Merlin Names Veteran Aerospace and Defense Executive Bob Smith Chairman and Interim Chief Executive Officer

November 19, 2026

Smith to focus on delivering autonomy to defense customers for the next century of flight

BOSTON, Nov. 19, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Merlin, Inc. (Nasdaq: MRLN), an aerospace and defense technology company building the operating system of record for autonomous flight, today announced that its Board of Directors has appointed Bob Smith, a member of the Board, as Chairman and Interim Chief Executive Officer, effective November 18, 2026. Smith succeeds founder Matt George, who has resigned as Chief Executive Officer, Chairman, and a member of the Board of Directors and has transitioned to the role of Founder and Advisor.

Smith brings more than three decades of aerospace and defense leadership. As Chief Executive Officer of Blue Origin from 2017 to 2024, he transitioned the company from a research organization into an operating business, growing annual sales from nearly zero to more than $750 million and building an order book of approximately $10 billion. Previously, he spent more than a decade at Honeywell Aerospace, including as President of Mechanical Systems and Components, a business with more than $4 billion in annual revenue, and as Chief Technology Officer, responsible for more than 12,000 engineers and technologists. Prior to Honeywell, he worked on upgrading the NASA space shuttle at United Space Alliance. He also currently serves as a Senior Advisor to the Office of the Secretary of Defense as part of the Business Operators for National Defense (BOND) program and as a director of Parsons Corporation.

“Matt and this team built something incredibly novel and needed, and I’m thankful for Matt’s vision and leadership. Merlin’s autonomy software is flying today, and as we enter our next phase, our priorities are clear: deliver for our customers, including USSOCOM and AFRICOM programs; grow our pipeline; keep building Merlin Pilot; and invest with discipline to protect our strong balance sheet. It’s a great team, and I’m eager to get to work,” said Bob Smith.

“Merlin has enormous potential, and Bob is exactly the proven leader we need to unlock it,” said Michael Blitzer, Lead Independent Director of Merlin’s Board of Directors. “Having served as CEO of one of the world’s largest aerospace companies, he brings a powerful combination of commercial acumen to accelerate revenue growth and operational discipline to fundamentally improve our cost structure. Bob has a proven track record of building and leading businesses at scale, and I’m confident he is the right person to transform Merlin’s trajectory, drive sustainable profitability, and create significant long-term shareholder value. The Board is commencing a search for a permanent CEO and will consider both internal and external candidates.”

“Building Merlin with this team has been the privilege of my career. Together we took autonomy from an idea to aircraft flying for real customers. I’m proud of what we’ve built, and I’m confident Merlin is in good hands,” said Matt George.

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 by helping to solve national security challenges through safe, reliable autonomy. 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 “safe harbor” provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements include, but are not limited to, statements regarding Merlin’s future performance and the Chief Executive Officer transition. These statements reflect management’s current expectations based on information available at the date of this release and involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties, and other factors that may cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied. Important factors that could cause actual results to differ materially include, but are not limited to: the transition of Merlin’s leadership, including the potential for disruption to Merlin’s business, operations, and customer and employee relationships; and the other risks and uncertainties described under “Risk Factors” in our final prospectus, dated May 13, 2026, filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “SEC”) on May 13, 2026, and in other documents we subsequently file with the SEC. Merlin does not undertake any obligation to update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise, except as required by law.

Contacts
Investor Relations: investor.relations@merlinlabs.com
Media: media@merlinlabs.com