MERLIN DESIGNATED A NEW ZEALAND PART 146 AIRCRAFT DESIGN ORGANIZATION, ADVANCING ITS PATH TO COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS

News / Manufacturer

Merlin received a Part 146 Aircraft Design Organization certificate from the Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand. Merlin's own engineers holding delegation authority can now approve certain aircraft design changes that previously had to be routed through outside design organizations, narrowing the gap between design engineering and an aircraft certified for commercial operations.

In aviation, revenue operations utilizing new designs and technology require both engineering progress and regulatory review and approval. The ability for a qualified Merlin engineer to approve and sign off on design changes within the scope agreed with CAANZ converts what was previously an external cost and schedule risk into internal capacity.

The Aircraft Design Organization certificate is not tied to a single aircraft or program. It reflects Merlin's standing capability as a qualified organization with an established design control system and an engineering team whose competency CAANZ has assessed. That foundation carries from one program to the next, with the scope of delegated work agreed with CAANZ for each

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certification project. The certificate supports Merlin’s broader strategic vision for operations in New Zealand.

Matt George, CEO, Merlin commented: "We're building one autonomy stack that goes on many aircraft, which means the cost of certifying the next one matters more than the cost of certifying the first. Owning the capability to deliver design approval is how that curve bends. It's a meaningful capability, not a side benefit."

Tim Burns, Chief Technology Officer, Merlin stated: “A regulator doesn’t delegate design authority to an organization it hasn’t examined closely. CAANZ assessed how we qualify our engineers, how our processes work, and how we hold ourselves accountable, then concluded we could carry that responsibility. That’s a durable statement about the quality and maturity of our engineering organization and process.”

An Aircraft Design Organization certification requires CAANZ to assess an engineering organization's personnel qualifications, facilities, equipment, tools and data, safety management and design control systems and procedures, continued airworthiness and recordkeeping procedures, and to accept a formal exposition governing how design work is performed. In granting it, CAANZ determined that Merlin met its standards, and had earned the privilege and authority to perform approved design activities under the Part 146 framework.

The certificate builds on Merlin's recent certification progress, including achieving Stage of Involvement (SOI) 3 for its AI-powered natural language processing and full flight autonomy system and concluding a key issue paper governing the certification approach of AI/ML-based natural language processing capabilities.

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