



Europe needs to pay more for its own defense

August 1, 2014

Commentator Jules Witcover writes that President Obama "needs to put a bit of John Wayne in his words" vis-a-vis his handling of Russia over the Malaysian Airlines tragedy ("The Obama doctrine under fire," July 25).

Mr. Witcover acknowledges that interventionism may not be the best idea. But what is to be gained from a disparity between the president's words and actions he doesn't venture to say.

The airliner was flying from Europe with primarily European passengers aboard. Once again, the expectation seems to be that America needs to police the world, even on matters that have nothing to do with us.

Unquestionably, President Obama is a lame duck in the middle of his second-term stagnation. But lame duck or not, the president has correctly responded to a situation that has little to do with the United States and would not likely benefit from our intervention.

Insisting that the United States talk tough and do nothing sounds like a fool's errand better left to the European Union. Forcing Europeans to rely on themselves for defense could create a more formidable and unified opponent for Russian President Vladimir Putin, and one much closer than the United States.

According to the Cato Institute, EU nations are spending an ever-shrinking amount of money on their own defense; meanwhile the U.S. has by far the largest defense budget in the world, at more than \$600 billion per year. Despite repeated calls to spend more money on their own defense, the EU has seen fit to remain a vassal state of the U.S.

If Europeans have any lingering doubts about their ability to defend themselves from Russia, perhaps they should consider funding a real military.

Jason Farrell, Baltimore