

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

The most important events of the month. During August, Russia repeatedly used the territory (airspace) of Belarus to carry out missile strikes on Ukraine. Moreover, the bulk of the launches took place on August 24-28 – on Independence Day of Ukraine and subsequent days. The day before, Aliaksandr Lukashenka sent a standard (although not appropriate in content, given the current situation) congratulations to Ukrainian people on this occasion. That was extremely negative (to put it mildly) perceived by chauvinist circles in Russia. After the missile launches, it was appreciated with a similar effect in Ukraine.

The developments within the month. On August 2-5, within the framework of the CSTO, a special tactical exercise of the special forces, which are part of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces “Cobalt-2022”, was held in Kyrgyzstan. The deploying a group of heterogeneous special forces of the CSTO CRRF, the formation of an operational headquarters, planning a special operation and its support were trained. Within the framework of the event, the troops trained the elimination of illegal armed formations in the border area, the blocking of drug trafficking channels, the elimination of emergency situations and their consequences that arose during the conduct of hostilities. About 500 troops with the armoured vehicles, UAVs and search dogs took part in the event.

On August 11, 2022, at the Ziabrouka airfield in the Gomel region, which, according to officially unconfirmed information, is used by Russian troops, there were some “flashes” noticed. The Ministry of Defence of Belarus claims that during the control run of one of the pieces of equipment after the replacement of the engine, it ignited. Alternative sources report that we are talking about a tank fire and detonation of ammunition.

On August 16, 2022 State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus Aliaksandr Valfovich met with his Russian counterpart Nikolai Patrushev. They discussed “the key issues of ensuring security in the context of the aggressive policy of NATO and the hybrid war unleashed by the West against Russia and Belarus”. They also discussed interaction in the field of information security, preparation of a draft concept of information security, of the so-called “union state”. Issues of the Russian-Ukrainian war as well as the prospects for full membership of Belarus in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation were also discussed.

On the same day, Minister of Defense of Belarus Viktor Khrenin and Valfovich spoke at the Moscow Security Conference. Both speeches were designed in an anti-Western spirit and actually repeated the main narratives of Lukashenka and Russian propaganda. We have devoted a [special article](#) to this event.

In particular Khrenin stated that:

- The West was ready for aggression against Belarus last year. “The whole architecture of the war ... near our borders” was built. At the same time, there was an intensive buildup of troops on the Ukrainian-Belarusian border by Ukraine. Belarus’ support for Russia’s actions in Ukraine and the fulfilment of allied obligations is a preventive reaction to the threat of unleashing military aggression from the West.

- Official Minsk will not allow the West to unleash an internal conflict with the help of illegal formations. Which is a clear allusion to the Belarusian volunteer formations in Ukraine.

- He naively believes that if Western societies are told the version of what is happening from Minsk and the Kremlin, they will put pressure on their elites. Who in turn will change the policy. And of course, Minsk isn't sabre-rattling, but is ready to "...sit down at the negotiating table and negotiate". But no points for such negotiations were mentioned.

- The Russian-Ukrainian war is of a fundamental nature. The West is fighting for the opportunity to continue to exploit other regions of the world in its own interests. And Ukraine is just a pawn in the game of Washington and London.

In addition, the Belarusian military delegation visited an exhibition of weapons and equipment seized by Russian troops in Ukraine.

On August 18, 2022, the Ambassador of Belarus Mikalai Ausianka met with the Minister of National Defence of Colombia, Ivan Velasquez. The parties exchanged views on a wide range of issues related to bilateral cooperation in the military and military-technical spheres. It's necessary to note that nothing is known about the existence of such cooperation.

On August 23, 2022, the 55th meeting of the Coordinating Committee on Air Defense under the Council of CIS Defense Ministers was held in Kyrgyzstan. Issues related to the development of the Commonwealth Joint Air Defence System were discussed. In addition to representatives of the ministries of defence, the event was attended by representatives of the enterprises of the military-industrial complex of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, as well as research organisations in the field of air defence.

The main topic was the adaptation of the Joint Air Defense System of the CIS to solve the problems of aerospace defense until 2035.

For the first time, the meeting of the Committee was held jointly with the Coordinating Meeting on the use of unmanned aircraft and countering UAVs. Therefore, the development of military unmanned aircraft and the experience of its use in combat conditions are also considered. The training and methodological meeting of the air defense commanders of the CIS countries on countering UAVs took place as well.

The largest army combat training events in August were the following:

- Planned exercise of the Air Force and Air Defence. The first stage took place in Belarus, the second one with live shooting – traditionally at the Russian range Ashuluk. The exercise was also attended by combat crews formed from cadets of the Military Academy. Night firing of S-300PS crews was carried out. The combat crews of the Tor-M2 air defence system and the S-300PS air defence system worked out the fight against cruise missiles, modern and advanced air targets in a difficult environment.

- Tactical exercise with the 120th mechanised brigade on the subject of command and control during the combat operations. The troops trained the preparing defensive lines and conducting combined arms combat as part of battalion tactical groups, conducting reconnaissance using UAVs for these purposes (Supercam S-100, S-350) and holding counterattacks. It is necessary to note the activities at the filtration post during the withdrawal of people from the blockaded area, their inspection and escort to the filtration point. This episode was attended by representatives of the State Committee for Forensic Examinations (obviously for fixing and fingerprinting the deduced persons).

The operational departments of the headquarters of the territorial defence regions and the State Border Committee were also involved in the exercise. Around 1000 people, about 30 tanks, 70 infantry fighting vehicles, 12 pieces of artillery took part in the event. The capabilities of new, modernised models of weapons and military equipment were tested.

- A joint tactical-special exercise of the units of the special operations forces of Belarus and Kazakhstan on the territory of the latter. The troops trained the actions in mountainous desert areas (organising raids, ambush, aiming artillery and army aviation), joint planning of a special operation and conducting reconnaissance operations.

In August, the second stage of a comprehensive inspection of the administrative bodies of the territorial defence of Minsk took place. The ability of city officials to manage the formation of territorial defence troops and their performance of tasks to protect life support facilities and order was assessed. More than 300 people were called up from the reserve for military training. A feature of the event was that for the first time the territorial defence artillery carried out practical firing from MT-12 Rapira anti-tank guns.

One has to recall that in May of this year, the head of the State Committee for Military Industry Dzmitry Pantus said that tests of domestic missiles for the Polonaise and Buk complexes were planned for August. There was no information about this last month.

Conclusions. It is obvious that Russia's "missile activity" is connected, among other things (or primarily) with a political factor: not to let Kyiv and the surrounding world forget about the role and place of Belarus in Russian aggression against Ukraine. Which narrows the field for manoeuvre of the Lukashenka regime in the western and Ukrainian directions. However, the official Minsk itself copes well with this task.

Regarding the incident at the Ziabrouka airfield, we note that the voiced versions do not correspond to the observed external manifestations of the event. Most likely, we are talking about the detonation of anti-aircraft missiles on the launcher when trying to launch. The reason was the chemical changes in the fuel of the ammunition due to their age. In any case, the possibility of sabotage at the airfield is vanishingly small.

It is interesting to note that Minsk received the status of an observer in the SCO under Chinese patronage. Moscow, as far as we know, was against it. Appealing to the factor of geography: the SCO is an association of Asian countries, and Belarus is located in Europe. Now Minsk is hoping for Moscow's patronage in raising its status in the organisation. Despite the fact that China formally remains an "iron brother" of Belarus. But, probably, Beijing has his own views on the role and place of Belarus within the SCO, which are different from ones of the official Minsk.

It is obvious that the Lukashenka regime takes the Belarusian volunteers in Ukraine and their potential very seriously. It is not yet clear what exactly this perception is based on. It is likely that on the realisation of one's own internal vulnerability in the event of a truly critical situation.

The Lukashenka regime would like to somehow fence itself off from the Russian-Ukrainian war and stabilise relations with the West. There is no mention of their improvement. And it won't be while the war is going on. It is unlikely that the Kremlin will allow it. But if possible, the statements "we supported Russia because we suspected

the West of wanting to attack us” are easily transformed into “alas, we misunderstood the intentions of the West due to the lack of dialogue with it.”

Regarding the visit of Belarusian military officials to the exhibition of Russian trophies from Ukraine, it is interesting that this fact was publicly disclosed by the Lukashenka propaganda. Those, it was a demonstrative action. Although the Russians would be satisfied with the very visit of the “exposition” by the delegation from Belarus.

For many CIS countries even maintaining the air defense system in the current format is a difficult task. While its transformation into aerospace defence is generally impossible – both technically and financially. So Russia should bear this brunt. But according to the experience of implementing the idea of uniform armament of the CSTO CRRF, it can be argued that it is not particularly worth counting on this. The Kremlin is in no hurry to promote a qualitative increase in the military potential of its formal allies in an effort thus to maintain their dependency in the field of security. Especially now, in the context of Western sanctions on the supply of high-tech products to Russia. This becomes a problem not only from a political and financial point of view, but also given the uncertain prospects for Russian military production. Rather, Moscow will seek to deploy its own military objects on the territory of neighbouring countries under the pretext of joint defence against threats from the air and space.

For the first time, MT-12 guns in service with the territorial defence troops were noted in February 2019. Practical firing of territorial defence artillery is an indirect sign that, in addition to battalions, regiment-brigade level formations are planned as part of the territorial troops. Because the battery-by-battery distribution of guns among the territorial defence battalions exceeds the capabilities of their command level. It is likely that mainly the army units will be the donors of the commanders of the regiments / brigades of the territorial defence and their artillery. The specialists of the relevant profile, recently retired from the service, may be involved as well. Probably, the next step for Minsk (20% of the population of Belarus without suburbs) will be the formation of an infantry / rifle division of territorial defence.