

A NATIONAL ADVANCED PROJECTS DEFENSE LABORATORY

(Copy of a message sent 11 December 1957 to President James Killian, Professor I. I. Rabi and several other members of President Eisenhower's Scientific Advisory Board.)

Am much impressed by concept of new Advanced Research Projects Agency as way to give planning and priority to new defense ideas free of service compartmentalization. I hope that this agency will provide means by which deeply concerned and able university colleagues who have spoken with me can be drawn into highly productive association with defense program on missiles, submarines and still more advanced thinking. I find it impossible at present time to name to them a central missile or advanced planning laboratory where they can contribute with optimal access to information with proper facilities and with certainty that their sound results will receive rapid unified Department of Defense follow-up. I therefore very much hope you plan to create a civilian National Advanced Research Projects Laboratory to work under contract closely with new agency directly under Secretary of Defense. Such a laboratory appears as indispensable to the agency as Los Alamos and Livermore are to the AEC. The only way to imagine where we would be on bombs without them is to look at where we are now on missiles. Would think of this laboratory as much larger in size than Los Alamos or Livermore and consisting of a whole campus of laboratories devoted to missiles, electronics and other advanced projects plus a central program initiation laboratory. Am convinced that formation of such a center would be followed by a great response of effort on part of scientists. Without some centralizing of research like this I don't see where we are going to get the scientific manpower to do what has to be done considering the present fragmentation of effort.

Best wishes in the urgent work you are doing.

John Wheeler

Dear Hugh:

This is a copy of what I sent off after listening to a classified briefing on the terrifying lead the Russians have on us. I can't see any escape from our having to set up some such central advanced projects research lab.

Best regards,
Sincerely,

