

We got an audience with the “Lunar Viceroy” to talk how NASA will build a Moon base

At the end of a long day on Tuesday, NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman looked down at a table littered with microphones and jokingly referred to the space agency’s new Moon base manager, Carlos Garcia-Galan, as the “Lunar Viceroy.” It was a bit of humor, but it also seemed to represent affection from Isaacman for a long-time NASA employee so willingly taking on a major new challenge.

Garcia-Galan was, in many ways, the emerging star at the daylong Ignition event in Washington, DC. Heretofore he has largely been an anonymous engineer at NASA who has now been thrust into a very public role of leading the agency’s ambitious Moon base initiative. (His official title, by the way, is program executive.)

Ars had a chance to speak with Garcia-Galan about NASA’s plans and, more importantly, how they might be implemented. Here is a lightly edited (for clarity) transcript of that conversation.

Ars: You were previously involved with the Lunar Gateway, which has effectively been canceled to build a Moon base, so I’d love to hear about whether this is a difficult transition for you.

Carlos Garcia-Galan: So change is always hard. But it was not hard from the perspective of having the focus on doing something that’s directly related to the objectives we have at hand, which are bringing humans back to the surface of the

Moon and building an outpost. So while I do believe that an orbiting outpost has value in the overall exploration goals, it doesn't mean that we can't do it later. We need to be focused on the surface, and everybody wants to be on the surface. So I'm super excited, and I'm sure the rest of the Gateway team will be, once they pivot and start shifting their focus to that.

Ars: I could tell from your talk that you were really fired up about this.

Carlos Garcia-Galan: Absolutely. Who wouldn't be? Yeah.

Ars: I mean, I would be. But I also recognize, as you said, that this is a huge challenge. What is the most pressing thing you want to do first to tackle this?

Carlos Garcia-Galan: So first of all, one of the things that we talked about today is bringing the entire NASA might and resources to bear on this. So I think, immediately, we're going to be working with all the programs and projects that are doing something related to lunar exploration, including Gateway with the previous architecture, and trying to stitch it all together. Because there's great work that has happened so far. We just need to basically focus on the things that are more relevant to the critical path.

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