

Analytical report:
National security and defence
(September 2022)

Minsk

The most important events of the month. In September, a traditional command and staff exercise of the army took place in Belarus. The main goal was to develop continuous command and control of troops during the performance of tasks.

Mixed tactical groups were formed (special operations forces, tank, anti-tank and artillery units). Which were supported by aviation. UAVs were also used.

An episode of air combat between Su-30SM fighters and the enemy was played. Fighter aircraft carried out tasks to isolate the battlefield. After that, attack aircraft delivered strikes, landings were carried out, and covering the helicopters with landing forces was trained.

The scenario of the exercise included:

- liberation of the temporarily occupied territory, assault, cleansing and establishing control over the settlement;
- restoration of control over the state border;
- air support for troops;
- ensuring forceful measures of martial law, the fight against saboteurs and illegal armed formations.

During the exercise, the use of weapons that were formally withdrawn from service in Belarus was recorded: the ZSU-23-4 Shilka, the T-72A tank.

The exercise looked limited in scope. Which could be due to the fact that a significant part of the units is involved in strengthening the protection of the border with Ukraine.

Minsk tried to demonstrate goodwill by inviting representatives of the military-diplomatic corps to observe the active phase of the exercise, although this was not necessary. It is stated that this is a manifestation of the desire to strengthen regional security and the “belt of good neighbourliness”. Only one of the known locations for the exercise was located in the border area – the Brest training ground.

The developments within the month. In September, the CSTO entered another crisis, the end of which is yet to be seen. The reason was full-scale hostilities on the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Tajik-Kyrgyz borders. In both cases, the parties used artillery, armoured vehicles and strike UAVs.

Yerevan turned for military support to its formal allies in the CSTO in accordance with Art. 4 of the Collective Security Treaty. As expected, Armenia didn't get any help. The role of the organisation in ending the clashes between its members Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is symbolic.

It is worth noting that the session of the CSTO Collective Security Council on September 13, 2022, took place via video link at the initiative of Armenia. Belarus was represented by State Secretary of the Security Council Aliaksandr Valfovich. While other countries were represented at the level of presidents and prime ministers in accordance with Art. 13 of the CSTO Charter.

On September 20, 2022, Aliaksandr Lukashenka met with the State Secretary of the Security Council Aliaksandr Valfovich. Lukashenka assessed the current security situation as alarming. He ordered to inspect military units, territorial defence and the newly created

“people’s militia” if necessary. The preparation of a new National Security Concept of Belarus was also announced.

Lukashenka reiterated his concern about the Belarusian volunteer formations fighting on the side of Ukraine and allegedly wanting to capture Belarus in order to join it to NATO.

It’s interesting that Lukashenka announced a meeting with Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin the day before. Despite the fact that nothing about this meeting was reported. It is likely that it was an unscheduled one and at the initiative of Khrenin. As a result of which, a meeting with law enforcement agencies on issues of military defence of the state was scheduled. This event took place later in October.

On September 21, 2022, a meeting was held between the secretaries of the Security Councils of Belarus and Russia. Among other things, issues related to biological safety were discussed. It is recognized as a new challenge and included in the draft National Security Concept of Belarus. It was stated that it was necessary to update the National Security Concept of the so-called “union state” adopted back in 1999.

Also, consultations were held between the apparatuses of the security councils of Belarus and Russia “... on key security issues in the context of the hybrid influence of the West”.

Aliaksandr Valfovich, during a meeting with his Russian colleague Nikolai Patrushev, announced the need for a speedy settlement of the “crisis in Ukraine”. According to him, the only possible option for that is peace talks.

On September 22, 2022, Lukashenka announced the upcoming negotiations with the PRC at the highest level. The agenda of the talks includes issues of bilateral cooperation in the field of politics and military equipment. An agreement on negotiations was reached during the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Samarkand on September 15, 2022. The next day, Lukashenka recalled that the result of previous similar negotiations was the creation of a heavy multiple launch rocket system “Polonaise” with Chinese technological support. True, he did not specify when those negotiations took place.

On September 26-30, the CSTO conducted a sub-regional anti-drug operation “Channel – Nioman” (source). The command was carried out from Hrodna. Over 9.5 thousand employees of the competent authorities of the participating countries were involved in the operation. On the territory of the participating states more than 432 kg of drugs were seized, incl. about 341 kg of marijuana. 361 drug crimes were revealed, 41 drug groups were exposed. Financial intelligence units identified 1,300 suspicious financial transactions totaling RUB 100 million.

The beginning of a partial (actually permanent) mobilisation in Russia has caused serious concern in Belarus. The official Minsk had to respond at the highest level: Lukashenka, the Ministry of Defence and Valfovich made statements that mobilisation is not planned in Belarus.

Conclusions. Regarding the decommissioned equipment seen during the command and staff exercises, we note the following. Obviously, during the exercise, measures were taken to remove the equipment from storage for use by the troops. Here it is worth recalling previous statements on the formation of an additional operational command of the ground forces. Which implies the creation of two mechanised brigades, which need to be armed with something. In addition, it is also possible to develop mechanisms for the rapid

formation of new units in case of mobilisation. For that, relatively modern technology may not be enough. In addition, new threats appear on the battlefield: UAVs and loitering ammunition. Which can be much cheaper than anti-aircraft missiles and their use can be massive. Therefore, there is a need for cheap countermeasures. So in this case, it was rather the creation of a reserve of military equipment for new units and new tasks.

It should be noted that not only the CSTO countries as a whole, but also Russia evaded rendering assistance to Armenia. Which is connected with Yerevan also by bilateral agreements in the field of security (in addition to multilateral ones). Thus, September demonstrated that one should not rely not only on the CSTO, but also on Russian guarantees. We have devoted a special [article](#) to this event.

The level of representation of Belarus during the meeting of the CSTO Collective Security Council on September 13, 2022 is the result of Lukashenka's disappointment with the unwillingness of formal allies to support Minsk and Moscow in the confrontation with the West. At the same time, this is a gesture of solidarity between Minsk and Baku: in the absence of the Belarusian representation at the highest level, the Collective Security Council de facto could not make any decision on helping Armenia, even if it wanted to.

The accusations of Belarusian volunteers in Ukraine that they have plans to join Belarus to NATO are designed exclusively for the Kremlin. Obviously, there is a need to remind who is Moscow's main ally in Belarus and why should this ally not be allowed to fall.

The issue of biological safety as a new challenge worthy of inclusion in the National Security Concept of Belarus has two dimensions. First, it is a biomedical one: associated with the creation of a system for early detection and response to the threat of epidemics of natural origin. Including the accumulation and provision of supplies of medical products. The second dimension is the prevention and response to acts of biological terrorism. Including the potential for genetic modification of biological agents to give them new dangerous characteristics. Countering the biological threat in recent years has been fairly regularly discussed by representatives of the security structures of the CIS countries. However, it is not known whether these discussions led to any practical results.

Minsk would like more active involvement of the PRC in the situation in Eastern Europe, viewing Beijing as a stabilising factor. In addition, due to the conflict with the West and dangerously high dependence on Russia, the Lukashenka regime is interested in obtaining extra-regional support from a subject whose position neither the West nor the Kremlin can ignore. At the same time, even limited, but clear support from Beijing is enough for Minsk at the current stage. For example, the resumption of Chinese military-technical support (even in a symbolic format) and the practice of joint military exercises/trainings.

