

# FTCN Replay: Insights into Defense Budgeting Trends

In a recent episode of “From the Crows’ Nest,” host and AOC’s Director of Advocacy and Outreach Ken Miller, sat down with John Knowles, Editor-in-Chief of AOC’s Journal of Electromagnetic Dominance (JED), to discuss defense budgeting for EW and EMSO.

The conversation provided valuable insights into how the US military services are addressing EW challenges through budget priorities and revealed some fascinating trends in electromagnetic spectrum operations.

*(Note: The full episode is available exclusively to AOC members and subscribers. Exclusive episodes are released twice a month. To access them and participate in live recordings as part of the virtual audience, become an AOC member at [www.crows.org](http://www.crows.org) or subscribe for \$2.99/month at [www.ftcnpodcast.org](http://www.ftcnpodcast.org).)*

## **Navigating the Defense Budget Labyrinth**

Miller and Knowles began by discussing the challenges of analyzing the defense budget for EW programs. They highlighted the difficulty of tracking specific programs across multiple budget documents, with Knowles noting, “The DOD organizes it a certain way and then Congress puts a bill together and you have to translate the DOD lines over to the congressional budget lines. They’re not the same. They’re not organized the same.”

This complexity makes it particularly challenging to follow the development of multi-function systems that blend EW with other capabilities – a growing trend in modern defense platforms.

## **Navy's EW Investments**

The discussion covered each service's approach to EW funding. Regarding the Navy, Knowles explained: "They're doing a major upgrade on the F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet called ADVEW ... Then they've got Next Gen Jammer, which is chugging along but probably like 10 years later than it should be in a lot of areas."

He elaborated on the Next Gen Jammer program, with the mid-band variant reaching initial operational capability and moving into higher production rates. The low-band variant is progressing despite contractual delays, while high-band remains in development with the Navy implementing a "high-band extension" on the mid-band pod as an interim solution.

## **Air Force Renaissance in Electronic Warfare**

Miller and Knowles highlighted the significant progress the Air Force has made in rebuilding its EW capabilities after years of divestment. Knowles observed, "The Air Force, I remember thinking in 2005, I'm like, I don't know if they could dig a hole any deeper for themselves ... and they've done a fantastic job, like, way above what I could have expected."

They praised the creation and continued growth of the 350th Spectrum Warfare Wing, with Knowles adding: "I think the Air Force has just kept their eye on the prize for a long, long time and ... has made a bet on the EMS for the first time since probably the Cold War."

## **Army's Evolution in EW**

The Army is pushing EW capabilities down to lower echelons while also developing new concepts for airborne electronic attack. Knowles explained, "They're pushing EW down to the smallest units they can, whether it's counter UAS or UAS with EW on it."

A RAND study commissioned by the 18th Airborne highlighted

that by 2030, a typical brigade could have 150 small unmanned aircraft systems, many with EW payloads. However, training challenges exist due to spectrum management limitations, with Knowles noting they can currently train with only “two orders of magnitude below what we need to do.”

## **European Defense Independence**

Looking ahead to this week’s [AOC Europe](#) conference in Rome, Knowles discussed how European nations are reassessing their defense capabilities and industrial base, particularly in EW.

“Europe is looking at its relationship with the US ... and they’re worried about their fear, whether it’s rational or not, is ‘What about my mission data files?’ ... So they’re thinking about what I need to do to build if the US isn’t going to be playing the same partnership role it has,” Knowles explained.

He concluded by emphasizing the importance of European self-reliance in defense technologies, with strong potential for continued advancement in native EW capabilities.

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