

Belarus Armed Forces Review

The Belarusian Armed Forces have been established in March 1992 when most of the Soviet troops had been smoothly converted into the Belarusian military. Unlike other former Soviet members Belarus didn't inherit much of the administrative problems. Furthermore much of the Soviet military equipment left by the previous military was in a great condition. High-tech military equipment along with high-tech production facilities and military industry was located in Belarus, this was mostly due to its proximity to the western borders and other NATO members. Finally and most importantly the country was free of the post-Soviet interior and domestic conflicts. Many other former Soviet countries were heavily burdened by insurgencies, domestic conflicts and separatist movements which affected their stability and security.

Belarus is a landlocked country with the population of around 9,500 million people and the annual GDP of 76 billion dollars, according to some estimates the country's military expenditure is around 700 million dollars. Some opposition groups in the country are requesting lesser military budget due to the bad economic conditions, sanctions and arms embargo imposed on Belarus by the US and the EU. The Belarusian Armed Forces are composed out of Army, Special Forces, Air Force. The military has 48,000 active and 290,000 reserve personnel.

Belorussian Armed Forces face an array of different challenges, first and foremost is the financial challenge or insufficient military funding. In the former decade Belarus defense budget was around 1.5% of its GDP while in 2014 the budget reached almost 2% of the country's GDP. These are some good news for the military, however it's still not enough to maintain a large military force and upgrade the vast Soviet military technology which was left after the Cold War. Military personnel is also dissatisfied with their salaries which are significantly lower than those of their counterparts in the Russian military. Insufficient funding is usually compensated by Russian donations in terms of specialized training and education as well as in oil subsidies. Although the Russian military aid can maintain the Belarus military it cannot be the long term solution. Most of the equipment of the Belorussian Armed Forces is coming from the Soviet era, and however sophisticated it is it still needs maintenance and upgrades. One of the major problems that the Air Force is facing is the expiring lifetime of their aircrafts. In 2013 the Air Force decommissioned around 50 aircrafts due to their age. Army faces similar problems, most of the infantry still uses Soviet-era equipment with the exception of donation coming occasionally from Russia or CSTO in form of light arms.

Belarus represents an important geopolitical asset for Moscow thus the Russian military presence in the country. The geopolitical importance of Belarus lies in its proximity to Moscow and the border with the Northern European Plain. This stretch of land that spreads across Germany and Poland and ends near the Belarus border is especially important for military

logistics and transportation. The bulk of the European NATO forces that are stationed in Germany and Poland can utilize this in order to quickly move their assets, and Moscow is well aware of that. Donating S-300 to the Belarusian Armed Forces and setting its radar facilities across the country are also showing the importance of the Belarus airspace to the Russian Federation. Finally joint military drills are further bolstering the cooperation between these two countries and their battle capabilities. One of the latest drills done by the Russian and Belorussian armed forces in cooperation with the Serbian Armed Forces is the "Slavic Brotherhood". Although the Belarusian military faces problems, especially in the financial department, it will remain an important ally for Russia therefore it can rely on their military aid, at least to some extent. Depending on the NATO's expansion in the Eastern Europe we can expect more military facilities and increased Russian presence in Belarus.

Belarus Army 16,500 personnel

FORCES BY ROLE

Command

Two operational-territorial commands, Western Operational Command at Grodno and North Western Operational Command at Borisov

Manoeuvre

4 Mechanized Brigades (or six with reduced strength)

- 6th Mechanized Brigade Stationed at Grodno
- 11th Mechanized Brigade Stationed at Slonim
- 120th Guards Mechanized Brigade Stationed at Minsk
- 19th Mechanized Brigade Stationed at Zaslonova
- 50th Mechanized Brigade Stationed at Baranovichi

Support

2 Artillery Brigades

2 Multiple Rocket Launcher Regiments

2 Engineering Regiments

1 Nuclear Biological Chemical Regiment

EQUIPMENT OF THE BELARUS ARMY

- **MBT 515:** 446 T-72; 69 T-80
- **AIFV 1,011:** 875 BMP-2; 136 BRM-1

- **APC (T)** 50 MT-LB
- **ARTY** 957 **SP** 434: **122mm** 198 2S1; **152mm** 236: 108 2S3; 116 2S5; 12 2S19 *Farm TOWED 152mm* 180: 48 2A36; 132 2A65 **GUN/MOR 120mm** 48 2S9 *NONA MRL* 234: **122mm** 126 BM-21; **220mm** 72 9P140 *Uragan*; **300mm** 36 9A52 *Smerch MOR 120mm* 61 2S12
- **AT MSL SP** 236: 126 9P148 *Konkurs*; 110 9P149 *Shturm* **MANPATS** 9K111 *Fagot*; 9K113 *Konkurs*; 9K114 *Shturm*; 9K115 *Metis*
- **RADAR LAND** GS-13 *Long Eye/SNAR-1 Long Trough/SNAR-2/-6 Pork Trough*
- **MSL TACTICAL SSM** 96: 36 FROM/9M79 *Tochka*; 60 *Scud*

Special Operation Forces 6,000

FORCES BY ROLE

1 Special Force Brigade Stationed at Maryina Horka

Manoeuvre

2 Mechanized Brigades

EQUIPEMENT OF THE SPECIAL FORCES

- **APC (W)** 192: 39 BTR-70; 153 BTR-80
- **ARTY TOWED 122mm** 48 D-30
- **AT MSL MANPATS** 9K111 *Fagot*; *Konkurs*; 9k114 *Shturm*; *Metis* (AT-7 *Saxhorn*)

Air Force and Air Defense Forces of Belarus 15,000

FORCES BY ROLE

Air Force

Fighter: 2 Squadrons with MiG-29S/UB *Fulcrum*

Ground Attack: 2 Squadrons with Su-25K/UBK *Frogfoot A/B*

Transport: 1 Base with An-12 *Cub*; An-24 *Coke*; An-26 *Curl*; Il-76 *Candid*; Tu-134 *Crusty*

Training: Squadron with L-39 *Albatros*

Attack Helicopter: Squadron with Mi-24 *Hind*

Transport Helicopter: Squadron with Mi-6 *Hook*; Mi-8 *Hip*; Mi-24K *Hind G2*; Mi-24R *Hind G1*; Mi-26 *Halo*

Air Defense

1 Brigade with S-200

1 Brigade with S-200; S-300 PS

1 Brigade with S-300V

1 Brigade with 9K37 *Buk*

1 Brigade with 9K37 *Buk*; 9K332 *Tor-M2E*

2 Brigades with 9K33 *Osa*

2 Regiments with S-300PS

1 Regiment with S-200

EQUEPEMENT OF THE AIR FORCE AND AIR DEFENSE

AIRCRAFT 72 Combat Capable

- **FTR** 38 MiG-29S/UB *Fulcrum*
- **ATK** 34 Su-25K/UBK *Frogfoot A/B*
- **TPT** 13: **Heavy** 2 Il-76 *Candid*; **Medium** 3 An-12 *Cub*; **Light** 8: 1 An-24 *Coke*; 6 An-26 *Curl*; 1 Tu-134 *Crusty*
- **TRG** L-39 *Albatros*

HELICOPTERS

- **ATK** 49 Mi-24 *Hind*
- **ISR** 20: 8 Mi-24K *Hind G2*; 12 Mi-24R *Hind G1*
- **TPT** 168: **Heavy** 43: 29 Mi-6 *Hook*; 14 Mi-26 *Halo*; **Medium** 125 Mi-8 *Hip*

AIR DEFENSE

- **AD SAM** SP 9K37 *Buk*; S300V; 9K35 *Strela-10*; 9K33 *Osa*; S300PS; 12 9K332 *Tor-M2E* **TOWED** S-125 *Pechora* **STATIC** S-200

Abbreviations:

MBT-Main Battle Tank

AIFV-Armored Infantry Fighting Vehicle

APC-Armored Personnel Carrier

ARTY-Artillery

SP-Self Proppelled

MRL-Multiple Rocket Launcher

MOR-Mortar

AT-Anti Tank

MSL-Missle

MANPATs-Man Portable Anti-Tank System

SSM-Surface to Surface Missile

FTR-Fighter

ATK-Attack

TPT-Transport

TRG-Training

SAM-Surface to air Missile

AD-Air Defense

ISR-Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance

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