



Russia in Review: August 18 – August 31, 2021

Russia Deploys Likely Permanent Advanced Air Defense Systems to Belarus ahead of Zapad-2021 Exercises

By George Barros

The Kremlin deployed S-300 air defense systems to Belarus in late August 2021, advancing a longstanding Kremlin campaign to establish a permanent Russian military presence in Belarus postured against NATO's eastern flank. This deployment increases Russian military capabilities to contest strategic airspace between the Baltic states and mainland Europe. The Kremlin seeks to degrade NATO's ability to defend the Baltics. Russian military personnel, as opposed to Belarusian personnel, will likely operate these S-300 systems.¹ Elements of Russia's 210th Air Defense Regiment arrived in Grodno, on the Belarusian border with Lithuania, on August 28.² The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated this deployment supports the permanent joint Russian-Belarusian air defense and air combat training center in Grodno that Moscow and Minsk agreed to create in March 2021.³ The Belarusian MoD did not connect this deployment to preparations for Russia's annual strategic exercise Zapad-2021, which will occur in Belarus and western Russia from September 10 to 16. ISW first warned about the threat of Russian air defense deployments to Belarus in August 2020.⁴

The Kremlin will deploy Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) units to Baranovichi, Belarus, on September 3. The Belarusian MoD stated that the VKS will deploy an unspecified number of Su-30 fighters to the 61st Fighter Air Base in Baranovichi



in western Belarus on September 3.⁵ The Belarusian MoD also framed this deployment as part of the joint Grodno training center and did not connect it to preparations for Zapad-2021. Self-declared Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko previously proposed hosting Russian military aircraft in Belarusian airbases for joint use by Russian and Belarusian airmen—as opposed to opening a new Russian airbase in Belarus, which Lukashenko has previously rejected—on March 2.⁶ ISW forecasted the threat of Russian airmen operating out of Belarusian airfields in April 2021.⁷

These S-300 and VKS deployments are likely Russia's first permanent deployment of full combat units to Belarus, a key milestone in the Kremlin's campaign to expand its military footprint in Belarus. Lukashenko has denied Moscow's requests to permanently deploy Russian forces to Belarus up until this point.⁸ The Institute for the Study of War ©2021

Zapad-2021 Training Grounds



0 500 1,000 2,000 Kilometers

Spatial Reference: WGS 1984 Web Mercator (auxiliary sphere)

- ★ Russian Training Ground
- ★ Sary Shagan Training Ground in Kazakhstan
- ★ Belarusian Training Ground
- Joint Russian-Belarusian Air Defense Training Center in Grodno

Map by George Barros
Institute for the Study of War © 2021

likely permanent deployment of Russian S-300 and VKS forces is thus a major achievement in the Kremlin’s campaign to integrate Belarus into Russian-dominated structures.⁹ The Kremlin will likely leverage Zapad-2021 to increase Russia’s military influence in Belarus further and deploy ground forces to Belarus. Russia may additionally deploy S-400 systems to Belarus. Lukashenko stated on September 1 that he signed an agreement with Russia on August 30 to supply Belarus with “dozens of aircraft and helicopters and possibly S-400 [systems] in the near future.”¹⁰

These deployments will increase Russia’s ability to contest strategic airspace in Poland, the Baltic States, and Ukraine.

Deployments in Belarus will support existing Russian systems in Kaliningrad and mainland western Russia. The Kremlin likely seeks to degrade NATO’s ability to defend the Baltics. Russian pilots’ permanent access to Belarusian airfields, if

achieved, would further enhance Russian force projection capabilities against NATO’s eastern flank and constitutes a significant threat to the West.

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced the parameters for Zapad-2021 on August 20.

The Russian MoD stated that 200,000 Russian and international personnel will participate in the exercises.¹¹ Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Serbia, and Sri Lanka will send currently unspecified forces to participate in Zapad-2021. China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan will send observers. Zapad-2021’s initial operational planning stage will simulate the joint Russian-Belarusian Regional Grouping of Forces responding to a simulated attack against Belarus from Poland. Zapad-2021’s second stage will feature joint combat operations to liberate occupied Belarusian territory. The exercises will occur at four training grounds in Belarus and nine in Russia as well as in the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland. The

MoD did not officially announce all the locations where Zapad-2021 will occur, such as at the Sary Shagan Training Ground in Kazakhstan and other likely training grounds in Belarus.

Russia and Belarus continued international military deployments and preparatory exercises for Zapad-2021 in late August.

Elements of Russia's 15th Army Aviation Brigade deployed to the Machulishchi airfield near Minsk and the 61st Fighter Air Base in Baranovichi on August 24.¹² Over 200 servicemen of the Belarusian 465th Missile Brigade and 336th Reactive Artillery Brigade began deploying from Osipovichy, Belarus, to the Sary-Shagan Training Ground in Kazakhstan on August 28.¹³ Russian—but not Belarusian—units previously deployed to Sary-Shagan for Zapad-2017.¹⁴ This exercise likely seeks to increase Belarusian deployment capabilities and increase Belarusian air defense units' integration with Russian forces. Elements of the Belarusian 5th Spetsnaz Brigade deployed to Ivanovo, Russia, for joint exercises with elements of the Russian 98th Airborne Division on August 30.¹⁵ Russia and Belarus additionally conducted a suite of large-scale joint logistics and signal exercises to establish command and control (C2) networks for Zapad-2021 on August 23-27.¹⁶ These C2 networks include the Western Military District, the Southern Military District, Kazakhstan, and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) headquarters—a C2 network much larger than what was used in Zapad-2017.¹⁷ Russian and Belarusian units conducted several other logistics exercises in late August.¹⁸ ISW has warned that such exercises can set conditions for Russia to establish the supply lines necessary to maintain a permanent military deployment in Belarus.¹⁹

ISW will continue closely monitoring the Zapad-2021 exercise and providing updates.

Russia Around the Globe

1. **The Kremlin will likely increase Russian-led CSTO operations near Afghanistan's northern border in the next six months.** The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) held an extraordinary Collective Security Council videoconference session on Afghanistan on August 23.²⁰ CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas stated Tajikistan is successfully controlling the border but requires further

military-technical assistance. Zas stated the CSTO will formulate a joint response to Afghanistan by the planned CSTO session in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on September 16. The CSTO also announced it will conduct four currently unspecified joint exercises in fall 2021: Search-2021, Echelon-2021, Interaction-2021, and Cobalt-2021, all of which will be held "according to a single plan." The Kremlin additionally continued to increase its military activity in Central Asia throughout late August. Russia's 201st Military Base in Tajikistan conducted several exercises and received new equipment in late August.²¹ A battalion-sized element of the Russian 55th Motor Mountain Rifle Brigade began deploying to the Edelweiss Training Ground in Kyrgyzstan on August 24 for participation in the CSTO "Rubezh-2021" exercises from September 7 to 9.²² The Kremlin will likely increasingly leverage the CSTO and expanded military exercises to advance longstanding Russian efforts to integrate the militaries of the former Soviet Union in Central Asia into Russian-controlled structures.

2. **The Kremlin secured two economic agreements with Hungary, advancing the Kremlin's effort to divide the EU and NATO.** Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó in Budapest, Hungary, on August 24.²³ During their meeting, Szijjártó announced that Hungary will begin producing the Russian Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine domestically at the end of 2022.²⁴ Szijjártó also agreed to sign a 15-year gas supply agreement with the Russian state-owned gas monopoly Gazprom in late September 2021.²⁵ The agreement will stipulate that Russia will deliver 4.5 billion cubic meters of gas to Hungary annually for 10 years, with the quantity of gas for the final five years negotiable after the first 10 years.²⁶ The Kremlin uses its Sputnik V vaccine and energy exports as geopolitical pressure tools.²⁷ The Kremlin has prioritized developing ties with Viktor Orban's government in Hungary for several years and will likely continue courting Budapest as part of Moscow's effort to undermine Western unity and structures.

3. **Lukashenko will likely make more Union State integration concessions to Russian President Vladimir Putin on September 9.** Lukashenko said he and Putin “could sign” integration agreements after a planned meeting in Moscow on September 9, the day before Zapad-2021 officially begins.²⁸ Lukashenko has so far stalled Russia’s absorption of Belarus via the Union State mechanism by stressing that the ratification of the Union State’s full suite of integration agreements is only possible as a package deal after every individual agreement has been agreed upon.²⁹ Lukashenko reportedly signed 28 of 30 Union State agreements for Belarusian integration into Russia by the end of 2019.³⁰ Lukashenko may sign more Union State documents at a planned Union State Supreme State Council meeting in October or November 2021.³¹
4. **The Kremlin issued cash bonuses to key demographics and promised to increase social spending to buy votes ahead of key parliamentary elections on September 19.** The Russian economy is performing poorly. Ruble inflation hit a five-year high in August 2021, and nearly 40 percent of Russians are currently unable to afford basic consumer goods such as food and shoes.³² This worsening quality of life has further eroded public support for the ruling United Russia party, which has lost support since early 2021 due to the Kremlin’s arrest of opposition figure Alexei Navalny and lingering dissatisfaction with the Kremlin’s poor handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.³³ Putin signed decrees issuing a 10,000 ruble (\$135) bonus to all Russian pensioners and a 15,000 ruble (\$200) bonus to military service members and police on August 24 and 31, respectively.³⁴ Putin additionally requested that the parliament budget monetary allowances for Russian servicemen and law enforcement indexed against inflation in 2022 and 2023 during a United Russia Party Congress on August 24.³⁵ Putin has announced one-time payments prior to past elections.³⁶ The Kremlin seeks to maximize voter turnout and secure additional public support for United Russia even though the Kremlin will falsify the September parliamentary elections in its favor.
5. **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hosted the inaugural session of the Crimean Platform Summit in Kyiv, Ukraine, on August 23.**³⁷ Representatives from 46 countries participated in the summit, including representatives from all 30 NATO members. Zelensky said he seeks to use the Crimean Platform to improve the effectiveness of the international response to the prolonged Russian occupation of Crimea, increase international pressure on the Kremlin, and prevent further human rights violations in occupied Crimea. The platform’s main goal is ending Russia’s occupation and the peaceful return of Crimea to Ukraine. The forum’s participants signed a joint declaration focusing on coordinating the diplomatic and political tools aimed at not recognizing Russia’s annexation.³⁸ The declaration does not define any concrete measures to achieve Crimea’s return to Ukraine other than the use of multilateral mechanisms to increase international cohesion in addressing Russia’s illegal occupation of Crimea. The platform could bring Crimean occupation issues more global visibility but is ultimately unlikely to achieve Crimea’s return to Ukraine. The West nonetheless must continue to coordinate policy and reject the Kremlin’s illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea. Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov described the Crimean Platform as “anti-Russian” and “unfriendly.”³⁹
6. **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed Ukraine’s first systematic foreign policy document since its independence in 1991 on August 27.** The strategy’s priorities include ensuring Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, counteracting Russian aggression, and continuing Ukraine’s course to join the European Union and NATO.⁴⁰ A separate section of the document is devoted to building the Ukrainian diplomatic service’s institutional capacity, indicating Ukraine is likely prioritizing increasing diplomatic outreach to foreign countries to offset Russian threats.⁴¹ Ukraine’s separate military strategy, signed in March 2021, states that Ukraine’s strategy is not aimed at achieving military parity with Russia but instead seeks to inflict unacceptable political, economic, military, and other costs on

Russia to compel Russian decision-makers to stop aggression against Ukraine.⁴² The continued support of Western partners to Ukraine is key to Ukraine's overall national security strategy and ability to resist Russian aggression.

7. **The Army-2021 Technical Forum and Army Games began in Moscow on August 22.** The forum is the Kremlin's premier annual military-industrial complex expo and generates reliable arms sales revenue for the Kremlin, which the Kremlin uses to supplement income lost due to sanctions.⁴³ The Army Games are a complementary series of competitive military sporting events that the Kremlin uses to demonstrate Russian weapon systems in the field and develop relationships with foreign militaries. This year's Army Technical Forum ran from

August 22 to 28 and the Army Games will run from August 22 to September 4.⁴⁴ Representatives from over 100 countries participated in the Army 2021 Forum and over 5,000 military personnel from 44 states are participating in the Army Games.⁴⁵ The director of Russia's state arms export company, Rosoboronexport, stated Russia has delivered \$5.2 billion in military equipment to 61 countries in 2021 and has a defense export portfolio totaling \$52.1 billion during a speech at the forum on August 23.⁴⁶

Contributors to this Report:

Mason Clark
George Barros

¹ George Barros and Mason Clark, "Belarus Warning Update: Lukashenko and the Kremlin Vie for Control Over Future Russian Weapons in Belarus," *Institute for the Study of War*, September 16, 2020, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-lukashenko-and-kremlin-vie-control-over-future-russian-weapons>.

² [On the Implementation of Measures to Create a Combat Training Center for Joint Training of the Air Force and Air Defense Forces,] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 28, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/139059/>.

³ [On the Implementation of Measures to Create a Combat Training Center for Joint Training of the Air Force and Air Defense Forces,] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 28, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/139059/>.

⁴ George Barros, "Belarus Warning Update: Belarus Confirms Plans to Purchase Advanced Air Defense Systems From Russia," *Institute for the Study of War*, January 14, 2021, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-belarus-confirms-plans-purchase-advanced-air-defense-systems>; George Barros and Mason Clark, "Belarus Warning Update: Lukashenko and the Kremlin Vie for Control Over Future Russian Weapons in Belarus," *Institute for the Study of War*, September 16, 2020, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-lukashenko-and-kremlin-vie-control-over-future-russian-weapons>; George Barros, Warning: Lukashenko's Security Forces Detain Belarusian Opposition Leaders, *Institute for the Study of War*, August 24, 2020, <https://www.iswresearch.org/2020/08/warning-lukashenkos-security-forces.html>.

⁵ [On the Implementation of Measures to Create a Combat Training Center for Joint Training of the Air Force and Air

Defense Forces,] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 28, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/139059/>.

⁶ ["Lukashenko Spoke About the Details of Negotiations with Putin and Reacted to Speculation,"] *Belta*, March 2, 2021, <https://www.belta dot by/president/view/lukashenko-rasskazal-o-podrobnostjah-peregovorov-s-putinym-i-otreagiroval-na-domysly-430898-2021/>; Maria Leyva, ["Lukashenko Refused to Create a Russian Military Base in Belarus,"] *RBK*, October 6, 2015, <https://www.rbc dot ru/politics/06/10/2015/5613ebe59a794769839c9e3f>.

⁷ George Barros, "Russia in Review: Russia Opens Permanent Training Center in Belarus and Sets Conditions for Permanent Military Basing," *Institute for the Study of War*, April 8, 2021, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russia-review-russia-opens-permanent-training-center-belarus-and-sets-conditions>.

⁸ Lukashenko previously rejected S-400 systems in Belarus in February 2020 and has rejected hosting a Russian air base in Belarus since at least 2015. ["Lukashenko Spoke About the Details of Negotiations with Putin and Reacted to Speculation,"] *Belta*, March 2, 2021, <https://www.belta dot by/president/view/lukashenko-rasskazal-o-podrobnostjah-peregovorov-s-putinym-i-otreagiroval-na-domysly-430898-2021/>; Maria Leyva, ["Lukashenko Refused to Create a Russian Military Base in Belarus,"] *RBK*, October 6, 2015, <https://www.rbc dot ru/politics/06/10/2015/5613ebe59a794769839c9e3f>; ["Belarus Refused to Buy Russian S-400, Claiming Their Uselessness,"] *Avia.Pro*, February 27, 2020, <https://avia dot pro/news/belorusiya-otkazalas-ot-pokupki-rossiyskih-s-400-zayaviv-ob-ih-bespoleznosti>; Boyko Nikolov, "Belarus Refused to Buy Russian S-400 Missile Systems Because They Are Useless," *Bulgarian Military*, February 27, 2020, [5](https://bulgarianmilitary dot com/2020/02/27/belarus-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

refused-to-buy-russian-s-400-missile-systems-because-they-are-useless/.

⁹ George Barros, “Belarus Warning Update: Forced Integration with Russia – Not the Protest Movement – Is Lukashenko’s Biggest Threat,” *Institute for the Study of War*, February 19, 2021, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-forced-integration-russia%E2%80%94not-protest-movement%E2%80%94lukashenko%E2%80%99s>.

¹⁰ [“Russia Will Supply Belarus with Dozens of Aircraft, Helicopters, Air Defense Systems, Possibly S-400,”] *Belta*, September 1, 2021, <https://www.belta.by/president/view/rossija-postavit-belarusi-desjatki-samoletov-vertoletov-sredstva-pvo-vozmozhno-i-s-400-457853-2021>.

¹¹ This count includes Western Military District (WMD) forces, Central Military District command elements, Airborne Forces (VDV), the Baltic Fleet, non-military security personnel, and foreign exercise participants. [“The Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation Held a Briefing on the Preparation of the Joint Strategic Exercise ‘Zapad-2021,’”] *Russian Ministry of Defense*, August 20, 2021, https://function.mil dot ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12378427@egNews.

¹² [“Preparation for the Joint Strategic Exercise ‘Zapad-2021,’”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 24, 2021, <https://vayar.mil dot by/news/138565/>.

¹³ [“Good Travels! Meet Kazakhstan!”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 28, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/139053/>.

¹⁴ “Iskander-M Missile Hits Target in Kazakhstan at Zapad-2017 Drills,” *TASS*, September 18, 2017, <https://tass dot com/defense/966182>.

¹⁵ The Belarusian MoD did not officially connect this exercise to Zapad-2021, however it is likely connected given this exercise’s similarities to the full suite of joint Russo-Belarusian activity that Moscow and Minsk have undertaken to prepare for Zapad-2021 since early 2021. [“Belarusian Spetsnaz Arrived in Ivanovo,”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 31, 2021, <https://vayar.mil dot by/news/139227/>.

¹⁶ [“The Joint Strategic Exercise Begins with the Forces and Means of Logistic, Technical (Material and Technical) Support of the Armed Forces of Belarus and Russia,”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 23, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/138332/>; [“WMD Signalmen Deployed a Closed Command and Control Network During Special Exercises,”] *Russian Ministry of Defense*, August 26, 2021, <https://structure.mil dot ru/structure/okruga/west/news/more.htm?id=12380155@egNews>; [Fuel Supplies and Fresh Bread,] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 24, 2021, <https://vayar.mil dot by/news/138564/>; [“Landing on the Airfield Section of the Road (Video),”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 25, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/138662/>; [“Large-Scale Logistics Exercises Started in the West Military District Under the Leadership of the Deputy Minister of Defense of

Russia General of the Army Dmitry Bulgakov,”] *Russian Ministry of Defense*, August 24, 2021, https://function.mil dot ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12379250@egNews; [“Signal Troops of the Armed Forces Will Perform Combat Missions,”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 26, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/138862/>.

¹⁷ [“Signal Troops of the Armed Forces Will Perform Combat Missions,”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 26, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/138862/>.

¹⁸ Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov presided over special Western Military District logistics exercises to prepare for Zapad-2021 that concluded on August 28, indicating a Kremlin prioritization of logistics activity. [“Special Exercises Preceding Large-Scale Maneuvers for ‘Zapad-2021’ Were Completed in the Nizhny Novgorod Region,”] *Russian Ministry of Defense*, August 28, 2021, https://function.mil dot ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12380645@egNews; A battalion tactical group of the Belarusian 19th mechanized brigade “with Russian units” conducted maneuver exercises at the Mulino Training Ground in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on August 31. [“The Perfection of Practical Activities,”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 31, 2021, <https://vayar.mil dot by/news/139224/>; Russian and Belarusian sappers conducted joint exercises in Brest, Belarus, on August 31 to September 1. [“On Holding a Joint Tactical and Special Exercise with Engineering Units of Belarus and Russia,”] *Belarusian Ministry of Defense*, August 31, 2021, <https://www.mil dot by/ru/news/139186/>.

¹⁹ George Barros, “Russia in Review: Russia Opens Permanent Training Center in Belarus and Sets Conditions for Permanent Military Basing,” *Institute for the Study of War*, April 8, 2021, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russia-review-russia-opens-permanent-training-center-belarus-and-sets-conditions>; George Barros, “Belarus Warning Update: Russia Likely Began Preparing Logistics Supply Lines to Belarus,” *Institute for the Study of War*, October 5, 2020, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-russia-likely-began-preparing-logistics-supply-lines-belarus>; George Barros, “Belarus Warning Update: Moscow and Minsk Hold Simultaneous Combat Readiness Exercises in Kaliningrad, Mainland Russia, and Belarus,” *Institute for the Study of War*, January 28, 2021, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-moscow-and-minsk-hold-simultaneous-combat-readiness-exercises>.

²⁰ [“On the Results of the Extraordinary Session of the CSTO Collective Security Council, Dedicated to the Situation in Afghanistan and its Impact on the Security of CSTO Member States,”] *Collective Security Treaty Organization*, August 23, 2021, https://odkb-csto dot org/news/news_odkb/ob-itogakh-vneocherednoy-sessii-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-posvyashchennoy-situatsii-v-af/; [“The CSTO Coordination Council for Combating Illegal Migration Discussed the Situation with Refugees from Afghanistan,”] *Collective Security Treaty Organization*, August 24, 2021, <https://odkb-csto dot>

org/news/news_odkb/koordinatsionnyy-sovet-po-borbe-s-nezakonnoy-migratsiy-odkb-obsudil-situatsiyu-s-bezhentsami-iz-afg/; ["Session of the CSTO Collective Security Council,"] *Kremlin*, August 23, 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66433>.

²¹ Helicopters from the Russian 201st Base in Tajikistan conducted combat exercises in Tajikistan on August 23. ["Russian Servicemen Conducted Exercises with Helicopters in Tajikistan,"] *Izvestia*, August 23, 2021, <https://iz.ru/1211063/2021-08-23/rossiiskie-voennye-proveli-uchenii-a-s-vertoletami-v-tadzhikistane>; The Central Military District deployed Kornet anti-tank missiles to the 201st Base on August 24. ["Russia Strengthened the Military Base in Tajikistan,"] *RIA Novosti*, August 24, 2021, <https://ria.ru/20210824/baza-1746970437.html>; A battalion-sized element of the Russian 201st Base began conducting signals and S-300 air defense exercises at the Sambuli Training Ground in Tajikistan on August 30. ["Russia Will Conduct Military Exercises in Tajikistan,"] *Deutsche Welle*, August 30, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/ru/v-tadzhikistane-prohodjat-rossijskie-voennye-uchenija/a-59027302>; ["About 500 Russian Military Personnel Will Participate in Maneuvers of Motorized Rifle Units in the Mountains of Tajikistan,"] *Interfax*, August 30, 2021, <https://www.militarynews.ru/story.asp?rid=1&nid=556402&lang=RU>.

²² ["Servicemen of the Central Military District Mountain Unit Began Marching to the Edelweiss Training Ground Located in Kyrgyzstan,"] *Russian Ministry of Defense*, August 24, 2021, https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12379223@egNews.

²³ ["Opening Remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov During Negotiations with the Minister of Foreign Economic Relations and Foreign Affairs of Hungary Peter Szijjártó, Budapest, August 24, 2021,"] *Russian Foreign Ministry*, August 24, 2021, https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/ckNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4845180; ["Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Working Visit to Hungary,"] *Russian Foreign Ministry*, August 25, 2021, https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/ckNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4845798.

²⁴ ["Hungary Announced Plans to Produce the Sputnik V vaccine Starting from 2022,"] *Izvestia*, August 24, 2021, <https://iz.ru/1211745/2021-08-24/vengriia-namerena-s-2022-goda-nachat-proizvodstvo-vaktsiny-sputnik-v>.

²⁵ ["Hungary Will Be Ready to Conclude a 15-Year Agreement with Gazprom in the Fall,"] *TASS*, August 24, 2021, <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/12206113>; ["Hungary Agreed with Russia on the Terms of a New Gas Supply Contract,"] *Deutsche Welle*, August 30, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/ru/vengrija-soglasovala-s-rossiej-uslovija-novogo-kontrakta-o-postavkah-gaza/a-59029939>.

²⁶ ["Hungary Agreed with Russia on the Terms of a New Gas Supply Contract,"] *Deutsche Welle*, August 30, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/ru/vengrija-soglasovala-s-rossiej-uslovija-novogo-kontrakta-o-postavkah-gaza/a-59029939>.

²⁷ George Barros and Nataliya Bugayova, "Europe Cedes Opportunity in Russia-Ukraine Energy Deal," *Institute for the Study of War*, January 30, 2020, <http://www.iswresearch.org/2020/01/europe-cedes-opportunity-in-russia.html>; Mason Clark, "Russia in Review: Belarus Update: Lukashenko Uses Oil Tariffs to Delay Integration With Russia," *Institute for the Study of War*, February 4, 2020, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russia-review-belarus-update-lukashenko-uses-oil-tariffs-delay-integration-russia>; George Barros with Joseph Kyle, "Putin Will Likely Punish Kyiv for not Holding Elections in Russian-Controlled Eastern Ukraine," *Institute for the Study of War*, November 30, 2020, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/putin-will-likely-punish-kyiv-not-holding-elections-russian-controlled-eastern-ukraine>.

²⁸ ["Lukashenko Announced Plans to Approve 28 Union Programs with Russia,"] *Interfax*, September 1, 2021, <https://www.interfax.ru/world/787833>.

²⁹ George Barros, "Belarus Warning Update: The Kremlin Prepares to Further Integrate Belarus," *Institute for the Study of War*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-kremlin-prepares-further-integrate-belarus>.

³⁰ George Barros, "Belarus Warning Update: The Kremlin Prepares to Further Integrate Belarus," *Institute for the Study of War*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-kremlin-prepares-further-integrate-belarus>.

³¹ ["Lukashenko Announced Plans to Approve 28 Union Programs with Russia,"] *Interfax*, September 1, 2021, <https://www.interfax.ru/world/787833>.

³² "UPDATE 1-Russia's Inflation Jumps to 5-year High as Central Bank Meeting Looms," *Reuters*, August 25, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-cpi/update-1-russias-inflation-jumps-to-5-year-high-as-central-bank-meeting-looms-idUSL1N2PW1QO>; ["Russians on Rising Costs,"] *The Levada Center*, August 24, 2021, <https://www.levada.ru/2021/08/24/rossiyane-o-roste-tsen/>.

³³ ["Party Electoral Ratings,"] *The Levada Center*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.levada.ru/2021/03/11/elektoralnye-rejtingi-partij-5/>.

³⁴ ["Decree on a One-Time Cash Payment to Citizens Receiving a Pension,"] *Kremlin*, August 24, 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66440>; ["Decree on a One-Time Cash Payment to Persons Serving in Certain Federal State Bodies,"] *Kremlin*, August 31, 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66529>; ["Decree on a One-Time Cash Payment to Certain Categories of Military Personnel,"] *Kremlin*, August 31, 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66530>.

³⁵ ["United Russia Party Congress,"] *Kremlin*, August 24, 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66445>.

³⁶ Tom Balmforth, "Putin's Payouts For Firstborn Babies Seen As Popular Preelection Move, But No Cure For Looming

Demographic Slump,” *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, November 29, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-putin-firstborn-allowance-population-slump/28886749.html>.

³⁷ [“The President of Ukraine Opened the Inaugural Summit of the Crimean Platform,”] *Ukrainian President Website*, August 23, 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-ukrayini-vidkriv-inavguracijnij-samit-krimskoyi-pl-70269>.

³⁸ [“Joint Declaration of the Participants of the International Crimean Platform,”] *Ukrainian Foreign Ministry*, August 23, 2021, <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/spilna-deklaraciya-uchasnikiv-mizhnarodnoyi-krimskoyi-platfomi>.

³⁹ Maya Musienko, [“Peskov Called the ‘Crimean Platform’ an Anti-Russian and Unfriendly Event,”] *TV Zvezda*, August 23, 2021, <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/20218231346-sBZwA.html>.

⁴⁰ [“The President Approved the Strategy of Ukraine's Foreign Policy,”] *Ukrainian President Website*, August 27, 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/glava-derzhavizatverdiv-strategiyu-zovnishnopolitichnoyi-di-70413>; [“Decree of the President of Ukraine №448/2021,”] *Ukrainian President Website*, August 26, 2021,

<https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4482021-40017>.

⁴¹ [“Decree of the President of Ukraine №448/2021,”] *Ukrainian President Website*, August 26, 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4482021-40017>.

⁴² [“Decree of the President of Ukraine №4121/2021,”] *Ukrainian President Website*, March 25, 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1212021-37661>.

⁴³ [“Rosoboronexport Has Supplied Equipment Worth \$ 5.2 billion Since the Beginning of the Year,”] *TASS*, August 23, 2021, <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/12194589>.

⁴⁴ [The International Military-Technical Forum ‘Army-2021,’] *Kremlin*, August 23, 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66434>.

⁴⁵ [The International Military-Technical Forum ‘Army-2021,’] *Kremlin*, August 23, 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66434>.

⁴⁶ [“Rosoboronexport Has Supplied Equipment Worth \$ 5.2 billion Since the Beginning of the Year,”] *TASS*, August 23, 2021, <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/12194589>.