

FTCN Replay: From F-16s to Service Dogs

In a recent episode of "From the Crows' Nest," host Ken Miller welcomed Jeff Fischer, a respected author, journalist, and philanthropist. The discussion spanned the latest developments in Ukraine's defense, including the progress of F-16 pilot training and Fischer's new nonprofit initiative, Shelter 2 Service, which aims to provide service dogs to veterans and first responders in Europe.

F-16 Pilot Training in Ukraine

Jeff Fischer shared insights on the first graduation of Ukrainian F-16 pilots in Tucson, Arizona. This significant event was part of a broader initiative to enhance Ukraine's air capabilities amidst the ongoing conflict with Russia.

"The pilots did really well. They knocked it out of the park," Fischer noted, reflecting on their performance. However, he expressed concerns about the pace of integrating these pilots into active service, citing operational security and logistical challenges.

The supply of F-16s to Ukraine is primarily coming from European nations like Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands, which are providing upgraded aircraft from their inventories. Fischer highlighted the strategic importance of these jets, stating, "30 F-16s won't create air superiority for all of Ukraine, but they will make an impact." He emphasized the need for combined arms and multi-domain operations to leverage air power effectively in the conflict.

Challenges and Optimism

Despite the progress, Fischer pointed out several challenges, including maintenance and logistics. He mentioned the

complexity of the Jenga puzzle metaphor, underscoring the interdependence of various operational components. Timing remains critical, with expectations set for early July when the first batch of trained pilots might be deployed.

Fischer remains optimistic about Ukraine's prospects, particularly in light of retired General Dave Deptula's recent visit to Kyiv to assist in strategic planning. Deptula, known for his pivotal role in crafting the air campaign during Desert Storm, brings valuable expertise to Ukraine's defense efforts.

Innovations in Drone Warfare

The conversation also touched on Ukraine's innovative use of drones in the Black Sea to disrupt Russian naval operations. Fischer described these makeshift drones as "Havoc Kayaks," a term he coined to illustrate their simplicity and effectiveness. He praised the ingenuity behind these tactics, noting their significant impact on the Russian Black Sea fleet.

Shelter 2 Service: A Philanthropic Initiative

Transitioning to his philanthropic work, Fischer introduced Shelter 2 Service, a nonprofit he founded to provide service dogs to disabled veterans and first responders in Europe. Inspired by his own experience with PTSD and the therapeutic benefits of service dogs, Fischer set out to address the lack of availability of such dogs for American veterans living abroad.

"There are over 100 million abandoned companion animals in Europe," Fischer highlighted, emphasizing the dual benefit of rescuing shelter dogs and supporting veterans. His organization aims to bridge this gap by training and providing these animals to those in need.

Overcoming Regulatory Hurdles

Fischer elaborated on the challenges he faced in establishing Shelter 2 Service, from navigating European Union regulations to raising awareness and funds. Despite these obstacles, the organization has made significant strides and is already supporting its first candidates.

He called on the defense industry and other potential partners to support this initiative, stating, "If you're a US defense company and want to build relationships, give me a call. I'll partner with anyone who shares our mission."

Advocacy and Future Goals

Looking ahead, Fischer hopes to engage in policy advocacy to facilitate easier access to service dogs for veterans worldwide. He aims to demonstrate the long-term benefits of these animals to government agencies, potentially leading to policy changes that would support such initiatives more broadly.

In conclusion, Jeff Fischer's appearance on "From the Crows' Nest" provided valuable insights into both the strategic developments in Ukraine's defense and the compassionate mission of Shelter 2 Service. His multifaceted efforts highlight the interconnectedness of military support and humanitarian initiatives, offering hope and tangible solutions in both arenas.

For more information on Shelter 2 Service, you can visit www.shelter2service.org/

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