

Winners Announced for Aviation Week's 68th Annual Laureate Awards

Award Honors Outstanding Achievements in Aviation, Aerospace & Defense and Winners will be Recognized on March 19 in Washington, DC

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, November 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Aviation Week](#) announced today the recipients of the 68th Annual [Laureate Awards](#) (#AWLAUR), honoring extraordinary achievements in the global aerospace arena. Winners will be celebrated at the Laureate Awards, taking place on March 19, 2026 at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC. At that time a Grand Laureate in each of the five categories will be named from among the honorees.



Aviation Week Network Logo



Aviation Week Network's Laureate Awards

The award categories are Commercial Aviation, Defense, Space, Business Aviation, and MRO. In addition, Aviation Week will bestow awards for Lifetime Achievement and the Pathfinder Award.

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Joe Anselmo, editorial director and editor-in-chief, Aviation Week

Four cadets and midshipmen from the U.S. military academies will be recognized as Tomorrow's Leaders, honoring young men and women who have chosen career paths in the armed forces.

“Aviation Week's editors spent several weeks rigorously scrutinizing dozens of internal and external nominations and narrowed them down to this list of winners,” said Joe Anselmo, editorial director and editor-in-chief. “This year's honorees demonstrated exceptional innovation and leadership in aviation and space. We look forward to celebrating their achievements and announcing the Grand Laureates in March.”

In addition to the Laureate Awards, Aviation Week will recognize the “20 Twenties” in partnership with Accenture. This program recognizes the accomplishments and drive of 20 science, technology, engineering and mathematics students in their 20s and currently enrolled in a master's degree or bachelor's degree program.

The [Laureate Winners](#) are:

COMMERCIAL AVIATION

LATAM Airlines Group CEO Roberto Alvo

Under Roberto Alvo's leadership, LATAM has emerged from financial restructuring stronger and more competitive. The airline group continues to strengthen its dominance in Latin America by delivering record cost and financial performance, undertaking a strategic network expansion and catering to changing passenger preferences by growing its premium product offerings.

Boeing 777-9 Thrust Link Fix Team

A Boeing engineering team employed out-of-the-box thinking – including use of a powerful leaf blower – to investigate and resolve a resonance that caused the premature fatigue failure of a load transferring component attached to the 777-9's GE Aerospace GE9X engines. Investigation of the puzzling failure and subsequent redesign of the thrust link enabled Boeing to resume flight tests after a five-month hiatus.

Rolls-Royce CEO Tufan Erginbilgic

Tufan Erginbilgic has built on more than 20 years at oil company BP to transform the fortunes of Rolls-Royce. Taking the helm of the UK engine maker in early 2023, he instituted a bold revitalization strategy which has streamlined the company's structure, renegotiated loss-making contracts and set clear performance targets – including returning the company to the single-aisle market with a version of the UltraFan.

Safran ENGINEUS Electric Motor

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency granted its first type certificate for an electric propulsion unit to Safran Electrical & Power in February 2025 for the 125-kW ENGINEUS 100B1. The approval paves the way for more powerful motors on future hybrid-electric regional aircraft. Safran will also use derived technologies in CFM International's RISE demonstration program for more efficient commercial engines.

Southwest Airlines Safety Management System

An effective Safety Management System (SMS) reduces risk for employees and the public. Changes can be almost imperceptible to those outside the company, but Southwest Airlines' SMS is reaching beyond the airline's walls. Guided by its SMS, the airline is adopting secondary flight deck barriers immediately as well as new protocols for portable battery banks and wheelchair batteries, showing that slight passenger inconvenience is a small price to pay for measurable risk reduction.

DEFENSE

L3Harris Technologies Red Wolf

After five years in secretive development, the L3Harris Red Wolf cruise missile broke cover in early 2025 as the new Precision Attack Strike Missile for the U.S. Marine Corps' Bell AH-1Z fleet. This puts the \$300,000-500,000 weapon at the forefront of an emerging wave of affordable, long-range and precise cruise missiles, which promise to break the trend toward ever more exquisite and costly munitions.

Boeing Defense, Space & Security CEO Steve Parker

As the new President and CEO of Boeing Defense, Space and Security, Steve Parker led the business to what may be a generational win with the U.S. Air Force's F-47 program, building on his prior leadership of the company's combat aircraft business. Parker has also been instrumental in beginning to turn around Boeing's defense business after years of problems.

Rafael and Mafat Iron Beam

Rafael, Elbit Systems and Mafat, Israel's Directorate of Defense Research & Development, fielded the Iron Beam high-power laser air-defense system to enable a low cost-per-shot means of defeating rocket, missile and drone threats. The team rushed the system into the field under wartime conditions, achieving operational shootdowns of drones attacking Israel.

Rolls-Royce Orpheus

Jet engines are complex examples of engineering that can take years to develop and refine, but Rolls-Royce broke this paradigm, designing, developing and ground testing its Orpheus small turbofan in just 18 months. Now being used to explore new technologies, Orpheus is helping advance the manufacturer's military and commercial engine projects.

Ukraine's Darknode

Faced with a relentless barrage from Russia's cheap loitering munitions, Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces stood up the Darknode unit in fall 2024 to find a solution. Within months, the secretive R&D cell led by a Ukrainian rap star and drone racing enthusiast came up with a solution. The Darknode unit credits its \$5,000 drone-based interceptor with scoring over 1,000 kills against Iranian-built Shaheds and Russian Gerans in 2025.

SPACE

Axiom Space Private Astronaut Missions

When NASA opened the International Space Station to U.S.-led private astronaut missions, Houston-based Axiom Space rose to the challenge. The company has conducted four charters so far, sending a dozen paying customers into orbit and giving several countries, including India and Saudi Arabia, early experience as they develop their own human spaceflight programs.

Rajeev Badyal, Amazon's Project Kuiper

Rajeev Badyal, former leader of SpaceX's Starlink project, is now head of Amazon's rival low-Earth-orbit satellite constellation, Project Kuiper. Leading development, manufacturing and deployment of two multi-thousand-satellite constellations within a decade is unprecedented. The competition between these constellations is poised to shape the space industry for years to come.

Blue Origin New Glenn

The long-awaited debut of Blue Origin's first orbital-class launch vehicle presented an opportunity for the U.S. Space Force to add the first new entrant into its national security space launch program since SpaceX broke United Launch Alliance's monopoly almost a decade ago. Many of the lessons learned from Blue Origin's suborbital New Shepard went into development of the heavy-lift New Glenn.

Firefly Aerospace Blue Ghost

Firefly was not the first private company to touch down on the Moon, but its Blue Ghost spacecraft was the first —and so far only — vehicle to not only stick the landing but also complete a full-duration 14-day mission on the lunar surface. NASA supported the flight as part of a program to spur commercial development of the Moon.

U.S. Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office Boeing X-37B

Boeing's X-37B has quietly become the U.S. Space Force's technology trailblazer, demonstrating operations in a new orbital regime and performing its first aerobraking maneuver. Now on its eighth mission in 15 years, the reusable spaceplane is testing key technologies for the Space Force to define the service's operational future, including a novel quantum inertial sensor and laser communications link.

BUSINESS AVIATION

Avfuel

At a time of waning U.S. government support for sustainable fuels, Avfuel remains committed to aviation's goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Serving fixed-base operators, airports, corporate flight departments and airlines, the fuel distributor has established eight sustainable aviation fuel supply points in California, Colorado, Florida, New Jersey and Texas and can deliver SAF to most of the U.S.

Pete Bunce, GAMA

Pete Bunce led the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) for 20 years, strongly advocating for the industry and promoting safety innovations and economic growth. He championed the Small Plane Revitalization Act, opened a GAMA office in Brussels in 2009 to ensure GA's long-term involvement in international aviation and expanded the association's membership to include rotorcraft manufacturers and electric aviation pioneers.

Corporate Angel Network

The Corporate Angel Network, which works with U.S. private aircraft operators that donate empty seats to transport patients to treatment centers, transported its 70,000th cancer patient in July 2025. Hanson Communications, a longstanding partner of the nonprofit organization, flew the patient from Minnesota to New York and back in its Learjet 40XR. Signature Aviation, Million Air and Drivania Chauffeurs also played a role in the mission.

Gogo

Gogo has started shipping terminals for its new Galileo high-speed in-flight connectivity service, which uses Eutelsat's OneWeb constellation of low Earth orbit satellites. Following its acquisition of Satcom Direct in December 2024, Gogo says it is the only multi-orbit, multi-band global inflight connectivity provider serving the business aviation and military/government markets.

Textron Aviation

In April, Textron Aviation opened a \$40 million Career & Learning Center dedicated to hiring, onboarding and training under one roof - an attempt to overcome industry-wide skilled labor shortages. The center includes a simulated factory environment for training and offers paid apprenticeship, internship and veteran programs. It works with local technical schools on certification programs.

MAINTENANCE, REPAIR and OVERHAUL

Choose Aerospace High School Program

Choose Aerospace has developed a curriculum and industry-recognized credential that enables high school students to gain a head start on pursuing FAA mechanic certification—a game changer for the industry's maintenance workforce shortage. The nonprofit has reached close to 2,000 unique learners across more than 40 programs in the U.S. since its launch in 2020.

Chromalloy

Chromalloy, one of the few companies that can design and manufacture single-crystal, internally cooled, high-pressure turbine blades, added an electron-beam physical vapor deposition capability at its Tampa, Florida, plant to apply thermal barrier coatings and contain the entire blade production process in one location. This cuts 3-4 weeks from the process.

Delta TechOps Drone Inspections

Delta Air Lines is the first U.S. commercial airline to gain FAA approval to use drones for aircraft visual inspections. Its Delta TechOps division spent months working with government agencies, airport authorities and drone provider Mainblades to prove the technology could safely and effectively inspect aircraft. Delta's inspectors now make decisions on aircraft conditions up to 82% faster than with manual inspection methods.

Electronic Authorized Release Certificate Working Group

Years of work by the Electronic Authorized Release Certificate (eARC) Working Group, which

includes manufacturers, component suppliers, airlines and repair stations, culminated in a true milestone in September 2025. Boeing sent a 737 battery from one of its repair shops to Southwest Airlines without a paper airworthiness approval form - a critical step in the industry's push to bolster supply chain integrity.

GE Aerospace Services Technology Acceleration Center

The Services Technology Acceleration Center (STAC) represents a multimillion-dollar investment in keeping GE Aerospace's engines running reliably on-wing. Opened in late 2024, the STAC incubates, validates and fast-tracks deployment of engine inspection and repair processes throughout GE's overhaul network, such as a faster, more accurate AI-assisted borescope inspection process for critical GE90 parts.

PATHFINDER

Peter Beck, Rocket Lab

As a child of the 1970s, Peter Beck grew up dreaming of rockets, but feeling like the glory days of space exploration had passed him by. Beck, founder and CEO of Rocket Lab, now says he had that all wrong. "Who could imagine a kid growing up on a farm in New Zealand would one day own a rocket company?" he told Aviation Week a few years after Rocket Lab's Electron small-satellite launch vehicle entered operational service.

Rocket Lab has now flown more than 72 Electron missions and added suborbital hypersonics testing to its portfolio. Beck led a team that built other product lines around the Electron's kick-stage motor, which has become a commercial satellite bus and platform for providing science, communications and other services in deep space. The company has launched to the Moon, built spacecraft for Mars and will soon enter the medium-lift launch market with the reusable Neutron.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Bill Franke

Bill Franke has been one of the most influential leaders in commercial aviation over several decades. After having turned around America West Airlines in the 1990s as Chairman and CEO, Franke cofounded investment firm Indigo Partners in 2003 and created a global network of low-cost carriers including Frontier Airlines in the U.S., JetSMART Airlines in South America, Wizz Air in Europe and Volaris in Mexico. He also served as chairman on Spirit Airlines and Singapore-based Tiger Airlines. Before he became known as the pioneer of ultra-low-cost air travel, Franke was the go-to executive for troubled businesses, leading a bank and a convenience store chain out of bankruptcy. It was because of this reputation that Franke was called to rescue America West, bringing him into the airline industry. Franke's thinking has influenced many others and made air travel accessible to many more people.

Jordi Puig-Suari and Bob Twiggs

Professors Bob Twiggs and Jordi Puig-Suari invented the cubesat standard not to upend an industry, but as a teaching tool for college students. Yet, since the first launch in 2003, more than 2,700 cubesats have made it to space, according to the Nanosats Database. And an entire sector has sprung up around the 10 cm³ form factor, with multibillion-dollar companies embracing the satellite type as well as space agencies such as NASA, which now use the small satellite for complex deep space missions.

The standard was developed in 1999, when Puig-Suari was a professor at California Polytechnic State University and Twiggs at Stanford University. Today low Earth orbit cubesats are being used for an ever-widening number of applications, including Earth observation; weather sensing; alternative position, navigation and timing; communications; and technology demonstration missions, as well as free-flying biology and in-space manufacturing experiments.

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