

1.

## **COMBINED STRATEGIC COMMAND-STAFF EXERCISE (CSCSE) OF ARMED FORCES OF BELARUS AND RUSSIA “ZAPAD-2017”**

2.

Military-Strategic situation in the World and around Ukraine is defined by aggravation of tension in relationships between Russia Federation and the United States of America due to principal differences in approaches, forms and ways to resolution of the actual international problems.

3.

Considering US and NATO as the main adversary, military-political leadership of Russia Federation pushed the plan to create so called “**safety belt**” in their Western strategic direction. It includes former soviet republics from the Black Sea to the Baltic region (including Moldavia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia).

4.

It is expected, that the scenario of CSCSE “Zapad-2017” will include, strengthening of US/NATO activity near the borders of the Union State of Russian Federation and Republic of Belarus. It should be anticipated that the exercise will have larger scale in space quantities as well as political and military goals.

5.

By the decision of Russian and Belarusian leaders such exercises are waged once every two years on the territory of one of the states: “Zapad” – Belarus, “Shchit Soyuzu” – Russia. “Zapad-2017” will become a final stage of combined training of Russian and Belarusian armed forces throughout 2017 training year.

6.

The combined strategic exercise “Zapad-2017” is planned to be waged in a period between 14<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017 on the territory of Belarus, western part of Russia (Western Military District) and in the waters of the Baltic Sea.

Totally the exercise will involve around 13,000 x servicemen. Over 300 x pieces of armaments and military materiel, up to 200 x artillery systems, up to 50 x combat aircraft and 40 x attack helicopters.

**Topic of the exercise:** “Training in application of groups of forces to safeguard military security of the Union State”.

7.

**The declared objectives** of “Zapad-2017” CSCSE are the following:

- Inspection the Regional group of forces’ readiness to execute the border common defense mission of the “Union State”;
- Practicing elements of land, air and naval defense operation;
- Improvement of command and control bodies’ cohesion, land and air drill of personnel of formations and units of the Regional group of forces;
- Improvement of interoperability of HQs of different levels, as well as C3 systems, and also cohesion between branches and services;
- Obtainment of practical skill of the commanders/HQs in combat application planning and battle command and control:
- Improvement of logistic support system’s cohesion;
- Combat testing of new and modernized types of armaments (produced by Belarusian and Russian-Belarusian plants) and to test prove their declared performances.

8.

The scenario was worked out by General Staffs of both states and approved the President of Belarus Republic O.Lukashenko on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2017. The background of the scenario is an emergence of the internal conflict in the state (in the territory of Belarus and Kaliningrad region of the Russia Federation) caused by activity of opposition and illegal armed groups.

Taking into account the resent statements of the Chief of General Staff of Armed Forces of Russian Federation, Army General V.Gerasimov, considering the growing threats for the safety of Russia and its allies, the probable scenario of upcoming **CSCSE** will be the crisis that appears and grows into the armed conflict after worsening of relationships between countries at the backdrop of the territorial claims.

The scope of **CSCSE** is from Kola Peninsula (Arctic zone of Russian Federations) to the territory of Belarus (inclusive) due to the statement of the Ministry of defense of Belarus.

9.

The following steps were detected as of today in the scope of preparations for the “Zapad-2017” combined strategic exercise:

**In Russian Armed Forces:**

10-14 January, 2017 – operational-mobilization meeting with commanders of formations and units of WMD;

January-February, 2017 in Leningrad and Kaliningrad oblasts – month-long training meeting of reservists. Probably, “Zapad-2017”

combined strategic exercise will include training in staffing new command and control bodies, formations and units, which are planned to be created during special period with reservists and equipping them with armaments and materiel;

3 February, 2017 – Western Military District (St. Petersburg) military council meeting;

20-29 March, 2017 – 152<sup>nd</sup> Missile brigade (Cherniakhovsk) tactical exercises – simulation missile launches were practiced;

5 May, 2017 - Western Military District (St. Petersburg) military council meeting headed by Colonel General A.KARTAPOLOV. The main attention was paid to the course of organization-planning events for the combined strategic exercise “Zapad-2017”;

**In Belarusian Armed Forces:**

9-13 January, 2017 – command and staff military game involving General Staff operational groups, operational commands, AFs and AD commands, Special Operations Forces, and also faculty of the Military Academy of the Armed Forces of Republic of Belarus;

12-13 January, 2017 – operational-methodological meeting with SOF formations’ and units’ commanders;

28 February – 2 March, 2017 – combined command and staff exercise with central military command and control bodies of the Ministry of Defense of Russia (Moscow) involving operational groups headed by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus, Major General A. BELOKONIEV;

28 March – 6 April, 2017 – combined special tactics exercise of Russian Airborne Forces units with Belarusian SOF units at “Brestskyy” training area.

10.

It is anticipated, that **CSCSE** active phase will happen in 2 stages:

The 1<sup>st</sup> stage (14-16 September, 2017): training on planning of application of the Regional group of forces, C3 training during the troops deployment, isolation of areas of the illegal armed groups’ activity, augmentation aviation and air defense cover of the important state and military objects;

The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage (17-20 September, 2017): C3 during the military actions in order to stabilize the situation and localize the conflict at borders of the “Union State”.

11.

Practical military actions will be carried out at 12 **military training areas (MTAs)** in Belarus and Russia as well as Baltic water area of the “Union State”, namely:

7 **MTAs** on the territory of Belarus:

Brest region (210<sup>th</sup> “Ruzhany” aviation MTA, 177<sup>th</sup> “Domanovo” aviation and air-defense MTA),

in Minsk region (227<sup>th</sup> “Borysovskiy” combined arms MTA):

in Mohilev region (“Repyshe” MTA)

in Vitebsk region (228<sup>th</sup> “Dretun” combined arms MTA, “Zaslonovo” MTA, MTA SOF “Losvado”).

5 **MTAs** on the territory of Russia: Leningrad region (33<sup>rd</sup> “Luga” all-arms MTA, “Tugany” MTA), Kaliningrad region (“Khmelevka” MTA, “Pavenkovo” all-arms MTA), Pskov region (714<sup>th</sup> “Strugi Krasnye” airborne MTA).

12.

In the course of preparation to **CSCSE**, the **Regional group of forces (RGF)** is to be formed on the Western direction, which is capable to wage an operation on the territory of Baltic States.

Most likely, the **RGF** will include:

From Armed Forces of **Republic of Belarus**:

**Land component:** 6<sup>th</sup> separate mechanized brigade (GRODNO), 11<sup>th</sup> separate mechanized brigade (SLONIM), 19<sup>th</sup> separate mechanized brigade (ZASLONOVO), 120<sup>th</sup> separate mechanized brigade (MINSK), 465<sup>th</sup> missile brigade (TSEL'), 336<sup>th</sup> MLRS brigade (OSYPOVYCHI), 7<sup>th</sup> engineer regiment (BORYSOV), 8<sup>th</sup> regiment of NBC protection (STARYE DOROZI), 56<sup>th</sup> (MINSK) -, 60<sup>th</sup> (BORYSOV) -, 74<sup>th</sup> (GRODNO) separate signal regiments;

**Air component:** military units of 61<sup>st</sup> fighter aviation base (BARANOVYCHI), military units of 116<sup>th</sup> assault aviation base (LIDA), 50<sup>th</sup> mixed aviation base (MACHULYSHCHI), 927<sup>th</sup> center of preparation and use of UAVs (BEREZA), 120<sup>th</sup> air defense missile brigade (BARANOVYCHI), 8<sup>th</sup> SIGINT brigade (BARANOVYCHI), 16<sup>th</sup> separate EW regiment (BEREZA);

**Other military formations:** HQs of sub-regional and territorial defense forces units, the units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the units of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, National Security Committee and State Border-security forces of Republic of Belarus.

From Armed Forces of Russian Federations – formations and units of JTF of the Western Military District (HQ – St. Petersburg):

**Land component:** formations and units of 6<sup>th</sup> Army (ST.PETERSBURG): military units of 25<sup>th</sup> SepMRBde (STRUGI KRASNYE), 138<sup>th</sup> SepMRBde (KAMENKA); from the 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army (BAKOVKA/ODINTSOVO): 4<sup>st</sup> Tank Division (NARO-FOMINSK), 2<sup>nd</sup> MRDiv (KALININETS), 6<sup>th</sup> SepTBde (MULINO), 27<sup>th</sup> SepMRBde (MOSRENTGEN); and 11<sup>th</sup> Army Corp of the Baltic Fleet (GUSEV, Kaliningrad region).

**Air component:** aviation units of the 105<sup>th</sup> Mixed Aviation Division (VORONEZH) of the 6<sup>th</sup> AFs and AD (St.PETERSBURG).

**Naval component:** military units of the Baltic Fleet (KALININGRAD).

Except aforementioned military units of the **Airborne Forces** will be employed to **RGF**. From Russian Federation side – units of 76<sup>th</sup> air assault division (PSKOV), 98<sup>th</sup> airborne division (IVANOVO) and 106<sup>th</sup> airborne division (TULA) will take part in **CSCSE**. From the side of Belarus Republic – the units of Special-Operations Forces Command (KOLODYSHCHI) will be involved in **CSCSE**. They are: 38<sup>th</sup> separate air assault brigade (BREST), 103<sup>rd</sup> separate airborne brigade (VITEBSK) and 5<sup>th</sup> special-operations forces brigade (MARINA-GORKA).

13.

It is possible that during preparatory measures to the **CSCSE**, Russia will covertly accumulate the logistic supplies, armaments and military materiel stocks (optimized for 14 days) needed for the time of real conflict in Western strategic direction. For this purpose, the Russian side ordered **4162** provisory carriages (trucks) that allows relocate up to two combined-arms divisions (most likely – 2<sup>nd</sup> MRDiv and 4<sup>th</sup> TDiv of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army) to Belarusian territory.

*Reference: it is 33 x times more than in 2015 and 83 x times more than in 2016.*

At the same time the complete renovation of 44 x facilities (hangars, storages, railroad liquid loading/unloading platforms, approach routes to storages and ordnance shelters) on the territory of Belarus and 16 x logistic objects in Russia is planned within “the Concept of improvement of military infrastructure objects planned for common usage in the interests of support to the Regional group of forces of the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation for 2016-2019”

14.

At the same time, the real quantity of personnel and military materiel involved will be much bigger than it was announced. For example, during training of the **JTF** built-up on “threatening” strategic direction, significant amount of units will be relocated from another military districts and a big amount of obligated reservists will be called up to military service.

Practically, all military units of the Western Military district of Russian Federation will be involved in the **CSCSE** (incl. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 144<sup>th</sup> MRDivs of the 20<sup>th</sup> Combined Arms Army), Northern Fleet of Russian Federations, particular units from Southern, Central and Eastern Military Districts, units of Aerospace Forces, Airborne Forces, Command of Long-range Aviation and Military Transport Aviation, units of direct subordination to the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the Armed Forces, defined formations and units of Federal Service of National Guard of Russian Federation, other military formations and units of the Ministry of Interior.

According to the experience of **CSCSE** “Zapad-2013”, “Kavkaz-2016”, the real quantity of manpower had been in a range of 100.000-150.000.

15.

During the preparatory measures to **CSCSE** “Zapad-2017” (West-2017) in order to balance the current personnel shortage in military units, State Guard bodies and Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) there will be organized a call up of reservists for the period for two months (under the President’s Decree as of 20<sup>th</sup> of April, 2017 “About calling-up the citizens of Russian Federation who are in reserve to the military service for military training in 2017”). The above-mentioned is shaped by certain problems in new units’ manning as well as rotation of personnel to the East of Ukraine and to Syria.

16.

Unlike previous combined exercises waged in the Western strategic direction in 2009 and 2013 which were foremost concentrated on actions against illegal armed formations, the overall scenario of “Zapad-2017” combined strategic exercise is aimed at possible armed confrontation between Russia (Union State of the Russian Federation and Republic Belarus) and US/NATO.

17.

Also, new types of armaments, military and special materiel, which have already been supplied to the forces or those undergoing state tests

(Belarusian UAVs, new communication systems of tactical, operational and strategic levels, navigation systems and electronic warfare systems) will be tested during “Zapad-2017” combined strategic exercise.

18.

Moreover, a range of other trainings and inspections of combat readiness of the troops will be organized on a common operational background with the “Zapad-2017” **CSCSE**.

The following events are planned in the Southern Military District:

Command-staff exercise of units of 49<sup>th</sup> Combined Arms Army (12-26 September, 2017);

Bilateral command-staff exercise on C2 over forces on Crimeas and Azov-Black Sea operational directions (12-16 September, 2017);

Command-staff mobilization exercise of 42<sup>nd</sup> MRDiv of 58<sup>th</sup> Combined Arms Army (18-23 September, 2017);

Tactical training exercise of 10<sup>th</sup> Separate brigade of Special Forces and 34<sup>th</sup> C2 Brigade of the 58<sup>th</sup> Combined Arms Army (18-23 September, 2017).

19.

In addition to this, the following events were planned in the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (**CSTO**):

Combined exercise with live firings of the Air-Defense Forces named “Boyevoye sodruzhestvo-2017” of the **Commonwealth of Independent States** in the “Ashuluk” training area (September of 2017, Russia);

Command-staff exercise of the **CSTO Collective Rapid Response Force (CRRF)** on command and control (25 September – 1 October, 2017; South Military District, RF);

Special tactics exercise of **CSTO member states’** recon units named “Poisk-2017” (September, 2017; territory of Armenia);

Joint exercise of the contingent of **CSTO CRRF** and units of **the combined group of forces** of Russian and Armenian Armed Forces in Caucasus region (September-October, 2017; territory of Kazakhstan).

20.

## SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the intention of Ukraine to integrate with European Union and in the same time imperial ambitions of Russia, supported by the experience of use forces within armed conflicts in the territories of former Soviet Republics and in Syria, the **CSCSE** “Zapad-

2017” (West-2017) will be used by Russia to demonstrate decisiveness to defend Russian interests in the region using Armed Forces to the US/NATO.

During the **CSCSE** “Zapad-2017”, Russia will substantially augment the group of forces deployed along the borders with Poland, Baltic states and Ukraine, which will require appropriate response from NATO countries, in particular from those, which have been involved into Enhanced Forward Presence in Baltic States.

After creation of sticking groups of forces in Western and South-Western directions, provocations with any invented reason (to protect Russian-speaking populations, the antiterrorist/ anti-extremists measures, so called “diversions” on a Russian objects or against Russian citizens) are very likely.

In the time of preparatory measures and during **CSCSE** “Zapad-2017”, it is expected the intensifications of propaganda campaign against Ukraine, accusing it of not fulfillment of Minsk agreements and necessity to “reload” the national leaderships.

In order to maintain the constant pressure on Ukraine, and influence the decisions of Western States, Russia continues to keep “regulated tensions” in the occupied territories in the East of Ukraine and support social and economical uncertainty in our state.