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**BRIEFING BY  
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY SECURITY AND ARMS  
CONTROL AT THE 988th PLENARY MEETING OF THE  
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

13 October 2021

**Agenda item: Any other business  
Subject: On the outcome of the “Zapad-2021” exercise in September 2021**

The “Zapad-2021” joint strategic exercise was conducted from 10 to 16 September under the direction of the Chiefs of the General Staffs of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in accordance with the Russian Federation Armed Forces Training Plan for 2021. The exercise was the concluding stage in the joint training of the armed forces this year.

On 8 October in Moscow, Deputy Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation Colonel General Alexander Fomin briefed the military attachés of foreign States on the main results of this joint Russian-Belarusian strategic exercise. It was pointed out that it was a scheduled exercise. The armed forces of the Russian Federation conduct such exercises annually, alternately in each of four military districts. Moreover, preparations for the “Zapad-2021” exercise were carried out as openly as is permissible in these cases.

The information provided in the briefing by Colonel General Fomin should help to lessen military tensions in Europe and reduce speculation about Russian military activity in the region. Russian military attachés were not invited to similar briefings on exercises conducted in NATO countries.

Prior to the start of the exercise, the Russian Ministry of Defence held a briefing on 20 August to provide the military attachés with basic introductory information on the scenario and purpose of the exercise and the areas where it would be conducted.

In accordance with Chapter V of the Vienna Document 2011, notification was sent via the OSCE Communications Network 42 days in advance of the exercise. The notification indicated the personnel strength of the military units of the armed forces of the Russian Federation covered by the Vienna Document during the “Zapad-2021” exercise on Russian territory. This number did not exceed 6,400 military personnel.

The exercise was conducted according to a single scenario in view of the overall operational and tactical environment. Moreover, the total number of troops of the armed forces of Russia and foreign States in the Russian phase of the “Zapad-2021” exercise did not exceed 9,000. In this case, Chapter VI of the

Vienna Document does not require that observers from participating States be invited. Russia therefore clearly complied in full with the requirements of the Vienna Document 2011.

The scenario for the joint strategic exercise with Belarus was based on the experience of modern armed conflicts and new modalities for the use of troops.

A total of around 200,000 troops, 80 airplanes and helicopters, 760 pieces of military equipment and 15 warships were involved in the exercise. As many as 2,000 troops from Member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and other countries participated in the exercise, and military contingents and task forces from Armenia, Belarus, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Sri Lanka were deployed on the territory of the Russian Federation. The armed forces of China, Myanmar, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam were represented by military observers.

In accordance with a decision by the operational headquarters to prevent the introduction and spread of the novel coronavirus infection in the armed forces, specialists from the Radiation, Chemical and Biological Defence Forces and medical units worked together to prevent the disease among the participants in the exercise.

The progress of the “Zapad-2021” exercise was covered on the website of the Russian Ministry of Defence and by the media. Representatives of the diplomatic and military corps accredited in the Russian Federation were invited as observers during the active phase. Military delegations from 12 foreign States and military attachés from 34 countries accredited in Moscow observed the troop activities during the main stage of the practical exercises at the Russian training ground in Mulino on 13 September. Altogether there were 134 foreign representatives at the training ground. In keeping with the principle of reciprocity, military attachés from NATO countries were not invited to this phase of the exercise, since Russian military attachés were not invited to the corresponding NATO exercise “Defender Europe 2021”.

Practical troop exercises were carried out at nine training grounds in Russia and in the Baltic Sea.

The exercise on the territory of the Russian Federation also dealt with the command of air and air defence forces when countering air strikes by a simulated adversary.

New ways of conducting defensive operations, including the landing of tactical airborne troops, were tested. Baltic Fleet forces practised training and combat missions to locate, block and destroy sabotage and reconnaissance groups and illegal armed formations. They repulsed an amphibious landing and defeated simulated enemy warships.

The experience gained by the crews of fighter jets of the Russian Aerospace Forces and the Belarusian Air Force will be used in organizing the protection of the air borders of the Union State.

The “Zapad-2021” joint strategic exercise was strictly defensive in nature and was designed to train troops in the conduct of military operations under modern conditions. The results of the exercise demonstrated the increased training of the troops and improved the interoperability of the military command bodies of the armed forces of Russia, Belarus, our allies and friendly States.

In closing, we should like to emphasize that, as part of the voluntary Russian initiative to move the areas of large-scale exercises away from the Russia-NATO line of contact, the main practical troop activities were conducted on the territory of the Russian Federation at a considerable distance from the western State border.

All the objectives of the exercise were achieved and the training issues were fully addressed.