



Admiral Watkins and South Carolina Governor Carroll Campbell in front of the K production reactor at the Savannah River site. (L to R) Paul Lego, President and Chief Operating Officer for Westinghouse Electric Corporation; James S. Moore, President of Westinghouse Savannah River Company; Watkins; P.W. Casper, Manager of DOE's Savannah River Operation Office; Campbell.

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price controls on natural gas, 6) obtaining legislative withdrawal of public lands used for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico, and 7) restructuring the uranium enrichment operations.<sup>158</sup>

President Bush made clear, however, the top priority when he addressed Department employees at Watkins's swearing-in ceremony on March 9. Modernization and cleanup of the weapons production facilities were the most pressing of the many challenges facing the Department. Referring to Watkins, he noted that the Department faced "big challenges ahead, so I selected a big man to do a big job." Attempting to raise departmental morale, the President emphasized that the Department of Energy would not close. "There's been talk in the past that perhaps this Department was not necessary, was redundant, or its responsibilities could be taken over by others," he said. "You have important work to do. You're on the cutting edge now and this Department is here to stay." Watkins, in turn, called for a new "commitment to excellence" and asked employees to "help form a subculture that rejects mediocrity and substandard work."<sup>159</sup>

## PRIORITY ONE: THE WEAPONS COMPLEX

Admiral Watkins moved quickly to carry out his "first priority": corrective actions on the waste and environmental problems within the weapons production complex. Two weeks after taking office, he announced the appointment of a special assistant for coordination of DOE defense waste management. In addition, he ordered the preparation of a five-year cleanup plan to "characterize and prioritize" all waste cleanups at departmental sites. The focus of the plan would be to confine and correct immediate problems, ensure the basing of long-term cleanup plans on credible science and technology, and mandate compliance with all applicable laws. The plan, according to Watkins, would establish "agreed-upon milestones" with Congress and the states.<sup>160</sup>

In late April, Watkins toured the troubled Savannah River site. With the earliest restart of the tritium production reactors now pushed back to sometime in 1990, he declared that