

The image is a low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a modern building's exterior. On the left, a series of horizontal, light-colored panels form a ceiling or overhang. Below this, a complex network of thick, reddish-brown metal beams crisscrosses, creating a geometric pattern against a clear blue sky. On the right, a large glass facade of a building is visible, with dark frames and reflections. The overall composition is dynamic and architectural.

SUPO

**Yearbook
2021**



Supo's yearbook deals with national security phenomena that were topical in 2021. Interaction with the surrounding society is essential for Supo and that is why experts from various fields have a voice in this yearbook.

4-5

High-quality intelligence is essential for foreign and security policymaking

6-7

The aim of refugee espionage is to control and silence

8-9

Managing data from critical functions is part of future security of supply

10-11

Terrorist threat assessment

12-13

The rise of the Taliban is providing living space for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan

14-15

Supo in figures in 2021

16-17

Simple explanations are usually wrong – mental health is not the only relevant factor when assessing the threat of terrorism

18-19

The tense security situation highlights the significance of counterintelligence

20-21

Online radicalisation changed the far right in Finland

22-23

Technology shapes societies – and Supo strives to anticipate its progress

24-25

Supo seeks enhanced interaction with security clearance vetting clients

26-27

People in Finland trust in Supo

High-quality intelligence is essential for foreign and security policymaking

In an escalating security situation where the role of diplomatic exchange is narrowing, the need for information grows. The confrontation between the West and Russia highlights the importance of intelligence that supports Finnish policymakers in their work, and Supo seeks to provide information to serve as an essential element in Finland's foreign and security policymaking. Simultaneously, Supo's traditional role to counter covert intelligence gathering by foreign powers is emphasised.

In spring 2021 Supo identified an APT31 state-sponsored cyber espionage operation targeting the core of Finnish policymaking in Parliament. Our new intelligence powers are useful for investigating such cases and have helped to curtail cyber espionage operations. Cyber espionage efforts cannot be prevented, because most systems have to be connected to a public network, with espionage traffic included in normal messaging communications. With intelligence powers now enabling earlier detection of such incidents, cyber espionage operations often stall at the first attempt.

The USA and its allies withdrew from Afghanistan in late summer 2021, and the Taliban rapidly took control of the country. The impact of the upheaval in Afghanistan will only be seen in the longer term. The stability of Afghanistan and changes in the operations of terrorist organisations remain among the issues to be monitored. The accession of the Taliban means that Afghanistan will remain a support area for terrorism. For the time being, the Afghanistan situation has had no immediate impact on Finland's security situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic rolled on throughout 2021. Several European countries have seen civil unrest over COVID-19 restrictions. Such confrontation has not been as sharp in Finland. Opponents of restrictions and vaccines are relatively few in number and varied in background. Social movements related to COVID-19 countermeasures have not endangered national security in Finland for the time being.

The police arrested five men in December 2021 on suspicion of far-right motivated terrorist offences. While investigation of the case is pending at the time of writing, the overall impression is largely in line with the Supo terrorist threat assessment, which has identified a rising threat of far-right terrorism alongside the danger of radical Islamist terrorism. Supo has discharged the

duties of its new role by providing specialist assistance to the police at all stages of the investigation.

A NEW STRATEGY MAKES WAY FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING, OPERATING CULTURE AND COLLABORATION

Supo published its new strategy in autumn 2021. We are especially seeking to improve our intelligence gathering, operating culture and collaboration. Supo gathers intelligence the top-level national government and our partners cannot get from other sources. Systematic, result-oriented and focused intelligence gathering is the cornerstone of our work. Merely aggregating data serves no purpose. Intelligence must instead be analysed and supplied to policymakers at the right time and in a clear format.

Supo staff have been working for many years against the background of a major ongoing shift in the organisation. We shall focus on consolidating and fine-tuning a new operating approach over the next few years. We must also ensure that the operating culture of Supo supports the success of its staff. We are developing leadership, staff competencies and teamwork. Supo must become an even better workplace for its staff. We all understand the importance of this work.

We requested comments from stakeholders when formulating our strategy. While this feedback was gratifyingly positive, it certainly provided motivation for improvement. Supo was encouraged in particular to be more interactive. We are seeking more proactive and systematic cooperation, which always benefits our partners as well. We are attentive to the wishes of our partners, and building a Finnish intelligence culture together.

Cooperation is also a theme of this yearbook. The various articles include contributions from specialists outside Supo, because a good end result requires a range of perspectives and expertise.

The work of Supo is continually scrutinised in various ways – and we are all the better for it. A Government report approved in December finds that the new intelligence legislation has enhanced the ability of public authorities to safeguard national security. While there is always room to refine legislation, we are pleased with



the current powers and with the effectiveness of the new laws.

Supo is now approaching its third anniversary as a security and intelligence service. I firmly believe that this combination is an effective arrangement for combating dangers to Finland and providing unique intelligence to ward off threats. Finland's national security has been

and can be significantly enhanced through well-targeted investment. This will enable Finland to manage in an increasingly complex world.

Antti Pelttari
Director of Supo

The aim of refugee espionage is to control and silence

Non-democratic countries sometimes try to influence people who have fled abroad, even after they have settled in a new homeland. The fictitious case of Mehmud illustrates the reality of such refugee espionage operations.

Refugee espionage is a phenomenon in which a foreign power gathers intelligence on its former or current citizens living abroad. The aim of this intelligence gathering is to control and silence people or groups who have settled in another country. Migrants belonging to political opposition or other groups that are considered a threat by the rulers of undemocratic countries are often a target of espionage.

Such espionage operations may involve harassment of intelligence targets or their relatives by the authorities in their country of origin. One country that engages in the practice of refugee espionage is China.

The following fictional case illustrates a typical example of refugee espionage by China. While not describing any real individual in particular, it includes many features that are common to such cases.

Mehmud came to Finland in 2010 as an asylum seeker from Xinjiang in western China. His brother had taken part in anti-Chinese protests in Xinjiang in 2009, and his family had been persecuted since that time. Mehmud was granted asylum in Finland and subsequently secured Finnish citizenship. Life in Finland was peaceful, and Mehmud and his wife found work with a Finnish cleaning company.

Mehmud returned to China in 2016 to visit his parents in Xinjiang. The trip did not go as expected. Despite Mehmud's new citizenship, Chinese intelligence authorities detained him and his wife for interrogation immediately on arrival. The aim was to convince Mehmud to spy on other Uighurs with a view to monitoring the situation of the Uighur community in Finland, determining how many Uighurs lived in Finland, who had applied for asylum, and how many participated in political activities, such as demonstrations. Biometric identifiers were also taken from Mehmud and his wife without their consent. Mehmud declined to cooperate with the intelligence authorities and managed to bribe officials into allowing him to leave China and return to Finland safely.

This was nevertheless not the end of the matter for the Chinese security authorities. They began paying regular visits to the home of Mehmud's parents, demanding detailed information about the family's children living abroad. They then began to apply pressure

on Mehmud through the Chinese WeChat messaging application, regularly demanding information on the situation of his family in Finland. Contact with relatives remaining in China has since been possible only through the Chinese intelligence services. For example, Chinese intelligence authorities have demanded pictures of the family's travel documents and full-length photographs of all family members including a daily newspaper in order for the authorities to verify that the material is current. Mehmud once had to photograph the entire family at Senate Square in Helsinki in order for the Chinese to verify that they were living in Finland.

Pictures of other Uighurs are occasionally sent to Mehmud with a request to identify them in Finland. Mehmud was also assigned to photograph Uighur families housed in a Finnish refugee reception centre. Mehmud declined all requests relating to individuals outside of his own family. Chinese authorities have stated that Mehmud's family members in China will be at risk if they do not receive the requested information. Last year Mehmud received a call from his father, who had been detained in a local police station. The Chinese authorities promised to release the father if Mehmud agreed to cooperate. Mehmud refused, and has not heard from his parents since that time.

Mehmud no longer dares to return to China. He fears that he would be arrested immediately at the border. This has happened to several of his friends.

REFUGEE ESPIONAGE IS NOT A CRIME IN FINLAND

Refugee espionage may very well continue in Finland in coming years. Supo proposed the criminalisation of refugee espionage in 2012, and continues to believe that this should be a non-complainant criminal offence subject to public prosecution. New intelligence legislation has enabled Supo to gather intelligence concerning refugee espionage without suspicion of a crime if there is a concrete threat to national security. Criminalisation would, above all, be an aid to safeguarding the rights and interests of the individual and the country.



REFUGEE ESPIONAGE HAS LED TO CONVICTIONS IN SWEDEN

In 2019 the Stockholm District Court sentenced a Swedish-Uighur man to imprisonment for two and a half years for unauthorised intelligence operations. The court found that the man spied on representatives of the Iranian opposition in Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands for nearly four years.

A Stockholm court also sentenced a man of Tibetan origin to a term of imprisonment in 2018 after he had gathered information on ethnic Tibetans living in Sweden at the request of China. The sentence was based on an offence of engaging in aggravated unlawful intelligence operations against a person. The man served as an agent for the Chinese civilian intelligence service (MSS).

An Uighur man was imprisoned in 2009 under the same statute for espionage targeting the Uighur community.

Managing data from critical functions is part of future security of supply

The architecture of information systems used in organisations that are critical for security of supply must be carefully designed to ensure that the organisation retains control of the data.

A great deal of critical information will be generated as society becomes increasingly digitalised, with growing opportunities to combine and analyse data. This development also affects vital functions of society, such as health care, logistics, financial sector and telecommunication operators, which process large volumes of data in their systems.

It is important for organisations of critical importance to security of supply to understand what kind of data they are processing in their information systems, and at least equally important to understand what information is accessible to their own staff and to external IT system service providers and their subcontracting chains.

"It is essential for data protection that the information systems involved in processing data remain unimpaired and under control throughout the life cycle of the data. There will not necessarily be any outward signs that a system has been compromised by outsiders – until it's too late," explains WithSecure Chief Information Security Officer **Erka Koivunen**.

Critical infrastructure businesses hold confidential information related to security of supply in Finland, and businesses are usually interconnected both within and across international borders. This interdependence means that a threat to one business may also affect the operations of another.

Businesses of critical importance to security of supply, or their information system service providers, are not exclusively in Finnish ownership. A growing number of these businesses are also moving their information systems onto cloud services, making them increasingly reliant on foreign service providers.

DATA FROM SMART SOLUTIONS MAY INTEREST AUTHORITARIAN STATES

Organisations that are crucial for security of supply often generate large data volumes without necessarily appreciating their importance. For example, data used for managing the energy sector may interest authoritarian states. Even where information does not include

personal data, the global tension between authoritarian states and democracies governed by the rule of law must be considered when assessing the risks involved in outsourcing and selecting service providers.

Many vital functions of our future society, such as energy provision and traffic control, will rely on smart solutions. These solutions are often networked online, and may therefore be more vulnerable to unauthorised intrusion or deliberate influence. The operations of a Finnish airport operator or pharmaceutical service provider may be affected, for example, if a foreign service provider is subject to such deliberate influence.

"Never before have businesses had access to such effective security technology."

Information generated by smart solutions is also used for training artificial intelligence. Authoritarian states are seeking data from Western countries for developing their own AI solutions. Face or speech recognition are examples of AI systems that require the broadest possible range of data.

Erka Koivunen is expecting to see a transition to a truly digital native character in which information technology enables services that have not previously been possible. One danger that nevertheless remains in a world based on smart solutions is our ongoing lack of access to the grounds for decisions taken by various algorithms that are closely guarded business secrets.

THERE ARE ALREADY WAYS TO MANAGE DATA

Protecting critical infrastructure requires broad cooperation throughout society. Supo seeks to combat threats to national security and provide relevant preventative



WithSecure Chief Information Security Officer
Erka Koivunen

are also one element in protecting security of supply businesses from the risks posed by users.

Previous arrangements that protected information systems from security anomalies by requiring non-recurrent user authentication are no longer enough. Modern technology bases protection

guidance to businesses and public authorities.

As businesses continue to own critical infrastructure, they must also take in-house measures to protect it. "Never before have businesses had access to such effective security technology," Erka Koivunen explains.

He insists that we should understand our data: where it comes from, how confidential it is, or what kind of usage restrictions it involves. Once these aspects are clear, it is fairly easy to specify various access privileges for data users.

"The meta-framework created to meet GDPR requirements serves as a good basis for this. It is worth cherishing this functional classification system with the patience of a librarian," Koivunen says.

Security clearance vetting reports prepared by Supo

on multilayer strong authentication and detection of in-use anomalies. Each user's device and actions can be checked and logged. Data on the same actions can be collected from terminals and cloud services, thereby verifying observations.

The business must also monitor this control mechanism to ensure that it is not misused.

Organisations should also use non-IT solutions to manage their data. For example, a public administration organisation processing classified information pursuant to the Act on the Openness of Government Activities may apply security and defence procurement criteria when making purchases. This enables security considerations to be taken into account, for example in competitive tendering for information system services.

Terrorist threat assessment

Some right-wing extremists have shown interest in firearms and explosives. Radical Islamist terrorism in Finland currently focuses primarily on support measures, such as recruiting, disseminating propaganda and fundraising. Lone supporters of ideologies remain the most likely source of a terrorist attack. The threat of terrorism remains at level two, i.e. elevated.

The threat of terrorism in Finland is elevated, corresponding to level two on the four-point scale. This threat level is unchanged from last year. The most likely threat of a terrorist attack comes from lone operators or small groups advocating far-right or radical Islamist ideology.

Some 390 counter-terrorism targets still give cause for concern. Most of these individuals support radical-Islamist ideology. The list of target individuals is not permanent, and people are continually added and removed.

The proportion of minors involved in terrorist activities has increased over the last couple of years. Several arrests of minors related to radical Islamist and far-right terrorism have been made in Europe. Radicalisation of children and young adults in a radical-Islamic environment is often an intergenerational phenomenon in which minors are linked to extremist ideology through their immediate associates. Internationally speaking, young adults typically become involved in far-right movements through online connections. Some young people have been attracted in particular to the international milieu known as Siege culture. The terrorist situation in Finland often reflects international trends.

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES PARTICULARLY AT RISK FROM FAR-RIGHT TERRORISM

Lone far-right individuals and small groups pose a significant threat of terrorism in Finland. Representatives of ethnic and religious minorities and political policymakers are particularly at risk of violence. Other parties that are viewed as enemies in far-right ideology are also potential targets.

Some right-wing extremists have shown interest in firearms and explosives. A criminal investigation that began in late 2019 found considerable quantities of firearms, explosives and bomb-making materials in the

possession of a small far-right group. Investigation of this group operating in Kankaanpää became a counter-terrorism operation during 2021, with the case coming to public attention when the suspects were arrested.

Networking on social media platforms, disseminating propaganda and promoting violent activities are integral to far-right operations. Some Finnish people also have links to Siege culture, where supporters of white supremacy incite violence and race war to bring about social collapse.

While organised and openly operating far-right groups pose no threat of terrorism as such, they create a potential breeding ground for individual radicalisation.

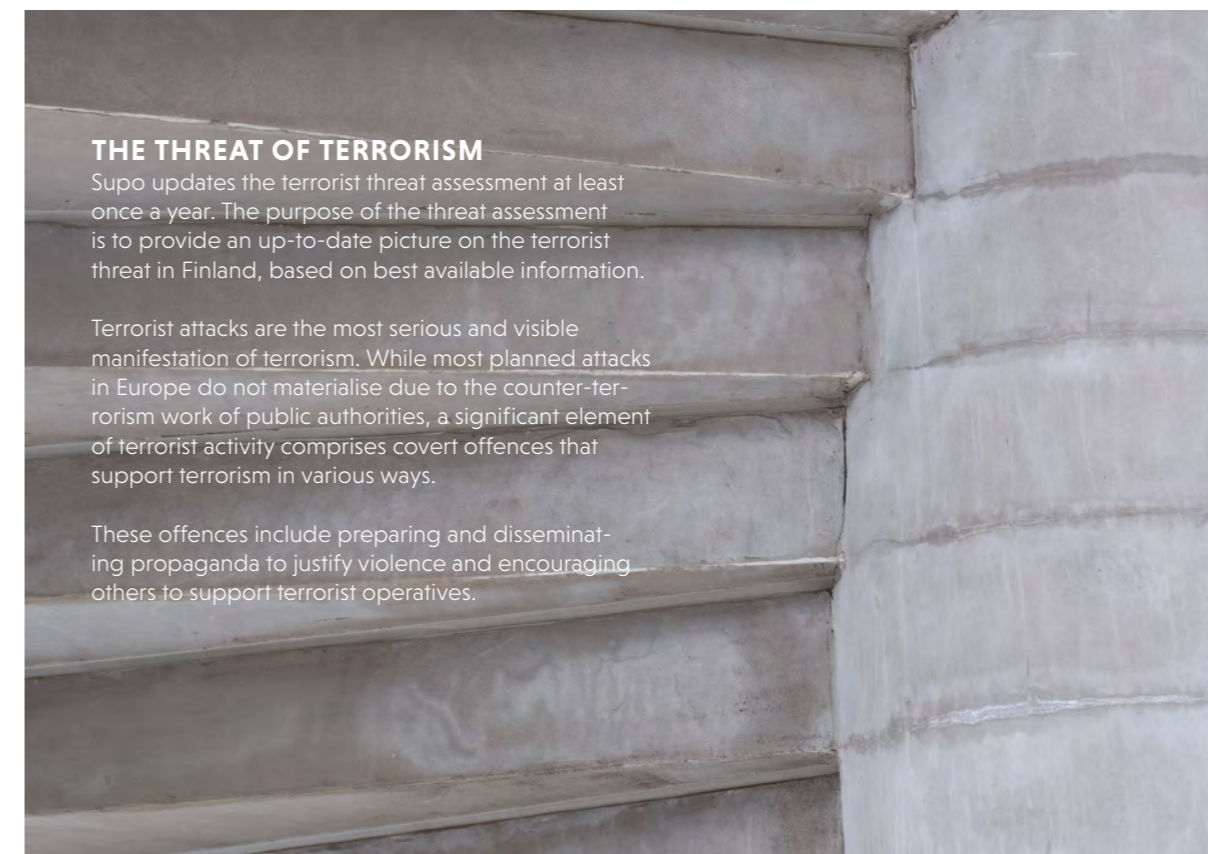
RADICAL ISLAMIST TERRORISM IN FINLAND FOCUSES ON SUPPORT OPERATIONS

Terrorism motivated by radical Islamism in Finland mainly focuses on enabling operations such as recruiting, disseminating propaganda and raising funds. The most significant capacity to engage in violent operations is found among individuals who have fought or otherwise worked for terrorist organisations in conflict zones, and those with a violent background.

The threat of a radical Islamist terrorist attack is posed in particular by individuals who, for example, are motivated by terrorist propaganda or by events that they perceive to be offensive to Islam. Attacks by lone individuals using readily available instruments remain the most likely. Radical Islamist terrorist attacks most often take place in public places or at public events. Several perpetrators of attacks in Europe have suffered from mental health problems.

The foreign fighter phenomenon continues to affect the radical Islamist operating environment in Finland. A small number of families arrived in Finland from the conflict zones of Syria and Iraq in 2021. Some women with pro-radical Islamist views and links to Finland are still living in camps with their children in the Kurdish region of north-eastern Syria.

The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan in autumn 2021 has not yet affected the threat of terror-



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.

ism in Finland. It is unlikely that Afghanistan will attract foreign fighters from Finland in the short term. The rise of the Taliban has inspired some radical Islamist movements, and its example has been highlighted in their propaganda. On the other hand, for example, the Islamic State terrorist organisation (ISIL) is hostile to the Taliban.

The most significant terrorist threat worldwide continues to come from the ISIL and al-Qaeda terrorist organisations, and from groups that swear allegiance to them, especially in the conflict zones of Asia and Africa. The death of ISIL leader Abu Ibrahim al-Quraysh in February 2022 will not significantly affect the threat posed by the organisation.

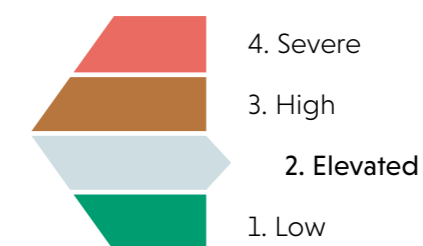
THE THREAT OF OTHER TERRORISM IS LOW

The threat of terrorism in Finland from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the far left is low. The PKK in Finland has focused primarily on support activities, such as fundraising. The activities of the far left mainly centre on non-violent opposition to the far right and

cooperation with Kurdish activists. Support for violence is minimal among those with far-left views in Finland, and the activities of this faction are primarily directed outside Finland.

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.



The rise of the Taliban is providing living space for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan

Radical Islamist operators around the world view the return of Taliban rule in Afghanistan as a significant propaganda victory over the West.

Radical Islamist actors have celebrated the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan in August 2021 as a portent of future victory in their sustained and patient struggle against the West. The return of the Taliban to power provides living space for the al-Qaeda global terrorist organisation. Supo nevertheless considers that this organisation will probably benefit from keeping a low profile in Afghanistan for the time being in order to reinforce the international status of the Taliban.

Taliban's status in Afghanistan has been strengthened by the Doha agreement. Under this agreement, the Taliban has pledged to prevent terrorist organisations from operating in Afghanistan against the USA or its allies. This was agreed despite the presence of key al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan and links between the Taliban and al-Qaeda. It constituted a political victory for the Taliban, as the agreement also set a deadline for the withdrawal of US forces.

Supo continually monitors the state of radical Islamist terrorism, and accordingly takes an interest in the global impact of the situation in Afghanistan and changes in the activities of terrorist organisations.

AFGHANISTAN NOW CONTROLLED BY AN INTERNALLY DIVIDED TALIBAN

"The power of the Taliban rests on its ability to maintain order. While it has reduced corruption and allegedly increased customs revenues, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains catastrophic. The weak economy and restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms could lead to unrest." Finnish Ambassador to Afghanistan **Heli Kanerva** explains.

The international community is working to deliver massive humanitarian aid to the Afghans without using Taliban intermediaries. Foreign powers are seeking to improve regional stability, curb uncontrolled emigration, and prevent the growth of terrorism, organised crime and the drug trade.

"Moreover no state has recognised the current regime in Afghanistan," Ambassador Kanerva points out.

It remains to be seen how the most radical members of the Taliban will respond to the efforts of its leadership to strengthen its foreign policy position and secure international legitimacy for the regime.

Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghanistan branch of the ISIL terrorist organisation, is one of several local terrorist factions that may attract fighters. ISKP is fighting the Taliban, and has stepped up attacks to weaken the regime. These tactics are very similar to those of the Taliban before it came to power.

AL-QAEDA-LINKED REGIONAL TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS REMAIN ACTIVE GLOBALLY

Radical-Islamist terrorism is the most significant terrorist threat worldwide, with conflict zones and fragile States such as Afghanistan beset by multiple internal and social problems often serving as breeding grounds for radicalisation. The weakness of security authorities also often allows terrorist organisations to operate in fragile States.

" The Afghans are tired of continual wars, and the most important thing for them is to meet their own basic needs.

Al-Qaeda has managed to maintain significant status as an ideological leader of radical Islamist terrorism. Its activities in recent years have focused on supporting regional allies around the world in several regional conflicts. Al-Qaeda-linked groupings are al-Shabaab in Somalia, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin in the Western Sahel and Mali. Terrorist violence is ongoing in these areas.

The long-term goal of al-Qaeda is a universal caliphate, beginning with the establishment of regional emirates. The fall of Afghanistan into the hands of



Finnish Ambassador to Afghanistan Heli Kanerva

the Taliban is in line with this goal. Regional terrorist organisations linked to al-Qaeda may seek to negotiate solutions to local conflicts along the lines of the Doha agreement.

THE STABILISATION OF AFGHANISTAN WILL DETERMINE THE IMPACT ON EUROPE

Supo believes that the repercussions of the Afghanistan situation in Europe will depend on how the country stabilises.

Afghanistan is unlikely to host a conflict that attracts Western foreign fighters in the same way as Syria and Iraq. Travelling to Afghanistan is difficult, and the Taliban are not seeking to recruit foreign fighters. The coun-

try has nevertheless remained symbolically important to global radical Islamist ideology for more than four decades, with foreign fighters coming especially from neighbouring regions.

The longer term impact of the situation in Afghanistan for Europe and Finland will depend on the global and regional development of ISIL and al-Qaeda operations. The main terrorist threat in Europe nowadays arises from lone European attackers, who may be inspired by radical Islamist propaganda.

"The future of Afghanistan is very difficult to predict. The Afghans are tired of continual wars, and the most important thing for them is to meet their own basic needs and those of their loved ones. It remains to be seen whether international diplomacy can find a solution for the future of Afghanistan," Heli Kanerva observes.

Supo in figures in 2021

DIVISION OF PERSONNEL

AVERAGE AGE

42.9 yr

EMPLOYEES WITH ACADEMIC DEGREE

62.8 %

EMPLOYEES IN TOTAL

522

SECURITY CLEARANCES

2021

Total 90,378

COMPREHENSIVE 412

STANDARD 36,734

CONCISE 35,566

ATTACHED* 17,666

2020

Total 88,349

COMPREHENSIVE 567

STANDARD 31,385

CONCISE 40,235

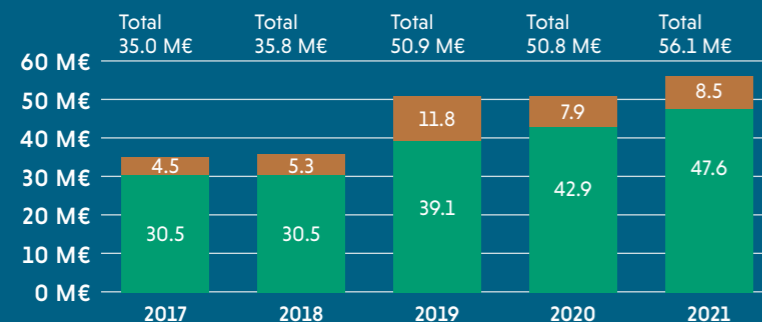
ATTACHED* 16,162

*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.

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

The Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo) counters threats to Finland's national security and provides unique intelligence to prevent threats in advance.

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.
- 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. 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 terrorist offences
- 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
- 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:

- counters foreign intelligence activities directed against Finland and preventing damage caused by them
- 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.

Simple explanations are usually wrong – mental health is not the only relevant factor when assessing the threat of terrorism

News reports of terrorist attacks often note that the perpetrator suffered from mental health problems. This is especially so for attacks or attempted attacks by lone individuals. Clinical Director Allan Seppänen nevertheless finds that mental illness is not a significant explanation for terrorist activity.

Popular reports of terrorist attacks or attempted attacks often seek to discuss the mental health of the perpetrators. If a perpetrator has sought treatment for mental health problems, then this is often viewed as the reason for the violent act. Forensic psychiatrist **Allan Seppänen** nevertheless insists that the explanation is seldom so simple. Seppänen is a Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist and Clinical Director at Helsinki and Uusimaa Hospital District (HUS).

“Psychiatric illness is not a significant explanatory factor for terrorist acts overall. News coverage of mental health problems can simplify and medicalise events without having to consider socio-political, cultural and religious dimensions that may be uncomfortable and awkward for commentators and society at large.”

Severe mental health problems usually prevent coordinated activities with other people, though even a person with paranoid schizophrenia has the potential to act independently for an extended period.

“I would expect such a person to be excluded from a close-knit group fairly quickly. We might cautiously begin by assuming that there would be more mental health problems among lone operators than among those acting in a group.”

There are problems in bundling mental health problems together when we consider their significance in the context of terrorist attacks. Seppänen points out that no mental health disorder is directly related to terrorist violence.

“Some mental disorders increase the likelihood of violence in general, while others reduce that likelihood. For example, depression deactivates individuals and typically reduces their likelihood of committing a violent offence. Severe psychotic illnesses slightly increase

the tendency to commit acts of violence, especially when combined with a substance abuse problem.”

Supo continually updates its list of individuals who are counter-terrorism targets. The list of CT targets is a counter-terrorism tool that guides intelligence gathering and threat prevention. It is essential to identify potential attackers in advance. Knowledge of possible mental health problems is one factor that raises concerns precisely because certain disorders can increase the potential for violence. Mental health nevertheless always remains only one factor in the overall assessment.

Sometimes mental health problems reduce the threat of terrorism. Seppänen has seen situations in which patients have created online identities that are entirely detached from their true identities and functional capacities.

The same phenomenon is known to Supo. People who present themselves aggressively and make threats online may, for example, prove to be very limited in their personal life management and functional capacities, and to pose no real threat.

MERE WORDS DO NOT MAKE AN ACTION TERRORISM

Seppänen finds that mental health problems do not predispose individuals to radicalisation, which instead has more complex causes. Certain psychiatric disorders, on the other hand, involve thinking patterns that may resemble radicalisation to the layman, even though they are a completely different phenomenon from the perspective of a psychiatrist.

“Rather many psychotic illnesses involve religious delusions and the same type of dogmatic religious rhetoric



Allan Seppänen is a Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist and Clinical Director at HUS

the matter on the basis of all available evidence in the most difficult situations. A psychiatric examination is arranged if necessary when assessing the criminal responsibility of perpetrators.

The most devastating terrorist attacks do not arise from a passing whim or delusions. They are often preceded by years of systematic planning. Complex strike plans involve a large number of people with various functions. The planners of attacks in particular, but also the perpetrators, tend to have a very strong ideological conviction, which they believe justifies the use of extreme violence.

Is any psychological trait associated with radical activity? Both Supo’s terrorism analysts and Seppänen are dubious that any such link exists.

“There are so many kinds of radicalisation. Terrorist groups are highly disparate, and involve so many types of role that they are inevitably very heterogeneous.”

Instead, there is often a background in experiences of isolation, humiliation, and lack of ability. Seppänen finds that radicalisation can be prevented by the same means that otherwise support social and mental well-being. He considers it important for people to be encouraged to integrate into their own environment and educate themselves.

Even though mental health problems are not a significant explanation for terrorism, Seppänen remains keen to highlight the risks associated with poor access to care. **“The plain fact is that mental health services have been run down too far. This always carries a risk of untreated psychiatric problems that may also manifest as violence.”**

that we are accustomed to hearing in the discourse of radicalised individuals. The thinking of these individuals is nevertheless wholly controlled by the contribution of the illness to the mindset, and it cannot be manipulated by such instruments as propaganda.”

“News coverage of mental health problems can simplify and medicalise events.”

Counter-terrorism operations at Supo have similarly noted that mere words do not yet make an action terrorism. The ideology may be superficial and its authenticity hard to assess. A court of law ultimately decides

The tense security situation highlights the significance of counterintelligence

Finland is subject to the continuous and wide-ranging intelligence operations of foreign powers. Supo's counter-intelligence continuously monitors these operations and actively hampers the work of foreign intelligence services.

Finland is subject to the continuous and wide-ranging intelligence operations of foreign powers. These operations are well resourced and characteristically of extended duration. The deteriorated security situation and tensions in superpower relations will also likely increase foreign intelligence operations against Finland. Foreign intelligence services seek information on the policymaking, economy and national defence of Finland, and on the findings of scientific and technical research. Besides gathering information, some countries that target intelligence operations against Finland also seek to influence its policymaking and public opinion. Intelligence and influencing operations also target the information and activities of organisations, businesses, universities and research institutes.

A disproportionately large number of foreign intelligence operatives are stationed in Finland relative to the size of the country. Continuous intelligence operations that jeopardise Finland's national security are still conducted mainly by the intelligence organisations of Russia and China. Supo's counter-intelligence continuously monitors these operations and actively hampers the work of foreign intelligence services.

ALL APPROACHES ARE APPLIED, FROM OPEN SOURCES TO HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

Foreign intelligence services seek to anticipate various aspects of Finnish policymaking and to influence political decisions. Intelligence services employ a wide array of information gathering instruments and methods in pursuit of these goals, from monitoring open sources to unauthorised intrusion into data networks. Another key method nevertheless remains the identification and engagement of covert human sources who are willing to supply information that would not otherwise be available. Foreign intelligence services also seek to recruit the assistance of individuals with a view to influencing

policymaking and public opinion, either directly or indirectly.

The second full year of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions also hampered human intelligence operations in 2021. With fewer opportunities to meet in person, it has become more difficult to recruit new target individuals. Human intelligence operations have nevertheless continued, with the relaxation of restrictions regularly restoring them to normal levels. Travel problems have particularly limited the number of intelligence officers sent abroad for short missions, while highlighting the importance of foreign intelligence stations. Supo has also detected an increased use of e-mail and social media links for establishing first contact in intelligence service operations.

THE TARGETS OF FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE REMAINED UNCHANGED, WITH PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE PROSPECTS FOR FINNISH MEMBERSHIP OF NATO

Foreign intelligence operations against Finland focused mainly on long-term interests in 2021. These include the issue of a possible NATO membership application from Finland, foreign and security policies, policymaking and associated preparations, defence procurement, international military cooperation by Finland, cyber security and expertise, the energy sector, initiatives promoted by Finland in the Arctic, and border security projects.

Russian intelligence in Finland takes a particular interest in Finland's relationship with NATO. The tensions around NATO expansion and the NATO debate that has lately taken place in Finland will likely further increase intelligence gathering on Finland's short-term intentions with regard to a NATO membership application.

A few foreign intelligence services also continued to gather information on dissidents and political opposition members of their own countries who reside in Finland.



The work of Supo's counter-intelligence also includes proliferation monitoring with a view to preventing illegal exports of dual-use products. Efforts have been made to procure export-controlled products from Finland and via Finland, such as dual-use items and sensitive technology for use in WMD programmes. The procurement process uses individual businesses and procurement networks operating in Europe.

Businesses require a licence to export controlled dual-use items to destinations outside the European

Union. Attempts to circumvent export restrictions include acquiring entire businesses, falsifying end-user certificates, and cooperating in research programmes. Foreign powers seek to boost the technological development of their armed forces through procurement and foreign expertise. Quantum technology and the components required for a quantum computer are one field of technology that is targeted in Western countries, including Finland. Supo works closely with other public authorities in monitoring proliferation.

Online radicalisation changed the far right in Finland

The threat of the extreme right became a topic of public debate when five Finnish men were arrested in Kankaanpää on suspicion of serious criminal offences in late 2021. Supo has provided specialist assistance in the police investigation.

Supo's specialist researcher **Eero Pietilä** explains that the tentacles of international far-right terrorism are reaching Finland more clearly nowadays through social media platforms and messaging services. Pietilä's work involves analysing threats to national security posed by the extreme right, based in part on independent Supo intelligence gathering.

"Online radicalisation of far-right operators has progressed rapidly over the past couple of years. While the number of people involved is not large, it is increasing," Pietilä observes.

Supo's analysts also closely monitor academic research in the field. **Tommi Kotonen**, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Jyväskylä who has followed the far right, agrees with the assessment of Supo that Finland has very few operators like the Kankaanpää group.

"Accelerationist groups of the kind represented by the suspects in Kankaanpää lie on the fringes of the fringe in Finland. These communities feel that there are no political solutions, and that their goals can only be realised through violence. While usually operating independently, these lone wolves or small wolf packs draw their inspiration from successful attacks made by others," Kotonen explains.

SMALL GROUPS DO NOT OPERATE IN A VACUUM

The heightened threat of the extreme right has been highlighted in the Supo's terrorist threat assessment since 2020. Attackers and geographically dispersed supporters linked individually to the far right through social media are united in a loose international community. It is difficult to combat the threat posed by

"These operators largely share views concerning the decadence of modern society and the need for violence to bring about change."

individuals and small groups that operate covertly.

Kotonen stresses that small groups do not function in a vacuum, and have at least online links to other operators. He notes that it is difficult to discern any clear command hierarchies or leaders of such groups.

"They largely share views concerning the decadence of modern society and the need for violence to bring about change," Kotonen concludes.

This phenomenon is manifest globally in the spread of accelerationism and Siege culture that promotes societal collapse and race war. Based on the writings of an American ideologue and originating in a far-right online forum in the 2010s, Siege culture and accelerationist thinking have spread online in Western countries.

Kotonen explains the interlinked nature of extremist groups: "The Order of Nine Angles (ONA or O9A) Satanic group in Britain has links to accelerationism, and especially to the Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD), which was linked in turn to the officially proscribed terrorist organisation National Action."

The threat of far-right terrorism is not confined solely to Siege culture and accelerationist thinking. There are also potential attackers outside of this operating context who justify the use of violent means, for example in opposition to immigration and Islam.

While the threat of far-right terrorism has been highlighted, the public and organised extreme right movement has receded into the shadows.

"The most important change came with the official disbanding of the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement in September 2020. This has eliminated a common operator that defined the movement on the extreme right in Finland, even though many groupings have been attempting to continue operations of the same type in new, smaller formations," Kotonen explains.

BLURRING OF IDEOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES

A trend is emerging on the extreme right stressing increasingly diverse factors in the mentality of pro-violence operators that blur certain ideological boundaries. While far-right ideology continues to revolve around



Postdoctoral researcher
Tommi Kotonen

xenophobia, opposing immigration and protecting white identity, a very wide range of additional views are increasingly accompanying these basic axioms.

"These operators broadly agree with respect to the failure of the Western way of life and immigration policy, but the splintering of organisations also leads to some degree of ideological fragmentation that explains the highly diverse ideological perspectives of individuals," Kotonen notes.

Opponents of the Western social order are glorified on the far right internationally, for example with expressions of sympathy for the Taliban following their resurgence in the wake of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. The most radical far-right circles are similarly even willing to show admiration for Islamist terrorist organisations such as ISIL. Representatives of the Siege culture

that advocates societal collapse and race war have incorporated various occult and ritualistic views into an ethos based on National Socialism.

The prolongation of COVID-19 restrictions and longer periods spent online have established a breeding ground for radicalising new individuals.

Pietilä notes that far-right recruiters are seeking to exploit the anti-establishment atmosphere and operators for their own purposes.

"Social phenomena, online activism and occasional acts of violence suggest that the threat of far-right terrorism is likely to continue growing in coming years. Serious threats will not be posed primarily by organised groups committed to a unified ideology, but by individuals and small groups emerging from a loose online community," Pietilä observes.

Technology shapes societies – and Supo strives to anticipate its progress

The mission of Supo is to keep Finland's top-level national government apprised of current threats to national security. Intelligence must be proactive in order to help prepare for the future. Supo also endeavours to predict technological development.

Technological progress has shaped societies throughout human history. It is also closely linked to their security issues, so Supo must also be able to forecast developments in technology.

The core mission of Supo is to furnish top-level national government with proactive and useful intelligence on threats to national security to substantiate policymaking. Supo's briefings do not merely report what has already happened, because intelligence must help in preparing for threats in advance.

Supo seeks answers to complex questions, such as how the phenomenal power of quantum computers could change the world, and how the increasing relevance of the virtual world in life is changing security threats.

Supo maintains awareness of complex threats in the cyber world, and assists in preparing for them in cooperation with other public authorities.

THE VIRTUAL AND PHYSICAL WORLDS ARE LINKED

Naturally the future cannot be accurately predicted, and social phenomena are often entirely unpredictable. Forecasting is a matter of perceiving alternative trends.

Forecasting work focuses on both the short and long term. Short-term forecasts may relate to months, while more far-reaching forecasts predict developments that may be even five or ten years away. The more distant the future considered, the greater is the uncertainty involved in forecasting.

Supo also monitors the megatrends that influence society extensively, and the impacts of such trends. Climate change and urbanisation are examples of these broad developments with a profound long-term impact on societies.

Technological progress is also a megatrend with a powerful impact on societies. The development of artificial intelligence and such features as high-speed 5G communication networks are already affecting our

societies. 5G technology allows real-time network connection of autonomous motor vehicles and many other new devices.

This will be followed by 6G, connecting people even more intimately to the network as the virtual and physical worlds become increasingly interwoven. Future interactions may involve shaking hands virtually with remote conversation partners and feeling it in our own hands. Body health data will be monitored in real time over a network, enabling intelligently proactive health-care. Issues of data security and privacy will become increasingly important.

5G and 6G network technologies also involve issues that are relevant to the security of society. We must ensure that the network necessary for the functioning of society operates in all circumstances. How can we arrange data secure updates in a network managed by artificial intelligence? Who can be trusted to perform such updates?

Quantum computers are in turn expected to revolutionise societies at some point, probably in the next decade. The power of quantum computers is many times greater than that of current supercomputers. For example, quantum computers could decrypt messages protected by our present encryption algorithms. It is no wonder that superpowers are strenuously competing to develop new technology.

Information is increasingly held by private businesses nowadays. Big data has become a major target of competition. Authoritarian powers seek to exert greater control over their populations by applying data and new technologies.

FORECASTING REQUIRES THE ABILITY TO EXAMINE MATTERS FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW

Forecasting work must also consider a much broader range of issues than belongs strictly to the operating field of Supo. Broad thinking is important in forecast-



ing. One strength of Supo is that the agency employs professionals from several disciplines who examine security issues from a variety of perspectives. A single project may involve social scientists, police officers and IT specialists.

Interpreting the significance of weak signals is a particularly problematic part of forecasting. It takes a special skill to predict that some initially innocuous factor will suddenly change the direction of progress.

Supo continually strives to develop more systematic foresight. Supo's analysts regularly review their reports to assess how successful forecasting has been. Incorrect forecasting is not necessarily a sign of failure, and it must be accepted that the future is always somewhat uncertain.

Forecasting always involves a balancing and weighing of risks. While self-evident forecasts are of no use, it is harder to see surprising trends coming.

Supo seeks enhanced interaction with security clearance vetting clients

The security clearance vetting clients of Supo are satisfied with the quality of investigations and the smoothness of the process. New customership manager Tiina Tuulensuu would like to boost interaction with clients.

Supo conducts about 90,000 security clearance vetting investigations annually into individuals whose work gives them access to premises or information of importance to national security. This vetting process serves over 400 clients, meaning employers requesting security clearance vetting of their staff. About 60 per cent of these clients are public authorities. The remainder are private businesses.

Supo is keen to serve these clients effectively, and even better in future. **Tiina Tuulensuu** took up her position as customership manager in the Vetting Department in 2021.

"I think recruiting a customership manager was already a concrete indication of an increased focus on client and partnership work at Supo. My job specifically supports interaction with our clients," Tuulensuu explains.

To assist in this work, Supo collected comments from its security clearance vetting clients last year. These comments suggest that employers are highly satisfied with such aspects as the quality of security clearance vetting investigations and the smoothness of the process.

Clarity of client communication is one area where the service could be improved. The website section dealing with security clearance vetting was revamped at the beginning of 2022, and client newsletters, seminars and training will also be used to provide better responses to questions from clients.

"Client communications must serve both employers and security clearance vetting subjects. Clear communications should guide clients and subjects through the application process."

Well informed employers will also be better placed to advise their job applicants about security clearance vetting.

"For example, the integrity monitoring aspect of security clearance vetting is still quite unknown to many employers. Integrity monitoring means checking certain registers to track the reliability of the subject while a security clearance vetting report remains valid. This means that the security clearance vetting process is not confined to the time before recruitment."

SECURITY CLEARANCE VETTING ALSO BOOSTS THE EMPLOYER'S IMAGE AT THE BANK OF FINLAND

With annual commissioning of about 900-1000 security clearance vetting investigations, the Bank of Finland is an important Supo client. These investigations concern individuals recruited to work at the Bank and at the Financial Supervisory Authority, and the staff of service contract partners. Department Head **Veli-Matti Lumiala** says that the Bank of Finland was one of the first organisations for which Supo began conducting security clearance vetting investigations about twenty years ago. Security clearance vetting is a supplement to other risk management measures.

"Security clearance vetting investigations are part of our approach to ensuring that our staff are fit to administer the functions of the central bank and the Financial Supervisory Authority."

"Security clearance vetting investigations are part of our approach to ensuring that our staff are fit to administer the functions of the central bank and the Financial Supervisory Authority. They serve as a deterrent when job applicants already know at the recruiting or contracting stage that the work will involve security clearance vetting. Security clearance vetting reports also occasionally disclose relevant information that would not have been otherwise available," Lumiala explains.

Lumiala also highlights the image that the Bank of Finland has deliberately sought to foster as an employer. "Security clearance vetting also reminds specialists that



Department Head
Veli-Matti Lumiala

their role is important, and that all of our people can perform their own work in a secure frame of mind."

ELECTRONIC SERVICES ARE APPRECIATED AND WELCOME

Security clearance vetting clients are increasingly filing their applications through the electronic service. Comments suggest that clients are highly satisfied with electronic transactions, even though these are also the most common subject of concrete reform requests. "Clients are especially keen to see a better overview of security clearance vetting investigations for their own organisations," Tuulensuu observes.

Lumiala hopes that electronic security clearance vetting applications will be optimally integrated into recruitment procedures at the Bank of Finland. "I understand that improvements in e-processing are currently under development."

WE SHOULD TALK WHEN THE NEED ARISES

Tuulensuu explains that comments from clients indicate a need to pay special attention to interaction in the

security clearance vetting process. Supo has recognised this need more widely, and has prioritised interaction in its new strategy.

"The comments indicate a wish for optimal interaction. Our clients want us to contact them and learn more about their business sectors."

The security clearance vetting process is well established at the Bank of Finland, and Lumiala observes that contact with Supo is not always necessary.

"Such special situations do not arise when everything is working as it should. The longer queues and delays that occasionally arise at certain times of the year can give us cause for communication. This has been quite natural. We should talk when the need arises."

With long experience of cooperating with Supo, Lumiala has seen how its operations have evolved. He also regards cooperation as important beyond the context of security clearance vetting investigations.

"Supo has managed to improve cooperation with society as a whole still further in recent years, which certainly promotes the basic mission of the Service. One area of cooperation is mutual sharing of information. Examples of this include overviews and perspectives on security-related phenomena. We are hoping to see more of this."

People in Finland trust in Supo

Supo surveys public perceptions of its work on an annual basis. The latest survey was conducted between 22 November and 3 December 2021, based on a sample representing the population of mainland Finland aged between 18 and 79 years.

A clear majority (89 per cent) of the public in Finland indicate either a very high or at least fairly high degree of trust in Supo. Two respondents in five (40 %) report a very high degree of trust, and one respondent in two (49 %) reports a fairly high degree of trust.

Confidence in Supo is almost as strong as a year ago. Only one respondent in a hundred does not trust Supo at all.

The same survey also looked at how well people living in Finland know the functions of Supo, which changed to some extent following the introduction of new intelligence legislation in summer 2019.

The best-known Supo's functions are gathering intelligence on threats to national security, combating terrorism and preventing espionage targeting Finland. More than 90 per cent of respondents identified these as Supo's functions. More than 80 per cent of people in Finland also know that Supo distributes intelligence to the President, Government, and public authorities, and conducts security clearance vetting of people appointed to key positions.

Foreign intelligence is a new function of Supo, and was the least well known (72 per cent of respondents). A slightly higher proportion of respondents mistakenly believed that Supo combats organised crime, even though this function belongs to the National Bureau of Investigation. Just over a quarter of respondents also mistakenly thought that Supo was responsible for investigating particularly serious homicides. There has been little change in survey findings since last year.



- high 40 %
- fairly high 49 %
- no opinion 4 %
- not very high 6 %
- none at all 1 %

A total of 1,005 interviews took place, and the margin of error is ± 3 percentage points.



Ratakatu 12, FI-00120 Helsinki, Finland
+358 295 480 131, www.supo.fi

