

Life without Lasers?

*basic research led to military, health
and commercial applications*

Source: Task Force on American Innovation

The Laser — “A solution looking for a problem”

Critics dubbed the laser, “a solution looking for a problem.” In fact, it took years for many potential uses of the laser to be recognized, and new laser applications are still being discovered today.

The basic research behind the laser was funded by the Department of Defense. The first laser was successfully operated in 1960 by Theodore Maiman at Hughes Research Lab. Since that occasion, more than 55,000 patents involving the laser have been granted in the United States.

Later applications were discovered as a result of other federally-sponsored research and technological advances. Today, the laser has many everyday applications and is vital to the U.S. military, to health care, to consumer and business electronics, and to many other industries.

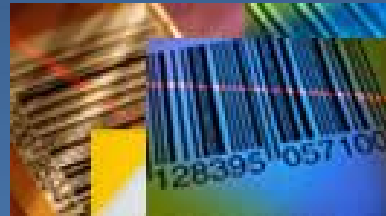
The laser is just one example of how basic research, which may begin with no specific technology or product in mind, can lead to important discoveries, life-changing inventions, and economic growth.



1964
Laser-guided Bomb



1969
Laser Printer



1974
Barcode Scanner



1987
Laser Vision Surgery



1995
DVD Player