



## NEXTA Actively Encourages Belarusian Security Service Defections

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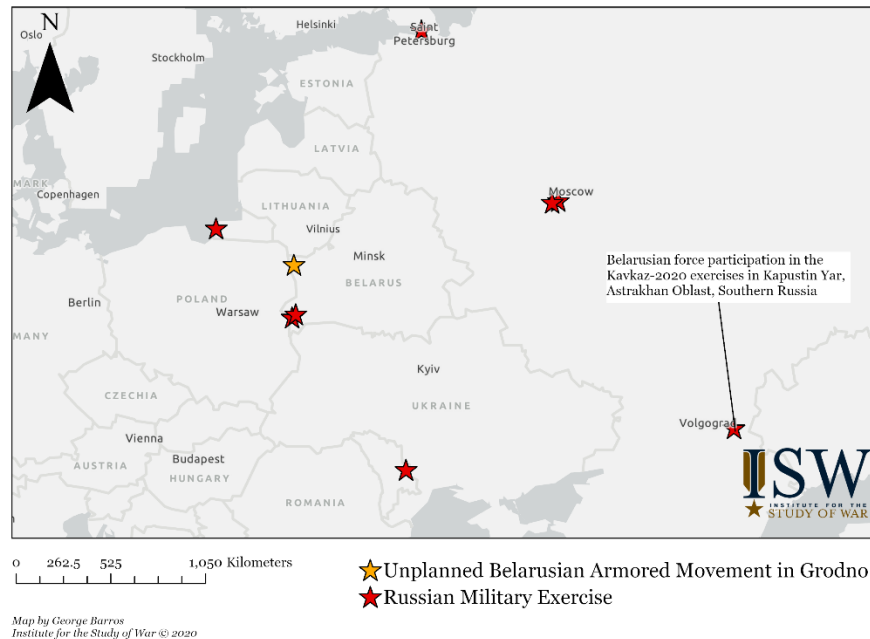
**The NEXTA Telegram channel is actively encouraging Belarusian security service defections. Large scale defections would likely precipitate an overt Russian intervention into Belarus.** NEXTA published personal information for 1000 security service personnel it claims are complicit in protester detentions on September 19.<sup>1</sup> NEXTA published security services personnel's full names, birthdays, cities of operation, departmental affiliations, and commanding officers. NEXTA is expunging personnel from the list who confirm their resignation from security services, implying that those individuals have contacted it. NEXTA has expunged five such individuals as of this writing.<sup>2</sup> ISW cannot independently verify NEXTA's information, which it claims it obtained from a third-party hack.

ISW forecasted the Kremlin might intervene in Belarus to prevent another revolution in the former Soviet Union if Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko loses control over his security services.<sup>3</sup> The Kremlin began its current media and security support to Lukashenko after regional security service elements in Grodno defected from Minsk on August 18.<sup>4</sup>

**NEXTA may incite protester violence or Western sanctions against Belarusian security service personnel.** NEXTA threatened to publish information on security personnel "on a massive scale" if protester detentions continue.<sup>5</sup> NEXTA critically did not publish email, address, or phone number targeting information for the identified security personnel. NEXTA did not instruct protesters to target the identified security personnel, which it could do if security service personnel continue to support Lukashenko. The West may use NEXTA's information to shape targeted sanctions against Belarusian officials. These considerations could well cause vacillation and defections. NEXTA will likely intensify efforts to erode security services' support for Lukashenko.

**Security personnel in Belarus are undertaking efforts to anonymize themselves – a development which sets favorable conditions for a potential Russian hybrid intervention into Belarus.** Belarusian riot police (OMON) in Brest removed their name tags on September 20 but continue to wear uniforms and insignia.<sup>6</sup> OMON in Brest previously operated with name tags. OMON personnel in Brest likely removed their name tags to preserve their anonymity given NEXTA's effort to identify security service personnel.<sup>7</sup> The unidentified security personnel in green uniforms without insignia continue to operate in Belarus as of September 19.<sup>8</sup>

## Russian and Belarusian Military Activity, September 18-20, 2020



**Russian and Belarusian airborne forces conducted parachute exercises as a single combat formation as part of the Slavic Brotherhood exercises.** A battalion-sized force composed of units from Russia’s 234th Guards Airborne Assault Regiment and unknown Belarusian airborne forces – likely from Belarus’ 38<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Brigade – conducted parachute exercises “as a single combat formation” at the Sahara landing site in Brest, Belarus, on September 20.<sup>9</sup> Such unit integration is likely a key component of the Kremlin’s desired Union State integration and may prepare Russian forces to subsume elements of Belarusian combat units in the event of a Russian intervention against the will of the Belarusian government.<sup>10</sup>

**A platoon-sized force from the 138th Guards Motor Rifle Brigade conducted reconnaissance and electronic weapons (EW) exercises with recon UAVs in Leningrad Oblast on September 20.**<sup>11</sup> Forces launched eight reconnaissance UAVs to identify camouflaged command and control assets and fire batteries. Russian EW assets partially jammed the UAVs to simulate battlefield conditions. This exercise could prepare forces to operate in Syria, where ISW forecasts that a pro-regime offensive will begin soon.<sup>12</sup> It could also be preparation for operations in Belarus in various contingencies. It could also simply be normal activity, although it would be unusual to report a platoon-level exercise, and there is no evidence this exercise was preplanned.

**Protesters in Brest are increasingly confrontational with security forces.** Protesters in Brest locked arms, advanced upon a group of OMON, and yelled “go away” on September 20.<sup>13</sup> This action caused OMON personnel to retreat and regroup. Belarusian protesters previously only used swarm tactics to resist detentions and beatings.<sup>14</sup> Confrontations between protesters and security forces may escalate further – a risk ISW forecasted.<sup>15</sup>

**Lukashenko’s campaign to expel and detain opposition leaders is likely degrading protests.** Approximately 2000 protesters marched in the fifth weekly women’s march in Minsk on September 19, and tens of thousands marched in Minsk on September 20.<sup>16</sup> This is a significant

decrease in protest size over the course of a week; tens of thousands of protesters marched in September 12 Minsk women's march.<sup>17</sup> The Sunday march on September 20 seemingly had weaker attendance than that of September 13. Protest fatigue and colder weather will likely further degrade protest participation.

**Belarusian authorities intensified their detention campaign on September 19.** Police detained approximately 400 out of 2000 women's march participants on September 19, whereas police detained only dozens out of tens of thousands of women's march participants on September 13.<sup>18</sup>

ISW will continue monitoring the situation and providing updates.

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<sup>1</sup> NEXTA published data on security services personnel's full names, birthdays, cities of operation, departmental affiliations, and commanding officers. [https://t.me/nexa\\_tv/4736](https://t.me/nexa_tv/4736); [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fcXAKN9VJOJ22AdGhI-1ipb1dt8Sbfp8pgxXyAxwXos/htmlview?usp=sharing&pru=AAABdNAiddY\\*yYrNBFv3HbuprXfx2ZABWA](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fcXAKN9VJOJ22AdGhI-1ipb1dt8Sbfp8pgxXyAxwXos/htmlview?usp=sharing&pru=AAABdNAiddY*yYrNBFv3HbuprXfx2ZABWA)

<sup>2</sup> [https://t.me/nexa\\_tv/4736](https://t.me/nexa_tv/4736); [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fcXAKN9VJOJ22AdGhI-1ipb1dt8Sbfp8pgxXyAxwXos/htmlview?usp=sharing&pru=AAABdNAiddY\\*yYrNBFv3HbuprXfx2ZABWA](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fcXAKN9VJOJ22AdGhI-1ipb1dt8Sbfp8pgxXyAxwXos/htmlview?usp=sharing&pru=AAABdNAiddY*yYrNBFv3HbuprXfx2ZABWA)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.iswresearch.org/2020/08/warning-russia-and-belarus-launch.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.iswresearch.org/2020/08/warning-kremlin-begins-security-forces.html>

<sup>5</sup> [https://t.me/nexa\\_tv/4736](https://t.me/nexa_tv/4736); [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fcXAKN9VJOJ22AdGhI-1ipb1dt8Sbfp8pgxXyAxwXos/htmlview?usp=sharing&pru=AAABdNAiddY\\*yYrNBFv3HbuprXfx2ZABWA](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fcXAKN9VJOJ22AdGhI-1ipb1dt8Sbfp8pgxXyAxwXos/htmlview?usp=sharing&pru=AAABdNAiddY*yYrNBFv3HbuprXfx2ZABWA)

<sup>6</sup> <https://twitter.com/AlexKokcharov/status/1307715760005971970>

<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/AlexKokcharov/status/1307715760005971970>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/09/19/belarus-police-detain-hundreds-women-protest/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://function.mil\(.\)ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12315135@egNews](https://function.mil(.)ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12315135@egNews)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.iswresearch.org/2020/09/belarus-warning-update-multiple-russian.html>

<sup>11</sup> [https://structure.mil\(.\)ru/structure/okruga/west/news/more.htm?id=12315121@egNews](https://structure.mil(.)ru/structure/okruga/west/news/more.htm?id=12315121@egNews)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.iswresearch.org/2020/09/syria-warning-update-syrian-regime.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/headwind512/status/1307692047676190721>;

<https://twitter.com/belteanews/status/1307690027489558534>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.iswresearch.org/2020/09/warning-security-personnel-in-green.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.iswresearch.org/2020/08/warning-militarization-of-lukashenkos.html>

<sup>16</sup> Reuters reported over 100,000 participated in protests in Minsk on September, 20. ISW assesses the participation was likely only in the tens of thousands. [https://iz\(.\)ru/1063017/2020-09-20/kolonna-iz-tysyach-demonstrantov-dvinulas-k-rezidentcii-lukashenko-v-minske](https://iz(.)ru/1063017/2020-09-20/kolonna-iz-tysyach-demonstrantov-dvinulas-k-rezidentcii-lukashenko-v-minske); <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-54220125>; <https://www.pressherald.com/2020/09/19/more-than-200-women-detained-at-belarus-protest/>;

<https://112.international/politics/almost-400-people-detained-during-womens-march-in-belarus-human-rights-activists-54872.html>; [https://twitter.com/nexa\\_tv/status/1307665542401097731](https://twitter.com/nexa_tv/status/1307665542401097731);

[https://twitter.com/nexa\\_tv/status/1307683161552420866](https://twitter.com/nexa_tv/status/1307683161552420866); <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-belarus-election/belarus-protesters-keep-pressure-on-lukashenko-with-mass-rallies-and-police-data-leak-idUSKCN26B09X>;

<https://www.rferl.org/a/thousands-gather-again-in-belarus-to-march-against-lukashenka/30848518.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.iswresearch.org/2020/09/belarus-warning-update-lukashenko-tries.html>

<sup>18</sup> [http://spring96\(.\)org/be/news/99601](http://spring96(.)org/be/news/99601); <https://www.rferl.org/a/police-make-arrests-in-minsk-as-women-keep-up-protests-against-belarus-s-lukashenka/30835111.html>