

The National Defence Council summoned by President of the Republic Toomas Hendrik Ilves today discussed the application for resignation submitted by the Commander of the Defence Forces Vice-Admiral Tarmo Kõuts on August 24.

The National Defence Council unanimously supported the proposal of the President of the Republic to release the Commander of the Defence Forces from office. The President of the Republic will send the respective draft resolution to the Chairman of the Riigikogu tomorrow.

Prior to the meeting of the National Defence Council the President of the Republic met with Vice-Admiral Tarmo Kõuts who has submitted his letter of resignation after heading the Estonian Defence Forces for last six years. Vice-Admiral Kõuts who has announced his intention to run as a candidate in the next parliamentary elections said that he was ready to leave his office as soon as possible.

This opinion was supported also by the National Defence Council. "In a democratic state it is not possible to wear the suit of a politician and the officer's epaulettes at the same time," Chairman of the Riigikogu Toomas Varek said.

President of the Republic Toomas Hendrik Ilves said at the meeting of the National Defence Council that he will begin consultations with representatives of all parliamentary factions on finding a candidate for the new Commander of the Defence Forces as soon as next week and wants to meet also with the National Defence Committee of Riigikogu and the Prime Minister.

Within the framework of consultations the President of the Republic will also meet with officers of the Defence Forces, among others with Chief of the General Staff Brigadier General Alar Laneman and Estonian Defence Attaché in the United States of America and Canada Brigadier General Vello Loemaa.

"My goal is to find a capable candidate whom the Riigikogu could nominate the Commander of the Defence Forces with peace of mind and firm conviction that in the future the leading of national defence will be carried out in the spirit of good cooperation between the government and the new Commander of the Defence Forces," the President of the Republic said.

Provided that the Riigikogu will release Tarmo Kõuts from office of the Commander of the Defence Forces, pursuant to the Peace-Time National Defence Act, the Chief of the General Staff of the Defence Forces shall perform the duties of the Commander of the Defence Forces until the time a new Commander is appointed.

Public Relations Department of the Office of the President
Kadriorg, October 26, 2006