

**Analytical report:**  
**Situation in the field of**  
**national security and defence**  
**of Belarus (April 2019)**

**The most important events of the month.** On April 19, 2019 Aliaksandr Lukashenka delivered an annual message. Among other he raised security issues. He repeated the thesis about the need to prevent Belarus from being drawn into the confrontation between Russia and the West: “We are doing everything to not be on the edge of a bloc confrontation between East and West.”

Belarus will continue to develop its own production of military equipment. In the list of achievements of the national military industrial complex Lukashenka mentioned a new medium-range anti-aircraft missile system, without specifying what he had in mind. Obviously, we are talking about a deep modernization of the Soviet air defence systems, which can be called partially new due to the lack of anti-aircraft missiles in Belarus. The creation of anti-tank missile systems is coming to an end. The tests of combat UAVs were mentioned as well (apparently, it is a question of adapting reconnaissance drones to use unguided small-calibre ammunition, including hand grenades). The Ministry of Defence has been tasked with raising the prestige of military service and conducting “activities to increase patriotism”.

According to Lukashenka, it is necessary to intensify counter-propaganda on the Internet. He acknowledged that there is the idea of the possibility of restricting access to the global network as a last resort if the authorities lose control of the situation. At the same time, it was stated that neighbours “... and those who came to work in Belarus” are conducting disinformation on the Internet. What was perceived as a hint at Russia and the Russian Ambassador Mikhail Babich. In general, Lukashenka negatively assessed the effectiveness of the information policy of the authorities on the Internet.

**The developments within the month.** On April 2, 2019 Head of the Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus Aliaksey Biahun informed that the draft Belarusian-Russian agreement on the mutual recognition of visas is under consideration by Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Later, on April 8, 2019, the Ambassador of Russia (now the former one) Mikhail Babich, met with the Minister of Internal Affairs of Belarus, Ihar Shunevich. The parties discussed the signing and entry into force of this agreement and other ones related to the entry of third-country nationals into the territory of Belarus and Russia. They also discussed the cooperation in countering the drug business, illegal migration, the transport of prohibited goods and false transit goods.

On April 4, 2019 the Second Meeting of the ensings of the border service of Belarus was held. Among other things, 209 representatives of all territorial bodies of the State Border Committee reviewed issues of maintaining law and order and the formation of a healthy moral and ethical situation.

On April 8, 2019 Belarusian company “Precise Electromechanics Plant” and the Russian “Space Communications” signed a cooperation agreement. Among other things, it provides for the joint creation of a spacecraft and the transfer to it of a functions of the satellite Belintersat-1 after the expiration of its active existence. We have dedicated a separate [article](#) to this event.

On April 14-17, the NATO delegation visited Minsk to hold an annual meeting on the participation of Belarus in the planning process and the evaluation of the forces of the

Partnership for Peace. The event was attended by the representatives of the Belarusian Ministry of Defence, the State Secretariat of the Security Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

On April 15, 2019 in Minsk, the creation of a joint production of UAVs and information security tools in Kazakhstan was discussed. At the same time, Belarus expressed interest in the early launch of projects. In May, test flights of the UAV “Busel M” with the participation of Kazakhstani specialists are scheduled in Belarus. Earlier in January, this equipment was already tested in Kazakhstan in the presence of representatives of Kazakh law enforcement agencies.

On April 16, 2019 Aliaksandr Lukashenka paid a visit to Turkey. During the talks with President Recep Erdogan, the issues of cooperation in the military-technical sphere were discussed. Among other documents, a Memorandum of Understanding between the State Military Industrial Committee of Belarus (SMIC) and the Presidium of the Defence Industry of the Presidential Administration of Turkey in the field of the defence industry was signed.

On April 24, 2019 Minister of Defence Andrei Raukou spoke at the VIII Moscow Conference on International Security. His speech was to a certain extent accusatory against the United States, which, however, may be dictated by the place of the speech.

From the point of view of the official Minsk, the greatest risks for regional security are the following:

- destruction of the existing security system and confidence-building measures due to the fault of all sides of the confrontation, with their obvious unwillingness to form a new system of balancing interests;
- centrifugal tendencies in Europe (“Europe of two speeds”, Brexit);
- the crisis of transatlantic solidarity and the idea of forming a European army that deepens it even more;
- reduction of the political and technical threshold for the use of military force, including nuclear weapons;
- the possibility of using armed force in response to computer incidents, the initiators of which, as a rule, cannot be reliably identified;
- the spread of NATO infrastructure to the East and the militarization of Eastern Europe;
- the degradation of international law and the low capacity of the UN Security Council due to the inability and unwillingness of the permanent members to agree among themselves;
- the expansion of using private military companies in the military-political interests of large states.

On April 25, 2019 the 52nd meeting of the Board of the Border Committee of Belarus and Russia was held. Among other things, the implementation of a program to improve border security in 2017–2021 was considered. As far as can be judged, the issue of the deployment of the border guard by Russia on the border with Belarus and the

restrictions imposed on the crossing of the Belarusian-Russian border by foreigners were not raised.

On April 25-27, the 2nd “Belt and Way” International Forum of International Cooperation was held in Beijing. The Belarusian delegation was headed by Aliaksandr Lukashenka. On April 26, 2019 he met with Serbian President Alexander Vucic. The heads of the two countries discussed the topic of military-technical cooperation and expressed mutual interest in its development. Earlier in April, at the invitation of Serbian Defence Minister Alexander Vulin, the SMIC delegation headed by SMIC First Deputy Chairman Ihar Dzemidzenka familiarized with the developments of the military-industrial complex of this country: artillery systems and armoured vehicles.

However, for unclear reasons and in violation of the protocol, the Belarusian ruler left the Forum ahead of time. As a result, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Belarus Mikalai Snapkou took part in the round table of the heads of state instead of Lukashenka. The inconsistency of Mr. Snapkou’s status with the level of events in which he had to represent Belarus in Beijing is obvious.

At the end of April, State Security Committee of Belarus (SSC) operatives arrested a deputy of State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus, Colonel Andrei Vtyurin, when he received a bribe of USD 148.6 thousand. Previously he for a number of years headed the Security Service of the President of Belarus. Which means that he is a representative of the top security unit of the country. A bribe was given for assistance in promoting the commercial interests of some company. Indirectly, the fact that we are talking about a self-serving crime confirms the arrest of the property of the former chief bodyguard of the country.

In April, large-scale exercises by the standards of Belarus were held:

- the 120th mechanized brigade trained for the preparation and conduct of hostilities in a defensive operation in a rapidly changing environment. More than 1,100 military personnel, up to 130 units of military equipment (about 40 tanks and 60 infantry fighting vehicles) were involved. Aviation was involved as well, while artillery fire was corrected with the help of UAVs;

- reconnaissance and fire forces of the Western operational command trained to conduct strikes, taking into account the results of reconnaissance in close to real mode of time;

- tank units, artillery, aviation and military air defence participated in the training of the mechanized battalion of the 11th mechanized brigade;

- a tank battalion of the 11th mechanized brigade with about 200 military personnel and more than 60 units of military equipment trained shooting anti-tank guided missile at long-range.

- a reinforced mechanized battalion of the 19th mechanized brigade marched more than 200 km to the landfill, where it trained the preparation and conduct of a defensive battle against the mechanized brigade of the enemy.

- SOF of the Belarusian army with the participation of the company of the 106th airborne division of the Russian army. About 1000 military personnel and about 100 pieces of equipment took part in the event. Conducting counter-sabotage actions, taking control of the area, searching and destroying sabotage and reconnaissance groups was trained.

The intensity of the work of the prosecutor's office on the prevention of offenses in the troops did not decrease.

So, in April, the prosecutor's office of the Minsk region held:

- preventive measures in the 2nd brigade of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the prevention of offenses among military personnel;
- reception of military personnel and civilian personnel in the 72nd joint training center, as well as a conversation with 300 military servicemen of military service about responsibility for military crimes and for illegal trafficking of psychoactive substances in the military;
- preventive lecture in the 7th engineering regiment.

The champion was the head of the department for the supervision of the implementation of legislation in the troops of the Prosecutor General's Office Mikalai Apalkou. In April, he met with military personnel of 22 territorial divisions of the border guard service in Brest, Homel, Hrodna, Vitsebsk regions, as well as 6 military units of the army and Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In addition, the prosecutor's office of the Hrodna region found violations of the rights of workers in military units. The guilty officials were brought to disciplinary responsibility.

In the prosecutor's office of the Mahiliou region, an operational meeting on the implementation of the legislation on conscription for military service was held. The emphasis was made on the search for those who evade military service. The regional prosecutor will monitor and analyse the work of the responsible services after the completion of the current conscription campaign.

In the prosecutor's office of the Brest region an interdepartmental meeting, dedicated to the results of the autumn draft in the region, was held. Thus, the location of more than 500 draftees has not been estimated – this is a record for Belarus. It is planned to involve not only the police, but also the border guards to ensure the conscription.

At the same time, in the Brest region, the number of criminal cases conducted in the field trials is increasing. Last year the courts considered 5 criminal cases at military units' location, 5 more cases were considered by the regional courts with the invitation of servicemen. The task of such a measure is to demonstrate a clear example of the consequences of a violation of the law to the largest possible number of military personnel.

**Conclusions.** Speaking about the possibility of a large-scale restriction of access to information resources on the Internet, it is worth recalling that earlier in Belarus, the authorities undertook actions that can be assessed as practical preparation for this measure.

The April visit of the NATO delegation to Minsk was more of a formal nature. The relations of Belarus and the Alliance as a whole rest on the problems of the bilateral relations of Minsk with individual NATO member countries and the low interest in Belarus on the part of the United States. It should be noted that relations between Belarus

and NATO are underdeveloped in comparison with the majority of the CSTO and CIS countries. At the same time, both Belarus and NATO are not setting up ambitious plans for the development of cooperation. The main task of the official Minsk is a direct bilateral dialogue with the Alliance on issues of regional security and the establishment of its infrastructure to the East. The problem is that at present the Alliance continues to view Belarus as a military-political appendage of Russia with a non-transparent and poorly predictable authorities. Therefore, interest from the West is rather limited to maintaining the necessary level of awareness of the situation in Belarus and Belarusian-Russian relations in order to ensure the security of NATO members.

For a long time, official Minsk has been showing interest in developing relations with Ankara in all spheres, including military-technical one. The development of the Belarusian-Turkish cooperation will not only compensate for the losses in the Russian market, but can also become an important source of technology. It is necessary to pay attention to the list of Turkish military-industrial companies, the representatives of which met the SMIC head Raman Halouchanka in Ankara: “TAI”, “MKEK” and “Roketsan”. These are manufacturers of products and have technologies that are interesting to the Belarusian military industry (UAVs, including combat ones; surface-to-surface, anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles; artillery systems, ammunition and explosives; space satellites). For their part, Turkish companies may be interested in a number of products of the Belarusian military industrial complex (radars, wheeled chassis, optics for armoured vehicles and remote sensing satellites, IT solutions in the field of security).

The statement by the Minister of Defence of Belarus Andrei Raukou at the Moscow Security Conference as a whole confirms the extreme concern of the Belarus about the current security crisis in the region. Obviously, Minsk perceives the threat of escalation of confrontation as very possible, although not predetermined. By nominating a number of peacekeeping initiatives, the Belarusian authorities are trying to secure the status of a regional negotiating platform. And thereby to avoid the threat of being involved in a conflict.

Andrei Raukou made it clear that, unlike the neighbouring NATO countries, Belarus does not plan to expand the foreign military presence on its territory.

Minsk and Belgrade demonstrate significant interest in cooperation in the military-technical sphere. We will see in the future whether it will grow into concrete projects. In any case, there is the potential for this.

Many observers associated Lukashenka’s early departure from Beijing with a kind of conflict during the meeting of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Vladimir Putin in the margins of the Forum. That seems unlikely. Taking into account the particularly painful perception of one’s own person by the Russian leader, one would expect from Moscow a quick response, especially in the sphere of propaganda. Which didn’t take place. It is unlikely that the conversation between Putin and Lukashenka was particularly pleasant for the latter. But let us note that the PRC Chairman Xi Jinping didn’t pay the attention to the Belarusian ruler, which the latter hoped for. The meeting of the rulers of China and Belarus was of a protocol nature. Although Lukashenka was counting on a certain format that would allow to emphasize the exclusive nature of the Belarusian-Chinese relations. Lukashenka’s personal feelings are increasingly gaining the upper hand over political expediency even in international relations.

The excitement around the arrest of Andrei Vtyurin is mainly explained by the fact that he was responsible for Aliaksandr Lukashenka's security for a long time as well as by the current crisis in Belarusian-Russian relations. Which gave rise to rumours about the conspiracy among the security forces. However, the situation in the security services is configured in the way that the probability of any conspiracies there is practically zero. In addition to interdepartmental competition, there is also competition between structures and personalities within the security agencies themselves (at least within the largest ones). The security forces completely lack the notion of corporate interests, and consequently, the readiness to defend them. In addition, the top of the law enforcement agencies is under the cross-control of special services. Including the top command of the security services themselves: it now appears that questions to the law-abiding behaviour of Mr. Vtyurin began to arise even when he was the head of the Presidential Security Service. Under these conditions, the organized activity of high-ranking conspirators is practically impossible.

In Belarus, the heads of law enforcement agencies are periodically brought to criminally responsibility (for example, Deputy Interior Minister Yauhen Paludzen or commander of the Air Force and Air Defence Ihar Azaronak). Therefore, the arrest of Mr. Vtyurin does not violate the established practice. As a rule, high-ranking functionaries (both military and civilian) are held accountable if their abuse exceeds a certain acceptable limit. It should be borne in mind that in Belarusian realities compromising high-ranking officials is one of the tools to ensure their loyalty. Up to a certain extent of abuse of their official position they may not be brought to responsibility. But the facts of such abuses are recorded and accumulated.

It is not entirely clear what the Minsk region Prosecutor's Office means by psychoactive things. In any case, the problem of consumption of these substances by young people is quite acute. The army is not isolated from such a negative phenomenon.

Strengthening the control of the prosecutor's office for conscription is a marker of the severity of the problems in this field. Especially in a situation where conscripts have the opportunity to go to work or study in neighbouring countries. The data for the Brest region show that on the scale of the whole Belarus several thousand young people are evading military service. The threat of criminal punishment is considered a lesser evil compared to the prospect of being in a barracks. This indicates the failure of what the Belarusian authorities call patriotic education. Modern Belarusian youth are deaf to the slogans of Soviet political politicians of the Brezhnev era. A radical change in the form and content of the information work of the security forces (and above all - the army, as the main recipient of the draft resource) with the society is needed. In order to change the working methods, people responsible for it should be replaced. Obviously, by virtue of conservative thinking, military and law enforcement agencies are critically lagging behind the changes in Belarusian society. With the current system of state administration, it is unlikely that the necessary increase in the effectiveness of information and propaganda work with society, and especially with young people, will be achieved. The situation of alienation of a citizen and society from state institutions in Belarus will preserve in the foreseeable future. The government will seek to impose new duties on the citizen, and the citizen – if possible, to avoid any actions in favour of the state. This is a very serious split and the attempts to overcome by methods of repressive nature will give no result.

In general, the state of law in the army is still in the centre of attention of the political heads of Belarus. They continue to adhere to the line that the existing system (in this case, military service) is good, and the problem is in bad performers. According to the authorities, the problems should be responded not with the reforms (at least limited ones), but with tightening the control and intimidation with severity of punishment. Such a policy preserves shortcomings, but in no way contributes to the restoration of public confidence in the army and the improvement of the situation in the military.

