Achieving target gain 1.5 in fusion experiments at the NIF

PPPL Summer Seminar Series

A. Kritcher for the HYBRID-E and ICF teams June, 2023

LLNL-PRES-826367

This work was performed under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Energy by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory under contract DE-AC52-07NA27344. Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC



Dec 5th 2022 marks a significant advance in ICF research; shows there is nothing fundamentally limiting gain >1 in a controlled laboratory experiment



First time Fusion yield > energy on target – still long way to go!

Experiments performed at the National Ignition Facility, world's most energetic laser, enables the creation and study of "micro-fusion" explosions



To reach fusion ignition and gain in ICF experiments requires heating and compressing DT fuel to extreme conditions, for a duration of time (Lawson)



- Compress and heat a central "hot spot" containing a fraction of the fuel with a fuel piston
- Absorb α for extra "self heating"
- Core temperature rises significantly → rapid fusion gain through the cooler dense fuel
- Competing with losses

¹O. A. Hurricane et al. Phys. Plasmas **26**, 052704 (2019)



Ignition occurs when α -heating > all energy losses for a duration of time





Laser Indirect drive inertial confinement fusion uses a laser-driven hohlraum to create the x-rays that drive the implosion



Achieving the conditions for ignition demands precise control of design, laser, and target parameters





Only a small fraction of the laser energy on target is coupled to the implosion, making this so challenging









Many design parameters need to be considered simultaneously to achieve these conditions



What's best for the implosion is usually difficult for the hohlraum



We use radiation-hydrodynamic simulations that are benchmarked to data to design ICF experiments







We compress the DT piston on a lower entropy (adiabat) using steps in the radiation temperature launching multiple coalescing shocks



We measure the leading shock from multiple angles within the shell to calibrate our radiation drive





The fuel is accelerated to extreme velocities ~400 km/s to do work on the hot spot with the "peak" – w/convergence: 100s Mbar in the DT shell and ablator



Compressed DT and HDC: 20 g/cc and 10s of eV

• Rely on models to balance high implosion velocity, instability growth at the ablation front, and growth between the fuel and ablator

Models largely untested (non ideal plasma and Fermi-degenerate strongly coupled plasmas), understanding is sensitive to EOS/conductivity



The end of the peak is important for maintaining pressure and coupling more energy – At peak compression the DT reaches hundreds of Gbar



Conditions well into HED regime, fermi-degenerate and strongly coupled in the shell, weakly coupled hot spot plasma



The program has advanced our physics designs, understanding and technology to improve performance

- E_{HS}P_{HS}² [Patel¹] related to ITFX
 - Take alpha heating out
 - Y_{amp} 15-30 (yield amplification from self-heating) for onset of propagating burn²⁻³
 - Boundary is uncertain



1: P. Patel, Phys. Plasmas 27, 050901 (2020) 2:A. R. Christopherson, et al, PHYSICAL REVIEW E **99**, 021201(R) (2019) 3: J. D. Lindl, et al, POP, 25, 122704 (2018)

Each color represents new understanding that led to the next improvement – moving toward the ignition boundary



Previous platforms made stability, symmetry, energetics advances to increase hot spot pressure but energy was too low



Would need bigger capsule, but no more laser energy and same pressure – major challenge

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Previous designs maxed out in laser power & energy, HYBRID¹ Challenge to make the capsule bigger! But keep similar pressure



More difficult with larger scale and no addnl. laser energy, terms trade-off each other and with Hohlraum, tested two scales

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HYBRID-E¹⁻² used higher efficiency hohlraums to maintain velocity for larger targets with fixed laser energy– more difficult for symmetry



(not drawn to scale)

1: A.B. Zylstra et al., PRL 126, 025001 (2021); 2: A.L. Kritcher et al., PoP 28, 072706 (2021)

3: S. Le Pape et al., PRL 120, 245003 (2018); L.B. Hopkins et al., PPCF 61, 014023 (2018)
 4: D.T. Casey et al., PoP 25, 056308 (2018); K.L. Baker et al., PRE 102, 023210 (2020)

5: D.A. Callahan et al., POP 25, 056305 (2018); J. Ralph, et al., POP, 25, 082701 (2018) 6: A. L. Kritcher, et al Phys. Rev. E **98**, 053206 (2018), L. Pickworth, et al, POP (2020)



Much bigger capsule in to slightly larger hohlraum...

 Difficult to model use data-driven models⁵ (D. Callahan) and cross beam energy transfer in low gas fill hohlraums⁶



Compressed fuel with asymmetries

Initial tests increased energy significantly but suffered in pressure, slightly smaller capsules by 50 microns recovered pressure



Simulations suggested coast was still sub-optimal, motivating test of yet lower coast

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1: O. Hurricane et al, APS-DPP, PO7.00001 (2017); PPCF 61, 014033 (2019); PoP 26, 052704 (2019) 2: A.B. Zylstra et al., PRL 126, 025001 (2021); A.L. Kritcher et al., PoP 28, 072706 (2021) 3: Zylstra Zylstra, et al., Nature, 601, 542 (2022);

4: Kritcher, et al., Nature Phys. 18, 251 (2022); 5: O. Hurricane et al., PoP 24, 092706 (2017); O. Hurricane et al., PoP 27, 062704 (2020)

To reduce coast³ we had to make the hohlraum even more efficient – Resulted in Aug 8th 1.35 MJ shot



1: O. Hurricane et al, APS-DPP, PO7.00001 (2017); PPCF 61, 014033 (2019); PoP 26, 052704 (2019) 2: A.B. Zylstra et al., PRL 126, 025001 (2021); A.L. Kritcher et al., PoP 28, 072706 (2021) 3: Zylstra Zylstra, et al., Nature, 601, 542 (2022);

4: Kritcher, et al., Nature Phys. 18, 251 (2022);

5: Kritcher, et al., PRE, 106, 025201 (2022); Zylstra, et al., PRE, 106, 025202 (2022); NIF collaboration, PRL, 129, 075001 (2022)

6: J. Ralph, T Woods, A Kritcher, et al., "Hohlraum Scans Project", (2020)

7: Hurricane, Kritcher, Callahan, et a.l, PoP, 24, 092706, 2017



In the ignition regime small changes in "no-alpha" space can lead to large changes in real "alpha-on" space



Much higher pressure and energy with small changes to input conditions indicates new regime



These improvements in hot spot energy density led to fusion energy yields exceeding MJ; more rapid progress



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1: O. Hurricane et al, APS-DPP, PO7.00001 (2017); PPCF 61, 014033 (2019); PoP 26, 052704 (2019) awrence Livermore Natior 2: A.B. Zylstra et al., PRL 126, 025001 (2021); A.L. Kritcher et al., PoP 28, 072706 (2021) 3: Zylstra Zylstra, et al., Nature, 601, 542 (2022);

4: Kritcher, et al., Nature Phys. 18, 251 (2022); 5: Kritcher, et al., PRE, 106, 025201 (2022); Zylstra, et al., PRE, 106, 025202 (2022); NIF collaboration, PRL, 129, 075001 (2022)

This experiment satisfied Lawson criterion for ignition, *self*-heating > input heating and all energy losses for a duration of time



This continuing increase in the fusion rate upon hot spot expansion was also observed directly





N210808 passed several published metrics of ignition that use measured or inferred quantities to determining if self-heating > losses

A Lawson-like criterion for ignition where selfheating dominates over all energy losses



Met other metrics for ignition (LC and yield amplification)
J. D. Lindl, S. W. Haan, O. L. Landen, A. R. Christopherson, R. Betti, Phys Plasmas, 25, 122704 (2018)
A. R. Christopherson, R. Betti, S. Miller, B. V. Gopalaswamy, O. M. Mannion, D. Cao, Phys Plasmas, 27, 052708 (2020)
B. K. Spears, M. J. Edwards, S. Hatchett, et al. Phys Plasmas, 21, 042702 (2014)
B. K. Patol, P. T. Springer, C. P. Weber et al Phys

• P. K. Patel, P. T. Springer, C. R. Weber et al Phys Plasmas

NAS definition

O. A. Hurricane, S. A. Maclaren, M. D. Rosen, J. H. Hammer, P. T. Springer, R. Betti, Phys Plasmas, 28, 022704 (2021)



Follow on "variability" attempts suffered from worse fielding conditions which robbed the hot spot of internal energy or pressure



The higher-energy thicker ablator work is designed to increase margin to these fielding challenges

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The higher-energy thicker campaign uses an extended pulse* to increase late-time Tr and drive thicker HDC ablators



Next 480TW, 2.2 MJ, better velocity & "coast" vs N210808 with +10-12um HDC

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Ref. C. Young et al High Radiation Temperature Hohlraum for ICF Implosions, APS DPP, 2020. A. Kritcher, et al, Physics of Plasmas **27**, 052710 (2020) (HybridB design up to 2.05 MJ)



The longer pulse results in more plasma filling of the hohlraum; symmetry was controlled by transferring more energy between beams



• The laser wavelengths are detuned to create a plasma grating and transfer energy toward the center of the hohlraum

Early time powers adjusted for same effective inner drive after transfer

Increase in energy density provides more margin for perturbations that reduce hot spot energy to still "ignite" the plasma

• Increased confinement

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- higher fuel+ablator ρR ~ Fusion Yield
- Better for stability- "cleaner fuel"







With the extra margin we can tolerate more perturbations and still reach MJ yields – higher yields for the same perturbation



Worse stability or capsule quality





Increased low mode asymmetry





Ablator mix into the hot spot (ng)





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First attempt N220919 was comparable to N210808 with worse conditions indicating more margin for achieving >MJ with non-perfect conditions



A large portion of the yield degradation vs expectation for N220919 can be explained with these known degradations using radiation hydrodynamic simulations



To fix the shape, the amount of transfer of energy between beams was increased by wavelength detuning the lasers





The symmetry adjustment resulted in a more spherical implosion on N220214



- The improvement in symmetry resulted in an increase in performance of ~2.5 x vs N220919 and target gain of >1.5
- Now meets all definitions for ignition (Lawson and NAS definition for NIF)



Verena Geppert-Kleinrath, Noah Birge, Chris Danly, Mora Durocher, Matt Freeman, and Carl Wilde, LANL, 505-695-3538 / nbirge@lanl.gov for the Neutron Imaging team.



N210808 passed several published metrics of ignition but not the NAS definition, now N221204 passed all metrics

A Lawson-like criterion for ignition where selfheating dominates over all energy losses



Met other metrics for ignition (LC and yield amplification)

- J. D. Lindl, S. W. Haan, O. L. Landen, A. R. Christopherson, R. Betti, Phys Plasmas, 25, 122704 (2018)
- A. R. Christopherson, R. Betti, S. Miller, B. V. Gopalaswamy, O. M. Mannion, D. Cao, Phys Plasmas, 27, 052708 (2020)
- B. K. Spears, M. J. Edwards, S. Hatchett, et al. Phys Plasmas, 21, 042702 (2014)
- P. K. Patel, P. T. Springer, C. R. Weber et al Phys Plasmas

NAS definition: fusion energy exceeding laser energy on target

O. A. Hurricane, S. A. Maclaren, M. D. Rosen, J. H. Hammer, P. T. Springer, R. Betti, Phys Plasmas, 28, 022704 (2021)

We use measured or inferred quantities to determining if the Lawson criterion was met (self heating overcoming losses for a duration of time

Next Steps: Explore high-yield, high-gain regime











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Cross-beam energy transfer moves energy between beams in an intentional way by changing the laser wavelength

- Pondermotive pressure from interreference pattern of overlapping beams creates plasma density perturbation
- Modifying relative laser wavelengths changes the frequency of this perturbation
- A resulting refractive index modulation acts as a bragg scatter which can redirect incoming laser light from one beam to another
- Max when den fluc ~ IAW resonance condition in the flowing plasma



"Bad" LPI can reduce HR efficiency

<u>SBS</u>: laser scatters off self-generated ion acoustic waves (iaws)

SRS: laser scatters off self-generated electron plasma waves (epws)





This continuing increase in the fusion rate upon hot spot expansion was observed directly



Fusion yield increasing during the explosion phase indicates that alpha-heating exceeds all energy losses

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The longer pulse results in more plasma filling of the hohlraum; symmetry was controlled by transferring more energy between beams



The laser wavelengths are detuned to create a plasma grating and transfer energy toward the center of the hohlraum





Precise control and design of the laser power and target conditions is required to reach ignition



- 1. Foot controls stability and majority of fuel entropy (adiabat, α_{if})
- 2. Peak Power implosion velocity
- 3. Coast period efficiency of KE conversion into DT internal energy, higher pressure

What's best for the implosion is usually worse for the hohlraum



Simulations use the as-shot conditions and models that are benchmarked against experimental data in a two step process



Model energetics, shock timing, time-dependent symmetry, pass to Capsule simulations

Model stability, impact of engineering features ; need to adjust shock timing to match HR and P2 to match shape



Often conflated, the terms "burning plasma," "ignition," and "gain" all mean something physically different

- Burning plasma*
 - ICF: Self-heating energy exceeds external "pdV work" to heat and compress the DT
 - MFE: Self-heating energy exceeds external heating of the DT
- Ignition (i.e. Lawson Criterion)
 - Self-heating power exceeds all DT plasma power losses
 - Losses are radiative, electron heat conduction, negative pdV work
 - Results in thermodynamic instability (explosive increase in T, Y, etc).
- Target Gain
 - Fusion yield exceeds laser energy into target
 - 1997 NAS committee used this as "ignition" in a report & the U.S. DOE adopted this definition



Follow experiments gave capsule gain >1 but reduced performance due to a large unintentional odd mode asymmetry



Simulations the mode one account for most of the degradation – origin explained for most "repeat" attempts



We got "better" on mode one for latest repeats but mix due to additional particles on the capsule at t=0 impacted performance



- This yield reduction from mixing is consistent with simulations and related to worse observed capsule quality
- Even with large mixing and mode one, variability experiments and N210808 are highest 5 yielding shots on NIF



Diagnostics are essential in our understanding of where we are –and what problems need fixing – significant improvement over time



This is the best diagnosed HED plasma on the planet – Developed by entire community over decades!





Many of the experimental measurements are pointing to this implosion being in a fundamentally new regime



These are all signatures of a hotspot undergoing rapid self-heating

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⁺NTOF (neutron-time-of-flight) diagnostic measures Doppler broadening of the neutron peak, which is mostly from the thermal temperature but includes contributions from fluid flow



Simulations get close in matching most performance metrics in 2D



- capsule simulations
- Postshot sims account for as shot conditions

Use these simulations to calculate the heat balance equation for the hot spot

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HYBRID-E increased capsule size to increase capsule energy – pressure dropped, capsule quality degraded, mix

910μm -> 1100μm capsule



- More coupled energy via reduced CCR (+maintain shape & velocity)
- -> Longer coast
- -> Capsule pits, voids
- -> Mix
- -> Lower pressure







Recovering pressure (and temperature) would require lower coast and less mix



To reach fusion ignition and burn requires heating and compressing DT fuel to extreme conditions, for a duration of time (Lawson)

- Burn up-
 - 1.8% fuel burn up
 - 1.9% ice
 - 70MJ if all burned (20 realistic)
- Tion =9 keV (DD)
- HS = 89 g/cc
- rHS=~51um
- PHS=550-600Gbar
- EHS=~52kJ
- PdV=~20kJ
- ~190 kJ into HS from alphas
- Areal density ~1gm/cmm^2
- Rhor HS ~.44 g/cm^2
- Mass HS~60ug



¹O. A. Hurricane et al. Phys. Plasmas **26**, 052704 (2019)

The hohlraum is about 6.5 mm in diameter, 11 mm long. The Capsule had an inner radius of 1050 microns and was 76 um thick.



Suprathermal ion distribution in burning plasmas at the National Ignition Facility (NIF) (Viso) Ed Hartouni

- Viso is isotropic velocity
- Changing relationship between viso and Tion with yield could indicate departure from single temperature Maxwellian plasma behavior
- Could be due to kinetic effects
- Burning plasma with interpenetration of fuel and hot spot could create these conditions (Hurricane)



