

“I have the pleasure of addressing you on the 92nd anniversary of the Republic of Estonia and to say that I am proud of the Estonian soldiers who are serving in Afghanistan,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves yesterday on video link between the General Staff of the Defence Forces and Patrol Base Wahid in South Afghanistan. “I have the pleasure of addressing you on the 92nd anniversary of the Republic of Estonia and to say that I am proud of the Estonian soldiers who are serving in Afghanistan,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves yesterday on video link between the General Staff of the Defence Forces and Patrol Base Wahid in South Afghanistan.

“Our lives would be in far greater danger if you were not there,” assured the Head of State when talking to the Estonian Defence Force members, adding that both the development of this state and region, along with the credibility of the alliance and Estonia’s security, depend on NATO’s success in Afghanistan.

“The participation of the Estonian defence force members in the mission in Afghanistan is important for the security of Estonia as a whole,” emphasised President Ilves. “This is why I want to thank you all and to say how very proud of you I am.”

The Head of State considers it important for the Estonian soldiers to have a solid rear, meaning strong social security and public support.

The Commander of ESTCOY-9, Major Sergey Guselnikov, from Patrol Base Wahid, spoke to President Ilves, and said that the spirits of the unit are high, “although we are in a war and we have suffered some losses.”

Major Guselnikov told of the conclusion of the first stage of NATO’s large-scale operation, “Together”, which has improved the security situation and the mood among the local population towards the NATO units.

“We are well equipped to solve any problems we may have here,” assured Major Guselnikov. “Our greatest concern is how well our wounded companions are being treated in Estonia.”

The Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces, Lieutenant General Ants Laaneots, emphasised the need to supply the Estonian Defence Force members in Afghanistan with the best possible supplies and weapons.

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