

# Bakiyev Praised for the Bishkek Massacre and Offered Political Asylum in Belarus



Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the ousted President of Kyrgyzstan, declined the offer of political asylum in Belarus. Speaking to his supporters in the south of his country Bakiyev shared his decision and the news that President Lukashenko was on his side. The Belarus president condemned the “anti-state and anti-constitutional coup d’état” as well as the Russian and United States policy towards the recent Kyrgyzstan events by calling it “very bad and shortsighted”.

At the same time, Lukashenko supported the use of firearms against the Kyrgyz opposition: “There is no reason to blame Bakiyev that the authorities used force to defend themselves. If the authorities cannot defend themselves and their people – what kind of authorities are those?”

Perhaps by “their people” he meant Bakiyev’s son Maksim widely known for embezzling state funds and leading lavish life in an impoverished Central Asian republic. “Their people” also meant other relatives Bakiyev put into key positions in Kyrgyzstan such as his brother Janysh Bakiyev who served as a high-ranked security official and reportedly ordered to open fire against the crowd.

Although Lukashenko has no brothers, he also has “his people” to take care of, including three sons. One of them, Victor Lukashenko, is already one of the most influential businessmen in Belarus and serves as his security adviser.

Bakiyev killed scores of demonstrators in Bishkek and still had to resign. Ironically, just a few years ago he was one of

opposition demonstrators himself when the Tulip revolution brought him to power in 2005. “Strong” presidents is a curse not only for Belarus and Kyrgyzstan but for virtually all post-Soviet countries.

The exceptions are Ukraine and Moldova which are parliamentary republics. They are far from perfect, but at least there are no political killings or political prisoners. Authorities in those countries have to rely on the ballot box, not guns to defend themselves. Perhaps changing constitutions to get rid of strong presidential posts is something other countries in the region should seriously consider.

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## **Kraków City Council Declares Lukashenka Persona Non-Grata**

The council of the Polish city of Kraków has declared Aliaksandr Lukašenka, the President of Belarus, persona non grata in the city. It is a symbolic gesture of solidarity with the Union of Poles in Belarus. The city council has passed a resolution which appeals to the European Parliament to take all possible effective action against the Belarusian state to protect the rights of persecuted Poles in Belarus. The [conflict](#) around the Union of Poles of Belarus is quite far from what it may look like at the first glance. The specific is that the conflict has no nationalistic background at all.

In principle, one can find potential grounds for Polish-Belarusian nationalistic tensions on historical and geographic issues, just as there are tensions between Poland and the Republic of Lithuania around the Vilnius region or between

Poland and Ukraine on the role of Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the 2nd World War. Polonization and repressions against Belarusian national movement in Poland-occupied West Belarus in 1919-1939, transfer of the city of Bielaŭstok (Polish Białyŭstok) and surroundings from Belarus to Poland by Joseph Stalin in 1945 or the fact itself that Poles are the only ethnic minority in Belarus that was largely formed not as a result of migration of people from mainland Poland but from Roman Catholics of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania adopting Polish self-identification – all these controversial historical episodes could have been used by a nationalistic Belarusian government as a reason for tensions with Poland.

As a tradition from Soviet times, September 17, the day of the Soviet invasion to Poland in 1939, is still commemorated as the Day of Reunification of West Belarus with the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, but nothing more than that. Belarus has avoided a wave of nationalistic self-esteem buildup all other newly independent states, like Ukraine or the Baltic states, have been through. The regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka is far from being nationalistic. To the contrary, it seems more cautious about the Belarusian-speaking minority, that is mostly represented by urban intelligentsia and youth in opposition to Lukashenka, than about the Polish minority. There is an official Union of Poles of Belarus led by Stanislau Siamashka that is loyal to the government and that gets support from it.

The prosecution of the unofficial Union of Poles of Belarus led by Anžalika Borys is first of all a prosecution of an organization that is independent from the government and refused to demonstrate loyalty. It should be viewed together with the government's reluctance to register political parties (like the Belarusian Christian Democracy) or repressions against free press in Belarus – and not along with nationalistic tensions between certain parties in Poland and Ukraine or the Republic of Lithuania. Read stories by

[Belorusskie Novosti](#), [Gazeta.pl](#) (in Polish) and [TVP](#) (in Polish). See also a [background story by Deutsche Welle Russian edition](#)

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# **BBC Interviews Ivonka Survilla – President of Belarusian Government in Exile**

BBC features Ivonka Survilla, the President of the Council (Rada) of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in a special broadcast on governments in exile.



According to the program author, Clive Anderson, the Rada is the longest-serving government in exile in the world. The Belarusian Democratic Republic's independence was declared on March 25, 1918 during World War I, when Belarus was occupied by the Germans according to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

After the Germans retreated from the territory of Belarus and the Russian Red Army started moving in to establish the Socialist Soviet Republic of Belarus, in December 1918, the Rada (Council) of the Belarusian Democratic Republic moved to Hrodna, which became the centre of a semi-autonomous Belarusian region within the Republic of Lithuania. During the subsequent 1919 Polish invasion, the Rada went into exile and

facilitated an anticommunist struggle within the country during the 1920s.

The BBC program examines interesting examples from around the world, which vary from the serious to the apparently ridiculous.

*Clive Anderson examines one of the potentially strangest corners of international politics, the lesser-known governments or rulers in exile – a paradoxical area of international relations and surreal part of international law.*

*In Toronto, for example, a Belarusian government holds court, run by the charismatic Irvonka Survilla. Their version of Belarus only existed for nine months in 1918 before it was assimilated by the Soviet Union. Now that Belarus is independent, is there any reason for their continued existence?*

The broadcast is available at BBC Radio 4 until 1 March 2010. To listen, click [here](#).

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**Russia's New Military  
Doctrine Mentions Belarusian  
Security**



On February 5, 2010 President Dmitri Medvedev approved a new Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. The document replaces the version adopted in 2000 and will serve as a frame of reference for the Russian military through 2020.

Among other things, the doctrine addresses the security of the so-called Union State of Belarus and Russia. According to the text of the doctrine, Russia “considers an armed attack on the state-participant in the Union State, as well as all other actions involving the use of military force against it, as an act of aggression against the Union State, and it will take measures in response.”

The new doctrine provides that Russia’s main priorities for its military-political cooperation with the Republic of Belarus are the following:

- (a) coordinating efforts in developing the national armed forces and using military infrastructure;
- (b) developing and coordinating measures toward maintaining the defense capabilities of the Union State in accordance with the Military Doctrine of the Union State.

According to the new doctrine, Russia can use nuclear weapons in response to the use of any types of weapons of mass destruction against itself or its allies. However, the doctrine does not provide for pre-emptive nuclear strikes. In fact, it reduces Moscow’s reliance on nuclear weapons, contrary to the predictions and concerns raised in the Western media throughout 2009.

The doctrine names the expansion of NATO first in a list of major external threats to Russia. Commenting on the reflection of Russia’s threat assessment in the new doctrine NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told Reuters that the

document “does not reflect the real world” and that “NATO is not an enemy of Russia.”

[Read the full text of the doctrine in Russian.](#)

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## 2000s for Democracy in Belarus: a Decade of Disappointment



*An article by one of this website's authors for the on-line magazine Novaja Europa:*

January 1, 2010 will not be just the beginning of a new year but the beginning of a new calendar decade. It is a formal and conventional event, but that's the way our perception is constructed – it is easier for us to view history in decades. Swinging Sixties, Greedy Eighties, Noxious Nineties. The 2000s (or “noughties”) will be a separate segment in systematized history of mankind.

For Belarus, it was a decade of dictatorship. The first full calendar decade under the unlimited authoritarian power of Aliaksandr Lukašenka.

We have entered 2000 under the red-green flag of the Lukašenka regime and leave 2009 with it still over our heads. In the 1990s the key year for Belarus was 1996, when, after the infamous [referendum](#), Belarus turned into a country where the

whole power is concentrated in the hands of one man. 2006, with its tragic and disgraceful defeat of the opposition at the [presidential elections](#), has become a landmark year in the 2000s. The lesson we should learn from these years is that 2016 is either unlikely to become the year of Belarus' liberation from dictatorship.

In 2000, that seems so recent, one might have thought that Lukašenka is there for not a long time. A year, or two, or three, and Belarus will at last be free. Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004 has spread much hope that was not destined to turn into reality. The noughties have been a decade of disappointment for Belarus, a decade which has completely turned Belarus into a very special country on the European continent.

Thirteen years have passed since the coup d'état of 1996. During this time a whole new generation of Belarusians has grown up – another generation of people with Soviet mentality, even though it's been almost twenty years since the Soviet Union itself doesn't exist any more. We may remind ourselves of 1957, thirteen years after the Nazi occupation of Belarus has been replaced back by Soviet occupation. By that time the anti-Soviet partisan movement in Belarus and neighbouring Soviet republics has almost completely vanished. Perhaps, this was not least because the society had realized that the Soviets came to stay. The same can be said about today's Belarus, with its tired, demoralized and split opposition; with the fact that Belarusians have mainly concentrated on consumption and primitive physical survival so that even the economic crisis does not initiate political protest.

In 1999 there could still be doubts, but the noughties have proven one thing to us. Belarus might have gained juridical independence simply following the trend set by Baltic countries and Ukraine, who had really struggled for it. However, we couldn't have got democracy the same way. A whole range of specifically Belarusian problems came into play: weak

national self-identification of the people, lack of political culture and absence of national elite, the unfinished process of formation of the Belarusian nation as such. All the dark legacy of the Soviet age, which might not be so noticeable to an outside observer, has realized its potential in the 1990s and became institutionalized in the 2000s.

Belarus enters 2010 as a very specific European country. A political system that rather resembles the relationship of a feudal and his serfs. An archaic economy, where the government has woken up with reforms twenty years after liberation of the socialist camp and where it is not clear, if there is still something to be reformed. A nation that missed the train of 20th century's romantic nationalisms and represents a mechanistic community of pragmatic and indifferent people without native language and historical memory.

Any difference is a potential advantage. Belarus may be able to transform its difference into an advantage, to realize its potential as a land untouched by investors in the middle of Europe or as a cradle for a post-nationalistic pluralistic traditionalism. Otherwise this potential will be spent in vain with sad consequences for the country. There is no third option, and there's not much time left till we find out the answer. It is, of course, necessary to hope for the better, but it may be far more useful to be prepared for the worst.

[Read the original story in Belarusian](#)

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# The Times: Hugo Chávez defends the 'bad guys' of the world



Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez tightens bonds with US foes: from Castro to Lukashenka, the influential British newspaper The Times states.

## *Hugo Chávez defends the 'bad guys' of the world*

*By Hannah Strange*

*Published: November 23, 2009*

*President Hugo Chávez has risked international ire by lauding Carlos the Jackal, the Venezuelan terrorist notorious for a series of bombings, kidnappings and hijackings across Europe, as a "revolutionary fighter" unjustly imprisoned for trying to defend the Palestinian people.*

*The leftist Venezuelan leader praised Carlos – whose real name is Ilich Ramirez Sánchez – as "one of the great fighters of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation", denying he was a terrorist and claiming his lifetime imprisonment in France was unfair.*

*"I defend him," he said during a speech on Friday night. "It doesn't matter to me what they say tomorrow in Europe."*

*Ramirez was incarcerated for life in France in 1997 for the 1975 murders of two French secret agents and an alleged informant, after being captured in Sudan three years earlier by French agents acting on a CIA tip and whisked to Paris in a sack. Mr Chávez said that this amounted to "kidnap".*

He has admitted to leading a 1975 attack on the Opec headquarters in Vienna that killed 3 people, and has been linked to the 1976 hijacking of an Air France jet en route to Uganda. He is also blamed for a series of bomb attacks in Paris and a grenade attack on the English headquarters of an Israeli bank.

Most famously, it is believed that he was the "godfather" behind the murders of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972.

Ramirez has also expressed support for al-Qaeda and spoken of his "relief" at the 9/11 attacks. It is not the first time that Mr Chávez has waded into controversy over Carlos the Jackal, who retains a small but ardent following in socialist Venezuela.

After taking office in 1999, the former paratrooper provoked international uproar when he wrote to Ramirez in prison, addressing him as "Dear Compatriot", and has previously described him as a friend. Addressing Friday's gathering of socialist politicians from 40 countries, Mr Chávez claimed that Ramirez had paid the price for his defence of the Palestinian cause. "How many Palestinians keep dying?" he added. "They accuse him of being a terrorist, but Carlos really was a revolutionary fighter," he said.

The fiery anti-American leader sought to defend leaders he said were wrongly branded "bad guys", heaping praise on Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is to visit Venezuela later this week, and the Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe, who he called "brothers".

He drew the wrath of Ugandans after casting doubt on the crimes of the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. "We thought he was a cannibal," said Mr Chávez of Amin, whose regime was notorious for torturing and killing suspected opponents in the 1970s. "I have doubts ... Maybe he was a great nationalist, a

*patriot.”*

*Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni’s secretary, Tamale Mirundi, reminded Mr Chávez on Sunday of the brutality of the Amin regime, under which around 300,000 Ugandans died, including one of Mr Mirundi’s wives.*

*Never one to shy away from controversy, Mr Chávez has during his decade in office built up close alliances with foes of Washington around the globe, most famously the former Cuban leader Fidel Castro, whom he regards as his ideological mentor.*

*He recently hosted Mr Mugabe at a summit on Margarita Island in Venezuela and invited the Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir to Caracas after claiming that the international warrant for his arrest over the genocide in Darfur was based on racism.*

*He has also forged ties with President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus, often said to be Europe’s last dictator, and has built a military alliance with Moscow, visiting both countries as part of a recent tour that also included Iran, Syria, Algeria and Libya.*

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## **Belarus May Win from the Change of US Missile Defense Plans**



On Sept. 17, to Russia's satisfaction and to Poland's chagrin, President Obama announced canceling US plans to build a missile base in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic. The revelation came on the 70th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland and was widely seen as US betrayal of its Eastern European ally.

For Belarus, however, the date marked a second week of Zapad 2009 military exercise, in which Belarus and Russia fought an enemy armed to NATO standards and attacking from the West. There can be little doubt of what enemy they were preparing to counter. Fortunately, the change of US plans on missile defense in Europe has made the actualization of this disturbing scenario less likely.

While President Barack Obama hardly remembered Belarus when deliberating the issue, his decision may have a positive effect on Belarus' relationship with Poland and the European Union as a whole. The US decision on missile defense signals a more cautious stance on NATO expansion. If last year Ukraine's NATO membership and consequent Russian outrage seemed probable, now it is now clear that decades may pass until Belarus borders a NATO state in the south.

The agreement to station ten missile defense interceptors on Polish soil to counter potential Iranian attack was signed between the United States and Poland on August 20, 2008, – immediately after the Russia-Georgia clash over the separatist region of South Ossetia. In return for Polish hospitality, Washington was to provide Warsaw with 20 Patriot missiles –

facing Moscow and, of course, Minsk. Strongly opposed to U.S. plans, Russia threatened to deploy ballistic missiles in Kaliningrad and/or Belarus. The missiles could be stationed at the air base Machulishchy, near Minsk.

Had the US plans actualized, Russia would have probably proceeded to place its weapons on the Belarusian territory, forcing the country to the forefront of the East-West confrontation. As a result, Belarus' participation in the Eastern Partnership would have come to an end, and its relations with the international community would have rapidly deteriorated.

With no American rockets in Poland, an opportunity to mend Minsk's relationship with Warsaw and Brussels has emerged. How much Belarus will benefit from the cancellation of US missile defense system in Europe depends on its willingness to overcome additional obstacles to the Minsk-E.U. rapport – Belarus' authoritarianism, disregard for human rights, and economic dependence on Russia.

In the nearly two decades of Belarus' "independent" policymaking, its relationship with the West tended to reflect the dynamics of Russian-US relationship rather than the preferences of the Belarusian people or even Belarusian national interest. Although the country of Belarus' size and geopolitical location must be advised to follow neutrality, Belarus has increasingly put itself on the front line of confrontation between Russia and the West.

The Belarusian leadership must realize that close military cooperation with a state as unpopular as Russia entails excessively high risks. Like the United States, which was unwilling to come to Georgia's rescue last summer, Russia is unlikely to prioritize the protection of satellites that are made targets by its own actions. On the crossroads between the East and West, Belarus should aim at becoming a bridge in the security architecture of the post-Cold War Europe rather than

a battlefield for the United States and Russia to resolve their conflicts.

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## **Greetings from the Axis of Evil**

The Soviet past taught Minsk that guns and oil are the most powerful instruments for shaping the international politics. Arms transfers to client governments allowed the Soviet Union to recruit allies and expand its strategic influence. Belarusian heavy industry constituted 25 percent of Soviet machine production, and when the Soviet Union collapsed, Minsk started exporting arms independently – only not so much to advance its strategic goals as to simply survive. In 1997, profits from selling the warehouses of the former Soviet Army reached \$500 million, securing Belarus ninth place among the world's ten largest arms exporters. The Soviet Union funded the decades of military and economic aid to allies through millions of barrels of oil exported in petroleum and natural-gas products. Belarus cannot emulate the USSR in this respect because its oil reserves are negligible and it has to import 75% of its oil from Russia. After the Soviet implosion, its deference earned Minsk generous energy subsidies. However, Moscow eventually raised the gas prices and in June 2009 started building a new pipeline, which will cut Belarus from a key supply route to Europe. Last summer, the Kremlin went as far as to stop supplies to Belarus altogether after Minsk had expressed discontent. Chavez's overtures have come at the time when Belarus is looking to diversify its fuel supplies. On Lukashenka's visit to Venezuela in 2007, Chavez promised to supply the oil needs of Minsk for years to come and this promise seems close to fulfillment. Venezuela is one of the

world's richest countries in oil reserves, which are estimated at 77.7 billion barrels. In return, Belarus will supply weapons and technological expertise. Partnership with Caracas will give Minsk access to South America's defense industry market. Having recently launched a military modernization program, Venezuela is interested in purchasing an anti-aircraft defense and portable missile systems. The two states are also considering joint design and manufacture of new military and technological equipment and transfer of technology. Like Russia, Venezuela is not shy about exploiting energy dependency of its customers. Chavez has already warned of cutting off oil exports, should the United States become aggressive. This matters little to Belarus, however, as Caracas will be less sensitive than Moscow about Lukashenka's overtures with the European Union. Lukashenka has been seeking closer ties with the European Union and the United States, but made merely cosmetic changes to his behavior at home and abroad. If the marriage of Belarusian arms to Venezuelan oil succeeds, he may change his mind about improving Minsk's relationship with the West and revert to old ways.

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## **The Real Shooting Distance of Belarusian Guns**

The Belarusian government not only violates human rights at home, but also hand over fist contributes to their violations abroad, going just as unpunished.

Last week Graduate Institute of International Studies issued a report titled "Small Arms Survey 2009: Shadows of War", which named Belarus – along with principled regimes like Iran and North Korea – a "significant exporter" of small arms that

provides little or no information on its exports. Produced annually by a team of researchers based in Geneva, Switzerland, the report estimates the undocumented trade of firearms to be at least US\$ 100 million.

Little Belarus has been culpable of keeping the illegal arms trade up from its very birth as an independent state. In the new millennium it has only become better at it. In 2002, Mark Lenzi wrote in the Wall Street Journal Europe, that Belarus secretly delivered over \$500 million worth of weapons to Palestinian militants. In 2003, Lebanon seized Belarusian weapons waiting to be smuggled into Iraq in defiance of a United Nations ban. In 2004, a report produced by Amnesty International accused Minsk of selling weapons and equipment "complicit in torture, rape and murder" in the western Darfur region.

The Belarusian leadership did not even flinch at being caught red-handed by the world's leading human rights watchdog and in 2006 concluded a military cooperation protocol with Sudan, selling even more armored personnel carriers. Incidentally, the same carriers were seen in Darfur in March 2007. In January 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding on defense cooperation was signed with Iran. And in March of 2007, Minsk publicly offered to sell Venezuela the SA-3 Goa and SA-8 Gecko surface-to-air missile systems. Another good Belarusian friend, authoritarian Turkmenistan, did not mind acting as a conduit for delivering Belarusian weapons to the opposition in Tajikistan and to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

According to information available on the Web site of Belarusian embassy in the United States, Belarusian export control system "meets high international criteria" and the country "acts in strict correspondence with the United Nations embargo that prohibits exports of arms and equipment to the countries of unfavorable military and political situation or states participating in any regional conflicts." In reality,

however, export control regulations in Belarus remain porous allowing the Minsk to continuously rank among the world's leading arms exporters earning millions in lucrative deals with developing countries.

Belarus' dangerous exports end up in places just as "roguish" as where they come from. Many are sent to conflict-ridden and armed-to-teeth hotspots, to which the West knows better than to sell more weaponry. According to the U.S. Congressional Research Service, from 1998 through 2005 the country ranked 11th in the world in deliveries of arms to developing nations with \$1.1 billion in deliveries to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, conflict areas in the Balkans, the Adjara region of Georgia, and the Palestinian territories among other glorious places. Such markets are most profitable because Belarus faces no competition there as few other nations have as little to lose in their international image as Minsk does.

Belarusian heavy industry constituted 25 percent of Soviet machine production. After the USSR collapsed, the country's defense sector started exporting left and right to survive, just as all other former Soviet Union states. In 1997, profits from selling the warehouses of the former Soviet Army reached \$500 million, securing Belarus ninth place among the world's ten largest arms exporters.

For a desperate satellite reeling off its Soviet orbit, the country was doing surprisingly well. At the end of the 1990s Belarus started manufacturing parts to repair the old technical equipment purchased earlier by the Soviet clients – Cuba, China, Ethiopia, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and others. Ten years after the Soviet implosion, Belarusian defense industry switched to modernizing old Soviet equipment and developing new technologies. At the same time, the secrecy of Belarusian arms exports increased. In January 2004, presidential decree established Goskomvoenprom, the state military-industrial committee. Besides planning, coordination, and control of production, the committee's tasks include

dabbling into arms export, which was previously reserved exclusively for the Foreign and Defense ministries.

Belarusian swagger on the arms market perplexes those who know the limitations of the country's weapons industrial base. All of the Soviet heritage must have been sold out or become obsolete by now. So where do the guns for sale come from? While damaging the country's relations with the West, the arms exports are suspected to be oiling the wheels in the country's relations with Russia. With no weapons development base of its own, it is Russian weapons Belarus may be selling. The symbiosis of the two "brotherly" nations results in a political cover for Moscow and financial backing for Minsk. This way Russia is able to reach the markets frowned upon by the West without risking international denunciation, and the Belarusian government can tap into considerable profits, cementing its authoritarian power at home.

More than 100 Belarus enterprises cooperate with Russian partners. According to the official data, their teamwork goes no farther than making spare parts and accessories for military equipment. In May 2007, Russian arms officials publicly denied any allegation that Moscow violated international embargos by selling arms through Minsk. However, even Russian analysts from Moscow Defense Brief admitted that "[i]t would have been quite difficult for Belarus to take this position [on the world's arms market] without cooperating with Russian agencies."

Belarus is careful not to give away too much about its arms exports. Four years ago the National Report on arms exports published by the Foreign Ministry stopped disclosing information about Belarus' customers, volumes of trade, and types of the equipment sold. The document has been reduced to a list of normative acts in the field of licensing and export control.

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka claims that Belarusian weapons

sales are insignificant and that the revenues are used to prop up the Belarusian ruble. The leader denies Belarus' involvement in the illegal arms trade, dismissing allegations as disinformation fed to the Western media by the opposition. In an interview with AFP news agency in November 2008 Lukashenka accused NATO of provoking a 'mini arms race' by flying planes near Belarusian borders and said he was considering buying short-range Russian Iskander missiles to step up air defenses.

The regime's dependence on arms exports to unsavory regimes is an indication that since the collapse of the Soviet Union the nation's economy has evolved as little as its political system. This year, the country's relationship with the West has improved. If Belarus still plans on joining the rest of Europe, it must act like a civilized nation: end oppression at home and stop profiting on oppression abroad.

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## **New York Times: Russia's Neighbors Resist Wooing and Bullying**

**The New York Times** Today's New York Times argues that Russia's policy towards the former Soviet Union republics is far from successful. Despite its own economic hardship, Moscow is trying to buy loyalty of its neighbors. But the neighbors, and Belarus in particular, only disappoint Russia. Having taken cash from Moscow, Minsk is now seek more from the West, often neglecting its pro-Russian commitments:

*Belarus – which was promised \$2 billion in Russian aid – is in open rebellion against the Kremlin, flaunting its*

*preference for Europe while also collecting money from the International Monetary Fund. Uzbekistan joined Belarus in refusing to sign an agreement on the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces, an idea Moscow sees as an eventual counterweight to NATO.*

*Russia's strategy for consolidating support in neighboring capitals can hardly be called a strategy. Belarus's president, Aleksandr Lukashenko, who is avidly pursuing Western partners, has been barraged with carrots and sticks from Moscow – first promised \$2 billion in Russian aid, then bitterly chastised for his economic policy, then punished with a crippling ban on the import of milk products, then rewarded by a reversal of the import ban. Russia regards Mr. Lukashenko's truculence as a bluff.*

*“He is imitating a quarrel with Russia until the West demands serious changes from his regime, at which point, he will, of course, surrender,” said Parliament member Konstantin F. Zatulin, a standard-bearer for Russia's ambitions in former Soviet space. “It's just his greedy line of behavior.”*

Read full text in [New York Times](#).

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## **Jonathan Moore's interview to Charter97**



The United States chargé d'affaires in Belarus Jonathan Moore recently gave an interview to Charter97. Below is the full text of the interview:

– Mr. Moore, an alarming tendency has appeared recently: some European politicians openly flirt with the dictatorship in Belarus. Despite of the gross violations of human rights, new political prisoners in Belarusian prisons, crackdown on peaceful rallies, they speak about some “liberalization” in Belarus. What would the policy of the new US administration be, enticement of dictatorships or support and encouragement of democracy?

– Thank you for your question, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today. I would describe the situation in different terms. Over the past year we have seen a variety of developments in Belarus. Some developments have been positive, others have not been. To go back to last August, the release of the last political prisoners was a positive step.

We were told that conditions would be much improved for the parliamentary elections. However, those of us who observed those elections and certainly OSCE report which was very comprehensive and professional, now that the election did not turned out as promised.

There have been protests which have occurred without any interference by the police. There have been some events that were allowed to occur, such as the congress of the Belarusian Christian Democracy Party, and the Union of Poles; the distribution of Nasha Niva and Narodnaya Volya, and some steps to establish a broader dialogue with civil society.

At the same time, and we will be talking about it in the interview, there are some cases that are of concern to us.

In terms of Europe's position, of course Europe has many positions. There are 27 different member states that have 27 different opinions. I think it's important however to stress that both the US and the European Union have the same fundamental perspective towards Belarus. This is underlined by the fact that both the United States and the European Union recently took steps to prolong the suspension of some sanctions. But it also indicates that neither the European Union nor the US are in a position to be able to remove sanctions. The government in Washington made a decision to keep an Embassy here, to maintain a dialogue with civil society and the authorities. And that is an approach that the Obama Administration is continuing to follow.

We have made clear that we are prepared to take positive steps to encourage positive steps on the side of the Belarusian authorities.

We certainly have a very active dialogue with civil society. We appreciate the support of many people in Belarus to us through our diplomatic difficulties. But at the same time we are here to maintain dialogue with the authorities as well.

**- Isn't there a confusion of terms when you speak about positive steps and you mean positive steps that are not substantial? Small steps like the congress of the Belarusian Christian Democracy or the two newspapers that are now distributed in kiosks (but their distribution is very small, 300-400 copies for Minsk, which is next to nothing) have almost no influence on the situation in the country. And the West is underlining and stressing that "liberalization" is taking place, taking minor steps and insignificant changes as examples which do not influence the situation in Belarus. Meanwhile, new political prisoners appeared in Belarus, and**

**serious violations are going on and remain unnoticed.**

– I did not use the word “liberalization”. As we look at the situation, we look at smaller steps and at larger ones. We have many serious concerns and we’ve made that clear to the authorities. And we can talk about these cases in more detail, but we do not currently consider that there are political prisoners in Belarus. But I think the fact that U.S. sanctions have not been removed indicates that the United States is by no means satisfied that all the work is done in Belarus.

**– Over the past month human rights violations have taken place in Belarus: leaders of entrepreneurs Mikalay Autukhovich, Yury Lyavonau, Uladzimir Asipenka, Young Front activist Artsyom Dubski were imprisoned. Peaceful rallies on St Valentine’s Day and on Freedom Day were disbanded brutally. Youth leaders are forcibly drafted despite of their poor state of health. Why there is still no official reaction of the United States to these events?**

– Let’s talk about these issues separately. Certainly it is very much our belief that protests and meetings should be allowed to take place without interference from the police. Examples like the protests after the elections in September or protests of entrepreneurs in January showed that it’s certainly possible to have events and protests take place without police involvement. As far as I know (your information may be more up to date) the small protest that was held last night with regard to the Day of Remembrance, was not particularly marked by any action by the police.

**– But it only confirms that when the regime does not stage provocations, policemen do not beat up people, opposition can hold peaceful protest rallies.**

– In that context it should have been possible in February for the police to have not gotten involved.

With regard to the case against three entrepreneurs, we are

following it very closely. Two of them are former political prisoners. They are in custody. However, the court proceedings have not begun. We have expressed interest in seeing the evidence in the case and have not had the opportunity to do so. And therefore it would be premature for us to come to conclusions in that case.

Similarly, in the case of Artsyom Dubski, we were present at his last trial. And if there is another trial we will be observing that as well. We are following these issues carefully, but we do not feel it would be appropriate to characterize them specifically at this time.

**– The US imposed sanctions after the denial of Belarusian authorities to release political prisoners. When political prisoners were released, sanctions against two enterprises were lifted. Should these 4 people be detained, recognized as political prisoners by the United States and the EU, would the United States be fighting for their release as for the previous ones?**

– I don't want to speculate at this time. There have been cases where people have asked questions about the motivations for the trials, but people had been found innocent, or they've been only sentenced to a fine. We'll have to deal with each situation as it develops. It is our hope that more positive developments will occur, which will allow us to suspend more sanctions.

**– Belarusian human rights activists state there are hidden repressions in the country today. The regime has become more cunning. There are different concealed forms, for example, setting up criminal cases, falsified criminal cases against leaders, pressure like drafting youth leaders and pressure with the help of tax inspection. For a person from the West it is hard to realize what is going on here. Is there any hope that the international community will follow and be attentive to such cases?**

– I think we have open eyes: it's one of the reasons why we have an embassy here. As diplomats we are trained in observing these sorts of issues and situations all around the world. Like her predecessors, Secretary Clinton has been very clear: human rights are important for the United States.

We look at a host of factors and developments on many levels. And we also look at civil society very closely to understand what the policies are, what the motives of different organizations are. And certainly by paying that kind of attention, when we feel it's appropriate for us to act or speak out we will do that.

**– The ideals of freedom and democracy have always been precious for the US. The US stated it is necessary to promote these ideals all over the world. In most cases your country was adhering to principles when dealing with dictatorships. What is your attitude to the fact that Lukashenka's Belarus is becoming a part of the Eastern Partnership alongside with democratic Ukraine and Georgia, and to the invitation of the Belarusian dictator to the EU summit in Prague?**

– We view the Eastern Partnership as a very important initiative. It is of course the initiative of the European Union. The United States does not have a role in it. It already includes a number of countries; in addition to those you've mentioned, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan. And those countries are at different levels of political and economic development.

The EU is now discussing of course how they wish to approach the issue of invitations to the summit in Prague. There are good reasons for ensuring that Belarus is included, that Belarus is not excluded from a group of the countries in this region. It would be wrong to exclude a sovereign, independent country like Belarus from a regional gathering like this. It is a very active debate, and how the Europeans will decide is their business.

**– But fundamentally not the Belarusian nation is in question, but legalization of the regime called “the last dictatorship of Europe” by the US Department of State.**

– The United States and many European countries maintain embassies and diplomatic relations with Belarus. I think we’ve been clear about our perspectives on the situation in Belarus. But even in 2006 the United States sent an ambassador here who presented her credentials to Alexander Lukashenka. I attend events at the state level, where he is also present.

European ambassadors here also presented credentials to Lukashenka. So this is not a case of Cuba where we do not have diplomatic relations, or Iran, where we have no embassy, no diplomats at all. So I don’t think that’s the critical issue for the Europeans.

**– But Belarus’ becoming a member of the Eastern Partnership program would allow Lukashenka to say Europe recognizes him. He will ask for more loans to support his regime. Do you agree that dictatorship’s becoming a part of the European Partnership is more serious than giving credentials?**

– Honestly, I do not see it that way. Solana was just here, Ferrero-Waldner wanted to come here and expected to see him. I think that indicated that Europe at a very senior level is prepared to engage directly with Alexander Lukashenka. And as I’ve said the invitation to the summit depends on the European Union. I think the different sides will make their own statements and competent conclusions about who gets invited and how it would be handled.

**– What are the possibilities of making decision on tighter sanctions against Belarus by the US should the human rights situation deteriorates further in Belarus?**

– We are following the situation in Belarus, as we discussed earlier, very closely and with great interest. We recognize that we introduced comprehensive sanctions in 2007 against

Belneftekhim and its subsidiaries. I can't promise what decisions would be made in Washington. I do not want to eliminate any possible future decisions of this president or the next American president. I can tell you however in the current discussions we are not talking about adding to the sanctions, we are talking about taking away some of the sanctions.

We feel that it would be better to be in a situation where we would be suspending and in fact lifting our sanctions. We track the situation; we do take note of some steps that have occurred. The government in Washington will be reviewing the situation again at some meetings in May. We have to take the next decision before this 90-day period expires on June 1. We'll see what Washington decides at that point.

**- There is an opinion that EU being slow with sanctions caused the existence of political prisoners, and the US on the other hand, by introducing sanctions released political prisoners.**

There are some differences in the approach and mechanisms of the European Union and the United States, but our policy is fundamentally the same. In our case we were able to respond very quickly in August and September last year. And of course our sanctions against Belneftekim do not have a European equivalent. But I would encourage everyone in Belarus, whether civil society or the authorities, to look at the fundamental views of the United States and Europe as the same. We work very closely together with them here in Minsk, in European capitals, and in Washington.

We are looking at the situation with the same fundamental principles. With many European Union member states we share membership in NATO. We all, together with Belarus, are members of the OSCE. It's easy to find certain differences of opinion or differences of mechanisms. I have to tell you I personally do not see as a good thing when Europe is criticized and the United States is praised, or vice versa. I do not think that

anyone will succeed in dividing the fundamental views of the United States and Europe. And this can be said in different contexts, but working together is more important than working apart.

**– However, Belarusians note that the stand of the United States in the issue of human rights is very principled as opposed to approach of the EU.**

– European concern about the human rights is the fundamental basis for their sanctions. Being one country instead of 27, and having different mechanisms, the United States did take steps the European Union is not taking. But we do not have fundamental differences with Europe. Europe is taking its opportunities to engage or to have a dialogue with the regime, to discuss issues that are also of interest to us.

We do feel that the sanctions that we introduced had a concrete effect. And from our side we took very concrete practical steps to suspend some of the sanctions when we felt that decision was justified.

**– Now when the so-called “dialogue” of the Belarusian authorities with Europe is taking place, the Belarusian opposition states that this dialogue should be preceded by an internal dialogue between the regime and opposition. Do you agree with such an approach?**

– Many people use the word ‘dialogue’ as if it were some magical solution. We want to see dialogue with results, dialogue that is genuine, is open; that leads to mutual conclusions and hopefully to progress. Exactly what form it takes is up to the different participants in the dialogue to decide.

It is also important to have Belarusians talking to Belarusians in a practical way that can lead to more results.

Certainly I think it is an excellent advice to the authorities

to have a very broad and very open dialogue with civil society.

**– You observed the parliamentary elections in Belarus in 2008. They were recognized as not free and undemocratic by the world community. The same things happen in Belarus since the referendum held by Lukashenka in 1996 that changed the Constitution. Do you agree with Belarusian democrats who say today that the first democratic reform the Belarusian authorities must carry out is really free and transparent election?**

– We support the dialogue of the authorities with the OSCE to provide some changes to the electoral code. The conduct of elections is very important for us. At some polling places the conduct was quite correct in September. So we were prepared – in fact, it was a part of our discussions, even in August – to make more positive steps with regard to sanctions if the elections would go well in September. We'll have to see how things will go on from here, but yes, free, democratic elections are extremely important to us.

**– Once the US hoped that democratic liberal values would be enrooted in Russia. But that hasn't taken place. The opposite process is taking place. What conclusions are made from that by the United States?**

– It's not really for the American Charge d'Affaires in Minsk to comment on Russia. We have a well-staffed embassy in Moscow that is responsible for these issues. But I will take one point from the recent bilateral discussions between Russia and the United States. Our Secretary of State presented Foreign Minister Lavrov with a "reset" button. We are not yet in the position to have a reset button with Belarus. We have seen our diplomatic staff reduced by 90%. We have seen certain small improvements but there is much more that could be done. Extremely important for the United States, on a bilateral basis, is the release on humanitarian grounds of our citizen

Emanuel Zeltser. His assistant has been released, but we still have no indications when Mr Zeltser might be released. There is great deal of speculations about him in the international press. We have one fundamental concern: he is an American citizen, and he is dying. We need this situation to be resolved.

**- What is the possible way to resolve this situation when the Belarusian authorities do not listen to your calls you for the period of the year?**

-Well, we hope at some point they will listen to our calls. In every discussion with the Belarusian authorities we have stressed the critical importance of resolving this issue.

**- Once Lukashenka confessed that he asked \$5 billion loan form the US, but he was refused. However, Russia and the IMF have given loans to Lukashenka. Is it moral and economically expedient to give loans to the dictatorship? The dictatorship is supported in this way. It is obvious that the money is given not to the Belarusian people and not for holding reforms, but to support the existing repressive system.**

- We were asked about a bilateral loan from the United States. In the present economic situation we are not providing bilateral credits. As with other countries, we recommended that Belarus pursue a loan from the International Monetary Fund. It was our hope that the credit from the IMF would have ties to structural economic reforms. Because we did not see that in the IMF loan, the US voted against it. We do not have a veto, we are just one of the countries that votes.

In any economic crisis there is always criticism of the authorities. It was certainly a very difficult and unpopular step – but a very practical one – to devalue the Belarusian ruble. That devaluation of the currency, and certainly the currency slipped somewhat further since then, helped to increase the amount of exports that Belarus can make,

particularly to Russia. Although unfortunately so much of the economy in Belarus depends directly on the state and the state budget, it was a necessary step to devalue the currency.

We will see over time what other steps are necessary. The IMF is still in dialogue with Belarus. Credits that are tied to structural reforms would be received more positively by the United States.

And there are many ways: banking reform, changing property and real estate ownership laws, making privatization much more transparent, much more open. We will continue to watch the situation and have close consultations with the IMF.

The alternative to this is of course the economic collapse of Belarus. While there can be a discussion about the fundamental causes of such a collapse, I think that vast majority of people would agree that economic collapse would not be in the interest of Belarus' sovereignty and independence.

**– As we see, the regime is just accumulating debts without making economic reforms. For today the foreign debt of Belarus is about \$20 billion.**

– As for the United States, as I've said, there is no possibility of a bilateral loan. Regarding the IMF, there is currently no request for additional credit. I believe there is a possibility of a certain credit coming from the World Bank. But you should talk to the World Bank office about that. There is this recent currency swap with China, that is an interesting step. Russia is providing some portions of its loan to Belarus. I haven't discussed that at the official level, but I understand that there has been a request for further 3 billion dollar loan from Russia. I'm not an economist, but I think the hope is that it would be possible to move through the crisis this year. We'll have to see what happens, but I don't think Belarus can succeed by simply getting more and more credits or expecting more and more

credits.

**– How the US estimate the stepping up of military cooperation between Belarus and Russia, namely, creation of the common regional air defense system and the collective rapid reaction force in the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization? Some observers have already called them military groupings of “chasteners” created to crack down upon peaceful protest rallies in the countries of the treaty.**

-We want to see Belarus continue to be a sovereign and independent state. We would like to see the people of Belarus choose the country's path of economic and political development. We are certainly very well aware of Belarus' close military cooperation with Russia. We do not fear that, we do not see that as a threat. We and other countries continue to inspect military units in Belarus, as Belarusians do elsewhere.

I think, based on some recent initiatives of President Obama, that there will be some more discussions about missile defense programs. That is a topic of interest for Belarus.

We hope that as part of our dialogue with the authorities – and at some point when we have a defense attaché in Minsk – that we can clarify to those people in Belarus who do not understand the purpose of the anti-missile system. We disagree with the perspective that the anti-missile program being discussed as any kind of threat to Russia or to Belarus. That's perhaps another topic to discuss with the authorities.

**– You have spent a few years in Belarus. Foreign diplomats usually speak about the country of their stay tactfully: they note a rich history and culture, wonderful landscapes and warm-hearted people; they speak about their preferences in the national cuisine. But it is not a secret to anyone that the work of a Western diplomat in Belarus is not the easiest one. What were the most positive and the most negative impressions**

## **during your stay in our country?**

– The most difficult day for me in Belarus was May 3 last year, because that was the day that I escorted a convoy of eleven colleagues, their family members, and their pets to the border with Lithuania. I do not remember the number of vehicles that crossed the border, but it was at least ten cars. And just one vehicle with me, my wife and some of my colleagues and the American flag, returned alone to Minsk. And we knew that we had a job to do here in the embassy, and that we would have to continue doing it. It's been nearly a year since then. I'm very proud of how much we've been able to accomplish. And we still have some more to do before I leave in July.

In terms of positive impressions, there have been many. My first day in Belarus was a great source of satisfaction: to arrive here and embark upon a three-year assignment. I was very pleased to meet for the first time in August some of the last political prisoners who were released. We have gotten to know their families and worked for their release, but to meet them in person and hear what they had to say was very special.

Probably my proudest day in Belarus was July 4 last year when I hosted our Independence Day reception at the ambassador's residence in Raubichi. I was very glad to show our guests that the flag of the United States was still flying in Belarus. And I particularly appreciated the opportunity to host so many Belarusians and diplomatic colleagues who had been very supportive throughout the difficulties of last year.

But there may be more difficult days and more positive days, we will have to see...

– **All Belarusians who go abroad always say the same thing: it is easier to breathe in free countries. Returning back to Belarus, everybody notes how unhappy our people look. To your mind, what all of us have to do to breathe freely in our own**

## country?

– We want to see the people of Belarus reach their own conclusions, make their own choices, to consider the situation in their own country, to consider conditions in other countries. I would encourage people here to practice the best principles of Belarusian hospitality, which means to welcome as many foreigners to this country as possible, even diplomats (laughs), but also when possible to travel to other countries and form their own impressions. The United States – I do not know whether it is a compliment or an insult – is called a “superpower.” I can tell you that after September 11, 2001, I do not feel that I am from a “superpower.” The United States is blamed for problems and never given credit for successes. I would like many more people from Belarus to be able to come to my country and form their own impressions. Then they can determine what they want and what they do not want for Belarus.

Source: [Charter97](#)