



SU
PO
2020
YEAR BOOK



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People need unique information in an uncertain world

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Extreme right-wing terrorism is a substantial threat in Western countries



18-19 The focus of espionage shifted to the online environment in an exceptional year



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People need unique information in an uncertain world

2020 was an eventful sequel to a preceding decade that revolutionised Finland's security environment in many ways. Besides the coronavirus pandemic, the downsides of digitalisation became increasingly evident, with Finland not spared from the spread of an extremist mentality that has assumed new overt forms around the world. Democracy and the open Western social model, including countries that have been regarded as stable democracies, are facing a stern challenge. Even Finland must remain vigilant to ensure that such developments do not emerge here.

2020 was the first full operating year in which Supo was able to apply the latest intelligence-gathering powers unanimously approved by the Finnish Parliament. With a total of some 500 employees, the Service has now reached the staffing level that was anticipated when the new intelligence legislation took effect. Even though full implementation of new practices and intelligence methods is still ongoing, Supo is already beginning to resemble a modern security and intelligence service in quite many ways.

The Service operates in a field where continual reform is essential. Our success crucially relies on anticipating changes in operating conditions and continually improving our work. The new intelligence legislation allows Supo to acquire intelligence concerning threats to national security, even without a concrete cause to suspect that any criminal offence has occurred. These powers have proved necessary, and have been useful in a wide variety of situations. Contemporary threats to Finland's national security and the intelligence requirements of top-level national government do not dovetail neatly into the framework of Finnish criminal law. This was a key justification for enacting the new intelligence legislation, and it has proved to be correct.

It is absolutely essential for Supo to exercise its powers in a lawful manner at all times. The first annual report of the Intelligence Ombudsman who oversees our operations was published in summer 2020. This report finds that the use of intelligence methods at Supo was lawful in all respects. The confidence of the Finnish public in Supo has also reached a record high level, and we are keen to continue being worthy of public trust in Finland.

The main function of Supo is to gather, analyse and report unique information to substantiate policymaking by our clients, meaning especially top-level national

government, officials and public authorities. We regularly gather comments from clients on how effectively our intelligence serves their needs. Though feedback collected in 2020 was quite favourable, we also heard some concrete suggestions for improvement. These are valuable to us as we continually enhance our reporting. Our clients also have a voice in this yearbook.

It is impossible to discuss 2020 without mentioning the coronavirus pandemic. Though also reflected in the work and evolution of Supo, this exceptional year fortunately had only a moderate impact on national security. We immediately prepared in many ways in the early months of 2020 to maintain our operational capacity over the pandemic, and this was never compromised at any stage.

Restrictions on travel and assembly hampered the efforts of foreign powers to acquire human intelligence in Finland, and after some initial rigidity, these states replaced human intelligence with more active campaigns of cyber espionage. This nevertheless in no way signals the end of human intelligence, and this yearbook accordingly also explains how agents are typically recruited.

We have collected some articles here that describe the various functions of Supo. These include contributions on anticipating trends in radical-Islamist terrorism after the Isil caliphate, discussing the role of Supo in securing critical infrastructure, examining foreign interests as part of security clearance vetting, and introducing some new Supo staff members. The yearbook also includes an updated terrorist threat assessment for the current year. The threat has become more multidimensional but remains at level two, meaning elevated.

Recent events in the USA, Russia, Belarus, and such regions as the Sahel in Africa have illustrated the importance of forecasting trends and assessing their security implications. There is certainly continued demand for the unique information that Supo gathers and analyses. Finland's top-level national government and public authorities must have the most comprehensive and realistic picture of the surrounding world when formulating policy.

Antti Pelttari

Director of the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service



After the caliphate – future trends in radical Islamist terrorism

Radical Islamist terrorism is seeking a new direction following the collapse of the Isil caliphate. Activities may rapidly fall in line behind some new operator if conditions are favourable.

The radical Islamist terrorist movement is currently undergoing a period of pathfinding and reorientation. As a terrorist organisation that attracted tens of thousands of foreign fighters and seized large areas of Syria and Iraq, ISIL emerged as a key phenomenon in the 2010s.

Its appeal has nevertheless waned since March 2019 when the organisation lost its territory in Syria and Iraq. Supporters of the ideology and their networks have not disappeared. The threat of radical Islamist terrorism remains, though operations are seeking a new direction.

These operations may be swiftly channelled into a new grouping when conditions are right. The appeal of ISIL linked to the conflict in Syria and Iraq demonstrated this.

The emergence of new conflicts or spectacular terrorist attacks may rapidly strengthen terrorist operators. Some new or established operator, such as the terrorist organisation al-Qaeda, may emerge to fill the leadership vacuum. The radical Islamist movement is greatly influenced by international events.

Returnees from the conflict zone reinforce networks

Radical Islamist operators in Europe will no longer necessarily be affiliated to a single organisation in future. They may support radical Islamist ideology more generally, drawing support from the propaganda materials of both al-Qaeda and ISIL.

The exceptional growth of the foreign fighter phenomenon during the conflict in Syria and Iraq is one of the factors reinforcing networks in Finland and Europe. Returnees from this region are strengthening radical Islamist networks in Europe. Cross-border acquaintances and complex family relationships have emerged in ISIL territory.

A large proportion of returnees will probably con-

tinue their radical Islamist activity, even if some of them are disillusioned.

The impact on the terrorist movement of individuals returning from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq will only be seen in the future. A returnee who has not disengaged from the ideology may be reactivated even after a long time. Such reactivation may be triggered by various causes, such as events around the world or in the individual's personal life.

Trans-generational radicalisation gives rise to concern

The foreign fighter phenomenon and the idea of a caliphate played an important role in the terrorist recruiting drives of the 2010s. Recruitment currently seeks to strengthen domestic networks. Instead of going to conflict zones, targets are urged to serve in Europe, for example in supporting activities.

There is an attempt to make radical ideology a way of life in Europe. These networks seek to enlarge the supporter base by spreading an ideology and worldview that opposes Western values in society.

Radical Islamist networks are not solely an outcome of the foreign fighter phenomenon, and domestic radicalisation also plays an essential role.

The phenomenon of trans-generational radicalisation gives cause for concern. There are families in Finland where radicalisation has already reached the third generation. Children may grow up in a radical environment from a young age.

It is important to prevent reinforcement of radical networks. In a worst case scenario, networks will also emerge in Finland, with individuals living in a radical parallel reality from which it is difficult to disengage.

Jihadis hide in the depths of the Internet

ISIL represented a breakthrough for the digital radical Islamist movement. As the most prominent operator in the early 2000s, Al-Qaeda distributed recordings of long sermons by its leaders, and was selective in recruiting new members.

ISIL made propaganda and radical Islamist activity more accessible. ISIL propaganda was made available on an entirely new scale for everyone to find on the best-known social media platforms. Even though these platforms have adopted stricter policies concerning terrorist propaganda, the sheer volume of such material makes it hard to address.

Propaganda operations are now more covert, with the more organised operators moving back to more closed forums that are harder to find and join.

These forums make agile use of various platforms from Tiktok to Jodel. Terrorist organisations may also use cryptocurrencies and other facilities in their financial operations.

ISIL is still producing propaganda in several languages, seeking to inspire supporters to violent attacks that bring greater attention to the movement.

Supporters of the ideology have risen to increasingly key positions, generating materials independently. Propaganda activities offer such supporters the opportunity to participate actively.

Radical Islamist and far-right terrorism feed off one another

One worrying international development has been the mutually supportive influence of radical Islamist and far-right terrorism. The Muslim population has been a target for right-wing extremist attacks around the world.

Since the far-right attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, there have been calls in radical Islamist propaganda to strike back against the far right. Right-wing extremist operators have cited radical Islamist attacks in their propaganda. The concern is that extremist ideologies in Europe are fuelling violence against one another.

Trends in European terrorism often reach Finland after a slight delay and in an attenuated form. International networking, security awareness and use of the digital world are common factors in terrorism, without regard to ideology.





Extreme right-wing terrorism is a substantial threat in Western countries

A heightened threat of far-right terrorism is also evident in Finland. The online environment plays a key role in spreading ideology.

The danger of extreme right-wing terrorism has grown in Western countries. The worrying trend of recent years is reflected in multiple completed and prevented attacks, arrests and convictions, with the most important threat coming from lone operators and small groups. The role of openly far-right movements in recent terrorist attack projects has nevertheless been minimal. Would-be perpetrators seldom operate in the open, preferring to conceal their operations.

The number of attacks by the far right and the associated death toll multiplied in the West between 2014 and 2019. The locations of far-right terror attacks have included the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, the United Kingdom and Norway.

2019 was a particularly grim year, with numerous large-scale armed attacks. The most serious of these was a terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand that claimed 51 lives.

2020, by contrast, was a calmer year in terms of completed attacks. The only large-scale violent incident occurred in February when a 43-year-old man killed 10 people in Hanau, Germany, before finally committing suicide in an armed attack motivated by anti-immigration sentiment. Several clandestine attack projects were nevertheless disclosed during 2020.

Xenophobia strongly influences attack targets and hostile figure constructs

Far-right terrorists primarily target ethnic and religious minorities. Large-scale violence has particularly targeted groups and symbolic sites representing Islam or Judaism, such as mosques or synagogues in recent years.

Besides large gatherings, individuals profiled as supporters of liberal immigration policies have been selected as targets for projected far-right attacks. Europe has seen several acts of violence and planned attacks targeting pro-immigration politicians.

The ideology of these attacks reflects such motivations as islamophobia, antisemitism or general anti-immigration sentiment. One of the most noteworthy ideological motives of far-right terrorists is known as the Great Replacement conspiracy theory based on the idea of a fundamental threat posed by immigration and multiculturalism to the white population of Western countries. Views reflecting the idea of a Great Replacement have been highlighted in several far-right terrorist attacks.

Previous attacks and the online environment have influenced the emergence of far-right terrorism

The threat of the far right materially relies on the inspiring influence of previous terror attacks and their perpetrators. This aspect was highlighted in the Christchurch attack, in which the perpetrator openly sympathised with prior far-right acts of violence in his propaganda, and became a significant inspiration for the far right after completing the attack. Christchurch inspired a further five acts of violence, with several further projected attacks also disclosed and prevented thereafter.

The international online environment plays a substantial role in disseminating far-right ideology, with operators also networking on their preferred social media platforms, spreading terrorist propaganda and inciting one another to violent action.

In several cases, far-right terrorists have used these platforms to disseminate propaganda related to their attacks and to gain approval. The online environment has enabled the emergence of some loosely affiliated international far-right groups that have also been classified as terrorist organisations in the UK.

Besides factors internal to the movement, the threat of far-right terrorism is affected by broad societal variables, such as the immigration situation, economic trends or the coronavirus crisis.

While the number of far-right terrorist attacks has

fallen during the coronavirus pandemic, increased use of the Internet due to coronavirus restrictions and social lockdowns, and far-right online activism have created a breeding ground for radicalisation.

The threat of the extreme right extends to Finland

Although the most important global terrorist threat is still posed by radical Islamist operators, developments in recent years have inevitably led security authorities to devote greater attention to the far

right. Like many other Western security and intelligence services, Supo has stressed the heightened threat from the far right.

Even though it has avoided far-right terror attacks, this worrying international trend also extends to Finland. Supo has identified some individuals who support or sympathise with far-right terrorism, and counter-terrorism targets include some far-right operators. The extreme right-wing international online environment is also a significant growth platform for radicalising lone operators and small groups in Finland.



Terrorist threat assessment

The threat of extreme right-wing terrorism has grown. The foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon has increased and strengthened the international connections of radical Islamist operators in Finland. The threat of terrorism has remained at level two, meaning elevated.

Supo has assessed the threat of terrorism in Finland as elevated, corresponding to level two on the four-point scale. The threat level is unchanged compared to last year but the threat picture related to the far right is more worrying than before.

The greatest threat of a terrorist attack is posed by lone operators or small groups advocating far-right or radical Islamist ideology. Straightforward attacks using readily available instruments such as knives and vehicles remain most likely, but use of firearms and explosives is also possible. The threat of attacks arranged abroad by terrorist organisations operating in conflict areas is minimal in Finland.

Significant terrorist support activities can nevertheless be found in Finland, and some 390 individuals are categorised as counter-terrorism target individuals. This figure has not changed significantly since last year. Many of these target individuals have received weapons training, been involved in armed conflict, or expressed a desire to take part in armed operations. The list of target individuals is not permanent, and individuals are continually added and removed.

The threat from the far right has grown

The threat from the far right has increased in Finland. Supo has identified some far-right operators with the ability and motivation to mount a terrorist attack.

In Western countries, the threat of far-right terrorism has emerged in recent years in the form of numerous attacks and attack projects. Individuals posing such terrorist threats do not typically belong to organised far-right groups.

Both far-right perpetrators and looser groups that support terrorist activity have actively employed the Internet to spread propaganda, recruit and network internationally. The far-right target individuals identified by Supo are also typically linked to the international online environment of the extreme right.

The foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon has increased and strengthened the international connections of radical Islamist operators in Finland

The threat of radical Islamist terrorism has stayed at the previous level. The capacity of the Islamic State (Isil) terrorist organisation has declined since its peak years, but the organisation continues to operate actively in the conflict zones of the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Isil is still able to inspire its supporters, and is also seeking to carry out attacks in Europe. Isil propaganda also portrays Finland as a hostile country.

Most counter-terrorism targets are linked to radical Islamist activity. Finland's radical Islamist networks are multi-ethnic and intergenerational. The foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon has increased and strengthened the international connections of radical Islamist operators in Finland. Several people returned to Finland from the Syrian conflict zone and its al-Hol camp in 2020.

Most returnees from the conflict zone are likely to continue operating in radical-Islamist networks, for example by recruiting and disseminating extremist ideology. Supo finds that individuals returning from conflict zones pose a threat to national security in the short and long term.

Supo monitors the threat posed by the far-left movement and the PKK

Supo also monitors and assesses the threat to national security posed by the far-left movement and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which the European Union classifies as a terrorist organisation. In Finland – and more broadly in Europe – the PKK has focused on actively supporting its operations in Kurdish regions. A few volunteers who have joined

armed organisations with a Kurdish background and participated in conflict in the region have also travelled from Finland to the Syrian conflict zone.

The coronavirus pandemic has had no impact on the national threat level

While restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic have reduced the number of potential attack targets, such as public gatherings and mass events, some terrorist attacks occurred both within and beyond the borders of Europe in 2020. The pandemic has had no impact on the level of the terrorist threat nationally.

Terrorist operators have exploited the pandemic to reinforce images of the enemy in their propaganda. Radical Islamists have painted a picture of the pandemic as vengeance against heretics, while the far right has viewed the circumstances as an opportunity to accelerate the collapse of social order.

International events may inspire attacks

Terrorist attacks can be triggered by international events with security policy ramifications and the media attention that they receive. For example, the antagonism in France surrounding cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in late 2020 mobilised individual operators to commit acts of violence.

Details of the attacks, their perpetrators and

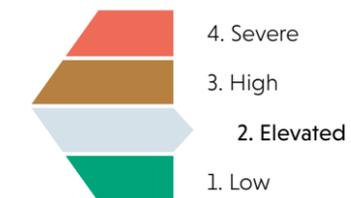
related manifestos spread rapidly on social media and messaging applications. Such attacks and the associated propaganda can inspire individuals in particular to mount similar attacks, even within a short time frame.

Certain national locations, times and events of great symbolic value may be subject to an elevated threat of terrorism. People from Finland may also become targets of generalised attacks against the West while abroad.

THREAT LEVELS

Threat levels are used to describe the terrorist threat against Finland and Finnish interests. The factors taken into account when assessing the threat level include the available intelligence, operational capacity and motivation of terrorist organisations or persons and groups linked to them, and the time span of possible attack plans.

TERRORIST THREAT IN FINLAND



The threat of terrorism

Supo updates the terrorist threat assessment at least once a year. The purpose of the threat assessment is to provide an up-to-date picture on the terrorist threat in Finland, based on best available information.

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.



Secrets, perseverance and diverse backgrounds – new Supo staff talk about their work

105 new staff members began working at Supo in 2020. Three of these newcomers tell us what it's like to work at Supo. All employee names have been changed for security reasons.

TIMO

Public service with an interesting twist
Supo researchers have access to unique information. The work of a researcher requires the ability to perceive essential content in large volumes of data.

When Finland's Prime Minister or President of the Republic receives a secret intelligence report, the author may be Timo. He works as an analyst in the Intelligence department.

Timo's work relies on investigative findings in his field and on open sources, such as news media. The work of a Supo analysts differs from ordinary specialist work due to the use of special information sources. Supo acquires information through its own intelligence gathering operations, or from international partners and other sources.

By combining all of this information, Supo analysts seek to furnish policymakers with intelligence of optimal quality to substantiate their decisions.

"Another special feature of this work is that the focus of intelligence is always oriented towards the future. We not only report on what has already happened, but also try to anticipate what the future may hold in store", Timo observes.

Timo explains that a Supo analyst must be analytical and able to envisage large entities comprehensively. The ability to extract the essentials from a

continual flood of information is crucial. Supo analysts must remain prepared to deepen their special expertise, but also to diversify their knowledge base.

"Writing skills are an important aspect of this work, as you sometimes have to produce briefings that can be understood very quickly."

UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE MAKES THE WORK INTERESTING

Timo studied social sciences at university, including several courses in Russian language and culture. After graduating, he served in a specialist capacity at another government agency.

Timo took an interest in Supo, and he monitored job vacancies at the Service for a while before a suitable position came up. Supo was somewhat mysterious viewed from outside.

"With previous service in central government, I thought the work might be somewhat similar, but spiced with an interesting twist. This tentative assessment turned out to be true."

Timo finds the secrecy aspect of working at Supo a rewarding challenge. It means that there is little opportunity to talk shop with family or friends.

"On the other hand, you have access to information that is not available to everyone, which makes the job interesting", Timo explains.

JENNI

Combating terrorism calls for a collaborative and humble approach

Detective Jenni describes her work at Supo as significant. Interaction skills and calmness acquired from working in the police service have been useful assets in combating terrorism.

Jenni is a detective in the Supo Counter-terrorism Department. Her daily duties include counter-terrorism intelligence gathering and intelligence assignments.

Working to combat terrorism requires good interaction and teamwork skills. Conditions can vary quickly at work, she explains, but she harboured the ambition of working at Supo for a long time.

"Despite my police background, I had no clear idea of operations here. My impression was of a mysterious, but valued and esteemed operator."

Prior to joining Supo, Jenni pursued a career in crime prevention. She finds that working as a police officer at Supo differs from her previous duties.

Supo staff do not have the same public profile. Jenni nevertheless finds that the skills acquired as a police officer help her in her current job.

"As a police officer, I learned interaction skills and a calm attitude to whatever I encounter", Jenni explains.

SUPO SUCCESSES CANNOT BE BROADCAST

Jenni works to gather proactive and relevant intelligence on terrorism-related phenomena. Her assignments often also require precision and perseverance, and swift successes are seldom available. Supo officials cannot discuss their successes publicly.

"A certain humility and modesty may also be called for. We are not seeking individual glory."

Staff members at Supo cannot discuss their work, even with loved ones. Jenni says that this reticence is already familiar from her previous work as a police officer. Though Supo tackles issues that are difficult and serious, a good ambience at work helps to maintain the balance.

Jenni explains that she finds working at Supo highly meaningful.

"It certainly involves a certain patriotism. I want to work to make Finland a safe place to live."

JUKKA

Unique and meaningful duties

Jukka works in the Digital Services Department, and Supo represented a professional leap into the unknown. He describes his duties as unique.

Systems specialist Jukka spent many years working in coding and software architecture in the private sector. Alongside his working duties, he also learned about data security, and set out to find a job where he could put these new skills to better use.

He decided to apply for a position at Supo after an acquaintance called his attention to an interesting job vacancy. He also received a competing offer from a private business in the final stages of this application.

"I had to decide whether to become a consultant or take a leap into the almost completely unknown. The Supo job advertisement could not disclose the entire job description, but I thought that these positions seldom become available, whereas I can always return to consulting work."

Jukka now works in the Digital Services Department. This work involves evaluating the security of various information systems and networks.

Jukka explains that Supo is able to do things that could not or even should not be done elsewhere.

"The assignments are unique. I have been able to do things in my short time here that I never imagined I

would be able to do."

On the other hand, he notes that much greater attention is paid to the legality of operations than in private enterprise. The mission of Supo is to combat threats to national security. All operations must be closely supervised and justified in law.

PEOPLE FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS WORKING TOGETHER

Jukka points out that a really wide range of people work at Supo, with a diversity extending well beyond programmers. The age range is also broad. People from very different backgrounds may be involved in the same project or operation. The job requires interaction skills and the ability to work in a team.

"You have to be able to explain things on many levels. You have to be open-minded and capable of learning new things."

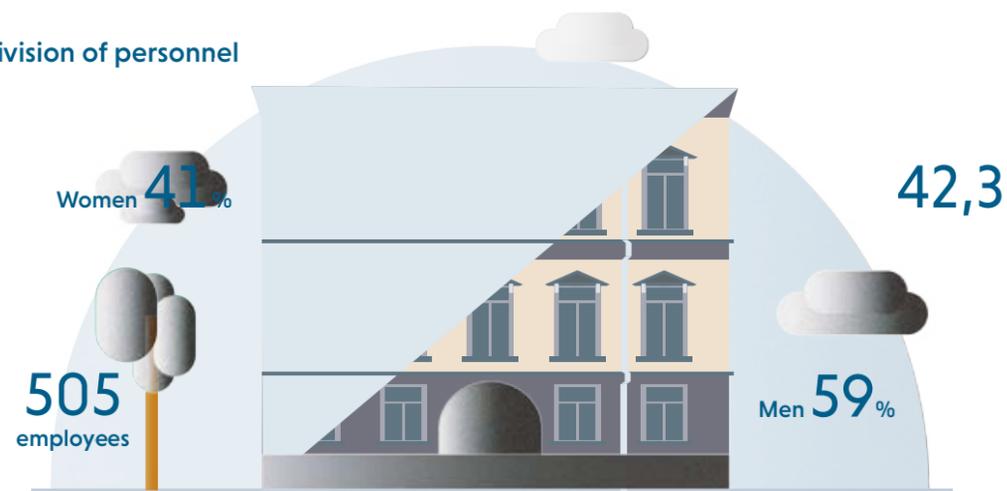
Jukka also notes that perseverance is an asset at Supo. The results of good work may show up after a really long time.

Jukka says that Supo has proved to be a more easy-going workplace than he had previously assumed. He also describes his work as exceptionally significant.

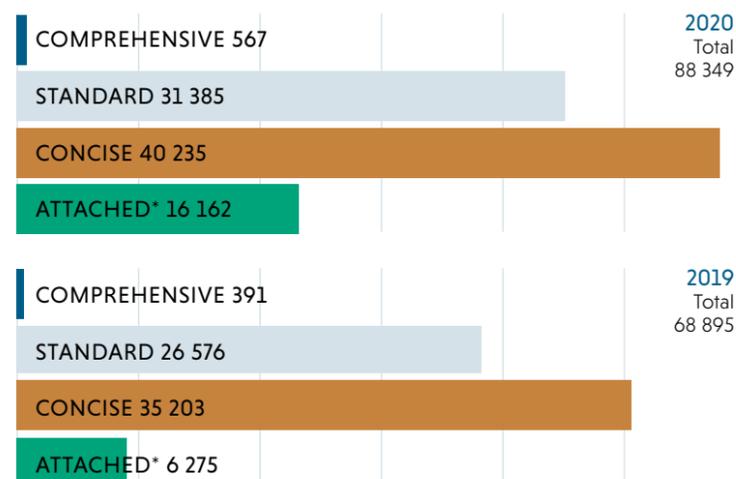
"There is no need to wonder why the work is being done at Supo", he says.

Supo in figures in 2020

Division of personnel



Security clearances



*A new vetting is not always needed when an individual's duties change.

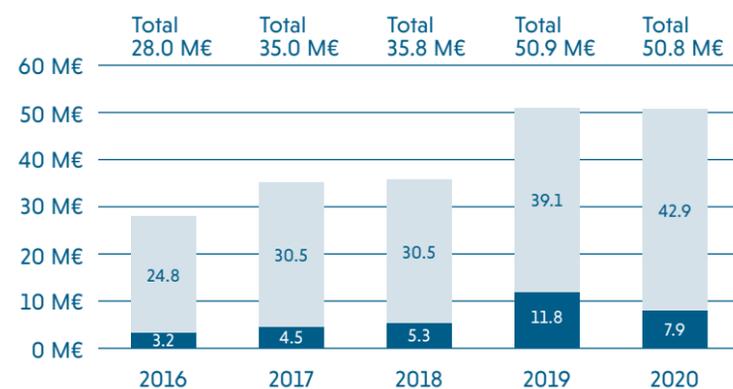
A new application may be appended to previously conducted vetting that is still in force for the individual concerned.

Economy

FINANCING USED BY FINANCIAL YEAR (million euros)

Realised income of the financial year

Budget financing used during the financial year (including the use of appropriations carried over from the previous year)



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 is responsible for counter-terrorism operations in Finland. 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 and
- monitors the nature of activities conducted by domestic extremist movements and assesses whether these activities pose a threat to national security.

SUPO COUNTERS ESPIONAGE

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 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.

Supo as viewed by its clients

The mission of Supo is to serve top-level national government and public authorities by supplying unique intelligence. We asked two long-term partners at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs what it is like to be a client of Supo.

Mikko Kinnunen, Director General for Political Affairs at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, notes that even at the turn of the century Supo conveyed a somewhat unseemly impression to the outside world. The agency was nevertheless also useful. Kinnunen recalls how a Supo representative had described the approaches used by foreign intelligence officers to an audience of young Finnish diplomats.

"This was very helpful when I was faced with circumstances in which a foreign representative actually approached me using the very playbook that Supo had described", Kinnunen says.

The situation that Kinnunen describes is a typical example of the traditional training work that Supo has done for many years in Finland. Though this important groundwork still continues, Supo now operates much more extensively with various operators. Conscious efforts have focused on organising and systematising co-operation with traditional clients.

Nowadays Supo endeavours to report as much as possible, subject to the confines of law and the need to safeguard its operations. Both Kinnunen and **Sari Rautio**, Director for Security Policy and Crisis Management at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, note that Supo has become more open in recent years. The slightly hideous agency of old has become more approachable.

"Supo has become more open towards the public and to other public authorities, and collaboration is excellent nowadays. We are able to support one another in the common goal of ensuring Finland's security", Rautio explains.

Who are the clients of Supo?

Supo combats the most serious threats to national security, such as espionage and terrorism. Luckily such phenomena are rarely visible in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Supo nevertheless does not gather intelligence for itself, but for its clients.

When Supo refers to its clientèle, this often means top-level national government. Supo provides

briefings for the President of the Republic, government ministers and senior officials, so that threats to national security can be considered when taking decisions.

Important clients and partners are public authorities, such as ministries, the police, the Border Guard, the Customs and the Finnish Immigration Service. Supo also works with various private businesses, universities and organisations.

Established nearly two years ago, the Supo partnerships team now helps specialists to customise briefings according to the needs of the client. Intelligence sharing must not only consider the kind of information that the client is authorised to process, but also what kind of information will benefit the client.

Supo now also collects feedback from its clients. The most widely appreciated aspect of the service is usually the fact that clients have been able to discuss issues with Supo specialists and ask follow-up questions. Indeed specialists who are among the finest in their field form the cutting edge of Supo expertise. Supo has recruited these specialists from a wide range of backgrounds, including cyber specialists, linguists and social scientists.

Kinnunen also notes that Supo has expanded its coverage into new subject areas, reserving particular praise for its analysis of issues related to China.

"Supo is the number one destination in Finland for anyone seeking a good analysis of China", he says.

Teamwork is vital in a small country

Working at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Kinnunen and Rautio have been clients of Supo for many years. Supo views the world from a national security perspective, acquiring information by applying civilian intelligence methods. The work of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is in turn based on a unique diplomatic network representing Finland throughout the world.

Over the years Rautio has received Supo briefings and specialist background reports on various issues, such as terrorism and influencing operations

by foreign powers. She points out that given the limited resources of a small country, no comprehensive impression of Finland's international operating environment could be formulated without close co-operation.

"These various perspectives are mutually complementary. While I do not feel that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is merely a receiving party, we enrich one another's views", she notes.

Kinnunen also finds commonalities in the work of Supo and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Both organisations gather intelligence in their own ways, combining and processing it into analysis for top-level

national government. The division of responsibilities between Supo and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs nevertheless remains clear.

Supo briefings help in forming an overview

Supo has seen major changes in recent years. The agency's staffing and its range of duties has grown. Civilian intelligence legislation that took effect in 2019 has given Supo better opportunities to gather intelligence concerning serious threats to Finland.

Supo finds crumbs of information that often help in formulating an overview. Kinnunen points out that the adoption of new intelligence legislation gives Finland some new instruments that may be used if the need arises.

"So we don't need to consider these only in an emergency", he says.

Kinnunen observes that the authorities could further enhance intelligence sharing and the process of formulating a common overview. The importance of this is highlighted when combating hybrid threats, for example.

"Hybrid influence inflates the difficulty factor even more, as the external operator seeks to hamper formulation of the accurate overviews that are essential for policymaking", Kinnunen explains.

In 2020 Supo produced

69 SECURITY INFOS
105 SPECIALIST BRIEFINGS
122 REPORTS
140 RESPONSES TO THE MEDIA

Effects of COVID-19 are shown in the figures.



The focus of espionage shifted to the online environment in an exceptional year

The coronavirus pandemic caused the relocation of many societal functions to remote access networks. Exceptionally intensive attempts of state-sponsored cyberespionage were detected in Finland.

Marked by the corona pandemic, the year 2020 will go down in espionage history as the year of cyber espionage.

A global polarisation has emerged between authoritarian states and democratic states governed by the rule of law. This has further increased the interest of authoritarian states to acquire unlawfully, i.e. by spying, secret information about foreign powers' decision-making and state-of-the-art technology.

Supo seeks to detect and combat espionage targeting Finland from any direction. In 2020, espionage jeopardising Finland's national security continued to be dominated by Russian and Chinese activities.

The most well-known method of espionage is human intelligence, but the restriction measures imposed to curb the spread of the corona pandemic weakened the countries' possibilities to carry out human intelligence abroad. Travelling, meeting people and mapping individuals suitable for recruitment became suddenly difficult.

Simultaneously, the preparation of political decisions was largely relocated to remote access networks, and far more information was suddenly available online than before. The focus of illegal intelligence consequently shifted to the cyber environment.

Supo gave early warnings of cyber operations

It can be stated in general terms that state-sponsored cyber espionage attempts of exceptional

intensity targeting the preparation of Finland's foreign and security policy decisions were detected in 2020.

Supo gave early warnings of cyber espionage operations to public administration organisations. The aim of the operations appeared to be intruding into email services. Supo also assisted in limiting the damages and produced intelligence about the attacks to other competent authorities. Moreover, cyber espionage targeting private companies was detected in 2020, but there was no particular difference in the activity compared to a normal year.

Cooperation between public authorities has proven effective in combating cyber threats. Like many of its European partners, Supo now has a dual role as being both a security and intelligence service. Supo's duty as an intelligence service is to serve Finland's top-level national government by supplying proactive intelligence, and as a security service Supo detects, exposes and wards off any activity that jeopardises Finland's national security, such as espionage.

The dual role came in valuable amid the corona pandemic in 2020, because it enabled effective simultaneous action to both limit damages and produce intelligence for top-level national government and other authorities.



First contact, meetings and a test - methods used by foreign intelligence services in their recruitment efforts in Finland

Traditional human intelligence remains an important intelligence gathering method used by foreign powers. It enables intelligence services to acquire information that would be hard to obtain otherwise.

Besides secret intelligence, foreign intelligence services are also interested in the views of Finnish experts, officials or individuals involved in politics, insider information held by them, and their assessments of future developments. It is difficult to acquire such information otherwise than by using methods of human intelligence.

The main duty of a foreign intelligence officer conducting human intelligence is to create contacts with individuals in his or her target country, to use them as sources, and try to recruit them as agents for secret intelligence gathering and influencing activity over a longer period. In the language of intelligence, "agent" refers specifically to an individual recruited to assist an intelligence service. Recruitment is a long and multi-stage process.

When the recruitment is carried out skilfully, the target does not find it suspicious - quite the contrary.

The intelligence officer does not introduce himself or herself as a representative of the intelligence service but often operates under diplomatic or some other professional cover. The meetings are natural and work-related.

It is possible that even though contact is kept for several years, the target for recruitment does not become aware that he or she is dealing with a foreign intelligence service. At a later recruitment stage, also money may become an important motive.

It is important to note that every meeting with an intelligence officer is an intelligence gathering situation, even though the recruitment process would finish after the first meetings.

Supo's duty is to identify individuals likely to be foreign intelligence officers and to warn the Finns keeping contact with those individuals of the true intentions of their contact partner.



Process of recruitment

FIRST CONTACT

The target for recruitment is selected in advance. The target is an individual through whom it is possible to obtain information being of interest to the intelligence service. The first approach typically takes place at an event that the target attends as part of his or her official duties or in free time, such as a seminar or a conference. The individual may also be approached in a targeted manner online, via e-mail or through the LinkedIn profile, for example.

MEETINGS

The intelligence officer contacts the target and invites him or her to lunch, for example. After that, several other meeting suggestions are made, some of them resulting in meetings. The intelligence officer may keep contact and make suggestions in a one-sided manner. The meetings look like natural professional discussions. As the meetings go on, the intelligence officer seeks to build up trust and increase friendliness. This phase can last for several years.

TEST

When the intelligence officer has cultivated the relationship long enough, it is time for the first test. The officer may ask the target for a piece of information or a favour, such as to pass open source information on paper or memory stick. The target individual does not actually do anything wrong but fulfilling the request means that he or she has crossed the first threshold - and done something at the request of a foreign intelligence service. The target may be rewarded with a gift for his or her efforts. The purpose of giving gifts is to accustom the recruitment target to receiving rewards, which lowers the threshold for carrying out assignments.

THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER CHANGES

The posting of an intelligence officer in Finland lasts for a few years. The recruitment process may last longer than this. This means that the intelligence officer can change during the process. The officer introduces his or her colleague to the target individual as a friend, for example. The new intelligence officer continues to keep contact and to cultivate the relationship.

FINAL TEST

After a longer relationship, the intelligence officer does the final test and asks the target to disclose secret information, for example, or tries to influence the decision-making on some topic through the target.

RECRUITMENT

If the final test is successful, the recruited individual has become an agent of a foreign intelligence service. This results in direct assignments, information requests, financial rewards and secretive behaviour. The assignments may also focus on influencing. In such cases, the intelligence officer may aim, for example, at publishing views promoted by the foreign power through the target individual or in his or her name.



Supo's role in securing critical infrastructure has strengthened

New powers have given Supo better opportunities to combat threats to critical infrastructure in Finland. Critical infrastructure and the threats that it faces are becoming increasingly diverse.

The function of Supo is to supply relevant and proactive intelligence on economic threats to national security. Protecting critical infrastructure is a key part of this work.

Electricity and hydropower stations, air and rail transport, food and pharmaceutical supplies, and payment transactions and banking represent traditional critical infrastructure. Telecommunications and data are also key critical infrastructures in a modern, digitalised society. Various network enterprises, operators and cyber security businesses are important gatekeepers for the growing volume of valuable information about society and its security of supply in Finland.

Critical infrastructure may take the form of health-care sector businesses, for example. The various subcontractors supplying paid services to businesses that are crucial for a functioning society may also be involved in critical infrastructure. Enterprises that supply IT services to a critical infrastructure business may serve as a backdoor to their clients' information.

Supo is responsible for safeguarding critical infrastructure from espionage, hostile influence, disruption or destruction.

New powers have facilitated the investigation of economic threats

Critical infrastructure and the threats that it faces are becoming increasingly diverse. For example, control of critical infrastructure can be acquired through ownership structures. New powers that improve the ability of Supo to monitor and prevent issues of espionage and influence related to economic activity are accordingly welcome.

Supo formerly needed probable cause to suspect a criminal offence before it could pursue an investigation. Following the entry into force of new civilian intelligence legislation in 2019, Supo may now inves-

tigate threats proactively if they concern national security.

This may include such measures as registry checks, bank enquiries and gathering of data from open sources. An intelligence operation may be launched in the most serious cases.

Supo has focused on building expertise concerning financial influencing in recent years, with a view to increasing co-operation with local authorities, for example.

Protecting Finland's critical infrastructure calls for extensive co-operation in society. Infrastructure in Finland is often owned by local authorities and businesses instead of central government. Local authorities and businesses are accordingly key players from a national security perspective.

Probes of critical infrastructure have also been observed in Finland

Business acquisitions and other investments are one way for authoritarian powers to acquire channels of influence. Some measures have also been observed in Finland that may have sought to access critical infrastructure.

A threat to critical infrastructure can take the form of a complex puzzle. Even though some individual investment may not pose a significant risk, simultaneous ownership of multiple assets may enable the emergence of undue influence.

The subcontractors that supply paid products and services to key operators in society also deal with critical infrastructure. Businesses commonly outsource and sell their operations, leading at worst to a

situation in which some hostile party gains access to critical information.

Supo shares preventative information

It is important to identify risky investments or corporate transactions concerning critical infrastructure before they occur. For example, financial problems in business or local government can provide opportunities for foreign powers to access critical infrastructure.

Supo seeks to acquire intelligence concerning foreign economic influencing phenomena and the associated operators, their objectives and methods. It works to prevent and combat potential threats to national security arising from such projects.

Supo proactively distributes information to key

operators about threats to national security, working with businesses, local government and other public authorities.

Even though tracking and confirming foreign business acquisitions falls within the purview of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in Finland, Supo evaluates such acquisitions from the perspective of national security on request. Supo does not prevent such transactions, but may discuss their security implications.

Security clearance vetting is also an important instrument for protecting critical infrastructure. Supo conducts security clearance vettings for enterprises of national importance, and has acquired resources and expertise in monitoring foreign economic influence to forestall threats.



Supo focuses foreign interest investigations carefully

An investigation of foreign interests assesses whether another state is in a position to coerce someone working in an important capacity into collaborating to damage Finland. Each case is considered individually.



Many Finnish people have close connections around the world nowadays, for example through studies, work or family. The globalisation of Finland is also evident in security clearance vettings.

The security and intelligence services of certain authoritarian countries are known to attempt to coerce Finnish officials into engaging in covert collaboration to the detriment of Finland. Such coercion exploits the dependencies of these officials on those countries and their citizens. Security clearance vetting accordingly now examines the foreign interests of an employee in certain situations.

The investigation of foreign interests became possible in 2018. Such interests may always be investigated in the course of a comprehensive security clearance vetting, and may also form part of a standard form vetting.

Supo conducted more than 88,000 security clearance vettings in 2020, investigating foreign interests in 3 145 of these cases and notifying the applicant (usually the employer) of such interests in a total of 46 cases. The notified cases involved circumstances in which Supo felt that an individual could be coerced into acting to the detriment of Finland, either due to personal dependencies or to the dependencies of loved ones.

Foreign interests are investigated in duties that are important for national security

The purpose of determining foreign interests is to ensure that employees have no dependencies that jeopardise the proper performance of their duties. This investigation is particularly important in duties that have bearing on state administration and national security, affording the employee access to nationally critical information or the ability to cause damage to Finland.

Supo focuses its investigations of foreign interests on functions in which its information and analysis suggests that a threat of coercion may arise. Supo investigates the foreign interests of an employee by checking the foreign interests that the employee declares and by reviewing the information sources specified by law, such as various official registers. The employee is also interviewed if necessary.

Foreign interests may include the individual's own current and former citizenship of another country, the current foreign citizenship of loved

ones, a service relationship, business or property in another country, or any other ongoing fixed connection with a citizen of another country or another state.

The investigation will always protect the target individual

Based on the information gathered, Supo assesses an individual's foreign interests from the point of view of the job that motivated the investigation. This assessment considers the nature, extent and duration of those foreign interests. Supo also assesses the likelihood of exploitation, coercion, corruption or other undue influence on the target individual in the light of information concerning the operations of an individual state.

Supo assesses whether the foreign interests of target individuals would be likely to compromise their ability and capacity to perform their duties independently and reliably.

Besides national security, an examination of foreign interests will always safeguard the target individual. Irrespective of personal conduct, anyone may end up in a situation where their loved ones living abroad are threatened or subject to extortion, or where the target individual is coerced into contravening the duties of a position.

The risks arising from foreign interests may accordingly be independent of an individual's personal character.

Each case is considered individually

Supo always makes a separate individual assessment in each case when evaluating the significance of foreign interests and the outcome of security clearance vetting. This assessment focuses on the individual's personal circumstances, and on how active and close the dependency is. It is highly unusual to report foreign interests to an employer. For example, mere dual citizenship or former citizenship of a state is not usually relevant as such to the outcome of security clearance vetting.

Individual consideration of each case in relation to the duties that motivated the request for clearance also safeguards fundamental rights of an individual, particularly with respect to ensuring equitable treatment.

The assessments made by Supo are backed by a Ministry of Justice Evaluation Criteria Committee, which has issued guidelines on statutory interpretation when investigating foreign interests.

Trust in Supo has grown

The Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo) surveys public perceptions of its work on an annual basis. The latest survey was conducted between 16 and 17 November 2020, based on a sample representing the population of mainland Finland aged 18 years and over.

A clear majority (91 per cent) of the public in Finland indicate either a high or at least fairly high degree of trust in Supo, with 50 per cent reporting a high degree of trust, and 41 per cent reporting a fairly high degree of trust.

The trust in Supo increased from the previous year. Only five per cent of respondents reported a lack of trust in Supo.



- High 50 %
- Fairly high 41 %
- No opinion 3 %
- Not very high 4 %
- Not at all 1 %

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

