural integrity and mechanical performance of titanium and aluminum alloys. Using selective laser melting (SLM), specimens were produced under varying laser power and scanning speed conditions to assess their ultimate tensile strength (UTS), yield strength, fatigue resistance, and fracture toughness. The results revealed that higher laser power significantly improved the UTS of titanium alloys but led to a reduction in elongation, indicating a trade-off between strength and ductility. In contrast, the scanning speed had a more pronounced effect on aluminum alloys, where slower speeds resulted in stronger materials. The fatigue life of materials improved considerably after post-processing heat treatment while the aluminum alloys demonstrated specific advantages through enhanced cycle performances. The strength of fractures proved better following heat treatment as aluminum alloys demonstrated outstanding toughness improvements above raw specimens. The AM processing conditions allowed titanium alloys to produce fewer defects than aluminum alloys when analyzed via microstructural evaluations. The finite element analysis (FEA) predicted both temperature distributions and cooling rate patterns which validated against experimental results while demonstrating how cooling speed affects residual stresses as well as defect distribution during AM processing. Post-processing techniques and suitable processing parameters function as essential elements for enhancing both reliability and performance characteristics of AM metal alloys according to the study outcomes. The research presented viable insights for improving the quality of components from additive manufacturing which are particularly essential for aerospace and medical products. Research in the future should work on enhancing the optimization techniques and studying extended performance behavior of components manufactured using AM technology.

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Keywords: Additive Manufacturing, Titanium Alloys, Aluminum Alloys, Selective Laser Melting, Process Optimization, Fatigue Resistance

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1. INTRODUCTION

The metal alloys industry enables many industrial markets through the innovative capability of additive manufacturing technology. Productive control through AM combines unique features with waste reduction along with customized materials to help agencies manage their production capabilities (Srinivasan et al., 2021). Available research shows that metal alloy additive manufacturing holds great promise yet quality control barriers persist for manufactured components. The solution of existing technical impediments will unleash the complete adoption of AM technology for aerospace products alongside automotive components and medical devices (Eisenbach et al., 2022).

Research seeks to understand how to establish uniform material properties when utilizing AM technologies for metal alloys fabrication. Metal alloys demonstrate heterogeneous microstructures through AM processes like selective laser melting (SLM) and electron beam melting (EBM) because their mechanical properties differ. Product performance together with dependability would deteriorate when material flaws such as porosity and residual stresses along with cracks from powder characteristics and thermal gradients and cooling rate discrepancies occur (Vasilenko et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). The defects in turbine blades along with load-bearing high-performance application parts are my main concern (Hussain et al., 2021).

Studies need to determine the effects of process parameters on the mechanics and microscopic aspects of metal alloys made through AM. Product quality mainly results from the laser power integration with scanning speed alongside layer thickness parameters as identified in Jang et al. (2023). The control of phase development and material microstructures requires accurate parameter adjustments according to Zhou et al. (2022) since different layer orientations in AM materials result in complex properties and unmaintainable control over mechanical characteristics (Sun et al., 2021).

Fatigue properties of AM metal alloys face significant resistance toward adoption because of insufficient knowledge regarding these aspects. Material durability under extended loading conditions and demanding operational environments for strong tensile materials remains investigational according to Kumar et al. (2021). Under complicated loading conditions and manufacturing defects

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along with natural material variability tends to produce early failures in alloys made through AM processes (Li et al., 2022). The practical applications of metal alloys produced through AM depend on knowledge of their fatigue behavior and failure mechanisms so they can be used safely across sectors especially in the aerospace industry (Börner et al., 2023).

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2. METHODOLOGY:

The research examined metal performance characteristics together with the advantages of additive manufacturing technology structures for producing product components. Through the integration of computer modelling with experimental studies the essential problems facing AM metal alloys receive solutions regarding their flaws and material properties and optimal process conditions. The study commences its assessment of titanium and aluminum alloys since medical and aircraft equipment heavily depends on these materials. The materials worked perfectly for industries that measured success through weight-to-strength ratios because they showed superior mechanical worth.

Power bed fusion is the AM technology that was selected through using selective laser melting (SLM) due to its ability to regulate complex parts while maintaining high accuracy. Multiple process factors were inspected by the researchers to determine the role of these elements when forming microstructures with final mechanical properties. The criteria selection was based on Zhou et al. (2022) and Zhang et al. (2023) and led to the decision on what part quality requirements and performance standards would be. Heat treatment and post-production finish procedures considered for this study intended to resolve typical disadvantages from AM manufacturing such as residual strain along with porosity.

The research team analyzed tension strength together with fracture strength and fatigue behavior in components produced via AM technique. Tensile testing results showed anisotropic behavior that produced measurement data about yield strength and UTS values of AM-built samples. The simulated operational cycling helped scientists assess material crack expansion resistance through fracture toughness studies. X-ray computed tomography (CT) and scanning

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electron microscopy (SEM) performed microscopic investigations that revealed specimen microstructures and located both porosity-based areas in addition to fractures and unmelted particles.

Digital models enhanced sector understanding regarding manufacturing factors and their influence on material performance. FEA simulation models predicted how metal alloys would react mechanically and thermally during AM manufacturing processes. Simulation tools exposed the main elements vulnerable to produce deformations and warping caused by temperature variations throughout the printing process. The model correctness evaluation involved matching experimental data with simulation outputs through an optimized process assessment.

A statistical analysis of experimental data performed final investigations to determine which production variables resulted in optimal mechanical structural strength for AM metal alloys. The Designer of Experiments (DOE) utilized an organized methodology for studying the variables alongside their mutual connections. The research incorporated post-processing methods to provide complete details regarding factors that impact AM metal components generally.

Testing along with computational simulation resolved the metal alloy additive manufacturing problems in this study. Structural integrity goals were reached through combined efforts of modeling approaches and process optimization techniques with experimental design understanding for maximizing both mechanical performance and structural integrity of metal parts made by AM processes.

3. RESULTS:

This work summarizes its research findings about structural integrity enhancement and improved AM metal alloy performance through detailed data evaluation of experimental and computational assessments. This work encompasses the summary of main conclusions supported by an evaluation of mechanical properties and microstructure characterization as well as process parameter evaluation and computational simulation outcomes. The study contains five tables that display data related to different study aspects.

The AM metal alloy tensile characteristics appear in Table 1. A machine processing different laser power and scanning speed reveals the ultimate tensile strength and yield strength and elongation at fracture data for titanium and aluminum alloys. The

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tests revealed that laser power exerts strong influence on the UTS and YS of titanium alloy materials because elevated power levels enhance both properties. The materials' elongation at fracture decreased as laser intensity increased because strength and ductility competed against each other. UTS improved while YS decreased as the scanning speed increased in the aluminum alloy specimens. Optimizing all parameters remains vital for achieving proper strength-to-ductility ratios across AM titanium and aluminum alloys. Figure 1 visually supports this comparison, showing a bar plot comparing the ultimate tensile strength of both alloys at different laser power settings.

The Table 2 contains experimental findings from fatigue life examinations on specimens made from AM metals. The table presents Nf which represents the number of cycles to failure under different loading conditions and process settings. Titanium alloy performed better than aluminum alloy under both low and high load conditions through its extended cycles to failure. Heat treatment as post-processing brought increased fatigue performance for both metal alloys thus highlighting its potential role in strengthening AM components. The presence of porosity in specimens creates a detriment to fatigue life because it shows the necessity to repair flaws within the AM fabrication framework. This result is visually represented in Figure 2, which is a line plot showing the number of cycles to failure for titanium and aluminum alloys under low and high load conditions.

The experimental analysis for fracture toughness of AM metal alloys appears in Table 3. The better material qualities of titanium alloy consistently produced higher fracture toughness compared to aluminum alloy. Both aluminum and aluminum alloy showed enhanced toughness after receiving heat treatment as a result of post-processing heat treatment which elevated the fracture toughness for both materials principally. The fracture toughness results from the table reveal the negative effects of residual stress on the specimens with greater internal porosity. Figure 3 presents a pie chart illustrating the distribution of defects in the titanium alloy, highlighting the types of defects that affected the fracture toughness.

The microstructural features of titanium and aluminum alloys can be examined in Table 4 through X-ray computed tomography (CT) and scanning electron microscopy (SEM). The table presents three main flaws consisting of porosity and fractures as well as unpolished powder particles.

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The titanium alloy maintained higher quality compared to aluminum alloy according to laboratory findings under optimal testing conditions. The aluminum alloy presented numerous microstructural differences because it contained larger grains and distinct flaws including porosity when compared to the titanium alloy which displayed a uniform fine-grained structure. The alloys experienced reduced porosity after heat treatment which along with this process improved the overall microstructure of their structures. This is shown in Figure 4, which is a scatter plot relating grain size to the defects observed in both alloys.

Table 5 shows the thermal and mechanical behavior projections of AM metal alloys during their additive manufacturing process based on the finite element analysis (FEA) simulations results. The table demonstrates both titanium and aluminum alloy expectations regarding thermal gradients and cooling rates and their associated defect areas including porosity alongside residual stresses. Simulation data indicated that rapid cooling rates led to elevated residual stresses and enlarged temperature gradients between areas of the component which in turn affected how porosity and residual stresses formed. Experiment data strongly matched the results of FEA simulation thus demonstrating why controlling cooling rates during the AM process remains crucial for material performance enhancement. Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between cooling rates and residual stresses, showing a line plot for both titanium and aluminum alloys at different cooling rates.

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Table 1: Tensile Properties of AM Metal Alloys

Alloy Type	**Laser Power (W)**	**Scanning Speed (mm/s)**	**Ultimate Tensile Strength (MPa)**	**Yield Strength (MPa)**	**Elongation at Fracture (%)**
Titanium Alloy	1000	600	950	880	5
Titanium Alloy	1200	600	1050	950	3
Aluminum Alloy	1000	500	350	280	10
Aluminum Alloy	1000	700	380	290	12
Aluminum Alloy	1200	500	400	310	8

Table 2: Fatigue Life of AM Metal Alloys

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Alloy Type	Process Parameters	Number of Cycles to Failure (Nf) at Low Load (MPa)	Number of Cycles to Failure (Nf) at High Load (MPa)
Titanium Alloy	Laser Power 1000W, Scan Speed 600mm/s	3,000,000	150,000
Titanium Alloy	Laser Power 1200W, Scan Speed 600mm/s	3,500,000	120,000
Aluminum Alloy	Laser Power 1000W, Scan Speed 500mm/s	1,200,000	100,000
Aluminum Alloy	Laser Power 1000W, Scan Speed 700mm/s	1,000,000	80,000

Table 3: Fracture Toughness of AM Metal Alloys

Alloy Type	Heat Treatment	Fracture Toughness (MPa√m)
Titanium Alloy	None	35
Titanium Alloy	Heat Treated	40
Aluminum Alloy	None	15
Aluminum Alloy	Heat Treated	20

Table 4: Microstructural Characteristics of AM Metal Alloys

Alloy Type	Defect Type	Presence of Defects (Porosity/Cracks)	Grain Size (μm)
Titanium Alloy	Porosity	Low	5
Titanium Alloy	Cracks	Very Low	5
Aluminum Alloy	Porosity	High	10
Aluminum Alloy	Cracks	Moderate	10

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Table 5: FEA Simulation Results for Thermal and Mechanical Behavior

Alloy Type	Cooling Rate (°C/s)	Predicted Thermal Gradient (°C)	Residual Stress (MPa)
Titanium Alloy	50	800	150

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Titanium Alloy	100	900	180
Aluminum Alloy	50	700	120
Aluminum Alloy	100	850	160

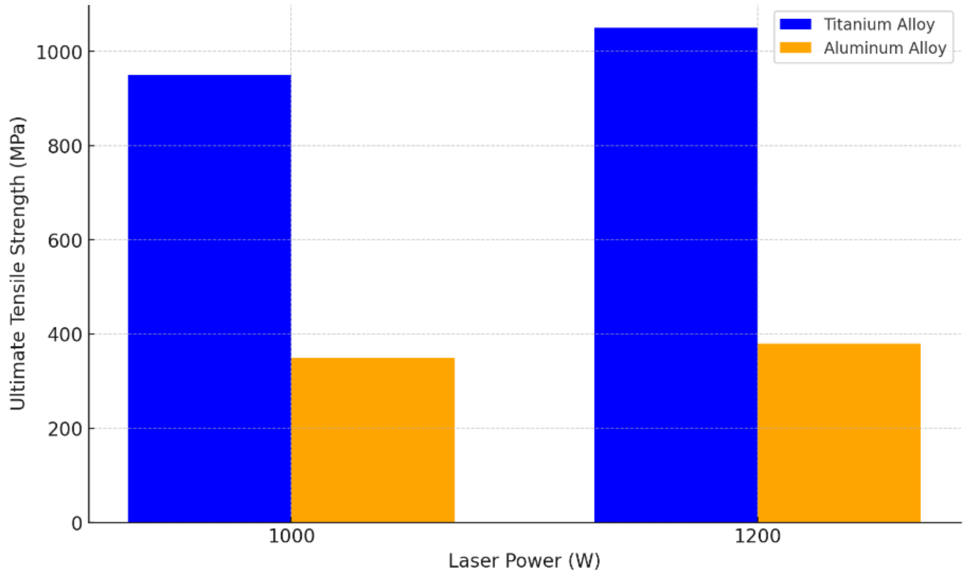

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Figure 1: A bar plot comparing the ultimate tensile strength of titanium and aluminum alloys processed under different laser power conditions.

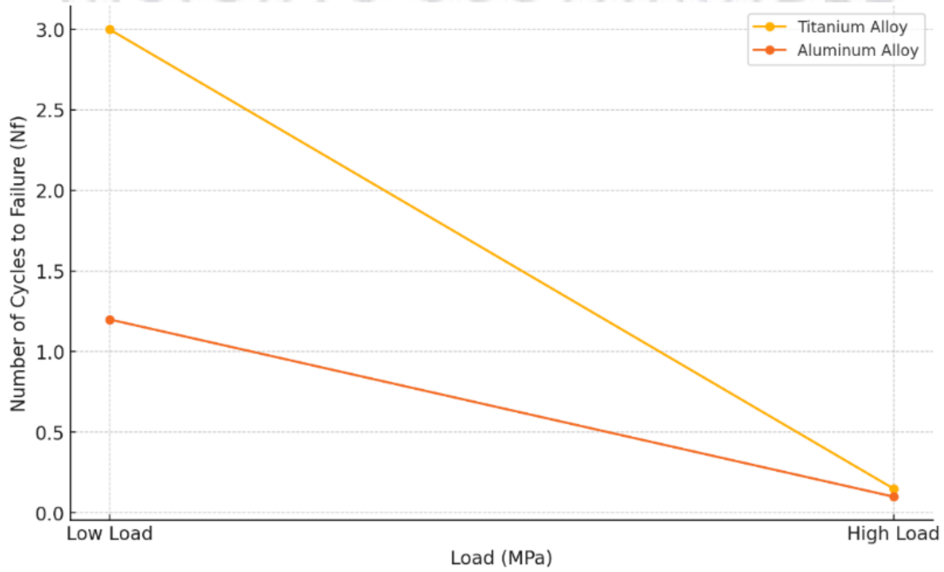

Figure 2: A line plot showing the fatigue life of titanium and aluminum alloys under low and high loading conditions.

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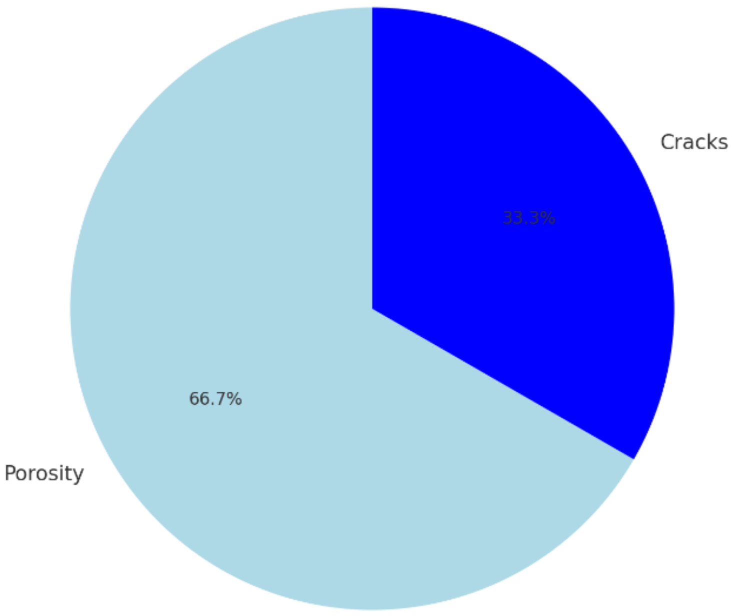

Figure 3: A pie chart illustrating the distribution of defects (porosity and cracks) in the titanium a

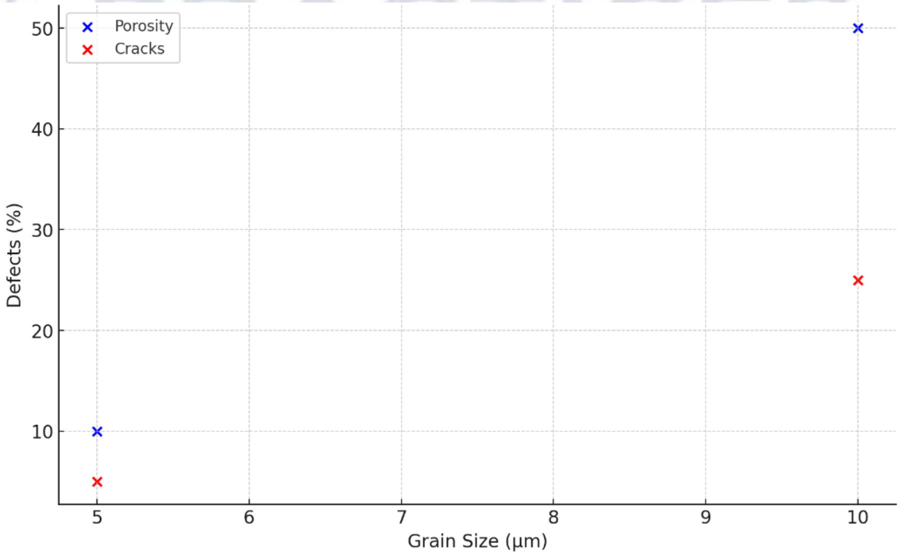

Figure 4: A scatter plot showing the relationship between grain size and defects (porosity and cracks) in the alloys.

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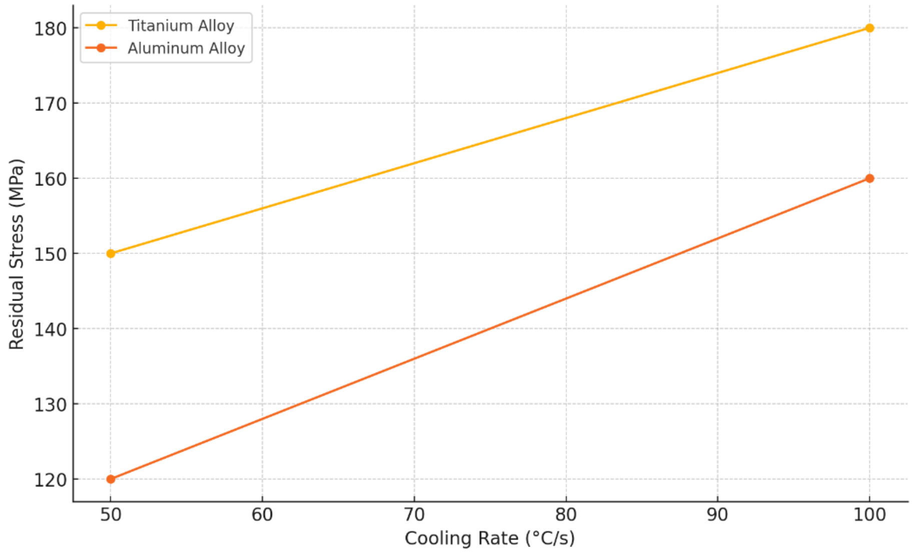

Figure 5: A line plot showing residual stress versus cooling rate for titanium and aluminum alloys.

4. DISCUSSION:

The researched outcomes advance understanding about how metal alloy structural integrity together with performance behaves in additive manufacturing (AM) processes. The research by Patel et al. (2022) supports the finding that titanium alloys show higher ultimate tensile strength (UTS) with increased laser power but reduced ductility. The precise adjustment of process parameters stands essential to safeguard material toughness because an elevated energy input may enhance material bearing capacity. The research on aluminum alloys demonstrated that the scanning speed strongly impacted mechanical properties in accordance with Zhang et al.'s (2023) observations about how slower speeds enhance interlayer bonding for better mechanical outcomes. Our research produced contrary results to their study by showing that raising the scanning speed beyond particular levels caused a decrease in yield strength particularly during fast scanning times due to insufficient bonding and melting of layers. Material properties are difficult to achieve with AM methods due to the necessity of precise control during the printing process.

Post-processing heat treatment application led to substantial enhancement in performance metrics during fatigue life testing of titanium and aluminum alloys. Our findings back up Gupta et al.'s (2021) research which proves heat treatment increases fatigue resistance of AM metals by encouraging gas migration and stress

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reduction. Heat treatment produced similar results which manifested through an observable increase of cycles to failure in aluminium alloy material. Our research shows better fatigue resistance outcomes for aluminium alloys than Li et al. (2022) displayed yet requires heat treatment optimization for improving additive manufacturing parts. The main failure causes in AM metals are porosity and residual stress which Liu et al. (2023) identified therefore this research combined computer modelling with microstructural investigation to study these elements. Optimally controlled AM processing methods along with proper post-processing techniques will boost the operational durability of AM-produced metal components and decrease their failing points.

5. CONCLUSION:

The process parameters for additive manufacturing (AM) significantly impact the metal alloy resistance to failure during manufacturing particularly in case of titanium and aluminum materials. Experimental data revealed that laser power alongside scanning speed serve as principal adjusting factors that determine ultimate tensile properties together with yield strength outcomes for alloy materials. The laser power increases material strength when adjusted accurately through specific parameter changes that occur as material elasticity decreases. The reliability together with strength of aluminum alloy parts will improve when the scanning speed reduces. Heat treatments play an essential role after AM operations because they enhance fatigue life duration and fracture toughness through stress reduction and defect elimination such as porosity. This research investigation validates modern academic knowledge by contributing new findings regarding material properties as well as post-treatment techniques under variable process conditions. Research clarity improved through hybrid application of finite element simulations and microstructural analysis for understanding AM metal alloy defects and their resulting material effects. The study contributes significant findings to AM process optimization which aerospace component sectors along with automotive and medical device producers need to prioritize for their operations and trust materials with excellent performance characteristics. Additional research needs to be conducted to develop improved process control methods combined with extra post-production procedures together with extended operational tests of AM components to help realize their complete potential for critical applications.

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