

“Thank you for choosing the job of a professional serviceman. It would be more appropriate to say the life of a professional serviceman, as your work is to serve your country, your people and the objectives that Estonia relies upon. In the course of such a service, looking at the time is often not an option. Therefore, I would prefer to use the word “life” instead of “job,” said the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at a meeting with defence force members of the ESTCOY-12 infantry company and NSE-11 support unit, who will soon depart for Afghanistan, and their family members.

The Head of State described the service of Estonian soldiers in Afghanistan as dangerous, difficult and complicated, adding: “The function of the state is to ensure that you have the best possible training, equipment and weapons. No armoured vehicle or contemporary weapon, despite its strength, will render dangers non-existent, but they will, however, considerably help to mitigate the risks involved.”

President Ilves characterised the efficient organisation of the social securities of defence force members participating in foreign operations – which are to be adopted by the state – as important. He acknowledged the fact that apart from the state our citizens’ society has begun to pay greater attention to this issue and, for example, the charity dinner, which took place last week to support the education of the children of defence force members who have been either killed or seriously injured in foreign operations or who have died in service in Estonia, was a huge success.

“This is a sign that not just the state but society in general understands the uniqueness of the job done by a serviceman. Businessmen, politicians and decent, sound people decided to offer their support. Approximately 22,000 euros or about 350,000 Estonian kroons is more than the organisers were expecting, and this is not bad at all for the first event of its kind,” President Ilves said.

The Head of State reminded those present of the greater international picture or the reasons for the Estonian Defence Force members staying in Afghanistan.

“I am personally convinced that our mission is useful and justified,” President Ilves assured. “We are in Afghanistan to enable this country and region to become stable and for it to be free of the threat of either terrorist attacks or drugs. We must admit to ourselves – honestly – that

Afghanistan will never have a democracy similar to Estonia or other western countries, but this is not our goal. The goal we – Estonia and NATO as a whole – pursue is a Afghanistan that is peaceful, successful and stable for both its own citizens and neighbouring states.”

We are interested in achieving stability in this region, thereby ensuring the security of both the Republic of Estonia and Estonian citizens, emphasised the Head of State: “Let us consider, for example, our seven co-countrymen, who were kidnapped in Lebanon and about whose fate, unfortunately, there is little accurate information.”

President Ilves considers achieving success and stability in Afghanistan possible, which was proven last year on the battlefield, as, in the more peaceful regions of the country, the Afghanistan government is gradually taking over control from the ISAF.

When wishing the defence force members soldiers’ luck, the Head of State also thanked their next of kin for their support and understanding, which is important for every soldier who serves on a mission.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229