

Short sequence-paper

Molecular cloning of ozone-inducible protein from *Pinus sylvestris* L.
with high sequence similarity to vertebrate
3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-CoA-synthase¹

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Abstract

We have isolated a *Pinus sylvestris* cDNA encoding a globular protein of 474 amino acids with a predicted molecular weight of 52 995 Da. The deduced amino acid sequence showed 41.9% identity and 13.6% similarity to mammalian cytosolic 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-CoA-synthase (HMGS). Treatment of Scots pine seedlings with ozone resulted in a transient increase of a 1.95 kb transcript, whereas a 1.2 kb mRNA decreased transiently, indicating a possible influence of ozone on isoprenoid biosynthesis.

Keywords: Ozone; 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-CoA-synthase; cDNA; mRNA; (*Pinus sylvestris* L.)

Ozone is an important photochemical air pollutant and known to be toxic to plants [1]. At the molecular level, transcripts of defense-related genes are induced in herbaceous plants. This includes an accumulation of pathogenesis-related mRNAs, transcripts involved in phenylpropanoid pathway, and antioxidative transcripts [2–5]. Many of these responses have been

summarized elsewhere [6,7]. Some of these responses are induced upon wounding, pathogen attack and UV irradiation [8–10]. In contrast to herbaceous plants, little is known about ozone effects at the molecular level in conifers. Ozone treatment of Norway spruce seedlings resulted in an accumulation of cinnamyl alcohol dehydrogenase (CAD) mRNA [11]. CAD is an important enzyme of lignification, which is also induced upon fungal attack [12]. A systematic search for Scots pine genes that are activated upon ozone treatment, using in vitro translation studies, resulted in several ozone-induced, as well as ozone-repressed transcripts [13]. Recently extensin mRNA was shown

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to be accumulated upon ozone fumigation in Scots pine, Norway spruce and European beech [14].

In plants HMGS catalyzes the condensation of acetyl-CoA with acetoacetyl-CoA, resulting in the formation of 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-CoA. This compound is reduced to mevalonic acid, a precursor of isopentenyl diphosphate [15]. Isopentenyl diphosphate, named also 'active isoprene unit' is the basic precursor for the synthesis of isoprenoids, important secondary products of higher plants [16]. The biosynthesis of isoprenoids is complex, however, 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-CoA reductase (HMGR) is thought to be a key enzyme of isoprenoid biosynthesis [17,18]. Aside developmental regulation, isoprenoids can be specifically induced by wounding, pathogen attack or elicitor treatment (reviewed in [19]). HMGR transcripts have shown to be increased upon such a biotic stress [20,21]. In contrast to

HMGR, HMGS has not been studied extensively in plants (reviewed in [19]). In animals it has been shown that the rate-limiting reaction in cholesterol biosynthesis is catalyzed by HMGR (reviewed in [22]). However, transcript accumulation of HMGS and HMGR is coordinately regulated by cholesterol [23,24]. Although HMGS activity has been demonstrated in plants, no purified enzyme or clone has been reported [25–27]. In this paper, we report on the characterization of a Scots pine cDNA encoding a putative HMGS, the first HMGS DNA sequence described for plants. The influence of ozone, an abiotic stressor, on HMGS transcript levels and the possible importance of isoprenoids in plant defense reactions are discussed.

Scots pine seedlings were grown in Perlite and placed in a growth chamber at 75% relative humidity with a photoperiod of 14 h light/10 h dark and

1	TGA TTG CAA AAG AGI GGG TTT TGT GCC TGG TAT TAT TAG CTG CTT TOC	48	1009	CAG CTT GCG AAG CCA TTG TAT GAT GCA AAA ATT CAA CCA TCA ACT TTA	1056
49	CAC TCT CAG GAT TTC TGA ATT TTC ATT CAG TCT GTC <u>AAA ACA ATG GCA</u>	96	307	Q L A K P L Y D A K I Q C P S T L	322
1		2			
97	TCT CGT CCA GAG AAT GTT GGG ATT TTG GCT ATG GAG ATC TAC TTT CCT	14	1057	CTG CCA AAG CAA GTA GGC AAC ATG TAT ACA GCA TCT CTC TAT GCA GCA	1104
3	S R P E N V G I L A M E I Y F P	18	323	L P K Q V G N M Y T A S L Y A A	338
145	ACT ACA TGT GTC CAG CAG GAG GAC TTG GAA ACT TTT GAT GGA GTA AGT	192	1105	TTA GCC TCC ATT ATT CAC AAC AAA CAT ACG ACT CTG GAT GGT CAA CGG	1152
19	T T C V Q Q E D L E T F D G V S	34	339	L A S I I H N K H T T L D G Q R	354
193	AAA GGA AAA TAT ACA ATT GGT CTT GGA CAA GAC TGC ATG ACT TTC TGC	240	1153	GTA ATG ATG TTC TCT TAT GGC AGT GGG CTT GCT TCT ACG TTG TTT TCT	1200
35	K G K Y T I G L G Q D C M T F C	50	355	V M M F S Y G S G L A S T L F S	370
241	ACT GAC TTG GAA GAC GTT ATT TCT ATG AGT TTG ACA GCA GTA ACG TCA	288	1201	TTT AAA ATC CGG GAG GGT CAA TTC CCT TTT ACT CTG TCA AAT ATT ACA	1248
51	T D L E D V I S M S L T A V T S	66	371	F K I R E G Q F P F T L S N I T	386
289	CTT TTG GAA AAA TAT GAA ATT GAT CCA AAG CAA ATT GGT CGT TTG GAA	336	1249	GAA GTT ATG GAC GTA CAA AAC AAA CTT GAT TCT CGT CAT GAG TTT CTT	1296
67	L L E K Y E I D P K Q I G R L E	82	387	E V M D V Q N K L D S R H E F L	402
337	GTT GGC AGC GAA ACT GTT ATT GAC AAG AGC AAG TCA ATA AAG ACG TGG	384	1297	CCT GAA GAT TTC GTG GAA AAC TTG AAG CGG ATG GAA ACT CTG TAC GGA	1344
93	V G S E T V I D K S K S I K T W	98	403	P E D F V E N L K R M E T L Y G	418
385	TTG ATG CAT ATT TTT GAG AAG TGT GGT AAT ACT GAA ATT GAA GGT GTG	432	1345	GCA AAG GAC TTC GTT TCA ACT TCT CAG CTC AGT TTG CTG CGG CCT GGC	1392
99	L M H I T E K C G N T E I E G V	114	419	A K D F V S T S T S Q L S L R P G	434
433	GAC TCA ACA AAT GCA TGC TAT GGA GGA ACT GCA GCC CTG TTT AAC TGT	480	1393	GCT TTC TAT TTG ACT AAA GTA GAT TCC ATG TAC CGG CGT TTC TAT TCC	1440
115	<u>D S T N A C Y G G T A</u> A L F L N C	130	435	A F Y L T K V D S M Y R R F Y S	450
481	ATC AAC TGG ATT GAA AGC AGT TCT TGG GAT GGA AGA TAT GGT CTT GTT	528	1441	CGC AAA GTT ATT AGT GCT GGT GAC AAT TTT GAG AAG TCA AAA CTT GCC	1488
131	I N W I E S S S W D G R Y G L V	146	451	R K V I S A G D N F E K S K L A	466
529	GTA GCT ACA GAC AGT GCA TGC TAT GCT GAA GGG GCA GCA GCA OCT ACT	576	1489	AAT GGT ACC ACC CAT GAT GAA TTG TAA ACA TGG TTT ATG TTT GTG AGG	1536
147	V A T D S A V Y A E G A A R P T	162	467	N G T T H D E L *	474
577	GGA GGA GCA GCT GCT GTT GCA ATG CTG ATA GGG CCT AAT GCT CCA ATA	624	1537	TTA ACT ACT ACT GAT ATT CGT GCT GAA TGT AAG TTC TGC ATT GTA ACA	1584
163	G A A A A V A M L I G P N A P I	178	1585	TAG CAT TCT GGA GTC TCC CAT TCC TTT TCT TTG GTA TCT GTT TAC TTT	1632
625	GCA ACT GAG AGC AAA TAC AGG GGA ACA CAT ATG GCT CAT GTC TAT GAC	672	1633	TGT TTT AAG TAA ACG TGG TAG TGT TGA GAA <u>AAT AAT</u> TCA AAG GAT GCT	1680
179	A T E S K Y R G T H M A H V Y D	194	1681	CCT TAA AGA GCA TTT GTT TGA ATC TCC TTT AGC CTC GGG GAT CTA TTT	1728
673	TTT TAT AAG CCT AAT CTG GCT AGT GAA TAT CCG GTT GTA GAT GGG AAG	720	1729	TAA TTA CAA ATG AGC AGT GGG <u>AAT AAA</u> TTA AAT CAC TTC ATT GCA CTA	1776
195	F Y K P N L A S E Y P V V D G K	210	1777	GGA AAC TTA GCT TGT TTG TGA CTT GGG ATA TAT TCA TCA GAA TAT AAC	1824
721	CTT TCA CAA ACT TGT TAT CTC ATG GCA TTG GAT TCA TGC TAC AAA CGG	768	1825	ATG GGC GAT TTG CCA AGT TAA AAC GTG TAC TTC TCA TTT CAT CAG AAC	1872
211	L S Q T C Y L M A L D S C Y K R	226	1873	TTT CTT TGT GAT AGA TTT TGC TCA TCA AAG ATG TTG CAT TCT CAG CTG	1920
769	TTT TGT AAT AAG TTT GAA AAG GAA GAA GCA AGA CAG TTT TCT CTT CTA	816	1921	GGC AGA GTG TGC GCT TTT ATT TAA GCT CAT GTT TGG GCA CTT ATT TG	1967
227	F C N K F E K E E G R Q F S L L	242			
817	GAT ACA GAT TAT ATA GCA TTT CAT TCT CCA TAC AAT AAG CTT GTA CAA	864			
243	D T D Y I A F H S P Y N K L V Q	258			
865	AAG AGC TTT GGT CGC CTG TTG TTC AAT GAT TTC TCA AGA CAT GCC AGG	912			
259	K S F G R L L F N D F S R H A R	274			
913	TCT GTT GGA AAG GAT GCA CAA GAG AAG CTA GAA CCC TTT GCT GGC TTG	960			
275	S V G K D A Q E E P F A G L	290			
961	TCT GAA CAA GAT AGC TAC AAT AGT CGT GAC CTA GAA AAG GTT TCT CAG	1008			
291	S E Q D S Y N S R D L E K V S Q	306			

Fig. 1. Nucleotide and deduced amino-acid sequence of the Scots pine cDNA clone O₃I-3.5. The initiation consensus nucleotide sequence [34,35] and putative polyadenylation signals [36,37] are underlined. The stop codon is marked by an asterisk. The putative active site of clone O₃I-3.5 is marked in bold and underlined [23,42].

21/17°C day/night temperature [28]. Six-week-old seedlings were subjected to ozone ($0.3 \mu\text{l/l}$, 8 h) in acrylic cuvettes and ozone was generated by electrical discharge of dry oxygen [29]. $5 \mu\text{g}$ poly(A)⁺ RNA from Scots pine seedlings treated with ozone for 4 h and 8 h, and an additional cultivation in clean air for 4 h, respectively, were used for cDNA cloning using the Superscript™ Plasmid System (Gibco BRL). Poly(A)⁺ RNA was isolated as described elsewhere [13] and cDNA synthesis was according to the manufacturer's instructions. The cDNA was ligated into the plasmid pSPORT 1 (Gibco BRL) and transformation of *E. coli* JM 109 was as described elsewhere [30]. About 6×10^5 clones were differentially

screened using the colony hybridization technique [31]. Hybridization of identical replica filters (about 2×10^4 clones/filter) was carried out with ^{32}P -labeled poly(A)⁺ RNA, isolated from ozone-treated or control seedlings, respectively. Clones of interest were subjected to a secondary and finally tertiary screening, resulting in 17 ozone-induced clones. Plasmid DNA of clone O₃I-3.5 was sequenced on both strands by primer hopping, using AmpliTaq® and TaqDyeDeoxy™ Terminator Cycle Sequencing Kits and an automatic fluorescence sequencer (ABI DNA Sequencer 373A). Primers were synthesized with a DNA synthesizer (Applied Biosystems 394A). DNA sequences were analyzed using software applications

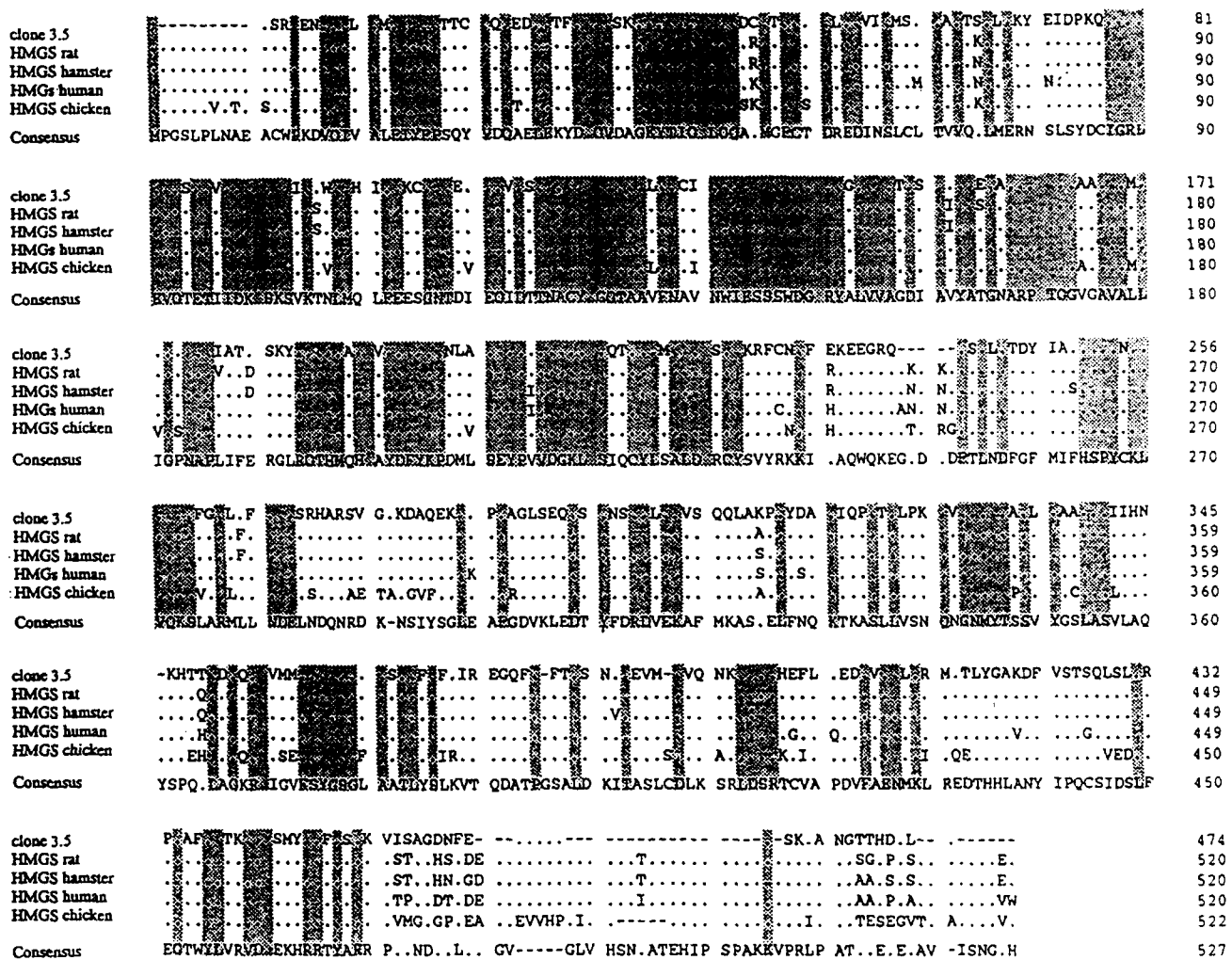


Fig. 2. Alignment of the predicted amino-acid sequence of clone O₃I-3.5 with human [43], rat [59], chinese hamster [24] and chicken [52] cytosolic HMGS.

of IntelliGenetics Suite and Wisconsin Package. Total RNA was isolated [32] and used for electrophoretic separation and transfer to nylon membranes. The blots were probed and washed as described [13]. RNA ladder 0.24–9.5 kb (Gibco BRL) was used as size marker. Radiolabeling of cDNA probes was done with the HexaPrimer Kit I (Applicene).

DNA sequence analysis of clone O₃I-3.5 showed an open reading frame of 1422 bp, 90 bp of a 5' untranslated sequence, and a 3' untranslated region of 455 bp. The DNA sequence and its encoded polypeptide is shown in Fig. 1. The coding sequence seems to be complete since there is an in-frame upstream TGA stop codon at position 64 before the ATG translation start site [33]. Furthermore, the initiation consensus sequence AACAATGGC found in plants [34,35], is present in clone O₃I-3.5 (underlined in Fig. 1). Nucleotide sequences following the stop codon showed the conserved A at position +1 and +3 [36]. The length of the cDNA insert without the poly(A) tail of 1967 bp corresponds well to the estimated size of a 1.95 kb transcript, detected by Northern analysis (Fig. 3). Taken together all these data indicate, that clone O₃I-3.5 is a full-length cDNA clone. The 5' untranslated region consists of at least 90 bp, which is in the range of plant leader sequences [34]. In addition, the percentage of A + T with 62% fits to most leader sequences in plant genes [34]. The 3' untranslated region contains two putative polyadenylation signals that are underlined in Fig. 1 [36,37]. The distance between the polyadenylation signals and the start of the poly(A) tail comprises an unusually high number of 212 or 299 base pairs, respectively. In most genes analyzed so far this signal sequence is about 10 to 33 bases in front of the polyadenylation site [36,38,39]. However, in petunia and maize up to 130 bp were found [37]. In plants not all AATAAA-like sequences can be recognized as a poly(A) signal [reviewed in [40]]. So it might be, that the 3' untranslated region of clone O₃I-3.5 contains additional poly(A) signals [40].

Nucleic acid sequence comparisons of clone O₃I-3.5 using the EMBL and GenBank database showed no significant homologies to known DNA sequences. However, comparison of the deduced polypeptide of the open reading frame 1 with the SwissProt and PIR database showed a high similarity to cytosolic HMGS of vertebrates. In addition, the predicted molecular

weight of 52 995 Da and the isoelectric point of 5.74 fit well to cytoplasmic liver HMGS [23,41]. Amino acids 105 to 125 (Fig. 1, marked in bold) showed a 16 out of 21 match with the active region of avian mitochondrial and hamster cytoplasmic HMGS (16 identical and 5 conserved amino acids) [23,42]. A sequence alignment of the predicted O₃I-3.5 amino acid sequence with known cytosolic HMGS sequences, using the SwissProt and PIR databases is shown in Fig. 2. A comparison of all five protein sequences showed 42% sequence identity and 56% similarity. A direct comparison of the amino acid sequence of clone O₃I-3.5 with human cytosolic HMGS [43] using the dotblot program according to [44] confirmed this homology (data not shown). In addition, the hydropathy profile [45] of the protein sequence of clone O₃I-3.5 was very similar to the profiles of known HMGS sequences (data not shown). Based on the primary amino acid sequence and the absence of an organelle transit peptide sequence, analyzed by the TRANSPER program of PC/GENE[®], clone O₃I-3.5 is localized in the cytosol. Clone O₃I-

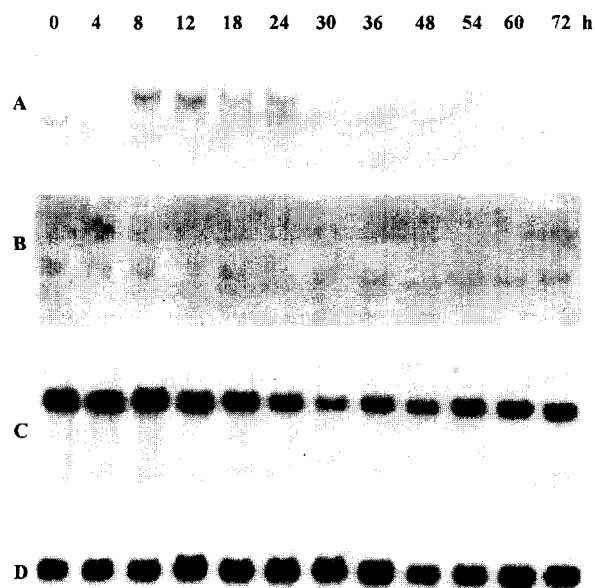


Fig. 3. Northern blot hybridization of clone O₃I-3.5 (A, B). Total RNA was isolated from ozone-treated (0.3 μ l/l, 8 h) (A) and unfumigated (B) needles of Scots pine. Numbers correspond to the time period in h. As a control the membranes were rehybridized with a cDNA clone encoding the chlorophyll *a/b* binding protein of Scots pine (C, D); (C) + ozone, (D) – ozone.

3.5 has a HDEL motif at its C-terminus, known to be an endoplasmic reticulum (ER) targeting sequence [46]. In radish HMGS seems to be membrane-associated [26]. HMGR of *Arabidopsis* is thought to be localized in the ER [47,48]. Therefore the presence of this putative HMGS in the cytosol/ER boundary is in accordance with the hypothetical model of IPP synthesis in the cytosol (reviewed in [49,50]).

Expression of clone O₃I-3.5 was analyzed in ozone-treated Scots pine seedlings. In non ozone-treated needles of Scots pine seedlings clone O₃I-3.5 hybridized faintly to a 1.2 and 1.95 kb mRNA species (Fig. 3). Upon ozone treatment the 1.2 kb transcript decreased transiently after 4 h, and was again visible after further cultivation in clean air (Fig. 3). In contrast to this 1.2 kb mRNA species a 1.95 kb transcript increased transiently with a maximum after 8–12 h (Fig. 3). These results indicate the existence of two putative HMGS mRNA species in Scots pine, similar as described for mammals [51,52]. Quantitation of these changed mRNA amounts by densitometer scanning resulted in a decrease of the 1.2 kb transcript by a factor of 2, whereas the 1.95 kb transcript increased by a factor of 5. To demonstrate that no non-specific shift in the relative proportions of ribosomal RNA and mRNA occurred, we reprobated the membrane with a cDNA clone encoding the chlorophyll *a/b* binding protein (*cab*) from Scots pine (pINEab 13) [53]. Transcript levels of *cab* mRNA were transiently reduced by treatment with ozone (Fig. 3). This is in accordance with an ozone-induced *cab* transcript decrease in herbaceous plants [54]. As mentioned above, the mRNA size of 1.95 kb closely agrees to the full-length cDNA clone O₃I-3.5, corroborating that this mRNA species represents the clone. The different behaviour of the two HMGS transcripts indicates a complex response of the isoprenoid biosynthetic pathway to ozone, an abiotic stressor. Ozone treatment of plants results in an accumulation of cytosolic defense-related mRNA species (reviewed in [6,7]), whereas several transcripts of nuclear-encoded chloroplastic proteins are decreased [54–56]. Therefore it is tempting to speculate, that the 1.95 kb transcript corresponds to the cytosolic/ER HMGS, whereas the 1.2 kb mRNA species represents a chloroplastic protein. The isoprenoid biosynthetic pathway in plants is affected at the molecular level by several stress factors. Most studies have focused

on HMGR levels, which respond to external stimuli like wounding, pathogen attack, elicitation, plant growth regulators and exogenous sterols (reviewed in [19,57]). However, in mammals a co-ordinated response of HMGS and HMGR activities was found [23,24]. Thus it seems, that HMGS may also be important for the regulation of the isoprenoid pathway in plants.

Our previous studies on ozone-induced transcript accumulations indicated a close similarity with transcript accumulations induced by pathogens or elicitors [2,3,11,58]. As isoprenoids are also involved in the plant defense against pathogens (reviewed in [57]), these results support the idea, that the expression of genes induced by pathogens or by ozone may be influenced via a similar signal transduction chain.

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