

We do not know how long NATO and, subsequently, Estonian troops will remain in Afghanistan, but what we do know is that we will remain there for as short a period as possible and as long as necessary, said President Ilves in Paldiski. We do not know how long NATO and, subsequently, Estonian troops will remain in Afghanistan, but what we do know is that we will remain there for as short a period as possible and as long as necessary, said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves today in Paldiski, where he met the infantry company Estcoy-E, commanded by Captain Ain Tiidrus, which has been formed to provide security during the presidential election in Afghanistan.

The Head of State reiterated the fact that the term security is a defined concept, and in ensuring the security of NATO territory, it is vital to avert tension, which may spread to endanger countries located away from the source of the tension.

“Therefore, I can say with confidence that the NATO states will continue to participate in foreign missions in the long-term,” President Ilves said.

“I have never been among those optimists who assumed that stable results would be achieved in Afghanistan in a year or two, or even five. Anyone who has even the most basic knowledge of history knows that this is not how things work. This just is not possible,” remarked the Head of State. “However, I have also never sided with the pessimists who have stated that the NATO operation makes no sense as the situation in Afghanistan will never change anyway.”

President Ilves assured that success can be achieved in Afghanistan; however, achieving it will be difficult, even more difficult than in Iraq where, regardless of all the complications, we are finally seeing some positive results. However, Iraqi society enjoys long traditions of statehood, which have been destroyed in Afghanistan as a result of more than three decades of war, the Head of State added.

“Therefore, we need patience and understanding as our commitment to a long-term mission is required for achieving success,” stressed President Ilves.

According to the President, a strong emphasis should be placed on improving the political stability and economic situation in Afghanistan in order to achieve success, aside from just military efforts.

“The important reason for your mission, the election of a president in Afghanistan, represents one step towards creating a stable society in this country. The more a lawful government can independently control its interior security situation and settle various problems, the less need there will be for the NATO presence. When speaking of problems, I am referring to, above all, the issues related to the nursery of terrorism as well as drug trafficking,” told President Ilves to the troops bound for Afghanistan.

“Stability also means economic stability, aside from security. This means jobs, education for children, medical aid and everything that is taken for granted by us but not by the people of Afghanistan,” said the Head of State.

President Ilves met with the Estonian infantry company bound for Afghanistan

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He confirmed that the allies have always appreciated Estonian soldiers for their bravery and professional defence force members, who fulfil their duties remarkably well so far from home.

To end, President Ilves wished soldier's luck to the defence force members and patient waiting to their next of kin.

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