FTCN Replay: EMSO Reform Gets a Foothold in New Defense Spending Bill

In the latest episode of **From the Crows' Nest**, host Ken Miller, AOC's Director of Advocacy & Outreach, sat down with Katy Nazaretova of **Forza DC** for an update on the fiscal year 2027 defense budget process — and a closer look at a recent win for electromagnetic spectrum operations (EMSO) policy on Capitol Hill.

Nazaretova, who directs AOC's congressional education efforts on Capitol Hill, returns to the podcast periodically to break down where the defense appropriations and authorization bills stand as they move through Congress.

Appropriations Process Moves Piecemeal

On the appropriations side, Nazaretova said the process remains fragmented. The House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee marked up its bill earlier in June behind closed doors, with the full committee taking up the measure June 24. The Senate Appropriations Committee, meanwhile, has not yet released its subcommittee spending allocations, leaving its timeline unclear.

Given how late last year's appropriations bills were finalized, Nazaretova said a continuing resolution is increasingly likely. "It's more than likely that we'll have a CR, and we'll see how all of that lands," she said.

NDAA Clears House Committee With EMSO Governance Language Included

The bigger story is the National Defense Authorization Act. The House Armed Services Committee marked up its version of

the bill June 4, finishing relatively early compared to past years, and the full House is expected to take it up the week of June 29. The Senate Armed Services Committee marked up its version in a closed session June 11, releasing only a top-line summary so far.

The House bill authorizes $1.15 trillion in Department of Defense and related agency funding, part of a roughly $1.5 trillion total defense package for fiscal 2027 when reconciliation funding is included.

Among the provisions, Rep. Mark Messmer (IN), a leader of the EW Working Group, secured report language directing the Pentagon to review implementation of the **2020 EMS Superiority Strategy** and to analyze governance alternatives, including a centralized combat support agency for EMSO, a structure AOC has been advocating for.

Nazaretova explained why report language, rather than formal bill text, can be a meaningful step forward rather than a consolation prize. Bill language requires agreement across the House, Senate and conference committee, making it harder to pass. Report language, by contrast, takes effect as soon as committee passes the bill — meaning the Pentagon's review is already underway. The Defense Department's response is due March 1, though Nazaretova cautioned that Pentagon reports are often delayed and require sustained congressional follow-up.

Miller added the broader strategic value of the approach: Report language keeps an issue under committee oversight until it's ready for a legislative push, rather than risking a premature vote.

Nazaretova flagged several other items of interest in the House version of the NDAA, including funding tied to GPS jamming, additional Compass Call aircraft, and expanded training requirements tied to spectrum operations and Indo-Pacific Command priorities.

Election Year Adds Friction to Advocacy Efforts

With Congress facing a compressed legislative calendar — with reduced floor time in July and an October recess tied to the midterm elections — Nazaretova said big, complex proposals like the JEMSO Combat Support Agency face longer odds this year. “It’s harder to drum up new support for something in a year like this,” she said, noting that members in competitive districts will prioritize time at home over major legislative pushes.

She also pointed to the upcoming departure of Rep. Don Bacon, (NE), a longtime EW advocate, as both a challenge and an opportunity for AOC to broaden its base of congressional champions. “This is also our opportunity to grow the base of members that are comfortable with speaking on EW,” she said.

Miller said AOC will continue working with the House Armed Services Committee to track the March 1 Pentagon report deadline and build support among returning EW Working Group members, including Reps. Mark Messmer, Chrissy Houlahan, Austin Scott and John McGuire, heading into the next Congress.

Listeners can follow ongoing coverage of the defense budget process at **crows.org/advocacy-blog** and learn more about AOC’s Joint EMSO Combat Support Agency proposal at **crows.org/CSA**.