

**Analytical note:**  
**Situation in the field of**  
**national security and defense**  
**of Belarus**  
**(July 2016)**

**Minsk**

**The most important events of the month.** On 20.07.2016, Alexander Lukashenko approved the final version of the new military doctrine of Belarus. The adopted version of the document is the result of a compromise between the need to have an updated doctrine and not to cause irritation on the part of Moscow. The text of the adopted Military Doctrine was earlier discussed by us in more detail.

On July 6-7, 2016, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Vladimir Makey paid a working visit to Latvia. During negotiations held with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Edgars Rinkevichs special emphasis was placed on development of inter-agency contacts, including in the field of defense. It is stated that the parties endeavor to develop the dialogue between various ministries and departments of the two countries to increase the level of trust and understanding. It is planned to sign a number of agreements on cooperation between the various governmental bodies of Belarus and Latvia.

The issue of deployment of the NATO troops in the Baltic States and Poland was also discussed. The Belarusian attitude remains the same: the military presence development is not welcomed, but such steps are understood by Minsk and no response measures are planned, because Minsk does not see this as a threat. The official Minsk stands for "... direct, open and sincere dialogue ... between NATO and Belarus."

So far such dialogue is just vain wishes. Belarus was not officially presented at the NATO summit in Warsaw on July 7-8.

**The dynamics of the situation development for the past month.** Contrary to expectations, July did not bring news on the putting into service and supply to the troops of the "Polonez" multiple launch rocket systems (hereinafter referred to as the MLRS). It wasn't also announced of the end of military trials of the system. One should remind that in June the Ministry of Defense of Belarus stated that "... the developers continue to work on the range and precision of shooting with the "Polonez" MLRS. In April A. Lukashenko said that "... the systems necessary for us and demanded on the armament market" are being developed in Belarus. In addition to the "Polonez", two more missile systems were implied.

The domestic defense industry continues promoting its products on the international market. Thus Jordan is exploring the possibility of acquiring special military vehicles and chassis produced by the Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant.

At the same time there remain relevant barriers faced by Belarusian producers in Russia. Despite the repeated verbal agreements at the highest level on removal of obstacles in access of Belarusian companies to the Russian public procurement and defense order, the problem remains unsolved.

On 03.07.2016 Minsk hosted a military parade, which was the most modest in the recent years according to the number of equipment presented. The Defense Department seeks to save money wherever possible. And this is a very specific indicator of depth of the crisis faced by Belarus. It is interesting to note that the parade was not equipped with the "Lis" armored vehicles (localized versions of the Russian armored vehicles "Tigr"). In this case, it is unlikely that this was the result of financial savings. The question of possible production in Belarus of the armored vehicles on the basis of Russian armored vehicles "Tigr" was discussed publicly in 2012.

On 07.07.2016, the Secretary of Security Council of Belarus Stanislav Zas met Lukashenko. Following the meeting it was announced that “fundamental reform of the power unit in Belarus is not necessary, but optimization of its number is expected”. The military component of the Ministry of Defense will be strengthened by reducing the supporting posts. The ministry planned to reduce the volume of regulatory and supervisory functions, whereby the 500 positions will be cut in 2016. The Ministry of Internal Affairs with the help of redeployment will create a battalion (about 300 men) within the Office for the purpose of protection of the Belarusian NPP.

On 08.07.2016, the Belarusian Ministry of Defense proposes to adopt the incentive measures for the military personnel, including increasing the money allowance. The Defense Department stands out in favor of giving preferences to people, who have undergone compulsory military service together with obtaining the higher education.

In July, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus, the First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Republic of Belarus, Major-General Oleg Belokonev visited Azerbaijan. On 13.07.2016, a meeting was held with the Chief of the General Staff of the Army of Azerbaijan, Colonel-General Najmeddin Sadykov, who said that Azerbaijan pays great importance to cooperation with Belarus in all areas, including in the military, military-technical sphere and military education. Touching upon the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Azerbaijani military leader has expressed confidence that Belarus “... will continue to support the objective position of Azerbaijan”. Belarusian delegation visited the Military Academy of Azerbaijan, a number of military units, including the peacekeeping forces.

On 14.06.2016, O. Belokonev met the Minister of Defense Industry of Azerbaijan Yaver Jamalov. During the meeting the sides discussed prospects of cooperation between the two countries in the defense industry. The Belarusian delegation visited one of the enterprises of Azerbaijani defense industry.

On 26.07.2016, under the chairmanship of Alexander Lukashenko there was held a meeting on the activities of the State Border Committee. The event was held with regard to the results of inspection carried out by the Security Council of Belarus. It was opened by a series of negative facts in the border agency activities, on which, however, it was not officially announced.

It is interesting to note that in addition to the heads of law enforcement agencies the meeting was attended by the heads of border units and groups, which is unusual.

There might be several reasons for the Lukashenko’s dissatisfaction with the situation on the border. Firstly, a significant amount of smuggling is going to the EU through Belarus. Secondly, there are problems with staffing units directly engaged in protection of the border. Thirdly, there is a disproportionate number of auxiliary and supporting structures in the State Border Committee, which is comparable with the number of those ones guarding the border. It is worth noting that it is characteristic of all law enforcement agencies in Belarus, where the bureaucratic machine is being supplemented with very non-obvious functions and tasks. And the fact that the de facto officials are having the officer ranks has a demoralizing effect on those officers directly engaged in the national security, law and order, and it devalues the officer status in the eyes of the civilian population. Fourthly, it is significant material costs for technical equipment of the border, which did not lead in the opinion of A. Lukashenko to the

radical improvement of the situation. Most likely there is a combination of all these factors.

And absence of the personnel decisions shows that the situation at the border may be not brilliant, but is quite tolerant.

During the first half of year the MIA has revealed almost 3.4 thousand drug-related crimes, including more than 1.5 thousand associated with sale. 27 drug supply chains were liquidated. Over 100 kg of drugs and more than 16 kg of psychotropic substances were seized. The activity of 40 online stores selling drugs, psychotropics and analogues was suppressed. The access was blocked to 12 sites related to drug trafficking. Over 300 electronic wallets were blocked.

In July it was reported that under the new state scientific and technical program “Robotic systems and aerospace technology”, it is planned to develop unmanned aircraft short-range systems, create the disposable and reusable aerial targets, establish production of a number of components, which are currently being imported. Also, the program provides for the establishment of terrestrial and underwater robots, development of new target loads for robotic platforms, engines, machines, devices, digital, high-performance data transmission channels, the use of new materials. In the Belarusian defense industry there is an experience of creating the robotic ground platforms. We are talking about the “Salamandra” and “Skarabey” projects. However, there was no information about their commercial success.

The opening campaign in higher education institutions of the law enforcement agencies was held. The level of preparation of the applicants raises questions. The passing score for more than for 2/3 of specialties at the Military Academy was below 200 out of 400 possible. And of the six specialties, which had the passing score higher than 200, three specialties were completed by women, which level of preparation was higher than that of the men. It is interesting to note that 20 people were enrolled to the specialties “Tank Elements Management” and “Ideological work”. Among the universities of the law enforcement agencies traditionally the highest-through marks were shown by the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, then the Institute of Border Service and the Command and Engineering Institute of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. And only then the Military Academy.

**Conclusion.** The fact that of putting into service or rejection of the “Polonez” MLRS in the timeline is not the evidence of the national missile program crisis. It is worth recalling that the relevant unit of the Armed Forces, which will develop new equipment, was already created, which would not be done, if there were doubts about the prospects for producing such systems. It is likely that the new heavy MRLS will be put into service later. And it will probably have other range characteristics – 300 km and more.

The question of direct participation of the domestic defense industry in the Russian defense procurement has been not solved for years. And there is no reason to expect that this would be resolved in the future. Russia has passed the peak of military spending. The volume of resources allocated for defense needs are to be reduced. And this leads to an increase in the competition for the military budget money between the Russian producers. And more competitors in the face of the Belarusian defense industry are not wanted. The Belarusian manufacturers continue to participate in the Russian state defense order as subcontractors of the Russian enterprises.

The program of military-technical cooperation between Belarus and Russia until 2020 included deliveries beginning to our country in 2014 of the kits for assembly of the “Lis” / “Tigr”. It is highly probable that after the first batch of armored vehicles is assembled, the process will be stopped. Initially, the “Lis” was meant for delivery to the Special Operations Forces. The machine was tested in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, after which it was put into service. Recently, however, there has been no public evidence of its use in the army units. As far as can be judged, all armored vehicles “Lis” were transferred to the troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Obviously, this is due to supply of prospects for military armored vehicles of domestic development. To simplify (and make cheaper) the equipment, maintenance activities are conducted for the purpose of fleet unification. In this connection, the “Lis” could turn to be non-demanded.

The formal reason for the absence of the Belarusian governmental delegation at the NATO summit in Warsaw was the insufficient level of cooperation between the Alliance and Belarus. However, if such an invitation was followed, Minsk would be willing to participate in the event in any format.

The real reasons for the lack of the Belarusian delegation at the NATO summit are much broader than the formal ones. The event is of a military-political nature. And the Western commanders have doubts about Belarus:

- from the standpoint of NATO in the military sense Belarus is a part of Russia;
- there are doubts about the completeness of the control of the official Minsk over its defense sphere;
- Moldova and Ukraine experiences demonstrate the high level of infiltration of the Russian agents in the military organizations of these countries, in this regard, from a Western point of view, the situation in Belarus is even worse;
- participation in the parade on July 3 of the Russian servicemen from the units, which participated in the aggression against Ukraine is perceived as a confirmation of the above;
- the behavior of the Belarusian officials in the course of the earlier occurred activities related to the NATO issue (delaying high-level meetings, ignoring invitations to the event, or sending to the events the representatives, who due to their level of training were not able to efficiently participate there) is perceived as hostile in the West;
- a number of offers on the part of NATO were rejected by the Belarusian side on the ground of unwillingness to irritate Moscow, which is seen as a sign of the limited independence of the Belarusian authorities in the sphere of defense.

Despite the neutral position of Belarus in the course of the confrontation between Russia and the West, the latter expects from the official Minsk clear and unambiguous guarantees of security and non-participation in any circumstances in Moscow's possible aggressive actions against neighboring member countries of the Alliance. The verbal assurances of the Belarusian authorities are not believed in the West. They are waiting for concrete and practical steps to demonstrate and independence of Belarus in the field of defense and the ability to refrain from involvement in a hypothetical conflict.

In Belarus in the security forces there are perhaps only two privileges: preferential retirement age and a chance to get a soft loan for housing. However, this applies only to those who have connected their lives with professional service. For military conscripts there are no such privileges. In this regard, the youth commonly considers the military service as a waste of time. The Ministry of Defense initiatives to improve the prestige of

military service are correct, although belated and not sufficient. In addition, the problem may be related to the practical implementation. The same benefits for higher education can be furnished with such restrictive conditions that will drive the positive effect on the whole to “negative”. On the other hand, it is obvious that there are areas (e.g. in the field of medicine and science), where the best selection mode should act without any concessions.

None of the official mass media reported about what enterprise exactly was visited by the Belarusian military delegation during the visit to Azerbaijan. However, we may assume that we are talking about the production of ammunition. Earlier, the representatives of the domestic defense industry showed interest in the similar products manufacture in Pakistan.

For A. Lukashenko the state of affairs on the border is of particular importance. Firstly, he served in the frontier troops in the Soviet times. Secondly, in terms of the actual lack of reforms in Belarus, the security issues, including the border, are not that much promised by the official Minsk to Brussels in exchange for political and financial support. The Belarusian leadership is trying to “sell” the EU's role in Europe as a shield in the east against penetration of terrorism, smuggling and illegal migration. And so it is positioning itself as a reliable partner in the field of security for all regional actors.

In general, low marks of applicants of law enforcement agencies universities is not only a result of low prestige of the military and special services among young people, but also a measure of the total degradation of the school system in Belarus. The old Soviet school with a focus on natural sciences was destroyed, and nothing new was created.

