Marburger Shakes Up White House Office

After winning unanimous Senate confirmation last week, presidential science advisor John Marburger has moved swiftly to make radical changes to his office.

Marburger has eliminated two of the four senior positions within the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) that he heads, subsuming environmental matters and national security under either science or technology. "I felt the office was too fragmented to be effective, and I wanted to have more direct control," says Marburger.

The changes have unsettled some members of the science and technology community. Eliminating the national security position "is a big blow" to forging links to the powerful National Security Council, says one former OSTP official. The need to incorporate science into the burgeoning war on terrorism suggests that Marburger "is moving in the wrong direction," says Al Teich, head of science and policy at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (which publishes Science). Dropping the environmental job, Teich adds, is a "surprising move" given the importance of global warming and related issues.

Several science policy analysts and former OSTP officials also expressed concern about the nomination of Richard Russell, now OSTP chief of staff, to serve as technology chief. Russell worked for nearly 7 years on the House Science Committee, but unlike most of his forerunners, he does not have an advanced scientific degree or extensive experience in industry. Russell declined comment, but Marburger acknowledges that researchers have questioned the choice.

"This is not an academic appointment, and dealing with academic aspects of technology is only part of what we do," says Marburger, the former director of Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York. The search for a science chief is still on, he says, adding that his goal is to build a team with complementary skills.

Marburger adamantly rejects speculation by some analysts that the White House dictated the changes at OSTP. "I was under no pressure to do this," he says. "It was not suggested by anyone in the Administration."

In charge. John Marburger says new OSTP structure gives him "more direct control."
Marburger Shakes Up White House Office

http://www.sciencemag.org/content/294/5544/973.1.full?sid=22a15e...