

FTCN Replay: When Does Caution Become Cowardice in Ukraine?

In a recent episode of the “From the Crows’ Nest” podcast, Ken Miller welcomed back a distinguished guest, Jeff Fischer – a retired US Air Force colonel, author, journalist and subject matter expert. Their discussion ranged from the latest developments in Ukraine’s air capabilities to the broader implications of global military strategies.

Ukraine’s Air Force Gets a Boost

Jeff Fischer kicked off the conversation by highlighting a significant development: Ukraine’s acquisition of its first F-16 fighter jets. While they have not yet received the full complement of 60 jets, the arrival of even a limited number marks a notable enhancement in their air capabilities. Fischer detailed the sophisticated modifications made to these jets, including the integration of an advanced Elbit IR and ECM pod between the drop tank and the Sidewinder missile on the wings. This setup, which features infrared sensors and chaff and flare dispensers, demonstrates a leap from older F-16 models.

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Navigating Restrictions and Strategic Decisions

Ken Miller raised a critical point about the restrictions placed by the US on Ukraine’s use of these advanced systems. He referenced a Kyiv Post article discussing missed opportunities for Ukraine to strike significant Russian targets due to such limitations. Fischer agreed, emphasizing that the cautious approach of the Biden administration in supplying munitions and capabilities to Ukraine could potentially hinder their efforts in achieving air superiority.

He echoed a sentiment shared by actor and advocate Sean Penn, highlighting that excessive caution might verge on cowardice in warfare contexts.

Volunteer Pilots and Future Steps

Fischer revealed an emerging initiative reminiscent of the Lafayette Escadrille or Flying Tigers, where retired F-16 pilots from the US and other nations are volunteering to aid Ukraine. This effort could significantly bolster Ukraine's capabilities, as they currently have only about 20 trained F-16 pilots for their 60 jets. The volunteers' push for support in Washington is gaining traction, potentially leading to a substantial increase in Ukraine's operational air strength.

Shifting Focus to the Middle East

The conversation then shifted to the Middle East, particularly the rising tensions involving Iran and Israel. Fischer provided insights into Israel's recent targeted killings of high-value targets in Lebanon and Iran. He noted the symbolic and practical measures taken by both sides, including Iran's raising of an official revenge flag. Fischer also discussed the strategic deployment of US naval assets to bolster Israel's air defense capabilities, predicting that Iran's only viable strategy would be to attempt to overwhelm these defenses.

Electronic Warfare: A Tactical Deep Dive

The podcast delved into the complexities of electronic warfare (EW), especially in conflict zones like Lebanon. Fischer elaborated on the use of GPS denial tactics, speculating whether it was an Israeli or Lebanese move to counter incoming precision-guided munitions. This nuanced discussion highlighted the intricate and often underreported aspects of EW in modern warfare.

Looking Ahead: AOC 2024 and Beyond

As the conversation wound down, Miller and Fischer looked

forward to the upcoming Association of Old Crows (AOC) conference in December 2024. Fischer, who has submitted an abstract for a presentation, emphasized the importance of understanding the evolving landscape of electronic warfare, especially in the context of the ongoing Ukraine conflict. He stressed the need for accurate intelligence assessments of adversarial capabilities, particularly those of Russia and China, to ensure informed and effective defense strategies.

Conclusion

The episode concluded with Fischer reflecting on the eerie prescience of his fictional works, which often mirror real-world events. His first book, "Live Range," features a plotline involving an assassination in Iran, a scenario now playing out in reality.

Listeners were left with a deepened understanding of the complexities and strategic considerations in modern warfare, thanks to the insights shared by Jeff Fischer on "From the Crows' Nest."

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