



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR

**Keynote address
by the President of the Republic of Slovenia
and Commander-in-Chief of the Slovenian Armed Forces Nataša Pirc Musar
at the ceremony on the occasion of the Slovenian Armed Forces Day**

Maribor, 14 May 2024

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*Dear members of the Slovenian Armed Forces,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

2024 marks important anniversaries which remind us of turning points and of brave and state-building acts in our history: in the year of General Rudolf Maister, Slovenia is celebrating its 20th anniversary of joining NATO and the European Union. The related acts striving for a common future facilitated the development and well-being as well as the equitable and equal role of our country in international relations.

The Slovenian Armed Forces also have a state-building mission. Tomorrow, it is their day. I am pleased that we are here together, celebrating Slovenian Armed Forces Day and everything that this indispensable foundation of our statehood represents: ensuring peace, defending the country and its people, providing selfless assistance to fellow human beings, cooperating with partners and allies, embodying esprit de corps, courage, self-sacrifice and solidarity, respecting human rights and freedoms, and ensuring the safety of our nation.

Dear members of the Slovenian Armed Forces,

People recognise your values every day. The values of the Slovenian Armed Forces are the values of the community. People trust you because they can always count on you, especially in a crisis, when other social subsystems need additional support. Cooperation with other state authorities, protection and rescue forces, local communities and people is of key importance for the country and its people. We have

learned this from many events, including during last year's floods, when you saved lives and gave people support and hope in a difficult situation.

However, the most important task of the Slovenian Armed Forces is to defend our homeland. It is the responsibility and state-building function of politics to ensure that the Slovenian Armed Forces are adequately equipped, trained and protected. To facilitate their modernisation. The armed conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and elsewhere in the world are a stark reminder that peace cannot be taken for granted and that we must adjust the national and alliance plans and actions accordingly. People's concern is understandable and the role of the Slovenian Armed Forces indispensable, including in international cooperation. It is important to be aware that we have been allies for 20 years and that we have allies. This means that we are not alone, that we make decisions together and share our burdens.

Our very existence depends on security. People, decision makers and politicians must trust the Slovenian Armed Forces and the entire national security system, and support their work. I am very pleased that the Government and the National Assembly have updated the strategic documents and orientation foundations for developing the defence system and building resilience in the long term. Security is an area where we must constantly consider predictable and unpredictable situations that will be brought to us by the uncertain future and the significantly fast development of modern technologies, and be prepared for all this.

Dear members of the Slovenian Armed Forces,

Last year I highlighted the importance of the acceptance and presence of the Slovenian Armed Forces uniform in our society. This year, I would like to add my sincere pride in each and every one of you who work in the military profession. For more than 25 years, you have been participating in international operations and missions, in the efforts to ensure stability and peace. You help people and institutions in many regions around the world. Heads of states and international commanders note the quality and high professionalism of your work. In each of my visits in the field, I have seen proof of your selflessness, unity and sincere wish to help your fellow human beings. I am grateful for the warmth, sincerity and kindness you have shown towards me when I have talked to you.

Your honourable mission in the service to your country offers many professional opportunities for young people. Last Friday, young people in Beltinci learned about military duty. They showed great interest. As your Commander-in-Chief, I am glad that you are making a sincere effort to seek new paths and connections to people, especially young people. I wish for the greatest possible support for your noble profession, in which throughout your career you train to defend our country and ensure people's safety. Awareness that you are prepared to give your lives for this gives me deep respect for you. As the President and a mother, I, of course, hope that it never

comes to that. We must all strive to ensure this – in particular we politicians must direct our mission to sincere efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes around the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my great respect and thanks to the members of the Slovenian Armed Forces, your families and close ones for your work and all the sacrifices. Thank you for being one of the pillars of our state, society and community and the bearers of values, which in modern society must constantly be emphasised and transferred to younger generations.

Dear members of the Slovenian Armed Forces,

In every handshake and meeting with you I feel that your big heart under the uniform beats for our homeland and for all of us. My sincere congratulations on Slovenian Armed Forces Day.

Good luck, Slovenian Armed Forces! Good luck, Slovenia!