

NASA gets ex "Star Wars" talent as new head

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Michael Griffin named NASA's new head. His resume includes the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization which was responsible for the "Star Wars" missile defence program.

http://www.theregister.co.uk/2005/03/14/new_nasa_head/

-- Space & Technology Editor

'Star Wars' vet appointed NASA head

By Lester Haines

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President Bush last week named former NASA chief engineer Michael Griffin as the Administration's new head. The veteran of the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization - responsible for the "Star Wars" missile defence programme - has proved a popular choice to succeed acting director Fred Gregory, Reuters reports. Gregory has been at the helm since former director Sean O'Keefe quit his post in February.

Griffin is currently head of the space department at the Applied Physics Laboratory of Johns Hopkins University. His CV includes a spell as NASA's chief engineer and a stint as deputy for technology at the SDIO. Later he was president of the CIA's private venture capital arm, In-Q-Tel.

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The nomination has attracted broad political support. Maryland Democratic senator Barbara Mikulski said Griffin has "the right combination of experience in industry, academia and government service". US House of Representatives Science Committee head Sherwood Boehlert, a New York Republican, agreed: "He has broad expertise, knows NASA inside and out, and is an imaginative and creative thinker and leader. We look very forward to working with

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Dr. Griffin at this critical time for NASA."

The critical time for NASA will come on 15 May - the intended date for the return to flight of its space shuttle programme. The launch of Discovery will hopefully lay to rest any doubts about the programme's viability following the Columbia disaster.