

## **The Collective Security Treaty Association Forms a New Military Structure**

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**E**lection campaign to the lower Chamber of the country Parliament, appointed to September 28, is expanding. 423 initiative groups of citizens for signature-gathering campaign for candidate nomination have been registered (454 applied).

Observers mention relatively small percentage of refusals in groups' registration and the peculiarity that about 40% of registered groups are oppositional. These are symptoms that the country authorities want to avoid unwarranted cruelty against political opponents, regarding political opponents, in order to obtain confession of those elections results by the West, though with reservations.

With that, according to independent analysts, authorities use so-called small foul tactics. There is a pressure upon oppositional activists of the campaign; some of them are

summoned to KGB for a talk. There are searches, organized in flats, including under the pretext of investigation of the sensational case about explosion in Minsk on July, 4.



Representative of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party Iryna Vershtat from Smarhon, having registered own initiative group in the district #59, fully realized dirty methods: in her

flat windows and a door lock got broken, doors were smeared with black paint, and her mobile number was placed at the site with the proposal of intimacy services.

Analysts mention that measured including of oppositional representatives into election committees and formal preserving of equality in giving microscopic quotas of the air and newspapers does not yet mean plenipotentiary elections.

Strong administrative resource work for pro-authority protégés, and

political opposition and civil community are exhausted as a result of a persecution of many years. There are no conditions for competitive politics, including mass media freedoms, as before.

In connection with that representatives of independent community express concern by the symptoms that the part of the European political beau monde is allegedly ready to catch the bait of quasi liberalization of the electoral process in Belarus.

Meanwhile, Belarusian authorities, on a large scale, are still manage to keep under control both political and economic situation. Economic results of the first half-year look not bad. Thus, GDP growth compounded 10,4%.

With that, the government worries that Russia may dramatically raise prices for energy resources. Development of the so-called pessimist variant of the budget-2009 has started. The price of 200 \$ per 1000 cubic meters of Russian gas is put into accounts (earlier variant was based at the price \$ 140).

Uladzimir Siamashka, the First Deputy Prime Minister, believes that

a high profitability level of Belarusian enterprises will help to maintain economic stability under growing prices for energy resources. According to the report of January – May period production, labor and services profitability reached the level of 17.8% with anticipation of 13%.

The Belarusian authorities count on possibility to increase food export.

The President participated in a meeting that took place in Brest region on July 25. The meeting was dedicated to the progress of works under State program of village revival and development for 2005-2010 years.

According to A. Lukashenka words, Belarus can not only guarantee its food security but also has a possibility to earn much. The President mentioned that Belarus exported agricultural production for more than \$ 2 billion. He also said that the figure can be doubled.

Almost Br 46 trillion have been invested into the program of village development in 2005-2007, in other words it's 125% of the whole amount of financing provided. Meanwhile, the agricultural growth for three years totals only 12.2% with a plan of 21-27%.

Economists report that though the Belarusian economy improved its activities, it remains ineffective and unreformed. Some kinds of agricultural production are exported to Russia with losses, as their net cost exceeds sales prices. Meanwhile Belarusian producers are unable to compete with European colleagues a fortiori.

In general, foreign economic situation favors Belarus. Thus, in first six months the country managed to increase the export proceeds of potash fertilizers in 2.5 times. The reason is a jump of world market prices for the potash fertilizers. Another major source of currency earnings is oil export.

According to the official information the real wage in Belarus for the first six months increased by 8.4%. The nominal calculated level of wage in June reached Br 892.4 thousand, or \$ 418.8. The government intends to reach the level of Br 996 thousand, or \$ 460 in equivalent.

It's notable that working efficiency growth in the first 6 months exceeded

the growth of real wage by 1.8 percentage point (ptc). Earlier independent economists criticized the authorities since wages grew faster than working efficiency.

Besides, inflation became a nightmare for the government. The officials agree that it can reach the level of 14% by the end of the year (for the first 6 months it made 7.3%).

According to the official information foreign investment rate in Belarusian economy made 280% in comparison with the last year period. Though, the foreign investment ratio is still very low in the total amount of investment – 1.4%. \$233.4 million have been invested in fixed capital by foreign investors for the period of January – June 2008.

Departing from former ideological principles, Belarusian authorities might be using the help of foreign investors more often. Thus, the biggest Turkish mobile operator 'Turkcell' company bought 80% of 'Belarusian network of telecommunications' ('BeST') close corporation shares. 20% of the shares are still kept by the Belarusian party. The agreement was signed in Minsk on July 29.

According to official sources, the payment will be done in three stages and the total sum will be \$ 600 million. Besides, 'Turkcell' intends to

invest another \$ 400 million in the network development.

It's worth noticing that the agreement has been broadly covered by the Belarusian state media. The government perhaps has taken into account the critics for the last year 'secret' sale of another mobile operator shares 'Velcom' to 'Telekom Austria' company.



## POLITICS

### The Collective Security Treaty Association Forms a New Military Structure



*The secretary of the association Mikhalai Bardzyuzha announced about the formation of a new military structure. This will be the answer to USA missile defense shield in Europe.*

He said that the military structure will be situated at the western borders



of the member countries - Belarus and Russia.

Mikhalai Bardzyuzha said that any defense system could be transformed into an offense system. That's why there is a certain concern about the USA missile defense shield in Poland and Czech Republic. "This is a big issue to us and of course we're keeping an eye on it." — Bardzyuzha noted in the interview for Russian newspaper "Gazeta".

## OFFICIALLY

### MFA of Belarus Implements Extraordinary Demands for Conducting Mass Actions

*All participants will be checked several times for presence of explosives.*

The Ministry for Internal Affairs of Belarus informed that security standards for carrying out mass actions have changed. New rules are directly connected with the explosion during the festival concert on Independence Day in Minsk on July 4.

Now place of carrying out the action has to be detached by transportable railings, and entrances will be equipped with frame metal detectors,



through which every participant will have to go through. Thus, there won't be "unchecked" people inside the railings.

Also the place of carrying out the action will be divided on squares, secured for concrete policemen. Each policeman will periodically come in the crowd and check the people with mobile metal detectors. It is worth mentioning that those security measures have been already tested in Vitsebsk during carrying out "Slaviansky Bazar" festival. It caused dissatisfaction of the people, because the entrance of guests to concert areas was fulfilled very slowly. Detectors went off also for metallic buttons, belts, and keys from flats.

Besides the metal detectors control, mass actions will have to be controlled through web-cameras also now. Policemen mentioned that not only exact place of

conducting the action, but also adjoining territory will be embraced. One more innovation – total visual "control of physical condition of the people", which has to separate drunken people and aggressive participants of the action, and also those, who have alcoholic drinks with them.

## OPPOSITION

### KGB Interrogates Wives of Oppositionists

*Alena Kavalenka and Ina Bernikovich – wives of democratic activists, teachers of chemistry and biology, according to the education, got under attention of KGB. They were questioned about explosions in Minsk on July 4.*

The teacher of Vitsebsk secondary school № 31 Alena Kavalenka, wife of the BPF Conservative Christian Party member Siarhej Kavalenak were questioned by phone. The man, who called himself KGB worker, was interested, whether a family of Kavalenak was in Minsk on the night of 3/4 July. Also he asked to remind, whether pupils of Ms. Alena asked to explain, how to prepare explosives. At the end of the talk he gave to understand that KGB traces demonstrations of

oppositional activity of her husband Siarhej.

The same talk was held in Glybokae district department of KGB with the teacher of Viarhniyansky basic school Ina Bernikovich, wife of the Deputy Chairman of the regional community of BPF Party Yaraslau Bernikovich. KGB workers were also interested, where was the family in the night of Minsk explosion and whether Ina Bernikovich was asked about explosives by husband friends, which are gathering signatures for nominating Yaraslau Bernikovich to the deputy candidate.

Radio Swoboda

## ECONOMY



**BeST is Sold to Turks**



*Belarusian mobile operator is*

*almost entirely sold to Turks. Belarusian authorities signed an agreement according to which 80% of the BeST mobile operator is sold to Turkey's leading mobile phone company, Turkcell.*

According to the Ministry of Communication and Information



the price of the shares sold to Turkcell totals \$500 million. Another \$100 million will be paid by Turkcell to Belarusian authorities when BeST records a first full-year positive net income, news agency “Novosty” says.

Belarusian Communications Minister Mikalay Pantsyaley told that the transaction became a major event of the Belarusian telecommunication market. “I think that in the future mobile operators will focus not only on attracting new subscribers but also on offering new services using new technologies and tools.” — Mikalay Pantsyaley said.

Registered in November 2004, BeST reportedly covers 26.3 percent of the country’s territory and has 187,000 subscribers

## SOCIETY

### Belarusians Wish to Be Designers and Psychologists

*16 people claim for one place on “design” major in BSU.*

The highest contest in BSU (Belarusian State University) is registered at the humanitarian faculty this year. 16 people have a claim for one student place.

Among other popular specialities are psychology (6 persons per a place)

and international relations. The general contest of university entrants for a full-time free education compounded 2.6 persons per a place.

## CULTURE

### Chalk Drawings on Asphalt in Salihorsk

*On Sunday July 27 a contest of chalk drawings on asphalt was held in Salihorsk. The event was dedicated to the anniversary of passing the Declaration of BSSR Independence. It has become traditional and is held by local “Malady Front” activists. This year the contest was held for the third time.*

Knyaz Algerd’s portrait, the drawing of Miensk Red Catholic Church and Pagonya emblem were noted as the best works. The winners received presents.

“Malady Front” activists noted that more and more people, even strangers, join the contest every year. There were no problems during the contest in Salihorsk. Policemen just checked the passports of the people who were taking pictures. The drawings remained on the asphalt for a couple of hours and then were washed away by street cleaning trucks.



There are various sites devoted to events in Belarus, which are, however, little known in Western Europe, and among people dealing with politics towards Belarus who do not understand the Russian or Belarusian languages.

The site [belarus-live](http://belarus-live.eu) fills this gap. The site allows to order weekly reception of news in English, Polish, Belarusian, Russian.