

"The young men who are completing their mandatory military service have been good students, as always, while the reservists have again proven the support of society towards national defence," told President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at the annual large-scale training exercise, "Kevadtorm" (Spring Storm), of the Defence Forces.

The Head of State learned more about the activities of the Combat Service Support Battalion, commanded by Major Tarmo Luhaäär, and visited the Reserve Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Eero Kinnunen, which is on hand to form a defence, as well as staffs of Defence League units that are comprised of reservists and Defence League members.

"I am pleased to see the Defence Forces getting better year after year; young and modern officers and conscripts that are capable and willing to learn," acknowledged President Ilves. "At the same time, I am impressed by the willingness to defend that is demonstrated by the reservists, who find the opportunity to take part in "Kevadtorm" (Spring Storm) at both their own initiative and with the support of their employers."

4,800 people, in total, including 1,600 reservists, 400 of whom were Defence League members, are taking part in the largest training of the Defence Forces which is running over two weeks. The Scouts Battalion is playing the role of the enemy, and they are commanding a 200 strong Latvian infantry company and 40 soldiers from the reconnaissance platoon of Lithuania, which are taking part in the Spring Storm for the first time. The Cyber Defence Unit of the Defence League is also participating in the training exercise.

The Head of State described the co-operation ability and repeated in-service exercise of units to be sent to the reserves as one of the cornerstones for the success of national defence based on compulsory military service.

Estonia's commitment to smartly organised national defence has been noticed and acknowledged by the allies, told President Ilves. He recalled the repeated assurance of high NATO officials and officers: the model of the Estonian Defence forces – compulsory military service, reserve army and professional units – has proven to be working.

According to a recently conducted public opinion poll by the social and market research company Saar Poll OÜ, 92% of the population see mandatory military service as useful for young men; this includes 58% of the population who see it as inevitably necessary, while almost 2/3 of the population (63%), when asked to choose between the general mandatory military service of the current situation and a hired army, prefers to retain to the current organisation.

The President of the Republic, as the highest commander of national defence, was accompanied at the "Kevadtorm" (Spring Storm) exercise by the Minister of Defence, Urmas Reinsalu, the Commander of the Defence Forces, Brigade General Riho Terras, and the Commander of the Army, Colonel Indrek Sirel.

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