

Relying on co-ordinated plan

Belarus-Russia military-technical co-operation based on contemporary defence approach

By Vladimir Khromov

Next year, Russia is to supply four S-300 air defence missile systems to Belarus, for use in protecting air space. The first standby link of combat fighters will arrive by the end of the year, as discussed by the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and the Russian Defence Minister, Sergey Shoigu, who recently attended a joint session of our Defence Ministries, hosted in Minsk.

Unity of approach

It was noted at the meeting that Belarus-Russian interaction in the military sphere is of a strategic nature, playing a decisive role in guiding state security provision. Moreover, military-technical collaboration between our two states is developing dynamically, serving as an example to other ministries, noted Mr. Lukashenko. He explained, "Belarus will always adhere to its declared policy, without deviation. We'll always be united in our actions, especially regarding systems of defence and security; we'll continue on a single course."

The joint Belarusian-Russian strategic 'Zapad-2013' (West-2013)

army exercise, scheduled for this September, will be a serious test for our two states. Mr. Lukashenko underlines that our military forces have no intention of initiating aggression. He notes, "We're trying to prepare them to defend our Fatherland and our common interests. We have enough land and don't lay claim to anyone else's. However, we won't give ours away. If we're going to train our armed forces, our security forces, to defend our common interests, then we need to arrange relevant events, including exercises. I don't understand why the West is so concerned about our regular exercises. This isn't the first. We're just smoothing our co-operation. New people have joined us, so we need to check our long-standing system. This isn't directed against the Poles or the Baltic States or NATO. Of course, they should all understand that if they behave badly towards us, we'll respond in kind."

Strategic allies

Exercises are prepared according to plan, checking readiness to react to contemporary challenges and to see what adjustments are needed to ensure the security of Belarus and Russia, as the General of the

Army, Sergey Shoigu, informed the President. Mr. Shoigu spoke about the most promising areas of Belarusian-Russian military collaboration. Particularly, he mentioned the new Russian fighter plane air base in Belarus and the supply of four divisions of S-300 systems, to defend our air space and the borders of the Union State.

"Our Russian-Belarusian partnership is of a strategic character," noted the Russian Defence Minister. "Today's military situation requires us to unite efforts, co-ordinating our actions and sharing military-political and strategic tasks. Russia is working in close collaboration with its CSTO allies, viewing this organisation as an objective regional mechanism to counteract new challenges and threats to contemporary security. We rely on Belarus' support, which remains a reliable strategic ally, boasting a professionally trained army."

Western direction

Mr. Shoigu emphasised that Belarus and Russia are implementing a joint programme to establish a reliable and substantive regional air defence system, to protect the air space and borders of the Union State.

Moreover, a major programme is being realised in the sphere of military-technical collaboration. He added, "We'll continue discussing issues relating to reinforcing the defence capacity of our Belarusian colleagues and brothers."

Belarus' Defence Minister, Yury Zhadobin, tells us that the joint session of the Defence Ministries of our two states has brought approval for a draft project on mutual provision of geospatial information by the armed forces of Belarus and Russia. This will enable regional troops to survey and navigate accurately and promptly.

Liaisons are also agreed regarding the control and assessment of radiation, chemical and biological situations. An important element in strengthening Union State defence in the western direction is the use of a single regional air defence system for Belarus and Russia. According to Mr. Zhadobin, a list of systems has been approved and suggestions for who should command this group have been submitted to President Lukashenko.



Russian Defence Minister, General of the Army Sergey Shoigu

Comfortable border crossing

International Peschatka border checkpoint, with capacity to process 2,000 passenger cars daily, soon to open on Polish-Belarusian border

The EU Representative Office in Belarus notes that the new international Peschatka border crossing is undergoing infrastructure development, partially financed by the *Poland-Belarus-Ukraine* trans-boundary co-operation programme.

The total cost is about 5m Euros, enabling the checkpoint to inspect 2,000 passenger cars daily, as well as 50 buses and 200 trucks.

To date, only citizens of Poland and Belarus were able to cross the border here, and only in passenger cars. The restructuring allows Peschatka to grow from being the last purely inter-state checkpoint on the Belarusian-Polish border (of six) to being international, allowing movement of citizens of any

nationality. Twelve buildings have been constructed, including the main site, facilities for inspection and pavilions for customs clearance of passenger cars. Its innovations include automatic scanning of number plates, enabling the identification of automobiles on the wanted list. Contemporary international requirements are met, using the latest high-tech equipment, ensuring speed and comfort during Peschatka checkpoint crossings.

Present day physics of mutual interest

By Yulia Vasilishina

Mats Larsson, on the Nobel Committee for Physics, is welcomed at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus as honorary guest

The Professor and Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences academician arrived in Belarus to take part in the Belarusian-Swedish-Ukrainian seminar, as part of the 4th Physicists' Congress of Belarus. He gave a public lecture dedicated to the work of Nobel Prize winning Lev Landau and discussed prospects for co-operation between our two states' scientists.

Sweden and Belarus have been liaising for around a decade across various research projects, including accelerators and sources of terahertz emission. The Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Vladimir Gusakov, believes that we could be making better use of our powerful scientific potential and looks forward to entering a new level of co-operation. "We'll try to collaborate, finding opportunities to liaise, since it's not always possible to work independently on fundamental and applied research," Mr. Gusakov asserts. Prof. Larsson confirms that such interest is reciprocated.

Result of business relations

Agreement on co-operation signed between Investigative Committees of Belarus and Russia at National Library of Belarus by Chairman of Russian Investigative Committee Alexander Bastrykin and that of Belarus, Valentin Shaev

Our two departments have been co-operating closely and successfully even without official documentation, as Mr. Shaev emphasises. He names as an example the joint investigation of the MMM case, which brought to trial 12 people who ran a financial pyramid in Belarus. The agreement will seriously expand collaboration, including the provision of international treaties in the criminal and legal sphere, helping tackle crimes and corruption. In addition, it will oversee training of investigation agency staff and employees from both committees will be able to attend the scientific and educational institutions of our two states.

Mr. Bastrykin praises the promptness of the establishment of the Investigation Committee of Belarus, noting, "In a short period of time, you've managed to set up a structure



A. Bastrykin (left) and V. Shaev after signing the agreement

which preserves all that is best in Belarusian investigation. Moreover, you've kept a high level of legitimacy and effectiveness at all stages." He notes that some Russian regions have not yet reached a similarly high level of efficiency.

The Russian guest warns against unconsidered legislative reform, emphasising, "You have the example of Russia in front of you; we hurried to adopt decisions on complex issues and are now being forced to correct our mistakes. Belarus isn't hurrying to introduce trial juries, which is the correct path. We've now reduced the powers of such courts countrywide,

since this institute has turned out to be doubtful. Regarding criminal penalties, I've been to Belgorod — the site of a terrible tragedy in which six people were murdered. People were on the streets almost demanding the return of the death penalty. People want to see fair punishments, which is understandable."

Summarising the results of the meeting, Mr. Shaev expressed confidence that, from now on, investigators in Belarus and Russia will be working in more efficient tandem. They'll receive the opportunity to share official information and experience of investigating various crimes.

Branches of one tree

By Alina Kolesnikova

Latest census shows that nearly 300,000 citizens of Belarus are ethnic Poles

Poles are the third largest ethnic group after Belarusians and Russians. Recently, the 8th Congress of the Union of Poles of the Belarus Public Association met in Minsk, gathering 93 delegates. From every region, they represented the 6,500 members of their association; of course, many more people are involved at its 70 branches and 12 Houses of Poles. Polish language lessons are available to all, alongside classes in singing and dancing. Concerts and art exhibitions are organised, for adults and children, and the Union of Poles pays special attention to local historical monu-

ments and memorial sites.

Today, in Belarus, there are two schools which teach through the medium of Polish: in Grodno and Volkovysk. Fully financed by the state, they offer separate classes in Polish, as well as teaching a range of subjects in Polish. Like other national-cultural public organisations, the UPB receives constant support from the Commissioner for Religions and Nationalities, as is noted with gratitude. The *Głos znad Niemna* (Voice from the Neman River) newsletter is published with financial aid from the Commissioner and the edition is to be presented at the Mass Media in Belarus Exhibition, at the Commissioner's stand. At the Congress, the Union of Poles also elected its new chairman: Mieczyslaw Lysy.