FTCN Replay: Listener Q&A on Current Events in EW

In the latest exclusive episode of *From the Crow's Nest*, Ken Miller, AOC's Director of Advocacy and Outreach, hosted a dynamic solo Q&A session, joined by producer Laura Krebs. This special edition, recorded on April 1 and released to all listeners the following day, tackled a wide range of questions from AOC members and subscribers – covering everything from policy shifts and electromagnetic spectrum operations (EMSO) to artificial intelligence, joint operations and the role of industry.

A Space for Honest Dialogue
Kicking off the episode with some lighthearted April Fool's anecdotes, Ken and Laura set an engaging tone that invited listeners to participate. With no special guest this time, the focus turned to questions submitted by members and listeners, allowing Ken to address pressing concerns from the field and share his insights shaped by two decades of experience in the EMSO community.

Enhancing EMS Dominance Through Policy and Investment
When asked about policy and investment priorities to bolster the US's spectrum dominance, Ken emphasized the need for early integration of EMSO capabilities in the development and acquisition processes. He highlighted the disconnect between combatant commands (responsible for electromagnetic order of battle) and the services (tasked with manning, training and equipping), urging a more synchronized and agile approach. Training and workforce development were also flagged as critical areas needing attention.

The Role of Industry and the Risks of Isolation
Ken pointed to the unique structure of the defense industrial base and stressed the importance of in-person engagement. With

technology development accelerating rapidly in the commercial sector, Ken warned against siloed efforts and excessive travel restrictions, which could hinder collaboration and innovation. “You limit the interaction of people, you’re going to end up slowing programs down,” he stated bluntly.

Analyzing the Updated Joint EMSO Manual
In response to a question about recent updates to the joint EMSO manual, Ken welcomed the changes, especially the increased emphasis on the electromagnetic order of battle and the formalization of GEMSO (Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations) cells. He praised the direction being taken by DOD leadership but underscored the challenge ahead — ensuring service-level alignment and implementation.

Global Hotspots and the Complexity of Conflict
When discussing global theaters of conflict, Ken made it clear that every region presents unique challenges. From great power competition with China and Russia to the ripple effects of proxy conflicts in the Middle East and South America, EMSO capabilities must remain flexible and rapidly adaptive. “Our EMSO capabilities have to be agile… we’re not there yet, but we’re making progress,” he said.

AI as a Game Changer in EMSO
Artificial intelligence, according to Ken, is central to the future of spectrum warfare. He stressed that adversaries are moving faster than human operators can respond—employing tactics like frequency hopping and dynamic jamming. Real-time, AI-driven analysis and response systems are not a luxury but a necessity. “If you’re resting on bureaucratic stovepipes and human bottlenecks, you’re going to lose the fight,” he warned.

Classification Challenges: Who Gets a Seat at the Table?
Addressing a concern from the audience about the classified nature of EW discussions, Ken acknowledged the growing divide between cleared professionals and the commercial sector. Overclassification, he argued, can hinder innovation and

reduce the pool of potential solutions. He advocated for more controlled but open exchanges to include non-cleared stakeholders who bring valuable capabilities to the table.

Legal Barriers and Risk Aversion
On regulatory hurdles, Ken candidly criticized legal interpretations that default to minimal risk over problem-solving. While acknowledging the importance of safeguarding sensitive information, he urged a shift in mindset to embrace and mitigate risk rather than avoid it altogether. “We have to adopt [risk], live by it and mitigate it,” he asserted.

The EMP Threat: Real or Hyped?
When asked about the risk of electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attacks, Ken drew on pop culture references – like *Ocean’s Eleven* – to illustrate the concept. He expressed skepticism about the practicality of such an attack without major escalation (e.g., a nuclear detonation) and questioned whether current investment levels to mitigate the threat are justified based on its actual likelihood.

NATO Cooperation and the Road to AOC Europe
To close the episode, Ken reflected on how NATO and allied nations are working together to build joint EMSO capabilities. With AOC Europe fast approaching (May 6-8 in Rome), he highlighted the growing interest among European nations in developing regionally tailored solutions. He praised the move toward greater collaboration, training and interoperability with US forces, reinforcing the need for diversity in capability and thought in today’s joint fight.

Looking Ahead
Listeners were encouraged to follow the Association of Old Crows on LinkedIn, participate in the ongoing listener survey, and look forward to *From the Crow’s Nest* live coverage from AOC Europe. As always, Ken invited questions via email and social media, reminding members that their voice drives the show’s direction.

Missed this episode?
The April 1 edition is now available to everyone for a limited time. Subscribe, share and send in your questions for future Q&A episodes. Your engagement helps shape the conversation around the future of EMSO and EW.

Start listening