

“A belief in freedom has bound Estonia and the United States into strong allies, who understand the importance of supporting each other, and who help those who need assistance to the best of their ability,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves at today’s meeting with US President George W. Bush at the White House in Washington.

At a meeting that lasted almost two hours, Presidents Ilves and Bush discussed the relations between Estonia and the United States, which both heads of state assessed as good. Vice President Dick Cheney was also attending the meeting.

President Ilves thanked the United States for its support of Estonia at the end of April and beginning of May, when we were confronted with extensive information and cyber attacks.

“I hope that visa-free travel to the US is not far off for Estonian citizens, and here, I recall your corresponding position expressed last November during your Tallinn visit,” the Estonian Head of State said to President Bush expressing his hope that the United States Congress and the Administration will come to an agreement and pass the necessary legislative changes.

President Ilves called upon the United States to participate in the NATO Center of Excellence, which the Estonian Government has proposed to establish in Tallinn.

“Estonia became famous at the end of the last century for its Tiger’s Leap program, which resulted in the internetization of the country, and now we must seriously tackle the Tiger’s Security program, which would safeguard us all from cyberattacks,” said President Ilves. “Let’s be honest—in the field of cyber security, compared to the United States, the European Union seriously lags behind both technically as well as legislatively, and the participation of the United States in the cyber security center planned for Estonia would be a great bonus for the center.”

Presidents Ilves and Bush also spoke about developments in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the military of both countries are striving to improve peace and stability for the local population.

President Ilves thanked President Bush for expressing his condolences to the families of the two Estonian soldiers killed in Afghanistan on 23 June.

“There are situations, in which one person’s problems may be those of an entire society, just as one country’s problems may grow into problems for the entire world, or at least, for a large part of the world,” said the Estonian Head of State, speaking about helping to establish stability in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, in the case of Afghanistan, President Ilves stated that the political decisions made regarding Afghanistan in the NATO countries participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) are often based unilaterally on information and assessments of the situation by the military.

“However, the military is often confined to their bases, and only get out when performing battle assignments, and therefore, do not perceive the actual pace of life and developments in the Afghan society,” said the Estonian Head of State. “Thereby, the people who make political decisions in the capitals of the coalition states develop an overly alarmist and one-sided picture of the situation in Afghanistan, and therefore, it is extremely important to increase the relative importance of civil information in making political decisions, and the level of civil participation on the whole, in order to draw this country out from among the nations that have failed.”

“The building of an Afghanistan that is friendly to other countries and secure for its population vividly demonstrates how important and fruitful the united trans-Atlantic front, or cooperation between the European Union and the United States, can be,” said the Estonian Head of State. “There is no doubt, that this cooperation is based on common values and a mutual interest in the world meriting a peaceful future.”

Presidents Bush and Ilves spoke about the joint activities of Europe and the US in deepening democracy and stability in the southern Balkans, Georgia, Moldova, and Belarus.

“No country whose government or population has aspirations toward freedom and wishes to join the lineup of reformed countries should be uncertain about the support of the free world,” said President Ilves. “Yes, we support them just as fervently as the free world has supported the aspirations of the Baltic countries.”

Speaking about NATO and the future expansion of the alliance, the Estonian Head of State said that, at the NATO summit in Bucharest next year, the organization must present accession invitations to more than one of the current candidate states.

“The wider the NATO safety belt is, the more security will surround us,” said President Ilves.

The Heads of State of Estonia and the United States also spoke at length about US-Russian and EU-Russian relations.

“Normal and good neighborly relations with Russia are in Estonia’s interest, unfortunately, we do not currently see the same wish on the part of our neighbor,” said President Ilves. “This can be predicated simply on the internal tension in Russia before the presidential and parliamentary elections, although a more complicated reason may be found in an interpretation of Russia’s incomprehensible fear of its democratic neighbors and democracy, a part of which is expressed in the threat to direct nuclear missiles at Europe.”

The Estonian Head of State thought it important that the United States and the European Union act toward Russia with strong unanimity, which would be well served by strategic energy-related cooperation.

Office of the President

Public Relations Department  
Phone +372 631 6229