

Yesterday in Paldiski, at the Peacekeeping Operations Center, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Evelin Ilves met with the members of the Defence Forces serving in the ESTPLA-16 infantry unit leaving soon for an international military mission in Iraq and their families.

“Members of the Defence Forces, I thank you for your decision to accept the difficult challenges of a professional soldier”, the Head of State said to the soldiers. “If we have a broad view of the world, we can see that the question of Iraqi security is also a question of Estonian security. That’s how closely we are connected to each other in the 21st century.”

Estonia’s foreign mission units have received the best training that Estonia’s Defence Forces can provide and the most effective equipment that Estonia has to offer, confirmed President Ilves.

According to the President, Estonia’s soldiers on foreign missions have earned only commendations from our allies.

“‘Excellent!’ is what they say about you, thinking that you are members of special units that have received very special training. Actually, the Estonian soldiers are ordinary infantrymen, who ‘acting with fire and maneuvers, decide the battle’. This is written in the 1932 battle instructions of the Estonian Defence Forces. Now it is you who will decide the result of our current battles in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans,” said the Head of State.

“Your mothers and fathers can rightfully be proud of their sons, because they have raised honorable citizens and brave soldiers,” said President Ilves. “To the wives and partners of the soldiers, I affirm—your six-month period of patient and understanding waiting and the safekeeping of your families is just as important a job as the service of the members of the Defense Forces on foreign missions.”

The Head of State called upon the wives and partners of the soldiers on foreign missions to communicate among themselves, to stick together, to support each other, and to support their spouses’ parents, “because their waiting may be the most difficult.”

In conclusion, President Ilves wished the members of the Defense Forces a soldier's good luck.

Office of the President  
Public Relations Department  
Phone +372 631 6229