

**Analytical report:
Situation in the field of
national security and defence
of Belarus (May 2018)**

The most important events of the month. On May 2, 2018 Aliaksandr Lukashenka met the Chairman of the State Security Committee (SSC) of Belarus Valery Vakulchyk. Once again the Belarusian leader praised the special services for the effectiveness of the fight against corruption. The results of work in the field of intelligence, counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and the protection of the constitutional order were discussed. It was announced that the agent of foreign intelligence, who had access to specially protected information in the General Staff, the State Secretariat of the Security Council and some SSC documents, had been exposed.

Lukashenka ordered to expand public awareness of the results of the work of the SSC (as far as the specifics of the special service's activities permit).

The Chairman of the SSC Valery Vakulchyk demonstrated the mobile phone for closed government communications developed in Belarus. The phone is already supposedly sent into batch production. The work on organizing export of new communications equipment to friendly states is underway.

The developments within the month. On May 2-4, a joint command and staff exercise of the missile forces and artillery of the armies of Belarus and Kazakhstan was held at the Sary-Shagan training ground in Kazakhstan. Belarusian army was represented by the units of multiple launch rocket systems "Polonaise" and tactical missiles "Tochka-U". In total, the event involved about 100 pieces of equipment and more than 200 servicemen.

On May 3, 2018 under the chairmanship of the head of the State Military-Industrial Committee Aleh Dzvihalyou, a meeting of the collegium of the Committee was held. In January-March, industrial products worth about USD 165 million were produced, which amounted to 131% against the same period last year. The profitability of sales by industry organizations included in the SMIC system amounted to 25.7%, while the planned level was 9.3%. Exports of goods and services amounted to 146.9% compared to the same period last year. The volume of exports exceeded the planned figure by 38.8%. The net profit of the SMIC organizations in the first quarter amounted to about USD 40 million, the growth rate in comparison to the same period last year - 124.4%. The amount of net profit received is 4.2 times higher than the planned level.

On May 14, 2018, within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union summit, President Lukashenka met with the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. The Armenian side raised the issue of Belarus supplying military equipment to Azerbaijan.

Already on May 16, 2018, the Azerbaijani Defence Minister Colonel-General Zakir Hasanov received a delegation headed by the SMIC of Belarus chairman Aleh Dzvihalyou. During the meeting, the sides determined the directions for the implementation of new large projects in the interests of the Azerbaijani army.

On May 14-16, Minsk was visited by a NATO delegation within the framework of Belarus' participation in the NATO Partnership for Peace Partnership Planning and Review Process (PARP). Representatives of the Ministry of Defence, the General Staff, the State Secretariat of the Security Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Emergencies participated in the event. The coordination of a new package of partnership objectives within the PARP framework was finalized, the order of their implementation was clarified, ways for improving the interaction between the Ministry of Defence of Belarus and the Alliance were outlined.

The situation around OJSC “Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant” is developing. On May 15, 2018 it became known that as a result of the conducted inspection the Belarusian prosecutor’s office instituted criminal proceedings against the former general director of the enterprise and officials of the Ukrainian company Motor Sich for exceeding the powers, which entailed grave consequences.

On May 22, 2018 Lukashenka, meeting the Interior Minister Ihar Shunevich, demanded to correct responsibility for illegal drug trafficking. It is worth recalling that the Belarusian leader personally was not only the initiator of the tightening of legislation to combat illegal drug trafficking, but also demanded that the convicts be provided with the most stringent conditions of detention in prisons.

On the same day, a meeting of the heads of security agencies and intelligence services of the CIS member states was held. An agreement to intensify efforts in countering international terrorism, to expand the exchange of intelligence information was reached. The event was ignored by Moldova and Turkmenistan. The meeting was attended by CIS Executive Secretary Sergei Lebedev. His speech is noteworthy because of anti-Western and anti-American rhetoric in the style of Russian propaganda.

Vladimir Putin greeted the participants of the meeting. In addition to traditional terrorism, transnational organized crime, illegal migration and drug trafficking, he named “... serious environmental risks” among the topical challenges.

On May 23, 2013, a meeting of the Council of Defence Ministers of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member states of the was held in Astana. The challenges of military security in Central Asia were discussed. The draft Decision of the CSTO Collective Security Council “On the Action Plan for the Development of a Coordinated Information Policy in the Interests of the CSTO Member States” was approved. It is reported that the purpose of the document is “... the formation of an effective information system for an adequate and timely response to manifestations of negative information impact”.

The organization of the first command and staff exercise with the CSTO Collective Air Force “Air Bridge” this year was announced. Under a unified command, a complex of tasks for the transportation of CSTO military contingents with the organization of interaction, covering aircraft and providing air transportation will be performed.

On May 24, 2018 Astana hosted a meeting of the Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils of the CSTO. As a result, 11 documents were signed. The Action Plan for the development of a coordinated information policy is among them.

On May 23-26, Kazakhstan hosted the International Weapons Exhibition KADEX-2018. The official SMIC delegation headed by Aleh Dzvihalyou held a number of negotiations with the heads of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan.

Also during the exhibition, Aleh Dzvihalyou held a working meeting with the head of the secretaries of the defence industry of Turkey, Ismail Demir. The deepening of military-technical cooperation was discussed. The SMIC Chairman visited the exposition of a number of companies of the Turkish military-industrial complex.

From May 30 to June 1, the 5th scientific and practical conference on the management and use of unmanned aerial systems of the Armed Forces devoted to the

prospects of development of unmanned aircraft was held. During the event SMIC confirmed the priority of creating robotic and unmanned equipment, combined into a network of combat and supporting platforms. In the near future, it is planned to complete the creation of a long-range UAV and duration of flight for various purposes, including combat, helicopter and airplane UAVs.

On May 31, 2018 a meeting on the results of the inspection of the Army this year was held. It was chaired by President Lukashenka, who stated that the absolute majority of the identified shortcomings are subjective in nature and are associated with the lack of moral motivation of the officers. Those who are not ready to work with 100% efficiency, will be fired. But this can be just a mere wish, if the prestige of the officer's profession and the inflow of quality personnel to the Army are not provided.

At the end of May, the joint anti-terrorist exercise "Dushanbe-Antiterror-2017" was held in six states of the CIS (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan).

During the first stage of the exercises on May 23-26, the interaction of CIS special services to identify and suppress the recruitment of terrorist organizations in social networks, exchange of information on the terrorist threat, algorithms for the use of CIS collective information systems (the data bank of the CIS Antiterrorist Centre, organized crime, the Joint Databased Data Bank, the International Counter-Terrorism Data Bank), and the date iloscopic software and hardware systems was trained.

Within the framework of the second stage, on May 31 and June 1, the power phase of the exercise was held in Tajikistan, with the participation of Tajik and Russian units. The counterterrorism operation and the fight against illegal armed formations were trained. Also a gathering of the command of the antiterrorist subdivisions of security agencies and special services of the CIS countries was held.

The Prosecutor's office continues to study the state of law in the army. In May, it became known about the shortcomings in the work to maintain military discipline and law and order among servicemen in one of the mechanized brigades. Thus, the officers avoided conducting educational activities among the personnel; ignored information about the facts of hazing relationships and sheltered it from higher authorities.

The prosecutors also addressed the servicemen of the most problematic compound (the 72nd joint training centre) in order to clarify the legislation on military service, prevent offenses in the army environment, exclude suicides, and activate educational work. The Prosecutor General of Belarus, Aliaksandr Kanyuk spoke to the military on the issues of observance of the law in May. Earlier Mr. Kanyuk headed the military prosecutor's office. That is why he is well oriented in army issues. In total, in the first quarter of this year, the Prosecutor's office conducted 188 events in military units.

Some results of the fight against corruption for the first quarter of this year (source) have been summed up. 696 corruption crimes were revealed in comparison with 311 crimes for the same period of the last year. The number of bribes received increased from 86 to 294, embezzlement by abuse of authority – from 119 to 153, abuse of power or official authority – from 61 to 78, bribery – from 17 to 132, inactivity of officials – from 1 to 5.

The use of budgetary funds for public procurement and implementation of state programs is still the zone of risk.

In May, it became known that the Supreme Court of Belarus had condemned the citizen of Ukraine Pavel Sharoiko to 8 years in prison for espionage. It is necessary to recall that on June 16, 2017 in Ukraine a Belarusian citizen Yury Palityka was detained on charges of espionage. On October 25, 2017 in Minsk, a citizen of Ukraine Pavel Sharoiko was detained on a similar charge. There is a high probability that Belarusian special services needed Sharoiko for subsequent exchange for the Belarusian citizen. But such an exchange is possible only after the completion of the trial in the case of Yury Palityka, which is delayed.

The construction of the border with Ukraine is continuing. Since the beginning of this year, almost 44 km of the border has been designated on the site of the responsibility area of Belarus. Another 33 km was designated by the Ukrainian side. In the current year, it is planned to jointly designate about 360 km of the border on the terrain, i.e. almost 1/3 of its total length. In total, since 2014, more than 387 km of the border have been designated from the Belarusian side. Currently, the parties are working to attract international technical assistance for the demarcation of the border.

Conclusions. The fact that Aliaksandr Lukashenka demonstratively highlights the SSC against the background of other military and law enforcement agencies does not mean an increase in the influence of the special services. It is possible that there is an attempt to provoke a competition for the conditional status of the most effective agency. The Belarusian leader does not hide that he is not satisfied with the results of the activities of a number of law enforcement agencies and their leaders. He is looking for ways to improve the situation without taking fundamental personnel decisions and reforming the national security sector.

We can expect wider public awareness of the activities of all law enforcement agencies in Belarus, not just the SSC. At the same time, the policy of announcing the successes and concealing the shortcomings will continue.

During the meeting Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Valery Vakulchik addressed personnel issues. It is obvious that the general personnel crisis in the military and law enforcement agencies influenced the SSC as well. Taking into account the special requirements to the moral, business and professional qualities that any special service sets against potential candidates, it may turn out that the personnel problems in the SSC are really hard.

The system of protected government communication is one of the priorities of the Belarusian leaders. It took considerable effort to create own Belarusian cryptographic school. At the moment, there is reason to argue that dependence on external partners in the field of providing secure communications is minimized. The conflict in Ukraine showed the critical importance of having a stable and reliable government connection. In this regard, the product and technologies of Belarusian specialists can be in demand in the post-Soviet countries. First of all, among the traditional partners of Minsk: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan.

The small number of personnel involved in the training at the Sary-Shagan training ground, with a large number of involved equipment, is more likely to correspond to a research or promotional event. Earlier, the SMIC management had already voiced plans

for the export of “Polonaise” to the CSTO and CIS countries. Kazakhstan is a member of both the CIS and the CSTO (unlike Azerbaijan, which did not join the latter).

Talking about the results of SMIC (which includes only a part of the national military complex), it is worth noting that in the first quarter of this year publicly announced figures allow us to draw some conclusions about the dynamics, but not about growth points. The increase in exports and net profit could be attributed to both the sale of upgraded/repaired equipment from the stocks as well as the new one with high added value. Given the relatively small volume of production of industrial products, even one export contract can give a significant increase in exports, production and profit. Multiple profit growth could be ensured both by new contracts not previously included in business plans, and by the transfer of planned contracts to an earlier deadline. In the first case, we are most likely talking about special exporters-traders with weapons and military equipment. In the second - about the early delivery of the MLRS “Polonaise” to Azerbaijan.

Belarus will continue to develop security cooperation with Azerbaijan despite formal commitments to Armenia within the CSTO framework. This is due both to the pragmatic interests of Minsk (access to the Azerbaijani market) and to the special nature of personal relations between Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Ilham Aliyev.

Prospects for Belarus-NATO cooperation are still vague. The objectives of the PARP partnership are not ambitious. The deterrent is the underdevelopment of the contractual framework of interaction, as well as the specifics of the internal political situation in Belarus (source). It is obvious that in the foreseeable future there will not be significant progress in cooperation between Belarus and NATO.

Regarding the situation with the Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant, there is a high probability that the initiation of a criminal case is a way to pressure Motor Sich in order to get the company back into the ownership of the Belarusian state. At the current moment, this is perhaps the only real way to save the production line.

The fact that Lukashenka now requires differentiation of punishment for drug users and sellers is connected, among other things, with a public reaction to the activity of relatives of persons convicted of illegal drug trafficking, who seek to review and mitigate sentences for their loved ones. The Belarusian authorities constantly monitor public sentiment. Obviously, there is discontent in the society with indiscriminate criminal punishment for illegal drug trafficking.

Anti-Western rhetoric of Sergei Lebedev during the meeting of CIS special services chiefs was absolutely inappropriate. Most Commonwealth countries seek to develop partnerships with the West in the security sector, making contribution (including financial one) in the support of NATO missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The attempts to oppose CIS countries to the West by Russian representatives undermine the Commonwealth itself. In this case, one can speak either of an inadequate assessment of the situation by Russian officials, or of a deliberate provocation in order to cause complications between the CIS states and the West.

It is not entirely clear what Putin meant by ecological risks, referring to the leaders of the special services of the CIS countries. It may be about the consequences of climate change associated with water depletion and desertification. Consequences of which can

be interstate conflicts, internal crises and displacement of the population. But these issues go beyond the influence of special services.

The CSTO coalition air forces are represented by aircraft of transport and special aviation allocated by the Organization member states. There is no open information on their structure, size and format of participation of each country. In this connection, the “Air Bridge” will be a specially interesting event.

Note that the Turkish official sources do not report on the meeting of the leaders of the military-industrial departments of Belarus and Turkey. On the one hand, this is traditional for the Turks: it reports on the results of cooperation, and not about the process. On the other hand, this may be a sign of the significance of the prospects for bilateral contacts in the military-industrial complex. Moreover, the SMIC head of visited the stands of those enterprises of the military-industrial complex of Turkey that produce high-tech products. At one time, the Turkish authorities chose several key areas in the field of high defence technologies (cybersecurity, secure communications, etc.), where significant resources were channelled and the result was obtained.

The platform, on the basis of which a national long-range UAV can be created, is specially interesting. At present, there are projects of drone aircraft of the aircraft type “Burevestnik” from the National Academy of Sciences and “BELAR YS-EX” from “Aviatechsystems”. It is necessary to take into account the creation of a joint venture “Aviation Technologies and Complexes” in April of this year. Its founders were the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the largest Chinese aircraft building corporation AVIC, which produces long-range and long-duration UAVs for various purposes, including combat, helicopter and airplane type ones.

The intensity of the activities of the prosecutor's office, the fact that the revealed shortcomings are reported publicly, can be regarded as an extreme concern of A. Lukashenko personally to the state of law in the troops, as well as the lack of a political attitude to conceal the violations revealed. Cases of concealment of offenses and crimes are an initiative on the ground in order to avoid the responsibility of the immediate and superior superiors of offenders. Taking into account the importance of the army in the system of ensuring national security, one can expect further strengthening of control over the state of law in the army environment.

Revealed violations of the law in the troops are a consequence of both the individual officers' avoiding the performance of their official duties and the weakened control of the situation by their superiors. The reasons are complex in nature and are associated with both the lack of motivation of officers and their objective workload. In Belarus, much has been said about the de-bureaucratization of state administration. At the same time, we should not forget that the security forces - perhaps, are the record holders in the field of various kinds of paper and control-reporting work.

It is necessary to reduce the bureaucratic burden of the officers. At the same time, a set of measures to promote the prestige of the officer's profession is required. For a long time due attention was not paid to these issues. It's not just about the army, but about the national security sector as a whole. As a result, lumpenization of the military and law enforcement agencies is observed, which is extremely dangerous.

There is a possibility that the Belarusian authorities will take a one-sided step, having pardoned Pavel Sharoiiko. Minsk is not interested in exacerbating relations with

Kiev. The nearest marker will be the forum of the regions of Belarus and Ukraine in Homel, which will be held at the end of September. If the event is not attended by the leaders of the two countries, this will become a sign of the deterioration of bilateral political relations at the highest level. Taking into consideration the fact, that many problematic issues in bilateral relations were resolved in Lukashenka-Poroshenko format, such a development of the situation seems undesirable.

Andrei Porotnikov,
The head of Belarus Security Blog project

