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A eukaryotic-like Serine/Threonine kinase protects Staphylococci against viruses

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Summary

Organisms from all domains of life are infected by viruses, the most abundant biological entities on earth. In eukaryotes, Serine/Threonine kinases play a central role in antiviral response. Bacteria, however, are not commonly known to use protein phosphorylation as part of their defense against phages. Here we identify Stk2, a Serine/Threonine kinase that provides efficient immunity against bacteriophages in staphylococci through abortive infection. A phage protein of unknown function activates the kinase activity of Stk2 when expressed in the cell. This leads to the phosphorylation of several proteins involved in translation, global transcription control, cell cycle control, stress response, DNA topology, DNA repair and central metabolism. Cells die as a consequence of Stk2 activation, thereby preventing phage propagation to the rest of the bacterial population. Our work shows that mechanisms of viral defense that rely on protein phosphorylation constitute an antiviral strategy conserved across domains of life.

1 Introduction

The arms race between bacteria and phages has led to the evolution of many bacterial defense 2 systems that can act at every stage of the phage life cycle, blocking phage adsorption, DNA 3 injection, degrading phage DNA, and interfering with phage replication or the production of 4 phage proteins (Labrie et al., 2010). These defense systems are mechanistically diverse and 5 6 can vary considerably among bacterial species or even among different isolates of a particular species. At a glance, bacterial defense against phages has little in common with eukaryotic 7 antiviral systems. In plants, defense is primarily conducted via RNA-mediated interference 8 (RNAi), while in vertebrates, pattern-recognition receptors (PRR) recognize nucleic acids and 9 proteins from pathogens and activate the interferon, proinflamatory and adaptive immune 10 responses (Kanneganti, 2010; Palm and Medzhitov, 2009; Pumplin and Voinnet, 2013; Sadler 11 and Williams, 2008). Serine/Threonine kinases (STKs) play a critical role at different stages 12 of the antiviral response in both plants and vertebrates. They behave as switches that are 13 activated by phosphorylation of one or several residues in an activation loop (Huse and 14 Kuriyan, 2002). Some STKs, such as the interferon-induced, double-stranded RNA-activated 15 protein kinase (PKR) in mammals, can also directly sense and interfere with viruses (Yan and 16 Chen, 2012). Upon activation by dsRNA, PKR phosphorylates the translation initiation factor 17 $eIF2\alpha$, blocking translation and viral protein synthesis. A similar mechanism was also recently 18 described in plants. The NIK1 STK of Arabidopsis was shown to phosphorylate the ribosomal 19 protein L10 and globally suppress translation as an antiviral immunity strategy (Zorzatto et 20 al., 2015). 21

22

23 STKs were assumed for a long time to exist only in eukaryotes, but Eukaryotic-like STKs

24 (eSTKs) have now been found in most bacterial clades where they have been implicated in a

- variety of functions including cell cycle control, exit of dormancy, cell wall synthesis, cell
- 26 division, control of the central metabolism and virulence (Pereira et al., 2011).Unlike
- 27 eukaryotes, bacteria are generally not known to use STKs in viral defense. An exception to
- this is the *pgl*phage defense system from *Streptomyces coelicolor* and the related BREX
- 29 (Bacteriophage Exclusion) systems, which are thought to exist in many unrelated bacteria
- 30 (Goldfarb et al., 2015; Hoskisson et al., 2015; Sumby and Smith, 2002). These systems
- includea STK known asPglWfor which kinase activity was confirmed *in vitro*; however, its
- 32 exact role in the defense pathway is not yet understood(Hoskisson et al., 2015). Also of note
- is the discovery of a prophage-encoded tyrosine kinase which excludes superinfection by UV(0,7) = UV(0,7) = UV(0,7)
- 34 phage HK97 in *Escherichia coli*(Friedman et al., 2011).
- 35

36 Here we report the discovery of an eSTK involved in phage defense in *Staphylococci*. The

- 37 Stk2 protein is activated when a specific phage protein, PacK, is present in the cell. The
- activation of Stk2results in cell death through phosphorylation of proteins involved in essential
- 39 cellular processes, including translation, transcription, control of cell cycle and others.
- 40 Infected cells die before releasing infectious phages thereby protecting neighboring bacteria.
- 41 This altruistic defense strategy is known as abortive infection (Abi) and can be performed by
- 42 mechanically diverse systems(Chopin et al., 2005). *Staphylococci* carry another STK known as
- 43 Stk1 or PknB, which is important for cell-wall structure, antimicrobial resistance, and
- 44 virulence(Beltramini et al., 2009; Debarbouille et al., 2009; Donat et al., 2009; Truong-
- Bolduc et al., 2008). The existence of a second STK, known as Stk2, present in only some
- 46 isolates of *S. aureus* was noted in a few studies but its function remained
- 47 mysterious(Debarbouille et al., 2009; Didier et al., 2010). We now demonstrate that Stk2
- 48 provides immunity against bacteriophages through an Abi mechanism. Interestingly, the Stk1
- 49 kinase is also involved in this defense pathway, suggesting a phosphorylation cascade
- 50 reminiscent of Eukaryotic viral defense pathways.

51

52 **Results**

53

Discovery of stk2, a bacteriophage defense kinase. We isolated a novel temperate phage of 54 Staphylococcus epidermidis, CNPx a 43kb Siphoviridae with 90.2% overall nucleotide 55 identity to phage CNPH82 (Daniel et al., 2007). CNPx was isolated on strain LM1680, a 56 derivative of S. epidermidis RP62A carrying a large deletion that includes a type III-A 57 CRISPR system and a type I restriction modification (RM) system (Hatoum-Aslan et al., 58 2014). Interestingly, CNPxdoes not infect strain RP62A, suggesting that the region deleted in 59 LM1680 contains a defense system, possibly the CRISPR or the type I RM, that blocks 60 infection by this phage. To narrow down the position of the defense system, we tested the 61 ability of CNPx to infect a collection of RP62A derivatives, obtained by Marraffini and 62 colleagues, that carry various deletions of this region (Jiang et al., 2013). This analysis 63 64 allowed us to identify a ~16kb candidate region that carries the phage defense system (Figure 1A). To our surprise, this region did not include the type I RM system or the CRISPR system; 65 instead, it contained a number of hypothetical proteins as well as an operon involved in 66 potassium transport and associated regulatory genes (Table S1). Genes coding for the 67 hypothetical proteins were cloned either alone or two at a time on plasmid pC194 which is 68 present in ~15 copies in the cell(Novick, 1989). The resulting plasmids (pDB31, pDB32, 69 pDB33 and pDB34) were introduced by electrotransformation in strain LM1680, and the 70 bacteria were tested for sensitivity to phage CNPx. The pDB31 plasmid carrying gene 71 SERP2479 provided strong resistance (EOP $< 10^{-5}$) while the other genes carried by plasmids 72 pDB32, pDB33 and pDB34 did not have any effect on the susceptibility of the strainto the 73 74 phage (Figure 1B).

75

SERP2479 contains a serine/threonine kinase domain that is easily identified by prediction 76 77 algorithm such as hhmer or CD-search (Figure 2A)(Finn et al., 2011; Marchler-Bauer and 78 Bryant, 2004). Proteins identical to SERP2479 are found in several strains of Staphylococcus 79 aureus (Figure 1C). In particular, protein SA0077whose sequence is 100% identical to SERP2479 was previously described in S. aureus strain N315.It was named Stk2 and shown 80 to phosphorylate the virulence regulatorSarAin vitro, but could not be assigned a 81 physiological role(Didier et al., 2010). Closely related proteins are also present in more 82 distantly related Firmicutes, including some Bacilli and Streptococci (Table S2). In addition 83 to the kinase domain, a distinctive feature of these proteins is the presence of large N-term 84 and C-term domains of unidentified fold or function. 85

86

Stk2 provides phage resistance instaphylococci. To investigate the scope and significance
of our finding, we decided to test whether *stk2* could also block phage infection in *S. aureus*.
The pDB31 plasmid, carrying *stk2* under the control of its wild-type promoter, was introduced
by electrotransformation in several *S. aureus* strains (TB4, NCTC8325-4 and RN4220) which
do not carry *stk2* in their chromosome (Bae et al., 2006; Nair et al., 2011). Stk2
providedstrong resistance to phage phiNM1 in all backgrounds (Table S3). Strain RN4220 is
a derivative of *S. aureus* strain NCTC8325 that is easy to manipulate but is generally not

considered to be a good model strain for the study of bacterial virulence(Nair et al., 2011).

95 Nonetheless, since the phage resistance phenotype provided by *stk2* was identical in all tested

strains, we decided to use RN4220 for the remaining of this study. We tested the ability of

plasmid pDB31 to confer resistance to infection by different phages in the RN4220

background, including five Siphoviridae (phage 80alpha, phage 85, phiNM1, phiNM2 and

phiNM4) and one Twort-like Myoviridae (phage Staph1N) (Bae et al., 2006; Lobocka et al.,

- 100 2012). Stk2 provided resistance against all tested Siphoviridae but not against the Twort-like
- 101 phage (Table S3).
- 102

Characterization of the Stk2 kinase activity. The stk2 gene was cloned with a 6x His N-103 104 terminal tag inplasmid pET15b and introduced inE. coli BL21 (DE3). Uponinduction with 105 IPTG, efficient overproduction of His6-Stk2 fusion protein was obtained, though in the form of inclusion bodies. The His6-Stk2 product was then purified by adenaturation/renaturation 106 method using guanidinium chloride, followed by a step of purification on anaffinity column. 107 Finally, the linked His6 was removed through proteolysis by thrombin (Figure 108 2B). Autophosphorylation activity was tested in the presence of various divalent cations: 109 Mn2+,Mg2+, Ca2+, Zn2+ and Co2+ (Figure 2C). It was observed that purified Stk2 was 110 significantly labelled *in vitro* in the presence of $[\gamma-32P]$ ATP and Mn2+ (Figure 2C, lane 4). 111 The ability of Stk2 to autophosphorylate in these conditions indicates that it displays intrinsic 112

- 113 kinase activity. To exclude the possibility of contamination by an exogenous kinasethat
- mightinterfere with the phosphorylation of Stk2, the invariant lysine152 involved in the
- binding of the ATP phosphoryl donor, was mutated to isoleucine. As expectedStk2-

116 K152Icould no longer autophosphorylate(Figure 2B, lane 5).

117

118 The phosphoamino acid content of the labelled protein was determined after acidhydrolysis

- and two-dimensional analysis (Duclos et al., 1991). Both phosphoserine and
- 120 phosphothreoninewere revealed on the corresponding autoradiogram (Figure 2D), indicating
- 121 that Stk2was modified exclusively on these two types of residues. NanoLC/nano-
- spray/tandem mass spectrometry was then used for the identification of phosphorylated
- 123 peptides and for the localization of the phosphorylation sites in Stk2(Molle et al., 2006). Nine
- phosphorylation sites could be identified including three sites in the activation loop of Stk2 (3272, 7275, 17272) (Figure 24) Main and the site is a site of the site of t
- 125 (S272, T275 and T278) (Figure 2A). Various mutated proteins were produced and purified,
- and the effect of substitution of the different residues to alanine on kinase activity was
 analyzed by measuring autophosphorylation activity(Figure 2E). Kinase activity was
- analyzed by measuring autophosphorylation activity(Figure 2E). Kinase activity was
 completely abolished when the substitution was on T147, S272, T275, and T278. In contrast,
- substitution of S246 had not effect on the activity of Stk2, and replacement of S163, S337 and
- 130 S360 unexpectedly increased Stk2 activity. Altogether these results show that Stk2 is indeed
- 131 an active STK.
- 132

133 To confirm*in vivo* that the kinase activity of Stk2 is required for the phage defense phenotype,

- 134 we mutated conserved residues:K152 in the ATP-binding loop, the predicted catalytic
- aspartate D243, and the T275 autophosphorylation residue in the activation loop(Figure 2A).
- All alleles were introduced in *S. aureus* strain RN4220 and tested for sensitivity to phage
- 137 phiNM1 (Figure 3A). As expected, all mutants showed sensitivity to the phage.
- 138

Stk2 triggers cell death. Several assays were performed to understand the mechanism of protection provided by Stk2.We first tested whether it could affect phage adsorption. Cells carrying plasmid pDB31 or the control pC194 were both able to adsorb 99% of the phiNM1 phage particles. However, infection of growing cells carrying *stk2*(pDB31) by phage phiNM1

phage particles. However, infection of growing cells carrying *stk2*(pDB31) by phage phiNM
 led to an interruption in the growth of the culture (Figure 3B). This result stands in clear

- 143 red to an interruption in the growth of the culture (Figure 5D). This result stands in clear 144 contrast to the lysis observed for cells that lack stk2 and are sensitive to the phage. Consistent
- 145 with this observation, ~3000x fewer phage particles are recovered after infection of cells
- 146 carrying *stk*2relative to cells without *stk*2 (Figure 3C). Also, measurement of the efficiency of
- 147 center of infection (ECOI) in the presence of *stk2* indicates that only $0.4\pm 0.08\%$ of cells
- receiving the phiNM1 phage are able to release functional phiNM1 particles. Plating a culture
- 149 of cells carrying *stk2* after infection reveals that most cells are dead as only $\sim 5\%$ of cells form

150 colonies (Figure 3C). This shows that *stk*2mediates cell death and acts as an abortive infection 151 (Abi) system, killing bacteria upon infection to prevent phage propagation (Abedon, 2012).

152

153 It is worth nothing that the number of bacteria that survive phiNM1 infection is similar in the 154 presence and absence of *stk2* (Figure 3C). Wild-type RN4220 cells can survive phiNM1 155 infection when the phage enters lysogeny and integrates in the genome. Interestingly, analysis 156 of cells that survive phiNM1 infection in the presence of *stk2* revealed that some (3/8) had

157 lysogenized phage phiNM1, while the remainder (5/8) most likely did not receive a phiNM1

phage particle, eliminated the phage without dying or mutated its receptor (Figure S1A).

- 159 These results suggest that stk^2 kills staphylococci only if the phage enters its lytic cycle. To
- 160 confirm this, we sought to induce the lytic cycle of phage phiNM1 lysogenized in cells
- 161 carrying stk2 or a control plasmid (Figure 3D). Prophages were induced with mitomycin C. In

the presence of stk2, the culture stopped growing but did not lyse. In agreement with this observation, $3*10^4$ -fold fewer phage particles were recovered after induction of cells carrying

stk2 stk2 compared to cells carrying the control plasmid(Figure 3D). Note that in the absence of

- mitomycin C, phage phiNM1 is spontaneously induced at a lower rate. Under these
- conditions, the presence of stk^2 also limits the number of phages released. Altogether, these
- 167 experiments demonstrate that presence of phage DNA is not recognized by Stk2; instead, the
- Abi phenotype of Stk2 is only triggered during the lytic cycle of the phage.
- 169

Identification of the Stk2 activation factor. In the pDB31 plasmid used here,*stk2*is
 expressed under the control of its WT promoter. To understand whether the transcriptional

expressed under the control of its WT promoter. To understand whether the transcriptional control of *stk2* is important for the Abi phenotype, we cloned *stk2* under the control of a

173 Ptetpromoter (Table S5). Resistance to phage was only observed upon induction of Stk2, and

overexpression of Stk2 on its own did not lead to any growth defect (Figure S1B). These

results clearly show that the Abi phenotype is only induced in the presence of the phage, and

that the natural transcriptional control of *stk2* is not required. Thus, as expected, Stk2 likely

- behaves as a protein switch that is activated upon phage infection. While Stk2 is able to
- rapidly auto-phosphorylate *in vitro*, we believe that it is not active in the absence of phage
- 179 infection *in vivo*.

180

181 To understand what might activateStk2, we isolated phage mutants capable of

182 infecting*S. aureus* strain RN4220 carrying pDB31. Theefficiency of plaquing(EOP) of phage

- phiNM1 on cells carrying *stk2* is only $5*10^{-7}$ (Table S3). Nonetheless, some plaques can be
- recovered and propagated on cells expressing *stk2*(Figure S2A). Phages isolated in this way
- retain the ability to infect cells carrying stk^2 even after being passaged on cells lacking stk^2 ,

suggesting that the new phenotype is the result of mutation and not epigenetic variation.

187 These phiNM1 mutants form small plaques and are harder to propagate than the wild-type

- 188 phage (data not shown). Two mutant phageswere sequenced (phiNM1k1 and phiNM1k2), and
- both carried independent miss-sense mutations (V200M and K30E) in the same gene,

190 SAPPV1_GP14. These results indicate that this protein likely activates Stk2. SAPPV1_GP14

- contains a P-loop NTPasedomain frequently found in proteins involved in molecular motion.
 An interesting observation enabled us to link the function of this gene to either DNA
- An interesting observation enabled us to link the function of this gene to either DNA
 replication or packaging. When sequencing phage phiNM1k1 and phiNM1k2 we observed

194 that coverage was highest shortly after the packaging site of the phage and then slowly

dropped over the rest of the sequence (Figure 4A). This contrasts sharply with the wild-type

196 phage which shows almost uniform coverage throughout the sequence. A possible explanation

197 for this skewed coverage is that the capsids from which DNA was purified do not all contain

the full phage genome; instead, most capsids only contain the part of the phage genome that is

199 packaged first. Phage particles which contain only part of the genome would likely not be

functional and might even lackthe tail. As we did not purify intact phage particles before
 DNA extraction, we recovered DNA from both functional phage particles and any
 incompletely assembled particles present in our samples. Thus, the skewed coverage could be
 explained by random premature termination of phage DNA packaging. Such premature
 termination could either be due to a defect of the packaging machinery itself, or a defect of

- the phage DNA replication or concatemer formation. The position of SAPPV1_GP14 in the
- 206 replication cluster of the phage supports the later hypothesis.
- 207

Because of its phenotype in DNA packaging, we decided to call the SAPPV1_GP14 gene *pacK*.To confirm that this phage protein is sufficient to trigger Stk2, we cloned *pacK* under

the control of an inducible Ptetpromoter on plasmid pE194, giving plasmid pAS10 (Figure 4B). Upon induction with anhydrotetracycline, cell death was observed only when *stk2* was

- present in the cells (Figure 4C). The V200M and K30E mutations identified in the mutant
- 213 phages were also tested in this assay and abolished the Abi phenotype (Figure S2B). These
- 214 experiments confirm that PacK is sufficient to trigger Stk2-mediated cell death.
- 215

It is interesting to note that Stk2 can provide resistance to phages which do not carry PacK 216 (see Tables S3 and S4), suggesting that it can be activated by other phage proteins. In 217 particular, this is true forS. epidermidis phage CNPx which was used in this study to first 218 identify Stk2 (Figure 1), as well as S. aureusphage 80alpha, phage 85 and phiNM2 (Table 219 S3). In phage phiNM2, geneAVT76_GP14encodes a protein with 43% identity to PacK, but 220 221 no homologous proteins exist in phage 80alpha, phage85 or CNPx. To identify how these phages activate Stk2, we isolated mutants of phiNM2 and phage 85 capable of infectingS. 222 aureus cells expressing stk2. Sequencing of these mutantsrevealed a H230T mutation in gene 223 224 AVT76_GP14of phage phiNM2 and a K97G mutation in gene ST85ORF023of phage 85.To confirm that these phage genesencode activators of Stk2, we cloned themunder the control of a 225 Ptet promoter on plasmid pE194, producing plasmids pFD16 and pFD20, respectively (Table 226 S5). After induction with anhydrotetracycline, cellswere killed in the presence of *stk2* but not 227 in its absence (Figure 4C). The mutations identified in these genes were also confirmed to 228 abolish Stk2-mediated cell death (data not shown). These results show that, in addition to 229

- PacK, two other phage proteins can activate Stk2.
- 231

Identification of Stk2 phosphorylation targets. Our results suggest that Stk2 triggers an Abi 232 phenotype through phosphorylation of one or several host proteins. To identify the 233 phosphorylation target(s) of Stk2, we first characterized S. aureus colonies that survive the 234 induction of *pacK* in the presence of Stk2 with the goal of identifying mutants of the target 235 proteins. Unfortunately, all of the 36 analyzed colonies carried mutations either in the *stk2* or 236 pacK genes, but no other mutant could be identified (data not shown). This result suggests 237 that several mutations might be required to survive Stk2 activation; these would occur at a 238 lower frequency than point mutations in *stk2* or *pacK*. 239

240

241 We then performed a phosphoproteome analysis of cells expressing *pacK* in either the

242 presence or absence of *stk2*. Expression of PacK was induced from plasmid pAS10(Ptet-

243 *pacK*) in exponentially growing cells. After 30 min of induction, proteins were precipitated

and digested followed by titaniumdioxide-based phosphopeptide enrichment (Larsen et al.,

245 2005). To confidently differentiate basal and Stk2-induced phosphorylation events, we

labeled the different proteomes with mass spectrometry-differentiable stable isotopes of

dimethyl (Boersema et al., 2009). We identified 32 phosphopeptides that could only be found

in the presence of Stk2 (Table 1). These include several proteins related to translation,

249 including elongation factors Tu and P, 50S ribosomal proteins L6, L5, L31 and the MetG

methionine-tRNA ligase. This extensive phosphorylation of the translation machinery likely 250 indicates that translation is modified after Stk2 activation. In addition, we identified proteins 251 252 involved in global transcription control, cell cycle control, stress response, DNA topology, DNA repair and central metabolism. This suggests a coordinated response influencing many 253 aspects of the cellular machinery, and a general shift towards stress response and growth 254 255 arrest. Phosphopeptides corresponding to Stk2 itself could also be identified. Three residues are phosphorylated in the activation loop (S272, T275, T278), as well as a serine S163 256 between the P-loop and the catalytic site. These residues were also identified in the in 257 vitroautophosphorylation assay (Figure 2). Phosphorylation of the trigger PacK protein could 258 also be identified at residue S176, suggesting that Stk2 interacts with PacK directly. Mutation 259 of the S176 residue to alanine did not have any impact on the Abi phenotype (Figure S3). 260 261 Role of Stk1 in the Stk2-mediated immunity. The question of whether the phosphopeptides 262 identified are directly phosphorylated by Stk2 remains to be investigated. Indeed, it is possible 263 that the activation of Stk2 results in the activation of Stk1 which would lead to secondary 264 phosphorylation events. For instance, the elongation factor P identified in our analysis was 265 previously reported as a target of Stk1(Lomas-Lopez et al., 2007). In further support of this 266 267

- previously reported as a target of Stk1(Lomas-Lopez et al., 2007). In further support of this possible role of Stk1 in the phage defense phenotype, we detected the phosphorylation of Stk1 at two threonines in the activation loop (T164 and T166). The phosphopeptide carrying these residues was 1.5-fold more abundant in the presence of Stk2 than in its absence (Table S7).
- To investigate whether Stk1 could play a role in Stk2-mediated phage defense, plasmid pDB31 carrying *stk2* was introduced by electrotransformation in *S. aureus* strain NCTC8325-4 and in the corresponding *stk1* deletion mutant(Debarbouille et al., 2009). The EOP of phage phiNM1 on cells carrying both *stk1* and *stk2* is $4.4*10^{-6}$, but when only *stk2* is present the
- EOP jumps to $2*10^{-2}$ (Figure 5A). Thus, in the absence of *stk1*, we can still observe some protective effect of *stk2*, but ultimately*stk1* is required for efficient immunity. We also
- investigated whether stk^2 could trigger cell death in the absence of stk^1 . S. aureusNCTC8325-
- 4 and the *stk1* mutant were electrotransformed with both pDB31 (*stk2*) and pAS10 (Ptet-
- 278 *pacK*) plasmids. Upon induction of PacKexpression, cells were killed with identical 279 efficiencies regardeless of the presence of stk1 (Figure 5B). This demonstrates that while stk1
- is necessary for efficient antiviral immunity, it is not required for Stk2-mediated cell death.
- 281

282 **Discussion**

283

Recent bioinformatics analyses have led to the discovery that bacteriophage defense systems 284 frequently cluster together in bacterial genomes (Makarova et al., 2011). Here we report the 285 discovery of a novel defense system in close proximity to the type III CRISPR and type I RM 286 system of S. epidermidisRP62A. SERP2479, or Stk2, is responsible for abortive infection and 287 cell death upon phage infection. Stk2 belongs to the family of eukaryotic-like serine/threonine 288 kinases but differs from previously described eSTKsin its lack of transmembrane or PASTA 289 domains. We were able to confirm the kinase activity of Stk2 in vitro and identified nine auto-290 phosphorylated residues. Four of these residues were corroboratedin vivo, including three in 291 292 the activation loop (S272, T275, T278), as well as a serine (S163) close to the ATP-binding region (Figure 2A). All three residues of the activation loop are essential for *in* 293 vitroautophosphorylation, while an S163A mutation actually increased the kinase activity, 294 suggesting a regulatory role. The phosphorylation of several residues in the activation loop of 295 eSTKshas been reported before and seems to be a common feature of these kinases(Young et 296 al., 2003). 297

298

Our data suggest that while Stk2 is able to autophosphorylate *in vitro*, it is only activated in the 299 presence of a phage protein *in vivo*. We identified three such phage proteins by analyzing the 300 genomes of mutant phages able to propagate on cells carrying stk2: Gene SAPPV1_GP14 301 (pacK) from phage phiNM1, geneAVT76_GP14 from phage phiNM2, a distant homologue of 302 pacK with 43% protein identity, and gene ST85ORF023 from phage 85, which shows no 303 304 identity to PacK. The PacK protein carries a P-loop NTPase domain and leads to a defect in phage DNA packaging when mutated. This defect could either be due to problems in DNA 305 replication leading to DNA molecules in a bad conformation for packaging, or to a defect in 306 packaging itself. It is currently identified in databases as the chromosomal replication initiator 307 DnaA. However, we believe this to be a simple case of incorrect annotation, as no significant 308 homologies can be found between PacK and DnaA proteins. The function of ST85ORF023 is 309 not known, and no protein domain of known function can be identified. These activator 310 genesare located within the phage lytic operon, which likely explains why Stk2-induced cell 311 death is not triggered when the phage enters lysogeny (Figure 3D). However, the induction of 312 a lysogenic phage in cells carrying stk2also leads to cell death. The ability of Stk2 to 313 tolerateprophages while maintaining an active defense against the phage lytic cycleis 314 reminiscent of the similar capacity of type III CRISPR systems to tolerate lysogenic phages 315 (Goldberg et al., 2014). 316

317

An analysis of Staphylococcal phages in the RefSeq database shows that 23% carry

homologues of PacK, while 13% carry homologues of ST85ORF023(Table S4). Phage CNPx,
which was used in this study to first identify Stk2in *S. epidermidis* carries a protein with 85%
identity to ST85ORF23. Interestingly, a blast analysis only identified activators of Stk2 in
Siphoviridae; none were found in other phage families. The ability of Stk2 to sense multiple
phage proteins is fascinating, and leads to deeper questions about the regulation of the kinase
activity.

324 325

We hypothesize that the activation of Stk2 by PacK is the result of a direct interaction 326 between the two proteins, as PacKisitself phosphorylated during the response. After sensing 327 the presence of the infecting phage, the activation of Stk2results in the phosphorylation of a 328 large number of proteins involved in several core functions of the cell including translation, 329 transcription and cell division (Table 1). The modulation of the activity of these proteins 330 through phosphorylation is likely responsible for cell death, preventing phage propagation 331 concurrently. It is worthwhile to note that while the SarA protein was previously reported as a 332 phosphorylation target of Stk2, we did not identify it in our analysis(Didier et al., 2010). This 333 could be explained by the fact that a serine-rich segment of SarA was not covered by our 334 mass-spectrometry analysis (data not shown). 335

336

Another STK known as Stk1 (sometimes also named PknB or PrkC), present in all 337 Staphylococci, is also involved in this antiviral defense pathway. Deletion of *stk1* strongly 338 impairs the ability of Stk2 to protect S. aureus against phages (Figure 5A). Nonetheless, the 339 activation of Stk2 leads to cell death even in the absence of Stk1 (Figure 5B). Thus, the role 340 of Stk1 in this defense pathway is likely to ensure that phage particles are not produced before 341 342 cells are killed by Stk2. It remains to be investigated whether this occurs by accelerating cell death, slowing down the phage, or some other mechanism. The phosphoproteome analysis 343 performed here does not allow for differentiation of direct targets of Stk2 from targets 344 phosphorylated by Stk1 as a result of Stk2 activation. Future work will focus on elucidating 345 the molecular interaction between Stk2 and PacK, for which we only provide circumstantial 346 evidence, as well as deciphering the exact phosphorylation cascade occurring during the 347

348 response.

350 In sum, we provide strong evidence for a bacterial antiviral defense pathway involving a complex phosphorylation cascade and resulting in cell death through the modification of 351 several essential cellular pathways. Other bacterial eSTKs have been shown to target different 352 components of translation (EF-Tu, EF-P), transcription (various sigma and anti-sigma 353 354 factors), cell divisionmachinery (FtsZ) and central metabolism (Pereira et al., 2011), but none so far have been linked to phage defense. On the contrary, some phages have been described 355 as using STKs in order to manipulate the host translation machinery for their own benefit 356 (Robertson and Nicholson, 1992). It is also interesting to note that STKs play critical roles in 357 the antiviral defense of eukaryotes. In particular, there are striking similarities between Stk2, 358 the mammalian PKR and the plant NIK1. All three STKs are activated by viral infection and 359 target the translation machinery. Moreover, PKR not only inhibits the initiation of translation 360

- through phosphorylation of eIF-2 α (Meurs et al., 1990), can also trigger cell death through 361 apoptosis (Dai et al., 2012; Hsu et al., 2004; Stark et al., 1998). Viral defense strategies which 362
- involve the Serine/Threonine phosphorylation of essential cellular pathwaysthus exist in both 363
- eukaryotes and bacteria. eSTKs have also recently been identified in archaea (Kennelly, 364
- 2014). In particular the Ph0512p kinase from Pyrococcushorikoshii OT3 was shown to 365
- phosphorylate the archaeal homolog of eIF2 α (aIF2 α) in vitro (Tahara et al., 2004). It is 366
- tempting to hypothesize that Ph0512p and other archaeal kinases could also be involved in 367
- viral defense, making this a universal strategy conserved across all domains of life. 368
- 369

349

Experimental Procedures 370

371 **Bacterial strains and growth conditions**

S. epidermidis LM1680(Hatoum-Aslan et al., 2014), S. aureus RN4220(Nair et al., 2011) and 372 derivative strains were grown in TSB media at 37°C with shaking at 200 rpm. S. epidermidis 373

- LM1680 and S. aureus RN4220 were used as hosts for recombinant plasmids. 374
- Chloramphenicol (10 µg/mL), erythromycin (10 µg/ml), and ampicillin (100µg/ml) were 375
- added to the medium to prevent loss of plasmids derived from pC194, pE194(Horinouchi and 376
- Weisblum, 1982a, b), and pET15b (Novagen), respectively. E. coliBL21(DE3)AD494 377
- (Novagen) was used for expression of recombinant proteins, and grown inLBmedium 378
- supplemented with 100 µg/mL ampicillin at 37°C. 379
- 380

381 **Isolation of phage CNPx**

Phage CNPx(GenBankaccession KU598975) was isolated as a plaque on a soft-agar lawn of 382

- S. epidermidis LM1680 that was infected with phage CNPH82 (Daniel et al., 2007). LM1680 383
- 384 is resistant to phage CNPH82 and the isolation of the CNPx was a single fortuitous event that
- might have occurred via contamination with an environmental phage and recombination with 385 CNPH82. Indeed CNPx shares close to 100% homology with CNPH82 over 65% of its 386
- genome length, but carries a divergent segment of ~13 kb in the region of the genome
- 387
- containing the lysogenic operon and the early lytic genes. 388
- 389

Introduction of plasmids in Staphylococci 390

- Plasmid constructions are detailed in the supplemental experimental procedures. Lists of 391
- plasmids and oligonucleotides used in this study are provided in supplementary Tables S5 and 392
- 393 S6.After DNA assembly all plasmids were first electroporated in S. aureus strain RN4220.
- Briefly, cells were grown to an optical density (600nm) of 0.8 and washed three times in cold 394
- water and concentrated 100x in 10% glycerol. Electroporation of dialyzed DNA was 395
- performed in 2mm cuvettes using the following settings: 100Ω , 2.5kV, 25μ F. In order to 396
- introduce plasmids in other Staphylococci strains, plasmids were extracted from RN4220 397

using the NucleoSpin Plasmid kit (Macherey Nagel) with the following modification: 4ug of 398

- lysostaphin (Ambi) was added to the A1 buffer, and cells were incubated 1H at 37°C in this 399
- buffer before resuming the protocol as described. Plasmids extracted from RN4220 can then 400
- be introduced in other Staphylococci through electroporation following the same protocol. 401
- 402

403 **Overproduction and purification of Stk2 and derivatives**

Plasmids pET15 Ω stk2(sa0077) and derivative mutantswere introduced into E. coli 404 BL21\lambda DE3/AD494. The transformants were grown in 1 liter of LB medium with shaking at 405 25° C until OD₆₀₀ = 0.5, IPTG (0.5 mM) was added to induce protein production, and 406 incubation was pursued for 6 h at 25°C. Cells were then harvested by centrifugation at 3000g 407 for 10 min. Since Stk2 and its mutants were not soluble and retained in inclusion bodies, a 408 step of denaturation/renaturation using guanidine chloride according to London(London et al., 409 1974) and Goldberg (Goldberg et al., 1996) was performed before the purification on a Ni-410 NTA column. 411

412

In vitro phosphorylation assay 413

Phosphotransfer to Stk2 and its derivatives purified was performed in abuffer containing 25 414 mMTris-HCl, pH7.5, 1 mM DTT, 2.5 mM MnCl2, 10 mM ATP and 5 µCi of [y-32P]-ATP 415 and incubated at 37°C 10 min to 30 min following the subtrate. The reaction was stopped by 416 the addition of 20% Laemmli 5X (Sigma), followed by electrophoresis on SDS-PAGE and 417 autoradiography. 418

419

Phosphoamino acid analysis 420

The method used to detect acid-stable phosphoamino acids was described previously (Duclos et 421 al., 1991). 422

423

424 **Phage production**

Phages were mixed with S. aureus RN4220 in soft TSA agar supplemented with CaCl2 425

- (5 mM) and then poured on top of TSA agar plate supplemented with CaCl2 (5 mM). The 426
- plates were incubated overnight at 37°C. Soft TSA agar lawns were then resuspended in PBS 427
- solution (1X), centrifuged and the lysate containing the phage was filtered on a 0.22 µM filter. 428
- To measure phage titers, serial dilutions were spotted on a soft agar lawn of RN4220 in TSA 429
- agar supplemented with CaCl2 (5 mM) and PFUs were quantified after incubation overnight 430 at 37°C. 431
- 432

433 Efficiency of plaquing assays

Phage lysates containing $\sim 10^7$ PFU/µl of CNPX, phage 80alpha, phage 85, phiNM1, phiNM2, 434 phiNM4 or Staph1Nwere serially diluted and spotted on soft TSA agar lawns supplemented 435 with 5 mM of CaCl2 and containing either S. epidermidis LM1680 or S. aureusRN4220, TB4, 436 8325-4, or 8325-4($\Delta stkl$) cells containing the indicated plasmids. PFUs were quantified after 437 incubation overnight at 37°C. 438

439

Efficiency of center of infection (ECOI) 440

RN4220 cells carrying plasmid pC194 or pDB31 were grown to on optical density of 0.6 and 441

- incubated 10 min at 37°C with phage phiNM1 at an MOI of 5. Cells were then washed twice 442
- in fresh TSB to remove unbound phages and plated on a lawn of RN4220 cells. ECOI was 443 obtained by dividing the number of plaques (or center of infections) obtained after infecting
- 444
- 445 cells carrying pDB31 by the number of plaques obtained with cells carrying pC194.
- 446

Phage DNA isolation and sequencing 447

- 448 Samples of phage lysates were treated with DNase and RNase to a final volume of 200 μ l for
- 30 min at 37°C followed by treatment with EDTA (pH 8.0, 5 mM) and proteinase K (0,5
- mg/ml) for 30 min at 37°C. Phage DNA was then purified using a PCR purification kit
- 451 (Macherey Nagel). Phage DNA was sequenced using the Nextera library preparation kit from
- 452 Illumina and sequenced on a MiSeq device.
- 453

454 Adsorption assay

- 455 Recipient RN4220 cells were grown to an OD of 0.6 and incubated with phage phiNM1 at an
- 456 MOI of 1 for 10min. Cells were then centrifuged and the number of phages remaining in the
- 457 lysates was quantified (n_{ad}) . Adsorption efficiency is computed as $(1 n_{ad}/n_{tot})$ were n_{tot} is the
- total number of phages added to the sample and reported as percentages.
- 459

460 Growth curves

RN4220/pC194, RN4220/pDB31, RN4220/pDB275, *S*. aureus strains (RN4220, 461 RN4220/pFD6) were grown in triplicate overnight at 37°C and diluted 1:100 in 200 µl of TSB 462 broth in a 96-well microplate that was incubated at 37°C with shaking in an Infinite M200 463 PRO reader (TECAN). Absorbance was measured at 600 nm every 10 min. For RN4220, 464 RN4220/pC194, and RN4220/pDB31, after 1h of growth (OD600≈0.2), 10 µl of phiNM1 465 (4.10⁷ PFU/µl) phage was added. For RN4220, RN4220/pDB275, and RN4220/pFD6, when 466 OD600 reached 0.2, the cultures were induced by anhydrotetracycline (aTc) during 1h and 467 then phage 80alpha $(5.10^7 \text{ PFU/}\mu\text{l})$ was added. 468

470 **Prophage induction**

- 471 S. aureus strains (RN4220, RN4220::phiNM1, RN4220::phiNM1/pC194,
- 472 RN4220::phiNM1/pDB31) were grown in triplicate overnight at 37°C, diluted 1:100 in TSB
- broth and incubated at 37°C with shaking. When cultures reached OD600≈0.4,mitomycin
- 474 Cwas added at a final concentration of 2 μ g/ml. After 3h of incubation in the presence or in
- the absence of mitomycin C, the samples were serially diluted and plated to quantify the
- 476 number of surviving bacteria. Samples were also centrifuged to recover the supernatant and
- 477 measure the phage titer.
- 478

469

479 Induction of candidate activators of Stk2

- 480 *S. aureus* strains were grown in triplicate overnight at 37°C, diluted 1:100 in TSB broth and
- incubated at 37° C with shaking. When cultures reached OD600 \approx 0.2, aTc was added at a final
- 482 concentration of 0.5 μ g/ml. All the strains were grown in parallel without aTc as a control.
- 483 After 1h30 of incubation in the presence or in the absence of aTc, the samples were serially
- diluted and 5 μ l was spotted in TSA with appropriate antibiotics to count viable bacteria.
- 485

486 Mass Spectrometry

- 487 Mass spectrometry methods are detailed in the supplemental experimental procedures.
- 488
- 489
- 490

491 Author Contributions

492 F.D., J.-P.D, A.S. and D.B. performed the experiments. B.D., F.D. and D.B. wrote the

493 manuscript. H.M. performed the mass spectrometry experiments and analyzed the data. A.B.
 494 performed the phylogenetic analysis.

495

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Figure Legends

617

Figure 1. Discovery of a novel phage defense system in *S. epidermidis* strain **RP62A.** A)

- 619 Strains with various deletions in the region of the CRISPR locus (numbered as in Jiang et al.,
- 2013) were screened for sensitivity to bacteriophage CNPx. ORFs in the genomic region are
- represented in green. Each horizontal line represents a strain and the line is discontinued in
- 622 the deleted region. Blue lines indicate strains sensitive to phage CNPx while red lines indicate 623 resistance. The region that is sufficient to provide resistance is highlighted in purple. The
- exact position of the candidate region is 2535598-2551561 and the ORFs it contains are
- described in Table S1. B) ORFs contained in the candidate region were cloned either alone or
- two at a time on plasmid pC194 to give plasmids pDB31 (*serp2479*, *stk2*), pDB32 (*serp2480*),
- 627 pDB33 (*serp2481+serp2482*) and pDB34 (*serp2483+serp2484*)(see Table S1). Efficiency of
- 628 plaquing (EOP) of phage CNPx is reported on *S. epidermidis*strain LM1680 containing these
- different plasmids (mean+sd, n=3). No plaques were recovered in bacteria carrying gene
- 630 Serp2479 (stk2) (EOP detection limit of 10^{-5}). C) A tree of Staphylococci was constructed
- based on the assembled complete genomes available in GenBank. Red indicates the presence
- of proteins with a minimum of 90% identity to Stk2 (SERP2479) over 100% of the sequence
- length. More distantly related proteins were also identified in Staphylococci that are not
- 634 present in this tree and are reported in Table S2.
- Figure 2. Stk2 is an active Serine/Threnonine kinase. A) Schematic presentation of the
 position of phosphoresidues in protein Stk2 and location of different domains. The kinase
- domain, the activation loop, the cystein-rich region, and the position of the residues K152 and
- 638 D243 are shown. The position of phosphore sidues is indicated by dotted bars. Residues in red
- 639 were also shown to be phosphorylated *in vivo* (see Table S7). B) SDS-PAGE analysis of
- 640 purified Stk2 (lane 2) and Stk2 mutant K152I (lane 3) after staining with Coomassie blue.
- 641 Molecular mass standards are shown on the left (lane 1). Autophosphorylation of Stk2 (lane
- 4) and mutant K152I (lane 5) in the presence of radioactive [γ -32P] ATP is shown.
- Radioactive molecules were detected by autoradiography. C) Effect of cations on
- 644 Stk2autophosphorylationactivity *in vitro*.D) 2D-analysis of phosphorylated amino acids in
- 645 Stk2. The acid-stable phosphoamino acids from $[\gamma$ -32P]-labelled Stk2 were separated by
- electrophoresis in the first dimension (1D) followed by ascending chromatography in the
- second dimension (2D). (P-Tyr) phosphotyrosine, (P-Ser) phosphoserine, and (P-Thr)
- 648 phosphothreonine were located by ninhydrin staining. Phosphorylated molecules were
- revealed by autoradiography. E) Effect mutations on the kinase activity of Stk2. Purified wild-
- type and mutants of Stk2 were incubated in the presence of radioactive [γ -32P] ATP, protein
- were separated by SDS-PAGE, and radioactive molecules were detected by autoradiography.
- **Figure 3. The Stk2 kinase triggers cells death during the phage lytic cycle.** A) EOP of
- 653 phage phiNM1 on RN4220 S. aureus cells in the presence of the WT Stk2 protein (pDB31) or
- various mutants: K152Q (pDB81), D243A (pDB82) and T275A (pDB83). B) Growth curve
- of *S. aureus* RN4220 carrying control plasmid pC194 or pDB31 (pC194 Ω stk2). Phage
- 656 phiNM1 was added after 1H of growth at a multiplicity of infection(MOI) of 10. C) PFU and
- 657 CFU recovered after infection of RN4220 cells carrying *stk2* or not. Cells were grown to OD

- 658 = 0.2 and incubated with phiNM1 for 2H. Cells were then plated on TSA to measure CFUs,
- and the filtered supernatant was spotted on a top-agar lawn of RN4220 cells to measure PFUs.
- 660 Upon infection with phiNM1 and in the presence of *stk2*, cells are killed but the phage is not
- amplified. D) PFU and CFU recovered after induction with mitomycin C (MMC) of growing
- 662 RN4220 carrying a phiNM1 lysogenic phage or not, in the presence or absence of *stk2*. Upon
- 663 induction, cells carrying a lysogenic phage are killed regardless of the presence of stk2, but 664 the production of phage is inhibited in the presence of stk2. Note that PFU are recovered even
- 665 in the absence of MMC due to the spontaneous induction of the phage. See also Figure S1.
- **Figure 4. A phage protein triggers Stk2-mediated cell death.** A) Two mutants of phage
- 667 phiNM1 able to infect RN4220 cells carrying *stk2* were isolated and sequenced. Coverage
- along the phage genome is plotted and mutations are highlighted. Both phages carry a
- 669 mutation in gene *pacK*(SAPPV1_GP14), V200M and K30E for phages phiNM1K1 and
- 670 phiNM1K2 respectively. B) To test whether PacKis sufficient to activate Stk2, the *pacK* gene
- was cloned under the control of a Ptetpromoter on a pE194 vector giving pAS10, and
- 672 introduced in cells carrying plasmid pDB31. C) RN4220 cells carrying genes
- 673 *pacK*(SAPPV1_GP14) from phage phiNM1 (pAS10), AVT76_gp14from phage phiNM2
- (pFD16) or ST85ORF023from phage 85 (pFD20) under the control of a Ptet promoter,
- together with plasmids pC194 or pDB31 were grown to OD~0.2 and induced with
- anhydrotetracycline. After 1H of induction cells were plated and colonies quantified. See also
- 677 Figure S2.
- Figure 5. Stk1 is required for efficient Stk2-mediated immunity. A) EOP of phage
- 679 phiNM1 is reported against *S. aureus* strain NCTC8325-4 harboring *stk1* or not (Δ *stk1*) in the
- presence of *stk2* (pDB31) or a control plasmid (pC194). B) NCTC8325-4 cells harboring *stk1*
- or not ($\Delta stk1$) in the presence of stk2 (pDB31) or a control plasmid (pC194)were
- transformed with plasmid pAS10 expressing *pacK* under the control of Ptet promoter. Cells
- were grown to $OD \approx 0.2$ and induced with anhydrotetracycline. After 2H of induction, cells
- were plated and colonies quantified. Induction of *pacK* expression triggers cell death in the
- 685 presence of stk2 regardless of the presence or absence of stk1.

Table 1. List of proteins phosphorylated upon expression of PacK and in the presence of Stk2 and which are never found phosphorylated in the absence of Stk2. A detailed list of all phosphopeptides identified with match metrics and measured ratios are provided in Table S7.

	Gene Name	Protein Descriptions	Accession #
Transcription	greA	Transcription elongation factor GreA	A6QHF1
	sigA	RNA polymerase sigma factor SigA	POA0JO
	nusA	Transcription termination/antiterminationproteinNusA	Q2G2D2
Translation	metG	MethioninetRNA ligase	A6QEE3
	tuf	Elongation factor Tu	A6QEK0
	efp	Elongation factor P	A6QH73
	rpmE2	50S ribosomal protein L31 type B	A6QIW4
	rplF	50S ribosomal protein L6	A6QJ77
	rpIE	50S ribosomal protein L5	A6QJ80
Cell cycle	ftsZ	Cell division proteinFtsZ	A6QG86
	sepF	Cell division proteinSepF	Q2FZ86
	gpsB	Cell cycle proteinGpsB	Q2FYI5
Stress response	clpX	ATP-dependent Clp protease ATP-binding subunit ClpX	Q2FXQ7
	clpB	ChaperoneproteinClpB	Q2FZS8
	ydaG / yzzA	General stress protein 26	Q2FVN7
	AQ00_RS06590	alkaline shock protein (Asp23) / Stress response regulator gls24 homolog	Q2FZ59
	telA	Tellurite/ Toxin anion resistanceprotein	Q2FYM7
DNA topology and repair	ssb	Single-stranded DNA-binding protein	A6QE48
	parE	DNA topoisomerase 4 subunit B	A6QGQ7
	mutS	DNA mismatch repair protein MutS	Q2FYZ9
Central metabolism and Biosynthesis	hemL1	Glutamate-1-semialdehyde 2,1-aminomutase 1 (protoporphyrin-IX biosynthesis)	A6QHK1
	pgk	Phosphoglycerate kinase (Glycolysis)	A6QF82
	pgi	Glucose-6-phosphate isomerase (Glycolysis pathway)	Q2FZU0
	dltA	D-alaninepoly(phosphoribitol) ligase subunit 1 (LTA biosynthesis)	Q2FZW6
Others	pacK / SAPPV1_GP14	pacK (Stk2 activation protein)	A6QDW1
	stk2	SERP2479	Q5HK71
	ylaL	Uncharacterized protein	A6QFW6
	esxA	Virulence factor EsxA (ESAT-6-like protein)	Q2G189
	obg	GTPase	Q2FXT1
	phoP	Alkaline phosphatase synthesis two-component response regulator	Q2FXN6
	AQ00_RS00105	short-chaindehydrogenase	Q2FV41