

**Analytical report:**  
**National security and defence**  
**of Belarus**  
**(March 2022)**

**The most important events of the month.** The key result of March was the non-entry of Belarus into the war with Ukraine. Lukashenka's sending troops to Ukraine was actively exaggerated by the Ukrainian side, despite the absence of any signs of preparation in Belarus.

It is quite likely that the informational provocations on this topic were intended to force the official Minsk, justifying itself, to take on public obligations not to send troops to Ukraine.

In addition, there was no credible information that the Kremlin turned to its formal allies (we are talking not only about Belarus) with a request to provide military contingents for the war with Ukraine. In Russia, the military potential of its partners is traditionally underestimated. Taking into account the fact that one can conclude that initially the Kremlin was confident in a quick and relatively easy defeat of Ukraine, it is unlikely that Moscow originally planned to turn to its formal allies for support.

In addition, Belarusian public opinion is against the possible direct involvement of Belarus in the war. This idea does not enjoy support even among Russian sympathizers.

Belarusians replied to the use of Belarusian territory by Russian troops to invade Ukraine with sabotage on the railway. It is not yet possible to fully assess the scale and the effect of these actions, but the regime reacted to the situation frankly nervously.

It is also worth noting that official Minsk has not yet recognized either the "people's republics" of the Ukrainian Donbass or the Russian annexation of Crimea.

**The developments within the month.** On March 1, 2022, Aliaksandr Lukashenka held a meeting with members of the Security Council and the Government. He once again declared Belarus' interest in Russian military equipment: a request was sent to the Kremlin to leave in Belarus the Russian S-400 air defence systems, which are already in the Homiel region. In addition to that, Lukashenka asked to provide more S-400 for deployment to the west of Minsk. So far, there has been no public reaction from the Russian side to these proposals.

Lukashenka also blamed Ukraine for the Russian aggression against Ukraine. According to him, Russia allegedly had no choice. Vladimir Putin informed his Belarusian counterpart about the start of the war and the use of Russian troops in Belarus at 5 am on February 24. Allegedly, on the eve of this day the Belarusian and Russian intelligence found several anti-aircraft and missile divisions on the territory of Ukraine in the immediate vicinity of the Belarusian border. Lukashenka said that they were preparing to strike at Russian troops in areas of concentration on Belarusian territory. After that, Russia launched a preemptive strike. These statements by Lukashenka have generated a wave of Internet memes and mockery.

Lukashenka also stated that the Kremlin has never raised the issue of direct participation of Belarus in the war against Ukraine, since there is no practical need for this. While the official Minsk itself is not going to join the war. At the same time, Lukashenka pointed out that the Belarusian side covers the Belarusian-Ukrainian border from Brest to Mazyr with its own forces.

On March 1-4, the regional and Minsk city executive committees held annual classes on the organization of territorial defence and the formation of territorial troops. In all administrative districts, training events were held for local officials and military

commissariats. The availability and storage conditions of stocks of material resources were checked.

On March 10, 2022, Lukashenka held a meeting with the heads of the Ministry of Defence. He stated that “...Belarus cannot allow a stab in the back of the Russian Armed Forces”, which can be carried out by NATO countries.

On March 11, 2022, Lukashenka met with Putin. The parties discussed the topic of confrontation with the West, including issues of the military-industrial complex and defence. They announced an agreement on the supply of military equipment by Russia to Belarus in the near future. Lukashenka called on the formal allies of Minsk and Moscow in the CSTO and the EAEU to rally in order to overcome Western sanctions. He also claimed that some foreign mercenaries were planning to strike Russian troops on the territory of Belarus. The goal is to draw Minsk into the war in Ukraine in order to pull Belarusian troops from the western direction.

In March, it became known about the involvement of army units to strengthen the protection of the Belarusian-Ukrainian border “in order to prevent possible provocations and to prevent the penetration of sabotage and reconnaissance groups, weapons and ammunition into the territory of Belarus”. Servicemen of the 103rd Airborne Brigade and the 38th Airborne Assault Brigade were involved in guarding the border. The troops guarded important roads and overpasses. Together with employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, they searched vehicles for the presence of weapons and explosives.

At the same time, it is reported that increased security was also organised on the western border. But no details were reported. It can be assumed that the airborne brigades were involved in strengthening the border with Ukraine, and mechanised – with Poland.

Among the notable activities of the combat training of the army include:

- A complex tactical exercise of the 115th anti-aircraft missile regiment, during which the troops trained to overcome the contaminated area. At the same time, the nature of such contamination (radiation, chemical or biological) was not reported.

- Tactical exercise with live fire of a reinforced tank battalion (with the involvement of motorised rifle, engineering and artillery units) of the 6th mechanised brigade. Issues of combat guards, tactical camouflage, combating sabotage and reconnaissance groups of a mock enemy, counterattacks of an enemy that had penetrated and its defeat were trained. As well as conducting night combat, including the offensive one and the deblockade of an important railway station.

Against the background of speculation about the possibility of a direct entry of Belarus into the war with Ukraine (that was actively circulating in March), high-ranking military officials tried to reassure the servicemen with stories about the peace-loving policy of the Lukashenka regime. A number of meetings were held in military units:

- Deputy State Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus Aliaksandr Rakhmanau met with servicemen of the Brest garrison;

- Chief of the General Staff of the Army of Belarus Viktor Hulevich held a meeting with servicemen of the Polack garrison;

- Advisor to the State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus, Major General Siarhei Kupryk met with servicemen of the 11th and 120th mechanised brigades (source, source);

Deputy Secretary of State of the Security Council Uladzimir Archakou met with officers of the Asipovičy garrison.

Previously, such meetings were not practised.

Western sanctions against the Belarusian military-industrial complex forced the leadership of the State Military Industry Committee (SMIC) to quickly look for a solution to new problems. As expected, with the help of Russia. The SMIC delegation visited Moscow, where issues of interaction between the military-industrial complex enterprises of the two countries, industrial cooperation, import substitution and mutual deliveries of spare parts and components under the sanctions were discussed. Negotiations were held with a representative of the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation, the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, the leadership of JSC Rosoboronexport.

**Conclusions.** As early as the beginning of 2021, Lukashenka spoke with Putin about using part of the “leftover” of the Russian loan allocated to Minsk for the construction of a nuclear power plant for the purchase of Russian weapons. Over the past year, there was no progress in this issue. It is obvious that the Kremlin continues to adhere to the old strategy, according to which Russia should not contribute to a serious build-up of the military capabilities of the post-Soviet countries. In addition, in the light of the war with Ukraine, Russia itself needs both new equipment and money for its production.

At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that some of the equipment of the Russian group in Belarus (air defence systems and operational-tactical missile systems) will be transferred to the Belarusian side. However, while the Belarusian side remains the source of information about the imminent supply of weapons, the Russian side prefers to remain silent on this matter.

Regarding Lukashenka’s statements that Russia started the war in order to preempt a Ukrainian strike against Russian troops in Belarus, it is worth paying attention to his use of the term “areas of concentration of Russian troops”. Although in Russian military terminology this is an ambiguous term, but, as a rule, it is used when describing activities within the framework of the deployment of troops in the theatre of operations. Simply put, Lukashenka could let slip that Russian troops were concentrating on Belarusian territory in advance to invade Ukraine. The question remains open when exactly official Minsk became aware of the Kremlin’s plans: on the morning of February 24, 2022 or earlier.

Lukashenka indirectly admitted that the section of the Belarusian-Ukrainian border in the Homiel region was not covered by the Belarusian side as of March 1, 2022 (referring to the reinforcement of border guards by army units). There is a question here about the reason for this situation: it is likely that the Homiel section of the border was “reinforced” by Russian units advancing on Ukrainian positions from Belarusian territory. And extra witnesses of this process in the form of Belarusian conscripts were completely unnecessary.

Statements that the Belarusian army is protecting the Russian army from a blow to the rear from the West is a rhetorical device to avoid direct involvement in the Russian-Ukrainian war. There is no reliable information whether this statement was a reaction to the appropriate requests from the Kremlin, or a preemption of such calls.

Further, the allegations that the West seeks to draw Belarus into a war with Ukraine in order to pull Belarusian troops from the western border to strike at the rear of the

Russian group in Ukraine were fully unconfirmed. They did not correspond to the actions of the Lukashenka regime itself – it pulled a significant part of the combat-ready units to the border with Ukraine.

Attempts to draw other CSTO and EAEU countries into confrontation with the West were unsuccessful. Formal allies of Minsk and the Kremlin prefer to keep their distance.

If the Russian military-industrial complex relies mainly on the domestic market (at least for now), the Belarusian defence industry is export-oriented. Under the sanctions imposed by the West, there is a problem with the execution of existing export contracts and, in general, the prospects of Belarusian gunsmiths in international markets. Obviously, in the short term, there is a plan to rely on Russia both in terms of supplies, industrial cooperation, and possible tools to reduce the impact of Western sanctions on the export opportunities of the Belarusian military-industrial complex. But so far there is no clear idea of how Western sanctions will affect the Russian economy in general, and the military-industrial complex in particular. In addition, after 2014, the Russian leadership pursued a policy of import substitution of military products. The effectiveness of these efforts is not obvious, but this policy has its beneficiaries. So even in the Russian market, the Belarusian military-industrial complex may have serious competitors. Especially in terms of lobbying opportunities in Moscow's corridors of power.

