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Contact: (703) 808-5050

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NRO Selects the 2015 Pioneer of National Reconnaissance

Ms. Betty Sapp, Director of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), selected Mr. L. Porter Davis as the 2015 Pioneer of National Reconnaissance. The NRO honors as Pioneers those individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions to the discipline of national reconnaissance. Designation as a Pioneer of National Reconnaissance is the highest honor in the field.

Mr. Frank Calvelli, Principal Deputy Director, NRO, inducted Mr. Davis as the 92nd Pioneer of National Reconnaissance into NRO's Pioneer Hall on Tuesday, April 19, 2016. Mr. Davis made significant innovative contributions that changed the discipline and practice of national reconnaissance.

During the 1960's, Mr. Davis pioneered the development of control moment gyros (CMG) for stabilizing, maneuvering, and controlling the attitude of large spacecraft. The innovative CMG technology led to the development of more agile NRO satellites, affording increased collection capacity, improved pointing performance, and longer mission life. These highly complex electro-mechanical systems flew on dozens of NRO spacecraft and enabled NRO satellites to accomplish their essential missions for national security. His mentorship was instrumental in developing many of the members of the next generation of NRO engineers.

Ms. Stephanie O'Sullivan, Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence, was the guest speaker at the ceremony and co-presented Mr. Davis with a small replica of the Pioneer medallion and citation that are on display in NRO's Pioneer Hall. Ms. O'Sullivan remarked that Mr. Davis' leap-ahead advances for spacecraft and his exceptional contribution to NRO's mission made his impact on spacecraft technology undeniable and unprecedented. She observed that "His legacy stretches well beyond the physical innovations he developed ... to his enthusiasm for nurturing future generations of technical talent."

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The NRO is a joint Department of Defense-Intelligence Community organization responsible for developing, launching, and operating America's intelligence satellites to meet the national security needs of our nation.

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