

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

**Minsk**

**The most important events of the month.** The expected event of the month was the adoption of the law on the budget for 2023. Which promises to be the most generous for the Belarusian law enforcement agencies: their budgets will grow by an average of 26-30%, the budget of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (hereinafter referred to as MIA IT) – by 38%, and the budget of the Ministry of Defence – by 50%.

In addition, since 2022, the rule on the possibility of financing the salaries of employees / military personnel of law enforcement agencies from reserve funds has been preserved. Although these funds themselves in the current year decreased by 1.5 times in nominal terms.

**The developments within the month.** On December 3, 2022, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited Minsk. During the visit Shoigu together with Belarusian Defence Minister Khrenin signed a protocol of amendments to the bilateral Agreement on the joint provision of regional security in the military sphere dated December 19, 1997.

Meeting Shoigu, Aliaksandr Lukashenka made a number of statements. From which it follows that:

- Vladimir Putin informed him about the visit of the Russian guest the day before; in Minsk this (the date of the visit) could be a surprise;
- the mobilised Russians are being trained in Belarus, they are also partially being supplied by Belarus;
- peacekeeping initiatives of Minsk are coordinated with the Kremlin;
- Lukashenka and his special services do not see the West's readiness for peace negotiations.

On December 6, 2022, Lukashenka ordered the consideration of the possibility of preferential purchase of rental housing by military personnel. He meant all the military and law enforcement agencies. In total, this project may affect more than 33 thousand security officials.

On December 7-8, under the leadership of the State Secretariat of the Security Council, an audit of the state system for responding to acts of terrorism was carried out. Which was accompanied by the movement of military equipment and personnel, the restriction of movement on certain roads and terrain, the use of training weapons and the lack of event details.

On December 19, 2022, Vladimir Putin visited Minsk. Judging by open information, Belarus was more interested in economic issues. Russia – in military-strategic ones. Putin said that work has been completed on adapting Belarusian combat aircraft to use tactical nuclear weapons (“air-based ammunition with a special warhead”). The next step is to prepare the crews accordingly. Lukashenka [announced](#) that the Iskander operational-tactical missile system and the S-400 air defence system were put on combat duty in Belarus.

Later, the Russian Foreign Ministry clarified that it is “not yet planned” to equip Belarusian Su-25s and Iskanders with nuclear warheads. Technologies for converting aircraft into nuclear weapons carriers will not be transferred. The training of Belarusian soldiers is still to be done. But it will be carried out according to programs that exclude the issues of exploitation of nuclear warheads. At the same time, it was confirmed that

the Iskander-M was transferred to Belarus in the same modification as for the Russian army. This indirectly indicates that weapons are being provided out of Russian stocks. Quite possibly, on a non-monetary basis. But it is not clear whether we are talking about Belarus already owning the Iskander-M and S-400 or only temporarily using them.

On December 23, 2022, the delivery of another Russian-made battery of the Tor-M2K air defence system to Belarus was announced. The 15th anti-aircraft missile brigade defending Minsk received the weapons.

On December 29, 2022, the Ministry of Defence of Belarus reported that an S-300 anti-aircraft missile fired from the territory of a neighbouring country was shot down by air defence systems in the region of the Brest region bordering Ukraine. Minsk did not speculate on this topic. Just a few days later, after the diplomatic demarches usually happening in this case, the story disappeared from the agenda of the state media. Ukraine also reacted with restraint, offering to hold a joint trial. It is obvious that neither in Minsk nor in Kyiv there is any desire to aggravate bilateral relations.

Last month, it became known about plans to introduce the death penalty for treason committed by an official or a person covered by the status of a military man. There are also plans to introduce criminal liability for “discrediting law enforcement agencies”.

In December, there were reports about the development in Belarus of ground-to-ground missiles with a range of 500 km. Obviously, we are talking about ballistic missiles. Although the information was voiced by the state media, it was submitted on behalf of the authors of the material and not on behalf of responsible persons.

Last month, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that for the first time since 2015, there has been an increase in the number of registered crimes in Belarus by 7%. Including property crimes, corruption and drug trafficking.

In December, a number of combat training events took place in the Belarusian army:

- Planned combat readiness exercises after the next call for military service and the development of the initial military training program by the new conscripts.
- A sudden check of the combat readiness of the army by the Security Council. The units made a march and overcame a water barrier along a pontoon-bridge crossing in the dark.
- Training camp with UAV operators of the army and other law enforcement agencies. The instructors were, among other things, Russian military personnel with relevant combat experience. Among other things, ways of adapting reconnaissance drones for dropping ammunition and methods of countering enemy electronic warfare were trained. It is stated that there are quadcopters “... in almost every company of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus”.

Also in December, a two-week training session of a special forces detachment of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs “Smerch” took place. 300 military personnel of the reserve took part in the event. As far as can be judged, this is a new type of reserve unit for “... to perform combat missions in special conditions”, including for the fight against sabotage and reconnaissance groups. It is planned that the reservists assigned to the detachment will be regularly gathered for training camps. Separate

training programs will be developed for sappers and UAV operators. Similar units will be created in all formations of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Additionally, a new special forces detachment of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs “Lynx” was presented. It is stationed in Minsk. It allegedly specialises in fighting against illegal armed formations and sabotage reconnaissance groups. It consists only of officers and professional soldiers. Again, it is stated that similar units will be formed in all regional centres of the country.

**Conclusions.** The relative synchronism in the growth of the budgets of law enforcement agencies for 2023 is primarily due to the expected increase in the cost of paying their personnel. For the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a slight increase in the number of personnel is possible.

Let's pay special attention to the Ministry of Defence. More than half of its budget growth was provided by the state program approved by secret decree No. 33cc dated January 28, 2021. In the coming year, funding for the military department according to it will more than double. Most likely, this decree approved the State Armaments Program for 2021-2025.

In addition, it can be expected that in 2023 the practical formation of the Southern Operational Command of the Ground Forces will begin. That will require an increase in the size of the army by 10-12%. What can be achieved mainly by increasing the call for military service.

Speaking about the prospects for providing housing for employees of law enforcement agencies, it is worth paying attention to the fact that so far we are talking about providing housing benefits for those who have served 25 years. Despite the fact that the minimum period of service for receiving a pension is 20 years. So the housing initiative can become a kind of replacement for the decision to increase the term of service for getting a pension. This may be linked, among other things, to the prospect of raising the general retirement age for the civilian population.

It is still not very clear what caused the sharp increase in attention to the social needs of law enforcement officers. These may be problems with staffing (they are officially denied), and the need to ensure loyalty (not officially commented on, but there are no outwardly observed problems in this part). However, traditionally, budgetary generosity towards the security forces is observed in the period preceding the most important political campaigns. Usually, the incomes of pensioners and public sector employees rise as well.

Putin's visit to Minsk provoked gossip about its real background, as the Russian ruler has not been very active in terms of foreign trips in recent years. Contrary to expectations, there were no statements regarding the war with Ukraine. Because it was not originally planned. It seems that there are two reasons that required the personal presence of Putin in Minsk:

- An act of solidarity with Lukashenka, who, like Putin, is in international isolation.
- After the sudden death of Uladzimir Makei, conspiracy theories arose about its unnatural nature and the involvement of the Kremlin in this. Putin wanted personally to ascertain how much this gossip influenced Lukashenka.

It is likely that any information and assessment of the activities of the law enforcement agencies that contradicts the official one will be considered discrediting them. So the norm can be repressive in nature and be aimed at limiting the spread of positions and opinions that are not controlled by the regime. But the situation is such that most of the independent sources of information today are outside the country and / or anonymous. So, in practice, repressions will rather stimulate the dissemination of information that is undesirable for officials, rather than deter it.

Assumptions that the tougher punishment for treason against the state for officials and military personnel is connected with the possibility of Minsk entering the war with Ukraine seems premature. This is rather a negative incentive to ensure the loyalty of these professional and social groups. Which is connected with internal political dynamics. Treason to the state is not only going over to the side of the enemy during the war with another country. But also during the internal armed conflict. As well as the transfer of information to foreign structures. And this information doesn't have to be secret. It can be even from open sources. The main thing is that this can be regarded as actions with the aim of using it to the detriment of the interests of Belarus.

The transition of the Belarusian military to the side of Ukraine in the event of entry into the war removes them from the threat of Belarusian laws. Because they are outside the scope of the Lukashenka regime. The officials can be accused of “treason” precisely for the transfer of information. Moreover, even to Russia.

A new set of negative and positive incentives for loyalty (growth of monetary allowance, solution of housing issues, execution) should be assessed primarily as an element of ensuring the “domestic political calendar” of the Lukashenka regime and not only in relation to relations with Ukraine.

Regarding the prospects for creating a surface-to-surface missile system in Belarus, we recall that in 2015 a Belarusian-Chinese agreement was signed on the development of an operational-tactical missile system with no indication of range. At the Milex-2017 arms exhibition, the Chinese M20 ballistic missile with a range of 280 km was presented as a promising weapon for the Belarusian “Polonaise” MLRS. In 2 years, a model of a Belarusian operational-tactical missile was presented. If there was interest from the customer, the developers were ready to bring it to a serial sample. In the future, there was no public information that could be unambiguously interpreted as confirmation of the development of ballistic missiles in Belarus.

Interestingly, the presence / absence of a connection between Russia's decision to transfer the Iskander-M to Minsk and the development of a Belarusian ballistic missile. The availability of access to a proven serial model of weapons calls into question the prospects for domestic development. On the other hand, Moscow is at war and has no extra weapons, especially missile ones. Therefore, the question is the amount of Iskander ammunition available to Belarus. In addition, it is still unclear whether Moscow intends to adhere to the restrictions of the Missile Technology Control Regime in the case of the transfer of Iskanders to Belarus. More likely no than yes. But in any case, a Belarusian missile would become a serious technological and export breakthrough for the Belarusian military-industrial complex.

The creation of specialised counter-sabotage formations within the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs can be seen as a response to the political activity of

Belarusian volunteer formations in Ukraine. It is obvious that in Minsk this is perceived as a real threat.

