FTCN Replay: Global Chaos Highlights the Critical Role of EMSO

In the latest “From the Crows’ Nest” podcast, a live bonus episode hosted by Ken Miller, Director of Advocacy and Outreach for the Association of Old Crows (AOC) with guest Jeff Fischer, a recurring guest and subject matter expert.
The episode began with Ken an unexpected and sobering moment came when a listener pointed out that Iran had just launched ballistic missiles at Israel, a stark reminder of the ever-present volatility in the Middle East. Ken and Jeff pivoted their discussion to this breaking news and the broader geopolitical situation, highlighting the complex interplay between Israel, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, and their sponsors like Iran and Russia. This interaction underscored the intricacy of modern warfare and the multiple fronts on which Israel is engaged.
The episode took a deep dive into how electronic warfare is evolving and what challenges it presents. Ken made it clear that the battle for electromagnetic spectrum superiority is as crucial in asymmetric conflicts, where inexpensive technologies are used by non-state actors, as it is in conventional warfare. The example of Ukraine and Russia’s use of drones to contest airspace is a poignant illustration of this dynamic.

> *“Russia is making advances on the ground, and they’re doing it by traditional means, but they’re also heavily relying on electronic warfare to counter Ukraine’s drone operations.”*

Russia’s Use of Electronic Warfare in Ukraine
One of the main points discussed was Russia’s reliance on electronic warfare in response to Ukraine’s heavy use of

drones. A Wall Street Journal op-ed by Porter Smith and Nathan Mintz highlighted this trend, pointing out how Ukraine's drone warfare is forcing Russia to adapt and strengthen its EW capabilities.

"Russia is making advances on the ground, and they're doing it by traditional means, but they're also heavily relying on electronic warfare to counter Ukraine's drone operations," Fischer explained.

The use of drones by Ukraine has pushed Russia to improve its offensive EW measures, particularly in the Napier River region. Fischer noted that Ukraine is trying to adapt by transmitting across multiple bands—ranging from 100 MHz to 9 GHz—to evade Russian jammers. The challenge is that by the time Russia pinpoints all the transmission bands, the drone has often completed its mission.

"Ukraine's defense strategy is unique…by the time you find all four transmission bands, the drone's work is already done," Fischer pointed out, emphasizing the complexity of the situation.

Russia's Involvement in Multiple Conflicts

The conversation shifted to Russia's involvement in the Middle East, where Fischer discussed Russia's hidden hand in conflicts through its partnerships with Iran and its support for Hezbollah and Hamas.

He highlighted the possibility of Iran pulling resources away from Russia if it gets drawn into a larger regional conflict, which would severely impact Russia's ongoing war efforts in Ukraine.

> *"War is an ugly thing…Israel gave a two-hour warning before their latest strike, but if they gave two days, Hezbollah could move their weapons and artillery, making the strike ineffective."*

The Middle East and the Challenge of Precision Strikes

In discussing the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, Fischer

noted that civilian casualties remain a tragic and unavoidable consequence of warfare. He explained that Israel, when launching strikes, sometimes provides warnings to civilians, giving them a chance to evacuate. However, this leads to a dilemma, as giving more time allows adversaries to relocate their weapons systems.

“War is an ugly thing…Israel gave a two-hour warning before their latest strike, but if they gave two days, Hezbollah could move their weapons and artillery, making the strike ineffective,” Fischer commented.

He also pointed out the unfortunate reality that many terrorist organizations place their military assets directly under civilian areas, further complicating Israel’s precision targeting efforts.

The F-35 and the Changing Landscape of Air Superiority

Toward the end of the conversation, Fischer shifted the focus to advancements in military technology, specifically the role of fifth-generation fighters like the F-35. He emphasized how the F-35’s integrated sensor systems and superior situational awareness are proving invaluable in combat.

“The F-35’s ability to gain air superiority, find, fix, and finish targets quickly is amazing,” Fischer stated. “It’s not even a fair fight when you compare it to older Russian platforms like the SU-57.”

He further discussed the stark difference between Western and Russian fighter jets, noting how modern jets like the F-35 are more adaptable and technologically advanced.

NATO and the Evolving Role of EW

Lastly, Fischer shared insights on NATO’s evolving approach to electronic warfare, particularly in maritime operations. While there is progress, he stressed that many NATO nations lack the necessary EW tools, relying heavily on the United States and a few other nations.

“The US doesn’t sell most of its EW systems, making it hard for other NATO countries to catch up,” Fischer said.

He highlighted the importance of advocating for EW capabilities now, as European countries are increasing defense spending.

Conclusion

Overall, this episode of “From the Crows’ Nest” provided listeners with a rich mix of real-time events, deep analysis, and insights into the future of warfare For those interested in the intersection of geopolitics, technology, and military strategy, the AOC podcast continues to offer compelling content grounded in current events.

For more in-depth analysis, listen to the full episode of From the Crow’s Nest.

Start listening to this members-only episode now!