Union of Concerned Scientists. "Going to more complex nuclear systems to get out of the climate change problem is not the best direction."

Citing a comment by Livermore that twice as much laser input would be needed to get 3 GW from inertial confinement fusion than from fission, Richard Garwin, a long-time adviser to presidents on nuclear weapons and energy issues, says, "I'd rather do the research for fusion than a hybrid." The hybrid, he adds, "tries to be all things to all people. I am a big supporter of breeder reactors. You are going to need repositories anyway for fission products. I believe that hybrids combine the worst of fusion and fission."

Many scientists do agree, though, that it's worth scrutinizing hybrids and debating their merits. MIT's Freidberg notes that while hybrids "were not treated too seriously within the fission community in the past," that may be changing. But, he adds, "I'm glad we don't need them urgently, because I don't think we can deliver urgently."

Toni Feder

Votano named director of underground lab

In September, Lucia Votano becomes director of Italy's Gran Sasso National Laboratory, the world's largest underground laboratory. She is the first woman to hold the post. Her predecessor, Eugenio Coccia, plans to return to research in astroparticle physics and teaching after two three-year stints at the lab's helm.

Since 1985 when Votano came to Gran Sasso, she has worked on two experiments and also served in management roles, most recently as chair of the OPERA (oscillation project with emulsion-tracking apparatus) collaboration, which studies neutrino oscillation using a beam from CERN.

One challenge facing Votano will be dealing with the aftermath of the magnitude 6.3 earthquake of last April. Gran Sasso escaped damage, but the area was hit hard, with more than half of the lab's staff rendered homeless and the nearby University of L'Aquila devastated. Those who lost their homes have been staying in nearby hotels or with relatives, and in June some moved into temporary housing on the lab's grounds. The lab is helping people find and pay for such housing and for travel to the lab. Gran Sasso also opened its doors to the university, which is holding physics classes there. "This operation to have lectures in a research center is quite rewarding," says Coccia. "More students are attending than when the lectures are at the university."

Since the area is unlikely to have recovered from the earthquake by September, Votano says, "I have to continue the effective job of the present director." So effective, she adds, "that less than one month after the earthquake, all the experiments were fully operative."


INFN

Votano

Gran Sasso hosts more than a dozen international experiments, devoted mainly to investigating neutrinos and dark matter. "The role of Gran Sasso in astroparticle physics is quite relevant," says Votano. "We have experiments that address the fundamental questions. My challenge will be to preserve and improve this rich legacy."

Votano took the top job because, she says, "I feel I can do something for the lab. Due to my long experience there, I feel fairly aware of the needs of the lab. I can promote physics and at the same time support the people working there."

Toni Feder

Kirby to become executive officer of APS

On 13 July, Kate Kirby, a physicist at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) and a senior research fellow and lecturer in Harvard University's astronomy department, will succeed Judy Franz as executive officer of the American Physical Society. Franz is retiring after 15 years in the post.


KEN COLE/APS

Kirby

"APS is an exciting and dynamic organization that both involves and serves the community very effectively," says Kirby. "It does a lot of wonderful things for physics and the physics community."

"I've been involved with the society for more than 25 years," she adds, "and