

Law Enforcement Agencies and the Prosecutor's Office of Belarus: Career Trajectories Before and After 2020

Summary

This study focuses on the professional career paths of Belarusian law enforcement officials before and after 2020, using case studies of the Investigative Committee, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), and the Prosecutor's Office of Belarus. It analyses the biographies of senior officials, examines open sources, and incorporates insights from expert interviews to explore changes in the leadership of these institutions in the context of the 2020 political crisis and the subsequent repressions. The study also briefly reviews the current state of leadership within these agencies. The findings demonstrate that following the events of August 2020, the top leadership of the MIA, the Investigative Committee, and the Prosecutor's Office was renewed, with those appointed during that period remaining in post after the government reshuffle in 2025. Career advancement within law enforcement is driven mainly by informal networks, loyalty to the ruling authorities, and a readiness to carry out any orders. Personnel policy in these agencies follows two main patterns: long-term internal promotion within an organisation and cross-appointments from related bodies, such as the KGB.

Table of contents

Introduction.....	4
Research methods and materials.....	6
Strengthening of the security bloc in the government and governance of the Belarusian state.....	7
Service and career in law enforcement agencies and the prosecutor's office.....	9
Policies and practices for recruitment to law enforcement agencies.....	10
Careers in law enforcement agencies and the prosecutor's office.....	12
The Prosecutor's Office in the Belarusian system of public administration.....	15
Service in the prosecutor's office: career specifics.....	17
Post-2020 leadership changes and the current state of the prosecutor's office.	22
The Investigative Committee of Belarus in the system of public administration	25
Career paths in the Investigative Committee.....	27
Appointments and promotions in the Investigative Committee.....	30
Changes in the leadership of the Investigative Committee since 2020 and the current situation.....	31
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) within the Belarusian system of public administration.....	35
Career Pathways in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.....	37
Leadership Changes in the Ministry of Internal Affairs Since 2020 and the Current Situation.....	42
Conclusion.....	48

Introduction

During his entire period in power, Aliaksandr Lukashenka¹ has been building a centralised, personalised governance system in Belarus, focused on repressive control and imitating the rule of law. In this context, the Belarusian Government's security bloc (the so-called 'hawks', 'silaviki'²) has consistently played a special role. Since 1996, its representatives have gradually strengthened their positions within the public administration system. At the same time, there have also been periods of relative liberalisation in the political history of modern Belarus, when the influence of more moderate officials, often representing financial, economic and other civil ministries and state agencies (the so-called 'doves'), grew within the Government.

The 2020 elections and mass protests, followed by large-scale repression against Belarusian citizens, led to the government's security forces gaining a qualitatively different weight and becoming the main support of authoritarian state governance. In response to the internal political crisis, Aliaksandr Lukashenka not only expanded the powers of the security forces but also significantly increased their funding from the state budget. For example, budget funding for the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2024 increased by 160 per cent compared to 2020.³

Institutionally, the security bloc of the Belarusian government includes not only physical coercion agencies (such as the Special Purpose Police Unit, or AMAP in Belarusian)⁴ but also a wider range of structures. These include judicial, law enforcement and supervisory bodies. All of them, under the control of the executive branch, function as instruments of repressive pressure and control. In such a system, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Investigative Committee (IC) are responsible for creating the grounds for political repression, including detention and the falsification of criminal cases, while prosecutors support politically motivated prosecutions. This study focuses on these three structures in particular.

¹ Here and throughout the text we use Belarusian transliteration. Other sources may use Russian-based forms, for example: Aleksandr Lukashenko

² The term 'silaviki' refers to members of state agencies that have a monopoly on legitimate violence. This term was created from the word 'sila', meaning 'force'. As a rule, term 'silaviki' include law enforcement agencies, the armed forces, special services and military-like bodies

³ Pozirk, 'The largest pieces go to the security forces, and propaganda will get by. How the authorities divide the budget', January 2024, <https://pozirk.online/ru/longreads/64133/>

⁴ AMAP is a special riot police force under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). In Russian it is called "OMON".

The establishment of presidential control over public agencies and ministries formally tasked with protecting citizens' rights and overseeing their observance took place gradually. They amended legal acts defining the agencies' powers, and their subordination to the head of state became increasingly strict. Despite formal autonomy in performing their functions, Aliaksandr Lukashenka personally appoints all officials in enforcement agencies from the rank of colonel upwards. He also approves the structure of these agencies, regulates service procedures, and determines other aspects of their activities. This approach and personnel policy have made it possible to establish a system of leadership in the MIA, the Investigative Committee, and the Prosecutor's Office—at all levels, from republican to district—that is entirely dependent on the head of state. The heads of these agencies have built a vertical chain of subordination, within which ordinary employees have effectively lost their procedural independence. After 2020, the political crisis led to further strengthening of personal control and the application of stricter principles of personnel selection based primarily on loyalty.

Although certain reshuffles in the government accompanied the 2025 presidential elections, the changes did not affect the leadership of key law enforcement agencies at the republican level. All previous leaders retained their positions in the MIA, the Investigative Committee, and the Prosecutor General's Office. Reshuffles occurred only at the regional level, partially affecting the leadership of the Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

As in other authoritarian regimes, the security and law enforcement agencies involved in repressive practices are highly secretive, and information about them is extremely limited. Official websites often do not contain up-to-date data, and since 2020 even access to them from abroad has been restricted. Despite rare publications in independent Belarusian media and investigative centre materials, systematic research on security and law enforcement agencies remains virtually non-existent. Moreover, any attempt to study this topic is considered sensitive and poses risks for those conducting such research.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the institutional role of three key law enforcement agencies -- the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Investigative Committee -- within the vertical system of public administration in Belarus. It also examines the career trajectories of their leaders at both the republican and regional levels in the period before and after 2020. In addition, we draw attention to the state of these agencies following the start of a

new political cycle in Belarus in 2025, after Aliaksandr Lukashenka held elections in January and, as expected, remained in office as head of state.

Research methods and materials

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, including analysis of open sources and qualitative data collection techniques. The primary focus is on the examination of the biographies of the heads of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Investigative Committee, and the prosecution bodies. The analysis covers the period from 2020 to 2025 and encompasses both republican and regional levels of government.

Biographical data on 41 top officials from these agencies were collected and analysed: 15 from the MIA, 12 from the IC, and 14 from the Prosecutor's Office. It is important to note that, in several cases, information from open sources was incomplete or entirely absent. Official agency websites, media archives, and other available resources were also used as sources of information. Due to restricted access to government websites from abroad (e.g. IP address blocking), a VPN was used to collect data.

In addition to analysing biographical data, the study includes an examination of the legal regulation of the powers of the MIA, the Investigative Committee, and the Prosecutor's Office, as well as the actual practices of appointing and promoting the heads of these structures. The assessment of the *de jure* and *de facto* factors made it possible to supplement the formal analysis of the institutional framework with empirical conclusions.

The qualitative part of the study is based on a series of semi-structured interviews and the expert knowledge of one of the authors regarding the specifics of the work of law enforcement and investigative bodies. In March–April 2025, six interviews were conducted with former law enforcement officials and experts with experience of working in law enforcement agencies. All interviews were conducted under conditions of anonymity and confidentiality. The main limitations of the study include difficulties with finding interviewees due to the sensitivity of the topic and the inability to interview current law enforcement officials. We relied on personal networks to form the sample for the study. However, even with this approach, not all potential participants ultimately agreed to be interviewed.

The study triangulated data collected through various methods, which allowed for an in-depth examination of the issue under conditions of limited access to information and supported the formulation of grounded conclusions.

Strengthening of the security bloc in the government and governance of the Belarusian state

As mentioned earlier, the mass protests of August 2020 and their openly brutal suppression led to a notable strengthening of the security bloc within the Belarusian government. The repressive measures used in response to the protests were systematic and deliberately harsh. These actions became a central element of the strategy to preserve the internal stability of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's authoritarian regime. The influence of the security apparatus on the entire system of governance continues to this day.⁵

The Security Council of Belarus occupies a distinct position within the system of governance.⁶ This body plays a key role in coordinating the implementation of the president's powers in the areas of internal and external security. According to the law, the Security Council serves as the highest collegial political and coordinating body tasked with ensuring the functioning of the state security system under the leadership of the head of state.⁷

The Security Council reports directly to Aliaksandr Lukashenka. He determines its composition, appoints the State Secretary, sets the regulations governing the activities of all its bodies, and makes key personnel decisions. Lukashenka also personally appoints the ministers and committee heads who serve on the Security

⁵ The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Lukashenko and uniforms. How security forces are transforming the Belarusian regime, November 2020, https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2020/11/lukashenkos-vicious-circle?lang=ru&utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁶ The Security Council consists of the president (as chair), the prime minister, the chairs of both houses of parliament, the head of the Presidential Administration, the state secretary of the Security Council, the chair of the State Control Committee, the prosecutor general, the ministers of internal affairs and defence, and the chair of the KGB. Other members of the Security Council include the ministers of foreign affairs, emergency situations, and finance; the chairmen of the Supreme Court, the National Bank, the Investigative Committee, the State Military-Industrial Committee, and the State Border Committee; and the chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces. The composition of the Security Council was approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 214 of 11 June 2021 (as amended on 29 August 2024) 'On the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus', May 2025, <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=P32100214>

⁷ See Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 1902-XII of 3 November 1992 'About Defence', May 2025, <https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=V19201902>

Council, approves regulations for the relevant bodies, and confers military ranks from colonel to the highest officer levels.⁸

In 2022, the powers of the Security Council were significantly expanded. In particular, Lukashenka transferred to this body the right to declare a state of emergency or martial law and, in essence, to control the entire public administration and governance system in the event of his violent death. According to some Belarusian analysts, the Security Council has de facto become a body where the security forces have gained not only institutional representation but also influence over political planning, to the point of replacing the functions of the civil administration with the actual powers of the Presidential Administration 'spilling over' into the Security Council.⁹

At the same time, it is the Security Council that controls the security agencies, with key appointments made by decree of Lukashenka. This trend in personnel policy is not new; it continues the tendency to subordinate all public agencies and ministries directly to the head of state, bypassing even the formal executive authorities.¹⁰

At the beginning of the political crisis in the country, Lukashenka had complete and, in essence, unlimited personal control over the heads of the security agencies, which made the security bloc of the government virtually inaccessible to any external influence.¹¹

When it comes to the government's security bloc in general and law enforcement agencies in particular, the events of 2020 marked the culmination of their institutional regression, which began in the mid-1990s. At that time, instead of fulfilling their intended functions of maintaining order and enforcing the law, the structures within this bloc increasingly served as instruments for preserving power and carrying out repression. Their actual powers have also shifted, and

⁸ See paragraph 12 of the Regulations on the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus, approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 214 of 11 June 2021 (as amended on 29 August 2024) 'On the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus', May 2025, <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=P32100214>

⁹ Nikolai Burov, Presidential Administration: transfer of powers to the Security Council, 2021, <https://nmn.media/yearbook/2021/page2.html>

¹⁰ Sergey Satsuk, Law Enforcement Agencies: New Personnel Policy, p. 45–51, 2009, <https://nmn.media/yearbook/get/yearbook2009.pdf>; Pyotr Valuyev, the Presidential Administration and law enforcement agencies: before and after the presidential election, 2010, <https://nmn.media/yearbook/2010/valuev-ru.html>; Alexey Medvetsky, Security Forces: Conservative Reform, 2011, <https://nmn.media/yearbook/2011/page13.html>

¹¹ Polina Makarova, Government of Military Discipline, 2022, <https://nmn.media/yearbook/2022/page2.html>

individual agencies, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB,¹² have begun to operate with little regard for law norms. The latter includes the authorised use of force, arrests without trial, and immunity from criminal prosecution for actions taken in the so-called ‘maintenance of order’.¹³

After January 2025, when Aliaksandr Lukashenka formed what he called a “new-old government”,¹⁴ Aliaksandr Turchyn,¹⁵ who had previously headed the Minsk Regional Executive Committee, was appointed Prime Minister. Turchyn is considered to be relatively more liberal than the previous Prime Minister, Raman Halouchanka,¹⁶ who had experience in the military-industrial complex and was regarded as the ‘head of the wartime cabinet’.¹⁷ There were no significant changes in the leadership of the three agencies examined in this paper, which likely indicates both Aliaksandr Lukashenka’s trust in the individuals who head them and confidence in their current heads and the sustained prominence of the agencies within the Belarusian system of public administration.

Service and career in law enforcement agencies and the prosecutor’s office

There are two types of civil service in Belarus: civil and militarised, which still differ from each other to some extent. In practice, Belarus operates under a militarised model of civil service legislation, characterised by restrictions on civil servants’ rights to privacy, protection of personal data, freedom of opinion, belief, and expression. Following the adoption of the 2022 civil service law, legal restrictions were introduced prohibiting individuals holding foreign citizenship from entering public service.¹⁸

Currently, the principles governing civil and militarised civil service in Belarus are converging, with both being effectively integrated into a single system. For example, the concept of official discipline has been introduced for both types of service. It is now interpreted as the requirement for employees to carry out their

¹² It is the State Security Committee.

¹³ Piotr Żochowski, Lukashenka’s last line of defence. The Belarusian security apparatus in a time of crisis, August 2021, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2021-08-05/lukashenkas-last-line-defence-belarusian-security-apparatus-a>

¹⁴ BIPART, Public administration news digest № 95, June 2025, https://bipart.eu/picture/library/new_d_mar-apr_2025_1.pdf

¹⁵ In Russian transliteration: Alexander Turchin

¹⁶ In Russian transliteration: Roman Golovchenko

¹⁷ Artyom Shraibman, Belarus Reshuffle Produces “Wartime Cabinet”, June 2020, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/82063>

¹⁸ BIPART, Overview of the Law of the Republic of Belarus ‘On Public Service’ (2022), 2022, https://bipart.eu/picture/library/statya_novyi_zakon_o_gossluzhbe.pdf

duties as defined by laws, job descriptions, and orders from superiors. At the same time, the principles of humanism and social justice have been removed from the legislation. This has reduced the importance of the ethical dimension of civil service and, in practice, has created a situation in which civil servants are expected to strictly comply with all regulations and orders, thereby effectively stifling any individual initiative.¹⁹

Law enforcement agencies and the Prosecutor's Office operate under a militarised civil service model characterised by some specific features. These include:

- a strict hierarchical command structure and administrative subordination
- rigorous requirements regarding employees' health and conduct
- the assignment of military or special ranks
- the mandatory wearing of uniforms
- and access to firearms.

Even in the case of the Prosecutor's Office, which formally occupies a distinct position within the governance system and is not a classic law enforcement body, personnel policy still follows the logic of militarised service. This applies to recruitment, career progression, and procedures and practices for dismissal. As a result, all the agencies examined in this research operate within a system marked by high disciplinary control, institutional secrecy, and politically motivated personnel selection.

Policies and practices for recruitment to law enforcement agencies

The main formal criteria for recruitment to the Prosecutor's Office, the Investigative Committee, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are as follows:

1. **Appropriate education.** A higher legal education is required for employment in the Prosecutor's Office and the Investigative Committee. In the MIA system, secondary education, including non-legal qualifications, is acceptable at entry. However, a higher legal education becomes mandatory for further career advancement.

¹⁹ BIPART, Overview of the Law of the Republic of Belarus 'On Public Service' (2022), 2022, https://bipart.eu/picture/library/statya_novyi_zakon_o_gossluzhbe.pdf

2. **Medical examination.** Candidates must undergo a comprehensive medical assessment. This includes psychological testing and an interview intended to evaluate their professional suitability.
3. **Special clearance.** The internal security service of the relevant agency conducts a background check on the candidate. This involves the analysis of data from internal and interdepartmental databases, a possible polygraph test, and collecting information about close relatives. The check aims to identify potential risks, including biographical details, social connections deemed unreliable by the authorities, and the candidate's level of loyalty.

According to the interviews, one of the defining features of these bodies' current situation remains an evident personnel shortage. This problem is particularly acute at the district level in rural areas and Minsk. In the past, this led to a relaxation of formal recruitment requirements. In some cases, it was sufficient merely to possess the required level of education and have no medical contraindications to service. While this approach helped maintain staffing levels, it also lowered the overall standard of employee training and reduced the quality of their work.

Following the events of 2020, the situation has changed. According to interviewees, the entry threshold for law enforcement agencies has increased. In addition to the previous formal criteria, loyalty to the current government has become a mandatory condition for recruitment. In one interview, this was described as follows:

'They check all your relatives, i.e. whether they have a criminal record or not, and your close relatives. If you are married, then, of course, your wife or spouse. They also compile character references, ... whether you have been involved in administrative cases...'

'... They have already questioned the neighbours, gone around to the neighbours, found out who lives there and who doesn't. ... [Before 2020] there was nothing like that, because those were different times.'

It is interesting to note that the interviewee also mentioned that passing a polygraph test has become a mandatory requirement for employment in law enforcement agencies:

'...The change that occurred after 2020: in my day, there was no mandatory polygraph test or anything else like that, I can say that for sure. Now, polygraph tests are mandatory even when entering the [Ministry of Internal Affairs] academy.'

It was also noted that since 2020, checks on the political reliability of relatives of those entering militarised service have been tightened:

'From the point of view of conducting special checks, the relatives of applicants for service are checked for involvement in politically motivated cases. If, for example, all relatives have emigrated or been detained, this automatically closes the door for the applicant. And this, again, is a big problem, because there is a huge shortage of applicants.'

Thus, after 2020, the recruitment policy for law enforcement agencies became not only stricter but also significantly more politicised. Despite the current shortage of personnel, particularly at the lower levels, the screening system has been reinforced and now incorporates ideological elements that previously had limited influence on recruitment.

Another notable feature of law enforcement agencies is that their leadership is exclusively male. This reflects both the traditional practices of Belarusian public administration and the personal stereotypes of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. In general, women remain significantly underrepresented in the ministries within this sector. While official statistics indicate that 70 per cent of civil servants in Belarus are women, Interior Minister Ivan Kubrakou²⁰ stated that, as of February 2025, only 12 per cent of employees in the Ministry of Internal Affairs were women.²¹

Careers in law enforcement agencies and the prosecutor's office

According to current legislation in the Republic of Belarus, appointments to all managerial positions at the regional and republican levels within the Prosecutor's Office, the Investigative Committee, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are made personally by the President following the completion of all relevant background checks on the candidates.

²⁰ In Russian transliteration: Ivan Kubrakov

²¹ Women mainly hold positions in citizenship and migration departments, information centres and juvenile inspection services – Zerkalo asked the Minister of Internal Affairs about women in the police force. His answer was limited to five sentences, but even there he managed to slip in two sexist stereotype, February 2025, <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/91844.html?c>

At the earlier stages of a career, however, promotion is influenced by a number of factors, as highlighted in interviews with experts and former employees of these agencies:

1. **Personal or informal connections.** Having relatives or informal ties to senior officials within the agencies or related institutions, such as the KGB, the Operations and Analysis Centre under the President, or the State Control Committee, provides clear advantages. These connections can improve one's prospects while studying at agency-affiliated universities and during initial job placements. They also facilitate faster career progression and access to more prestigious or comfortable positions.

"There is nepotism everywhere, that's obvious, even at the stage of education, where there were hereditary cops, as they say. That is, these are the children of some police officers or KGB agents or someone else. The academy's management turns a blind eye to this because the parents are high-ranking officials. The second stage is when the assignments are made. That is, if there is a special position, or if someone's parents have connections, they will pull their children into these "warm" places."

"If they [parents, connections] are somewhere higher up, these people are quickly taken away. They stay there for two years and are then taken to regional administrations, around the city, to Minsk, or even to the central office."

2. **Professional competencies and skills.** These include subject-matter knowledge as well as the ability to communicate effectively. Such qualities are particularly important in the early stages of a career, where strong performance may serve as the basis for promotion to a higher level, for example, from the district to the regional level.

"Of course, there are very few specialists who are good at this, there are not enough of them. That is, there is an option ... to "work hard" on difficult lines, if you are good at it, you will succeed sooner or later. If you are stupid there, no one will take you."

3. **Loyalty** to the current government has become a significant factor since 2020. It includes not only political loyalty but also a willingness to carry out orders even if they are legally questionable.

"If an employee who is ready for promotion says, "I am ready to carry out orders" that are not always legal or correct, or "I am ready to be cynical, I am ready to be unprincipled," these people are immediately noticed. And there will always be a

suitable job for them. This is considered a very strong social elevator in these structures."

According to experts, before 2020, loyalty was not a decisive factor. At that time, professional performance and experience played the primary role in career advancement.

"[You can get promoted] by investigating political crimes ... and you will rise from some Shchuchynski district department of the Investigative Committee to the central office. This factor definitely did not exist before 2020."

4. Willingness to participate in politically motivated persecution is also seen to advance one's career quickly, even in the absence of other grounds.

'Proved yourself in the fight against protesting citizens – you can count on some kind of "bonus" for yourself.'

5. **An additional factor influencing career advancement** may be membership in the alumni community of a university, as well as participation in various competitions and sport events within the security bloc.

'...You still have an advantage thanks to the academy [Ministry of Internal Affairs]. There were [many] people studying with me, who have spread out across the republic. Naturally, I can call any city, and I will have several acquaintances there, whom I can ask to provide some assistance.'

It is important to note that the above-mentioned grounds and mechanisms for promotion apply primarily to lower- and middle-level personnel, particularly in the transition from district to regional positions. However, these factors do not guarantee promotion to senior management roles at the republican level, including ministerial posts (heads of departments) and their deputies. Such appointments remain entirely at the discretion of Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

Promotion within the Prosecutor's Office, the Investigative Committee, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs has traditionally depended on informal connections, professional competence, and a record of successful service. Since 2020, these factors have been supplemented by a mandatory requirement to demonstrate loyalty to the current government and a willingness to participate in politically

motivated actions. As a result, career advancement has become increasingly dependent on political reliability rather than professional merit alone.

The following sections of this study examine the characteristics of career trajectories within each of the three departments under review.

The Prosecutor's Office in the Belarusian system of public administration

The Prosecutor's Office holds a distinct position within the Belarusian governance and public administration system. Unlike traditional law enforcement agencies, it combines the functions of supervision, participation in criminal proceedings, and oversight of other law enforcement bodies. Its powers include supervising compliance with legislation, participating in investigations, and supporting the prosecution in court.

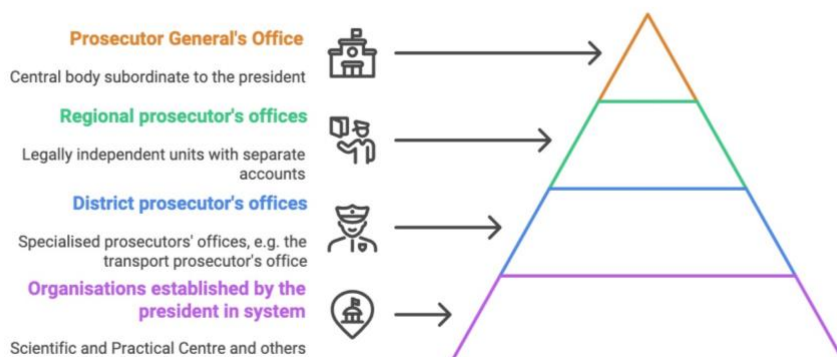
A defining feature of the Prosecutor's Office is its unique institutional status compared to other law enforcement agencies. Formally, it is not a militarised body, and its employees are classified as civil servants. However, in practice, several characteristics, such as the wearing of uniforms, the assignment of class ranks, and access to weapons, make the nature of service comparable to that in militarised institutions.

The Prosecutor's Office holds constitutional status established in Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. Under a separate law, it functions as a unified and centralised system that exercises state supervision over compliance with legislation and performs other functions defined by law.²²

The structure of the Prosecutor's Office system is as follows:

²² Article 1 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus dated 08.05.2007 No. 220-Z (as amended on 08.07.2024) 'On the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus', May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h10700220&q_id=2522235

The hierarchy of prosecutor's offices



The central element of the system is the Prosecutor General's Office, which comprises 21 structural units.²³ Eleven of these are responsible for overseeing specific areas of activity carried out by other state bodies, including the Investigative Committee, the KGB, and the judiciary. Nine units are dedicated to the internal organisation and management of the prosecutorial system, including personnel affairs and ideological work. One unit coordinates the state's efforts to combat corruption and organised crime.

The Prosecutor General formally initiates the creation, reorganisation, and liquidation of the prosecution service, but the head of state retains final authority.²⁴ The president also determines the overall staffing level. In contrast, the Prosecutor General approves the internal structure and staff set within the established limits unless the head of the state puts it differently. This model highlights the head of state's de facto control over the entire system of the prosecutor's office.

Despite the formally declared independence of the Prosecutor General and the prosecution system as a whole,²⁵ they are entirely subordinated to the president.

²³ Structure of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus, official website, May 2025, <https://prokuratura.gov.by/ru/about/struktura/struktura-generalnoy-prokuratury-respubliki-belarus/>

²⁴ See Part 2 of Article 16 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 220-Z dated 08.05.2007 (as amended on 08.07.2024) 'On the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus', May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h10700220&q_id=2522235

²⁵ See Article 127 of the Constitution of Belarus of 1994 (as amended on 04.03.2022), May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=v19402875&q_id=3072052; Article 8 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus dated 08.05.2007 No. 220-Z (as amended on 08.07.2024) 'On the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus', May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h10700220&q_id=2522235

The Constitution and the relevant legislation explicitly establish the Prosecutor General's accountability to the head of state. The president appoints and dismisses the Prosecutor General with the consent of the upper house of parliament, which, given its political dependence, has never opposed Lukashenka's decisions.

The formal grounds for dismissal from the prosecution service include a conviction for a criminal offence, loss of working capacity, voluntary resignation, and other grounds defined by law.²⁶ However, the list of grounds for dismissing the Prosecutor General is non-exhaustive, allowing the head of the state to exercise this power at his discretion.

Service in the prosecutor's office: career specifics

This study examined open-source information on 14 senior officials within the Prosecutor's Office. The analysis covered the current Prosecutor General, his deputies, and prosecutors representing all regions of Belarus and the city of Minsk. It also included one former Prosecutor General, Aliaksandr Kaniuk,²⁷ and the former prosecutor of the Vitebsk region, Ihar Ukrainets.²⁸

Table 1. Biographies and positions of the leadership of the Belarusian Prosecutor General's Office

N	Full name, title	Year and place of birth	Date of appointment	Current position	Previous positions and terms of service
1.	Shved Andrei Ivanavich. ²⁹ State Counsellor of Justice 2nd class	1973. Village Hlushkavichy Homel region	2020	Prosecutor General	1) First Deputy Chairman of the Investigative Committee (2012–2013) 2) Chairman of the State Forensic Examination Committee (2013–2020)

²⁶ See Part 3 of Article 18 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 220-Z dated 08.05.2007 (as amended on 08.07.2024) 'On the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus', May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h10700220&q_id=2522235

²⁷ In Russian transliteration: Aleksandr Koniuk

²⁸ In Russian transliteration: Igor Ukrainets

²⁹ In Russian transliteration: Shved Andrey Ivanovich

2.	Dysko Henadz Iosifavich. State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class	1964. City Ashmyany Hrodna region	2016	Deputy Prosecutor General	1) Assistant and Deputy Prosecutor of the Astravets District of the Hrodna Region, Prosecutor of the Shchuchynski District of the Hrodna Region (1990–2006) 2) Prosecutor of the Vitsebsk Region (2006–2016)
3.	Stuk Aliaksei Kanstantsinavich. ³⁰ State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class	1959. City Minsk	2008	Deputy Prosecutor General	1) Prosecutor of the Leninski District of Minsk (1998–2007) 2) Deputy Prosecutor of Minsk (2007–2008)
4.	Varonin Maksim Valerevich. ³¹ Major General of Justice	1975. city Kastrama (Russia)	2020	Deputy Prosecutor General	1) Chief of the Main Investigative Department of the Central Office of the Investigative Committee (2012–2013) 2) Deputy Chairman of the State Forensic Examination Committee (2013–2020)
5.	Khmaruk Siarhei Kanstantsinavich. ³² State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class	1968. city Charvanahrad Lviv region (Ukraine)	2021	Deputy Prosecutor General	1) Prosecutor of Minsk (2012– 2019) 2) Prosecutor of Minsk Region (2019–2021)
6.	Lavrukhin Aleh Uladzimiravich. ³³ State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class	1965, city Dushanbe (Tadzhikistan)	2019	Prosecutor of Minsk	1) Deputy Prosecutor of the Brest Region (2011–2012) 2) Prosecutor of the Minsk Region (2012–2019)
7.	Klimau Viktar Dzmitryevich. ³⁴	1963, city Kupina (Russia)	2015	Prosecutor of Brest Region	1) Head of the Department for Supervision of Criminal Investigations by the

³⁰ In Russian transliteration: Stuk Aleksey Konstantinovich

³¹ In Russian transliteration: Voronin Maksim Valerevich

³² In Russian transliteration: Khmaruk Sergey Konstantinovich

³³ In Russian transliteration: Lavrukhin Oleg Vladimirovich

³⁴ In Russian transliteration: Klimov Viktor Dmitrievich

	State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class				Investigative Committees of the General Prosecutor's Office (2012–2013) 2) Head of the Department for Supervision of the Enforcement of Legislation and the Legality of Legal Acts of the General Prosecutor's Office (2013–2015)
8.	Skurat Andrei Mikalaevich. ³⁵ Senior Counselor of Justice	1977. city Slonim Hrodna region	2025	Prosecutor of Vitsebsk Region	1) Prosecutor of Leninski District of Hrodna (2012–2019) 2) Deputy Prosecutor of Hrodna Region (2019–2025)
9.	Audzei Aleh Aliaksandravich. ³⁶ Senior Counselor of Justice	N/A. Kletski district, Minsk region	2024	Prosecutor of Gomel Region	First Deputy Prosecutor of Minsk, term of service unknown
10.	Zhukau Aliaksandr Vasilevich. ³⁷ State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class	N/A. city Krymsk (Russia)	2021	Prosecutor of Hrodna Region	Head of Hrodna Region Directorate of the State Forensic Examination Committee (2017–2021)
11.	Shchetska Yuri Anatolevich. ³⁸ State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class	1980. village Arekhava Vitsebsk region	2021	Prosecutor of Minsk Region	1) Deputy Head of the Vitsebsk Region Office of the Investigative Committee (2012–2013) 2) Head of Vitsebsk Region Directorate of the State Forensic Examination Committee (2013–2021)
12.	Kulikovich Valery Leanardavich. ³⁹ State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class	N/A. Ashmianski district Hrodna region	2023	Prosecutor of Mahiliou Region	Head of the Internal Security Department of the General Prosecutor's Office (2020–2023)

³⁵ In Russian transliteration: Skurat Andrey Nikolaevich

³⁶ In Russian transliteration: Avdey Oleg Aleksandrovich

³⁷ In Russian transliteration: Zhukov Aleksandr Vasilevich

³⁸ In Russian transliteration: Shchetko Yuriy Anatolevich

³⁹ In Russian transliteration: Kulikovich Valerij Leonardovich

13.	Kaniuk Aliaksandr Uladzimiravich. State Counsellor of Justice 1st class	1960, city Hrodna	2025	N/A.	1) Deputy Chairman – Chairman of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court (2009–2011) 2) Prosecutor General (2011– 2020) 3) Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Armenia (2020– 2025)
14.	Ukrainets Ihar Uladzimiravich. State Counsellor of Justice 3rd class	1974. village Khoramsk Stolinski district Brest region	2025	N/A.	1) Prosecutor of Mascouski District of Minsk (2018–2020) 2) Deputy Head of the Department for Supervision of Criminal Investigations by the Investigative Committees of the General Prosecutor's Office (2020–2021) 3) Prosecutor of the Vitsebsk Region (2021–2025)

Source: analytical summary by the authors of the study based on information from open sources

Analysis of the biographies of the top prosecutors in Belarus

Age

The average age of entry into the prosecutor's office is 49.1 years (range: 41–54 years). As of 2025, the average age of the leadership of the prosecutor's office was 56.4 years (ranging from 45 to 66 years). The oldest is Aliaksei Stuk (66 years old), who has held the post of Deputy Prosecutor General since 2008.

Place of birth

Most (8) of the officials under review were born in Belarusian cities. Five are not from Belarus: three were born in what is now the Russian Federation, one in Ukraine and one in Tadzhikistan.

Education

Almost all senior officials in the Prosecutor's Office graduated from civilian universities. Seven, including Andrei Shved and Aliaksandr Kaniuk, studied at the Faculty of Law of Belarusian State University (BSU). One received a degree from the International Institute of Labour and Social Relations.

Four officials obtained their education at Hrodna State University (HSU), and two studied at universities in Ukraine. Nearly all of them hold law degrees. The only exception is Viktor Klimau, who graduated from a military-political school in Russia.

Obtaining a second degree or an academic title is relatively rare and has been observed in only five senior figures within the Prosecutor's Office. Four of them—Mikhail Varonin, Siarhei Khmaruk, Yuri Shchetska, and Viktor Kulikovich—graduated from the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Belarus. Viktor Klimau earned an additional degree from the Belarusian Non-State Institute of Law. The only official with a doctoral degree and the academic title of Associate Professor is the current Prosecutor General, Andrei Shved.

Ranks

The Prosecutor's Office uses class ranks instead of general military ranks. These class ranks correspond to their military equivalents. The current distribution is as follows:

- **Aliaksandr Kaniuk holds class 1 State Counsellor of Justice (equivalent to Colonel General).**
- **Andrei Shved holds class 2 (equivalent to Lieutenant General).**
- Nine senior officials have been awarded with **Class 3** (equivalent to Major General).
- The title of **Major General of Justice** has been retained by Maksim Varonin, presumably without conversion to the class rank system following his transfer from the State Forensic Examination Committee.
- The rank of **Senior Counsellor of Justice** (equivalent to Colonel) is currently held by Andrei Skurat and Aleh Audzei, likely because they have not yet received a class rank corresponding to their current positions.

Class rank generally reflects the position level and the official's status at either the regional or republican level. It influences not only the level of remuneration but also the scope of social benefits provided.

Post-2020 leadership changes and the current state of the prosecutor's office

Following the 2020 protests, significant personnel changes occurred within the Belarusian Prosecutor's Office, reflecting a redefinition of its role in the governance system. The repressive dimension of the Prosecutor's Office's activities has intensified, while its legal oversight functions have been pushed into the background. The prosecution authorities have been staffed with leaders whom Aliaksandr Lukashenka appears to regard as more loyal and controllable. This shift reflects a broader trend towards centralisation and the increasing role of informal interactions within the security bloc.

1. The political significance of Andrei Shved's appointment

One of the key personnel changes in the leadership of the Prosecutor's Office was the appointment of Andrei Shved as Prosecutor General on 9 September 2020. Before this, he headed the State Forensic Examination Committee (SFEC) and had previously worked in the Prosecutor's Office between 1998 and 2006. His appointment marked a turning point, symbolising the transformation of the Prosecutor's Office into an institution actively engaged in political repression.

During Shved's appointment, Aliaksandr Lukashenka publicly instructed prosecutors to carry out any assigned tasks. During this address, he delivered the now widely cited phrase: "Sometimes the law doesn't matter," implying that even unlawful orders must be followed.

In the interviews, experts attributed Shved's appointment to his absolute loyalty and readiness to carry out any task without question:

"[On the reasons for A. Shved's appointment] -- absolute loyalty, absolute willingness to violate every conceivable and inconceivable law. The phrase "sometimes even the law" came from somewhere around there.'

'It was clear that Shved had been given several ambiguous tasks, which he carried out as required – harshly – and for this he was rewarded with the next step in his career.'

2. Building Andrei Shved's team

With the appointment of a new head of the Prosecutor's Office, a wave of personnel rotation began, primarily through transfers from the State Forensic Examination Committee (SFEC), the agency previously led by Andrei Shved. It meant a departure from traditional career trajectories within the Prosecutor's Office.

Notable examples of such appointments include:

- **Maksim Varonin**, former Deputy Chairman of the SFEC, was appointed Deputy Prosecutor General in October 2020.
- **Yuri Shchetska**, former Head of the Vitsebsk Region Directorate of the SFEC, became Prosecutor of the Minsk Region in April 2021.
- **Aliaksandr Zhukau** led the Hrodna Region Directorate of the SFEC and was appointed Prosecutor of that region in November 2021.

These appointments reflect the formation of a "power core" within the Prosecutor's Office that is loyal to Shved and closely connected to him through prior professional affiliations.

3. Rotations in the regions

Personnel changes also extended to the regional level. However, in this case, regional prosecutors, such as those in Vitsebsk, Homel and Mahiliou, were appointed from within the existing structure. Specifically, they were selected from individuals who had previously served in the central departments of the Prosecutor's Office or its disciplinary units. For example, Valery Kulikovich, former head of the Internal Security Department of the Prosecutor General's Office, was appointed to a regional position.

This approach has helped reinforce local control and minimise opportunities for individual regional leaders to become entrenched in specific regions or their professional places.

4. Two types of career paths

The situation with personnel in the Prosecutor's Office after 2020 reflects two parallel trends:

- **Stability among long-standing appointments.** Several senior officials have remained in their positions since the 2010s. For example, Deputy Prosecutor General Aliaksei Stuk has held his post since 2008, while Henadz

Dysko has served since 2016. Regional prosecutors such as Aleh Laurukhin (since 2012) and Viktor Klimau (since 2015) also remain in office.

- **The emergence of new, personally loyal figures aligned with Shved.** Individuals who previously worked directly with him in the State Forensic Examination Committee (SFEC) or earlier in the Prosecutor's Office, the Investigative Committee, or the Security Council have taken positions in republican and regional leadership.

This second circle of personnel forms Shved's internal support base within the system. It also suggests that Lukashenka places particular trust in Shved.

5. The trajectory of the former Prosecutor General

Former Prosecutor General Aliaksandr Kaniuk, dismissed in September 2020, did not leave public service. In November of the same year, he was appointed Ambassador to Armenia, a position he held until April 2025. No information on his subsequent professional activities is available in open sources.

6. Retention of the Prosecutor General and senior members of the Prosecutor's Office in 2025

Changes in the composition of the Belarusian government in 2025 had virtually no impact on the prosecutor's office (except for the appointment of A. Skurat as prosecutor of the Vitsebsk region). Andrei Shved retained his post, which indicates that Aliaksandr Lukashenka still trusts him and is satisfied with the work of the prosecutor's office.

The Investigative Committee of Belarus in the system of public administration

Compared to other law enforcement agencies in Belarus, the Investigative Committee (IC) is a relatively new institution. Aliaksandr Lukashenka established it by a decree in 2012. The main objectives behind its creation were to improve preliminary investigations' quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. The Committee was formed through the redistribution of functions among existing bodies, specifically:

- Investigative units were transferred from the Prosecutor's Office.
- Preliminary investigation units were removed from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the financial investigation bodies of the State Control Committee (SCC).

Before establishing the Investigative Committee, Belarus followed a model of broad jurisdiction over preliminary investigations. Under this system, several bodies had the authority to carry out investigative activities, including the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the KGB, the Financial Investigation Department (FID) of the State Control Committee (SCC), the Border Service, and the State Customs Committee.⁴⁰ With the creation of the committee, this system was simplified, and only two bodies retained the authority to conduct preliminary investigations. This reform increased the independence of investigators, particularly within the Investigative Committee, by reducing interference and conflicts of interest with other agencies at the same institutional level. At the same time, it strengthened the Committee's direct subordination to the president.

In practice, the Investigative Committee serves as the primary body responsible for conducting preliminary investigations in criminal cases.⁴¹ However, the KGB retains parallel investigative powers. The KGB conducts preliminary investigations into specific categories of criminal cases, primarily those related to public and national security, the illegal trafficking of weapons and other hazardous substances, offences against the state, and disseminating information classified as state secrets. In addition, KGB investigative units may handle other categories

⁴⁰ Official website of the Investigative Committee of Belarus, History of the investigative bodies of Belarus, May 2025, <https://sk.gov.by/history/>

⁴¹ Articles 180 and 182 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Belarus dated 16 July 1999 No. 295-Z (as amended on 17 February 2025), May 2025, <https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=hk9900295>

of crimes. In practice, these typically include corruption cases, high-profile economic offences, and crimes related to drug trafficking and similar activities.

According to the association of former law enforcement officers, BELPOL, the KGB began to initiate and investigate politically motivated criminal cases far more frequently after the events of 2020. This shift has been reflected in the emergence of new types of crimes under KGB jurisdiction and a decline in activity within previously common areas of investigation.

Like other law enforcement agencies in Belarus, the Investigative Committee has an extensive structure with divisions operating at various regional levels. The IC system includes the following components:

- **The Central Office of the Investigative Committee** which consists of main departments, departments, divisions, sectors (groups), and other units. Its primary function is to regulate and manage the overall process of preliminary investigation.
- **Regional departments of the Investigative Committee, including the city of Minsk**, which are composed of departments, divisions, sectors (groups), and other units. These departments manage and oversee the activities of district, inter-district, and city-level IC units.
- **District, inter-district, and city departments of the IC** include departments, sectors, and other subdivisions. These units are directly responsible for conducting criminal investigations. Although preliminary investigations may be carried out at all levels of the IC system, the district-level units carry the main burden of investigating crimes and processing reports and complaints.
- Educational institution of the Investigative Committee – ‘Institute for Advanced Training and Retraining of the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus’.⁴²

As in most other public administration institutions in Belarus, personnel policy in the Committee is determined by Aliaksandr Lukashenka. According to the Law on the Investigative Committee, the head of state exercises general oversight of the

⁴² See Articles 6-9-1 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus ‘On the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus’ dated 13 July 2012 No. 403-Z (as amended on 24 May 2024), May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h11200403&q_id=2639701

Committee.⁴³ He defines its structural components, sets staffing levels, establishes the terms of service, and regulates other aspects of its operation. In addition, he directly appoints, dismisses, and relieves of their duties the Chairman of the Investigative Committee, the Deputy Chairmen, and the heads of the Committee's departments in the regions and in the city of Minsk. As a result, Aliaksandr Lukashenka plays a decisive role in shaping the entire leadership of this institution at the central, regional, and local levels.

Career paths in the Investigative Committee

This analysis draws on open-source information regarding 12 senior officials of the Investigative Committee, comprising 11 current leaders and one former Chairman.

Table 2. Biographies and positions of the leadership of the IC of Belarus

N	Full name, title	Year and place of birth	Date of appointment	Current position	Previous positions and terms of service
1.	Hara Dzmitry Yurevich. ⁴⁴ Major General of Justice	1970. city Tbilisi (Georgia)	2021	Chairman of the Investigative Committee	1) Head of the Investigative Department of the KGB (2009–2019) 2) Deputy Prosecutor General (2019–2021)
2.	Shandarovich Aleh Stanislavovich. ⁴⁵ Major General of Justice	1973. city Mahiliou	2020	First Deputy Chairman of the Investigative Committee	1) Head of the Main Investigative Department of the Central Office of the Investigative Committee (2013–2018) 2) Head of the Investigative Committee for Hrodna Region (2018–2020)
3.	Vasiliev Anatol Ivanovich. ⁴⁶	1978.	2021	Deputy Chairman of the	Various positions in state security agencies (2000–2021)

⁴³See Article 12 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus 'On the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus' dated 13 July 2012 No. 403-Z (as amended on 24 May 2024), May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h11200403&q_id=2639701

⁴⁴ In Russian transliteration: Gora Dmitrij Iurevich

⁴⁵ In Russian transliteration: Shandarovich Oleg Stanislavovich

⁴⁶ In Russian transliteration: Vasilev Anatoliy Ivanovich

	Major General of Justice	city Tsulukidze (Georgia)		Investigative Committee	
4.	Azemsha Siarhei Iakaulevich. ⁴⁷ Major General of Justice	1974. city Rechytsa	2016	Deputy Chairman of the Investigative Committee	Various positions in the prosecutor's office (2000-2015)
5.	Arkhireieu Yauhen Anatolevich. ⁴⁸ Colonel of Justice	1977. N/A	2023	Head of the Minsk City Office of the IC	1) Deputy Head of the Minsk City Office of the IC (2012-2018) 2) Head of the Main Investigation Department of the Central Office of the IC (2018-2023)
6.	Liehan Viktar Miachyslavavich. ⁴⁹ Colonel of Justice	1979. urban-type settlement Voranava Hrodna region	2024	Head of the Brest Regional Office of the IC	1) Head of the Procedural Control Department of the the Hrodna Region Office of the IC (2014-2016) 2) Deputy Head of the Hrodna Region Office of the IC (2016-2024)
7.	Hutsko Aliaksandr Mikalaevich. ⁵⁰ Major General of Justice	1976. urban-type settlement Kazenki Mazyr district Homel region	2021	Head of the Vitsebsk Regional Office of the IC	Deputy Head of the Homel Region Office of the IC (2016-2021)
8.	Spryntsytyn Maksim Uladzimiravich. ⁵¹ Colonel of Justice	1977. N/A	2024	Head of the Homel Regional Office of the IC	Deputy Head of the Homel Region Office of the IC (exact term unknown)
9.	Malinouski Eduard Viktaravich. ⁵²	1971. city Minsk	2020	Head of the Hrodna Regional Office of the IC	Head of the Department for Analysis of Practice and Methodological Support for

⁴⁷ In Russian transliteration: Azemsha Sergey Iakovlevich

⁴⁸ In Russian transliteration: Arkhireev Evgeniy Anatolevich

⁴⁹ In Russian transliteration: Legan Viktor Mechislavovich

⁵⁰ In Russian transliteration: Gutsko Aleksandr Nikolaevich

⁵¹ In Russian transliteration: Sprintsytyn Maksim Vladimirovich

⁵² In Russian transliteration: Malinovskiy Eduard Viktorovich

	Major General of Justice				Preliminary Investigations of the Central Office of the Investigative Committee (2012–2020)
10.	Udovikau Siarhei Aliaksandravich. ⁵³ Major General of Justice	1976. City Brest	2024	Head of the Minsk Regional Office of the IC	1) Head of the Main Directorate for the Investigation of Organised Crime and Corruption of the Central Office of the IC (2016–2019) 2) Deputy Head of the Homel Regional Office of the IC (2019–2024)
11.	Shyshko Uladzimir Vitalevich. ⁵⁴ Major General of Justice	N/A	2023	Head of the Mahiliou Regional Office of the IC	Head of the Main Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and Corruption of the Central Office of the IC (2019–2023)
12.	Naskevich Ivan Danilavich. ⁵⁵ Major General of Justice	1970. village Tsiablichy Stolinski district Brest region	N/A	N/A	1) Prosecutor of the Pinsk district (2007–2012) 2) Prosecutor of the Brest region (2012–2015) 3) Chairman of the Investigative Committee (2025–2020)

Source: analytical summary by the authors of the study based on information from open sources

Analysis of the biographies

Age

The average age of officials in the Investigative Committee is 46. Most assumed their positions between the ages of 42 and 51.

Place of birth

Senior officers of the Investigative Committee come from varied backgrounds. Eight were born in Belarus, two in what is now Georgia, while the birthplace of the

⁵³ In Russian transliteration: Udovikov Sergey Aleksandrovich

⁵⁴ In Russian transliteration: Shishko Vladimir Vitalevich

⁵⁵ In Russian transliteration: Noskevich Ivan Danilovich

remaining two is unknown. Six were born in urban areas, three in rural areas, and the origin of the other three is unknown.

Education

All top officials of the Investigative Committee received a law degree. Four of them (Aleh Shandarovich, Siarhei Azemsha, Eduard Malinouski and Ivan Naskevich) studied law at various civilian universities in Belarus, including Belarusian State University and Hrodna State University, as well as at the Ukrainian State Law Academy (UkraSLA)⁵⁶ in Ukraine. Another four received their education at a specialised institution, the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus.

The current Chairman of the Investigative Committee, Dzmitry Hara, and his deputy, Anatol Vasilieu, who were both appointed after 2020, graduated from specialised militarised institutions in Russia. These are the Military Red Star Institute in Moscow and the Academy of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

Three top officials also obtained a second higher education degree in economics. Two graduated from the Academy of Public Administration under the President of Belarus, and one from Paleski State University.

Ranks

Most of the top officials of the Investigative Committee hold high ranks. Nine out of twelve hold the rank of Major General of Justice, while the remaining three are Colonels of Justice.

Appointments and promotions in the Investigative Committee

Analysing the professional backgrounds of the Investigative Committee's leadership reveals at least one clear pattern in personnel appointments. Other law enforcement bodies serve as a kind of 'talent pool' for the Committee's top positions. Among the twelve heads of the Investigative Committee at the national and regional levels, five previously served in the prosecutor's office, four worked in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and two were appointed from the KGB.

This career trajectory can be explained by the fact that, before establishing the Investigative Committee, the prosecutor's office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were responsible for conducting preliminary investigations. At the same

⁵⁶ Currently – Yaroslau Mudry National Law University (Kharkiv), June 2025, <https://nlu.edu.ua/>

time, experts interviewed for this study noted that former prosecutors were often appointed to the most senior posts as they were considered better qualified.

Five senior officials (Shandarovich, Arkhireieu, Malinouski, Hutsko and Udovikau) were transferred to the IC immediately after its creation in 2012. A further three (Naskievich, Aziemsha, and Udovikau) were appointed senior positions between 2014 and 2016. Two of these came from the prosecutor's office and one from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Changes in the leadership of the Investigative Committee since 2020 and the current situation

Since August 2020, significant personnel changes have occurred within the Investigative Committee of Belarus at both the national and regional levels. An analysis of key appointments made since the end of 2020 reveals several consistent trends that have shaped the agency's personnel policy.

1. Centralisation of leadership: former KGB officers at the head of the Investigative Committee

Since 2020, Lukashenka has consistently appointed former KGB officers to senior positions within the Investigative Committee. This trend suggests tightening control over the Committee by incorporating personnel with security service backgrounds, particularly from the agency regarded as the most loyal to Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

In March 2021, Dzmitry Hara, previously serving as Deputy Prosecutor General and head of the KGB's Investigative Department, was appointed Chairman of the Investigative Committee. In April of the same year, he was succeeded by Anatol Vasilieu, who also had ties to the KGB and had served alongside Hara. Both Hara and Vasilieu have experience working in KGB investigative units. Until 2009, Hara led the Investigative Department of the KGB in the Brest region and later headed the department at the national level. While no detailed information is available about Vasilieu's service before 2021, it is known that he holds a relevant degree and has over twenty years of experience within the system.

It appears that Lukashenka viewed leaders with KGB backgrounds as more capable of leveraging criminal prosecution for political purposes in the aftermath of the 2020 events. Top officials with either a KGB background or experience in regional divisions of the Investigative Committee have been appointed to key leadership roles. It reflects a deliberate policy aimed at creating a closed and loyal

leadership core within the IC, integrated into the broader structure of the security apparatus and capable of carrying out political tasks during times of crisis.

2. Intra-system rotation and personnel succession at the regional level

At the regional level and in the city of Minsk, appointments of heads of regional offices of the Investigative Committee were made according to a rotation scheme within this institution. Most often, former deputy heads from other regions were appointed heads of regional offices, including Aliaksandr Hutsko, Viktar Liehan, Maksim Spryntsyn, and Siarhei Udovikau.

At the same time, some of the heads were transferred from the Central Office of the Committee to positions in the regions: Eduard Malinouski to Hrodna (2020), Arkhireieu to Minsk (2023), and Uladzimir Shyshko to the Mahilyou region (2023).

The interviewee emphasised that these reshuffles were carried out to prevent the formation of stable informal ties between leaders and local authorities and security forces:

'...There is this reshuffling, where someone from Minsk is appointed to Homel', and someone from Homel' is appointed to Minsk, so there are no strong, authoritative and hierarchical ties...'

According to non-public data, before their transfer to the regional level, Arkhireieu and Shyshko had led investigations into several politically motivated cases, which might also be a factor in their promotion to higher positions.

3. 'Revolutionary' Investigative Committee in 2020 and the Resignation of Naskevich

According to some sources, in 2020, the Investigative Committee was one of the few law enforcement agencies where many employees sympathised with the protest movement. There are also known cases of investigators being dismissed for signing in support of alternative candidates during the election. One interviewee described the situation as follows:

'The Investigative Committee is [the body] that did the most... to bring down this regime (in percentage terms [compared to other agencies] in the security bloc).'

According to some estimates, such sentiments among the committee's employees caused Lukashenka's dissatisfaction. In authoritarian logic, it was

projected onto the then chairman of the Committee, Ivan Naskevich, whom Lukashenka dismissed. In addition, experts claimed that Naskevich had demonstrated 'disloyalty' to the system. He allegedly prepared materials indicating the need to initiate criminal cases against law enforcement officials for violence in August 2020:

"Materials began to be collected against police officers who beat people. That is, they recorded everything, apparently to be on the safe side, in case the regime fell and all these cases had to be investigated. Everything was collected and recorded, but no criminal cases were opened."

"...He took this material to [Lukashenka] and said that there was no choice... that criminal cases had to be opened [criminal cases against the security forces]. That was his last report."

Although no criminal cases were ever opened, the very fact that the materials were collected probably became a reason for mistrust. This logic is consistent with the transfer of the investigation into the murder of Raman Bandarenka to the General Prosecutor's Office rather than the Investigative Committee.

At the same time, Naskevich's resignation did not occur immediately and was delayed until the protest situation in the country stabilised. The authorities likely delayed his resignation to prevent internal divisions within the Committee. However, after his resignation, Lukashenka excluded Naskevich from the personnel reserve and did not appoint him to a new position, which made an exception to the usual practice of assigning alternative posts to high-ranking security officials. Thus, he 'fell out' of the formal and informal pool of those Lukashenka is willing to appoint to government positions.

4. Dzmitry Hara: a course of repression and control

The appointment of Dzmitry Hara as chairman of the Investigative Committee marked a shift towards increased internal control and the agency's transformation into a more militarised structure. Until 2020, the committee was considered a relatively civilian organisation in both spirit and internal culture. In contrast, Hara introduced a strict discipline policy, using rotations and dismissals to enforce control. As a result, he significantly reduced the autonomy of investigators, particularly in politically sensitive cases.

Another likely reason for Hara's appointment was his leadership of the inter-agency commission investigating allegations of ill-treatment following the 2020 election. The commission produced no tangible outcomes and did not initiate any

criminal cases, which may have reinforced perceptions of his suitability for leading the committee during political repression.

Hara is widely described as a top official who is intensely loyal to Lukashenka and willing to carry out internal 'purges':

'He [Hara] was completely loyal and was not afraid to replace his own investigators so there would be no sympathy for them...'

"Hara has a background in investigation but not in the Investigative Committee. Most likely, loyalty and the strictest control measures [were the basis for his appointment]. It was necessary to crack down, that is, to pacify them [the IC employees] so that they were under complete control, so it was necessary to have someone as loyal as possible but who also had a backbone so that his employees would fear him..."

After 2021, the Investigative Committee ultimately lost even its formal autonomy. Internal checks for participation in protests or signs of disloyalty became routine.

5. Institutional rationale for appointment and promotion decisions

Since 2020, the personnel policy of the Investigative Committee has followed a stable logic: leadership at the republican level is drawn from individuals with backgrounds in other security agencies, primarily the KGB, while regional leadership is filled from within the committee's internal ranks. Heads of regional offices are typically former deputy heads or department heads from the central office. This system balances professional continuity with hierarchical control, while the personnel pipeline's closed nature helps to minimise the risk of internal fragmentation.

6. Leadership of the Investigative Committee in 2025

As with other law enforcement agencies, the leadership of the Investigative Committee remained unchanged during the government reshuffle in late 2024 and early 2025.

Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) within the Belarusian system of public administration

The Ministry of Internal Affairs oversees internal affairs agencies and internal troops within the Belarusian system of governance. It regulates and manages efforts to combat crime, maintain public order, and ensure public safety. The MIA also coordinates the activities of other public institutions in these areas.⁵⁷ The ministry is also responsible for combating crime, maintaining public order, ensuring public safety, and coordinating the activities of other public agencies in these areas.⁵⁸

The MIA is the largest structure in the law enforcement system in Belarus, although the exact number of its employees is not known. Various sources cite figures ranging from 87,000 (as of 2017)⁵⁹ to 46,128 employees, excluding civilian personnel and conscripts of the internal troops (as of 2020).⁶⁰

As is the case with other law enforcement agencies, Aliaksandr Lukashenka retains complete control over the MIA. He appoints key figures, including the minister, deputy ministers, and the heads of major divisions. These include the Ministry's central departments, the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Main Directorate of Internal Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee, and the internal affairs departments of regional executive committees. In addition, he appoints the heads of other internal affairs institutions and subordinate organisations, consolidating his influence across the entire internal security apparatus.⁶¹ The Minister of Internal Affairs has deputies, including one first

⁵⁷ See Article 12 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 263-Z of 17 July 2007 'On the Internal Affairs Bodies of the Republic of Belarus' (as amended on 19 May 2022), May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h10700263&q_id=2519557

⁵⁸ Official website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, History of the Belarusian Militia, April 2025, <https://mvd.gov.by/ru/page/o-ministerstve/istoriya-belorusskoj-milicii>

⁵⁹ 42.TUT.BY, More than half a billion dollars. Belarus' military spending has increased, March 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190829182536/https://42.tut.by/586750>

⁶⁰ International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus, How many security forces are there in Belarus?, April 2025, <https://torturesbelarus2020.org/ru/kolki-silavikou-u-belarusi/#>

⁶¹ See Article 8 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 263-Z of 17 July 2007 'On the Internal Affairs Bodies of the Republic of Belarus' (as amended on 19 May 2022), May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h10700263&q_id=2519557

deputy. However, the number of deputies is also determined by the head of state.⁶²

The system of internal affairs institutions in Belarus includes organisational and functional elements that ensure the fulfilment of tasks in internal security, law and order, and enforcing penalties. The organisational structure comprises a Central Office, which provides overall management, as well as **territorial internal affairs departments**, including:

- Main Internal Affairs Directorate of the Minsk City Executive Committee;
- Internal Affairs Directorates of regional executive committees;
- Departments and divisions of internal affairs of city and district executive committees (local administrations);
- Departments and divisions of internal affairs in transport.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs structure also includes **subordinate institutions** created to support the activities of the internal affairs system, including educational institutions and healthcare organisations.

Functionally, the internal affairs system includes the police, citizenship and migration units, security, finance and logistics, and the criminal justice system, which is responsible for enforcing sentences and the detention of convicts.⁶³

At the same time, the dual subordination of MIA units is codified in Belarusian legislation. On one hand, overall control rests with the president.⁶⁴ On the other, the MIA is formally subordinate to the Council of Ministers (the government); however, this subordination operates strictly within the powers defined by the president. As a result, the Ministry of Internal Affairs functions de facto as an agency accountable to and directly controlled by the head of state.

⁶² See paragraph 10 of the Regulations on the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 611 of 4 December 2007 (as amended on 19 October 2023), April 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=p30700611&q_id=3073347

⁶³ See Article 12 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 263-Z of 17 July 2007 'On Internal Affairs Bodies of the Republic of Belarus' (as amended on 19 May 2022), May 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=h10700263&q_id=2519557

⁶⁴ See paragraph 10 of the Regulations on the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 611 of 04.12.2007 (as amended on 19.10.2023), April 2025, https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=p30700611&q_id=3073347

Career Pathways in the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Based on open sources and expert interviews, we analysed information on fifteen (15) heads of the Ministry of Internal Affairs at both the republican and regional levels. The sample included current officeholders and three former leaders: Yuri Karaeu,⁶⁵ Aliaksandr Barsukou,⁶⁶ and Aliaksandr Astreika.⁶⁷ As of 1 May 2025, these three no longer held positions within the Ministry of Internal Affairs system but had exercised their authority during the events of August 2020.

Table 3. Biographies and positions of the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus

N	Full name, title	Year and place of birth	Date of appointment	Current position	Previous positions and terms of service
1.	Kubrakou Ivan Uladzimiravich. ⁶⁸ Lieutenant General of Police	1975. village Malinawka Kastsyukovich district Mahilyou region	2020	Minister of Internal Affairs	1) Head of the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) of Vitsebsk Regional Executive Committee (2017–2019) 2) Head of the Main Department of Internal Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee (MDIA) (2019–2020)
2.	Nazarenka Yuri Henadzevich. ⁶⁹ Major General of Police	1976. city Slonim Hrodna region	2020	First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs – Head of the Public Security Police	1) Various positions in the Security Service of the President (2018–2019) 2) Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs – Commander of the Internal Troops (2019–2020)
3.	Kazakevich Henadz. ⁷⁰ Major General of Police	1975. city Minsk	2020	Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs – Head of the Criminal Police	1) Head of the Main Directorate for Drug Control and Combating Human Trafficking of the Criminal Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (2017–2020)

⁶⁵ In Russian transliteration: Karaev Iurij Khadzhimuratovich

⁶⁶ In Russian transliteration: Barsukov Aleksandr Petrovich

⁶⁷ In Russian transliteration: Astreiko Aleksandr Viacheslavovich

⁶⁸ In Russian transliteration: Kubrakov Ivan Vladimirovich

⁶⁹ In Russian transliteration: Nazarenko Yuriy Gennadevich

⁷⁰ In Russian transliteration: Kazakevich Gennadiy Arkadevich

					2) First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus – Head of the Criminal Police (2020)
4.	Karpiankou Mikalai Mikalaevich. ⁷¹ Major General of Police	1968. city Minsk	2020	Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs – Commander of the Internal Troops	1) Head of the Department for Drug Control and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Criminal Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (2012–2014) 2) 2014: Head of the Main Directorate for Combating Organised Crime and Corruption of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (2014–2020)
5.	Karziuk Dzmitry Mikhailavich. ⁷² Major General of Police	1971. city Minsk	2021	Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs	Head of the Main Directorate of the State Automobile Inspection of the Public Security Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (2016–2021)
6.	Hryb Mikhas Viachaslavavich. ⁷³ Major General of Police	1980. city Minsk	2020	Head of the MDIA	1) Deputy Head – Head of Public Security Police of the MDIA (2017–2019) 2) Head of the DIA of the Vitsebsk Regional Executive Committee (2019–2020)
7.	Shuliakouski Aleh Mikalaevich. ⁷⁴ Major General of Police	1977. N/A	2021	Head of the DIA of the Brest Regional Executive Committee	1) Head of the DIA of the Maskouski District Administration of Minsk (2013–2018) 2) First Deputy Head – Head of the Criminal Police of the DIA of the Homel Regional Executive Committee (2018–2021)

⁷¹ In Russian transliteration: Karpenkov Nikolay Nikolaevich

⁷² In Russian transliteration: Korziuk Dmitriy Mikhailovich

⁷³ In Russian transliteration: Grib Mikhail Viacheslavovich

⁷⁴ In Russian transliteration: Shuliakovskiy Oleg Nikolaevich

8.	Subota Maksim Aliaksandravich. ⁷⁵ Colonel of Police	1975. Kobrynski district Brest region	2025	Head of the DIA of the Vitsebsk Regional Executive Committee	1) Head of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Criminal Police of the DIA of the Brest Regional Executive Committee (2015–2020) 2) Deputy Head DIA of the Brest Regional Executive Committee (2020–2025)
9.	Liubimau Andrei Yurevich. ⁷⁶ Major General of Police	1976. city Baranavichy	2025	Head of the DIA of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee	1) Deputy Head – Head of the Criminal Police MDIA (2018–2020) 2) Head of DIA of the Vitsebsk Regional Executive Committee (2020–2025)
10.	Shastaila Aliaksandr Ivanavich. ⁷⁷ Major General of Police	1974. city Lida	2021	Head of the DIA of the Homel Regional Executive Committee	1) Head of the Shchuchyn District Internal Affairs Department (2012–2016) 2) First Deputy Head – Head of the Criminal Police of the DIA of the Hrodna Regional Executive Committee (2016–2021)
11.	Reziankou Dzmitry Yurevich. ⁷⁸ Major General of Police	N/A	2021	Head of the DIA of the Hrodna Regional Executive Committee	1) Head of the Navapolatsk District Internal Affairs Department (2011–2015) 2) First Deputy Head – Head of the Criminal Police of the DIA of the Vitsebsk Regional Executive Committee (2015–2021)
12.	Shcharbachenia Ihar Uladzimiravich. ⁷⁹ Major General of Police	1976. village Zaelnae Liuban district Minsk region	2018	Head of the DIA of the Mahiliou Regional Executive Committee	1) Head of the Smalyavichy District Internal Affairs Department (2006–2009) 2) Head of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Criminal Police of the DIA of

⁷⁵ In Russian transliteration: Subbota Maksim Aleksandrovich

⁷⁶ In Russian transliteration: Liubimov Andrey Yurevich

⁷⁷ In Russian transliteration: Shastailo Aleksandr Ivanovich

⁷⁸ In Russian transliteration: Rezenkov Dmitriy Yurevich

⁷⁹ In Russian transliteration: Shcherbachenia Igor Vladimirovich

					the Minsk Regional Executive Committee (2009–2018)
13.	Karaeu Yuri Khadzhymuratavich. Lieutenant General of Police	1966. city Uladzikawkaz (Russia)	2025	Chairman of the Hrodna Executive Committee	1) Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs – Commander of Internal Troops (2012–2019) 2) Minister of Internal Affairs (2019–2020) 3) Assistant to the President – Inspector for the Hrodna Region (2020–2025)
14.	Barsukou Aliaksandr Piatrovich. Lieutenant General of Police	1965. settlement Peravesse Vetka district Homed region	2024	Deputy of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly	1) Head of the MDIA (2011–2017) 2) Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs (2017–2019) 3) Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs – Head of the Public Security Police (2019–2020) 4) Assistant to the President – Inspector for the City of Minsk (2020–2024)
15.	Astreika Aliaksandr Viachaslavavich. Major General of Police	1971. city Kopyl	2025	Head of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs	1) Head of the DIA of the Brest Regional Executive Committee (2017–2021) 2) Head of the DIA of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee (2021–2025)

Source: analytical summary by the authors of the study based on information from open sources

Analysis of the biographies

Age

The average age at which individuals enter senior management positions within the Ministry of Internal Affairs is 47.6 years, with ages ranging from 40 to 54.

Place of birth

Most leaders, 10 out of 15, come from urban areas. All are native to Belarus, except Yuri Karaeu, born in Vladikavkaz in the Russian Federation.

Education

Most top officials in the MIA system obtained their first higher education at a specialised institution affiliated with the ministry, namely the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Although Dzmitry Reziankou studied radio engineering in Polatsk State University, he later obtained a master's degree at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Four top officials studied at military institutions, two studying in Belarus and two in Russia. Yuri Nazarenka attended the Military Academy of the Republic of Belarus at the Faculty of Internal Troops, and Aliaksandr Astreika graduated from the Minsk Higher Military Command School. Yuri Karaeu studied at the Saratov Military Institute of Internal Troops under the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, while Mikalai Karpiankou graduated from the Ulyanawsk Guards Higher Tank Command School in Russia. For Karaeu and Karpiankou, this military education proved particularly relevant in their later appointments as deputy ministers responsible for internal troops.

In several cases, a total of eight individuals, MIA top officials also obtained a second degree. Four (Reziankou, Liubimau, Hryb, and Kazakevich) followed the typical civil service route by graduating from the Academy of Public Administration under the President. Others received their degrees at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including Astreika and Karpiankou, or specialised military institutions. For instance, Karaeu studied at the Frunze Academy of the General Staff in Russia, while Nazarenka graduated from the Command and Staff Faculty of the Military Academy of the Republic of Belarus. Karaeu also obtained a third specialised degree from the Military Academy of Belarus, where he studied at the General Staff Faculty of the Armed Forces.

Ranks

An analysis of the ranks held by the top officials of the Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs shows that the vast majority possess senior special ranks within the police system. Among the fifteen individuals examined:

- Three (Kubrakou, Karaeu, and Barsukou) hold the rank of **lieutenant general of police**
- Ten hold the rank of **major general of police**⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Kazakevich, Karpiankou, Karziuk, Hryb, Shuliakouski, Liubimau, Shastaila, Reziankou, Shcharbachenia, Astreika

- One (Nazaranka) holds the rank of **major general** without a specified affiliation to the police
- One (Subbota) holds the rank of **colonel of police**

Almost all top officials have spent their entire careers within the internal affairs system, attaining ranks corresponding to their hierarchical positions. The ranks of major general and lieutenant general reflect seniority and long-term progression within the security apparatus and a high level of trust from Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

One top official, a colonel, was appointed in 2025 and has not yet received a rank corresponding to his new position.

Leadership Changes in the Ministry of Internal Affairs Since 2020 and the Current Situation

Since 2020, there have been targeted personnel changes and reshuffles in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We can identify several trends.

1. Centralisation and strengthening of management at the republican level

In the context of the mass protests of 2020 and the subsequent intensification of repression, key personnel decisions within the Ministry of Internal Affairs were aimed at consolidating control under loyal and trusted officials. Lukashenka dismissed Minister Yuri Karaeu and his deputy Aliaksandr Barsukou. In October 2020, he appointed Ivan Kubrakou as the new minister, promoting him from a previous position of the head of the Main Directorate of Internal Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee. This directorate had played an active role in suppressing the protests.

According to interviews, the main reason for Kubrakou's appointment was his toughness and effectiveness during the suppression of protests in Minsk:

'In his previous position [head of the MDIA], he carried out the task assigned to him as the country's leadership wanted. It can be said that he suppressed the protests in Minsk quite harshly.'

Another significant factor cited was Kubrakou's complete loyalty:

'Kubrakou, who also participated in the suppression of the protests, became a minister. He is a special type of person, a completely thoughtless man who will simply do whatever he is told.'

Respondents also suggested that Kubrakou saw the situation as an opportunity for career advancement:

'Kubrakou became a minister because he was the head of the Minsk police; he managed the dispersal of mass protests and proved himself to be an effective leader.'

A broader crackdown within the ministry accompanied his appointment. At the same time, Mikalai Karpiankou, formerly head of the Main Directorate for Combating Organised Crime and Corruption, was promoted to commander of the internal troops. This move underscored the regime's intention to draw special forces and broader law enforcement agencies more closely together.

The most likely reason for Karpiankou's promotion to deputy minister and his elevation to the major general rank was his loyalty to Lukashenka and his direct role in suppressing the protests. Since August 2020, Karpiankou has effectively transformed the Main Directorate for Combating Organised Crime and Corruption into a form of "political police," with its officers reportedly involved in torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners.

At the same time, according to interviewees and media reports, there had arguably been plans before the 2020 elections to disband the Directorate due to its ineffectiveness, and Karpiankou himself had been set for dismissal. However, his demonstrated loyalty secured not only the survival of the unit but also his career progression:

"It is reliably known that the Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption wanted to disband altogether because there is no organised crime in the republic. Their loyalty in 2020 allowed them to remain as a kind of Gestapo. As for Karpiankou, they wanted to dismiss him at that time, but again, his loyalty allowed him to extend his term of service and move up a step".

Karpiankou also introduced a culture of violence and impunity within the unit, personally modelling the behaviour expected from its officers.⁸¹

2. Formation of a stable 'core team'

Since 2020, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has formed a stable management team of loyal, proven officers who have passed the 'filter' of the protest years and demonstrated toughness in crises. At the same time, there is a discernible pattern in appointing employees with similar competencies and service experience to leadership positions. It is important to note that, unlike the Prosecutor General's Office and the Investigative Committee, the Ministry of Internal Affairs continues to appoint leaders exclusively from within its structures and divisions.

Three waves of personnel changes in the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs can be identified:

- **Autumn 2020. Appointment of new agency leaders at the republican and regional levels.**

Lukashenka appointed a new minister (Ivan Kubrakou), deputy minister (Mikalai Karpiankou), and regional department heads (Mikhas Hryb, Andrei Liubimau). In addition, there were reshuffles among the deputy heads of the Departments of Internal Affairs (DIAs).

- **2021. Personnel changes within the department at both the republican and regional levels.**

A new deputy minister (Dzmitry Karziuk) was appointed at this time. Two deputies at the regional level (Aleh Shuliakouski, Dzmitry Reziarkou, Aliaksandr Shastajla) were promoted to the position of head. The head of the regional Departments of Internal Affairs was also transferred to a position similar to that of another region (Aliaksandr Astreika).

- **April 2025. A new wave of personnel changes within the department in the regions and subordinate institutions.**

Lukashenka promoted one deputy to head of the Department of Internal Affairs (Maksim Subota) and transferred one of the heads of the Department of Internal Affairs (Andrei Liubimau) to a similar position in another region. One of the heads

⁸¹ Reform.news, Head of GUBOP smashes café window — new video, September 2020, <https://reform.news/163911-glava-gubopik-razbivaet-vitrinu-kafe-novoe-video>

of the DIAs was also appointed to lead a departmental university, the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Aliaksandr Astreika).

3. Stabilisation of the vertical structure and internal staff rotation in the regions

The personnel policy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is based on a rigid vertical structure and internal promotion. Deputy ministers are usually appointed from among the heads of the central apparatus's main departments or from the internal troops' command. In the regions, the heads of the DIA are typically former deputies of the same departments.

Between 2021 and 2025, there was a large-scale rotation within the regional internal affairs departments: almost all regional chiefs were replaced. These transfers occurred within the system, with deputies being promoted to senior positions or department heads being reassigned to equivalent roles in other regions.

Unlike the Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor's Office—where, after 2020, Lukashenka appointed leaders from other security agencies—all appointments in the MIA have been made exclusively from within the department. All appointed heads generally have experience working only in the MIA. The only exceptions are Yuri Nazarenka and Mikalai Karpiankou, who previously served in the President's Security Service.

Rotation in the MIA serves as a tool of control and a mechanism for career advancement. Deputies are transferred to other regions to take on leadership roles while existing heads are reassigned from one region to another. Some officials have undergone two such transfers within five years. This practice reinforces dependence on the central leadership and restricts the development of personal influence at the local level.

"The explanation is quite simple: Lukashenka is afraid of being overthrown, of some kind of palace coup or coup against the government. That is why there is constant rotation, why there are constant high-level "landings", so that they do not have time to make contact, to establish any kind of trust between themselves, lest, God forbid, tomorrow they get it into their heads to seize power."

4. Informal connections and nepotism in the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Despite the strict vertical structure of public administration, informal connections and elements of nepotism persist within the Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs. Some of the Ministry's top officials began their careers under Ivan Kubrakou. For example, Mikhas Hryb, who currently heads the MDIA, and Andrei Liubimau, now head of the DIA of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee, both started their careers as district police officers in the Central District DIA of Minsk. Kubrakou later served as head of this department.

In 2019, Kubrakou was appointed head of the MDIA, with Liubimau becoming his deputy. At the same time, Hryb took up a position in the Vitsebsk DIA, previously held by Kubrakou. Following Kubrakou's appointment as Minister of Internal Affairs in October 2020, Hryb became head of the MDIA, and Liubimau was transferred to lead the Vitsebsk DIA.

Dzmitry Reziankou, currently serving as head of the Hrodna DIA, is also closely associated with Kubrakou. He worked with Kubrakou in the Vitsebsk DIA from 2015, serving as his deputy. Reziankou has publicly referred to Kubrakou as his mentor and has acknowledged that Kubrakou facilitated his enrolment at the Academy of Public Administration to support his career advancement. Reziankou also served as the first deputy to Hryb and Liubimau, to whom he publicly expressed his gratitude.⁸²

Another example of informal ties involves First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Yuri Nazarenka and Deputy Minister Mikalai Karpiankou. Both share a background in military education and previously served in the President's Security Service. Employment in this service traditionally requires a high level of personal trust from Aliaksandr Lukashenka and clearly influences career advancement within law enforcement and security agencies.

5. Career paths of former top officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs after 2020

The reasons behind Karaeu's resignation remain a subject of differing interpretations. For instance, some media reports indicated that it may have been triggered by an interview in which he appeared to 'apologise' and acknowledged the possibility that unlawful force had been used against participants of peaceful

⁸² Grodnonews.by, Generals are not born, they are made, https://grodnonews.by/news/zhizn/generalami_ne_rozhdayutsya_a_stanovyatsya_general_mayor_militsii_dmitriy_rezenkov_o_sluzhbe_v_spetsnaze_godakh_upornogo_truda_lichnom_sostave_i_seme.html

protests.⁸³ Aliaksandr Lukashenka may have viewed such remarks as a display of weakness or a lack of complete political loyalty.

Nevertheless, following his resignation, Karaeu did not leave public service. He was appointed Assistant to the President for the Hrodna Region, marking a transition from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Presidential Administration.⁸⁴ The position entails the authority to oversee the implementation of the head of state's directives within the region under his jurisdiction. Later, in March 2025, Karaeu became Chairman of the Hrodna Regional Executive Committee. This move can be interpreted as a promotion, as working within the executive branch offers broader administrative responsibilities. The interviewees noted that such a career trajectory may reflect a reward for personal loyalty to Lukashenka and a willingness to carry out any orders.

The career of Aliaksandr Barsukou, who was dismissed from the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs post in October 2020, developed similarly. He also moved to the Presidential Administration and assumed the position of Assistant to the President and Inspector for Minsk. In March 2024, Barsukou became an MP of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly (the lower chamber of Parliament). This move is likely an acceptable retirement pathway for a former security official, allowing him to maintain public status.

6. Situation in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2025

As in other law enforcement agencies, the changes in the Belarusian government in 2025 had virtually no impact on the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, indicating that the ministry continues to perform its functions following Lukashenka's expectations.

⁸³ BELTA, Karaev apologised for injuries sustained by bystanders during street protests, August 2020, <https://belta.by/society/view/karaev-izvinilsja-za-travmy-sluchajnyh-ljudej-na-ulichnyh-aktsijah-402787-2020/>

⁸⁴ Official website of the President of Belarus, Personnel matters, October 2020, <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/naznachenie-pomoshchnikov-prezidenta-po-brestskoy-grodnenskoj-oblastyam-i-minsku>

Conclusion

After 2020, the role of the government's security bloc, including law enforcement agencies, became more prominent within Belarus's system of public administration. Mass protests led to a change of top officials in the prosecutor's office, the Investigative Committee and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, the logic behind these changes differed.

In the Ministry of Internal Affairs, appointments were made through internal rotation, when officials were promoted from within the MIA, from a pool of those already making careers there. By contrast, the Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor General's Office were effectively brought under external control, with key positions filled by individuals from other governmental institutions. The situation in the Investigative Committee is particularly telling, as former KGB officers filled its senior posts. This likely reflects Lukashenka's perception that this agency presented particular concerns regarding loyalty.

It is challenging to analyse career trajectories within law enforcement agencies due to the limited availability of information. Nonetheless, Lukashenka's extensive powers in personnel policy enable him to appoint virtually any candidate to any position without formal constraints. Despite this lack of transparency, specific trends in personnel policy can be identified across the agencies examined in this research.

In the Prosecutor General's Office, two parallel developments can be observed. On the one hand, several senior officials, including regional prosecutors and deputy prosecutors general, were appointed before 2020 and continue to serve in their roles. On the other hand, since Andrei Shved assumed the position of Prosecutor General, a new group of officials has emerged. These individuals are personally connected to him and previously worked alongside him in the forensic committee. It suggests that Andrei Shved has established a network of trusted associates within the office.

In the Investigative Committee, personnel policy has taken a more militarised direction. The appointment of KGB representatives to the positions of chairman and deputy chairman in 2021 reflects a deliberate move toward using criminal prosecution as a tool of political repression. Since 2020, the Investigative Committee has lost even its symbolic characteristics as a civilian institution. At the

same time, at the regional level, promotions continue to be based largely on internal rotation and gradual advancement.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is characterised by specific patterns of personnel policy. Although Lukashenka replaced its top officials in 2020, all successors were selected from within the ministry. It may be explained by the ministry's key role in suppressing the protests and thereby demonstrating loyalty to Lukashenka. Career advancement within the MIA typically follows a path through the central apparatus or the command of the internal troops. Appointments at the regional level are likely coordinated informally with Minister Ivan Kubrakou, given that several regional department heads had previously worked directly under his leadership.

Although Lukashenka maintains complete control over personnel decisions in law enforcement agencies, informal networks of influence, particularly nepotism, seem to play a more prominent role in security than in the civilian block of the Belarusian government. It may be attributed to these agencies' hierarchical and closed nature and the critical importance of personal loyalty in executing formal directives and informal or potentially unlawful orders. These informal ties reinforce central authority and internal discipline, complementing the formal control mechanisms.

Since 2020, personal loyalty has become the primary criterion for appointment and retention of positions in the law enforcement agencies. A willingness to carry out orders without hesitation is now more important than formal qualifications.

Following the 2025 elections, the leadership of the Prosecutor General's Office, the Investigative Committee, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs remained unchanged. The only exceptions were the appointments of two new regional officials within the MIA and one within the Prosecutor General's Office. The large-scale purges and repressive measures targeting even those merely suspected of disloyalty in the lead-up to the election campaign demonstrate that the security forces maintain complete control of the situation in the country. Within this context, Lukashenka has no pressing reason to replace the leadership of the Prosecutor General's Office, the Investigative Committee, or the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, further personnel changes in the near future remain possible.