

**Analytical note:**  
**Situation in the field of**  
**national security and defense**  
**(December 2015)**

**Minsk**

**The most important events of the month.** On 15.12.2015, Alexander Lukashenko met Vladimir Putin. The issue of expansion of the Russian military presence in our country was not discussed, according to official sources. Subsequently, on 21.12.2015, there were no separate meetings between Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko at the CSTO and EAEC summits in Moscow.

In December, two meetings at the high level were held within the scope of the CSTO summit: on 09.12.2015 a meeting of the Military Committee of the Organization was held, and on 21.12.2015 the summit of the heads of participating states took place. Both events demonstrated the absence of assistance (at least the public assistance) to Russia from its partners in the Collective Security Treaty Organization. At first the statement, made by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces Yuri Khachaturov, on support by the member states of the Russian military campaign in Syria and its stance on destruction by the Turkish Air Forces of Su-24 bomber on 24.11.2015 was disavowed. Later Moscow did not receive public support from the CSTO member states (except Armenia) even at the level of the heads of states.

**The dynamics of the situation development for the past month.** On 01.12.2015, the 61<sup>st</sup> fighter airbase in Baranovichi received back ten repaired MiG-29 fighters. On the same day, two repaired Su-25 training and combat aircrafts were passed to the 116<sup>th</sup> Air Base of the Belarusian Air Forces and Air Defense Forces. The machines were sent for repair to the 558<sup>th</sup> Aircraft Repair Plant as early as April 2014. The equipment and its capacity was restored, the flight parameters video recording system was installed.

On 03.12.2015, Minsk hosted the International Conference on “Social and psychological aspects of national security”. During the event the Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology Alexander Shumilin said that information security has taken one of the first places in the national security of Belarus. And the national security itself is defined by one of the nine priority areas of scientific and technological activities in Belarus for 2016-2020 years. The KGB Chairman Valery Vakulchik noted the importance of the socio-psychological aspect in ensuring the stability of the State. He said that “...forms and methods of manipulating public opinion, lobbying vested interests, as well as provoking a crisis are constantly improving”. The significance of interaction between the academic community and practitioners to ensure national security is growing. During the conference it was stated that in Belarus only several evidences of extremist activity were detected. In this respect, our country is the safest one among the CIS countries.

The Belarusian authorities are concerned about participation of our citizens in armed conflicts abroad. On 06.12.2015, the information appeared about the death in Syria of the citizen of the Republic of Belarus, who had been fighting on the side of the “Islamic State”. Later, on 15.12.2015, the Interior Ministry acknowledged participation of the Belarusian citizens in the war on the side of terrorists: totally about 10 people were detected. Each identified case shall be checked. Besides, the Minister of Internal Affairs Igor Shunevich announced that they detected about 100 citizens of Belarus, who fought in Donbass.

In turn, on 18.12.2015, the Chairman of the KGB Valery Vakulchik reported that 58 citizens of Belarus taking part in the hostilities on the territory of Ukraine from both sides were detected. All these people are now in the neighbouring country. When they return to

Belarus the issue of detention would be decided by the secret services in each case separately.

On 09.12.2015, First Deputy Chairman of the State Military-Industrial Committee Igor Bykov announced the plans to supply sights for small arms to Pakistan. The two countries also intend to develop cooperation in the field of electronic warfare (hereinafter referred to as EW). The work in this direction is already in progress.

It became known in December about the success of domestic UAV developers. Referring to Vietnamese sources, it was stated that with participation of the Belarusian specialists, a long-range flight HS-6L UAV was developed in this country. The declared range was up to 4,000 km, flight duration – 35 hours. The HS-6L flight tests will begin over the South China Sea in the II quarter of 2016. It was first publicly demonstrated in Vietnam on 09.12.2015 to the Delegation of the National Academy of Sciences headed by Academician Vladimir Gusakov. It should be noted that the Belarusian side has no official information on this matter.

Further, during the visit of Alexander Lukashenko to Turkmenistan on December 10-12 it was announced that Belarusian UAVs with a range of application up to 50 km are assembled in this country. Obviously, we are talking about the developed by the National Academy of Sciences “Busel-M” unit. Besides, the Belarusian manufacturers are ready to offer our customers the “Burevestnik” UAV, which has a range of 290 km and can be equipped with a different purpose payload, including for battle purposes.

Continuing the topic of unmanned aircraft, it became known on 20.12.2015 that the JSC “AGAT – Control Systems” reached an agreement with the East China Research Institute of Electronic Engineering on cooperation in this sphere.

On 12.12.2015, the Minister of Defence of Belarus Andrei Ravkov said that Belarus will never be drawn into the other countries’ wars and conflicts. It is guaranteed either by “... multi-vector peaceful foreign policy”, or military capabilities. It is worth noting that earlier the Belarusian officials called the participation of our country in the military-political structures in the post-Soviet space, and particularly a close alliance with Russia, the most important factors in maintaining peace.

On 14.12.2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Vladimir Makey had a meeting with NATO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Alexander Vershbow. The meeting was held behind the closed doors. Neither of the parties made any statements, the topic of the negotiations remains unknown.

On 16.12.2015, under the chairmanship of Alexander Lukashenko a meeting on security issues was held. The event was a continuation of the same meeting, which took place in November. The head of state demanded to increase the efficiency of the armed forces. He also addresses the optimization of all law enforcement agencies “... to the reasonable extent”, including by getting rid of unnecessary functions. The released resources should be focused on implementation of direct departmental tasks. Alexander Lukashenko highlighted that radical reorganization of the national security and defense sector is not necessary. But he wants to improve the performance of each department in its area of activities.

On the same day there was a meeting of the second working group of Belarus-US on democracy and human rights. The US side consisted of the representatives of the State Department and the Agency for International Development. The American side stressed

the importance of the Belarusian parliamentary elections in 2016 to be held in accordance with the international standards, the need to guarantee the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, development of civil society and independent media, rule of law, execution of the commitments undertaken in the framework of the United Nations in the field of human rights. The US urged Minsk to take positive steps in the field of democracy and human rights, including during the upcoming elections to the National Assembly. The US officials have noted that respect for democracy and human rights in Belarus is a necessary foundation for improvement of bilateral relations, and is essential for the prosperity of the country.

On 22.12.2015, the State Border Committee of Belarus reported an increase in illegal migration across our country. Thus, in 2015, more than 40 channels of transit migration (twice more than in 2014) were revealed. 70 organizers/facilitators of illegal transit migration were arrested against 30 in the previous year. The increasing number of attempts of the organized group violations of the state border is observed. During 11 months in 2015 the bodies of border service of Belarus 10.3 thousand foreign citizens were detained for violating the law on the legal status of foreign citizens and stateless persons. More than 7.5 thousand people, including 860 frontier intruders were detained for violation of legislation on the state border. 386 people were detained on the border with Lithuania, 113 people were detained on the border with Poland and 87 people were detained on the border with Latvia. Thus, 274 offenders refer to Ukraine.

On 27.12.2015, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in connection with adoption of the Chinese law on the fight against terrorism. The application itself is formal. Though the fact of its appearance poses interest: it is not usual for the national diplomacy to publicly comment the foreign lawmakers, including the friendly countries. The only exception is China. Earlier, on 02.07.2015, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in connection with adoption of the new Chinese law on national security.

On 28.12.2015, Alexander Lukashenko received the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs I. Shunevich with the report. He stated that the criminal situation in the country is under the operational and tactical control. A. Lukshenko gave a "... balanced and largely positive assessment of activity of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and at the same time pointed out the shortcomings, which elimination will be implemented by the police". In particular, the complaint is caused by the growth of disorderly conduct.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus in 2015 detected more than 7,000 violations in the field of gray imports, almost 20% of which are related to the illegal importation of alcohol. The withdrawal of valuables from illegal circulation values more than USD 42 million.

In December the Investigative Committee completed the criminal investigation against criminal organizations involved in the illegal sale of particularly dangerous psychotropic substances supplied from Russia. It was reported on prosecution of the 17 accused, including the three police officers among them.

In December the Russian mass media (including the official one) reported that Belarus plans to create an airborne cruise missile, which is supposedly based on the Soviet technology purchased from Ukraine and applied in X-55 rocket.

**Conclusion.** It is obvious that Belarus and Russia have the period of cooling of the so far not excellent relations due to several reasons: the regional security situation, the position of Belarus on Ukraine and the refusal of the official Minsk from the earlier informal arrangements to expand the Russian military presence in the country. Given the overall systemic crisis in the two countries, the external background, the virtual absence of a positive outcome of the EAEC, one should not expect a quick warming of relations. Belarus, of course, is interested in improving relations with Russia. However, not at any cost any more. Minsk realizes the futility of confrontation with the West on its own experience.

The results of the December meeting of the Military Council and the CSTO summit demonstrated that the alliances exist more in theory than in practice. The organization is a typical post-Soviet structure, relying on the “so far so good” principle. And when it is “bad”, the “every man for himself” principle operates. Which is the logical consequence of absence of the shared values between the participating countries. Initially, the CSTO was created more as a modern equivalent of the European “Holy Alliance” of the nineteenth century. And it was intended to protect the political regimes in the member states in the first place, and military-technical cooperation in the second. The CSTO countries have no and may not have a consistent foreign policy, therefore all the Kremlin's attempts to turn it into an analogue of NATO are hopeless.

Regarding the Belarusian-Pakistani cooperation in the field of EW it should be noted that Pakistan refers more to consumers, than to the owners of technology in this field. More than likely forms of this interaction are presented in technology transfer and delivery of products of the relevant application for Belarus. The interest of Minsk is not limited to money. Counter delivery of technologies and products is likely, primarily related to rocket construction, where Pakistan has certain achievements.

It is obvious that the Belarusian authorities are not happy with appearance in the country of people with combat experience. Especially considering the fact that they have acquired this experience without permission of the State. One may expect demonstrative steps to prevent the return to the combatants from Ukraine and squeezing out those, who have already returned to Belarus.

The test results of HS-6L UAV are of interest to our country, as it allows to check in practice the performance of the domestic developments in creation of long range units. In Belarus similar tests may be difficult either as a consequence of the lack of funding or because of the small territory of the country.

It may be expected that upon the results of the meeting between Alexander Lukashenko and the security forces, work will be performed to unite the structural units of the law enforcement agencies in neighboring administrative areas in the inter-district structures. Due to reduction of the managerial positions this will help to release a significant number of additional posts, which may be transmitted to fulfill the departmental duties. For example, when consolidating the regional police departments, the joined division releases up to 15-17 positions, of which not less than 12 are the officers mostly bearing the rank of Major or Lieutenant Colonel. The territorial structure of the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs may be reorganized in a similar way (with 3-6 positions released) and the Ministry of Emergency Situations (with about 10 positions released). Given the fact that the country has 152 administrative units of the

second level (district, district in the city, a city of regional subordination), the result of such optimization may be significant.

The opposition is currently so weak and disorganized, that the authorities, in principle, may go on to hold several districts elections to the House of Representatives in accordance with the international standards. Moreover, the ability of the opposition groups to put forward competitive candidates is far from obvious. For the West this will become an evidence of progress in the democratization of Belarus without the actual democratization. However, in terms of socio-economic crisis A. Lukashenko may want not to risk by providing additional opportunities for the opposition campaign. And even more so – the parliamentary rostrum. Even if the opposition deputies in the National Assembly could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The Belarusian President remembers that last but not least the “gravediggers” of the communist regime in the Soviet Union were a few dissidents, who received the parliamentary rostrum in the late 80s.

Speaking of illegal migration through Belarus to the EU, it is worth to note a few points. It is not reported how many of those detained offenders account for residents of border areas on both sides of the border, as well as on third-country nationals. We only know that most of the detained migrants were citizens of Vietnam – more than 360 persons (111 – in 2014). It is also evident that the detainees for violations of the state border 7.5 thousand people make up a significant portion of the citizens of Belarus.

The statements of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on adoption by the PRC of new laws could bear systematic character. Careful attention of our diplomacy to the innovations of Beijing legislation has less to do with foreign policy (though this ground is also present), it is more of a departmental competition within the Belarusian authorities. It is worth recalling that on 31.08.2015 Alexander Lukashenko signed Directive No.5 “On development of bilateral relations between Belarus and the People's Republic of China”. As the main content of bilateral cooperation it was determined as follows: “... the mutual firm support on issues related to the fundamental interests of the two countries, such as the sovereignty, territorial integrity, security and economic development”. Among the subjects of execution the MFA Directive is not allocated at all. It is possible that thus the Ministry reminds of itself and the role that diplomacy plays in international relations.

In connection with the plans announced in the Russian media about locating airborne cruise missiles in Belarus, it is worth noting the following two points. Firstly, such missiles are not subject to the restrictions of the Soviet-US Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987. Secondly, if the weight and size parameters of the created missiles match the Soviet missiles, there arises a question about the carrier aircraft. Neither MiG-29 nor Su-25 weapons have sufficient weight to carry them. There are three possible solutions to this problem:

- modernization and return to operation of Su-27 fighters;
- modernization and return to operation of Su-24 bombers;
- reequipping of the transport aircraft to the cruise missile carrier.

The latter option seems to be acceptable in case of cruise missile of sufficient range. In this case, it can be started without entering by the enemy of the air defense zone. And given the defensive nature of the military doctrine of Belarus it may be started from its own airspace.

The most amount of gray imports (primarily alcohol) comes to Belarus through the unguarded border with Russia. The law enforcement officials estimate the scale of the black market of alcohol in Belarus as 25%, i.e. within about USD 400-500 million a year. A large part of this amount is not just counterfeit alcohol, it is also dangerous to health. The difficulties on filling the state budget make the fight against illicit trafficking of alcohol one of the priority areas. But in the absence of control on the border with Russia it will be extremely difficult to achieve success. Alcohol business is profitable. And the new dealers will come to replace the current ones. In addition, the income of the general population living in the border regions of Belarus and Russia is not high. That's why the demand for cheap alcohol, even of poor quality, will not disappear.

It is likely that the report of the Investigation Committee on the end of investigation relates to exposure in December 2014 of the group of drug dealers. There was a former police officer and two acting KGB officers among the detainees. Besides the ten members of the group were charged, among other charges, for the authority abuse. I.e. we are talking about the officials. The fact that there was no detailed information reported on the charges of drug trafficking brought against the security officials may be considered as indirect evidence that we are talking about not ordinary positions. It should be noted that proceedings against the police officers are usually relatively open. At least we always know the official position of the accused. In this case there is no information on the rank, position or the division of service.

