

“Your service has taken you far away from your homes and you will have had to stay away during both the Christmas and New Year celebrations. But you can be assured that our thoughts and good wishes will reach you, wherever you are,” wrote the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, in his New Year greetings, which were sent to the Estonian Defence Force members who are deployed on international operations.

He confirmed that all of our defence force members serving in NATO, the European Union and UN operations will contribute to a more secure future of Estonia and added: “I am proud of you as a President.”

The Head of State admitted that, once again, the year in Afghanistan has been difficult for Estonian soldiers, even irreparable for the family of Corporal Agris Hutrof and those who were wounded and injured and their families.

“However, I am optimistic, as I look ahead to the coming year. The tactical strategies of the allied forces considerably improved in 2011, which is also reflected by the increased faith of the local population in their government and the ISAF,” President Ilves emphasised. “Transferring responsibility for the security of Afghanistan has progressed at the expected speed.”

The Pushtu people, who are tired of years of living in fear and insecurity, are turning their backs on violence. Apart from military success, we can also look forward to a breakthrough in the political process, particularly in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan,” wrote the Estonian head of State to our Defence Force members.

“A Happy New Year and soldier’s luck in the New Year! See you at home!” wished President Ilves.

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