

**Analytical report:**  
**Situation in the field of**  
**national security and defence**  
**of Belarus (October 2018)**

**The most important events of the month.** On October 5, 2018 Aliaksandr Lukashenka got acquainted with the new developments of the Belarusian military industry. During the event, he made a number of statements regarding ensuring the country's military security.

Thus, the Belarusian ruler announced his intention to reduce the number of deferments from military service. He confirmed the intention to restore order and discipline in the army.

Lukashenka expressed doubts about the reliability of his formal allies, including Russia.

It was once again confirmed that the Special Operations Forces (hereinafter referred to as SOF) the priority of the army development. Creation of UAVs (including combat ones) and high-precision missile weapons was also announced to be a priority. At the same time, the Belarusian authorities assume, that there is a possibility of an attack on the territory of Belarus both with missile weapons and with the SOF by an aggressor state.

The Belarusian ruler was sceptical about aviation, saying that "... an airplane is no longer a weapon for us", it can be quickly found and destroyed. The cost of aircraft is high as well.

During the event, Lukashenka for several times repeated that Belarus is preparing exclusively for the defence of its own territory and does not intend to participate in wars far from its borders.

He stated the need to consolidate efforts to create UAVs. At least - the combat ones. It was also stated that it is necessary to develop our own production of small arms and ammunition. Note that earlier representatives of the domestic military industrial complex studied the experience of ammunition production in Azerbaijan and Pakistan.

Among other things, Lukashenka demonstrated the option of a deep modernization of the Su-25 attack aircraft.

**The developments within the month.** The 9th meeting of the Joint Belarus-UAE Committee on Military-Technical Cooperation took place on October 2-3 in Minsk. The co-chairs were the Chairman of the State Military-Industrial Committee of Belarus Raman Halouchanka and the head of the executive directorate of policy and cooperation of the Ministry of Defence of the UAE, Major General Mubarak Ali A. Al-Neyadi. The parties traditionally expressed satisfaction with the results of cooperation between the two countries, analysed its current state and identified promising areas.

On October 5, 2018 it became known that the State Security Committee (SSC) of Belarus expelled from the country two foreign citizens suspected of espionage. In this case, the secret service didn't announce the details.

On October 10, 2018 Aliaksandr Lukashenka met the new Russian Ambassador Mikhail Babich. Traditional statements about the strategic nature of cooperation between Minsk and Moscow were accompanied with a passage that Belarus is a sovereign and independent country. Which has no desire to incorporate into Russia.

On October 10-13, a military delegation from the PRC headed by Assistant Head of the Political Department of the Central Military Council of China, Major-General Wang Liping, visited Belarus. During the meetings with the Belarusian military officials, the

parties discussed bilateral cooperation. The Chinese delegation got acquainted with the educational process in the Military Academy of Belarus.

On October 11-12, the 9th meeting of the subcommittee on military-technical cooperation of the Intergovernmental Belarus-Kazakhstan Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held. The parties expressed satisfaction with the interaction of the two countries and identified promising directions for its development. The Kazakhstan part of the subcommittee was headed by Vice-Minister of Defence and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan Amaniya Yerzhanov. He particularly noted the development of cooperation between enterprises of the military-industrial complex of the two countries, including assembly plants.

On October 16, 2018, the Concept of ensuring border security of Belarus for 2018-2022 was approved. It assesses the state of border security as stable, the existing hazards are at the level of risks and challenges, and the threats are probabilistic in nature. The document is planned and its adoption is connected with the completion of the implementation of the previous Concept for 2008-2017.

It should be noted that among the priorities of the border policy of Belarus for the next period one can find the attraction of international assistance to strengthen border security and border management. The decline in opportunities to receive such support is related to probable threats.

Also, the State Border Committee face the task of improving the combat and mobilization readiness of the border service agencies with the help of their build-up.

On October 23, 2018 a working meeting of the heads of the border departments of Belarus and Ukraine Anatoly Lapo and Peter Cigikala took place. The parties discussed the results of the protection of the joint section of the state border for the first 9 months of 2018. The main threats are smuggling and illegal border crossing for the purpose of migration and seasonal gathering of wild-growing plants. The parties did not reveal any organized channels for smuggling weapons, ammunition, explosives and other dangerous substances.

The border guards of Belarus and Ukraine decided to organize a joint investigation of border incidents and will continue the practice of conducting joint border operations in the future. Thus, in the framework of the joint operation "Rubezh-2018", almost 200 border violators were detained, 26 cases of smuggling were stopped.

In addition to purely working issues, the sides discussed the attraction of international assistance for the arrangement of the Belarusian-Ukrainian border.

On the same day, Lukashenka met the Secretary of the Security Council under the President of Uzbekistan Viktor Makhmudov. The parties discussed the prospects for the implementation of agreements in the field of security, which were reached during the visit of the Belarusian ruler to Tashkent in September this year. The Security Council of Belarus and Uzbekistan signed a plan of practical actions for the further development of cooperation in the field of security for 2019-2020.

On October 24, 2018, a joint meeting of the Ministries of Defence of Belarus and Russia was held in Minsk. This is an annual event. The plans for defence cooperation between the two countries for 2019 were approved. The central event of this cooperation will be the joint exercise "Union Shield – 2019" on Russian territory. The parties also

discussed “... improving the united military systems”. In this case, it is most likely a matter of optimizing the structure of the Unified Regional Air Defence System of Belarus and Russia.

The heads of defence departments signed a number of documents in the field of military cooperation, including an agreement on the exchange of information on promising technologies and developments. It regulates the exchange of information on research and development used to create promising models of weapons, military and special equipment.

On the same day, the Minister of Defence of Russia, Sergei Shoigu, spoke out sharply against the expansion of the US military presence in Poland and the development of infrastructure for the transfer of troops in Europe. He said that the measures in response (obviously, joint ones from Russia and Belarus) would follow.

On October 25, 2018, speaking to state media representatives, the Minister of Defence of Belarus Andrei Raukou dwelled on the priorities of military development until 2020:

- optimization of the structure and size of the army;
- selective rearmament of troops;
- getting rid of excessive military property.

When optimizing the structure, the attention is paid to increasing the strength of the combat component, improving the command and control system. At the same time, the number of the army over the past three years has not changed and is within 65 thousand people (including civilian personnel). By reducing the provisional component, eliminating redundant and secondary structures, it was possible to significantly increase the staffing and reduce the time needed for readiness of the units capable of immediately responding to threats to the state’s military security.

Also, Andrei Raukou said that in the first half of the year, 33 new types of weapons and military equipment were put into service. The modernization of T-72B tanks to the level of T-72B3 continues; “Torn-8P” and “Kondor-K” electronic intelligence facilities are being received. In 2019, the army will receive 22 Cayman armoured vehicles. Until the end of this year and in the first half of 2019 the army will receive:

- battery of anti-aircraft missile system “Tor-M2K”;
- Yak-130 aircraft flight simulator;
- four Yak-130 training and combat aircraft;
- 33 Caiman armoured vehicles;
- 32 armoured BTR-70MB1 personnel carriers.

Mr. Raukou also said that the issue of providing benefits to young people who have undergone military service when receiving education (advantage in entering higher and secondary special educational institutions with an equal number of points, the priority right to receive housing in a dormitory, reduced tuition fees, additional payments for scholarships, free training at the preparatory courses for admission to universities) and admission to the civil service is being considered.

The same day, the 45th meeting of the Council of Heads of Security Agencies and Special Services of the CIS countries was held. The participants discussed the strategy and tactics of international terrorist organizations, the development of the situation in the northern provinces of Afghanistan bordering on the countries of the Commonwealth and the use of the Internet in terrorist activities. They also discussed issues of countering terrorist and extremist organizations operating from the territory of European countries, improving the efficiency of the Joint Databank of fingerprint information of the CIS countries, and training specialists in combating terrorism. The draft Program of Cooperation of the CIS States in the fight against terrorism and other violent manifestations of extremism for 2020-2022 was discussed.

On October 29, 2018 the board of the State Military Industrial Committee of Belarus (SMIC), dedicated to the results of the work of the department for the first 9 months of 2018, was held. The SMIC organizations produced industrial products for the about USD 405 million, which amounted to 102% in comparison with the same period last year. Return on sales by industry organizations was 20.6%. Exports of goods and services amounted to 139% in comparison with the same period last year. The net profit of the SMIC organizations in comparison with the same period last year is 106.4%.

Among the acute problems of the department the external overdue receivables, most of which have already been repaid, were mentioned. Planned work on timely collection of debts and prevention of their growth is required from SMIC organizations.

The main tasks for 2019 include the following:

- an increase in productivity growth over wage growth;
- growth of sales profitability in conjunction with a decrease in the cost of production;
- reduction of external overdue receivables;
- increase and diversification of export supplies;
- effective import substitution, including through the creation of new industries, maximum localization of the production of newly created and modernized models of equipment;
- creation of a line of combat UAVs and ammunition for them;
- preparation of specialists for the operation of new and upgraded equipment.

The development of new and modernization of existing models of weapons and military equipment will continue. The approaches to the selection and financing of projects to develop new weapons and equipment will be changed.

Together with the army, the approbation of new products of the domestic military industry will be conducted during the combat and operational training of the army. A plan of cooperation between the SMIC and the Ministry of Defence on cooperation in the field of improving the equipment of the Armed Forces with new models of equipment will be drawn up or already exists.

In 2019, the ministry will begin to develop the next program for the development of the defence sector of the economy and the SMIC until 2025.

In October, a series of combat training events took place. The 103rd brigade practiced the search, blocking and destruction of saboteurs. Particular attention was paid to actions in the dark.

A brigade tactical training of the 38th SOF brigade was held. The reinforced battalion tactical group of the 106th airborne division of the Russian army took part in it.

Joint actions to search for, block and destroy saboteurs and militants in the territory of six districts of the Brest region were practiced. Overcoming water obstacles; landing of personnel and heavy airborne equipment with the use of six platforms for delivering cargo to units that conduct military operations in isolation from the main forces were trained as well.

At the same time, joint activities of the special forces of the two countries took place in the territory of Russia.

In October, an interdepartmental meeting on law and order among the troops under the chairmanship of Viktor Klimau, the prosecutor of the Brest region, was held. The goal was to strengthen the interaction of military formations, law enforcement and other bodies in the prevention of negative trends. The Prosecutor's office noted the need to improve the effectiveness of educational work with military personnel. The issues of ensuring the safety of property, weapons and ammunition as well as the measures to strengthen control over their spending were discussed. This was obviously connected with the recently discovered facts of the theft of weapons and ammunition in the Baranavichy garrison. The police are charged with more actively working to identify violations of the law among the troops. While the prosecutors will participate in the legal education of military personnel.

Last month, the Interior Ministry reported that more than 95% of counterfeit alcohol seized in Belarus comes to our country from Russia.

October was full of combat training activities of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (hereinafter referred to as the CRRF) and the CSTO peacekeepers. As a part of the strategic CSTO exercise "Combat Brotherhood - 2018", a number of more local events were held:

- joint exercise with the Collective Air Force "Air Bridge-2018", during which more than 3,500 military personnel and 620 units of equipment were transferred by military transport aviation of six countries;

- tactical special exercises with the intelligence services units "Poisk-2018" in Kazakhstan with the involvement of more than 3,000 troops and over 500 pieces of equipment, including reconnaissance and front-line aircraft, helicopters and UAVs. The capabilities of Kazakhstan's Earth remote sensing satellite were also involved. A significant part of the events took place at night and in conditions of limited visibility;

- command-staff exercises with the CSTO CRRF "Collaboration-2018" in Kyrgyzstan with participation of about 2,000 military personnel, 300 pieces of equipment (including "Iskander" missile systems), about 40 aircraft, including UAVs and Tu-22M3 and Tu-95MS bombers. The operation to localize the armed conflict in order to restore territorial integrity and protect the constitutional system of the conditional CSTO member state as well as to destroy illegal armed groups was trained. The combat experience gained by Russian troops in Syria was taken into account;

-training with the peacekeeping forces of the CSTO “Indestructible Brotherhood – 2018” in Russia to conduct a peacekeeping operation on the basis of the UN mandate in the territory of a third state - not a member of the CSTO. About 1300 people, 300 units of equipment and 20 units of aircraft including UAV were involved.

In October, it became known that at the end of September in the Vitsebsk region, the exercise with Interior Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA Interior Troops) on the organization and conduct of an operation to search for and destroy sabotage and reconnaissance groups was held. Also, issues of protection and defence of critical facilities in the zone of the counterterrorist operation were trained. According to the exercise plan in the Vitsebsk region there were several sabotage and reconnaissance groups. To neutralize them, the MIA Interior Troops were sent. They organized the protection and defence of four critical objects and blocked the area where the saboteurs were located. After that, the search groups had to find, detain or eliminate the enemy, which was made by SOF servicemen. The blocking perimeter was about 50 km.

**Conclusions.** The issue of recruiting military servicemen is escalating. About 60% of draftees enjoy the right to postpone service (mainly for education). The demographic crisis and the state of health of recruits also squeeze the recruiting field. It can be expected that the authorities will take the path of reducing the requirements for the state of health of conscripts and reducing the grounds for obtaining a deferment from military service. It is very likely that students of colleges and universities will receive a deferment only until the end of the year. After that they will be called up for military service and complete their education only after demobilization.

Correcting the situation with law and discipline in the army requires the adoption of both tough organizational and personnel decisions. Simple requirements, even from the very top authorities, will not change the situation. The problem is that the Belarusian authorities often replace the systematic work on solving the problem by a “show-off”, which does not affect the causes of negative trends.

The doubts about the reliability of the Russian security guarantees for Belarus are not the first Lukashenka’s words in this style. Even in front of the generals. It is another important marker of the state and prospects of the Belarusian-Russian relations. The CSTO is regarded by Minsk as an international regional security organization, and not a military bloc.

As far as we know, possibility of attacking the territory of an adversary country has been an integral part of national military planning since the beginning of the 2000s. This was not caused by Russian-Ukrainian war.

SOF, UAVs and missile armament are a priority of national defence construction for a long time.

The UAV production is one of the projects that are in Lukashenka’s sphere of attention. The voiced demands for the development of the domestic UAV with a load of 1 ton or more look unrealistic so far. It is necessary to note the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus is most advanced in the creation of UAVs. Recently it established a joint venture in the field of unmanned aircraft with one of the leaders of the Chinese aircraft industry corporation AVIC.

In recent years, Belarus has studied the issue of replacing the Su-25 attack aircraft with the new Russian Yak-130. Obviously, while it's too early to talk about abandoning Su-25 attack aircraft, while they have the potential for further exploitation.

The SMIC chairman Raman Halouchanka had previously been the Ambassador of Belarus to the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia for more than 5 years. As far as we know, the development of military-technical cooperation with the countries of the region, the attraction of investments from the Arabian monarchies into the Belarusian military industrial complex are among his priorities.

Regarding the expulsion of foreigners from Belarus on suspicion of espionage, it is worth noting that the Belarusian authorities have chosen the softest way to resolve the issue. As far as we know, the deportees are citizens of one of the neighbouring EU countries, who were in Belarus as businessmen. Official Minsk is not interested in complicating relations with its neighbours because of another spy scandal. According to the established practice, the decision on the facts of the activity of foreign special services in Belarus is taken in agreement with Lukashenka or personally by him. The expulsion of foreigners instead of their arrest can be considered as a kind of gesture of goodwill to the neighbouring country.

The fact that Aliaksandr Lukashenka at the meeting with the Russian Ambassador Mikhail Babich was forced to publicly repeat the position on the inviolability of national sovereignty is a sign of official Minsk's concern about the future of bilateral Belarus-Russia relations. It also shows the effectiveness of the Russian psychological war against the Belarusian regime: in recent months, there has been a massive flow of misinformation through Russian information channels that the main task of Mr. Babich is the removal of Lukashenka from power and the incorporation of Belarus into Russia. We believe that Mr. Babich was given the task of reformatting the nature of relations between the authorities of the two countries, lowering it from the highest level to technical administrators. Which actually means make the Belarusian-Russian relations not exclusive.

At the same time, the figure of the new Ambassador is designed to divert attention from Russian activity in Belarus: for the first time since 1991, Moscow began to study its formally closest ally. There are attempts to create some Belarusian-Russian expert councils that would be focused specifically on the internal Belarussian issues. Public opinion is being studied both nationally and regionally (geopolitical orientation, level of protest, separatism). It is interesting to note that the issue of probable separatism is of interest to Russian customers in relation to the Brest region, where in the early 90s there was a movement for cultural autonomy of the supposedly existing Yatvyag people (the Yatvyag tribes inhabited the territory of today's Hrodna region of Belarus and participated in the ethnogenesis of Belarusians in 13-14 centuries).

Belarus and China maintain high-level security relations. The interest of China in military education in Belarus may be connected with the fact that it (education) is associated with the Russian one. It can give an idea about the methods and areas of training in Russia.

It should be noted that the Kazakh sources did not give any information about the meeting of the subcommittee on cooperation in the military-industrial complex. Earlier, the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Belarus has already announced the existence of a

program for the supply of Belarusian military equipment for the needs of the Kazakh army. Also this year, on the territory of Kazakhstan there were launches of the MLRS Polonaise. Which formally were designated as a joint exercise. But it looked more like a demonstration and / or research event.

The new Concept of ensuring border security of Belarus directly confirms the prospects for increasing the number of border agencies. And indirectly - a return from the police principle of the protection of the State Border to the military one.

The Belarusian authorities are very much counting on external material support in order to strengthen border security. The official Minsk have repeatedly stated the expectations of serious financial assistance from Europe before, even in the form of ultimatum. Lukashenka personally identified the attraction of European funds in the interests of Belarus's border security as a priority for the State Border Committee.

In Belarus, the statement by Sergei Shoigu during the joint meeting of the defence ministries of the two countries was perceived too seriously. In fact, he did not say anything new. Russia has traditionally opposed the promotion of NATO infrastructure to the east in any form. Taking into account the plans to deploy an additional contingent of US troops in Poland, it would be strange if Sergei Shoigu was silent on this issue. Earlier, the Russian Ambassador Mikhail Babich confirmed that any military attack on Belarus would be regarded by Moscow as an attack on the Russian Federation. Which caused a wave of gossip in Belarus. At the same time, he only confirmed the readiness of his country to fulfil obligations to Belarus.

Although the heads of the military departments of Belarus and Russia showed complete solidarity and satisfaction with the achieved level of cooperation, it is worth noting that A. Lukashenko did not accept S. Shoigu. Given that the Belarusian leader regularly personally conducts negotiations with Russian officials at the regional level. The last time Lukashenko and Shoigu met was in April 2013, when a Russian official publicly announced an agreement on the creation of a Russian air base in Belarus.

Although the heads of the military departments of Belarus and Russia showed complete solidarity and satisfaction with the achieved level of cooperation, it is worth noting that Lukashenka did not meet Shoigu. Note that the Belarusian ruler regularly personally conducts negotiations with Russian officials at the regional level. The last time Lukashenko and Shoigu met was in April 2013, when a Russian official publicly announced an agreement on the creation of a Russian air base in Belarus. These plans were disavowed by Lukashenka in 2015.

It is worth noting that, according to the results of 9 months, there is a kind of slowdown of the results of Belarusian military industry activities according to the main indicators: the growth of industrial production, exports, profitability and net profit. It is difficult to speak about the reasons because of the sphere's being quite closed. Several large contracts are able to seriously affect the abovementioned economic indicators.

Most likely, the Russian contractors' indebtedness to Belarusian military industry grew. Russia remains the main market for Belarusian military industry. While many enterprises of the military-industrial complex of a neighbouring country experience financial difficulties.

As for the SMIC priorities for 2019, one can state that the import substitution, reduction of production costs with an increase in quality, as well as diversification of sales markets are practically eternal tasks for the Belarusian military industry.

A significant increase in exports of SMIC enterprises against the background of a relatively small increase in industrial production could be achieved through the export of services, primarily intermediaries in the field of defence trade. As well as through reducing the supply to the domestic market. The latter is unlikely, because domestic law enforcement agencies already have small budgets for technical re-equipment, new equipment and weapons are purchased in small batches or in general in single units - there is simply nothing to cut back on.

In the joint exercise of the 38th SOF brigade of the Belarusian army and the 106th airborne division of the Russian army, Belarus was represented by about 1,500 troops of the airborne assault, special operation and electronic warfare units using more than 200 weapons, military and special equipment. Nothing is not reported on Russian units. However, we can talk about 700 soldiers. Thus, the exercises in the Brest region can called one of the largest in Belarus in 2018. Obviously, the most important element of the exercises were the issues of troop transfer and logistic support of units conducting combat operations in isolation from the main forces.

It is interesting to note that SSC military counterintelligence bodies are not mentioned among the participants of the meeting in the Brest Regional Prosecutor's Office. But they are designed to ensure law and order in the army. Now they are trying to entrust this mission to the police. Obviously, this is not evidence of the high viability of military counterintelligence. In addition, there is a question how the police will organize operational investigative activities and undercover work among military personnel - this can be regarded as a direct invasion of the sphere of influence of the Ministry of Defence and the SSC. Such decisions should be made at the level of central government bodies. Given the current state of affairs, giving the Ministry of Internal Affairs additional powers to identify offenses in the army will not be superfluous.

The issue of combating the illegal alcohol market remains acute. Especially given the significant budgetary losses of "drunk" money, which can reach USD 250 million per year. At the same time, about 25% of the alcohol market in Belarus may be in "underground". The Ministry of Internal Affairs has already initiated the introduction of criminal liability for trafficking in counterfeit alcohol in the event that these actions have led to serious consequences for the life or health of consumers. However, without an increase in the effectiveness of control on the Belarusian-Russian border, these efforts will have little effect.

The events of the "Combat Brotherhood-2018" were focused on the Central Asian region. This is evidenced in particular by the fact that in the course of the exercise, in addition to Russian language, Arabic and Dari / Farsi were used as well.

