

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is on a working visit to the United States of America, yesterday visited the Walter Reed Military Medical Center, near Washington, where soldiers who are seriously wounded in military operations receive diversified rehabilitation treatment.

"Estonia and the United States are both allies in the strongest military-political organisation in the world; we are also allies in specific military operators, currently Afghanistan," said President Ilves.

"The soldiers of Estonia and the USA go to war for their countries, a safer world and our allies. It is the duty of the state to take care of its soldiers when they are on the battlefield, providing them with the best possible equipment and weapons, and also when they are back home. This is highly relevant for the soldiers who have been wounded while fighting for their state," said the Estonian Head of State.

He stated that this is, above all, the duty of the Ministry of Defence and the army, but added: our soldiers must feel the support of the whole of society.

President Ilves described the work done by the medics of Walter Reed Center – putting seriously wounded soldiers literally back on their feet – as admirable.

"Estonia has to learn a lot from you as approximately one hundred of our defence force members have been wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last ten years and many of them still need support from the state. The Ministry of Defence has started to support the development of modern military medicine and I do hope that your Estonian colleagues will soon find their way to the Walter Reed Center," President Ilves said.

The Estonian Head of State earlier visited the centre for the treatment of wounded defence force members in Tallinn, the Magdalene Hospital, and the Birmingham Hospital in England, where Estonian soldiers, who have been seriously wounded in Afghanistan, are being treated.

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