

"Over the last ten years, I have witnessed how the training level of our conscripts has improved while the command of our officers and non-commissioned officers has become more professional, and the weaponry and equipment of the Defence Force members more contemporary," said the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who today visited the annual large-scale training exercise of the Defence Forces, "Kevadtorm" (Spring Storm).

The Head of State met at the central polygon with conscripts from the Kalev Battalion, professional defence force members from the Scouts Battalion and allied units from the Netherlands, Latvia, the USA and Lithuania, and he described "Kevadtorm" as the state examination for conscripts that will encapsulate their year in service.

"The conscripts have been diligent and they have had good teachers," he admitted. "I am sure that they will become good reservists who will keep their skills up-to-date through reservist trainings and participating in the operations of the Defence League."

President Ilves described as positive the understanding approach of many employers to their reservist employees taking part in exercises and trainings.

"Kevadtorm" also represents a co-ordinated training exercise between the Estonian Defence Forces and NATO allies, emphasised President Ilves.

"Approximately ten countries and more than 5,000 individuals will be brought together in the exercise. For many of the allies, this is not the first time that they are taking part in "Kevadtorm"; they already know the local circumstances and people well. This is how NATO operates and it is an exercise in what the alliance was established for," said the Head of State. "The ability of our Defence Forces to act with the allies has been steady and smooth, and this will significantly strengthen Estonia's security in today's world."

Forward air controllers demonstrated their functions to President Ilves in air-ground exercise fields in co-operation with the ground-attack fighters of the allies who practiced hitting ground targets.

Office of the President  
Public Relations Department