



Belarus Warning Update: Kremlin Likely Contriving Amenable Government Structure in Belarus

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By Savannah Modesitt

An independent Russian media outlet published documents allegedly detailing Kremlin plans to cement control over Belarus through constitutional changes and a Kremlin-amenable political party in Belarus. Independent Russian news outlet “The Insider” published several documents allegedly from internal Kremlin discussions on December 25 outlining Kremlin plans to maximize Russian influence over the Belarusian government through shaping constitutional amendments and restructuring.¹ Among the documents are a framework for gaining political and social influence in Belarus, a speech by Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) General Vladimir Chernov seemingly to Kremlin officials on an unknown occasion outlining the role of Kremlin-amenable Belarusian politicians in constitutional reform, a list of Belarusian “assets,” and the foundational document for a new Kremlin-run political party in Belarus.² The documents allegedly come from the President’s Office for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, headed by Chernov, although there is no independent verification of the authenticity or provenance of the documents.³ The reports indicate that the Kremlin is preparing for a scenario in which self-declared President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko leaves office. Without independent validation, the documents by themselves cannot serve as confirmation of the Kremlin’s preparation for a post-Lukashenko scenario. ISW has previously forecasted, however, that the Kremlin may support a pro-Kremlin alternative to Belarusian President Lukashenko to further Union State integration to cement Kremlin suzerainty of Belarus, a forecast that is in accord with the policies outlined in the documents.⁴

The Kremlin likely plans to create a pro-Russian, anti-Lukashenko Belarusian political party. One of the documents details the creation of the “Right of the People,” which plans to push for the creation of a parliamentary-presidential republic in Belarus.⁵ The report also includes an alleged list of “assets,” likely individuals who are candidates for the Kremlin to prop up and support in a transition government.⁶ Chernov allegedly said that Kremlin loyalists should hold power in a planned new Belarusian parliamentary-presidential republic.⁷ This assessment tracks with ISW’s previous forecasts that the Kremlin may start grooming pro-Russian politicians and a Kremlin-amenable successor to replace Lukashenko.⁸

Kremlin plans for a puppet government in Belarus may pose security risks in 2021. In addition to propping up loyalist politicians, one of the documents in the report strategizes forming an information infrastructure with ownership of media channels and community organizations.⁹ The Kremlin likely intends to use increased control over Belarusian media to curtail the ability of Belarusians to protest Union State integration. A Kremlin push for the removal of Lukashenko from office may also catalyze Putin’s ability to establish a permanent Russian military presence inside Belarus, a most dangerous course of action that ISW previously assessed.¹⁰ The West should closely monitor the Kremlin’s interaction with Lukashenko and political and social structures inside Belarus in order to respond to Kremlin attempts to consolidate a power base outside Lukashenko.

ISW will continue monitoring the situation and providing updates.

¹ [https://theins \(dot\) ru/politika/237945](https://theins(dot)ru/politika/237945)

² [https://theins \(dot\) ru/politika/237945](https://theins(dot)ru/politika/237945)

³ [https://theins \(dot\) ru/politika/237945](https://theins(dot)ru/politika/237945)

⁴ ISW previously forecasted that the Kremlin may start grooming a Kremlin-preferable successor to replace Lukashenko; <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/belarus-warning-update-putin-will-increase-pressure-lukashenko-integrate-belarus-2021>

⁵ 28-year old International Relations Belarusian graduate Nikita Logovoy edited portions of the foundational document. He supports the opposition movement and has posted photos of himself with the opposition flag. His father is a businessman who cooperates with Russian companies, has dealings in Kaliningrad, and is listed in Chernov's list of "assets"; [https://theins \(dot\) ru/politika/237945](https://theins(dot)ru/politika/237945)

⁶ [https://theins \(dot\) ru/politika/237945](https://theins(dot)ru/politika/237945)

⁷ Chernov allegedly made this comment in a speech from October 3; [https://theins \(dot\) ru/politika/237945](https://theins(dot)ru/politika/237945)

⁸ <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/belarus-warning-update-putin-will-increase-pressure-lukashenko-integrate-belarus-2021>

⁹ The document of the Kremlin's strategy for Belarusian integration outlines the formation of information infrastructure to maintain influence in Belarus; [https://theins \(dot\) ru/politika/237945](https://theins(dot)ru/politika/237945)

¹⁰ <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/belarus-warning-update-putin-will-increase-pressure-lukashenko-integrate-belarus-2021>