WHAT: News conference announcing filing of federal law suit challenging the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) for attempting to construct and operate new facilities for bio-terrorism experiments -- involving lethal bacterial and viral agents -- at the Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos National Laboratories without having completed legally-mandated Environmental Impact Statements. These facilities would co-locate research on bioweapon agents and nuclear weapons.

WHEN: 11:00 a.m. -- Tuesday, August 26, 2003

WHERE: Press Room, 18th Floor, Federal Court, 450 Golden Gate Ave. San Francisco

WHO: Marylia Kelley, Executive Director of Tri-Valley CAREs, who lives across the street from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Jay Coghlan, Executive Director of Nuclear Watch of New Mexico, a “watchdog” group over operations at the Los Alamos National Laboratory

Stephan Volker, lead public interest Attorney for the Plaintiffs, who specializes in environmental law.

WHY: Experimentation with biological agents could expose lab workers and the public to some of the most virulent pathogens and toxins known to humanity, including anthrax, plague, Q fever, botulism, and hantavirus.

Constructing and operating new facilities to conduct such research constitutes a major federal program, which requires completion of an Environmental Impact Statement according to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. The DOE has given the go-ahead for these facilities without conducting the requisite programmatic or site-specific environmental review.

Both Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos have poor safety, security, and environmental records. Strict public and regulatory scrutiny of the new facilities is needed to protect workers and the public.

“Mixing Bugs and Bombs,” an article detailing the dangers of conducting bio-terrorism research at DOE labs, authored by Ms. Kelley and Mr. Coghlan, is the cover story in the September-October, 2003 issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Copies will be available at the August 26 news conference or by request.