

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

Minsk

The most important events of the month. With a month delay the Belarusian army received the first part of heavy multiple rocket launcher systems (hereinafter as MRLS) "Polonaise". It is stated that the divisional set was transferred to the military forces.

The transfer of the first part of MRLS "Polonaise" caused additional questions. So, technically the new complexes have the range from 50 up to 200 km. The military call the maximum range as "over 200 km".

Also, four weapon control vehicles are visible on the presented photos and video frames (obviously, the three battery and one division), six launchers and only two transport-charging machines. Of course, possibly it's only the first part of equipment and the division MRLS "Polonaise" will be replenished with new units in future. However, the military themselves point out that the ammunition used by "Polonaise" is more in line with the short-range missiles than with rocket-propelled ones. Accordingly, it affects the number of launchers. In addition, it is possible that all the missiles available were transferred with the equipment (which means, 64 units). Thus, there is no need for the new launchers and transport-charging machines currently: there are no missiles for them.

It cannot be excluded that the MRLS "Polonaise" division is primarily a research department. Objective: to work out the questions of use and maintenance of new equipment. And in this case there is no need for forming a complete set of division equipment.

Rather, it is a combination of all the above mentioned factors at once.

The dynamics of the situation in the past month. Following the theme of missile, the domestic missile solid fuel for unguided missiles of C-8M type was successfully tested in August in Belarus. This will let to prolong the shelf life of ammunition by charging it with new fuel.

Command-staff exercises of the Collective operating response forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (hereinafter CORF CSTO) "Interaction -2016" were held as of August 14-19 in Pskov region of Russia. The aim of the event was to develop the organization and interaction of different multinational army groups during the escalation of conflict situation in one of the border regions of member states of CSTO (the latter task is fulfilled for the first time). About 6 000 of military men were involved in the training exercises, of which 1300 represented CORF CSTO and the rest - Russian Western Military District.

There was a controversial incident during the "Interaction-2016": there was an appeal broadcasted from the loudspeakers to the soldiers of NATO to give up. Obviously, this was an improvisation of the Russian side, of which the other participating countries were not aware as well as the CSTO leadership. Anyway, the Organization's press release dedicated to the military exercises reports that the appeal to give up was addressed to the soldiers of some Western military alliance. Participating countries preferred to ignore the incident, although made the appropriate conclusions for themselves.

16.08.2016 ceremony was held on the adoption of the Air Forces and Air Defense Forces of the Republic of Belarus of three-axis radar early-warning station "Enemy" of Russian production, able to accompany at least 200 aerodynamic and ballistic targets at an altitude of 150 km and with maximum range of 450 km. The contract for the supply of these techniques was concluded a year ago.

18.08.2016 Alexander Lukashenko met with the member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Meng Jianzhu. The parties confirmed the strategic character of bilateral relations. Belarusian leader said that technologies and investments should be a priority of relations between the two countries. At the same time Chinese sources are more open. So, Alexander Lukashenko said that relations with China is a traditional priority of Belarusian diplomacy. Minsk aims at making Chinese-Belarusian industrial park a model of the joint initiative "Belt and Road".

19.08.2016 Alexander Lukashenko signed a Decree on the reorganization of education institutions of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. On its basis the University of civil protection of the MES of Belarus was established by combining Command and Engineering Institute, Gomel Engineering Institute, the Institute of retraining and advanced training. For the last two years the institutions became branches of the University and provide training for working professions, upgrading qualifications and retraining of employees of MES.

The delegation headed by the Deputy Chairman of the State military industrial committee, Gennady Smolsky, made a visit to Jordan as of August 21-25. The third meeting of the joint Belarusian-Jordanian Committee for Military-Technical Cooperation was held during the visit. The parties confirmed their interest in enhancing cooperation, considered the practical aspects of the implementation of joint projects and determined the interaction plan for the future. Belarusian delegation visited enterprises engaged in research and development in the field of defense.

Trainings with the peacekeeping forces of the CSTO "Indestructible Brotherhood-2016" were held from August 23 to 27 in Belarus; they were dedicated to the operations under the auspices of the UNO. The question on getting the UN Security Council mandate for the holding of peacekeeping operation was revised for the first time. The event was attended by about 1 500 troops of army, Interior troops of MIA of Belarus as well as the police of the participating countries.

During the trainings the participants worked out a joint service on mobile checkpoints, work with refugees, questions of tactical medicine, detection and destruction of improvised explosive devices, patrolling of areas, accompanying of columns, attacks of illegal armed groups, negotiating with the population, the separation of the conflicting parties, control over the territory and population. The trainings were attended by representatives of the Red Cross.

Belarusian Military industrial committee used the event for advertising of its own products: fire weapons, unmanned aircraft and robotic systems, means of mobile weaponry, optic, communications, machinery, equipment and others.

The cooperation agreement between KGB and the State Security Service of Georgia was signed as of 25.08.2016. It is interesting to note that the official information sources of Belarus, as well as the KGB, didn't cover the event. Special services of Belarus and

Georgia intend to cooperate in the field of fighting against terrorism, corruption, international crime and crimes against the state security.

By the results of the joint meeting of the Advisory Board of the Minister of Defense of Belarus and the Coordinating Council of the Officers' meetings Armed Forces, the proposals to increase the prestige of military service were announced. It includes the incentives in education, employment, the preservation of rights for job regardless of the form of ownership of the enterprise, pension security, increase the monetary allowance, and others. The above mentioned proposals were supported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. It is proposed to introduce a prohibition on the employment of civil servants for citizens not serving in the military forces, without a legal basis. Obviously, it refers to Art. 31 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Military Duty and Military Service". It means that a different kind of deferred service or service in the reserve will be in fact prohibitive for the admission to the civil service. It should be noted that the similar provisions are contained in the legislation of some CIS countries (such as Uzbekistan).

Although the initiative comes from the Ministry of Defence and, in case of implementation of these proposals, changes will be applied to all military service departments: the State Border Committee, Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB.

Summary. It is highly probable that the incident at "Interaction-2016" was the result of the desire of Russian Western Military Region leadership to be attractive for the Permanent Representative of Russia in NATO, Alexander Grushko, known for his harsh statements against the Alliance. However, such a "local initiative" eventually turned against the CSTO. The demonstrative disregard of the views of its formal allies from Russia side raises doubts about the readiness of Moscow to build relations on an equal basis and taking into account the interests of its partners. In addition, the incident became a public demonstration that even Russia does not consider the CSTO as a subject. Such arrogance not only decreases trust between Russia and other formal allies, but actually puts the end to the attempts of the Organization to acquire at least minimal international subjectivity.

If the specifications, claimed by the manufacturer, are true, then the radar early-warning station "Enemy" may become not only a part of air defense system in the future, but also anti-missile defense of Belarus.

Obviously, official Minsk is rather disappointed by the level of economic and technological cooperation with China. This is primarily due to the fact that the Belarusian side initially had high expectations from the cooperation with China. In addition, the Belarusian leadership is characterized by inadequate assessment of Belarus' value in regional policy and, consequently, in interest in our country from the external actors. To a certain extent we are talking about arrogance, when a potential partner is expected to provide some bonuses just for the fact of readiness of Belarus to cooperate.

The reason for the reform of the education system of Ministry of Emergency Situations – is the need for rational use of budgetary funds. Obviously, the Belarusian authorities do not expect a significant improvement in public finances in the coming years. So, it takes measures to adapt the departments to the work under tight budget constraints. This is supported by the sharp reduction in the number of students set - future

MES officers. Previously they recruited about 300 people per year (full-time education), then in 2016 - only 180. Obviously, MES will have a significant reorganization, reducing the number of officer positions and probably a total reduction of the number of departments.

Speaking about the prospects of Belarusian-Jordanian cooperation in the defense industry, it should be noted that Jordan is actively working on a wheeled armored vehicles and robotic platforms. These areas are among the priorities of the military-industrial complex of Belarus. In addition, Jordan has a positive experience of cooperation with Russia in the field of rocket-propelled grenades production. The agreement to establish a joint Belarusian-Russian enterprise for the production of reactive grenade launchers for Belarus was reached two years ago. However, since then there is no news of the project implementation.

The training "Indestructible Brotherhood-2016" should be considered basing on the ambition to transform CSTO into a subject of international relations. Not succeeded as a military-political bloc, the Organization obviously seeks to get the status of actor of peacekeeping activity. It is doubtful that this idea will be a success. Firstly, the CSTO as an international structure, capable of tackling important issues, is financially insolvent. Secondly, the role of the CSTO is not quite clear in the situation when a number of countries of the Organization do participate in peacekeeping activities. Thirdly, the CSTO is seen as a tool of Moscow's influence in the former Soviet Union. And counting on the fact that West will allow to enhance this tool through the United Nations – is at least naive. This is the "glass ceiling" not possible to be broken by the CSTO.

One of the main reasons for the interest of the official Minsk in Tbilisi is a high level of cooperation between Georgia and the West, especially with the United States. Georgia is one of the main partners of NATO. It is believed that the Georgian political establishment (especially the ex-President Mikhail Saakashvili) has serious lobbying power in Washington. The US position regarding the provision of financial funding from the IMF and other international structures to Belarus could be decisive. There is a reason to believe that currently this support is furnished with a number of conditions related to the internal policy of Belarusian authorities. Official Minsk, realizing the vulnerability of its current position, is afraid that the West and especially the United States will try to take advantage of it. Obviously, the Belarusian authorities are extremely limited in contacts with the western political elites. In these conditions, the Belarusian side is actively seeking for a mediator to establish informal and non-public dialogue with the West. The goal of Minsk remains unchanged: the preservation of the existing political regime; achieving maximum feedback with minimal counter steps. This is supposed to be reached also through the contacts and capabilities of a number of countries in promoting the interests of official Minsk in the West.

The need to increase the prestige of military and special services is of high priority for the year. The problematic question is the formation of security departments with the qualified officer personnel. Previously this was supposed to be solved by the development of the system of military schools and professional oriented classes in secondary schools (for example, legal, patriotic) as well as by the involvement of conscripts. However, analyzing the current situation, these measures do not give a noticeable effect. Thus, out of 513 people enrolled in the Military Academy of Belarus this year, only 5 - graduates of the Minsk Suvorov Military School, 61 - graduates of

cadet schools, 8 – soldiers, 439 - civil youth. By the way, the graduation of the Minsk Suvorov Military School amounted to 55 persons. And nine existing cadet schools annually have more than 500 graduates. The education level of conscripts often does not meet the requirements for entering higher education institutions of law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the main recruiting base is a civil youth whose level of knowledge is also still far from brilliant.

