

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met in Paldiski yesterday with the 34 members of ESTPLA-17, the infantry platoon that will soon leave for the international military mission in Iraq and their family members.

“Estonia’s security guarantee is our membership in NATO and the European Union,” President Ilves said to the soldiers. “However, let’s not create any illusions that our security is guaranteed regardless of what we ourselves do. We must constantly strive toward ensuring our security, to protect the values important to us and our allies—then we can expect help if we need it.”

The Head of State thought it important that many of the members of ESTPLA-17 leaving for Iraq have Defense League experience. He said that the Defense League is an organization that one joins in order to make a contribution to defend Estonia as a whole, but also to protect one’s home and neighborhood.

President Ilves also singled out the three female members of the Defense Forces who are leaving for Iraq—for the first time, women are included in a battle unit in Iraq.

“Good soldiers’ luck to you all!” President Ilves wished the members of ESTPLA-17.

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