

# Belarus Strengthens Its Air Force With Russia's Reluctant Support

Last week, the Belarusian army newspaper *Vo Slavu Rodiny* published an article praising the newly received Russian warplanes. However, these Russian aircraft are a step backward compared to the equipment that Belarus already had.

President Lukashenka recently publicly complained that the Kremlin had refused to give Belarus a dozen aircraft. The Belarusian authorities therefore are delaying the establishment of a Russian airbase in Belarus. Minsk trying to convince Moscow to give it newer aircraft.

## Is the Agreement on the Airbase Ready?

According to an article published by the Russian news agency *Sputnik* on 17 August, Belarus and Russia had already agreed technical and legal details on establishing a Russian airbase. The two sides reportedly have prepared a draft agreement.

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According to the draft, Belarus agrees to a permanent Russian military presence in the form of an airbase for at least 15 years after the signing of the agreement. However, according to the document, the prospective airbase will be subordinated to the goals and objectives of the Single Regional System of Air Defense, which means that no Russian military units deployed on the airbase could be used without the consent of

the Belarus.

But the situation around the base still remains unclear. Some time ago, Belarusian Defence Minister [Andrei Raukou](#) said that the issue of the base still had [not been decided](#) upon politically. Speaking on 4 August, Lukashenka likewise failed to mention the prospective airbase while explaining that the existing Russian military communication and radar facilities pose no threat to Ukraine.

## Which Planes has Belarus Received?

The issue of the Russian airbase closely relates to the state of the [Belarusian Army](#) and its capability to fulfil its tasks with the Soviet-era equipment that it has. Since 1991□ Belarus has bought no combat aircraft. Although it may appear that Belarus has many modern aircraft, including up to four dozen MiG-29, the real figure and the state of them has caused many doubts. Belarus has sold scores of planes since early 1990s and has given up on exploiting the more sophisticated Su-27 fighter jet.

Minsk did get some [new military equipment](#). On 12 August, Air Force and Air Defence commander, Major General Aleh Dvihalyou announced that by the end of the month Minsk was going to sign a contract to purchase four more Yak-130 aircraft in addition to the four planes of the same type it had got from Russia in April.

Belarus is going to replace by 2020 all the L-39 Albatros it had used as jet trainers with Yak-130 advanced jet trainer/light attack aircraft. Belarusian officials emphasise that the Yak-130 can carry out a wider range of tasks, while the L-39 functions essentially only as trainer. Moreover, the Belarusian Army has successfully absorbed the Yak-130, said Dvihalyou.

The Army daily *Vo Slavu Rodiny* proudly wrote, “For the first

time in its history, our aviation has used high-precision munition – guided bombs KAB-500Kr – dropping them from the Yak-130.”

No wonder that the Belarusian Army coped with Yak-130, as it is a backward development. For decades the Belarusian Airforce flew older yet more sophisticated machines such as the heavier Su-27 (comparable with the F-15) and the lighter MiG-29 (comparable with the F-16).

## Overhaul Instead of Buying

For now, Minsk has failed to get advanced military aircraft from Moscow. On 4 August, Lukashenka said how he had asked Moscow to sell or "give" [whatever it means] Belarus "a dozen of aircraft" before the 2014 Ice Hockey [World Championship](#). The Kremlin offered to "give" Minsk just "three or four" planes which Lukashenka accepted. This story corresponds to previously known information about the aircraft flight of Russian [fighter jets](#) deployed to Belarus back then.

Lukashenka insisted that the mentioned aircraft had returned to Russia. So currently no Russian military planes – in any capacity – are deployed in Belarus. He hinted at the problem of getting newer – and even second-hand equipment. Nevertheless, the Belarusian leader asserted

*We have enough of aircraft. When I was refused [by the Kremlin] is to be sold certain weapons, including aircraft, I gave the order to overhaul and upgrade ten fighter jets. We have enough of them but their effective life-span nears its end. In November, we will finish the last overhaul – of the tenth fighter.*

The Belarusian government obviously tries to strengthen national defence although it has limited funds for this. The following table of the known overhaul and modernisation works

undertaken by Belarusian industry for the national army illustrates that.



In addition, Minsk apparently decided to spend more on fuel. The fuel deficit for years debilitated the national air force, as for instance in 2000 a Belarusian military pilot flew two to five hours a year.

In 2011, the Air Force set a goal to achieve 100 hours a year per pilot. The government supports this plan. Recently, the army press hinted at a possible increase in the fuel limit for the Air Force by more than 2,000 tonnes – to 16,000 tonnes in 2015.

## **Two Goals of the Belarusian Authorities**

In its military policies in general and in its modernisation of the air defence in particular, the Belarusian authorities pursue two major goals. First, they want to remain a militarily valuable ally for Russia. In particular, the Belarusian government would be eager to provide air defence for Moscow from the western side by itself.

Belarus established together with Russia the [Single Regional System](#) of Air Defence in 2012. Despite concerns that it would put a part of the army under Russian control, [Minsk holds](#) its ground and even got its officer appointed as the system's commander. Now, the system serves Minsk as a bargaining chip in its attempts to get economic and political favours from Russia.

But Minsk has a second goal in mind, to keep some distance from Russia, especially after the war in Ukraine.

To resolve the contradiction between the two goals Minsk opted

for delaying strategy. Belarus can live with deficiencies in its Air Force yet for Russia they present a vital threat. They mean a hole in the defence perimeter of Russia's capital.

To fill this hole, Russia while refusing Belarus' requests for newer planes in the 2010s decided instead to put [its airbase](#) in Belarus. However, if Minsk manages to [procrastinate longer](#), the Kremlin will have no other option but to give Belarus the planes it wants.

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## **Chinese Missiles, CSTO, Belarusian Air Force – Belarus Security Digest**

China is gradually replacing Russia in the security arena for Belarus. The programme of development for the domestic UAVs is well under way.

The national Air Force has received four combat Yak-130 training aircraft, all manufactured in Russia.

Despite the difficulties in the traditional markets of Russia and Ukraine, the Belarusian military and industrial complex has shown exhibited some positive dynamics. Belarus helps Tajikistan to secure its border with Afghanistan.

### **Chinese missiles are in already Belarus**

Sino-Belarusian high-level contact has been rather active over the past month. On 7-10 April, Alexander Miazhujev, State Secretary of Belarus' Security Council, visited the People's Republic of China. The parties discussed, among other things,

China's support to Belarus in strengthening its defence capabilities.

Alexander Miazhujeu held several meetings with China's top military and Party leaders as well as with Yin Liming, President of the China Great Wall Industry Corporation, and Guo Zhaoping, President of China's Airspace Long-March International Trade Company.

Long-March is a manufacturer of defence goods, including missiles, multiple rocket launcher systems (MRLS), rocket engines, high precision guided bombs, and unmanned aerial vehicles.

### **The next stage of tests of Grif-1 UAVs has begun**

In April, military tests of Grif-1 unmanned aerial vehicle have started. The army received one BAK-100 system, which includes four GRIF-1s and several support vehicles. After the testing is concluded, the Ministry of Defence is set to receive several more systems before the end of this year.

The tests are supposed to confirm the UAV's estimated parameters. Thus far, the drones have been equipped with foreign-manufactured engines, but there are plans to develop a domestically manufactured engine before the tests are over (by the end of the year).

### **The Belarusian Air Force has four more aircraft**

On 27 April, at the Belarusian air force base in Lida, the Air Force received four Yak-130s, a combat training aircraft, that are manufactured in Russia. Additionally, the Irkut Aircraft Corporation plans to supply eight more of these aircraft to Belarus. The contract for four Yak-130 has already been signed, and there is an option for four more aircraft. Belarusian officials have confirmed these plans.

The next batch of aircraft should be delivered before 2020.

This option is likely to be taken up sometime after 2020. The Czech combat training aircraft L-39, ten units of which the Belarusian Air Force uses, will remain in service until 2020.

### **The domestic military and industrial complex is looking for new markets**

On 28 April, the Board of the State Military and Industrial Committee (SMIC) met. The Board focused on the efficiency of the chief technical designers' work in developing and manufacturing new (innovative) products. It was said that presently, all of the necessary conditions had been created for the development of new types of equipment and sources for funding of for them has already been secured. However, it appears that the chief technical designers have not been working efficiently enough.

Siarhiej Huruliou, the head of the SMIC, spoke about implementation of the projects for the development of medium-range anti-aircraft missile systems and a range of light-armour combat vehicles.

In general, in the first trimester of this year, the SMIC-sponsored companies increased their industrial output twofold. The exports of goods and services increased by 2.7% compared to the same period of 2014. After the first half of 2015, the SMIC plans to increase the volume of industrial output by 47% compared to the same period of 2015 and the exports of goods and services by 3 to 5%.

The main issue concerns the overdue receivables, especially foreign receivables. There is a high dependence on the Russian market or on a narrow range of customers to get the necessary inputs. Belarus needs to take systematic efforts to diversify supplies of works and services.

### **Belarus has fulfilled its obligations towards Tajikistan in the framework of the CSTO**

For two years already, Tajikistan has been waiting for emergency assistance from the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) to secure its border with Afghanistan. Dushanbe has legitimate grievances due to these delays. On 2 April, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CSTO, Sirodzhiddin Aslov, Tajikistan's Foreign Minister, expressed his dissatisfaction with this state of affairs. The heads of states early adopted the decision to assist Tajikistan back in September 2013.

This initiative was to be implemented in two stages. First, the emergency assistance should have been sent, and then a special programme to reinforce the Tajik – Afghan border should have been developed. Thus far, only Belarus and Armenia have provided emergency assistance to Tajikistan. Belarus sent clothing as well as protective and survival equipment, and Armenia provided vehicles.

There has been no information about other CSTO member states providing assistance. Meanwhile, all of the Alliance members (and especially Russia) have been vocally expressing their concern about the possibility of the situation in Afghanistan destabilising, the increase of cross-border crime, and extremism in the Central Asian countries.

The level of cooperation of the CSTO members continues to be rather minimal. The parties fail to demonstrate their willingness to cooperate even on the issues that affect their own interests. Traditionally, in the post-Soviet space, high-level agreements are not binding. Meanwhile, the CSTO's concern about the developments in Central Asia has a sturdy foundation. It is not only the prospects of destabilisation of Afghanistan that raise alarm, as other issues carry weight as well.

Central Asian countries are still vulnerable, and the ruling regimes there are unstable. As opposition political activities are being suppressed in the countries of the region, with the

exception of Kyrgyzstan, and there are still serious social problems, the protest potential is moving more and more towards religion-related political activities.

Notably, the Soviet-era leaders still remain in power in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the largest countries in the region, and the question of a transition of power after their departure remains unresolved there. Or rather, that is how it looks from the outside.

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## **Army Reform, New Gyroplanes and Radar Systems – Belarus Security Digest**

Belarus' law enforcement agencies still do not know how much money they receive in 2015, while all remains quiet on the Belarusian border.

Less than they would like but better than nothing – the Belarusian Air Force and Air Defence Force received new weapons purchased for them in small batches. The Belarusian head of state informed the military how they would live from now on, and he has not promised them an easy time.

### **Lukashenka Speaks on the Reform of the Army**

Alexander Lukashenka announced what would happen with the army. On 19 February, Alexander Lukashenka met with the

officer corps of the Ministry of Defence. During the event, the Belarusian leader made a number of statements in his traditional manner.

Thus, Belarus remains open to constructive dialogue with NATO based on the principles of parity and transparency. At the same time, the country's participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation guarantees its national security and regional stability.

The Ministry of Defence has developed relevant policy documents to support strengthening the army. In short, everything that requires an upgrade should be upgraded. Lukashenka implied that there would be no mass rearmament just yet.

Troop numbers and combat personnel have mostly been optimised at this point. Lukashenka expects to see the future direction of the Armed Forces reform in the new edition of the Military Doctrine of Belarus. The modernisation of the army should be mostly complete by 2020.

Lukashenka promised to allocate the necessary financial resources to modernise the Armed Forces and its military equipment and to purchase new weaponry. Lukashenka also intends to personally inspect Armed Forces' officers physical and combat preparedness.

The Belarusian leader said that he had no intention of abandoning [territorial defence](#) because "armies win battles but nations win wars". The Ministry of Defence, supported by other government agencies, should continue to play a leading role in this arena. Thus, attempts by the military to get rid of this troublesome task (territorial defence) may yet fail. The Security Council should control the building of the territorial defence system.

Lukashenka demanded that ironclad discipline be enforced in the army. "The army penetration of such dangerous phenomena

like corruption and malfeasance gives a particular reason for concern; a betrayal of the interests of the service is especially unacceptable", he said.

Lukashenka also requested to solve problems surrounding flight operating safety in the Air Force as soon as possible. "The Ministry of Defence takes inadequate, and sometimes, ineffective measures", he said. However, for some reason, he never mentioned the obsolescence of equipment and the need to replace it. "You won't find it funny if I hear about any accident in the Air Force again", the Belarusian leader said next.

threats to national security begin with destabilisation of the situation within a country

The head of state pointed out that threats to national security begin with destabilisation of the situation within a country. "Nobody has guaranteed us a quiet life", the Belarusian leader stressed once again. The Belarusian government still counts on Russia's support, but it will rely on its own forces as well. Lukashenka gave an order to prepare the troops without the support of the Russian army.

### **Future Military Spending Unclear**

Contrary to expectations, the government failed to introduce in February a new state budget for 2015. All law enforcement agencies are operating under severe budget constraints despite the authorities' assurances that they will satisfy the agencies' financial requirements.

Both external and internal factors have obviously caused the delay in adoption of the new budget. There is no clarity about the size and terms of Russia's financial support in 2015. The economic situation may be worse than the government has predicted. The budget may shrink significantly, resulting in a serious redistribution of public finances.

## **Update from the State Border Committee**

On 3 February, the State Border Committee summed up the results of its activities over the past year and shared some plans for the current year. In 2014, the number of offences on the border went down significantly (by 14%). The nature of the occurrences show they present no threat to Belarus' border security. Illegal migration, smuggling of drugs and weapons and other forms of cross-border crimes brought the main risks.

Meanwhile, there was word of a forthcoming contract to be signed that would supply four two-seat gyroplanes of the Calidus series manufactured by the Russian company AutoGyroRussland to the State Border Committee. The first gyroplanes will arrive in Belarus as early as mid-April. The gyroplanes will be equipped with 24-hour surveillance cameras and other equipment needed to patrol the border.

Interestingly, Russia's Ministry for Emergency Situations and the Federal Protective Service also purchased some, but so far for trial operation only. The Pinsk border detachment has begun forming two units, which will be equipped with UAVs and a gyroplane. The gyroplane will be fitted with surveillance systems. The main task is to find pilots to fly them and technicians to service them.

## **New Training and Aircraft and Radars for the Air Force**

On 10 February, the Air Force made public its plans to replace its aircraft L-39 with the Russian-made Yak-130. They plan to phase in training for the new equipment, and then they will phase out the old equipment. The implementation of the contract for the purchase of the first flight of four aircraft Yak-130 is in its final stages.

In February, technicians and pilots were trained in Russia and will return with the new planes. During their first year of operation, the manufacturer will provide technical support to the Belarusian Air Force. The Belarusian aviators would like

to purchase another batch of Yak-130s later on.

Additionally, plans have been made public to equip the nation's radar troops with new locally manufactured radars Vostok-D (one unit) and Rosa-RB (two units). Thus far, the automated control system complexes of Belarus' Air Forces and Air Defence radar troops have seen 90% of their wares upgraded and the radar reconnaissance equipment is 35% renewed. The upgrade is scheduled to continue until 2020. In December 2014, they announced plans to purchase three or four units of the Rosa-RB in 2015. Obviously, the financial crisis has had an impact on their plans.

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## **The Ukrainian Scenario is Being Tested in Belarus – Belarus Security Digest**

The Belarusian authorities are preparing to counter by military means any possible attempts to destabilise the situation in Belarus under the scenario deployed in Eastern Ukraine.

The Belarusian Ministry of Interior plans to make the fight against drug trafficking more efficient and initiate tougher punishments for drug dealers.

The Belarusian authorities seek to use the crisis in Ukraine to elevate their own importance as the Kremlin's partner... and

to put a little money in the bank while they are at it. Will they succeed?

The CSTO views the drug flow coming out of Afghanistan the most serious challenge facing it.

Minsk does not want to spend any money on purchasing new combat aircraft and has instead decided to modernise its Soviet heritage aviation.

### **Corruption Remains One of the Major National Security Threats**

On 22 April 2014, Alexander Lukashenka made his annual address to the National Assembly. He paid the utmost attention to the problem of corruption. Lukashenka separately went into the details of abuse of power among judges, the KGB (the initiation of criminal proceedings against a number of top officials from the Department of the KGB in the Homiel region), law-enforcement officials (Interior Ministry, Investigative Committee, customs and border agencies).

This part of his address was not only the longest but also the most emotionally charged. Obviously, the issue of corruption in public administration and law-enforcement agencies is of considerable concern to Lukashenka. It is especially true in the light of the events in Ukraine, a point that he stressed earlier on. He said that corruption and abuse remained the "birthmarks" of law-enforcement and executive bodies. This may be one of the harshest wordings he has ever employed.

The time that Lukashenka dedicated to the problem of corruption during his address on 22 April 2014 suggests that the situation has become intolerable. Moreover, it also signals that the law-enforcement agencies can no longer be regarded as a wholesome part of the public administration system.

## **The Ukrainian Scenario is Being Tested in Belarus**

For the moment there are only during drills. A joint exercise with the 120th guards motorised brigade and internal troops of the Interior Ministry recently took place. During the drill its participants worked out coordinated tactics to accomplish special tasks in urban areas.

One of the goals of the exercise was to develop the most appropriate approach when using the nation's military units, and establishing the technical and logistical support needed in preparation for conducting special military operations. The latter essentially included counter-insurgency and anti-sabotage manoeuvres, suppressing armed insurgencies or similar activities using their own forces against that of the enemy.

They also worked out plans to hold joint street patrols and maintaining curfew by military personnel and internal troops. The participants were trained in carrying out their respective duties at checkpoints and inspecting incoming transports as well as countering mass riots with joint actions.

It is worth noting that during the exercise the military personnel worked out their actions in reaction to the occupation of administrative buildings by a group of aggressively minded people who earlier tried to hold an unauthorised rally in a public square.

## **Drugs Remain in the Spotlight**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs insists on setting up an interagency anti-drug commission, which will allow for the monitoring and anti-trafficking measures for new psychoactive substances within days after their initial seizure. The interagency commission is being established with three agencies: the State Committee of Forensic Examinations, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Health.

This commission can prohibit, by an official decision that it

makes, any substance that is determined to have a psychoactive effect on a potential user and is dangerous for their health. The Ministry of Internal Affairs also initiated new legislation in this vein.

They proposed to toughen the penalties associated with drug distribution by punishing the production of psychoactive substances in drug laboratories as well as the sale of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their analogues to minors by imprisonment of up to 13 years. Amendments to Decree No. 60 "On measures to improve the use of the national segment of Internet", which will allow for prohibiting by law visits to web sites that were found to have sold drugs are also under consideration.

It is thought that it will automatically deny at least 90% of distributors the possibility of selling narcotic substances online. In the long term, there are plans to establish the single centralised register of drug users and set up the process of obtaining information about drug addicts from healthcare institutions.

### **Greed or Fear?**

Analysing the events in April, we can say that the Belarusian authorities are trying to milk the most out of the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine. Considering the context of the occupation of Crimea, the introduction of an embargo on military and technical cooperation with Russia is a matter of principle for Kyiv. Public opinion demands it. However, the Ukrainian military and industrial complex needs money – much of which comes from Russia.

If things should progress along this line of thought, Minsk is ready to jump into the game by offering itself as an assembly plant for the Ukrainian defence industry. The Belarusian authorities are trying to act as an intermediary for military equipment supplies, and idea which is of interest to Russian

customers. In other words, the idea is to set up assembly and production plants in Belarus of the products that would be essentially Ukrainian, but with the label would "made in Belarus" for further sale to Russia. It looks like so far Moscow and Kyiv have no objections to this option.

On 2 April 2014, Lukashenka set an agenda to organise the manufacturing of airplanes and helicopters in Belarus in the production facilities of JSC Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant, which is owned by the Ukrainian helicopter corporation Motor Sic". A statement about the need to enhance cooperation with Ukraine in the military and industrial sphere in general followed. According to Lukashenka, "the time [for this] is right". And they need to seize this opportunity to set up the manufacture of new products, including ones headed for the Russian market.

loud statements about the indestructible military and political union with Russia are aimed one goal – to increase the importance of Belarus as the Kremlin's partner

In general, intermediary's (Belarus) services in helping to supply products from the Ukrainian military and industrial complex to Russia as well as recurrent loud statements about the indestructible military and political union with Russia are aimed one goal – to increase the importance of Belarus as the Kremlin's partner. And this is not only about Minsk's hope to obtain additional financial and economic benefits from Moscow. The first reason for this behaviour is the clear threat of Russia's continued aggressive actions towards other post-Soviet countries.

### **The CSTO Fears Threats from Afghanistan**

The CSTO is preparing for the end of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. In connection with this, the Organisation has identified four potential risks:

- risks of destabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan;
- the creation of bases for various armed extremist groups and centres of ideological influences in Central Asian countries and, subsequently, a rising number Islamists in these countries;
- the creation of training centres for militants;
- an expansion in drug trafficking in the territory of CIS countries.

The risk of a major invasion from Afghanistan is not regarded as probable. However, local attempts at penetration by armed groups into Tajikistan are a real threat, and such attacks have already been recorded. More alarmingly, their number is growing rapidly. The objectives of trespassers are different: political and solely criminal, related to drug trafficking.

The drug trade remains a priority for the CSTO. This is due to the fact that Russia is currently the major consumer of heroin in the world: the country has 1.7 million drug addicts, whose number increases annually by around 80 thousand people, with roughly 30 thousand people dying every year from overdoses. With these facts in consideration, the Centre of Special Anti-Drug Operation is being established within the CSTO, which will focus on coordinating special operations against the Afghan drug mafia.

### **Modernisation of Fighters of the National Air Force Begins**

Currently, the beginning of a project of modernisation for 10 fighters MiG-29 has been confirmed. It will affect the systems of control, their aiming and tracking systems and their armaments. The airplanes will improve their ability to hit ground targets. The modernisation of the heavy Su-27 is planned to happen the end of the first stage of the modernisation project. However, no specifics are available yet. The question of modernisation of the assault fighters

Su-25 also remains open; it was reported in January this year, but nothing further appears to have occurred.

The modernisation of the domestic fighters MiG-29 may also have an economic effect by spurring the interest of foreign customers. Talks are now under way with a foreign country about the modernisation of the MiG-29. The contract may be signed this year; the 558th Aircraft Repair Plant in Baranavichy will be responsible for the work.

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## **New Chief of General Staff, Modernisation of Air Force, S-300 – Belarus Security Digest**

Aliaksandr Lukashenka made a good personnel decision by appointing a new Chief of General Staff.

Security agencies suffer from underfunding. It forces them to adopt austerity measures and negatively impacts the number of those who want to choose to serve in the military.

Unable to procure new combat aircraft, the Belarusian authorities have decided to modernise their existing fleet.

The delivery of new armaments from Russia has been postponed

once again. The Kremlin may use its military and technical assistance to Belarus as leverage against Minsk.

### **A New Chief of General Staff Appointed**

On 11 January 2014, Major General Alieh Bielakonieu, previously in command of the Special Operations Forces, was appointed the Chief of General Staff. He belongs to a group of operational commanders. He is considered to be aware of the real situation in the Belarusian Army and he has necessary business skills to run it: energetic, prone to innovation and not afflicted with Soviet dogmatism.

He is not afraid of assuming responsibility, which is unusual today for the Belarusian leadership. He has demonstrated the qualities of an efficient lobbyist, which helped to meet the needs of the Special Operations Forces in financial and material resources even under the conditions of budget cuts. He has also devoted a great deal of time to the welfare of his subordinates, spending a lot of time among troops.

### **The Army Has to Cut Down Expenses**

The practise of minimum spending being spent on the needs of the Army will continue in the coming years. For this reason the Ministry of Defence seeks to find money internally to maintain its capabilities and ration its costs. The most sophisticated systems are available to the Air Force and the Air Defence Forces of Belarus, which have been the main priority for more than ten years already.

So, all the repairs and modernisation of weapons and equipment will be performed by Belarusian enterprises. Repair units have been set up for anti-aircraft missiles and radar, with troops performing routine maintenance and repairs. These measures will help to save money by not employing specialists from the manufacturers of combat weapon systems.

### **No Money, Shortage of Staff**

Performance in staffing the Armed Forces in 2013 was analysed and its goals for 2014 were readjusted. The past year was marked with better staffing of the officer corps in comparison to 2012. It was achieved by implementing a set of measures. First, this was done by enlisting new graduates of military colleges. Second, by retraining warrant officers with their promotion to a military officer with the rank of lieutenant. Also, officer ranks were given to female military staff who were already serving in officer positions.

the Ministry of Emergency Situations this agency allowed its employees to hold second jobs in their spare time

In the state budget for 2014 the clothing allowance of the Army is only financed at 40% of assessed need. In other security agencies the overall situation is similar. At the end of January, it became known that the Ministry of Emergency Situations suspended payments of bonuses to its rank-and-file and junior command personnel, bonuses that which amounted to between 250,000 – 270,000 Belarusian roubles. To take cool the situation down a little, due to the low wages of servicemen, the Ministry of Emergency Situations this agency allowed its employees to hold second jobs in their spare time.

### **The Novelty of the Belarusian Defence Industry on Combat Duty**

The new domestic radar station "Vostok-D" went was launched for combat duty for air defence in the 49th Radar Brigade. The station was created in accordance with the State Armament Programme and is of an original design. The manufacturer of the station is the company "Radar Systems." The main activities of the company's branches are design and industrial-scale manufacturing of air defence systems, radars, radio navigation systems and means of electronic warfare and their modernisation.

The technical specifications of the station allow it to replace several obsolete medium and long range radar stations

at once. The station has a high detection range (up to 360 kilometres) and mobility; it is capable of efficiently tracking small targets and objects manufactured with stealth technology.

### **Operational Readiness of Troops Tested**

Operational readiness test of the Armed Forces that was promised by Aliaksandr Lukashenka started in January. The main burden was placed on the Air Force and the Air Defence Force as well as the Special Operations Forces. Aircraft were dispersed with their relocation to alternate airfields in Luninets and Babrujsk. The units that were protecting the airfields had to operate under attacks from saboteurs and reconnaissance groups of the enemy.

### **Plans to modernise the Air Force**

On 30 January 2014, Deputy Minister of Defence for armaments Major General Ihar Latsienkou announced the decision to carry out the overhaul and modernisation of MiG-29 and Su-25 aircraft, was set to begin in early 2014. The first 10 aircraft are already in the 558th Aircraft Repair Plant in Baranavichy. It is still unclear if all aircraft will be modernised or only some of them.

Besides, in the nearest future the military and industrial complex of Belarus may carry out the comprehensive modernisation of Su-27 fighters. Their fate was extremely confusing. On 28 August, Minister of Defence Jury Zhadobin said that the Su-27 fighters were not decommissioned but their operation was discontinued.

Jury Zhadobin said that the Su-27 fighters were not decommissioned but their operation was discontinued

On 14 November 2013, Commander of the Air Force and Air Defence Force of Belarus Alieh Dzvihaliou said that the Su-27

had been removed from operational use because their operation was expensive. And he added immediately that the Su-30, which are an upgraded version of the Su-27, were considered as potential replacement fighters for the national Air Force. And on 18 November 2013, Aliaksandr Lukashenka, while visiting the air base in Baranavichy, said that withdrawal of the Su-27 aircraft from the Air Force of Belarus was premature.

It all looks like an attempt to patch a hole that appeared after the decommissioning of two dozens heavy Su fighters. The only thing is that the aircraft have not been operational since 2011. And the Belarusian authorities became especially concerned with this problem only after facing the prospects of receiving a Russian air base on their own territory.

### **Delivery of S-300 Postponed Again**

The Ministry of Defence is pinning its main hope on 2015, when they expect (and for now that is all they do – expect) the delivery of four battalions of air defence missile systems S-300 as well as radar equipment and trainer aircraft Yak-130 from Russia that they were promised three years ago. Belarus should then focus on their plans to get four battalions of air defence missile systems S-300 from Russia; they are seen as a kind of bonus for the planned deployment of a Russian air base in Belarus.

If in the past, the transfer of these weapon systems was planned for this year, now the question is whether or not they will arrive in 2015. It should be emphasised that these four battalions have been scheduled for delivery since 2011 already. In July 2012, it was announced that the delivery would take place in the near future. Now, this 'near future' appears to be 2015. With this in mind, the outlook for rearming of the 377th air defence missile regiment and changing over from the S-200 to S-300 air defence system looks rather dim.

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