

"Success is possible in Afghanistan. But achieving it will be difficult," said President Ilves in Paldiski, where he met with members of the Estonian Defence Forces that are soon leaving on a mission to Afghanistan. "Success is possible in Afghanistan. But achieving it will be difficult," said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves today in Paldiski, where he met with members of the Estonian Defence Forces that are soon leaving on a mission to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's statehood has almost been destroyed by more than three decades of war, said the Head of State. He added, "Therefore, we require patience and dedication. We must understand that we must be prepared for a long-term mission in order to achieve success. Moreover, we must also understand that in addition to the military element, a very strong civilian element is needed for achieving success in Afghanistan. Without it, a genuine civil society cannot develop, and stability cannot develop without it. Estonia too must think more about increasing its civil contribution."

According to President Ilves, Afghanistan is the most important foreign mission for our Defence Forces and for us generally as a NATO member state.

"After the war between Russia and Georgia, NATO is again paying more attention to the most important topic for all of us - the defence of our territory. We can see how more attention is being paid to the defence plans for the NATO countries and how the demonstration of the alliance's military presence has also increased. This is even proven by the air security exercise mentioned above," said the Head of State. "However, we also have responsibilities to NATO as an organization. The countries that understand their responsibilities to their allies and are considerate in their foreign policy can feel secure. This also means helping the countries that require our help and which we can help."

The President of the Republic stressed that members of the Estonian Defence Forces on the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan help to make the country more stable, and thereby reduce the threat from terrorists and narcotics shipments.

At the same time, our defence forces also acquire indispensable experience in Afghanistan. "No matter how good the work during our exercises and in our classrooms, each soldier's can only acquire actual combat experience in a real theatre of war, in actual battle situations," said the Head of State.

President Ilves affirmed that Estonian soldiers are well regarded by our allies, because they are brave and good professionals.

The Head of State wished all the members of the Defence Forces soldiers' luck and asked their families to be patient while they wait.

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