



## Merlin Successfully Completes Critical Design Review for C-130J Autonomy Program with USSOCOM

June 4, 2026

### CDR approval marks the completion of the final design configuration for the C-130J, advancing the program to the aircraft integration phase

BOSTON, June 04, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [Merlin, Inc.](#) (NASDAQ: MRLN), an aerospace and defense technology company building the operating system of record for autonomous flight, today announced the successful completion of the Critical Design Review (CDR) for its C-130J autonomy program with the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Completion of the CDR is a milestone in the program's maturation, validating the system's design readiness and advancing Merlin from design development into aircraft integration activities.

This milestone positions the program to enter a structured formal test campaign, including aircraft-level testing, reflecting a disciplined systems engineering progression from design through verification.

The CDR is part of Merlin's previously awarded [IDIQ contract](#) under its C-130J autonomy program with USSOCOM. The milestone supports a demonstration of Merlin's C-130 autonomous capability development, showcasing the potential reduction in crew workload through all phases of flight. Under this contract, Merlin is rapidly advancing its AI-powered autonomy stack onboard the C-130J, with potential pathways for expansion across other Department of War or commercial aviation platforms.

"Completing the Critical Design Review validates the architecture we've built for safe, scalable autonomy on large aircraft like the C-130J," said Matt George, CEO and founder of Merlin. "We are grateful for USSOCOM's partnership and guidance in this effort as CDR is another important step in demonstrating that our system meets the rigorous standards required for our USG customers' real-world deployment. As we move into integration, ground testing, and eventually flight demonstrations, we're focused on proving autonomy from takeoff to touchdown is one of the most effective ways to improve operations and safety for US warfighters."

#### 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](http://www.merlinlabs.com) or follow us on X [@merlinaero](#).

#### 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 related to statements regarding the advancement of Merlin's C-130J autonomy program into aircraft integration and formal testing activities; the anticipated timeline and scope of flight demonstrations; the performance, maturation, and scalability of the Merlin Pilot autonomy system; and Merlin's pathways for potential expansion across other Department of War or commercial aviation platforms. These forward-looking statements are based largely on our current expectations 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 any future results, performance or achievements 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 in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on May 15, 2026. Except as required by applicable law, we undertake no obligation to update any of these forward-looking statements for any reason after the date of this press release.

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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

A photo accompanying this announcement is available at <https://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/9e299c70-3208-4a59-b9ee-5791e0e863b0>