

**Analytical report:**  
**Situation in the field of**  
**national security and defence**  
**of Belarus (June 2017)**

**The most important events of the month.** In June, there was a number of events within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the CIS related to security issues.

On June 5, 2017 Minsk hosted a meeting of the Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils of the CSTO countries. Among other issues, the problems of information security and countering crime on the Internet were discussed. It was announced that in 2016 more than 11 thousand websites "... potentially threatening the security" of CSTO countries were revealed.

On the same day, the 15th meeting of the CSTO Interstate Commission for Military-Economic Cooperation was held. Issues of development of military-economic cooperation were discussed, the steps for cooperation in the production of military products were determined. A work plan in the field of standardization of weapons and military equipment within the framework of the CSTO was adopted. The issues of granting access to a high accuracy signal of the Russian global satellite system GLONASS were discussed as well.

On June 8, 2017 a meeting of the Coordination Council of heads of competent bodies for counteracting illicit drug trafficking of the CSTO member-states was held. The issues of combating drug production in Afghanistan, the spread of new types of drugs and psychotropics as well as transnational drug-related crime were discussed.

On June 13, 2017 a meeting of the Council of Defence Ministers of the CSTO countries took place in Minsk. The ministers discussed the issues of combat training, coordination of positions on foreign policy, security and defence, development of military-technical cooperation, joint training of personnel. Meeting the defence ministers of the CSTO countries, President Lukashenka declared Minsk's interest in the effective activities of the Organization. Belarus has put forward a number of initiatives in the military sphere, including deepening cooperation in the military-technical area.

The Belarusian leader again recalled plans to arm the Collective Rapid Response Force of the CSTO with compatible weapons and military equipment, which remain mostly unimplemented.

Aliaksandr Lukashenka once again stated that Belarus' obligations within the CSTO framework are directed only to the West "... and our entire army is concentrated on this together with the Russian Federation". At the same time, Belarus is allegedly charged with defending this most western direction. However, it is unclear by whom and when.

On June 28, 2017 a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Internal Affairs of the CIS countries was held in Dushanbe. Among other things, issues of countering violations by members of informal associations of supporters of sports teams, combating recruitment to terrorist and extremist organizations, forming a single list of organizations of a terrorist and extremist nature were discussed. The draft of the Interstate Program for Joint Measures to Combat Crime for 2019-2023, which included issues of combating cross-border crime, including combating illicit drug trafficking, psychotropic drugs and their precursors, human trafficking and illegal migration, as well as crimes in the field of information technology, was discussed. Currently, cooperation in these areas is carried out within the framework of separate programs of the CIS countries.

**The developments within the month.** On June 2, 2017 it was announced that four T-72B3 tanks, modernized in Russia, were transferred to the Belarusian army. We wrote a [separate article](#) on this issue.

On June 5-8, a Chinese military delegation headed by Colonel-General Zhao Kashi, head of the Main Logistics Administration of the Central Military Council of the People's Republic of China, visited Belarus. During the event, issues of Belarusian-Chinese military cooperation were discussed.

On June 6-15, a multinational Belarusian-Russian-Serbian tactical exercise "Slavic Brotherhood – 2017" was held in Brest region. The goals of the exercise included working out combating terrorism and increasing the level of interaction within the multinational units. More than 800 servicemen and more than 100 pieces of equipment were involved in practical actions. For the first time, a new armoured car V-1 manufactured by Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant (MWTP) was used. The most interesting episode of the exercise was armoured vehicles' overcoming a water obstacle: 52 armoured vehicles in 42 minutes.

On June 8, 2017, during his visit to Kazakhstan, President Lukashenka handed over copies of archival materials from the period of Stalinist repressions to Nursultan Nazarbayev. The documents were presented for the museum of victims of political repression, which is located on the site of the largest Soviet women's concentration camp – "Akmola camp for wives of traitors of the motherland".

On June 16, 2017 the Ministry of Defence announced the visit of the commander of the Air Force and Air Defence of Belarus, Major-General Aleh Dvihalyou to Latvia. During the visit, the prospects of cooperation in the field of ensuring security in the airspace were discussed. An interdepartmental agreement on the exchange of information on aircraft flights, as well as an instruction on the interaction of the central control posts of the Belarusian and Latvian Air Forces, were signed. It should be noted that Aleh Dvihalyou's visit was almost not covered by the Belarusian side, and was not covered by the Latvian side at all. But such an event isn't an ordinary one.

On June 20, 2017 Siarhei Hurulyou was dismissed from the post of Chairman of the State Military Industrial Committee (SMIC). According to our information, the main reason for the resignation was the health issue. It should be noted that while Mr. Hurulyou was in chair, the national military-industrial complex became the most successful branch of the Belarusian industry, dozens of new factories and a number of engineering and design centers were created.

On June 21, 2016 the changes and additions to the legislation in the field of defence were adopted in the first reading. Thus, it is planned to establish a new type of military service - on mobilization, with the settlement of the legal status of people called upon to mobilization. In this case, the experience of Ukraine is given as a justification for the need for amendments.

In June, the agreement on the delivery of 12 heavy multi-purpose Russian fighters Su-30SM to Belarus became public. It is necessary immediately to pay attention to the fact that the main newsmaker of the event was the Russian side. Belarusian officials were forced to react, and did it very sluggishly. On June 21, 2017 Belarusian Defence Minister Andrei Raukou said that the aircraft will be delivered within three years. He acknowledged that the contract was concluded on suspensive terms and will come into

force from the moment of the beginning of financing the transaction. At the same time, the source of financing (the Belarusian budget or borrowed funds) is not formally stated.

President of Vietnam Chiang Dai Kuang paid a visit to Belarus. On July 27, 2017 during the meeting with Aliaksandr Lukashenka the issues of bilateral cooperation in the military-technical sphere were discussed.

On June 30, 2017, for the first time this year, the meeting of the Supreme State Council of the Union State of Belarus and Russia took place. The event was planned to be held much earlier. However, it was repeatedly postponed without a clear explanation of the reasons. The acute Belarusian-Russian contradictions were the reason ([source](#)).

In June, preliminary tests of the Burevestnik MB, a UAV capable of carrying self-guided “kamikaze” drones for pinpoint strikes at targets up to 40 km away, were announced. The developer is the Research and Production Centre of Multifunctional Unmanned Systems of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Representatives of the Ministry of Defence of Belarus and several other countries showed preliminary interest in the project. It should be noted that the Research and Production Center was the founder of the joint venture with the Chinese company AVIC. The parties plan the production of a number of UAV models, including helicopters.

A joint tactical-special exercise of the Belarusian and Russian engineering units “Dnepr-2017” was held in June as part of the preparations for the joint exercise “West-2017”. During the exercise, among other issues, the arrangement and maintenance of the crossing through a water barrier was worked out. Such an event took place on the territory of Belarus for the first time.

In June the situation around the “Patriots Case” continued to develop. With regard to the persons involved in the case by State Security Committee (SSC), the criminal prosecution under art. 293 (riots) of the Criminal Code of Belarus was stopped. After that the criminal case was referred to the Investigative Committee (IC) of Belarus. The defendants are still accused of art. 287 of the Criminal Code (creation of an illegal armed formation). As a result, by the end of June all the defendants of the “Patriots Case” were released from custody. The case is unprecedented: according to the established practice, a person arrested during the preliminary investigation stage remains in custody waiting for a court decision to be taken or for the criminal case to be stopped.

It should be noted that on June 13, 2017 the SSC Chairman Valery Vakulchyk actually admitted that Art. 293 of the Criminal Code is of a political nature. At the same time, he avoided assessing the degree of guilt of the accused in the “Patriots Case”, stating that the task of the investigation was to objectively investigate the situation.

**Conclusions.** Authoritarian regimes have been established in four of the six CSTO countries. Under these conditions, the concept of “information security” includes countering terrorism, extremism and crime, as well as combating dissent, limiting the dissemination of politically relevant information.

The current system of technical standards in the CSTO countries is based on the Soviet one. That’s why it is largely obsolete. In the past 26 years, differences in the national technical standards of the CSTO countries have objectively accumulated. As a result, even the terminology is different. In addition, there is a diversification of suppliers of military products to the CSTO countries, even if this process is slow. The markets are

penetrated by Western and Chinese producers, which also has its influence. Thus, the creation of a unified or coherent system for the standardization of military equipment and weapons seems to be a complex and long process.

Speaking about the cooperation of the CSTO countries in the field of the military industry, it is necessary to note that Moscow consistently pursues a policy of import substitution of military products. Including ones manufactured in Belarus. The result of this activity is not unambiguous. But it already acts as a deterrent to the development of cooperation in the field of military-industrial complex between Russia and other CSTO countries.

Fan organizations were in the focus of attention of law enforcement agencies of the CIS after the Ukrainian revolution. Fans of various football teams took an active part in the events on the Kyiv Maydan, although their role was far from being crucial. However, the image of aggressive, numerous and well-organized fan movements that can be used in the political struggle has become a convenient “scarecrow” for the political leadership of the post-Soviet countries, especially ones ruled by undemocratic regimes. In fact, the fan movement can create only small-scale threats of criminal nature to public security. The danger attributed to fan groups seems to be over exaggerated. This is made in order to increase the importance of some of the law enforcement agencies in the eyes of the political leadership.

The exercise “Slavic brotherhood – 2017” is noteworthy in the first place because of the tough statements of the Ambassador of Ukraine on the event being not transparent for foreign representatives, who were allowed only for the exhibition part of the exercise. Meanwhile, representatives of neighbouring states would like to have the opportunity to fully observe the exercise, from the moment the Russian and Serbian military arrived to the territory of Belarus and until their departure. In this regard, the transparency of the Belarusian-Russian military exercises “West-2017” is one of the most problematic issues. In neighbouring states there are fears associated with the upcoming event, which often remind hysteria. Transparency and predictability of the behaviour of official Minsk are highly desirable in order to avoid political complications and to minimize the threat of possible information provocations during the “West-2017” exercises. Which include, in particular, the expected sudden testing of the Russian army’s combat readiness or large-scale exercises on the territory of the Southern Military District of Russia. Neighbours of Belarus and NATO would like to have the opportunity to fully observe the “West-2017” exercises during the entire period, and not just the active phase. The issue is the readiness of the Belarusian side, which refers to organizational difficulties. In this case, the official Minsk is interested in meeting the expectations of the West and Ukraine.

The transfer of the documents related to Stalinist repressions by Aliaksandr Lukashenka to Nursultan Nazarbayev goes beyond diplomatic courtesy. For more than 20 years, the Belarusian leadership has positioned itself as a devoted receiver of the historical and ideological heritage of the USSR. The central element of this is the mythology of World War II and the person of Stalin as the leader of the victorious country. The open condemnation of communist genocide on the part of Kazakhstan and much more veiled - from the side of Belarus, looks like an attempt to break from the Soviet historical heritage. That goes against the tendencies existing in Russia. Belarusian authorities, following other post-Soviet countries, “push out” the Soviet mythology, which psychologically and ideologically binds them to Moscow. This is the expected and

natural process of finding one's own place in history, which requires an independent evaluation of past events, often contrary to the views of the former imperial centre.

The statements of President Lukashenka regarding the responsibility of Belarus for the Western direction within the framework of the CSTO mean that in the event of a security crisis, it is not necessary to expect the Belarusian military in the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Which does not exclude Minsk's providing assistance to its formal allies in another format: political, material, technical, etc. Also note that nothing was reported about Lukashenka's personal meeting with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who visited Minsk. Traditionally the Belarusian leader personally accepts even Russian officials of the regional level. Obviously, after refusing to host a Russian airbase in Belarus, personal relations between Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Sergei Shoigu have deteriorated so much that none of them has the desire to go beyond the protocol format. Previous time the Russian Defence Minister and the Belarusian leader had a personal meeting in June 2013 ([source](#)).

The figure of the new chairman of the State Military Industrial Committee will be indicative. The appointment of a representative of the army (for example, the person like SMIC first deputy chairman Ihar Dzemidzenka) will actually mean the subordination of SMIC to the army. Taking into account the fact that the overwhelming majority of defence products are exported, this will not have a significant impact on the development prospects of the Belarusian defence industry. Although there are still reasons for quite tense relations between the representatives of the army and of the military industry: the generals want higher-quality products at a lower price, the industry wants more money. The situation is not unique; this also quite often happens in foreign states.

Taking into account the extremely cautious behaviour of the Belarusian side, it seems that the issue of purchasing Su-30SM has not been fully resolved and will depend on a number of factors that are beyond the control of Belarusian Defence Ministry. The fact that almost all the information on the planned purchase came from Russian sources can be a factor of psychological pressure on the Belarusian authorities. It can be done not necessarily with the purpose of starting the practical implementation of the contract. Belarusian public opinion, as far as can be judged by external manifestations, isn't so optimistic about the prospects of an expensive contract. In the conditions of the crisis and mass impoverishment of the population, the contract for the purchase of Su-30SM, which in case of execution will be the largest defence contract in the history of Belarus, is perceived as a waste of funds. It is worth paying attention to the failure of the information support for the deal: the citizens of Belarus were faced with the fact that no arguments or explanations were given in favour of the decision taken. State propaganda once again proves its inability to moderate the national information field. Belarus Security Blog [wrote about this in detail](#).

Vietnam remains the main partner in South-East Asia for Belarus and a significant client of the Belarusian military-industrial complex in the field of air defence and staff training. Cooperation in the field of security is a closed topic. The level of relations between the two countries is evidenced by the fact that not less than 15 meetings of the bilateral commission for cooperation in the military-technical sphere have already taken place. And a number of leaders of the Belarusian defence enterprises have stable and long-term ties in the Vietnamese political elite.

Vietnam is a regional rival of the PRC, both countries periodically balance on the brink of an armed clash over disputed territories in the South China Sea. The latter is called East-Vietnamese Sea in Hanoi. The closed nature of the Belarusian-Vietnamese cooperation allows us to assume that Belarusian authorities are trying not to focus Beijing's attention on the interaction of Belarus and Vietnam in the security sphere.

The State Council of Belarus and Russia, which took place in June, had only ritual significance and was gathered to perform ceremonial functions. Belarusian state propaganda provided extremely small coverage of the event. Among the topics discussed at the meeting of Presidents Lukashenka and Putin, there were issues of livestock breeding and cancelling roaming. Obviously, there are more important issues on the bilateral agenda that require attention at the highest level. If, of course, there is a desire to resolve them. If there is no such desire, then the insemination of cows can be discussed. The level of bilateral Belarusian-Russian relations is quite clearly defined by topics that the leaders of the two countries are ready to discuss.

It is obvious that the initiation of the "Patriots' Case", the arrests of the defendants, and their subsequent release are political, not legal decisions. President Lukashenka, who initiated the "Patriots' Case", came to the conclusion that it creates exclusively additional problems for him. It can be expected that the trial of the defendants will take place, a conviction will be passed and a punishment will be determined in a format that will allow the accused to remain free. The reasons for softening the position of the authorities were external and internal pressure, civil solidarity with the arrested and media attention to the "Patriots' Case".

It's necessary to note that the authorities "forgot" about the incident at the checkpoint Aliaksandrauka on the Belarusian-Ukrainian border. On the night of March 20, 2017 a car allegedly tried to make a breakthrough deep into the territory of Belarus. Having stopped the vehicle, the border guards found objects that looked like a pistol and ammunition, as well as elements of an explosive device ([source](#)).

