Merlin Awarded $8.9 Million Task Order To Advance USSOCOM C-130J Autonomy Program from Design Into Integration

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The newly awarded task order takes Merlin Pilot through integration and validation preparation on the path to flight demonstrations

US Air Force Lockheed Martin C-130J-30 Hercules



Luqa, Malta - September 25, 2015: US Air Force Lockheed Martin C-130J-30 Hercules (L-382) (Reg: 04-3142) on short finals for runway 31, arriving for the Airshow the following weekend

BOSTON, Nov. 10, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Merlin, Inc. (NASDAQ: MRLN), an aerospace and defense technology company building the operating system of record for autonomous flight, today announced it was awarded a new task order worth $8.9 million for the next phase of its C-130J autonomy program with the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Following the completion of its Preliminary Design Review (PDR) and Critical Design Review (CDR), Merlin is now executing on its next task order, which includes system integration, ground test preparation, cybersecurity approval, and airworthiness acceptance to support future flight demonstrations.

"This task order brings us closer to demonstrating how Merlin Pilot can reduce the demands on C-130J aircrews and expand the operational capacity of the aircraft," said Matt George, CEO and Founder, Merlin. "As government demand for autonomy grows, the priority is delivering capabilities that can be integrated into existing fleets and trusted in demanding operational environments. This next phase puts our design to the test, validating how the system performs, how crews interact with it, and how it responds in off-nominal conditions. Through our work with USSOCOM, we're building a path from autonomy development to practical mission capability, giving aircrews greater support and commanders more flexibility in how they employ their aircraft."

Merlin's C-130J autonomy development program is designed to potentially reduce crew workload across all phases of flight. This next task order advances system integration and validation through flight control law tuning, human factors evaluations, failure mode testing, and simulated flight-test dry runs to verify system behavior and readiness before aircraft installation. It also includes updating test plans, procedures, verification matrices, and safety assessments for Government review ahead of ground testing; advancing the cybersecurity assessment and documentation required for an Interim Authorization to Test (IATT); and delivering an updated airworthiness plan to support flight test demonstrations. The completion of these milestones moves the program closer to demonstrating those capabilities on the C-130J aircraft.

About Merlin

Merlin is an aerospace and defense technology company building the operating system of record for autonomous flight. Through a first-principles approach, the company is redefining what's possible across aviation, aerospace, and defense with the goal of delivering full-stack autonomy for any aircraft, military or civilian, from takeoff to touchdown. The Merlin Pilot system powers a growing range of aircraft and mission profiles, proven through hundreds of autonomous flights from test facilities across the globe. With $100M+ total in IDIQ contract ceiling value under its C-130J autonomy program with USSOCOM, Merlin is advancing American leadership in autonomous aviation. To learn more, visit www.merlinlabs.com or follow us on X @merlinaero.

Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Statements

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. All statements other than statements of historical fact should be considered forward-looking statements, including without limitation statements regarding: the scope, timing, and anticipated outcomes of our work under the task order; the potential for Merlin Pilot to reduce crew workload, expand the operational capacity of the C-130J, and provide greater support to aircrews and flexibility to commanders; the anticipated demand for autonomy among government customers; and our ability to integrate our technology into existing fleets. These forward-looking statements are based on our current expectations, assumptions, and projections about future events and trends. These forward-looking statements are neither promises nor guarantees, but involve known and unknown risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements, including without limitation the risks and uncertainties detailed under the section entitled "Risk Factors" of our final prospectus, dated May 13, 2026, filed with the SEC on May 13, 2026, and our subsequently filed Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, which are available from the SEC. Except as required by applicable law, we undertake no obligation to update any of these forward-looking statements after the date of this press release.

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A photo accompanying this announcement is available at https://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/34e181f0-718e-4216-8331-3633d86acd74