

President Obama hosted Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, along with Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė and Latvian President Andris Bērziņš, for a meeting at the White House on August 30. The visit underscored the close ties between the United States and the Baltic states, which are grounded in our shared values, ideals, and interests. The leaders highlighted ongoing cooperation in the following areas:

### **Defense and Security Cooperation:**

**Sustaining NATO capabilities:** Estonia demonstrates its commitment to transatlantic security as one of only a few NATO allies that meet the NATO benchmark of spending at least 2 percent of GDP on defense.

**Afghanistan:** Estonia is a stalwart supporter of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan and has committed to continue supporting NATO's post-2014 non-combat mission. Estonia currently has more than 160 troops, Special Operations Forces, and trainers deployed in Afghanistan, primarily in Helmand province. In addition to providing \$1.3 million in development assistance to Afghanistan in 2013, Estonia has pledged \$500,000 annually from 2015 to 2017 to support the Afghan National Security Forces. Tallinn is also a key port along the Northern Distribution Network, which facilitates the transport of materiel to coalition troops in Afghanistan and serves as a retrograde route for materiel leaving the theater.

**Cyber Security:** Estonia is a key ally and recognized leader on issues of cyber security. Our bilateral cyber relationship is captured in our pending partnership statement and includes collaborative efforts on network protection, development cooperation, combating cyber-crime, strategic global policy alignment, internet freedom, and improving cyber education. Estonian and American Computer Emergency Readiness Teams (CERTs) are in regular contact in order to effectively respond to cyber incidents.

Defense and Security Cooperation: U.S. and Estonian troops participate in a range of joint and multilateral exercises, including: BALTOPS, SABER STRIKE, and STEADFAST JAZZ 13. Estonian soldiers and defense personnel also receive technical training and strategic education in the United States.

**NATO Allies:** As NATO allies, the United States and Estonia are committed to each other's defense and partner in critical areas around the world. Estonia also hosts a NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence, which serves as a repository of expertise on cyber security issues.

**The State Partnership Program:** Estonia's military maintains an active relationship with the Maryland National Guard through the State Partnership Program. Last year, the two worked jointly to train Estonian helicopter pilots to support medical evacuation efforts in Afghanistan.

### **Diplomatic Cooperation and Global Development:**

**Development Cooperation:** Estonia has drawn on its transition experiences and cyber expertise to provide specialized development assistance in the sectors of e-governance, cyber security, and civil society. In addition to partnering with the U.S. government to support development projects in Moldova and Georgia through the Department of State's Emerging Donor Challenge Fund, Estonia mentors Eastern Partnership countries and other emerging democracies through the Tallinn-based Eastern Partnership Center.

**Internet Freedom:** Estonia is a close partner in the Freedom Online Coalition, a group of governments collaborating to advance Internet freedom. As current chair of the coalition, Estonia will host the next ministerial in Tallinn in spring 2014. The United States and Estonia are also donors to the Digital Defenders Partnership, which provides emergency support for Internet users in repressive environments who are under threat for peacefully exercising their universal rights online.

**Leaders Engaged in New Democracies (LEND) Network:** The United States and Estonia co-chair the Leaders Engaged in New Democracies (LEND) network, a groundbreaking technology platform that connects key leaders in young democracies with experts on democratization from around the world. Working under the auspices of the Community of Democracies, LEND leverages expertise from world leaders including former presidents, prime ministers, and supreme court justices in dozens of countries.

## **Economic, Energy, and Environmental Cooperation:**

**Energy Security:** Estonia enjoys a high degree of energy self-sufficiency due to its large domestic oil shale reserves, from which the country derives approximately 87 percent of its electricity. In 2011, the United States and Estonia signed an Oil Shale Cooperation Agreement to promote research in this area.

**Trade, Investment, and Jobs:** Bilateral trade in goods with Estonia was \$743 million in 2012. The government of Estonia has expressed strong support for the U.S.-EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) negotiations. T-TIP aims to boost economic growth in the United States and in the EU and add to the more than 13 million American and EU jobs already supported by transatlantic trade and investment.

## **Educational and Cultural Ties:**

**Educational Exchange Programs:** Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the Fulbright program in Estonia. Since 1992, more than 160 Estonians have been educated, taught, or performed research in the United States through the Fulbright Program. In the past 20 years, more than 170 U.S. Fulbright students and scholars have studied, researched, or taught classes in Estonia.

**Cultural Programs:** Annual festivals such as the jazz festival, Jazzkaar (Jazz Arch), and the Black Nights Film Festival, which features North American independent films, highlight the rich cultural ties between Estonia and the United States. Arts-based cultural exchanges in the areas of music, literature and the humanities, and museum communities have strengthened ties between American and Estonian societies.

**Professional Exchange Programs:** Since 1991, 540 Estonians have participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), the Department of State's premier professional exchange program, which brings current and emerging foreign leaders in a variety of fields to the United States to experience this country firsthand and cultivate lasting relationships with their American counterparts. In addition, approximately 730 Estonians took part in privately funded professional exchanges with the United States last year, including the Summer Work Travel, Intern, Short Term Scholar, and Au Pair programs.

**Science Cooperation:** The United States and Estonia signed a bilateral Science and Technology Agreement in 2008 that prioritized collaboration on environmental and biodiversity protection, marine science, energy, space, HIV/AIDS, engineering, and sustainable development. Estonia and the United States are also jointly engaged in the GLOBE (Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment) program. Currently, 81 Estonian schools collect data on soil, biometrics, and hydrology that they upload to a NASA website for use by U.S. researchers.