VerdeGo Aero Awarded Phase III SBIR by USAF for Maturation of the VH-4T Hybrid-Electric Powerplant

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla., August 5, 2025 – VerdeGo Aero™, Inc. has been awarded a $9.7M Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Phase III contract with the U.S. Air Force to mature the VH-4T hybrid-electric powerplant into a production-intent configuration and to build and test the first prototype VH-4T-415. This award was issued by the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center Mobility Directorate (AFLCMC/WLM) in cooperation with AFWERX, the innovation branch of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and supported by the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL). AFWERX harnesses cutting edge American ingenuity from startups and small businesses to tackle the most critical challenges of the DAF. The 22-month Phase III effort builds upon the durability testing work VerdeGo Aero performed under a previous AFWERX Direct to Phase II award using the VH-4T-RD Research & Development powerplant.

“VerdeGo is pleased to support AFWERX as they continue to advance dual-use technologies to benefit both the Department of the Air Force and the U.S. aerospace industry, so that the U.S. can maintain leadership in the emerging field of electrified aerospace,” said David Eichstedt, Vice President of Product Management for VerdeGo Aero. “VerdeGo has had a strong positive response to the VH-4T for both commercial and military applications and we are excited to deliver this important capability to our customers.”

Utilizing a Pratt and Whitney Canada PW207 helicopter engine, the VH-4T can deliver approximately 400 kW of high-voltage DC electricity to power the electric motors in aircraft like eVTOL air taxis and drones using liquid fuel rather than batteries as the primary energy source. This approach enables electric aircraft to achieve five to ten times more range and endurance than batteries alone can provide. “This increased range and endurance is crucial to providing military utility to these aircraft,” Eichstedt stated.

Dave Spitzer, VerdeGo’s Vice President of Product Development, added, “The first version of the VH-4T, the 375-kW VH-4T-RD for ‘Research and Development,’ was developed around custom-modified COTS equipment to rapidly demonstrate the architecture and to support our customers with powerplants for ground testing of iron birds, copper birds, and limited early flight testing. And it’s proving very popular for these purposes. The production version we’re developing under this Phase III, the 415-kW VH-4T-415, will utilize bespoke components to deliver capabilities that are important for certification, things like multi-channel electrical power output and the ability to deliver full power over a broad voltage range.”

“This award is a major milestone for VerdeGo and for the VH-4T powerplant,” said Eric Bartsch, VerdeGo CEO, “the project accelerates our path to delivering a certifiable hybrid-electric propulsion system that supports both government and commercial applications. The VH-4T is

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already in demand, and this award enables us to advance its capabilities for our current customers and expand its impact across the aviation industry."

ABOUT VERDEGO AERO

VerdeGo Aero, a frontrunner in the electric aviation industry, is committed to revolutionizing aerospace technologies with cutting-edge propulsion solutions. Since its establishment in 2017, VerdeGo Aero has consistently led the field, specializing in advanced hybrid-electric propulsion technologies. VerdeGo Aero's collaborative approach with aircraft developers, coupled with proprietary analysis tools, accelerates the conceptual design phase, and positions the company as a key partner in the industry. VerdeGo Aero is based at the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Research Park in Daytona Beach, Fla.

ABOUT AFRL

The Air Force Research Laboratory, or AFRL, is the primary scientific research and development center for the Department of the Air Force. AFRL plays an integral role in leading the discovery, development and integration of affordable warfighting technologies for our air, space and cyberspace forces. With a workforce spanning across nine technology areas and 40 other operations around the globe, AFRL provides a diverse portfolio of science and technology ranging from fundamental to advanced research and technology development. For more information, visit afresearchlab.com.

ABOUT AFWERX

As the innovation arm of the DAF and a directorate within the Air Force Research Laboratory, AFWERX brings cutting-edge American ingenuity from small businesses and start-ups to address the most pressing challenges of the DAF. AFWERX employs approximately 370 military, civilian and contractor personnel at four hubs and sites executing an annual $1.4 billion budget. Since 2019, AFWERX has awarded over 10,400 contracts worth more than $7.24 billion to strengthen the U.S. defense industrial base and drive faster technology transition to operational capability. For more information, visit: afwerx.com.

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