

Military formation saves its battle order even in peacetime



Silent drill team's solemn march in honour of the Defenders of the Fatherland Day

By Vasily Kharitonov

Stability is the most important element in ensuring national security. Details may alter but the essential aspects remain constant. The annual speech given by the President, in his role as Commander in Chief to the military, included an assessment of the state of the army and other security forces, analysis of the situation at home and abroad, and instructions to all those serving in what society expects from them.

Of course, the main objective of the military is to protect our independence and peace. As the President

noted, "The unity of the people and the world is our most precious possession. Prosperity is possible only under conditions of harmony and mutual understanding."

The words are clear and simple. Sadly, the world is not peaceful enough that we can afford to lose our vigilance. The President of Belarus stated, "Not all modern superpowers have learnt from the bitter lessons of history. The military potential of NATO is being increased in neighbouring countries, with millions of dollars allocated for the support of opposition forces, with the aim of destabilising the country and changing the constitutional order.

Fortunately, Belarusians remember well the tragic consequences of various 'civilisers' attempting to establish world domination, imposing their will on others. They treat with disdain those who betray the interests of the Fatherland, defaming its good name and serving our detractors."

The head of state asserted that, for many years, Belarus has been an example of political and social stability, to the merit of the Government and the law enforcement agencies. Belarus ensures reliable military security, establishing a powerful barrier to manifestations of extremism and anti-constitutional action.

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that, on this holiday, tribute is paid to the many generations of people in uniform: all those who helped win peace and independence for the country and who provide for the security and sovereignty of Belarus today.

Mr. Lukashenko pointed out that military co-operation is a vital aspect of international interaction. Major strategic training events are held regularly, liaising with the military forces of friendly countries, to strengthen the defense potential of the Union State. Belarusian special service staff interact with foreign colleagues to prevent cross-border crime, human and drug

trafficking and illegal migration. "The latest scientific and high technologies are widely used in our national security. Today's military and law enforcement officers are professionals of the highest class," the President emphasised.

The President recalled that the military has another important mission: helping educate the younger generation. He added, "It's no wonder that only those who serve in the army deserve to be called real men. Citizens consider those in uniform to embody the best moral qualities: generosity, selflessness, devotion to duty and responsibility for the fate of their Homeland."

The deeds of the many generations of people in uniform will remain ever in our memory. The President noted, "We admire the deeds of those freedom fighters who defended the Fatherland from invaders. These days, the legacy of veterans continues in our efforts to protect the peace and tranquility on our native land. The soldiers of the Great Patriotic War believed that they were winning the last war in history. The human casualties were too great to ever be forgotten. The allies extinguished the fire of hostility with their lives beyond the border of the Fatherland. They dreamed that their courage and dedication would serve the whole world: present and future generations..."

Another February tradition is for the President to award the top officers with the rank of general. This time, Major General Igor Lotenkov and Oleg Dvigalev received the honour, alongside Nikolay Melchenko and Alexander Barsukov (in the militia) and Gennady Lasuta (internal affairs). The First Deputy Chairman of the State Customs Committee, Sergey Rednenko, and the Deputy Chairman of the State Customs Committee, Sergey Poludnya, were made State Counsellors of the Customs Service 3rd Class. Meanwhile, Deputy Prosecutor General Nikolay Kuklis was given the title of State Counsellor of Justice 3rd Class.

Mr. Lukashenko congratulated all on their new rank. "General is a great title, awarded to decent men. I hope you always behave in a manner which upholds the honour of this great title," he said.

Current situation at home and abroad

President accepts reports from Prime Minister and State Security Committee Chairman

On meeting the PM, the President discussed the building of more accommodation for those not receiving state support; this year, a further 6.5 million square metres of housing are scheduled for construction. Of this, 2.5 million square metres are to be set aside for those receiving state support (being on low incomes and having large families). Budgetary funds have been allocated to engineering infrastructure and banks' mortgage rates are to be set at a more modest level, to aid people in buying their own home.

Belarusbank ASB JSC, Belagroprombank JSC and Belinvestbank JSC

are charging a modest 16 percent annual rate on mortgages, with a rate of 14 percent for rural residents and 12 percent for families with many children. Large families enjoy various state privileges, including access to accommodation, but, as Mikhail Myasnikov notes, they need to contribute their own money to buy their own home. He emphasises, "This is a rather serious decision which we've made jointly with banks and the National Bank, making mortgages more accessible to citizens and companies." The Government plans to keep inflation at 12 percent in 2013.



Issues relating to the Single Economic Space came under scrutiny, with the PM stressing, "We are anxious that our SES partners are taking narrow-minded decisions which may be to the detriment of our common market." The Supreme State Council of

the Union State, which meets in St. Petersburg on March 15th, will continue discussions.

Listening to a report by the Chairman of the State Security Committee, Valery Vakulchik, Mr. Lukashenko noted his eagerness to discuss the situation domestically and abroad. "I won't hide the fact that we're keeping track of trends in relations with the West — primarily, the EU and the USA. I've recently noticed the West's interest in establishing constructive relations with us — as reported by my internal sources and the media."

The President stressed that, this

year, several foreign political issues need attention. "At the beginning of the year, when new ideas and trends are born, I want to hear your analysis of the situation. The State Security Committee Chairman delivers a report to me every year, on the situation and on our points of focus for foreign and domestic policy. He tells me the concerns of our citizens and possible threats — although I don't generally observe any in our country. We have no intention of dramatising the situation but, as I've told our military, we need to be on the alert to any negative forces within our borders and beyond."