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Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory 50th Anniversary Celebration

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LAWRENCE LIVERMORE NATIONAL LABORATORY
50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
September 20, 2002

President Richard C. Atkinson

It is a great pleasure to be back on this "campus" of the University and to participate in the celebration of its golden anniversary. I use the word "campus" deliberately. This laboratory is such an integral part of the University of California and its missions of teaching, research, and public service that it is natural to think of it as a campus. The symbiosis between the lab and the rest of the University is sharply evidenced by the fact that fully one quarter of all the lab's scientific publications are co-authored by UC faculty. In addition, the lab bears many of the hallmarks of the University's campuses - including a culture that promotes scientific excellence and protects intellectual freedom. These are important values to the University, and I believe they also have served the laboratory well.

This laboratory's development goes back to the UC Berkeley campus, to its physics department, and to Professor Lawrence's innovation of a multidisciplinary way to do "big science." Livermore is an exemplar of how he used that innovation to help science serve national security. The Livermore laboratory has never shied away from the really tough problems at the intersection of science and national security. Indeed, at times these problems have seemed to some to be *too* tough. Let me give two examples.

First, a few years after the lab was founded, it committed itself to the very ambitious goal of producing a nuclear warhead that would be compact enough to be launched from a submarine. Imagine a cold war in which we failed in developing this means of deterrence! Second, a few years ago, the lab committed to producing a fifty-fold increase in laser power to enable the exploration of the physics of fusion for a detailed understanding of nuclear weapons and their aging - as well as an understanding of the scientific and energy aspects of this new investigation of fusion.

These two examples have remarkable parallels. Not surprisingly, goals that at first seem outrageously ambitious do often have rocky trajectories. We have certainly seen that in the past few years at the National Ignition Facility. But we also have seen the tremendous resilience of the Lawrence Livermore community in solving difficult problems. NIF is now meeting all of its milestones and, indeed, already has a light beam all the way down the first set of identical laser elements needed for its completion. This

development should give us all confidence in its successful completion, just as the goal of a submarine-based nuclear weapon was ultimately achieved.

How has this laboratory been able to accomplish so much, and how has it been able to position itself to accomplish even more in the terrorist environment we now face? The answer, of course, is *people*. For half a century now, the lab has attracted the best and the brightest, many from the academic campuses of the University. And from the beginning - up to today, with the current director - the laboratory has had remarkably visionary and competent leadership.

At this time, the University wishes to acknowledge its colleagues who have made such a remarkable contribution here by honoring the founding directors of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory - those who were "present at the creation" - with the Presidential Medal. This is the highest honor the president of the University can bestow, and for the first time ever, we are making multiple awards on a single occasion. I would note that Herb York has already received the Presidential Medal - so his "number" has been "retired" in a certain sense, though his many contributions here certainly must not be overlooked.

Allow me now to read the citations accompanying these Presidential Medals:

"Edward Teller -- Scientific visionary, you have advanced the frontiers of science and laid the foundation for a world renowned laboratory, exacting in research and innovative in discovery; acclaimed physicist, your groundbreaking research has profoundly altered the course of world history; impassioned patriot, you have given selflessly of your wisdom and insight to advance the well being of your beloved adopted homeland. For your inspired contributions to the nation and the University as co-founder and second director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the University of California is proud to bestow upon you the Presidential Medal.

"Harold Brown -- Brilliant scientist, your creative explorations of the endless frontier of science have illuminated and enriched the scientific community for over half a century; renowned statesman and skillful diplomat, you have kindled the spirit of freedom throughout the world and blazed new paths to democracy; perceptive leader of higher education, you brought to California's educational community your great gifts of mind and character and an enrichment of the values of academic life, to the lasting benefit of all. For your thoughtful leadership as the third director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and for your outstanding contributions to

science and education, the University of California is proud to bestow upon you the Presidential Medal.

"John S. Foster, Jr. -- Visionary leader, you have devoted a lifetime of unparalleled service to safeguarding and enhancing the security and defense of our nation; statesman of science, you have been a powerful advocate in government, industry, and education of America's scientific and technological endeavors; insightful counselor, you have consistently and generously shared of your exceptional knowledge to the lasting benefit of the state and the nation. For your leadership and vision as the fourth director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and for your superb contributions to science and technology, the University of California is proud to bestow upon you the Presidential Medal.

"Michael M. May -- Distinguished scientist and scholar, your powerful voice and inspired leadership have contributed brilliantly to international strategic arms control and the safeguarding of the world; renowned physicist, your perceptive insights have enriched and illuminated your discipline and your colleagues; dynamic leader, vigorous in the pursuit of excellence, you have been a powerful influence in shaping the destiny of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. For your outstanding achievements and selfless dedication as the fifth director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and for your devoted efforts in the area of arms control, the University of California is proud to bestow upon you the Presidential Medal."

I also have a certificate to present to the laboratory as a whole. It reads:

"The University of California is proud to have managed the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory from its inception 50 years ago. Over the past five decades, the Laboratory has evolved into one of the premier scientific centers in the world, having established an incomparable record of vital contributions to the security and well being of the United States. Now, in the early years of the 21st Century, the successful partnership between the Laboratory and the University is helping break new ground in such critical and diverse areas of national importance as energy, biomedicine, environmental science, and homeland security. The nation and the world will benefit for many years to come from this extraordinary laboratory's exceptional research and development.

"The Regents, faculty, staff, and students of the University of California salute the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and its remarkable staff for a half century of outstanding service to the United States of America."

In closing, let me say that I believe the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory is one of the University of California's finest accomplishments. I'm proud of the laboratory's fifty-year history, and I'm proud of the laboratory's continuing relationship with the University today. Thank you very much.