



# MERLIN AWARDED FAA CONTRACT TO DEPLOY FIRST AIR CARGO NETWORK FLOWN BY NON-HUMAN PILOT

News / Manufacturer



**FAA has awarded Merlin a \$1 million contract to demonstrate a highly automated flight control system in conjunction with a safety pilot. In partnership with the FAA designated University of Alaska Fairbanks UAS Test Site and Everts Air Cargo, the Merlin Pilot will be the first autonomy system integrated into the NAS. Flight trials will run along three test routes serving five destinations. All test routes originate from the FAA designated UAS Alaska test site in Q2 2023.**

Last year, Merlin announced a \$105 million Series B financing along with key partnerships with the United States Air Force, the New Zealand Civil Aviation Authority, and the FAA. The funding has allowed Merlin to continue developing its integrated hardware and software solution known as the Merlin Pilot.

Matthew George, co-founder and CEO of Merlin said: "The Merlin Pilot is being developed to make the skies safer and more accessible. These initial flight trials are vital to maturing our in-flight capabilities and it's rewarding that this work will also serve a material need in the communities of

Alaska. To date, we have conducted hundreds of missions with our Merlin Pilot on five aircraft types from our dedicated flight test facility in Mojave, California. Alongside the FAA, and our operating partner Everts Air Cargo, we're thrilled that the Merlin Pilot will soon be learning in a real world, complex environment."

Dr. Cathy Cahill, Director of the Alaska Center for Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration (ACUASI) at the UAF Geophysical Institute commented: "Alaska's terrain and inclement weather can challenge the most experienced pilots. And yet remote communities rely on air cargo deliveries for vital supplies such as milk, mail, and medicine. Working with Merlin on these flight trials benefits our residents and provides data with each flight that will create not only a safer airspace in Alaska but technology that is applicable worldwide. This program will help thousands of our state's remote residents to acquire supplies necessary to sustain life and it's exciting that the advent of new technologies can drive greater equity and access across our communities."

The trials are set to begin in the second quarter of 2023 with an aim of reaching underserved areas of Alaska to enable better access to supplies while reducing the significant safety risk to today's pilots. Merlin will use crewed aircraft augmented with the Merlin Pilot, its integrated hardware and software solution, to serve rural cargo destinations. During the initial testing phase, safety pilots will monitor the experimental flight control system. All routes will originate from Fairbanks and separately fly to Fort Yukon, Galena, Prudhoe Bay, Huslia and Tanana.

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