



## **Belarusian-Russian modus operandi (operation techniques) of manipulating in the international information space the image of its aggression against Poland.**

### **Operation Sluice**

Poland has been subjected to controlled migration pressure, accompanied on an equal scale by propaganda and disinformation activities of the Union State of Russia and Belarus (USRB). Alexander Lukashenko himself as well as Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makei acknowledged this, stating that support for cross-border smuggling of illegal immigrants is a response to EU sanctions against Belarus, resulting from the falsification of the 2020 presidential election and the repression of oppositionists. The actions of the Belarusian authorities are an obvious blackmail aimed at exerting such pressure on Poland and the European Union so that the sanctions are eased. However, in the emotional dimension, it is also a kind of punishment for Belarus' immediate neighbours, who supported the protests against Lukashenko. Lithuania and Poland strongly supported the protesters, as they recognized that the neighbouring nation with which they formed a common state in the past deserved the same rights as their citizens have been enjoying. Inequality and denial of basic rights, as well as repression of those who opposed it, is, after all, a problem close to the experience of Iraqi residents.

Lukashenko and his services are recruiting these people on the basis of a project from years ago, which is called "Operation Sluice". It consists in Belarus attracting migrants from various regions of the world and pushes them to the European Union across the green border. "Operation Sluice" was initiated approx. 10 years ago Initially, the operation was aimed at forcing the European Union to pay protection fee for strengthening the border. However, the scale of this action was smaller than today. Groups of over a dozen people were brought to the border with Poland and Lithuania and transferred to the neighboring country. Initially, the stream of migrants was directed to Lithuania. However, when the authorities in Vilnius announced that Lithuania would return anyone who tried to cross the border illegally, Belarus redirected the migrants to the border with Poland and Latvia.

No war refugee is the cause of the appearance of migrants at the border. According to the information of the services, there, in fact, also is a group of Afghans among the migrants, but they previously lived in Russia, and they are not fleeing from the Taliban, so it is difficult to call them war refugees. There are also people from Iraq who also do not qualify as war refugees. Although Iraq still faces many problems in regards to security and reconstruction



after the war with Daesh, now no war is fought there, and the terrorist threat is decreasing radically every year. Periodic Turkish and Iranian air strikes also affect a small and sparsely populated part of the country. The residents of Baghdad, Erbil, Basra, Tikrit, Mosul or Sulaymaniyah unlike the residents of Ukrainian cities, leave the house without worrying about whether they will return to it alive or whether the house will not be bombed in the meantime. Both the inhabitants of Iraq and the Polish services guarding the border with Belarus know this very well. The authorities in Minsk, whose goal is not helping the refugees, but to destabilize the situation at the border, are also aware of this. For Russia, it is the reconnaissance of the reaction of Polish services, the reaction of our allies and the reaction of public opinion to possible aggression. So this aggression below the threshold of war is a preparation for even greater aggression, and perhaps even war.

### **Methodology of work of Russian-Belarusian planners of information and psychological operations**

In the methodology of the work of planners of information and psychological operations, which are inscribed in the canon of eastern operations, attributed to the Russian Federation and the Belarusian services, which directly draw models of operation from Russia, the so-called active reconnaissance, i.e. reconnaissance by taking some action, in this case creating migratory pressure, actually gives the opportunity to build a dozen different reconnaissance vectors. For example, it is a question of social polarization, defining types of the media and journalists who are to a lesser or greater extent susceptible to emotions and psychological pressure, also testing of the functional systems of the security structures of the Polish state in the border area is conducted. The efficiency and functionality of these systems, the quality of supervision in the field - both that is carried out using electronic devices, as well as conducted on the basis of personal patrols of the border guards and the Polish army, up to the issues of embedding Poland in international relations (an attempt of disrupting them) are examined. This also applies to Polish-Iraqi relations and mutual perception by both nations. Traditionally, these relations have been positive. In the 70s and 80s of the 20th century, Poles built highways in Iraq, including highways from Baghdad through Anbar up to Jordan and Syria. Since 2016, Polish soldiers have been training Iraqi special forces to fight against Daesh. In turn, many Iraqis have finished their studies in Poland. Russia, however, strives to make these relations bad. There have already been signs of hostility towards Polish soldiers on the part of Iraqis, inspired by Russian disinformation on subject of the treatment of Iraqi citizens by the Polish border services. Meanwhile, Poland is still open to tourists from Iraq,



businessmen as well as students. But the appearance of aggressive groups posing as refugees among migrants on the border also changes the perception of Poles and may negatively affect the existing openness to Iraqis legally coming to Poland.

Russia, through Belarus, is investigating how Poland, a member of NATO and the EU alliances, will be perceived in its external environment. Whether it will be able to manage this migration crisis in cooperation or without cooperation with partner countries. At the moment, it seems that there is lack of consistency in the position regarding the migration threat in both structures (NATO and the EU).

The information now collected can be used to make a decision on further actions, such as triggering a large-scale incident at the border, which will have the potential to affect Western public opinion. Only basing on the reaction of the public the center that controls such an operation will attempt to influence or check the quality of Poland's embedding in allied relations. Both in NATO and in the EU.

The Belarusian services are pursuing the incident at all costs, including the cost of life of those they have brought. They take advantage of their situation and pay them for provoking Polish border guards and soldiers. The Belarusian services not only give them grenades, axes, stones, but also dress the immigrants in elements of uniform, which may make it difficult to distinguish whether we are dealing with a disguised man or a soldier. There are known situations when someone pointed a long gun at the Polish services. The point of this is so that Polish uniforms are not sure who they are dealing with. This may even serve to provoke a border conflict with an exchange of fire, where Belarusians will shift the blame to migrants and "wash their hands" of everything. How would soldiers and security officers in Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region, react if someone provoked them in this way during the war with Daesh? Every Iraqi should answer this question before accusing the Polish services of brutality. Double standards must be rejected.

The Polish Border Guard, which supervises the border area, detects such provocations. The issue of dressing immigrants in uniform-like attire was picked-up relatively early and is an event that can be handled by the Belarusian side in two basic ways. The first way is propaganda. Belarusians suggest that they are helping migrants by giving them warm clothes. The second element is the possibility of setting in the border area a large number of people who will be visually indistinguishable from the officers of the Belarusian border guards. This, in turn, can be exploited to try to provoke a reaction of border guards in the field, by, for



example, trying to penetrate such a uniformed group on to the territory of Poland, gathering information on the manner of communication and reaction time of border guards or the form of reaction itself. Such actions are to help the Belarusian services recognize in an active way how the Polish side supervises the borders. In this context, warnings about a possible war scenario do not seem exaggerated. And in fact, everything must be done to seal the border. After all, this is a natural action of every state, especially in a situation of threat to security, and no one in Iraq should be surprised.

### **The Polish-Belarusian border of propaganda.**

The operation conducted by Belarus and Russia exploiting the illegal migration route is primarily propaganda and disinformation activities. **Belarus and Russia meticulously use precisely selected information material, and if they do not have it, they manage activities in the field and the behaviour of foreigners so as to produce it.** If one event publicized by Belarus does not evoke an appropriate propaganda effect, inspiration and simulation in the field begin. And this is how it works. Of course, at the expense of migrants' suffering. Analysing the problem as a whole, the opponent in the field of information is perfectly oriented in the divisions of worldview in Poland. Apart from that, there are media facilities that, in addition to reporting events, enter the space of creating a narrative, i.e. the way in which the recipient is to think about specific facts.

The exhibition of the harm began with showing suffering animals that died in confrontation with the fence (concertina wires) erected by the soldiers. When the hysteria around the subject did not work in terms of deepening the polarization, the harm to children and defenceless women was put at the forefront of the propaganda.



„Take the children, cuddle them, look dirty and tired.”

"Friends in the woods need a child to give a statement for the video, which will be sent to the NGOs."





**Poland is facing the action of an opponent who bases many of his actions on empathy, which is a very strong and primary feature of man. It is not easy to oppose selectively selected information and manipulated or simulated events that evoke sympathy in the recipients.** The international public opinion should be widely informed that these emotions are evoked in them by specific countries (Russia, Belarus) and for a specific purpose.

Further instructions from the Belarusian services, further recordings of propaganda materials. Children are exposed to arouse even greater emotions:

- [https://twitter.com/Straz\\_Graniczna/status/1458834075662405636](https://twitter.com/Straz_Graniczna/status/1458834075662405636)
- [https://twitter.com/Straz\\_Graniczna/status/1458834476310671361](https://twitter.com/Straz_Graniczna/status/1458834476310671361)
- [https://twitter.com/Straz\\_Graniczna/status/1458834730347020293](https://twitter.com/Straz_Graniczna/status/1458834730347020293)

Tempted by the Belarusian authorities, the migrants blow cigarette smoke into the child's eyes to cause tears:

- <https://twitter.com/VoicesBelarus/status/1457705413898604545>

If any children know even a word of English, they are involved in propaganda activities. "Announcements in foreign languages is a huge advantage", "Give children banners, write slogans on humanitarian issues":

- <https://twitter.com/StZaryn/status/1458769057902178311>
- <https://twitter.com/StZaryn/status/1458774680064643077>

The above examples are only a fragment of the activities of Belarusian services and propagandists, but forcibly showing their modus operandi (mode of operation) and motivation: the end justifies the means. They have been and are so cynical that they did not even hide it. Such material where they are "caught red-handed" is available to the Polish Border Guard and other services in huge quantities, suggesting that the Belarusians assumed in advance that, despite the unmasking, their manipulative and propagandistic message would get where it was supposed to go.

Returning to the media reaction: Eastern models of conducting service operations lead to the expected psychological reactions. It is assumed that some of the press editors, completely unconsciously, will enter the opponent's narrative. Trivializing, they "catch" on the hook - in this case, we are talking about the suffering of the youngest. The Belarusian regime did not take into account (and will not take into account) the victims associated with living in the



forest in unfavourable weather conditions. Of this we can be absolutely sure. From the beginning, a large exposure of materials in the Belarusian media about deceased immigrants was expected, with particular emphasis on shifting responsibility to the Polish state. Thus, Belarus divides Polish society and provides greater motivation to people engaged in helping those nomadising on the Polish-Belarusian border, who, motivated by noble motives, enter into confrontational interactions with the services and, guided by frustration, fit into the narratives of Belarusian propagandists. The only way to save immigrants from death would be the sudden occurrence of internal problems in the Lukashenko regime which would cause the operation to end abruptly (Lukashenko's repressive apparatus would focus on internal problems) or bringing about a complete marginalisation (no interest) of the Belarusian propaganda message to the world - causing the costs to exceed the operational yield.

In addition, from the Belarusian side, there are attempts to subject Polish officers to psychological pressure: firing empty shots, throwing objects in the direction of the Border Guard, moving Belarusian "border guards" with sniper weapons, threatening to harm/rape women and/or children in front of the Polish services. These are actions calculated to create pressure, including provoking Polish officers to cross the border or engage in physical confrontation. Thanks to such an operation, the enemy's services gain as much information as possible about the ways of reacting in a foreign country. It sounds vague, but the border line consists of a specific territory, differently shaped and supervised - in addition to electronic means, there are teams of the Border Guard or the Polish Army. Each patrol, reconnaissance activity, time and reaction decision can be stimulated by Belarus with the pressure of immigrants, and the response of Poles - subjected to exhaustive analyses. This type of threat does not only have a social dimension, as there are often planning and recognition processes often taking place in the background, often with a brutal dimension.

**Since the very beginning of the Belarusian operation, there has also been a wave of videos encouraging the Arabic-speaking population to come to the European Union.** The recordings have suggested and continue to suggest that crossing borders illegally is easy and enjoyable. They show smiling men listening to music as they traverse one green forest after another. **The migrant films that are being disseminated achieve two objectives. First of all, they are a form of advertising and luring other foreigners.** Encouraged by such content, they enter the entire "tourist" cycle. It begins with dislocation, and then we have settlement in a Belarusian hotel, transport to the border, and finally forcing by Belarusian border guards under physical pressure to enter the territory of the Republic of Poland. **The**



**second purpose of distributing this type of recordings is to distract attention from the fact that the regime of Alexander Lukashenko is behind the whole procedure. Public opinion's attention is temporarily focused on companies, organizations or groups that are involved in encouraging migration and helping to cross the border. Of course, such a commercial business is taking place, but it is not happening without the support, consent and supervision of the Belarusian services.**

Above all, remember and beware of one thing – easy earnings! Belarusian services are recruiting migrants for various tasks. From feigning actions, propaganda settings, to aggression against Polish officers, to even quasi espionage activities. It is not worth it! Currently, 3,000 day-night and thermal imaging cameras are operating on the Polish-Belarusian border, and another 4,500 cameras and motion sensors are expected to be created in the near future. The above-mentioned actions constitute a crime that is very likely to be detected and if a person committing such acts is identified in Poland, they will be sentenced to prison. It is not worth derailing your resume for "a few dollars". For Belarus, you are just a pawn.

What we can and do is to rely on diligent information showing real events and the real picture. **It is also important to point out the true intentions of the Belarusian side. And this is what the SHAFAFIYAT project is dedicated to.**





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