

The Estonian Reserve Officers' Association today at Kadriorg handed over to President Toomas Hendrik Ilves an Estonian Defence Forces Officer's Sword.

In the words of the President of the Republic it is a great honour and pleasure to receive a symbolic officer's sword of the Estonian Defence Forces. "The sword is traditionally a symbol of a free man. Why could it not in today's context when given to the head of state symbolize a free country and free people," President Ilves said.

When accepting the sword the Head of State pledged to act in his office in a way that ensures that our national defence would be continuously in good form and that there would be no need to defend our state with arms in hand.

President Ilves added that ten years ago our reserve officers showed with their personal example that it is an affair of honour to be ready to protect your country when needed. "It was their own free will. And so this officer's sword is symbolizing our will to defend our country," the President of the Republic said.

Heino Piirsalu, talking on behalf of the Estonian Reserve Officers' Association, said that today the sword has lost its meaning as a weapon, but all the more it has become a symbol of officer's status and honour, regalia of free people. "Restoring the meanwhile interrupted pre-war tradition - bringing back the sword into our military ceremonies, we believe that reintroducing the use of that weapon again at parades and lineups will help to make those events more attractive and will give dignity to the participants," Captain Piirsalu added.

"As citizens of a peace-loving country we do not want wars and we wish that this sword will stay in its scabbard. In spite of that, let today's ceremony demonstrate our readiness to defend Estonian values and independence by force of arms if necessary," Captain Piirsalu said.

The Estonian Defence Forces Officer's Swords are hand-made in Germany at W.K.C. Solingen and are reproductions of an original made before World War II.

Public Relations Department of the Office of the President

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