

Why RF Filtering Is Critical for Next-Generation Missile Platforms

Learn how RF filtering helps prevent interference in modern missile platforms and considerations for selecting the right filter technologies.

by Peter Matthews

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The diversity of RF systems within a modern missile platform creates an increasingly complex challenge for spectral coexistence, especially as seekers become more multimode. Robust filtering is key in preventing interference and malfunction within this compact, fixed platform, but since no single filter technology currently spans the entire spectrum from VHF to mmWave, engineers must apply various filtering approaches across different frequency ranges.

Converging RF Technologies in a Fixed Missile Platform

As outlined in our [previous blog](#), modern missile airframes typically include these seven RF systems, each of which requires filtering:

1. Radar Seekers
2. Altimeters
3. Proximity fuze
4. GPS or GNSS
5. Datalink
6. IFF

7. Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities

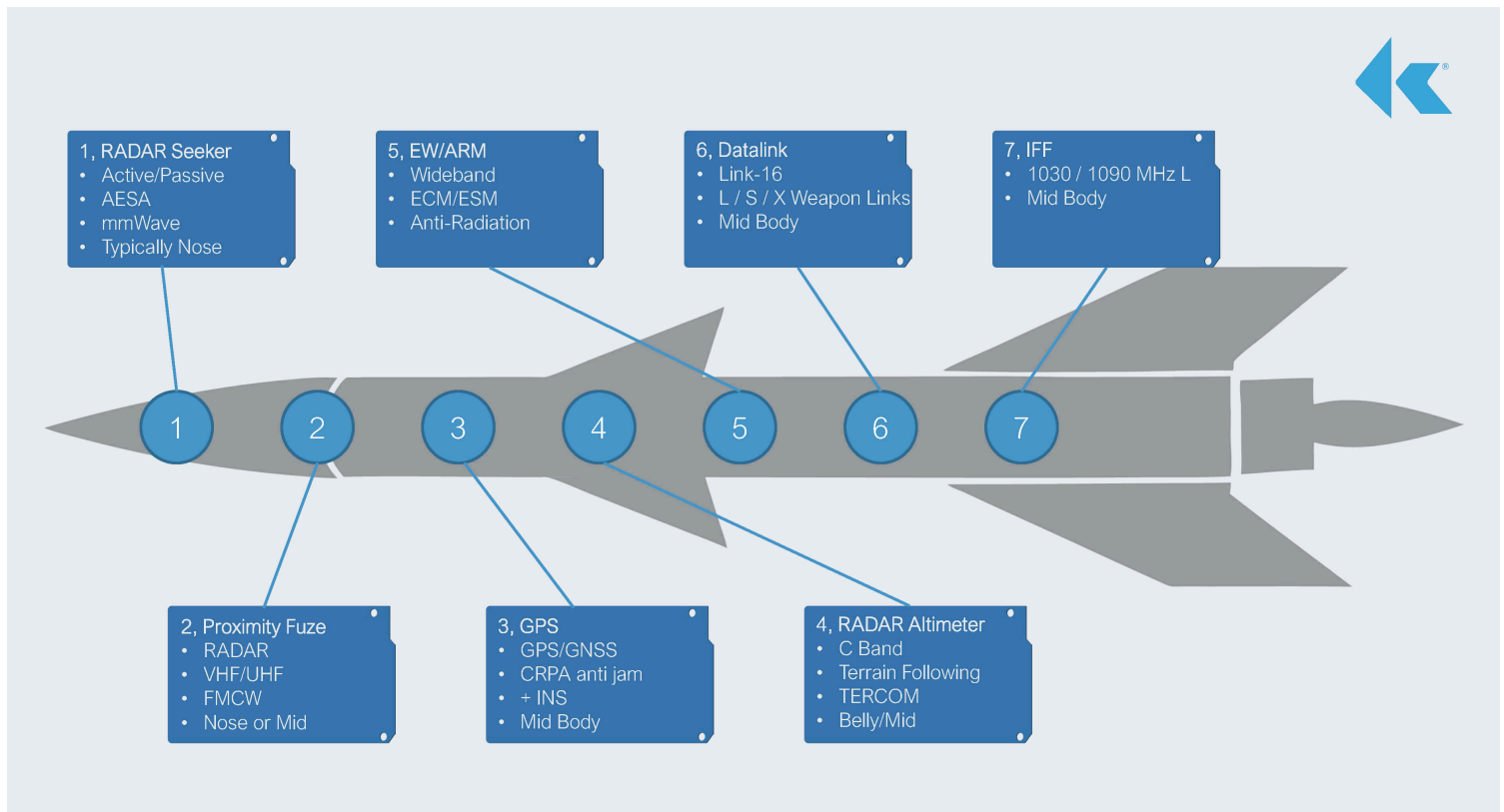


Figure 1. Additional detail on the seven RF systems typically included in a modern missile.

Why Filtering is Important

As the space within a missile becomes increasingly crowded with these converging technologies, the bar for filtering also rises. This is because signal inference from neighboring technologies inside the airframe can distort the real-time communication required for accurate performance. Since it's necessary for individual components to complete their tasks without impacting others operating nearby, and do so within a limited space typically under extreme physical duress, engineers today need high-Q and temperature-stable filters that also balancing size, weight, and power (SWaP) considerations.

They also need options that are customizable and flexible since some requirements may not be fully defined at the start of the project. Having options with quick turn-around times and the ability to obtain a comprehensive solution that covers the full spectrum from a single vendor is also important. Additionally, filter reliability is key. It doesn't do any good to build a filter that hits performance requirements but can't match the longevity needs of a system that faces intense shock and vibration in its operating environment.

Evaluating RF Filter Technologies

The Knowles RF/Microwave product portfolio offers filters supporting applications from 1 KHz to 65 GHz. Our filter offerings include:

- **Lumped Element Filters:** Individual capacitors and inductors configured to form resonant filter networks.
- **Microstrip Filters:** Distributed element architecture in which microstrip transmission line structures form resonators.
- **Coaxial Ceramic Resonator Filters:** Distributed element architecture in which coaxial transmission lines form resonators.
- **Cavity Filters:** Distributed element architecture in which metallic cavity resonators (waveguide-like structures) form resonators.

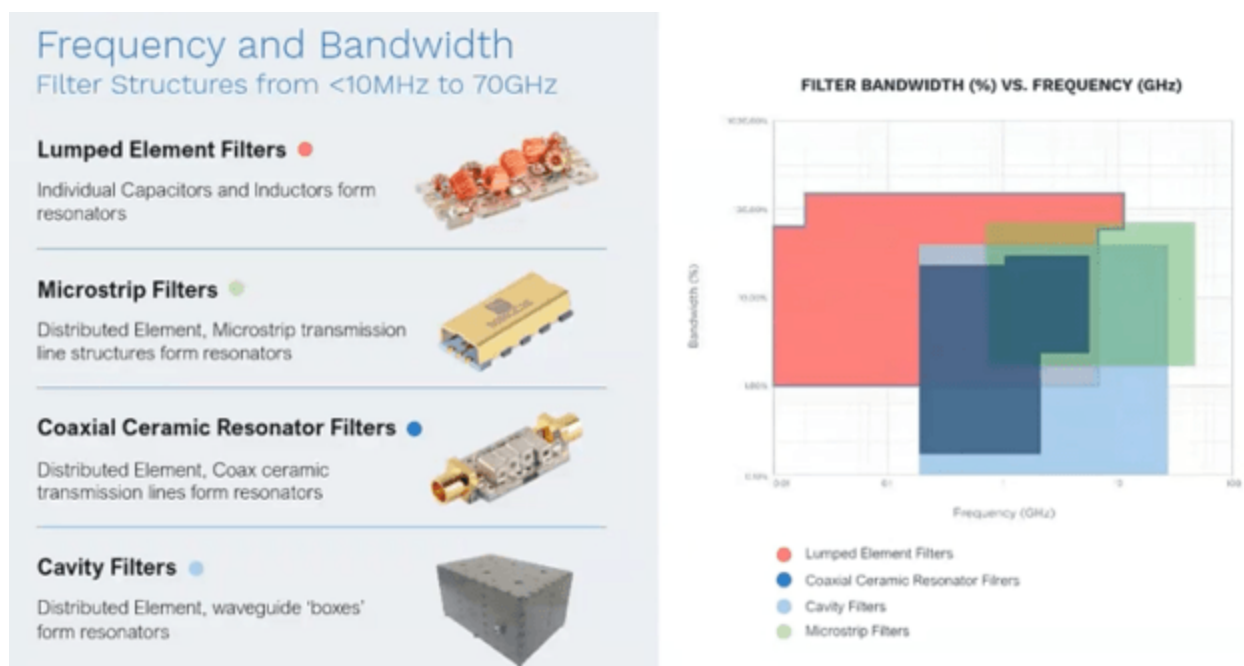


Figure 2. A high-level comparison of four different filter technologies.

When comparing frequency vs. fractional bandwidth, it may appear several of these filter technologies “do the same thing.” However, it’s important to note that while filters may fall in the same range, they offer vastly different benefits depending on your intended usage, environment, and restrictions on temperature and size.

If you need a very narrow or very wide bandwidth, your choice between technologies is more straightforward: lumped element solutions on one end and microstrip filters on the other. In the midrange of the graph shown in Figure 2, however, you begin to see an overlap of options including lumped element, microstrip, coaxial ceramic resonators, and cavity filters. While some functionality is similar, it’s important to understand the differences so you can select the correct combination of filters for your exact solution.

Additionally, for applications where size is critical, Knowles offers filter technologies that leverage high-permittivity ceramic materials to reduce overall filter dimensions while maintaining RF filter performance. This helps engineers meet the demanding SWaP constraints they face inside modern missile platforms.

The Importance of Working with a Knowledgeable Supplier for Your Filter Solutions

Oftentimes, the full requirements for filtering needs are not something that can be comprehensively covered in one sheet of paper. Instead, this requires an in-depth understanding of the solution's challenges and goals as well as how to leverage different capabilities for various applications. This is where the value of selecting a filter provider that also has a skilled RF engineering team comes into play.

While dielectrics are the foundation of our technology, Knowles' RF global engineering team is the real key to helping customers succeed. The Knowles team collaborates with customers closely as we understand there is not an one-size-fits-all solution to meet the complex filtering challenges in this space.

Our team brings the required security credentials necessary for these critical discussions and can convert even a "back-of-an-envelope spec" into a formal spec sheet or provide parameters to put into your simulation. They can walk you through options, whether it's one design or 20 designs, for complex situations and can help scale your solution so that it's not just a one-filter-in, one-filter-out exchange.

Additionally, our lithography and thin film team supports flexibility for your operation. Our ability to produce manufacturing volumes or create prototypes eliminates the need for you to build the device and then package it. We can also help you proactively identify any issues or reliability concerns that might arise during assembly and develop options to reduce manufacturing lead times.

Knowles is a leading manufacturer of specialty electronic components. Through extreme reliability, custom engineering, and scalable manufacturing, we enable businesses to succeed in the most demanding applications. Learn more about our [filter technology](#).