

The ole ball game just ain't the same... or isn't it?

Strike one, strike two, strike three! You're out! ..., er, I mean, strike four, strike five, ...

In my last rant concerning the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, I mentioned the possible beginnings of World War III in the Ukraine. We were all so enthralled with the mystery of the missing Boeing 777 that we could have cared less about what was going on in a little corner of Eastern Europe. And the media knew that we would find a disappearing airplane more fascinating than that little non-newsworthy skirmish. And don't get me wrong; my heart goes out to those poor lost souls. As a former aviation professional, I understand the almost physical pain of not knowing.

However, there is a much bigger catastrophe brewing in the Ukraine, with MANY more lives at stake. And coincidentally enough, it has been brought to the forefront by yet another aviation disaster. Not to mention that the fickle finger of fate seems to not just be pointed at Malaysian Airlines, but is shoved right up that company's keister. Not their fault, but the negative ramifications of the two incidents happening so close together will no doubt prove almost insurmountable.

As with the first catastrophe, I feel for the victims, and pray for their lost souls...and for the loving families and friends that they left behind. In this last case though, at least there is some closure. They know that their husbands, wives, children, parents and friends were senselessly slaughtered, and they know how, and why, and by whom.

A missile fired by pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine is the how. And it was probably a mistake, as errors are made in any conflict, and collateral damage is a fact of war. Probably.

Politics, pure and simple, is the why.

The who is a little bit trickier to ascertain, but the man ultimately responsible is well known. And untouchable.

You see, there is a wolf again walking among the sheep of the world, this time going by the name, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. And there is no longer a shepherd around to protect the little lambs on this planet. The

United States of America is no longer the world's policeman, so Putin need not fear us. Europe needs his oil, so they will not act. China, India and the rest of Asia have their own agendas, and are more than happy to let Russia upset the world balance.

Putin is immune, he knows it, and the world has not heard the last from him. He is still up at bat and knows that he can take as many swings as he wants, with impunity. The last time someone like him started throwing his weight around, millions died.

At least for a moment the media spotlight was on him. The outcry was loud, pointed, and the world seemed to be waking to the danger that the mad Russian posed. But lucky for him, it quickly swung to the Gaza Strip and Israel, the only nation hated more than the United States. Luck, yeah right.

So the world is in more turmoil than it has been since the seventies, when another U.S. President was perceived as weak and ineffectual. Are Putin and the rest of the malevolent powers stirring across the planet correct about Mr. Obama? Does our fearless leader have the backbone to make the hard decisions, no matter how his popularity numbers might drop? Will his leftist base still respect him when he takes his head out of the sand and realizes that we are not living in Utopia, at least not yet? And will his party support him when he proclaims that there are still bad people out there that will do their best to keep the world in flames... and the US needs to act, or in short order lose the ability to act? Time will tell, but he needs to start throwing some strikes, or the game will be over before we know it.

Captain Steve