

“It is clear that in the current economic situation, where costs are being cut in every field of activity, the national defence must also demonstrate solidarity,” President Ilves acknowledged. The National Defence Council, which met in Kadriorg yesterday at the invitation of President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, focused on national defence financing and the future of military cooperation between Estonia and the United States.

Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo provided the National Defence Council with an overview of the military defence budget, which is based on a sustained spending level of two percent of GDP.

“It is clear that in the current economic situation, where costs are being cut in every field of activity, the national defence must also demonstrate solidarity,” President Ilves acknowledged. “At the same time, it is clear that unlimited costs cannot be made in national defence costs, because after a certain limit is exceeded, the concepts and plans we have developed to date will become pointless and Estonia’s national defence capability will suffer significantly. It is the task and responsibility of politicians to strike the optimal balance.”

At the meeting of the National Defence Council, it was recognised that the United States is, and will continue to be, one of Estonia’s most important political and military allies. In a situation where the Iraq mission has ended for the Estonian Defence Forces, it is important that the government recently made the decision to send an infantry company to safeguard the security situation in Afghanistan during the upcoming presidential elections.

At the meeting of the National Defence Council, the plans to send an Operational Mentor and Liaison Team to Afghanistan next year to train their military were also discussed.

The National Defence Council is an advisory body of the President of the Republic. The Council membership includes the President of the Riigikogu, the Prime Minister, Chairman of the National Defence Committee of the Riigikogu, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu, the Foreign Minister, Defence Minister, Minister of Finance, Minister of the Interior, Minister of Justice, and Commander of the Defence Forces.

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