

NASA Wants to 'Orchestrate' Voyage to Mars in Proposed Collaborative Effort



Mars (NASA)

By Cathy Burke | Friday, 13 Oct 2017 09:08 PM



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NASA's goal is to "expand the human presence deeper into the solar system," including Mars — but the effort won't be a single country or company effort, an agency official says.

At the International Symposium for Personal and Commercial Spaceflight in Las Cruces, N.M., William Gerstenmaier, associate administrator of NASA's Human Exploration and Operations Directorate, said Wednesday the United States would likely "orchestrate" a humans-to-Mars

effort, [Space.com](#) reported.

"Our goal for human spaceflight is essentially to expand the human presence deeper into the solar system," Gerstenmaier said, adding the task will require participation from many countries, companies, agencies and individuals.

NASA could lead that effort, he said, adding: "'Lead' is maybe too strong a term," [Space.com](#) reported. "I think more maybe 'orchestrate' that effort — to bring together this diverse community to figure out how we can go accomplish that goal."

NASA has already laid out a plan that includes the work being done on the International Space Station, and the construction of a "Deep State Gateway" around the moon in the early 2020s — a gateway to assist in the construction of Mars-bound vehicles and habitats, and to serve as a launching point for astronauts bound for the Red Planet, [Space.com](#) reported.

NASA is already working with SpaceX and Boeing to build vehicles that'll carry humans to and from the International Space Station, but Gerstenmaier said those vehicles must meet NASA's safety standards, as well as various other mission standards.

we let the companies design, build and own their systems," he said, [Space.com](#) reported. "They can then market them; they can find creative uses. But NASA is there to make sure the basic safety, mission and success requirements are set in the right way."

[Space.com](#) reported that NASA wants to encourage commercial participation in its human mission to Mars, but Gerstenmaier said NASA will design the basic architecture for the mission, so no single company has a monopoly on any critical piece.

"It's more important that [certain things] be owned by the government, and then they are available to the wider industry and not held by one company," he said. "Things like going to [the space between the earth and moon] should really be driven by NASA's needs, and then when we get down to

should really be driven by NASA's needs, and then when we get down to... a service or a capability, then those can be done by the companies."

"NASA can also help by providing substantial early demand and maybe being an anchor customer," he added. "But at some point, we need to get out of that mode and see if there's a market that can be generated."