

“By today it is clear that those who believe that some countries are far away, and therefore, have nothing to do with us do not understand the world of the 21st century,” said Toomas Hendrik Ilves at today’s meeting at the Pentagon with Robert Gates, the United States Secretary of Defence.

At the meeting, the Estonian Head of State and the United States Secretary of Defence spoke at length about the foreign missions in which the military forces of both countries are participating and also about the general situations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“Our objective is that these countries become safe for their residents and not pose a threat to other countries,” said President Ilves. “However, this means that, along with military solutions, civilian solutions are also important, which can help to win the hearts and support of ordinary Afghans and Iraqis.”

The United States Secretary of Defence expressed his condolences to Estonia in connection with the death of two soldiers in Afghanistan on June 23rd and wished the wounded soldiers a speedy recovery.

President Ilves and Secretary of Defence Gates spoke in detail about the NATO cyber-defence center planned for Estonia, about the practical questions related to its creation and the participation of the United States in this project, for which United States President George W. Bush expressed his support during yesterday’s meeting with the Estonian Head of State.

“Cyber-security is one of the greatest challenges at the beginning of our century and one facet is the technical and legislative solutions needed to defeat cybercrime and cyberattacks,” noted President Ilves.

The Estonian Head of State and United States Secretary of Defence also spoke about bringing the Georgian and Ukrainian armed forces into compliance with NATO standards, which both Estonia and the United States are supporting.

## **President Ilves met with the United States Secretary of Defence**

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“We are not speaking today about an exact date for accession to NATO, but about what the military of a contemporary and intelligent nation, which has chosen democracy, should be and how to establish civil control in a society,” said President Ilves, also affirming that if the current positive developments continue in Georgia, Estonia will support giving Georgia a Membership Action Plan (MAP) at next year’s NATO summit.

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