

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today signed a resolution to give state decorations to 99 people on the eve of the 94th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia, to acknowledge their services to Estonia.

On the eve of Independence Day, with state decorations our country thanks and acknowledges people whose commitment in different spheres of life has encouraged and inspired many others, wrote the Head of State in the introduction to the resolution.

According to President Ilves, through this form of recognition the state is showing both our own people and the world outside the values and spirit that are promoted by Estonia, and what sort of achievements are important for us.

“As the Head of State, I consider the decorations of the Republic of Estonia to be the highest gratitude and acknowledgement of the Republic of Estonia to people from Estonia and other countries, whose work and activities have contributed to a better, safer and richer Estonia and, in a number of cases, the nominees of the decorations have expressed special personal courage. They have done more than their work would have assumed them to do,” told President Ilves. “The number of receivers of decorations is not large and this should enhance the value and significance of each and every one of them.”

Decorations are being awarded to diplomat **Daniel Erik Schaer** and Security Police officials **Tõnu Miilvee**

and

Peeter Oissar

, whose well-planned, professional and relentless efforts considerably contributed, in co-operation with other institutions and our foreign partners, to releasing seven citizens of the Republic of Estonia who were last year held hostage for 114 days in Lebanon.

The Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana, 1st class, is being awarded to the former President of the United States, **George W. Bush**, who played a decisive role in NATO's enlargement in 2004, which joined Estonia with the alliance, and who later stood for our foreign and security policy interests as a friend and supporter of Estonia.

The Order of the National Coat of Arms, 3rd class, is being awarded to **Urmas Paet**, who has worked as the Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2005. The Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana, 3rd class, is being awarded to the human rights activist and promoter of democracy in Russia,

Lyudmila Alekseeva

. The Order of the White Star, 3rd class, is being awarded to the promoter of discovery-based learning, initiator and contributor to the Forest University in Estonia,

Mare Taagepera

. The Order of the White Star, 4th class, is being awarded to

Silver Meikar

, who has consistently stood for human rights, civil liberties, democracy and the principles of a state based on the rule of law.

Estonia awards decorations to our talented scientists, whose research work has won Estonia international recognition. The Orders of the White Star are being awarded to Professor Emeritus of Tallinn University of Technology, **Rein Muntter**, who has worked at the universities of Toronto, Cambridge and Oxford and is also one of the initiators and implementers of ozonating technologies for drinking water in Tallinn; Professor Emeritus of University of Tartu and one of the most outstanding researchers and introducers of fungi, natural scientist

Kuulo Kalamees

; linguist

Jaak Peebo

; Professor of the Tallinn University of Technology and environmental researcher

Enn Loigu

; and a professor of University of Applied Science of Tallinn, geologist

Rein Einasto

. State decorations are also being awarded to three young Estonian scientists: Professor

Maarja Kruusmaa

from Tallinn University of Technology, who participated in the founding of the bio-robotics centre of the university and who is involved in the development and implementation of shape-shifting robots in entrepreneurship;

Mart Noorma

, who is a lecturer at the University of Tartu and is the developer of the student satellite team, the activities of which have increased the interest of young people in natural precision sciences and spheres of technology; and Professor

Ülo Niinemets

from the Centre of Excellence in Environmental Adaptation ENVIRON of the Estonian University of Life Sciences.

Decorations are also being awarded to a number of cultural figures, including sculptor **Mati**

Karmin

saxophonist and composer

Villu Veski

, artist and teacher

Laine Mägi

, musician and TV director

Jaanus Nõgisto

, artist and writer

Toomas Vint

, one of the shapers of the history of Estonian Thought and Editor in Chief of magazine Akadeemia (Academy)

Toomas Kiho

, one of the keepers and developers of Estonian dance culture

Ants Tael

, a conductor and programme manager of last year's youth song and dance festival

Raul Talmar

, one of the founders of Estonian modernist architecture in the 1970s and renowned pedagogue

Toomas Rein

, artist

Olav Maran

, actor

Tõnu Oja

, founder of clarinet school and lecturer of the Estonian Academy of Music Professor

Hannes Altrov

, folk instrument teacher of Põlva Music School and promoter of accordion music

Heino Tartes

, and naturalist and nature protectionist

Uudo Timm

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Estonia is also acknowledging its Defence Force members. The first citizen of the Republic of Estonia to receive the Order of the Cross of Eagle, 1st class, is the builder of our defence forces and their former Commander, **Ants Laaneots**. The Order of the Cross of Eagle with Swords is being awarded to the Commander of the Mine Clearance Team, Lieutenant

Martin Meos

, who disarmed 92 explosive devices last year during the NATO operation to Afghanistan; Corporal

Tarmo Lepik

, who battled bravely in Afghanistan; and Sergeant

Andres Soosaar

, who travelled across an area that was not yet cleared of improvised explosive devices as the team's paramedic to assist a wounded Estonian soldier. Orders of the Cross of Eagle are also being awarded to one of the creators of the Defence Forces Air Surveillance deterrence capabilities, Lieutenant Colonel

Mati Tikerpuu

, and Major

Toomas Susi

, who is working to develop the Ämari Air Base into an airfield that has the capacities to co-operate with NATO.

The Estonian Republic thanks police officials who showed special commitment and often perform their work with the utmost courage. Decorations of the Order of the Cross of Eagle are being awarded to one of the founders and leaders of the contemporary special police unit, K-Commando, Police Major **Heldur Lomp**; criminal police officer **Talis Thal**, who has successfully and innovatively solved a number of crimes; one of the law and order leaders of Eastern Police Prefecture,

Ain Kruuse

; and Security Police official,

Priit Pastarus

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The Order of the Estonian Red Cross is being awarded to **Enno Liiber** from Viljandi County, who has worked in the sphere of rescue for over 40 years. The Order of the Estonian Red Cross is also being awarded to a voluntary assistant,

Karl Mäesepp

, who has brought approximately fifty electrical wheelchairs from Finland to young people with disabilities and has helped to acquire graduation attire for more than 800 high school graduates over eight springs, and

Sülvi Sarapuu

, assistant to blind people and people with visual disabilities and who has introduced and implemented the idea of descriptive translation and tactile books to Estonia.

The Order of the Estonian Red Cross is also being awarded to the Head of the North Estonian Regional Hospital Clinic of Oncology and Haematology and Chairman of the Board of Directors of NGO Estonian Cancer Society **Vahur Valvere**; **Tanel Laisaar** from Tartu University Hospital, who was in charge of the first lung transfer in Estonia; and long-term gynaecologist

Ene Palo

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The Republic of Estonia acknowledges the keepers of its history. The Order of the White Star is being awarded to a lecturer of University of Tartu, archaeologist **Ain Mäesalu**, who has studied ancient and medieval fortresses for approximately 30 years; researcher of the terracotta sculptures of St. John's Church, Tartu, and long-term scientific conservator, art scientist

Eve Altoa

; and Professor

Toivo Ülo Raun

, researcher of the history of the Baltic countries and Finland at the University of Indiana in the United States of America. The Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana is being awarded to a historian of St. Petersburg,

Anatoly Razumov

, who is an investigator of mass repressions and has recorded the memoirs of more than 1,500 Estonians who were executed once in Leningrad.

Decorations are being awarded as a sign of gratitude and recognition to **Juta Saharova** and **Leonida Rebane**

, who opposed, along with other volunteers, the attack of an extermination battalion in the Liivamäe battle near Kilingi-Nõmme on 4 July 1941 as an orderly and medical nurse.

Estonia thanks the teachers who have inspired thirst for knowledge and wisdom in their students. Orders of the White Star are being awarded to the chemistry teacher of Tallinn Secondary School no. 53 **Vladimir Ossipov**; a teacher of mathematics of Hugo Treffner Gymnasium **Hele Kiisel**; the developer of a training system for vocational teachers

Ants Tarraste

; the teacher of contemporary Estonian language and author of textbooks

Aino Siirak

; and the Director of the Centre for Baltic-Russian Studies

Vladimir Juškin

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State decorations are awarded to sportsmen and trainers who have brought Estonia recognition. Orders of the White Star are being awarded to sumo wrestler **Kaido Höövelson**, who has successfully promoted Estonia in Japan; the Head Coach of national basket ball team

Avo Keel

; the Head Coach of Estonian football team

Tarmo Rütli

; wrestling coach

Jakob Proovel

; a swimming trainer for people with disabilities

Õnne Pollisinski

; and cycling trainer

Erich Perner

from Pärnu County.

Estonia also thanks journalists whose work and creations have helped to widen the horizons of all of us. State decorations are being awarded to the Editor in Chief of Classics Radio **Tiia Teder** ;

the editor of Narva Studios of Estonian National Broadcasting Company

Jüri Nikolajev

; the long-term editor of county magazine "Sakala"

Eve Rohtla

; and photo correspondent of the Estonian daily paper, "Postimees"

Peeter Langovits

, who has recorded Estonian history and people for several decades.

Estonia also awards state decorations to businessmen whose activities have contributed to the development of their respective regions. Among the receivers of decorations are one of the key persons in the current oil shale chemistry industry, **Nikolai Petrovitš** from public limited company VKG Oil; one of the leaders of AS Viljandi Metall

Jaak Sulg

; one of the owners of export company AS

Lenne Meeli Leeman

; and the founder of the fish processing company M.V.Wool,

Mati Vetevool

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The Order of the White Star is also being awarded to the former Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Estonian Trade Union Confederation and promoter of social dialogue **Helle-Mai Enniko**

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Estonia acknowledges promoters of local life. The Orders of the White Star are awarded to researcher of home and cultural history **Eli Maanso** from Puurmani; one of the leaders of the NGO Estonian Village Movement Kodukant

Sirje Vinni

; the voluntary promoter of culture and sports in Koeru and Järva county in general

Uno Aan

; the Director of Kullamaa community cultural centre

Loit Lepalaan

, who is also the founder of the local music society and parrish museum; and Hiiumaa folklore researcher and collector and leader of dance groups

Helle-Mare Kõmmus

The Order of the Estonian Red Cross are awarded to voluntary blood donors, **Asta Aleinik** from Pärnu county, **Vambola Sepp** from Tartu, and **Heiki Valdek** from Tartu county, who have all donated their blood more than 100 times.

Estonia thanks its friends and supporters aboard. Orders of the Cross of Terra Mariana are awarded, among others, to the adviser to Vice Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament **Dainius Dabašinskas** as a strong supporter of co-operation between Estonia and Lithuania; successful promoter of co-operation between Estonia and Germany **Hiltrud Kaufmann-Friedrich** ; promoter of relations between Estonia and France **Denis Pietton** ; one of the founders of the Baltic study programme at the University of Washington, Professor **Guntis Šmidchens** ; the promoter of co-operation between Estonian and Finnish engineers, **Ari Impivaara** ; the Chairman of the British-Estonian Association **Neil Macrae Taylor** ; supporter of cultural and economic relations between Japan and Estonia **Sadayuki Sakakibara** ; and Honorary Chairman of the Estonian-Finnish Association of Trade **Erkki Olavi Auvinen**

Decorations of the Republic of Estonia are also being awarded to one of the leaders of the Estonian community in St. Petersburg, **Külli Sulg**; founder of the Moldovan Estonian Society and Estonian Honorary Consul in Moldova **Igor Gontšarov** ; and Chairman of the Norwegian-Estonian Society **Else-Jannike Kuum**

President Ives will award the decorations on 23 February in the Hall of the University of Tartu.

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