

Respected generals, dear Defence Force members, good guests; ladies and gentlemen.

Here and today, we can only state, once again, the appropriateness of the old adage – even one man can be a soldier in a battlefield. This has been proven by General Ants Laaneots, one of the men who took part in restoring the Estonian Defence Forces and an officer who has held with dignity the office of Commander of the Defence Forces for the last five years.

General Laaneots has taken the Estonian Defence Forces through complicated years. We have suffered painful losses in Afghanistan, faced cyber attack and experienced the difficulties that have accompanied the credit crunch. But we are also better off than five years ago. Our defence and operative management schemes have improved, our defence forces are more professional, we have a better idea of the functions and organisation of national defence and we have agreed on the sustainable funding of national defence.

However, we have not reached the end of the road. Estonia's experiences, interests and geographical location are accompanied with a duty to continue with active contribution to international security, progressing, with dedication, towards strengthening our defence forces.

I thank you, General Laaneots, for excellent service over two decades in the Estonian Defence Forces. I am proud that I have had the pleasure of working with you. Estonia is proud of your dignified and professional service to your country.

I wish the new Commander of the Defence Forces, Brigadier General Terras, unending supplies of strength, clear vision, a willingness for co-operation and soldier's luck!

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*Today, General Ants Laaneots completed his five year term in office as the General of the Defence Forces. The Government of the Republic has appointed Brigadier General Riho Terras to the office of General of the Defence Forces as his successor.*