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This Sam Altman- And Peter Thiel-Backed Aviation Company Achieves Supersonic Flight

Hermeus aims to make planes for the U.S. military that travel over five times the speed of sound—and maybe even introduce the world to hypersonic commercial air travel.

By [Monica Hunter-Hart](#), Reporter. Monica Hunter-Hart is a reporter covering ...

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Published May 27, 2026, 07:08pm EDT, Updated Jun 3, 2026, 12:45pm EDT



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Hermeus' Quarterhorse Mk 2.1 plane taking off.

HERMEUS

Last Wednesday, a defense aviation company backed by Sam Altman, Peter Thiel and Thiel's Founders Fund successfully tested an uncrewed airplane at supersonic speed, the first privately developed jet in the world to do so. The seven-year-old company, Hermeus, announced on Tuesday that it had flown its "Quarterhorse"—the name for its experimental aircraft—over a New Mexico military base at 1.21 times the speed of sound, or roughly 930 miles per hour.

It marked a crucial step towards the El Segundo, California-based unicorn's goal of achieving hypersonic flight, over five times the speed of sound. No airplane in service today can reach that speed, though experimental craft have demonstrated the capability.

"Supersonic flight is a huge milestone that is going to be a massive tailwind to us, I believe," says Zach Shore, who started transitioning into Hermeus' CEO role the week before the Quarterhorse test flight, taking over from company cofounder AJ Piplica. Piplica remains as board chairman; cofounder Skyler Shuford has an observer seat and two additional cofounders are no longer with the firm.

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By **Monica Hunter-Hart**. Monica Hunter-Hart is an NYC-based reporter who covers the world’s richest people with focuses on defense, real estate, and the arts. She has reported on the [competition to build the U.S. military’s...](#)

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