

In a greeting delivered on the anniversary of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Estonia, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves invited those present to reflect about France and our allies, the French people: "The co-ordinated terrorist attacks in Paris represent an example of attempts to scare Europe and make us afraid enough to become inefficient in standing up to violence and evil, to make us withdraw within the borders of our respective countries and not reach out a helping hand to friends. We will not be scared. We will enhance our security, strengthen our guard on the external borders of the European Union, carry out controls on the background of refugees, and improve domestic and military defence. But we will not be scared."

The Head of State recalled that the Estonian Defence Forces fully understand the real meaning of the sentence – "We will not be scared" – and confirmed that as the highest commander of national defence he has experienced the professionalism of the active servicemen and conscripts of the Estonian Defence Forces and their dedication and commitment to defending Estonia.

"Since Estonia restored its independence, its Defence Forces have been largely shaped by exercises including many foreign missions and many that have been conducted with our allies – we have suffered grave losses in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, above all, the capabilities of the defence forces have been shaped by their service here, in Estonia, whether it be refining our conscripts or getting ready to host the rotations of allied units. Due to the support of our allies and our own commitment, our defence policies have achieved one of the long-term goals: the presence of NATO allies in Estonia," said President Ilves in his greeting.

He acknowledged the commanders of the defence forces, who despite the complicated security situation have been able to introduce all the required changes defined in the ten year national defence development plan, and all the services – the Army, Navy and Air Forces – have coped with the increased work load. He separately acknowledged the Military Intelligence Centre of the Estonian Defence Forces for obtaining valuable information and for the prompt and clear delivery of information to the nation's leaders.

"The fact that Estonia is defended better than ever is not just a windfall. We have never had one sole road with blinking lights to follow. Every time we have reached a crossroads, we have been smart enough to choose the road that has brought us here. Now, as we progress further, we must focus on the level of defence expenses that must not drop below two per cent of GDP, continue to concentrate on developing the military capabilities of Estonia and contribute to global security," said the Head of State. "We do not have time to rest. The defence of Estonia

involves the continuous, daily work of thousands of people."

President Ilves addressed all the defence force members and their families by saying: "This work has been done well and I thank you for it. And I also thank your next of kin for understanding and caring, and for being there to support."

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