

Planetary Ions Acceleration in a Hot Flow Anomaly at Mars

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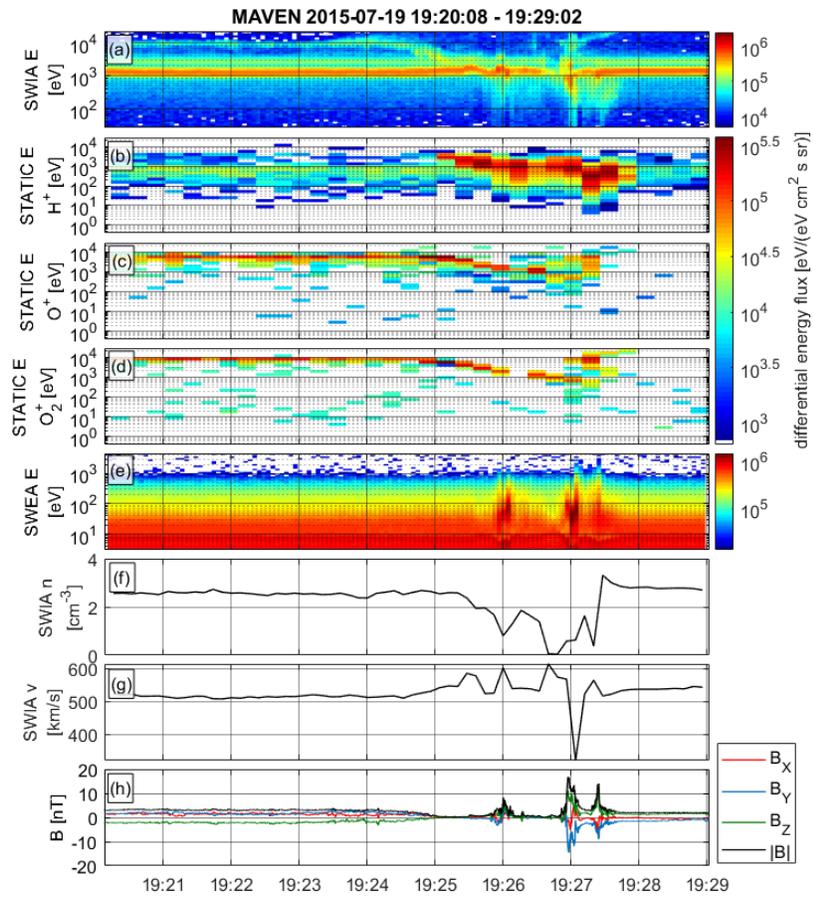
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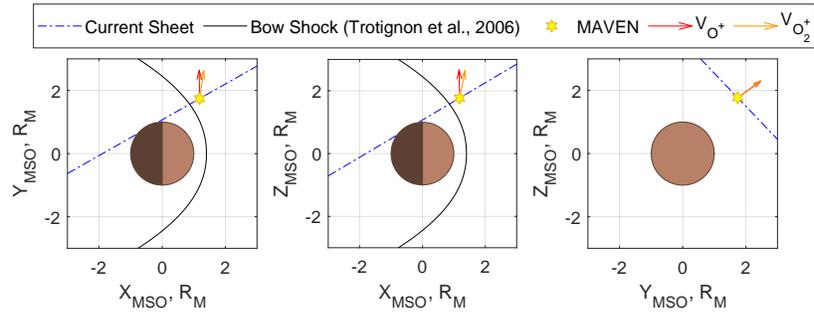
Abstract

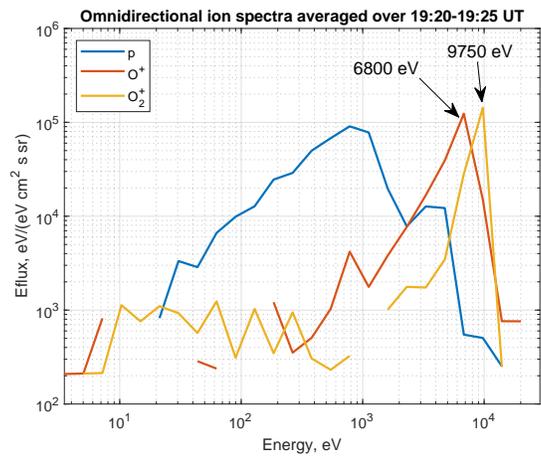
Previous observation of a single hot flow anomaly (HFA) at Earth by MMS mission reported solar wind protons effective acceleration inside these structures to nearly 1 MeV under certain conditions via first-order Fermi acceleration process. Current study focuses on the analysis of a single HFA registered at Mars by MAVEN spacecraft. The event is characterized by the presence of accelerated O⁺ and O²⁺ ions of planetary origin on both sides from the current sheet associated with the event. Ions with energies up to ~10 keV are detected before the current sheet crossing, and over 30 keV after the current sheet crossing. We report that the relationship between the ion mass and the maximum energy to which acceleration occurs is consistent with the above-mentioned Fermi acceleration process. We hypothesize that effective planetary ions acceleration in HFAs is possible only at unmagnetized planets due to closer bow shock stand-off distance.

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Planetary Ions Acceleration in a Hot Flow Anomaly at Mars

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Key Points:

- O^+ and O_2^+ ions of planetary origin accelerated in a Hot Flow Anomaly are for the first time reported to be observed at Mars
- Ions are accelerated to more than 30 keV at the trailing edge and to ~10 keV on the leading edge of the event
- The ratio of O_2^+ to O^+ maximum energy is consistent with the 1st order Fermi acceleration mechanism

13 Abstract

14 Previous observation of a single hot flow anomaly (HFA) at Earth by MMS mission reported
15 solar wind protons effective acceleration inside these structures to nearly 1 MeV under certain
16 conditions via first-order Fermi acceleration process. Current study focuses on the analysis of a
17 single HFA registered at Mars by MAVEN spacecraft. The event is characterized by the
18 presence of accelerated O^+ and O_2^+ ions of planetary origin on both sides from the current sheet
19 associated with the event. Ions with energies up to ~ 10 keV are detected before the current sheet
20 crossing, and over 30 keV after the current sheet crossing. We report that the relationship
21 between the ion mass and the maximum energy to which acceleration occurs is consistent with
22 the above-mentioned Fermi acceleration process. We hypothesize that effective planetary ions
23 acceleration in HFAs is possible only at unmagnetized planets due to closer bow shock stand-off
24 distance.

25 Plain Language Summary

26 Hot flow anomalies (HFAs) are among the largest known types of non-stationary transient events
27 that are formed when a bow shock of a planet encounters a tangential discontinuity (TD) in the
28 interplanetary magnetic field (IMF) of the solar wind that sweeps across the front of the shock,
29 under certain conditions solar wind particles are reflected from the shock to be channeled
30 upstream along the discontinuity. A shock wave is often formed on the upstream edge of a HFA.
31 As this shock sweeps across the planetary bow shock, these two shocks may converge relative to
32 each other resulting in acceleration of particles that are trapped between them, which is known as
33 the 1st order Fermi acceleration mechanism. Previously, observations of solar wind protons
34 accelerated via this mechanism have been reported in the terrestrial HFA, however, at Mars,
35 much closer bow shock stand-off distance enables for the ionospheric ions to reach the bow
36 shock of the planet when it undergoes significant disturbances as a result of TD crossing. In this
37 work we report, for the first time, direct observations of planetary oxygen ions acceleration
38 inside a HFA at Mars by The Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution Mission spacecraft.

39 1 Introduction

40 Hot flow anomalies (HFAs, Schwartz et al., 1985), along with foreshock bubbles (Turner et al.,
41 2013), are the largest known types of transient events formed at planetary bow shocks. HFAs are
42 formed when a discontinuity in the interplanetary magnetic field (IMF) travelling from the Sun
43 with the solar wind flow meets the bow shock of a planet under certain magnetic field
44 orientations and sweeps across it slowly enough to give time for plasma instabilities to develop.
45 If the motional electric field $E = -1/c V_{SW} \times B_{IMF}$ (where c is the speed of light, V_{SW} is the
46 velocity of the solar wind flow, and B_{IMF} is the local IMF vector) is directed towards the
47 discontinuity at its both sides, solar wind particles reflected from the bow shock are channeled in
48 the upstream direction along the discontinuity. Subsequent interaction of these particles with the
49 incident solar wind flow often results in formation of new fast magnetosonic shock on the
50 upstream edge of HFA (Thomsen et al., 1988, Fuselier et al., 1987). The interior of HFA

51 (sometimes referred to as “core”) is characterized by low magnetic field magnitude, increased
52 ion temperature and reduced ion number density relative to the solar wind, which is surrounded
53 by compression regions with stronger magnetic field and increased ion concentration. Inside a
54 HFA core, solar wind becomes decelerated and strongly deflected (see, e.g., Liu et al., 2016).

55 The universality of HFA phenomena is proven by their numerous in-situ observations at the most
56 of the planets in the Solar System: Mercury (Uritsky et al., 2014), Venus (Slavin et al., 2009),
57 Earth (Schwartz et al., 1985), Mars (preliminary observations were reported by Øieroset et al.,
58 2001, and then confidently confirmed by Collinson et al., 2015), Jupiter (Valek et al., 2017),
59 Saturn (Masters et al., 2008, 2009). This widespread occurrence of HFAs in heliosphere at
60 different bow shock sizes varying by several orders of magnitude implies that similar processes
61 may occur at much bigger scales, such as stellar or even galactic shocks, having an impact on the
62 medium underlying the shock surface and being responsible for processes like particle
63 accelerations at astrophysical scales.

64 Since there often is a shock wave in the upstream edge of HFA which moves with the
65 discontinuity in IMF, under certain orientation of the discontinuity relative to the bow shock a
66 combination of two converging shock waves can be formed, separated by HFA’s core carrying a
67 weak magnetic field. In such configuration, population of charged particles become trapped
68 between two shocks, reflecting at their fronts due to increased magnetic field and smaller
69 gyroradius, and gaining energy at each bounce. The acceleration process continues until the
70 particle’s gyroradius becomes large enough to pass through either of the shocks. This process is
71 known as the 1st order Fermi acceleration (Fermi, 1949), and there are recent reports observing
72 accelerated electrons (Liu et al., 2017) and solar wind protons (Turner et al., 2018) via this
73 process at terrestrial foreshock transients.

74 As HFAs and foreshock transients in general are large-scale events in terms of sizes of planets
75 and their bow shocks, they have an impact on magnetosphere and ionosphere. Thus, according to
76 estimates given in Collinson et al., 2012, 2015, a single HFA caused the rise of ionosphere below
77 it to ~70 km at Mars and to ~210 km at Venus due to the decrease of solar wind dynamic
78 pressure on the bow shock in the vicinity of HFA. There are also reports about magnetospheric
79 and ionospheric responses to terrestrial foreshock transients (Shen et al., 2018; Wang et al.,
80 2018). It can be assumed that such responses can be even more significant at planets without

81 intrinsic magnetic field as their plasma systems are more compact. Thus, the magnetosheath-
82 ionosphere disturbances triggered by the passing of a transient event in front of the
83 unmagnetized planet's bow shock may potentially enable for the ionospheric particles to reach
84 the bow shock.

85 In this paper we report, for the first time, evidence of effective planetary ions acceleration inside
86 a HFA. The analyzed event is chosen from the list of 19 HFAs registered at Mars from the
87 previous research by Shuvalov et al., 2019. No other events from the list exhibit features related
88 to heavy ions acceleration, implying the presence of a number of conditions that must be fulfilled
89 in order for such process to occur and be registered. We hypothesize that effective acceleration of
90 ions of planetary origin in HFAs (or probably other foreshock transients) can happen only at
91 unmagnetized planets, given their closer bow shock stand-off distance to the ionosphere.

92 The structure of the paper is the following: information about the instruments and data products
93 used is presented in section 2; section 3 contains the observation of the event and description of
94 its main features; we discuss the mechanism and causes of the observed acceleration process in
95 section 4; finally, the conclusions are given in section 5.

96 **2 Instrumentation and data**

97 In this research we use data obtained by the Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution spacecraft
98 (MAVEN, Jakosky et al., 2015). Launched in November 2013, it arrived at Mars in September
99 2014 and was inserted into orbit with $\sim 75^\circ$ inclination, periapsis ~ 150 km, apoapsis ~ 6200 km
100 and orbital period of ~ 4.5 hours, covering ionospheric, tail, sheath and solar wind regions of the
101 Martian plasma envelope. The data presented in the paper are from Supra-Thermal And Thermal
102 Ion Composition (STATIC), Solar Wind Ion Analyzer (SWIA) ion spectrometers, Solar Wind
103 Electron Analyzer (SWEA) electron spectrometer and magnetometer MAG from from the
104 particles and fields package onboard the spacecraft.

105 The STATIC instrument (McFadden et al., 2015) mounted on the Actuated Payload Platform is
106 used to study characteristics of different ion species at solar wind-Mars interaction. The
107 instrument consists of a toroidal top hat electrostatic spectrometer with an electrostatic deflector
108 at the entrance providing $360^\circ \times 90^\circ$ field of view (FOV) combined with a time-of-flight velocity
109 analyzer resolving the major ion species (H^+ , He^+ , O^+ , O_2^+). It measures energy spectra of ions
110 with different (m/q) in the range of 0.1 eV-30 keV with minimum cadence of 4 seconds and

111 ~15% energy resolution dE/E . The measurements allow a retrieval of the velocity distribution
112 functions and their moments (density, velocity, temperature). STATIC Level 2 d1 data product
113 (Version 2, Revision 0) was used for investigating ions of different species. This dataset contains
114 differential energy fluxes for ions over 32 energy steps, 4 polar and 16 azimuth angles for 8 mass
115 bins. The measurement cadence for the time intervals presented in the paper is 16 seconds. At
116 high count rates some proton data can be wrongly registered as ions of bigger masses due to
117 incorrect identification of start/stop signals of the time-of flight scheme. In order to diminish this
118 effect, we applied a special procedure for O^+ and O_2^+ data, in which 8% of protons differential
119 energy flux was subtracted from oxygen ion data for the same energy and angular bins.

120 SWIA (Halekas et al. 2015) is also a top-hat ion analyzer with FOV similar to that of STATIC. It
121 does not resolve ion species, however, being mounted on the solar array panel, its orientation is
122 different and chosen in a way that its FOV could continuously observe the direction to the Sun.
123 The energy range of the instrument is from 5 eV to 25 keV per ion charge, energy resolution
124 $dE/E \sim 10\%$. We utilize SWIA onboard survey spectra data bundle (Version 1, Revision 1)
125 which provides ion differential energy fluxes for 48 energy steps, and SWIA key parameters data
126 bundle (Version 18, Revision 3) for obtaining ion number density and bulk velocity derived from
127 the instrument's measurements. The data cadences for these data bundles during the analyzed
128 time interval are 4 and 8 seconds, respectively.

129 SWEA (Mitchell et al., 2016) is a top-hat electron analyzer with energy range from 5 eV to
130 4.6 keV, FOV $360^\circ \times 120^\circ$ and energy resolution $dE/E \sim 17\%$. We use SWEA survey rate omni-
131 directional electron energy spectra data collection (Version 4, Revision 1) containing differential
132 energy fluxes of electrons for 64 energy steps with time cadence of 4 seconds for the time
133 interval presented in the paper.

134 MAG (Connerney et al., 2015a, 2015b) is a 3-component magnetometer providing data in
135 60000 nT dynamic range with 0.05 nT resolution and 32 Hz time cadence. We use MAG
136 Level 2 data bundle (Version 1, Revision 2) in current research.

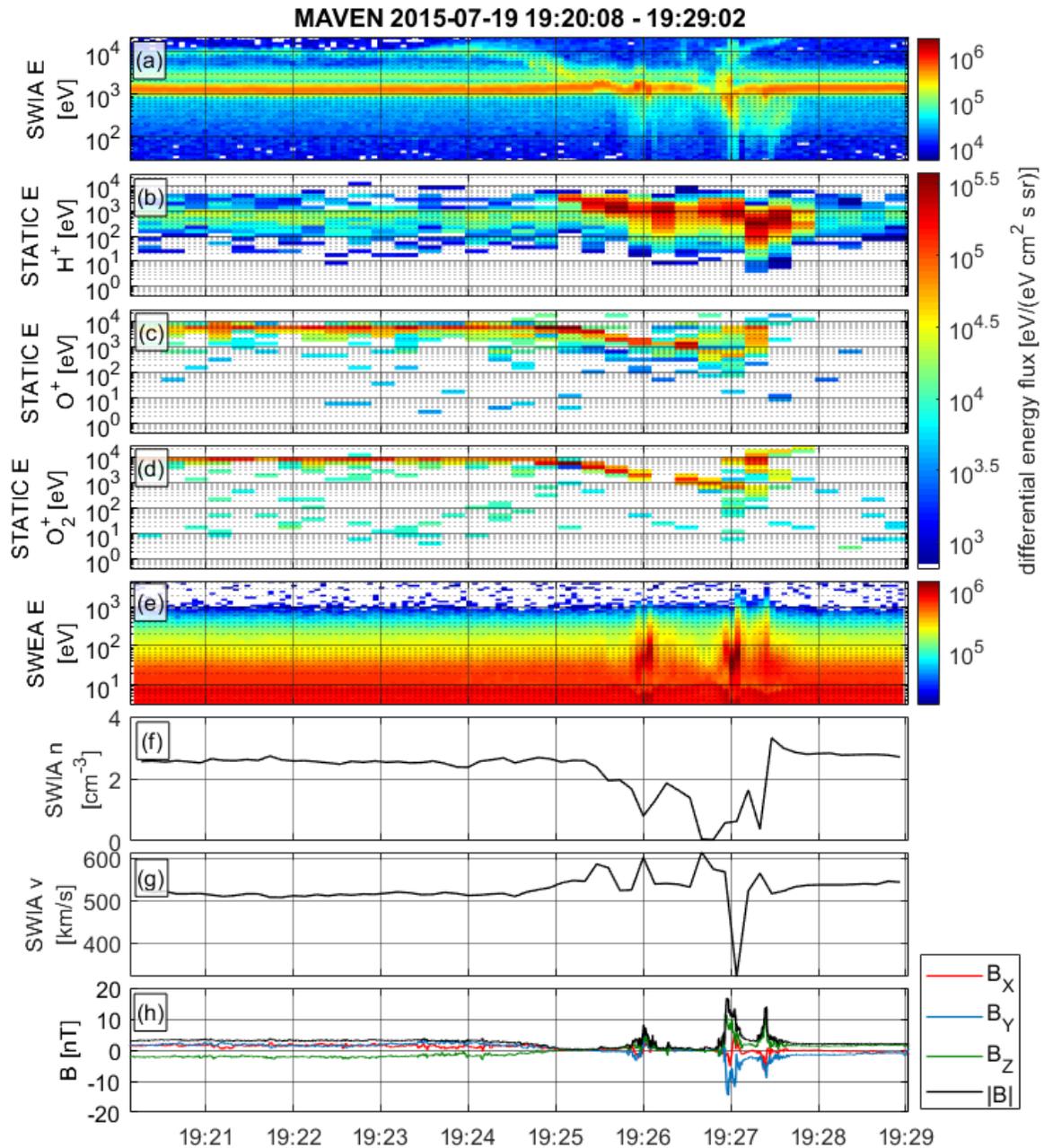
137 **3 Observations**

138 The reported event was registered at 19 July 2015, roughly within time interval of 19:25:00 –
139 19:27:40 UT (see figure 1). During the interval of observations the SC was located at about
140 (1.18, 1.74, 1.77) R_M (where R_M is the radius of Mars) of Martian solar orbital coordinate system

141 (MSO). In this reference system x-axis is directed toward the Sun, y-axis is backward along the
142 tangent of the orbital plane of Mars, and z-axis completes the right-handed system pointing out
143 of the plane of the Martian ecliptic. This point of observations is located upstream of the
144 bowshock. Main details of the system configuration are listed in table 1.

145 Approximately at 19:20:00 UT, 5 minutes prior to the HFA registration, both SWIA and STATIC
146 instruments start registering narrowly directed monoenergetic beam of ~ 10 keV O_2^+ ions and
147 ~ 6 keV O^+ ions. The energies of these ion populations remains unchanged until 19:25:00 UT,
148 when magnetic field magnitude experiences a sudden drop from ~ 2.5 nT in the ambient solar
149 wind to ~ 0.5 nT, indicating spacecraft entrance inside the core of HFA. Simultaneously, ion
150 number density starts dropping from 2.5 cm^{-3} to nearly zero at $\sim 19:26:40$, STATIC starts to
151 observe population of hot H^+ ions, which are also features of HFA core, and energies of detected
152 heavy ions start gradually decreasing. Another milestone in the timeline of event registration is
153 19:26:00 UT, when magnetic field experiences a turn at $\sim 160^\circ$, indicating the intersection of
154 HFA-related discontinuity, or current sheet (CS), by the spacecraft. This turn is accompanied by
155 the increase of magnetic field magnitude to ~ 7.9 nT, which then returns to its previous value of
156 ~ 0.5 nT within ~ 15 seconds. Also, a population of hot electrons is observed by SWIA during CS
157 crossing (panel (e) in figure 1). Approximately 40 seconds later, the spacecraft enters the HFA
158 upstream compression region, in which magnetic field magnitude has two spikes up to ~ 16 nT at
159 19:27:00 UT and 19:27:30 UT, solar wind becomes decelerated from ~ 510 km/s to ~ 320 km/s
160 and ion number density begins to increase, peaking at 3.3 cm^{-3} and then returning to ~ 2.8 cm^{-3} in
161 the solar wind. Hot electron populations are observed simultaneously with magnetic field
162 magnitude peaks in the compression region.

163 Starting at 19:27:00 UT, SWIA (panel (a) in figure 1) starts to register another highly accelerated
164 ion population with energy of ~ 10 keV which quickly increases in time and quits the energy
165 range that the instrument is capable to detect at $\sim 19:27:35$ UT. The same population is registered
166 by STATIC (panels (c) and (d) in figure 1) which keeps detecting it for a little bit longer time
167 (nearly 19:28:00 UT) due to its higher maximum energy registration limit. According to STATIC
168 measurements, this populations consists of O^+ and O_2^+ ions with the dominant component of O_2^+
169 ions.



170

171 **Figure 1.** A HFA event with accelerated planetary ions. (a) – ion energy-time spectrogram
 172 measured by SWIA (all ions), (b)-(d) – H^+ , O^+ , O_2^+ ion energy-time spectrograms measured by
 173 STATIC, (e) – electron energy-time spectrogram measured by SWEA, (f) and (g) – ion density
 174 and bulk velocity derived from SWIA, (h) – three components and magnetic field magnitude in
 175 MSO coordinate system.

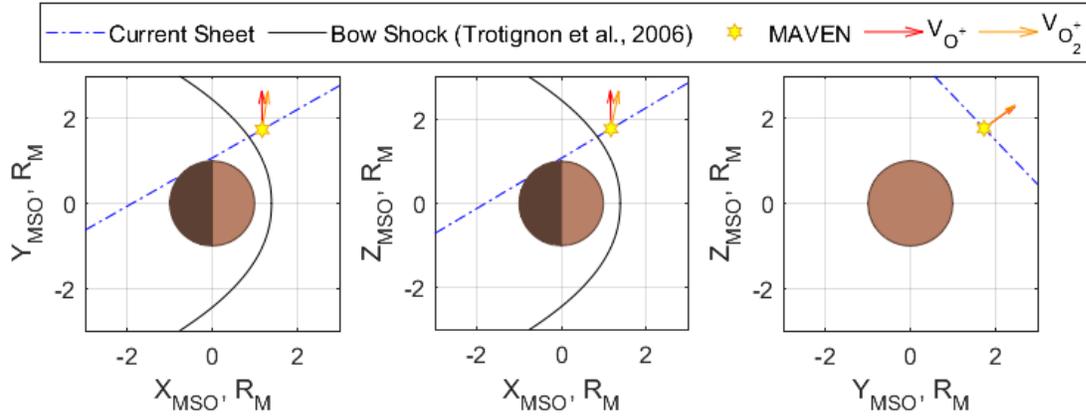
176 **Table 1.** Main characteristics of the observed HFA.

| <i>Parameter</i> | <i>Value</i> |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Location of HFA (MSO, R_M) | (1.18, 1.74, 1.77) |
| Average V_{SW} | 540 km/s |
| Magnetic field rotation | $\sim 161^\circ$ |
| θ_{Bn} before/after the event | $66^\circ/85^\circ$ (quasi- \perp BS) |
| CS normal (MSO) | (-0.38, 0.67, 0.64) |
| CS velocity | 202 km/s |
| $n_{cs} - V_{SW}$ angle | $\sim 112^\circ$ |
| Distance to the BS, R_M | 0.72 |

177 **4 Analysis**

178 The orientation of the HFA-related CS was estimated in the assumption of an infinite planar
179 tangential discontinuity (e.g. it has zero normal magnetic field component), calculating the cross
180 product of magnetic field vector averaged over periods of time 19:23:30–19:24:30 and 19:27:41–
181 19:28:30 UT, during which the spacecraft was in the undisturbed solar wind region prior and
182 after the HFA registration, respectively. The angle between the resulting CS normal with the
183 solar wind is $\sim 112^\circ$, which, according to the criteria for HFA formation listed in Schwartz et al.,
184 2000, can be considered as big enough to reduce the CS speed relative to the planet and give
185 HFA sufficient time to develop. Despite the relatively high solar wind speed, ~ 540 km/s, the
186 speed of CS calculated as projection of V_{SW} to CS normal direction, is only ~ 202 km/s. The
187 angle θ_{Bn} between magnetic field and the bow shock was calculated at the nearest intersection
188 point between IMF and the bow shock model derived by Trotignon et al., 2006, and shows
189 values 66° and 85° prior and after the event, respectively, which is consistent with quasi-
190 perpendicular bow shock on both sides of the CS. The closest distance from the event to the
191 bow shock along the IMF line is $\sim 0.72 R_M$ which is close enough for a HFA registration at Mars.

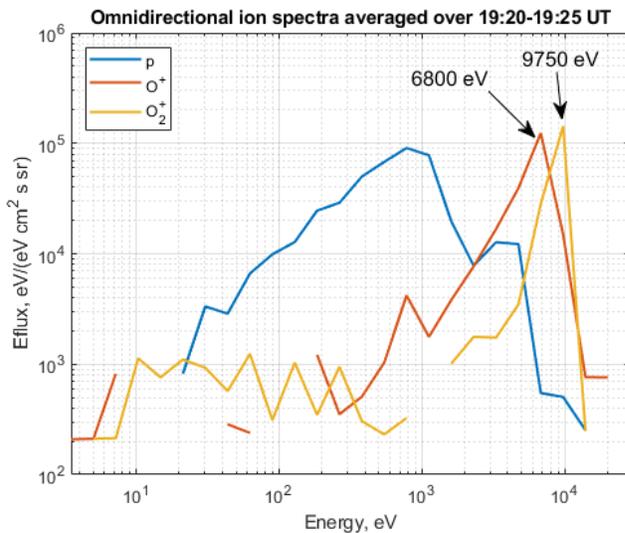
192 In order to trace the accelerated heavy ions seen before the CS crossing, these populations have
193 been selected from angular distribution function measured by STATIC as a result of applying a
194 mask to its angular bins. Ion bulk velocity vectors have been calculated as 1st moment of
195 resulting distribution function and averaged over a period of time 19:20:00–19:25:00 UT. The
196 directions of these vectors, combined with the orientation of the CS and the MAVEN position
197 relative to Mars and its bow shock, is presented in figure 2 in 3 projections of MSO coordinates.
198 It is seen that O^+ and O_2^+ ion velocities are directed roughly towards CS propagation speed
199 which is a strong evidence that these particles are HFA-related.



200

201 **Figure 2.** Three projections of HFA registration position in MSO coordinates with orientation of
 202 the current sheet related to the event, idealized bow shock position derived from Trotignon et al.,
 203 2006 and velocity vectors of accelerated O^+ and O_2^+ ions detected prior the event registration.

204 Following Turner et al., 2018, we check if maximum energy of accelerated O^+ and O_2^+ ions
 205 satisfy condition for the 1st order Fermi acceleration $\frac{E_{max}^2}{mq} = const.$ According to it, these
 206 energies must differ from each other by $\sqrt{2}$ times. Given that the maximum energy of O^+ ions
 207 detected at the leading edge of HFA is ~ 6.8 keV (see figure 3), the predicted maximum energy of
 208 O_2^+ ions must be ~ 9.6 keV. The actual measured maximum energy of these ions is ~ 9.75 keV
 209 which lies well within the STATIC energy resolution error (15%) of the predicted value.



210

211 **Figure 3.** Omnidirectional ion energy spectra for H^+ , O^+ and O_2^+ ions averaged over 19:20:00-
 212 19:25:00 UT derived from STATIC measurements.

213 **5 Conclusion**

214 This paper reports observation of heavy ions acceleration in a HFA at Mars to energies up to
215 ~10 keV on the leading edge and up to more than 30 keV at the trailing edge of the event. The
216 ratio of O_2^+ to O^+ maximum acceleration energy on the leading side of HFA is consistent with
217 the 1st order Fermi acceleration mechanism. Unlike previously reported similar acceleration
218 mechanism in terrestrial HFA (Turner et al., 2018), the species of accelerated particles are
219 predominantly heavy ions of ionospheric origin, which, apparently, is the feature of HFAs at
220 unmagnetized planets. Being capable of accelerating particles to velocities, exceeding the escape
221 velocity at Mars (~2 eV for O^+ and ~4 eV for O_2^+ ions), this mechanism reveals another Martian
222 atmospheric loss channel.

223 **Acknowledgments**

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225 authors express gratitude to MAVEN team for the research data.

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228

229 **Open Research**

230 The MAVEN data used in this study can be accessed from the NASA Planetary Data System via
231 link below (see directories for STATIC, SWIA, SWEA and MAG instruments) ([https://pds-
232 ppi.igpp.ucla.edu/search/?t=Mars&sc=MAVEN&facet=SPACECRAFT_NAME&depth=1](https://pds-ppi.igpp.ucla.edu/search/?t=Mars&sc=MAVEN&facet=SPACECRAFT_NAME&depth=1))

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- 309

Figure 1.

MAVEN 2015-07-19 19:20:08 - 19:29:02

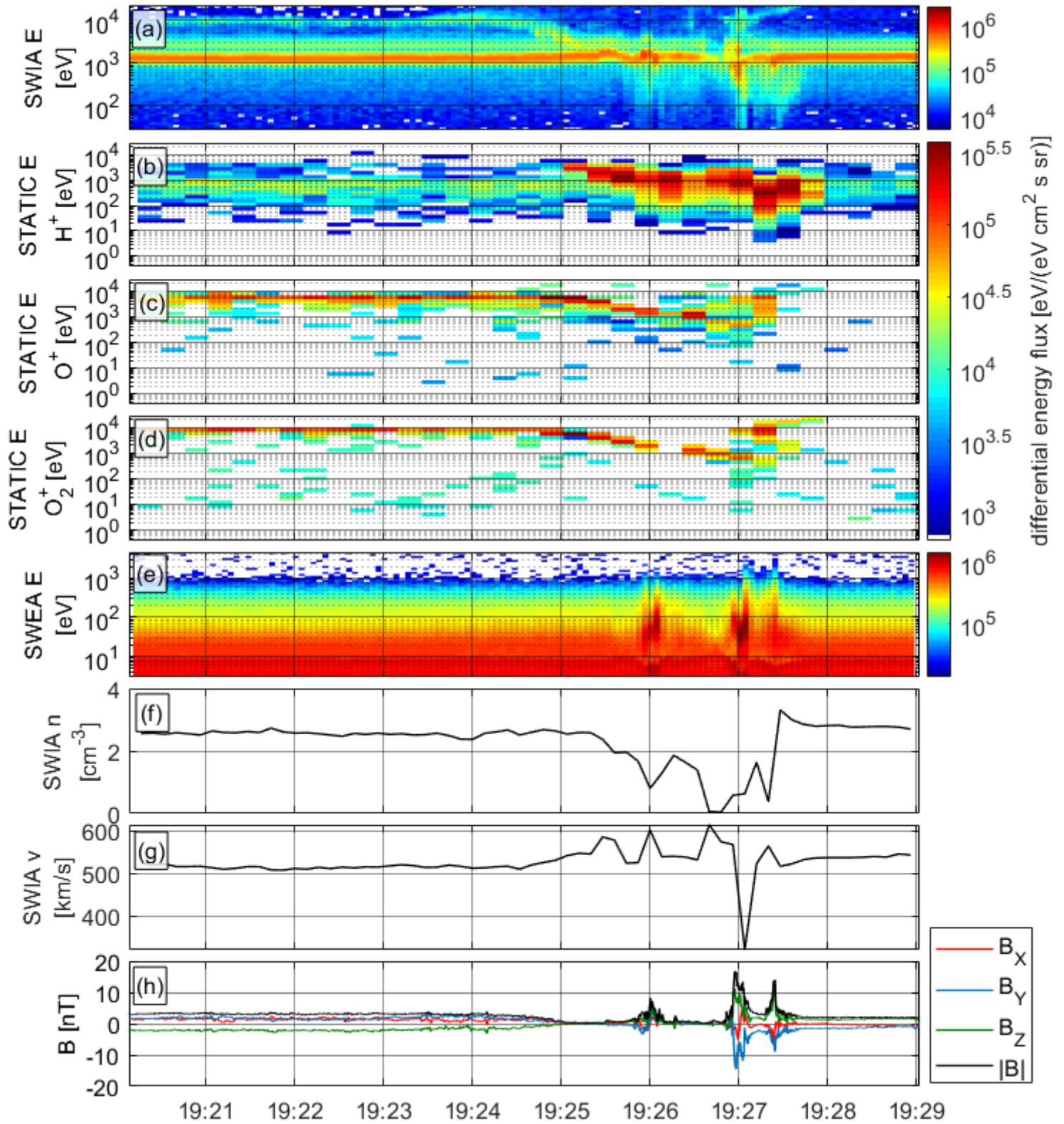


Figure 2.

- - - Current Sheet
 — Bow Shock (Trotignon et al., 2006)
 ★ MAVEN
 → V_{O^+}
 → $V_{O_2^+}$

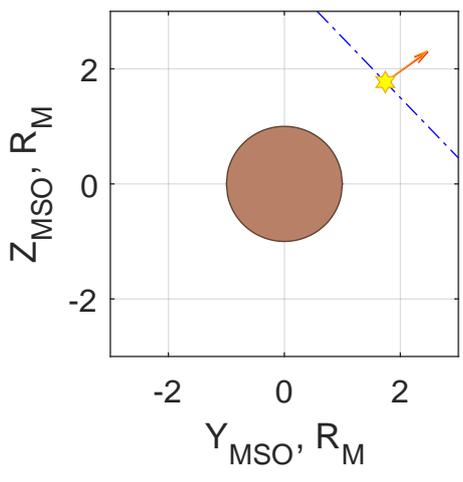
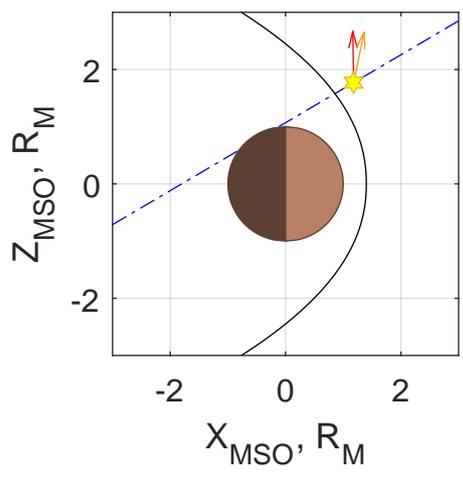
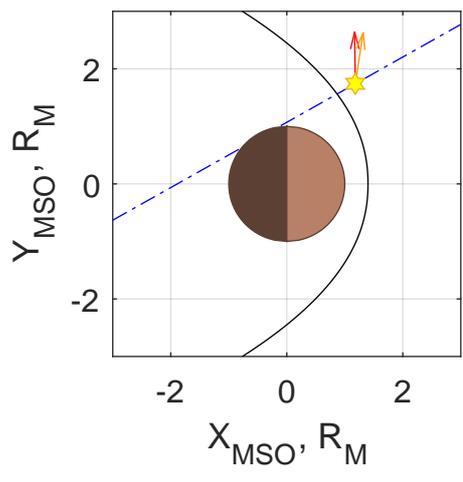


Figure 3.

Omnidirectional ion spectra averaged over 19:20-19:25 UT

