

Officers and soldiers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I'd begin with a quote from a song.

"Have you heard of the 173rd Airborne Brigade?
With boots on the ground and dirt on our face,
We'll defend your freedom anytime, anyplace."

That is the song of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Here in Estonia we like that song. We also believe in it as we ourselves have proven in Forward Operating Base Wahid deep in the middle of Taliban territory in Helmand Province, in Iraq, today in Mali and next week in Central African Republic, where we too have defended the freedom of others.

Warriors,

Let me welcome you all in Estonia. Hosting the 173rd Airborne Brigade company here in Estonia is, as you can imagine, important for us. The transatlantic link is not something that Estonians take for granted. Rather, we see it as a vital element of security in an unsecure world. This is why we so appreciate Allied boots on the ground here. Estonia is a country that has always appreciated and liked United States of America.

American and Estonian soldiers exercising here together raise the visibility of the transatlantic alliance both for people living here and for those living elsewhere; it makes the NATO less an abstraction and reinforces the commitment we all share in the Alliance.

The 173rd has had a remarkable history and history is being made here today. For a corner of Europe where so many thousands were killed, deported, suffered or fled from the horrors of Nazism and Communism, and where the longing for the sight of Western parachutes that would

free people from tyranny became folklore, this day is a milestone. For we finally witness what so many never could. Seven decades later we no longer need to be liberated but the sight of you here is still significant and powerful. History is being made and you guys are making it.

Welcome to Estonia.