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Major-General J. Scott Gration is currently working as a policy advisor to president-elect Barack Obama
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Former Air Force General to Lead NASA

Sources say that Obama already made his choice

An informed source near Barack Obama has announced that the president-elect has asked retired Air Force Major General Scott Gration to lead the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Despite the fact that Gration is short on direct space experience, he is a decorated pilot, having flown more than 1,000 hours of active combat missions, before retiring in 2006. He campaigned alongside Obama during the presidential race, and is said to be capable of leading large organizations.

"There are lots of NASA administrators who have come from other areas without a background in space. You want a guy who is a leader and can manage a large organization," said space policy expert John Logsdon, adding that experience alone should not preclude a person from assuming such an important position. There are other factors to consider as well, the official said.

Gration, who could be announced in the new position as soon as today, only worked for NASA in 1982, when, as a White House Fellow, he worked for then-administrator, Hans Mark. This makes him virtually unknown to the international space community, but, most likely, that's what Obama had in plan all along. The situation of the space shuttles is one of the most urgent the new president has to deal with, and someone who has great managerial skills is required for the job.

"That's when I met a leader unlike any I had met before. He asked tough questions, and he didn't settle for easy answers. It was this same way of thinking that led him to get it right, when he opposed the war in Iraq, when he warned of its consequences. That's the judgment of a leader," Gration said about Obama in 2005. Afterwards, he campaigned across Africa with the future president, becoming an arduous Democrat.

His studies include a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, which he got from the Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, as well as a degree in national security studies, which he obtained in 1998 from the Georgetown University in Washington.