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2019



## 4-5

Intelligence legislation provides a firm foundation for the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service to safeguard the democratic order in Finland.

## 8-9

ISIL continues to pose a threat in the West.



## 10-11

Domestic  
extremists  
mainly  
engaged in  
street violence  
in 2019.



## 20-21

Changes  
in the Arctic  
also have  
regional  
and national  
security  
implications.



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## STEADFAST NATIONAL SECURITY AS A GUARANTEE OF DEMOCRACY

2019 was a historic year for the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo) in many ways. The powers of the Service were revised at the beginning of June when new intelligence legislation finally took effect following prolonged and careful preparation. This work has given us effective and modern intelligence laws that balance the interests of safeguarding national security and respecting individual privacy.

The new intelligence legislation provides a firm foundation for discharging our mission, but also subjects us to new expectations. Since June 2019, Supo has become a full-blooded security and intelligence service.

To support our new role, we implemented a major reorganisation, began recruiting new specialists, and initiated a wide range of modifications to our practices to make them more intelligence-oriented.

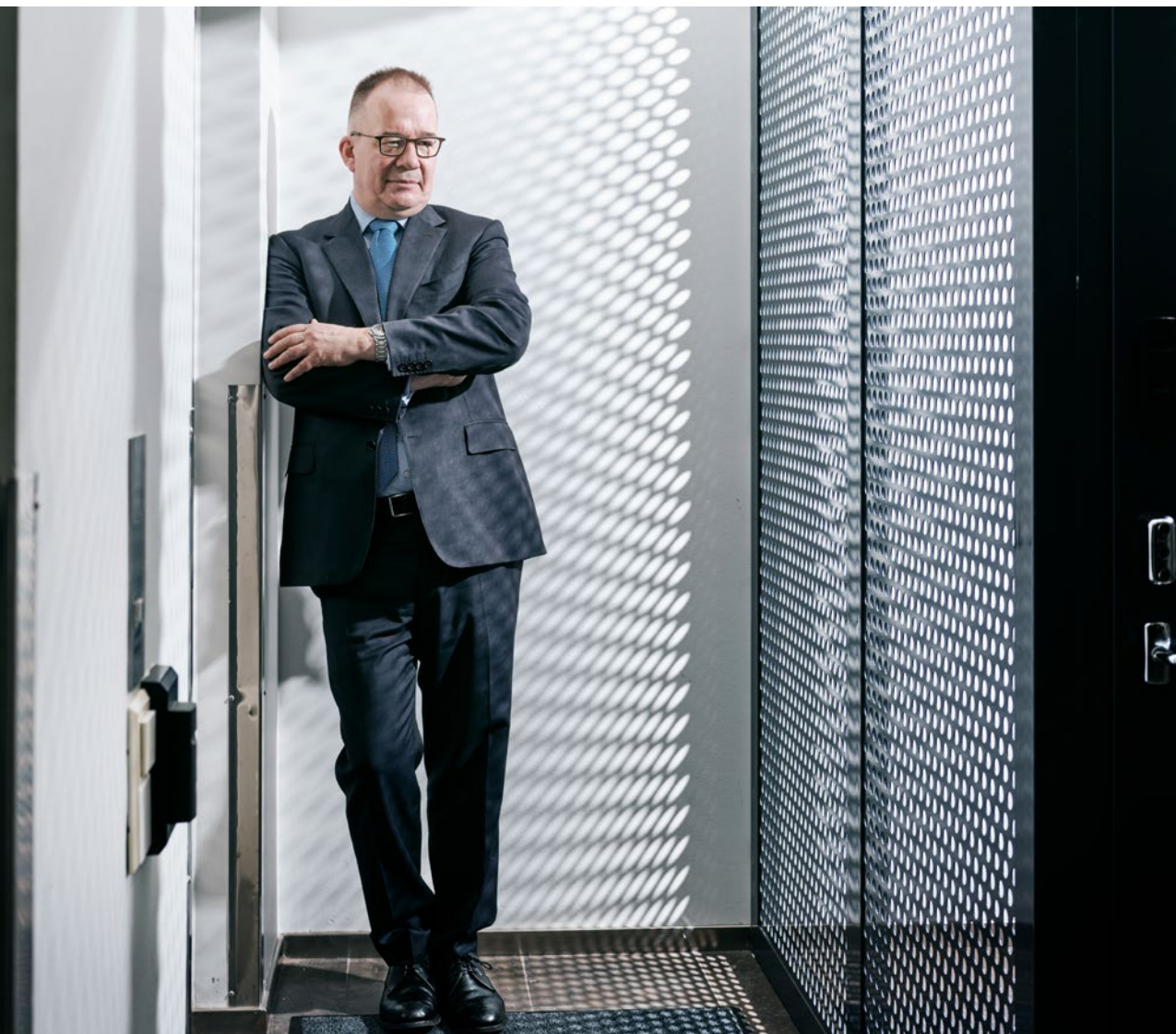
Though counterterrorism, counterintelligence and security clearance vetting remain important pillars of our work, our future operations will focus more on providing meaningful and proactive intelligence to substantiate central government policymaking. We shall strive to ensure that Finnish security policymaking is based on increasingly up-to-date and relevant information prepared expressly from the perspective of our own national security. We have already made a good start in this work, but building to full capacity will inevitably take time.

New intelligence powers now allow Supo to operate in a new way online and also for the first time abroad. We are becoming less dependent on intelligence from our international partners as our own expertise grows. Our powers are no longer limited to cases involving substantiated suspicion of some criminal offence, and we may instead procure intelligence on serious threats to national security that do not necessarily conform to the elements of any offence.

I think it is good Finnish practice to proceed with caution while maintaining the best traditions of the past, so Supo will maintain its basic values of legality, reliability and quality amid all of this turmoil. These values will pervade all of our operations.

One can nevertheless not afford to be over-cautious in this line of work, and we must not be shy in applying our new powers to benefit national security and the public at large. We shall pay particular attention to exercising these powers lawfully under new circumstances, and have accordingly focused on internal supervision of legality and on proactively ensuring that our operations comply with the law. The main guarantor of legality is the new Intelligence Ombudsman, who enjoys





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unrestricted access to even the most secret information held by Supo. A parliamentary Intelligence Oversight Committee has also been established and amicable collaboration has already begun with this new watchdog body.

The new powers will also prove necessary. Our security environment has undergone unprecedented changes in recent years. The wide-ranging role of Supo is well illustrated by the articles in this yearbook, which include discussions ranging from the Arctic dimension to cyber-espionage and economic influencing. The yearbook also includes our updated terrorist threat assessment, which has remained unchanged at level two (elevated) on the four-level scale. The nature of the terrorist threat is nevertheless continually changing, so the

threat assessment will continue to be updated at least annually. It should also be understood that we sometimes have to report unsavoury aspects that are not to everyone's liking when assessing threats to national security.

The mission of Supo is to detect the phenomena that jeopardise national security at the earliest stage and to anticipate their impacts on Finland. Our primary function is to protect Finland, its people, and our system of open democracy. The value of this work cannot be overstressed.

**Antti Pelttari**

Director of the Finnish Security  
and Intelligence Service



## THE FINNISH SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (SUPO) SERVES ITS CLIENTS WITH UNIQUE INFORMATION

New intelligence legislation broadened the powers of Supo into a security and intelligence service as of June 2019. This also initiated a closer service role in relation to national government partners.

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The growing complexity and rapid evolution of global affairs has been continually on the agenda in recent years. Technological progress and the growing role of social media, a questioning of democratic principles, political uncertainty, changes in geopolitics and climate change are all examples of factors or trends that have made the operating conditions of Supo hard to predict. How can the Service respond to these challenges?

One of the most important functions of Supo is to provide proactive and analysed intelligence to substantiate policymaking by national leaders. The Service also supplies expertise to various other partners, such as the defence forces, police and foreign service, with a view to providing optimal materials for policymaking.

The new intelligence legislation that took effect in summer 2019 enables Supo to discharge its mission more effectively. This new legislation broadened the powers of Supo, transforming the organisation into a security and intelligence service. The new role is evident from closer co-operation with key actors in central government and greater expectations placed on the Service by society and the national leadership.

### The intelligence cycle enables timely intelligence

Intelligence and security services often describe their activities in terms of an intelligence cycle. This is a process whereby an intelligence service responds to the information requirements of its clients, identifies and procures intelligence on security threats, and analyses the information to create assessments. Clients are also asked to comment on the information shared. The aim is to provide relevant, proactive and timely intelligence to clients. Supo accordingly does not collect intelligence for its own sake, but to substantiate government policymaking.

Central government needs to develop a common intelligence culture and concepts, with similarly understood concepts and operating principles that form a basis for co-operation. Building a common understanding and condition assessment is not always straightforward, as the concepts may be controversial, politically charged, or not unanimously understood. In addition, the division of central government into various departments can also hamper co-operation at times. Supo is nevertheless convinced that only through active co-operation can Finland respond to the growing threats arising from espionage, terrorism and the cyber environment.

### The priorities of civilian intelligence guide operations

The Ministry of the Interior sets annual priorities for civilian intelligence, providing a framework for Supo operations. These priorities guide the gathering and formulating of intelligence by defining the focus areas of the Service. The focus areas comprise key information needs of the national foreign and security policy leadership, and are co-ordinated with the priorities of military intelligence.

Priority setting involves an extensive dialogue with client organisations. This active engagement benefits both parties. Supo still has much to learn from its partners and clients.

Service operations are based on relationships of trust, with legality and responsibility forming the heart of the work. Though the details, information sources, working methods, operations and competencies of international co-operation must be protected, and accordingly cannot be publicly disclosed, we nevertheless seek to contribute to public debate with optimal frankness.

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## ISIL CONTINUES TO POSE A THREAT IN THE WEST

**Syria and Iraq remain core areas of radical Islamist terrorism.**

The most important terrorist threats to Europe are still the Islamic State (ISIL) and Al-Qaeda terrorist organisations, together with associated operatives. Despite the losses suffered by ISIL in the Syrian-Iraqi conflict zone, this organisation continues to pose a threat in the West. The main interface between the threat to Europe and terrorist organisations comprises foreign fighters, who have often spent long periods in the Syrian-Iraqi conflict zone.

ISIL and its associated operators are still seeking to commit major acts of terrorism in Europe. The ability of this organisation to inspire supporters has declined to some extent following the loss of its so-called Caliphate and a reduction in propaganda. This is mainly evident from the smaller number of attacks made by lone operators over the last two years.

The operational capacity of radical Islamist terrorist organisations, both in Syria and Iraq, is sustained by unresolved societal root causes of conflict: Lack of basic services, unemployment, corruption and slowness of reconstruction combine with sectarian tensions (Sunni-Shia) create conditions for supporting extremist movements.

Since losing control of territories in Syria and Iraq, ISIL has returned to operating as an underground terrorist group, especially in its traditional support areas. Its operations are well-established, and it strikes actively against both security forces and civilian targets. The death of its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in October 2019 has not significantly affected the organisation's operations in the conflict zone. ISIL propaganda has also sought to highlight the organisation's global presence and its operational capacity outside of Syria and Iraq since losing the territory that it called the Caliphate.

Some groups in the Idlib province of northwestern Syria that are linked to Al-Qaeda have so far confined most of their operations to Syria, but their underlying anti-Western and global jihadist ideology combines with efforts to mount attacks outside of the conflict zone.







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## DOMESTIC EXTREMISTS MAINLY ENGAGED IN STREET VIOLENCE IN 2019

### **Neither national security nor public order were threatened by extremist movements.**

Domestic extremist movements remained peaceful in 2019, with only a few dozen related offences recorded over the year. Criminality mainly took the form of individual acts of assault, menace and ethnic agitation by the extreme right and such offences as violent resistance to a public official and criminal damage on the extreme left.

### **Nordic Resistance Movement subject to interim ban**

As in previous years, the National Socialist Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) gained the greatest prominence among extreme right-wing movements, with the Supreme Court imposing an interim ban on this organisation in March 2019. Shortly after this ban took effect, a Towards Freedom movement linked to the NRM began organising the same kind of activities as the NRM.

While no violent offences were committed in the names of either the NRM or the Towards Freedom movement last year, both groups are under a criminal investigation launched by the National Bureau of Investigation to determine whether the NRM has infringed the ban on its operations.

### **Co-operation between the far left and Kurdish activists**

Priorities of the extreme left in 2019 included co-operating with Kurdish activists and engaging in radical antifascist activities. Co-operation between the extreme left and Kurdish activists in recent years has seen some Finnish people travelling to Northeast Syria in order to join armed organisations of Kurdish extraction operating in the region. Several demonstrations protesting at measures taken by the Turkish government have been organised in Finland, occasionally involving disruptive conduct. The radical antifascist movement sought to disrupt public demonstrations by the extreme right during the year, but more serious clashes were avoided thanks to effective policing operations.





## TERRORIST THREAT ASSESSMENT

The Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo) has assessed the threat of terrorism in Finland at level two, i.e. elevated. Although this level has not changed since the previous threat assessment issued in June 2017, the situation and operating scope of terrorism have changed both in Finland and internationally. Travel to conflict zones has strengthened both networking and the ability and capacity to engage in acts of violence. This change applies particularly to radical Islamist terrorism, but also to right-wing and left-wing extremism.

The growth of radical Islamist networks in Finland is conforming to international trends. In the same way as the individuals who departed for the conflict zone, radical Islamist networks in Finland are multi-ethnic and intergenerational. Marriages are concluded within networks, potentially hampering disengagement from radical ideology and reinforcing the radicalisation of future generations. The groups and networks in Finland that promote terrorist operations have contacts abroad in both Muslim-majority and Western countries.

### **Returnees from the Syrian conflict zone pose security threats both in the short and long term**

Supo considers that returnees from the Syrian conflict zone pose both immediate and indirect security threats in the short and long term. Besides the threat of terrorism, people returning from the conflict zone are likely to trigger reactions in the immigrant population, in extremist movements and among the general public. Returnees are also potential targets of hate crime. In addition to the national security implications, people returning from the conflict zone may have a broader impact on the European terrorist situation and counter-terrorism work, for example through their established networks and travel within the Schengen Area.

Dozens of men and women travelled from Finland to the Syrian conflict zone in 2012–2016 to join the ISIL terrorist organisation or to live in the Caliphate that it initially declared, and which subsequently collapsed. Some of these individuals died in the conflict zone. The factors underlying personal decisions to travel to an area controlled by ISIL, or by another terrorist organisation or group, are largely individual.

People living in the conflict zone have been exposed to an extremely radicalising environment, even for several years. The rising generation comprising the children of those who support terrorist activities give cause for concern from the perspective of the future evolution of religiously motivated violent extremism. Children represent the future and ideological continuity for terrorist organisations.

### **ISIL remains a threat**

ISIL remains a threat despite its territorial losses in Syria and Iraq, with functional networks that it can call upon in external operations, disseminating propaganda, recruiting and fundraising. As a member of the anti-ISIL coalition, ISIL regards Finland as a legitimate target for terrorist operations.

The radical Islamist organisations Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab constitute a smaller but non-negligible terrorist threat. Though their operations are mainly focused on conflict zones in Asia and Africa, and on unstable countries, they reflect a strongly anti-Western and global jihadist ideology.

The threat of extreme right-wing terrorism has grown in Western countries. The inspirational impact of recent attacks, social confrontation and especially online radicalisation encourage similar individual acts of violence in Finland.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has cross-border support operations in Finland that involve extreme left-wing anti-fascists.

The Middle East is the theatre for a complex and continually evolving conflict between several State and non-State actors. The progress of this conflict may affect the threat of radical Islamist and other terrorism in Europe.

### **Lone operators or groups are the primary threat**

Finland harbours significant terrorist support activities and international networks, with known resident and visiting individuals and groups possessing the motivation and ability to carry out terrorist attacks. The threat of a religiously



motivated terrorist attack on Finland comes primarily from lone operators or groups pursuing radical Islamist ideology and objectives.

Lone operators also pose the greatest threat of terrorist attack, irrespective of ideology. While a straightforward attack using readily available instruments is the most likely action and methodology, use of firearms and explosives is also a possibility.

### No change in the number of CT targets

There was no significant change in the number of CT targets in 2019. This number stood at about 390 persons at the end of 2019. Activation of recruiting and promotion networks associated with the conflict in Syria and Iraq and the foreign fighter phenomenon almost doubled the number of CT targets in previous years. No factors that would significantly affect the number of CT targets in the longer term are currently visible, though qualitative changes in conditions may occur.

The intensive increase in the number of CT targets in the 2010s, the August 2017 terrorist attack in Turku and the conflict in Syria all show that international events can have a significant radicalising and mobilising effect on the national situation. Events outside Finland may also trigger violent religiously or politically motivated acts and confrontation between various groups.

There are targets representing other countries and various religious traditions in Finland, together with international events held here that also face a heightened threat, both from terrorist organisations and from lone radical operators. Sites, times and events of great national and symbolic value may be subject to a particularly elevated threat of terrorism. The threat level may also increase due to trends in terrorism, such as straightforward and unsophisticated attacks on crowds or locations representing population segments, and to media coverage of such attacks. The threat of terrorist attacks on Western interests and tourist destinations has increased, so people from Finland may also be targeted in the course of strikes against Western countries abroad.

### The threat of terrorism

Terrorist attacks are the most serious and visible manifestation of terrorism. While most planned attacks in Europe do not materialise due to the counter-terrorism work of public authorities, a significant element of terrorist activity comprises covert offences that support terrorism in various ways.

These offences include preparing and disseminating propaganda to justify violence and encouraging others to support terrorist operatives. This may also mean raising one's own children to support an ideology that accepts violence. Support for terrorist networks and groups may also take the form of recruiting for terrorist groups and of financing them, for example through money laundering or crime.

The most serious threat is posed by individuals who have joined terrorist groups, travelled to conflict zones, and undergone training in attacks.

Criminalised terrorist offences fall under Chapter 34a of the Criminal Code of Finland.

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### Threat levels

*Threat levels are used to describe the terrorist threat against Finland and Finnish interests. The factors considered when assessing the threat level are available intelligence, the operational capacity and motivation of terrorist organisations or individuals and groups linked to them, and the time frame of possible attack plans. The aim of the classification is to provide a clear picture of the nature of the threat against Finland, and to determine whether the threat level has changed since the previous assessment.*

### Terrorist threat in Finland

4. Severe

3. High

▶ 2. Elevated

1. Low

## A GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF TERRORISM

Radical Islamist terrorism remains the most important terrorist threat internationally. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIL), the principal terrorist organisations, are seeking to strike at Western interests globally, and radical Islamist groups are actively involved in many ongoing conflicts.

The danger of extreme right-wing terrorism has grown in Western countries over the past year, with the most important threat coming from lone operators. The inspirational impact of the March 2019 anti-Islam terror attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, has been reflected in several corresponding acts of violence and attempted strikes in Western countries.

Terrorism based on other ideologies is characteristically much more local. Extreme left-wing terrorism targeting public authorities, banks and national interests is mainly confined to southern European countries. Separatist and ethno-nationalist terrorist operations also occur in many countries around the world, but have no impact on Finland's national security.

### Europe

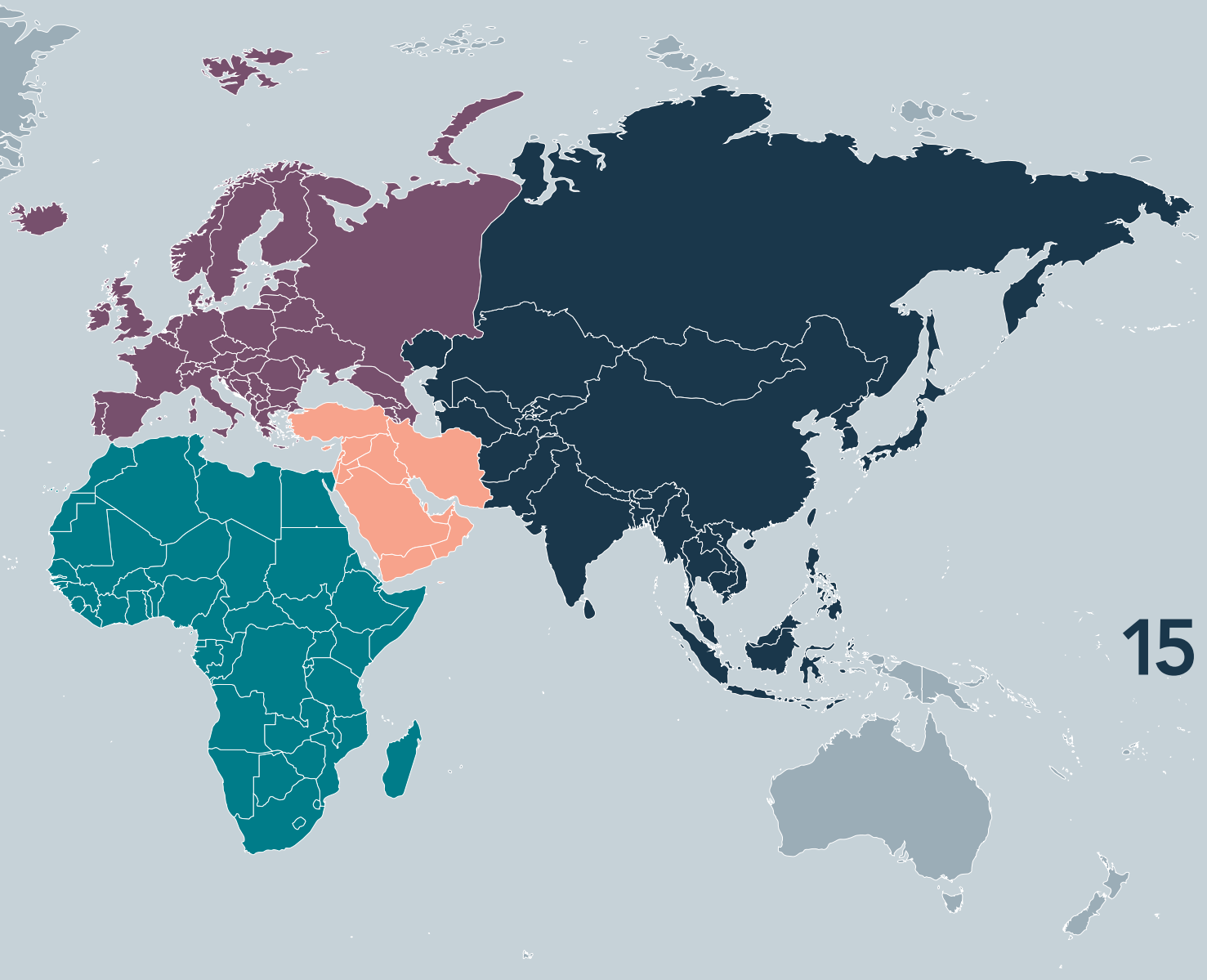
The conflict in Syria and Iraq was a powerful boost for radical Islamist networks in Europe. More than 5,000 foreign fighters have travelled to the region from Europe to join the ranks of ISIL and Al-Qaeda, while radical Islamist terrorist organisations have inspired individual supporters and small groups to launch attacks in Europe. Though most attacks have been straightforward in approach, perpetrators remain interested in more complex methods. Foreign fighters returning from the conflict zone and radicalisation in prison and at home will sustain the threat of terrorism in coming years.

### The Middle East

Sustained conflicts, political instability and lack of vision make this region fertile soil for violent extremism. Syria and Iraq have become the epicentre of radical Islamist terrorism.

Years of war and regime weakness in Yemen have enabled radical Islamist terrorist organisations to operate in the country. The operations of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIL in a province of Yemen remain largely local, but they both seek to attack the regimes in the Arabian Peninsula and Western interests.





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### Africa

Radical Islamist terrorism is a major security challenge in North Africa, the Sahel and East Africa, particularly from ISIL and Al-Qaeda, but also from smaller terrorist groups that identify with them. Terrorist activity has increased especially in part of the Sahel with several large-scale attacks. The principal terrorist group in East Africa is al-Shabaab, the regional branch of Al-Qaeda.

### Asia

Both Al-Qaeda and, to a lesser extent, ISIL are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan. These groups are generating propaganda that specifically seeks to raise their profile in Asia. Several terrorist organisations operate in South and Southeast Asia, mostly under a common Salafi jihadist ideology. Southeast and Central Asia have been key points of departure for the foreign fighter phenomenon directed at Syria and Iraq.

# SUPO IN FIGURES IN 2019

## DIVISION OF PERSONNEL

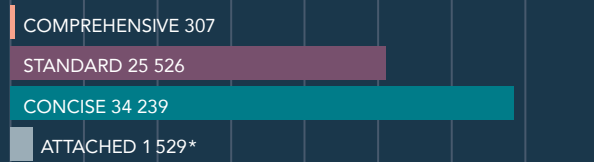
### Personnel 2019

**438 employees**  
Men **60 %**  
Women **40 %**  
Average age **43,1**



## SECURITY CLEARANCES

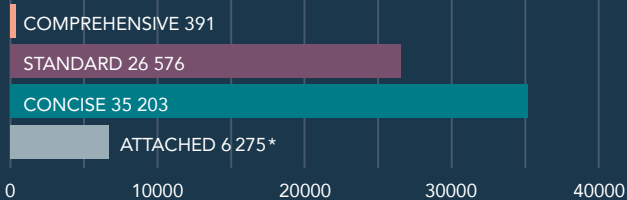
### 2018



### 2018

Total: 61 601

### 2019



### 2019

Total: 68 895

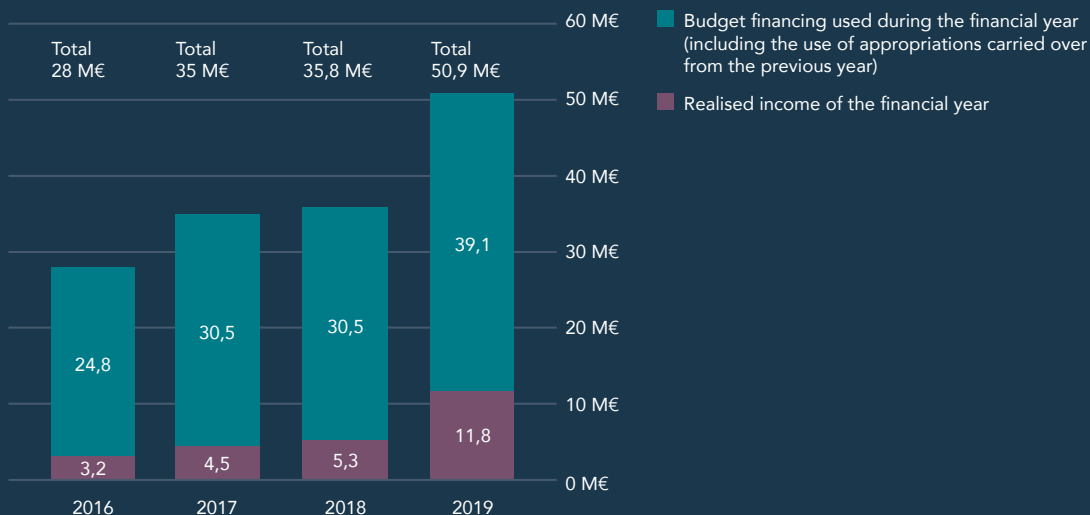
\* A security clearance register was introduced on 1 January 2018, reducing the need for a new vetting when an individual's duties change.

A new application may be appended to previously conducted vetting that is still in force for the individual concerned.

More information:  
[www.supo.fi/turvallisuusselvitykset/turvallisuusselvityksrekisteri](http://www.supo.fi/turvallisuusselvitykset/turvallisuusselvityksrekisteri)

## ECONOMY

### FINANCING USED BY FINANCIAL YEAR (MILLION EUROS)





# SUPO'S CORE DUTIES

## SUPO PRODUCES INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION TO SUPPORT DECISION-MAKING

- Supo's duty is to produce forward-looking and relevant intelligence information to state leaders and partner authorities to support decision-making. Intelligence is often the only way to obtain information about new threats in advance.
- Intelligence is collected through operational work, national and international cooperation and open sources. Foresight is a vital step in intelligence analysis.
- Intelligence-based reports on phenomena relating to national security are produced for state leadership and ministries to support decision-making. Supo also produces threat assessments for authorities, other police units, and occasionally also for companies performing critical security-of-supply functions.

## SUPO COUNTERS TERRORISM

### Supo

- conducts intelligence operations with a view to detecting and preventing the terrorist offences referred to in chapter 34a of the Criminal Code of Finland,
- counters terrorist attack plots against Finland,
- is responsible for exchanging international counter-terrorism intelligence,
- serves as an operational specialist organisation in relation to terrorism,
- develops, maintains and promotes national situational awareness related to the threat of terrorism.

## SUPO COUNTERS ESPIONAGE

The Finnish Security Intelligence Service (Supo) is tasked with countering foreign intelligence activities directed against Finland and preventing damage caused by them. Supo

- counters illegal human intelligence and influence operations conducted by foreign powers against Finland,
- counters espionage conducted by foreign powers against Finland on data networks,
- prevents the dissemination or transit of technology, devices and expertise required for making weapons of mass destruction from or via Finland,
- maintains situational awareness and reports on phenomena or projects that endanger Finland's national security.

## SUPO AND EXTREMIST MOVEMENTS

- Supo is tasked with monitoring the nature of activities conducted by domestic extremist movements and assessing whether these activities pose a threat to national security.
- Local police departments are responsible for assessing security threats to public safety and public order.

## SUPO GRANTS SECURITY CLEARANCES

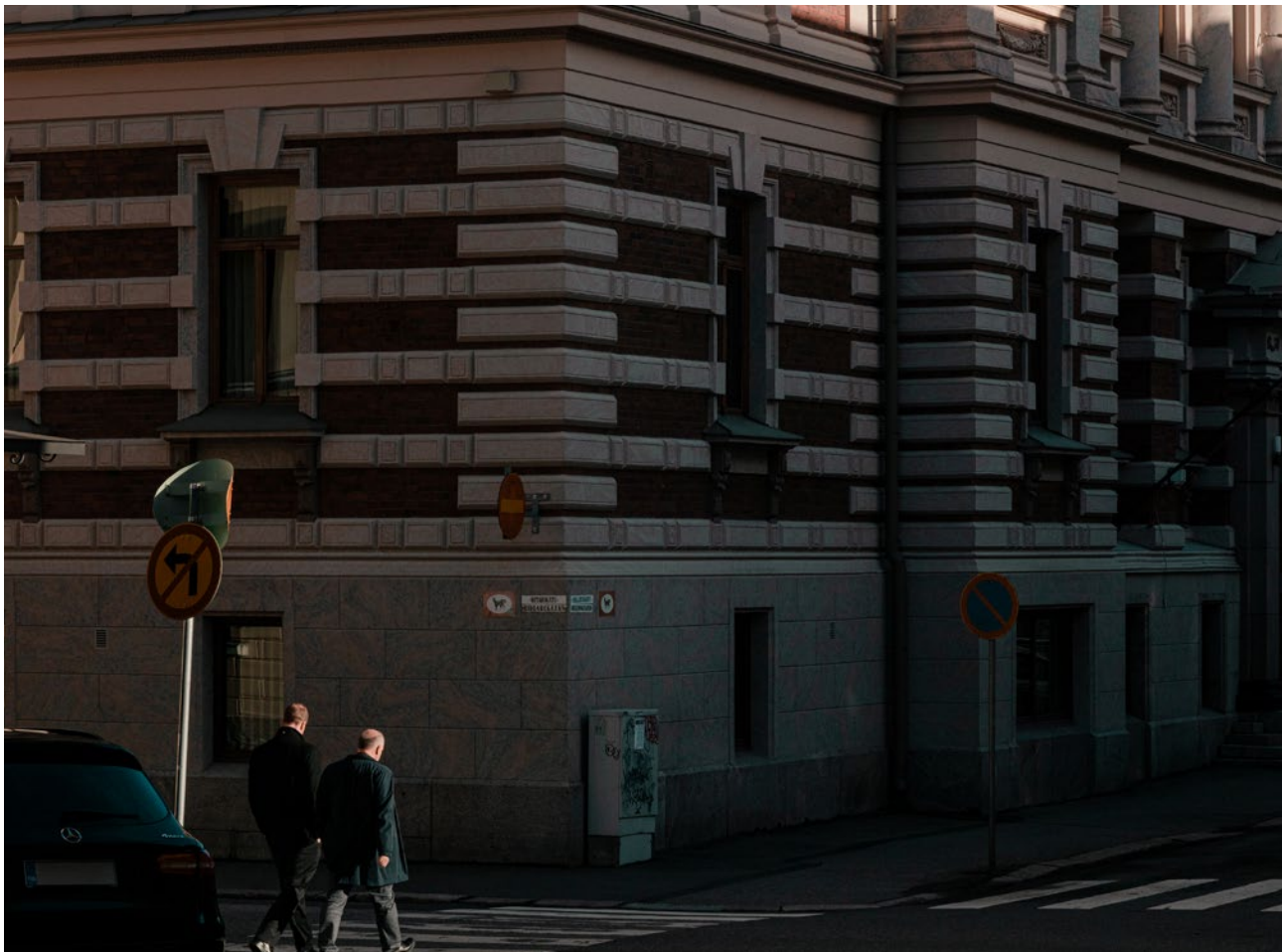
- Supo conducts all Finnish security clearance investigations, with the exception of investigations within the defence administration.
- The security clearance procedure seeks to prevent activities that endanger national security or significant private economic interests.
- Supo also conducts facility security clearance investigations, and issues opinions on citizenship and residence permit applications and other subjects.

## ECONOMIC ASPECTS ARE ALSO BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT IN THE WORK OF THE FINNISH SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Interdependence between countries and superpower policies are among the economic security issues that guide Finland. These are increasingly also matters of national security.

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The economic influence of countries is increasingly linked to political influence as globalisation progresses. Strong interdependence binds countries to the economic and monetary policy adopted by individual countries and international organisations. Finland's export-driven economy has largely benefited from globalisation but this also involves risks, some of which are clearly related to the national security sector. Open, export-dependent economies of this kind are particularly susceptible to shifts in the global economy.

Besides direct economic influence, another country may focus unlawful intelligence or influencing operations on Finland under the guise of business acquisitions or other investments. It is often difficult to distinguish between private and public projects, especially in countries with limited democratic accountability.

#### **R&D information, critical infrastructure and information systems are targets of unlawful intelligence**

Besides traditional targets such as policymaking, unlawful state-sponsored intelligence operations may focus on such areas as Finnish technological expertise or export-controlled products. Economic aspects are also a target of unlawful intelligence operations. States that actively engage in espionage accordingly often give strategic priority to acquiring R&D information in fields of high expertise in Finland. Technological progress also makes it increasingly difficult to identify dual-use items and other export-restricted products.

Critical infrastructure in Finland is increasingly under private ownership. Even though enterprises can supply services efficiently, they must proportion the security of their systems to the revenue stream that they generate. Privately owned infrastructure is also more susceptible to purchasing by foreign operators. An investment may target a part of Finland's critical infrastructure whose sale to a foreign operator could jeopardise national security.

Expertise-related knowledge is a key production factor in Finland, which increasingly resides in information systems that are unavoidably linked to public data networks. Though espionage still employs traditional methods, the Internet has expanded the range of available tools. Online activities increase the threat of state-sponsored and other sabotage of critical systems, even though the perpetrator never sets foot on Finnish soil. Systems also become more vulnerable to illegal intelligence operations as the critical functions of society increasingly move into the virtual realm.

Digitisation of the economy is accordingly not only creating a truly global market, but also irreversibly diversifying the elements of national security threat scenarios. One new phenomenon has involved attacks on outsourced subcontracting or service provider chains with a view to accessing the information systems of the target proper.

#### **Supo collects intelligence on threats to the economy at the earliest possible stage**

Supo applies numerous strategies for preventing and combating national security threats targeting Finland. Proactive threat prevention is a key objective.

Supo collects intelligence on the economic phenomena that threaten Finland, and on the associated operators, their objectives and methods, even before the threat materialises. It obtains such intelligence through its own intelligence operations, from domestic and foreign partners, from open sources and in other ways. Good connections with other central government agencies, and also with local authorities, universities and private businesses, are essential aspects of this intelligence gathering function.

Supo processes the information obtained into intelligence for use in policymaking, producing proactive and relevant intelligence for use by its partners in the form of various written releases and stakeholder meetings. Issues of economic security increasingly affect Finnish entities served by Supo.

## WHY ARE MAJOR POWERS INTERESTED IN THE ARCTIC?

An Arctic location is an opportunity and resource for Finland, but changes in the Arctic also have regional and national security implications. Major world powers are interested not only in the region, but also in the Arctic expertise of Finland.

The international security environment in the Arctic has been shaped by a deterioration in relations between the West and Russia, especially since 2014, and by the rise of China. Economic interest in the area has grown rapidly, with an increase in geopolitical competition.

The reduced ice cover caused by climate change will allow more maritime traffic in the Arctic Ocean and more effective use of the Northern Sea Route for shipments between Europe and the Far East. New territories will also become accessible to geological exploration, with associated prospecting for mineral and hydrocarbon resources.

### Co-operation and competition

While co-operation is essential for Arctic states to address global challenges, the interests of major global powers intersect in the North Arctic. Russia views the Arctic as an instrument for reconstructing superpower status by economic and military means. The region is also a key component of Russia's identity and a dimension of its foreign policy. Russia has restored the military presence and supporting infrastructure in the North that contracted due to the collapse of the USSR.

The Russians justify their military presence in the region with reference to the threat posed by the NATO military alliance and by the US Navy in particular. Russia has expressed particular concern regarding US military activity in the Barents Sea area and the development of missile defence in Alaska. Tensions are expected to escalate in the Arctic, even though military aspects have been excluded from the remit of the Arctic Council, which is the region's principal forum for international co-operation.

As interest in the Arctic grows and the Northeast Passage becomes increasingly important for energy shipments, countries outside of the region, such as China, are paying more attention to the region and seeking influence there.

Russia and China are collaborating on Siberian energy projects, with Russia anticipating that China will become an alternative source of investment, bypassing the sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries. Combined with Russia's growing dependence on the Chinese market, China's wealth and political power is a source of influence in bilateral relations between these countries. The depth of any Sino-Russian partnership should nevertheless not be exaggerated, even though the countries are content to appear as strategic partners. China's investments in Russia remain modest, and Russia is running a deficit in its trade with China. Russia is nevertheless wary of publicly highlighting the challenge and even potential threat posed by China to Russian interests.

China announced its Arctic strategy in 2018. It is particularly seeking natural resources in the Arctic, coupled with the benefits of a sea route, logistics and ports. China also needs access to northern latitudes for such purposes as constructing satellite data reception stations that will enable China to serve its maritime traffic and to study weather and ice conditions along the Northern Sea Route. Chinese naval activities have already increased in the Arctic, though capacity constraints have largely prevented them from reaching the northern Arctic Ocean.





### **Finland interests major powers as a leading specialist in the Arctic**

Finland interests the Arctic superpowers as a member of the Arctic Council and as an active specialist in northern conditions. Expertise in Arctic conditions is important to Russia, which also takes an interest in the policy positions of Finland concerning Arctic co-operation.

The Northeast Passage submarine cable project linking telecommunications between Europe and the Far East is one example of an Arctic business opportunity that combines the interests of international business and national governments. China is also actively involved in satellite station and other technology-driven projects in northern Finland. These projects reflect the growing interest of China in the Arctic, and may be viewed as part of the country's emerging superpower role, which is bringing new opportunities but is also increasingly in conflict with Western interests.

The Arctic also interests intelligence services, with this aspect attracting the attention of the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo). Foreign intelligence services have been interested in Finland's chairmanship

of the Arctic Council, as the Finnish Arctic dimension falls within the scope of the long-term interests of foreign powers. Foreign intelligence services also monitor Arctic-themed seminars and conferences arranged in northern Finland, and planned infrastructure projects in the north.

### **Local expertise to substantiate national policymaking**

Threats to national security are combated throughout Finland, with SUPO acting as an operational security authority in all parts of the country. The eight regional offices of SUPO outside the Helsinki Metropolitan Area are located in Turku, Vaasa, Tampere, Lappeenranta, Joensuu, Kuopio, Oulu and Rovaniemi. These regional offices focus on local expertise and stakeholder engagement with businesses and other organisations, and with other public authorities. They also provide operational information in support of national policymaking.

The Arctic sphere of operations is a particularly prominent factor in northern Finland, where the Oulu and Rovaniemi offices of Supo formulate an overall assessment of Arctic-related security issues.

## CYBER ESPIONAGE IS SYSTEMATIC AND DIFFICULT TO DETECT

Growing political tension internationally is likely to increase state-sponsored espionage as the need for information grows while its lawful accessibility diminishes. The counterintelligence work of the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo) seeks to detect and combat espionage targeting Finland, both in the real world and in the cyber environment.

### Espionage is systematic

Espionage is a means of acquiring information that is otherwise unavailable, and that enables the spying state to influence detrimentally the behaviour of the target state.

An espionage operation may be conducted in the form of human intelligence, as technical cyber espionage, or as a combination of these methods. Though many countries are technically capable of carrying out cyber espionage operations, the will to do so is more important than mere technical ability. Espionage operations are not launched by accident, but when specifically commissioned.

For example, countries that engage in state-sponsored cyber espionage may obtain confidential information by intruding into information systems via a technical vulnerability, or by exerting pressure on hardware or software suppliers under their control to obtain data from their foreign customers.

### Risk management can be used to combat cyber espionage

A wide range of measures are required to defend your organisation against technical intrusion or conflicts of interest with a hardware or software manufacturer.

Preventing exploitation of vulnerabilities in information technology requires continuous, disciplined data security work and a realistic information security architecture.

The risk caused by hardware or software suppliers from countries that actively engage in espionage targeting Finland will instead be managed at the procurement stage. It is unlikely that devices would have backdoors that could be found through technical security auditing, as these are not needed by the state actors. They have the front door: service connections and software updates.

Cyber espionage is a planned intelligence gathering operation that requires resources to implement. A state that engages in espionage must weigh its benefits against the costs of implementation. An organisation seeking to protect its own information or that of its clients can take substantial steps to increase the costs of intrusion.

### Preventing technical intrusion

- comprehensive system and network logs
- strong authentication
- virtualisation of programs that accept external data inputs
- network segmentation

### Managing conflicts of interest

Is the device manufacturer bound by a stricter duty towards the national authorities of its country of origin than towards its customers or towards the legislation of Finland and the European Union? Is the country of origin actively spying on Finland or EU?

### Security requires careful technical system administration and comprehensive management of log entries

Cyber espionage operations seek to exploit routes that are already open to the intruder. Malicious code can be concealed into e-mails and websites.

Parties engaging in cyber espionage operations may send the target a seemingly pertinent document as an e-mail attachment or a link to an external website. Espionage operations do not use links that the user can recognise as untrustworthy, but take care to ensure that the recipient of the message has a clear reason to open the attachment or link.

Document readers and web browsers have undiscovered technical vulnerabilities, allowing additional code to run on the hardware that opens the document or website. This gives the operator a foothold in the internal network. How far the hostile operator can progress will then depend on the network architecture.

Combating these threats requires realism in system design. Users will always open attachments and click on links, as this is part of their job. Devices that are vulnerable to malicious code should accordingly not be treated as trusted intranet hardware in the information security architecture. Technical system administration is also crucial for both detecting and combating espionage. The importance of saving comprehensive log information cannot be overstressed. Cyber espionage will be detected - if at all - by a combination of log information and skilful system administration.

States that engage in state-sponsored espionage have also shifted their attention to subcontracting chains as organisations increasingly outsource their ICT operations. The resulting systemic blind spot hampers detection of state-sponsored espionage. Even with a fully sound system administration process, an ICT service provider cannot be expected to know what customer information is of interest to a foreign power engaging in espionage, whereas the organisation that is actually subject to espionage does not see the technical log information that could be used to detect it.



## SECURITY CLEARANCE VETTING IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT IN KEY RECRUITMENT

Security clearance vetting has become an established aspect of successfully recruiting the right people for positions that are important for national security or for some highly significant private financial interest.

Security clearance vetting is an effective approach to preventing serious insider threats in an organisation. The Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo) stresses the need for optimally comprehensive security clearance vetting of all individuals who are selected for positions with significant national security implications.

Current legislation allows security clearance vetting to remain in force for up to five years. The integrity of the individual concerned is automatically monitored over this period. This makes security clearance vetting an important part of continual risk management in organisations. Regular updating of security clearance vetting enables systematic management of access to classified information.

To respond to changes in operating conditions, Supo has endeavoured to increase the number of standard security clearance vetting investigations compared to concise investigations. Standard and comprehensive security clearance vetting investigations have also been made more exhaustive.

Investigating foreign dependencies became an integral part of all comprehensive security clearance vetting and of certain standard security clearance vetting procedures in 2019. An investigation of foreign dependencies involves assessing whether such dependencies may expose an individual at work to exploitation, pressure, bribery or other undue influence from the security or intelligence services of foreign powers.

### **Intelligence increasingly disclosed in security clearance vetting**

Standard and comprehensive security clearance vetting includes a review of any intelligence

concerning the individual that may be held by Supo or the Defence Command, and of whether there is any criminal intelligence on the person concerned in police files. Information of this kind was found in security clearance vetting more than twice as often in 2019 as in 2018, which was itself a record year for the volume of intelligence obtained.

This change reflects evolving operating conditions. The number of CT targets did not change significantly in 2019 but their activities in support of terrorism have become more serious. Foreign powers are also actively pursuing intelligence operations in Finland.

### **Most clients request vetting electronically**

Supo has developed a security clearance vetting register to facilitate the work of clients and public authorities. This includes an electronic service that most clients are already using. The electronic service enables Supo to expedite requests for vetting reports and improve the reliability and integrity of the security clearance vetting procedure.

Supo is seeking optimal automation of various register checks during 2020, enabling better focusing of resources on improving the quality and impact of reports to meet the needs of evolving operating conditions.

The time required to prepare security clearance vetting reports in 2019 remained broadly in line with the 25 business day promise of our client service charter. Digitising the preparation of security clearance vetting reports will improve opportunities for supplying better reports within this time frame.





PEOPLE IN FINLAND  
STILL TRUST THE SECURITY  
AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

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YEAR BOOK 2019







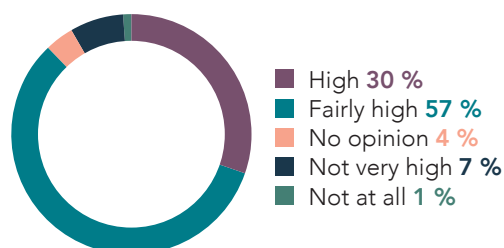
The Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo) surveys public perceptions of its work on an annual basis. The latest survey was conducted between 18 and 29 November 2019, based on a sample representing the population of mainland Finland aged 18 years and over.

A clear majority (**87 per cent**) of the public in Finland indicate either a very high or at least fairly high degree of trust in Supo, with nearly one third (**30 per cent**) reporting a very high degree of trust, and more than half (**57 per cent**) reporting a fairly high degree of trust.

Public confidence in Supo remains at broadly the level of the preceding year. Only eight per cent of respondents reported a lack of trust in Supo.

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#### Trust in the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service



Total of 1002 interviews conducted.  
Margin of error +/- 3 percentage points.



FINNISH SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

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