

Yesterday, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves visited Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and met with General John Craddock, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).

The SHAPE motto “Vigilia Pretium Libertatis”, which can be translated as “Vigilance is the Price of Freedom”, reflects the continual readiness of NATO to protect its member states,” said President Ilves.

The meeting focused on NATO operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo, about which General Craddock provided a thorough overview, and thanked Estonia for its contribution to the stabilization of both crisis regions. The operations in Darfur and Iraq were also discussed.

“Afghanistan is a problem we cannot ignore and its solution must unite the NATO member states and its partners, as well as the combined power of NATO and the European Union,” the Estonian Head of State stressed.

President Ilves and the SACEUR also spoke about the provision of air security for the Baltic countries and Slovenia.

“We thank the allies for securing our air space; this demonstrates that the Baltic skies are part of the NATO skies,” said President Ilves.

At the meeting, the increased activity of Russian strategic bombers and navy were also discussed. The principles for the formation of the NATO Respond Force (NRF) were also spoken about.

“It is very important to all of us that the alliance is prepared to use its forces quickly—the work quickly is especially important—to fulfill various military assignments,” President Ilves said recalling the fact that Estonia has deployed the Admiral Pitka, the flagship of its navy to the NRF. Preparations are also underway to form a joint Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian battalion

which would be a component that the Baltic countries contribute to the NRF.

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