



The Finnish Defence Forces



FINNISH  
**MILITARY  
INTELLIGENCE**  
REVIEW 2025

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# Foreword by the Chairperson of the Intelligence Oversight Committee

Parliamentary oversight is one part of the oversight of authorities that have significant powers. The primary task of the Intelligence Oversight Committee is to oversee the proper implementation and appropriateness of intelligence operations, in other words, that the intelligence authorities use their resources sensibly and allocate the resources toward proper subjects. It is also the job of the committee to monitor and evaluate the focus areas of intelligence operations, and to monitor and promote the effective exercise of fundamental and human rights in intelligence operations. The Intelligence Ombudsman oversees the legality of intelligence operations.

In addition to the Intelligence Ombudsman and the ministry of this branch, the committee often hears and consults the highest overseers of legality, the Deputy Data Protection Ombudsman, the Helsinki District Court, those responsible for the oversight of legality within the authorities, and of course the intelligence authorities themselves. The Defence Command Chief of Intelligence and the Chief of the Legal Division are frequent guests in committee meetings. The committee also does familiarisation visits. The latest visit of the committee at the time of writing was a visit to the Finnish Defence Intelligence Agency.

During its existence, the committee has made the positive observation that the military intelligence authorities are committed to developing an intelligence culture suitable for a country governed by the rule of law. Although oversight is necessary, in order to maintain the trust and acceptability of intelligence operations, it is vitally important that the intelligence authorities and their personnel independently maintain an intelligence culture that is based on respect for legislation and for fundamental and human rights.

On behalf of the Intelligence Oversight Committee, I wish the military intelligence personnel of the Finnish Defence Forces success in the important work that they do to ensure Finland's safety and security.



*Chairperson of the Intelligence Oversight Committee, Mats Löfström, Member of Parliament (Swedish People's Party of Finland)*

## Foreword by the Commander of the Finnish Defence Forces

There are dozens of armed conflicts going on around the world. In Ukraine and in the Middle East, the war is fought on all levels and in all operating environments. Diplomatic and economic means, information influencing and the kinetic effects of warfare are directed against all of society since the first moments of conflict. They affect everyone – soldiers and civilians alike. Our adversaries try to weaken society also by non-military means, by targeting its critical functions, infrastructure and people all over the country.

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There is a war in Europe. We cannot rule out an escalation of the war in Ukraine. Therefore, we must prepare for the threat of a large-scale attack. At the same time, hybrid influencing is already a reality.

During its entire existence, Finnish military intelligence has demonstrated high-class professionalism. Our operating environment is full of challenges and uncertainties. Even with the fog of conflicts and crises, and a continuous time pressure, military intelligence must be able to meet the information needs of the Finnish Defence Forces and the state leadership. A common operational picture, timely dissemination, and shared situational awareness create a foundation for decision-making. Ultimately it is about providing advance warning of military threats against Finland and the Finnish people.

The volatile global situation, the wide range of conflicts and crises, and suddenly appearing, even surprising, threats only highlight how important the work of military intelligence is. NATO membership and deepening defence cooperation further improve our capability and create new opportunities for working with others. Our skills likewise contribute to the intelligence capabilities of the Alliance. We are a security provider, not a security consumer: this applies to military intelligence as well.



*Commander of the Finnish Defence Forces,  
General Janne Jaakkola*

# Foreword by the Defence Command Chief of Intelligence

Finland's military operating environment has undergone drastic changes in the last few years. In the 2020s, power politics has made a major comeback in international relations. Russia's barbaric large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022 led Finland and Sweden to seek NATO membership. Finland became a member of NATO in the spring of 2023 and Sweden a year later. The relationship between Finland and Russia has hit rock bottom. At the time of writing, the border between the two countries is closed – for the first time since the Second World War. As war rages in Europe, new crises have risen elsewhere in the world and old crises have come to a head. We are living in tough times in a world full of tensions.

This third published Finnish Military Intelligence Review describes Finland's military operating environment and the developments in that environment, as well as Finland's military intelligence system also known as the Finnish Defence Intelligence (FDI). This review will also share some of the history of how Finnish military intelligence has worked to ensure the security and safety of the country during its 107-year history. Finland's NATO membership puts the Finnish Defence Forces, and military intelligence as a part of it, in a new situation. With the membership, Finland's military defence can also lean on assistance from the Allies, and the other Allies of the military alliance can trust that Finland will support them in turn. The membership has placed new requirements on military intelligence to develop its procedures so that work within the Alliance is as seamless as possible.

The Act on Military Intelligence has provided a solid foundation for intelligence collection during the five years that it has existed. However, it should be noted that gained experience has shown a need for a minute review of the act. At the same time, military

intelligence is under extensive national oversight. Military intelligence evolves with the times and constantly develops its activities to respond to the changes in the threat environment. The significant military power that Finland has needs and deserves an effective and well working military intelligence.

Finnish military intelligence is on the front line of Finland's national security and defence capability, ever vigilant to safeguard Finland.



*Defence Command Chief of Intelligence,  
Brigadier General Pekka Turunen*

## Finland's Military Operating Environment

The international security environment is in a state of flux due to Russian aggression. The changes can have a rapid impact on Finland. Military planning is one way to prepare for changes in the operating environment, and it is the job of military intelligence to provide intelligence to support that planning and decision-making.

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We prepare for threats in all domains and successful cooperation requires up-to-date and timely intelligence.



The phenomena taking place in Finland's military operating environment have a direct or indirect impact on Finland's national security. The operating environment is part of the geographic and political context in which Finland navigates.

Defence planning is a key tool for national defence: it notes the developments in the operating environment and tries to foresee sudden changes. Part of the planning is that we prepare for threats in different domains (land, sea, air, space and cyber.) The task of military intelligence is to create a situational understanding that provides a view of the current threat situation, and to write assessments on the developments in the operating environment.

In addition to state actors, also supranational and asymmetric actors and phenomena have an effect on the development of the operating environment. In many cases, the threats are global and interlinked. Terrorism is a global security threat. A global strategic competition on the control and exploitation of natural resources, regional conflicts and instability, and the considerable shock effects of the above-mentioned phenomena are key factors that impact our security. They are also central to our own resilience.

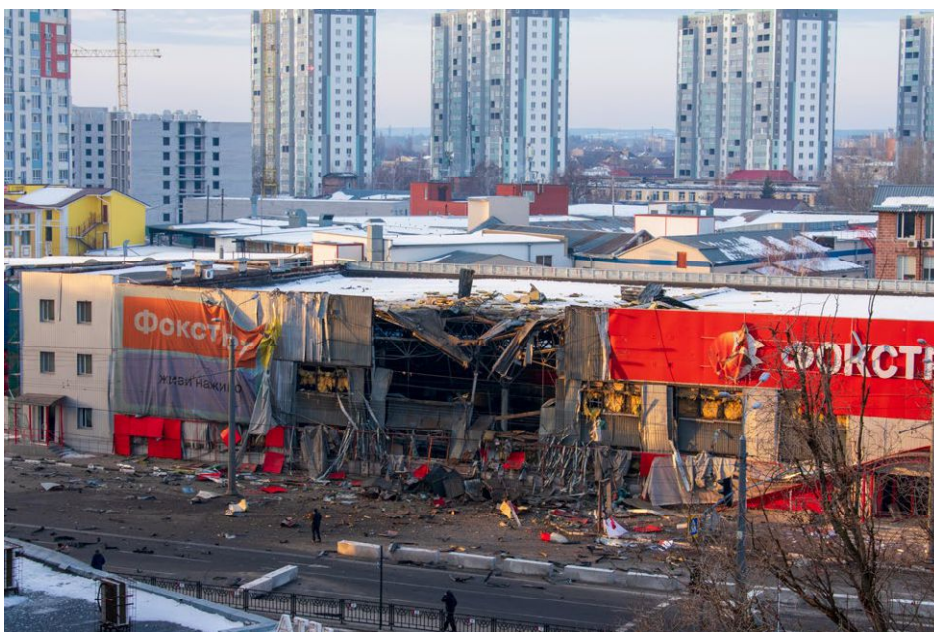
Developments in the security environment do not only include risks, but also developments on the strategic level that contribute to security. In the

Finnish framework, the most important change that contributes to security is the NATO membership of Finland and Sweden. It improves military security in the Baltic Sea region and supports the development of Finland's national defence.

Russia is a military threat to NATO's security and to the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. Russia has violated the norms and principles that have been a key part of the predictable and stable system of security in Europe. It started an unprovoked large-scale attack against Ukraine and it has illegally annexed Ukrainian territory. Russia has also committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine, and, for example, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued an arrest warrant for President Putin. Furthermore, Russia has committed acts causing environmental damage and caused damage to infrastructure that will take at least several years to repair.

### **Russia Is Challenging the International System**

Russia seeks to increase its influence in global security questions and sees the West as its primary opponent. It seeks to decrease the influence of the West, to ensure a sphere of influence for itself and to strengthen its relations with actors that resist the strategic goals of the United States and the West.



A store after a Russian strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine (15.3.2022).

Russia sees security policy as a zero-sum game of great powers, in which the expansion of NATO strengthens the standing of the United States and thus weakens the security of Russia. The sovereignty of neighbouring nations or their security interests are not a factor in Russia's calculations.

From Russia's perspective, ensuring its own security requires ensuring military hegemony in the neighbouring area and keeping the neighbouring countries in a militarily vulnerable position vis-à-vis Russia. It has pursued this goal with various diplomatic initiatives, the clearest being the 2021 demands for security guarantees. Russia has demanded that the United States removes its strategic capabilities from Europe, that NATO return to the situation of 1997 and a ban on all military activities by the United States in former Soviet republics.

Russia's actions show that it does not accept that Ukraine has a right to exist as a sovereign state. President Putin has stated on numerous occasions that Ukraine is part of the "same people" as Russia. Russia's conditions for peace with Ukraine include recognition of the annexation of territories, "demilitarisation", "denazification" and Ukrainian neutrality. In practice, these conditions would mean a puppet government under Russian control and making Ukraine unable to resist Russian pressure or Russian use of military force.

In addition to using military force, Russia is using many political, economic, information influencing and diplomatic means to pursue its goals: this also includes sabotage and assassinations. Currently, the primary objective of Russia's political influencing is to force the West to accept the spheres of influence that Russia has forced upon Eastern Europe by force. Such a solution might result in a brief respite in the war in Ukraine, but in the long term, the consequences of the acceptance would be unpredictable. If Russia achieves some of its goals in Ukraine with threats and use of force, it will likely try the proved strategy again. Acquiescing to Russian demands would likely make further escalations even more dangerous.

Russia engages in power politics in the so-called Global South as well. It strives to forge relations with anti-Western actors and to offer support to them. Here its actions are very much like the policy of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Russia emphasises its own position, distorts the motives of its partner countries and the West and exaggerates

the decrease of Western influence. For example, it tries to portray the BRICS group as part of the anti-Western "global majority". In reality, although many countries maintain and improve their relationships with Russia, often it does not mean that they would be interested in working actively against the West. Many Russian partners in the Global South actually have much stronger and multidimensional relations with Western countries or with the United States than with Russia. In practice, Russia can only offer very limited and narrow cooperation.

For Russia, key factors in Finland's neighbouring area include the strategic capabilities located in the Kola Peninsula, unrestricted access to the Atlantic via northern sea routes and the Arctic region. It also seeks to restrict NATO activities in the Baltic Sea region, to weaken the integration of Finland and Sweden into NATO, and to influence the content of the countries' NATO memberships.

Extensive international sanctions have limited Russia's ability to acquire, for example, high technology and dual-use items. The sanctions have had an additional negative impact on its energy exports and economy in general. Russia is currently prioritising defence industry expenditure, resourcing of warfighting and increasing the capacity of its military industry. It has gradually strengthened its war economy model. Russia has been able to somewhat circumvent the sanctions and to strengthen its partnerships outside the sanctions regime. It has particularly strengthened its relationship with China, as China's support is a necessary counterweight to the Western regime of sanctions. Furthermore, Russia has tightened its relations with countries that are on the margins of the international system, such as North Korea.

Russia's economy enables continuing the war for now, but at a high societal cost. As Russia withdraws from the global economy, its own economy will turn increasingly inward. At the same time, Russia's actions will likely become even more unpredictable.

While Russia is waging war in Ukraine, it is at the same time preparing a massive armed forces reform. Its goal is to increase the size of its armed forces by 350,000 soldiers to a total of 1.5 million and to establish new units and commands. The focus of the increased strength is on the Russian Ground Forces, which have also suffered the highest casualty numbers in Ukraine. The focus of development in the Air Force and Navy is particularly on force protection

- 1 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade
- 2 61st Naval Infantry Brigade
- 3 80th Motorized Infantry Brigade
- 4 44th Army Corps
- 5 69th Motorized Infantry Division (Fmr. 138th Motorized Infantry Brigade)
- 6 25th Motorized Infantry Brigade
- 7 76th Air Assault Division
- 8 18th Motorized Infantry Division
- 9 336th Naval Infantry Brigade

- 10 Northern Fleet
- 11 Baltic Fleet main naval base
- 12 Baltic Fleet Leningrad naval base
- 13 Olenya air base
- 14 Monchegorsk air base
- 15 Besovets air base
- 16 Khotilovo air base
- 17 Chkalovsk air base

Russia's conventional military force in the vicinity of Finland.





and long-range attack capabilities. Russia is also maintaining and modernising its nuclear arsenal, as nuclear weapons remain a key part of its own great power strategy.

Russia has begun an armed forces reform that includes its military districts. As part of this reform it has disbanded the Western Military District and the Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command and has re-established the Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts instead. The Leningrad Military District, which is located close to Finland, is planned to be significantly reinforced in the future. In the Kola region, an army corps will be expanded into an army, and a completely new army corps will be established in Karelia and several brigades will be expanded into divisions.

When the previously mentioned changes are complete, they will likely increase the number of troops in Finland's neighbouring area from 30,000 to 80,000. However, it is likely that as long as the war in Ukraine continues as a war of attrition as today, the military power in Finland's neighbouring area will not grow significantly. After the war in Ukraine ends, Russia will likely prioritise its north-western direction and try to speed up the implementation of the reforms.

Russia's strategic interests are in irreconcilable conflict with the West, and there are no possibilities for improvement in the current situation. Russia continues its efforts to disrupt Western unity, for example by offering different cooperation projects to sympathetic countries. Russia seeks to influence



Murmansk is the largest city in the Kola region and Russia's most significant port on the Arctic Ocean. The picture shows the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov in dry dock in Murmansk in 2015.



The protection of critical infrastructure requires constant training by different authorities as well as a common intelligence picture.



Finland's security policy decisions, and is implying that NATO infrastructure in Finland would lead to increased tensions.

Russia's aggressive actions are the key reason for military tensions in Europe. Russia's ability to mobilise military and societal resources is likely enough to sustain the conflict in Ukraine for at least a few years to come. Western support to Ukraine's defence capability will remain critical.

Russia will likely increase the use of all hybrid methods as it seeks to cause disunity within NATO and the European Union. These methods include cyber and information influencing, energy policy, effects on energy infrastructure and other critical infrastructure, weaponising migrant flows and different types of intelligence operations.

### China's Growing Global Influence

China's goal is to achieve a global and undisputed position as a political, economic, military and technological great power by 2049, when it will be the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. It seeks to grow its influence and to strengthen its position, especially vis-à-vis the United States. As an example, China has extensive political and economic influence in the Global South. China is also developing its armed forces and their capability as part of its great power strategy. Its focus is on developing its Navy. From NATO's perspective, China has objectives that seek to challenge NATO's interests, security and values. It opposes military alliances by other countries and particularly

the creation of NATO-like structures in Asia.

Russia is a significant partner for China, but it is not China's equal. China is seeking to gain from Russia's weak situation. China is a major oil export country for Russia as it has lost energy income from its previous trade with Western countries. In July 2024, China bought 47% of Russian oil. In 2023, 31% of Russia's overall exports went to China and approximately half of Russian imports are from China. Furthermore, China is helping Russia to circumvent sanctions. The balance of relations is increasingly favouring China, and Russia is becoming strategically dependent on China. As Russia continues its war in Ukraine, it steers Western attention away from China, which benefits China.

### Strategically Significant Baltic Sea

Regardless of the outcome of the war in Ukraine, the High North will maintain its strategic significance. It is in Russia's strategic interests to ensure the use of the Baltic Sea in all circumstances. The Russian Navy has a limited freedom of action in the Baltic as all other coastal states of the Baltic Sea are members of NATO. Even before becoming members of the Alliance, Finland and Sweden have long been a part of NATO in Russia's eyes.

Even though the gas pipelines of the Baltic Sea have been inoperable since the autumn of 2022, over 40% of Russia's foreign trade still passes through the Baltic Sea, and it is Russia's most important route for the export of oil.



The Baltic Sea holds strategic significance. FNS Uusimaa escorting the French FREMM class frigate FS Aquitaine to international waters after a visit to Helsinki in 2024.

The undersea data cables and energy transfer infrastructure at the bottom of the Baltic Sea are of particular importance for Finland and the Baltic countries. At the same time, the risk of attacks or tampering with them has increased significantly. Identifying the perpetrator of such acts is extremely difficult and these acts are deniable.

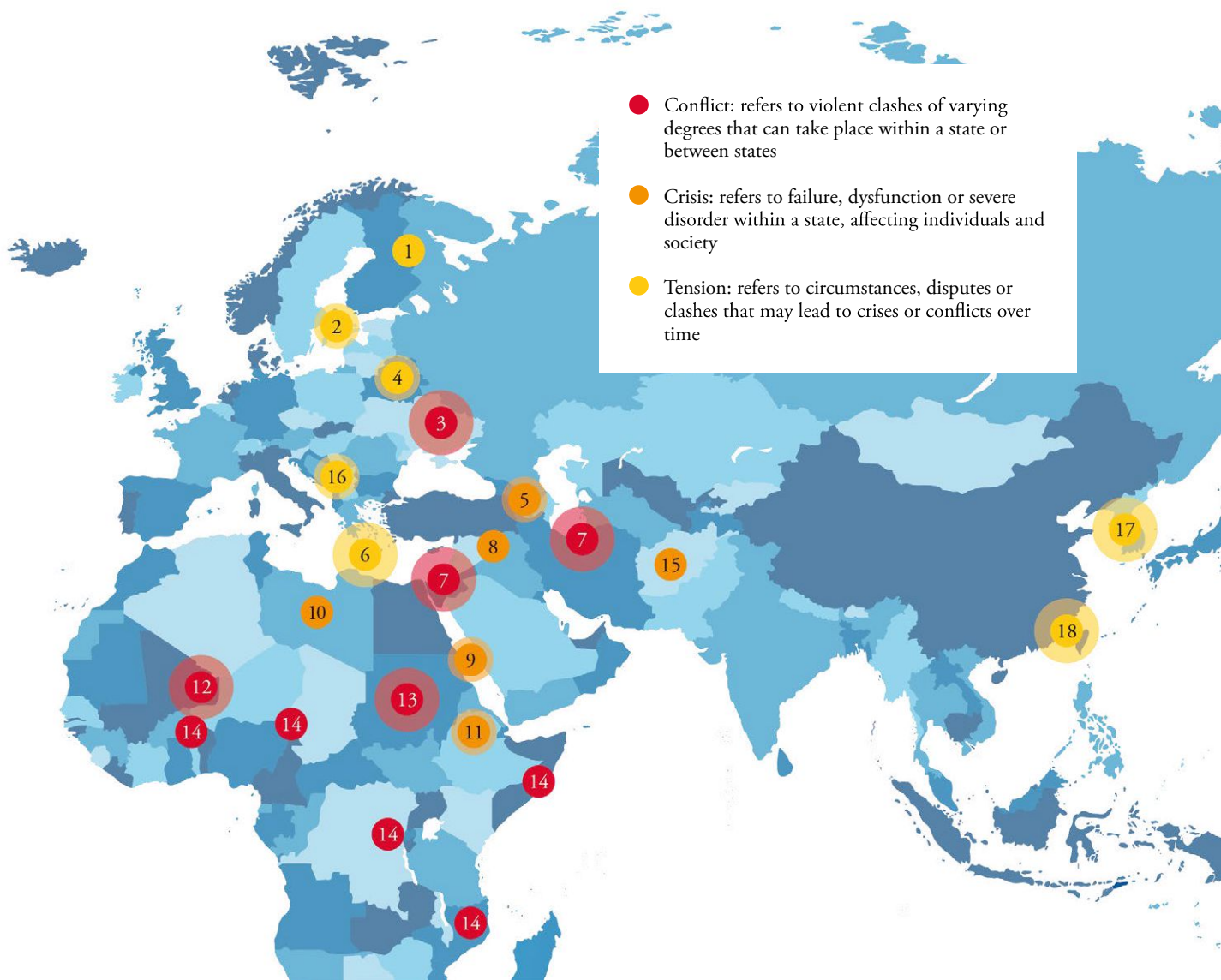
### **Great Power Dynamics in the High North**

The security political importance of the High North is growing and military tensions are increasing. The area is strategically important and it has economic potential for the West, Russia and China alike. Economy is also a key theme of Russia's Arctic policy, and the military development of its Arctic region is advancing side-by-side with economic and

infrastructure development. Sanctions and isolating Russia will highly likely slow down the realisation of Russian plans.

### **Russia Continues To Develop Its Military's Arctic Capabilities**

From a Russian perspective, the Arctic region is a playing field for its armed forces and it opposes foreign activity in its perceived sphere of influence. Free use of the Arctic sea areas is a critical factor for Russia's nuclear deterrent. However, it is possible that excluding Russia from other international cooperation will increase its willingness for cooperation in the Arctic region, particularly with China. The Arctic area is one of the focus areas of China's strategic long-term plans. This will likely be visible in how China develops its armed forces in future years.



● Conflict: refers to violent clashes of varying degrees that can take place within a state or between states

● Crisis: refers to failure, dysfunction or severe disorder within a state, affecting individuals and society

● Tension: refers to circumstances, disputes or clashes that may lead to crises or conflicts over time

1. Tensions: Consequences of instrumentalised migration at the Russo-Finnish border
2. Tensions: Incidents involving undersea infrastructure in the Baltic Sea, GPS jamming of air and maritime traffic
3. Conflict: Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine ongoing since February 2022
4. Tensions: Hybrid influencing against the West by Belarus
5. Crisis: The decades-long crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh continues to be a source of instability
6. Tensions: In the eastern Mediterranean, disputes over territories and natural resources, as well as the movement of migrants maintain the tensions and regional instability
7. Conflict: The impact of the war in Gaza and the increased tensions between Israel and Iran increase the tensions all over the region
8. Crisis: The internal problems of Iraq and Syria and combating Daesh continue
9. Crisis: The security situation in the Red Sea continues to be weak as a result of the conflicts in the region
10. Crisis: The deadlock in internal politics in Libya makes the country vulnerable to outside influence and to re-weakening of the security situation
11. Crisis: The internal situation of Ethiopia remains unstable as local clashes continue
12. Conflict: Several military coups in the Sahel region and decreased democratization as a result of increased Russian influence prolong instability in the region
13. Conflict: The Sudanese civil war that started in 2023, has the potential to become a cross-border conflict
14. Conflict: Activities against radical Islamist groups continue in many areas without any resolution
15. Crisis: The situation in Afghanistan continues to be very unstable
16. Tensions: Ongoing tensions between ethnic groups in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina
17. Tensions: The actions of North Korea are causing tensions in the Korean Peninsula and in the region
18. Tensions: Tensions between China and Taiwan remain high



### **Impact of Middle East Crises on the Finnish Security Environment**

Different types of crises and conflicts in the Middle East have an impact, for example, on the demands of international crisis management conducted by Finland, or on the movement of migrants to Finland. Particularly the attack of the terrorist organisation Hamas on Israel in October 2023, and Israel's subsequent operation to destroy Hamas' capability to act will likely have extensive and far-reaching effects on the regional balance of power.

The conflict in Gaza with its widespread impacts has been useful for Russia. Gaza rose beside the war in Ukraine to compete for international attention and it has provided Russia with opportunities for anti-Western political and information influencing. However, Russia's actual opportunities to have an impact on the events of a similar conflict are limited.

### **Threats to Finland's Defence System**

Finland's NATO membership, increased international defence cooperation and the change in the European security environment have increased Russian information requirements regarding Finland. The following topics are of particular interest to the intelligence services: implementation of Finnish NATO policy, developments in defence cooperation, activities of foreign forces in Finland, and the development of NATO commands and force structures.

Additionally, the war in Ukraine has heightened the need to acquire information on the production

capacity of the defence industry and on the development of the Finnish Defence Forces' materiel capacity. The intelligence threat against the defence system is primarily directed at Finnish Defence Forces' capabilities, operating procedures, and readiness.

Russia is actively conducting intelligence activities in Finland. The Russian military intelligence service (GRU) has sought to modernise its intelligence collection methods to better meet the new operating environment. The methods are likely more versatile and partly improvised. This may manifest, for example, as the use of front organisations and middle men, and as even more direct attempts to acquire information. Attempts to recruit human sources online, and particularly on pro-Russian social media platforms, are likely to become more common. The threat posed by digital network intelligence collection remains significant.

In addition to intelligence activities, the Russian military intelligence service has the capability for vandalism and sabotage. During the war in Ukraine, Russia has organised various types of sabotage activities in a number of European countries. The acts have been committed by proxy actors recruited by Russia, who have been able to carry out simple attacks against logistics operations supporting Ukraine. The threat of serious sabotage, particularly against support given to Ukraine, has increased in Finland as well. If needed, Russia has the ability to increase the intensity of these acts and the ability to direct sabotage also against military targets, critical national infrastructure and security of supply.



Crises in the Middle East will affect intelligence collection tasks given to military intelligence.



Foreign intelligence services are interested in, for example, the activities of allied forces in Finland. Pictured is a U.S. Air Force F-35 in Exercise Baana 24 in Finland.

## Finland and Challenges of the Security Environment

Russia sees that it is engaged in a systemic conflict with the West, and it is trying to particularly influence the unity of NATO and the European Union, and the United States' commitment to helping defend Europe. Finland's NATO membership has not caused major changes in Russian military activity levels, and there is no immediate military threat directed against Finland. Russia's long-term goal is to reinforce its forces in its Western direction, which can be seen in Russia's attempts to reinforce its forces in Finland's neighbouring area.

Tensions have increased in Finland's military operational environment. The international crises and wars have direct and indirect knock-on effects on Finland as well. As a whole, it can be said that the risks have increased in all areas of security. However, at this time there are no indications of an immediate deterioration of the military security situation in Finland's operational environment.

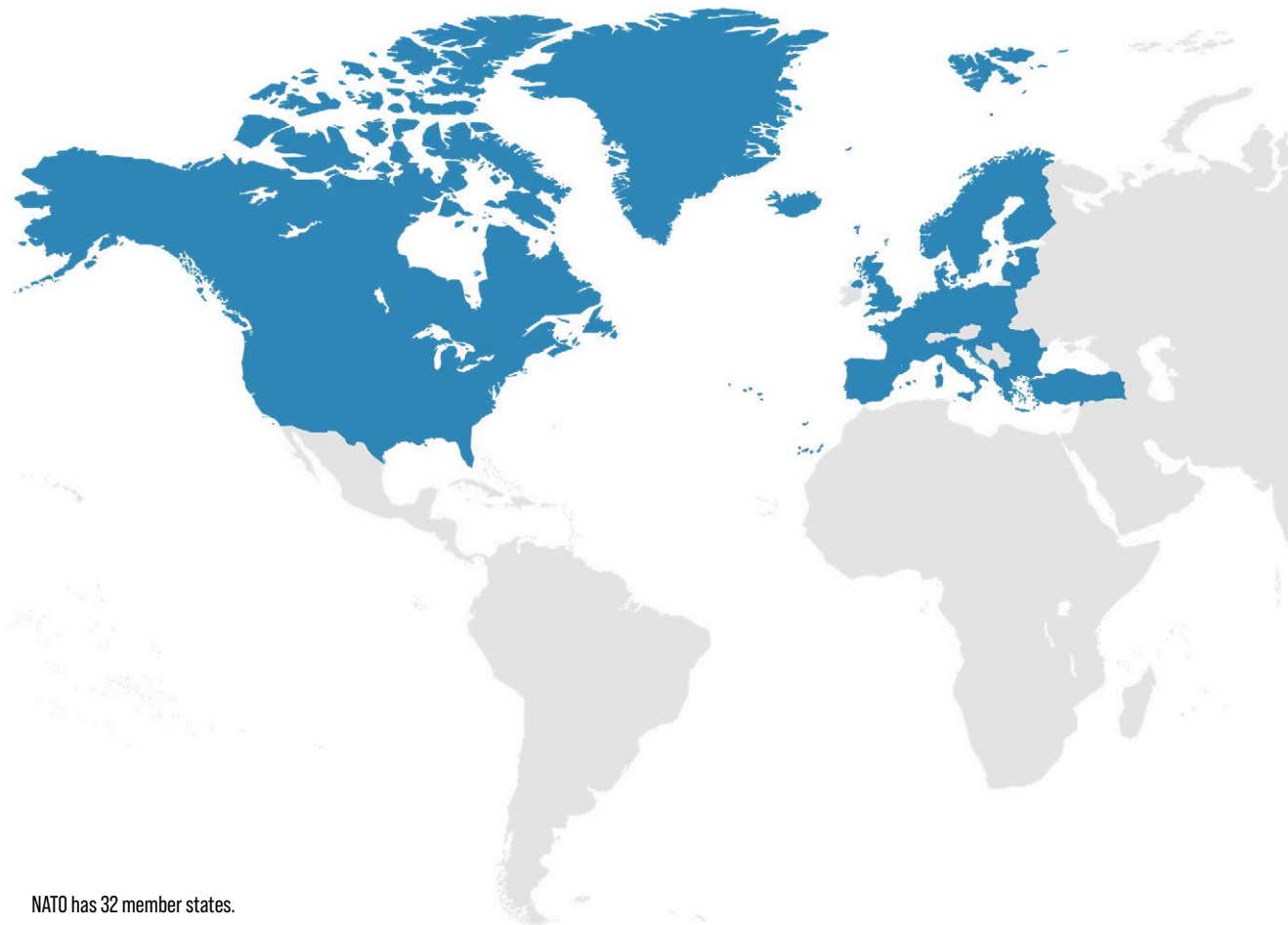


Increased risks in all areas of security also create demands for military intelligence.

## Finland as a Member of NATO

Finland is an active member of NATO that shoulders its responsibilities by participating in NATO's collective defence tasks. The main task of the Finnish Defence Forces remains the military national defence of Finland. Finland's military intelligence participates in intelligence cooperation conducted within NATO, but its main task is to monitor and analyse Finland's military operating environment. The global security environment is in flux, which emphasises the need for cooperation and intelligence sharing to facilitate decision-making.

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NATO has 32 member states.



NATO is a defensive alliance, with its core tasks being deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. The Alliance has 32 members, which are committed to assisting each other, including with military assistance, in case one of them is attacked. NATO's collective defence is built on its command structure, defence planning and exercises. The Alliance has no operational forces of its own, but the member states provide NATO with forces, based on separate decisions and for strictly defined tasks.

NATO's decision-making is divided into political and military decision-making. The member states provide the military structure with military and political guidance and all decisions by the Alliance are always made by consensus. The highest decision-making body is the North Atlantic Council (NAC). The Military Committee (MC) is the senior military authority in NATO and the primary source of military advice to the North Atlantic Council. NATO military command structure consists of Allied Command Operations (ACO), under Supreme

Allied Commander Europe, and Allied Command Transformation (ACT), under Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

At time of publication of this review, Finland has been a member of the Alliance for approximately two years. During this time, Finland – and especially the Finnish Defence Forces – has learned a lot about the Alliance, about its goals and resources. Membership in a 32-member-strong defence alliance means that Finland will shoulder its share of the obligations and participates in NATO's collective defence in ways that are separately agreed upon. Ever since the beginning of its membership, Finland has been an active participant that demonstrates responsibility and willingness to achieve the goals of the Alliance.

Even as a member of NATO, the main task of the Finnish Defence Forces remains the national defence of Finland. The same applies to Finnish military intelligence. Its main tasks remain the following: the monitoring and analysis of factors directly or indirectly affecting Finland's security, supporting situa-



Finnish military intelligence participates in NATO intelligence cooperation, for example in the Baltic Sea region.

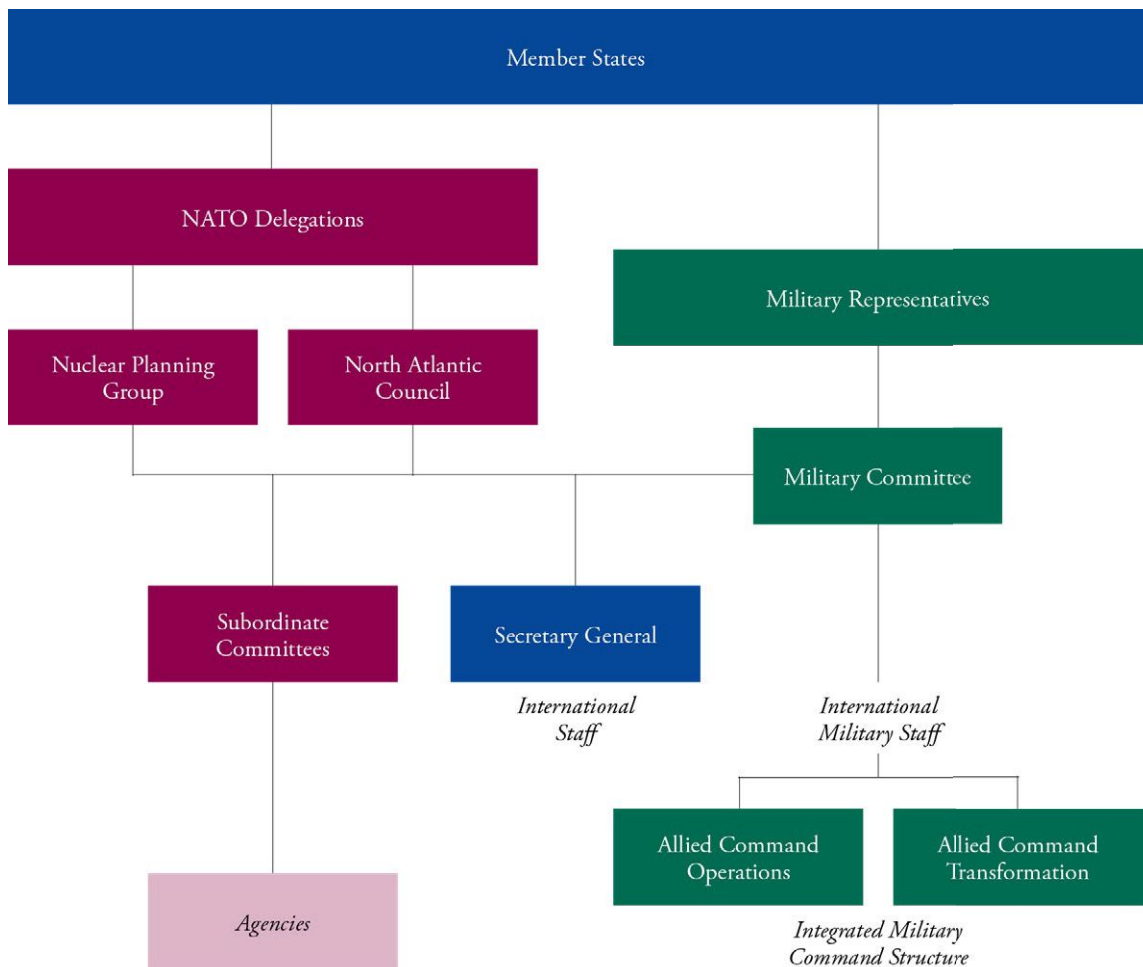
tional awareness for the purpose of national military and political decision-making, and providing the necessary early warnings.

As part of its responsibilities as a NATO member, Finland also participates in intelligence cooperation within NATO. NATO's decision-making needs timely and up-to-date intelligence to support it. The global security environment is in a constant state of change, and NATO has to prepare for increasingly complex global threats and it needs new capabilities to prepare for those threats, as well as determined cooperation between Allies. The ever-changing security environment underlines the need for tight cooperation and information sharing. Also, longer-term strategic assessments and situation awareness focusing on a shorter time frame are used to support NATO decision-making. A key task is also to provide warnings to NATO decision-makers on devel-

opments that threaten the security of the Alliance or its members in order for NATO to regulate its deterrence and defence.

NATO's threat environment is dynamic. As stated in the Washington Summit Declaration, Russia and terrorism are the most significant threats to the Allies, but also emerging disruptive technologies, new operating domains and potential threats have a key role in the situational awareness to support NATO's decision-making. Additionally, the regional instabilities on the Eastern and Southern flanks of Alliance territory are key factors for developing NATO's deterrence and defence. The Allies are developing NATO's procedures to support decision-making, also in the field of intelligence.

Because of the dynamic threat environment, it is the central goal of NATO's intelligence production



NATO's working structures.





NATO Headquarters, with all member states represented, is located in Brussels, Belgium.

to offer the Alliance's political and military decision-makers high-quality, customer-centric and timely intelligence to support situational awareness. A key part in the intelligence cooperation between the 32 Allies is the pooling of resources, avoiding overlapping and duplication, and the optimal and effective use of resources.

The daily matters in NATO are handled in NATO's over 400 committees and groups. NATO Headquarters in Brussels also works in a committee and group structure under the guidance of the member states. There are two key committees in the field of intelligence: the Civilian and Military Intelligence Committees, where the security and intelligence services represent their countries. The task of the Civilian Intelligence Committee is to be in an advisory role to the North Atlantic Council, for example in questions concerning espionage and terrorism. The Military Intelligence Committee supports both the North Atlantic Council and the NATO Military Committee. A key task of the Military Intelligence Committee is to provide strategic guidance to NATO's intelligence structures. Finnish military intelligence participates in the work of the Military Intelligence Committee and its numerous related

working groups. Military intelligence participates in supporting the Alliance's situational awareness, which in turn supports strengthening NATO's core tasks, particularly deterrence and defence.

The NATO HQ's Joint Intelligence and Security Division is a major actor in NATO intelligence. It is led by an Assistant Secretary General, who is a central actor for both the situational awareness to support decision-making and for the strategic leadership of NATO's intelligence activities. The Assistant Secretary General leads the intelligence production in the Headquarters and the activities of the civilian and military intelligence and security branches. The Assistant Secretary General works together with Supreme Allied Commander Europe and subordinate commands in matters related to intelligence.

NATO intelligence works mainly according to the Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance concept. It refers to intelligence collection and analysis and a comprehensive understanding and situational awareness of the operating environment to support political and military decision-making in all domains (land, sea, air, space and cyber).

# Act on Military Intelligence and Act on Military Discipline and Combating Crime in the Defence Forces

Military intelligence stepped into a new era when the Act of Military Intelligence was enacted in 2019. The act provided military intelligence with new powers and defined the tasks of military intelligence more thoroughly.

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The Finnish Parliament passed the Act on Military Intelligence in 2019.



The use of intelligence collection methods is juridically tightly controlled.

It places military intelligence under political guidance. The priorities concerning military intelligence targets are primarily determined by the highest state leadership. They guide what targets military intelligence focuses on to support the state leadership's decision-making. Based on the priorities, the Defence Command Chief of Intelligence will give military intelligence an intelligence task, which defines the legal basis for the intelligence collection.

### **Use of Intelligence Collection Methods**

The military intelligence authority uses various methods to carry out intelligence tasks. The targets of military intelligence generally try to conceal their actions and to avoid making information regarding them easily accessible to outsiders. Therefore, the intelligence collection methods in chapter 4 of the Act on Military Intelligence are strong methods

#### **Act on Military Intelligence, Section 4 Targets of military intelligence**

Military intelligence is targeted at the following activities if they are of a military nature:

- 1) activities by a foreign country's armed forces and organised troops comparable to them, and preparing such activities;
- 2) intelligence activities targeting Finland's national defence;
- 3) the design, manufacture, distribution and use of weapons of mass destruction;
- 4) the development and distribution of military supplies of a foreign country;
- 5) a crisis that poses a serious threat to international peace and security;
- 6) activities that pose a serious threat to the security of international crisis management operations;
- 7) activities that pose a serious threat to safety when Finland provides international assistance or is involved in other international activities.

In addition, military intelligence is targeted at activities by a foreign country or other activities that pose a serious threat to Finland's national defence or endanger functions vital to society.



for collecting information that would otherwise be unavailable. Because the use of the intelligence collection methods may violate a person's constitutional right to privacy, their use is allowed only when the conditions set in the law are met. A court will decide the use of the methods, as their use encroaches on a person's fundamental and human rights.

The use of the powers has increased because there has been a need to collect intelligence with the methods and it has been essential. The increase demonstrates that there has been a particular need for the powers.

In actual fact, the use of the intelligence collection methods has been useful to carry out the purpose of military intelligence operations.

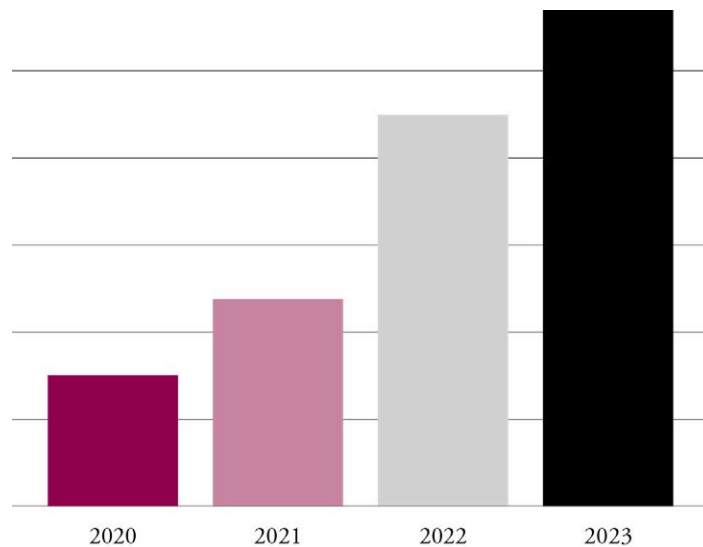
### **The Functioning of Act on Military Intelligence**

At the time of its enactment, the Act on Military Intelligence was a completely new kind of legislation in Finland. Based on experiences gained when applying the law, the military intelligence authority has identified some needs for a review of the Act.

Like the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service, the military intelligence authority also sees that the ban on using intelligence collection methods targeted at premises used for permanent residence should be reviewed, and lifting the ban should be considered or at least the ban should be amended so that it would not apply to state actors, such as foreign intelligence officers.

It has also been noticed that using the collection method of technical surveillance of a device is somewhat difficult in practice, as the use of the method requires very precise advance information on the targeted device.

In intelligence operations it is typical that the targets try to conceal and hide the information about what kind of computers or other similar technical device they are using. In such cases, more detailed information on the device or its nature may be discovered only at the moment when the use of the method can be started. The military intelligence authority sees that technical surveillance of a device should be reviewed so that the method could also be used to target a person, in addition to targeting a computer or other similar technical device.



Decisions on the use of intelligence collection methods 2020-2023.

## **Comprehensive Review of the Act on Military Discipline and Combating Crime in the Finnish Defence Forces**

The purpose of the review of The Act on Military Discipline and Combating Crime in the Finnish Defence Forces (255/2014) is to ensure that the legislation is up-to date and takes into account the changes in the operating environment after the act was passed. Another purpose is also to ensure that Defence Command Finland can execute all of its statutory tasks in all states of readiness, from normal conditions to emergency conditions.

The regulation seeks to make sure that the Defence Command Finland has the necessary independent powers to execute its tasks and that the regulation is not reliant on the power or powers of other authorities, as in the current act. The goal is to more effectively identify, reveal and prevent internal and external threats against Finland's military national defence, directed at Finland by foreign intelligence services, individuals or organisations. The objective of the regulation is to improve criminal liability relating to these matters and to protect the security of society.



Intelligence collection methods can only be used when the conditions set in the law are met.

# Organisation and Capabilities of Finnish Military Intelligence

The purpose of military intelligence is to provide intelligence to those who need it. Military intelligence, also known as Finnish Defence Intelligence, is a part of the Finnish Defence Forces and it serves both the various command levels of the Defence Forces and the leadership of the Defence Forces and of the state in particular.

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The President of the Republic is a key end user of intelligence.





Military intelligence provides situational awareness for the Services.

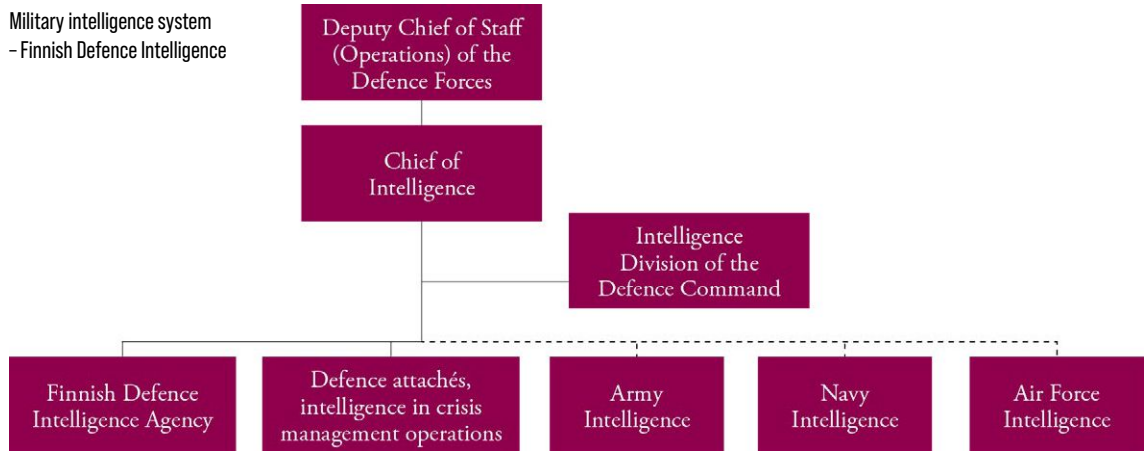
The purpose of military intelligence is to acquire and handle information about such military or other activity directed at Finland or impacting Finland's security environment which seriously threatens our national defence or endangers the functions vital to society. That information is needed, so that military intelligence is able to give the necessary early warning of a military threat against Finland, to create the necessary situational awareness to support the decision-making of the Defence Forces and the state leadership, and to create the necessary situational awareness to support the execution of the statutory tasks of the Defence Forces.

The duties of the Defence Forces are the military defence of Finland, providing support for other authorities, providing and receiving international support, and participating in international military crisis management.

As part of the Finnish Defence Forces and Finland's military defence, the task of military intelligence is to secure the livelihood and basic rights of the population and the freedom of action of the government, as well as defending the rule of law. Military intelligence also participates in international operations of the Defence Forces, such as providing and receiving military assistance, military crisis management operations and fulfilling the required tasks of a NATO member. In military intelligence timeliness as well as the reliability and actionability of produced intelligence are vital.



The intelligence branches of the Services work closely together with radar surveillance, for example.



**Structure of Finnish Military Intelligence**

Military intelligence is a part of the operational activities of the Defence Forces, which are led by the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations of the Finnish Defence Forces. The planning and execution of military intelligence tasks is the responsibility of the Defence Command Intelligence Division (J2). It is led by the Defence Command Chief of Intelligence, who also steers the Finnish Defence Intelligence Agency. The tasks of the Finnish Defence Intelligence

Agency include monitoring the military operating environment, assessment and reporting. The Finnish Defence Intelligence Agency is also responsible for geospatial and meteorological services for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Defence Forces.

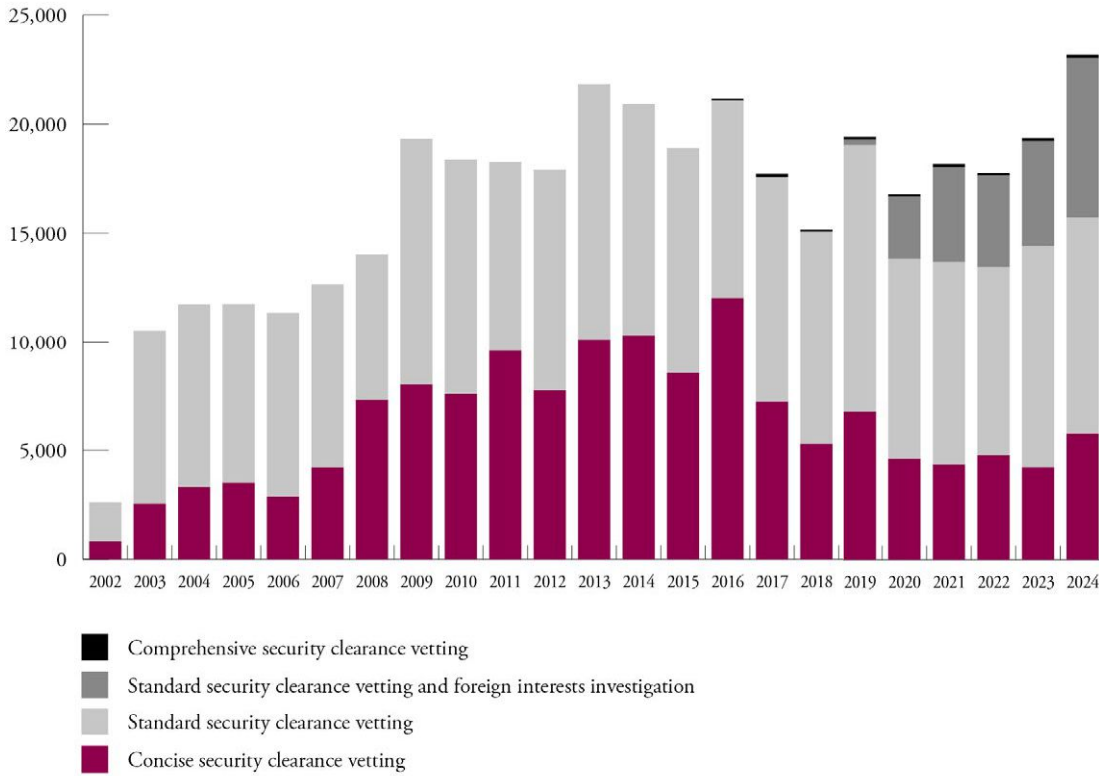
The Services, i.e. the Finnish Army, Navy and Air Force, have their respective intelligence organisations and their primary task is to support the decision-making of the commander of that particular Service and the operations by producing common



Military counter-intelligence acquires information on intelligence activities that threaten critical infrastructure or functions vital to society.



Security clearance vettings conducted in 2002-2024.



intelligence picture and assessments of events in the neighbouring area. Service intelligence works closely together with units and parties involved in surveillance of territorial integrity. Moreover, the Services train and equip wartime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) units. The Defence Command Chief of Intelligence has operational guidance of the intelligence of the Services.

### Military Counter-Intelligence Is Part of Military Intelligence

Military counter-intelligence is part of the intelligence system of the Defence Forces. It acquires and handles information on intelligence activities directed at Finland's national defence that may threaten national defence or functions vital to society. It exposes and prevents threats and crimes against the Finnish Defence Forces and Finland's national defence. They include: intelligence and espionage, sabotage, terrorism, organised crime, and attacks on information networks.

The goal of military counter-intelligence is to identify the threat, operating principles and objectives of foreign intelligence and security services. The objective is to protect key actors of national defence against intelligence threats and to provide the political and military leadership with advance warnings on the changes in the operating environment and threats.

The military counter-intelligence has also a role as Designated Security Authority (DSA) in personnel and facility security clearance vettings and accreditation of information systems and cryptographic products.

### Intelligence Operations

Intelligence is often portrayed as a cyclic process. In the five-phase cycle, the process begins with the customer's intelligence requirements. The customer for the military intelligence may, for example, be the leadership of the Finnish Defence Forces, the

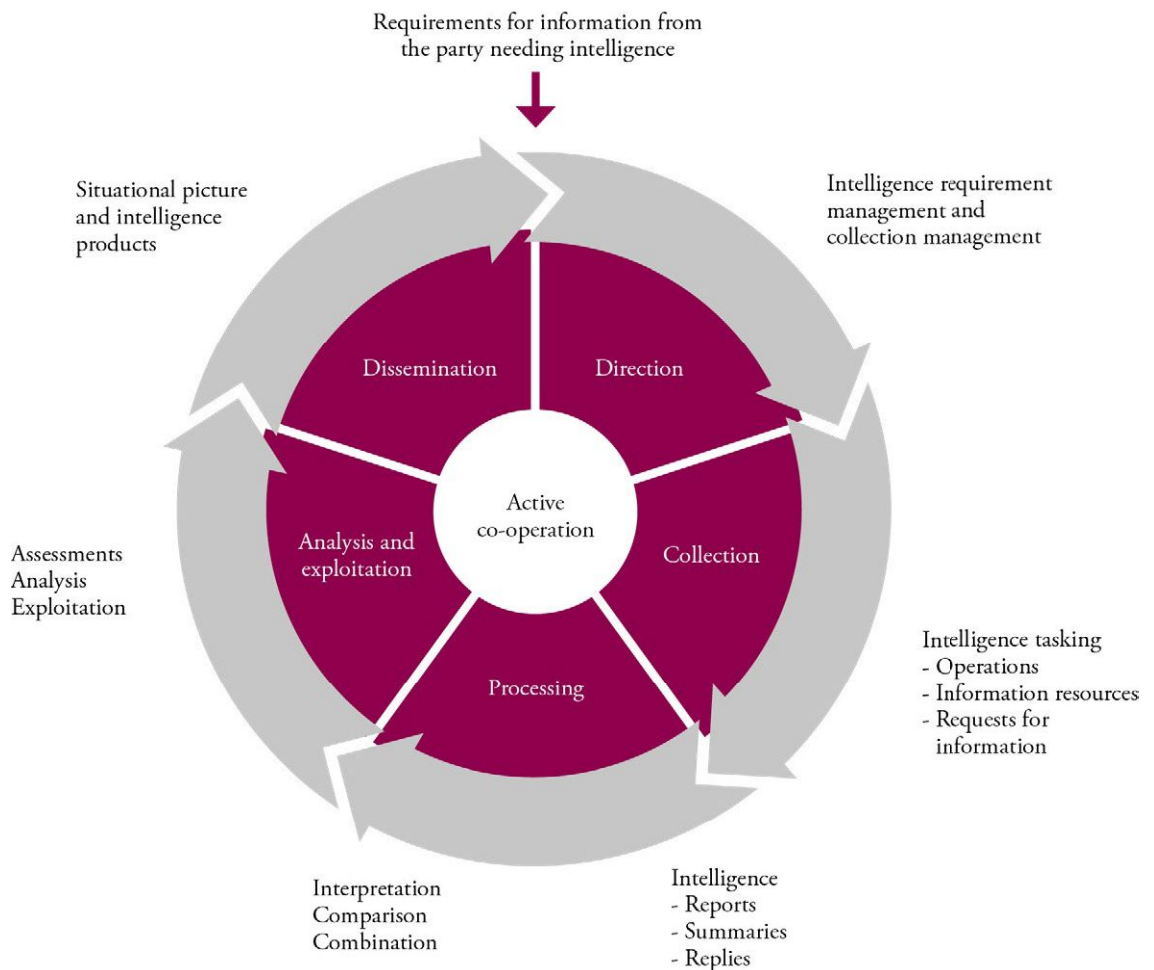
Government or the President of the Republic. In the direction phase, it is assessed what kind of information requirements the customer has and how to meet them. This phase is also where the information requirement management and collection management begins. In the management phase, one finds out what is already known about the topic, and what sources are available to meet the intelligence requirement. After that it is decided if there is a need to start an intelligence collection operation, in order to meet the information needs of the customer.

In the collection phase, intelligence tasks are given to the different intelligence disciplines for collection. The collected intelligence is processed, that is, interpreted, compared and combined for analysis. In the next phase, the processed information is analysed and processed further, to ensure the quality of the intelligence. The processed intelligence is then for-

mulated into a report or another suitable intelligence product and, in the next phase, delivered to the customer at the right time. Feedback received from the end user of the intelligence further improves the guidance. The intelligence cycle is a heavily simplified model and the reality is not as clear, but the phases of the cycle describe the activities and basic processes of intelligence. The methods that are used to collect intelligence for analysis are called intelligence collection methods.

A specific collection method, the related processing and analysis of the information is called an intelligence discipline. If the situation requires, multiple intelligence disciplines can be used together to complete the intelligence collection task, or sometimes the methods of a single discipline are enough.

Intelligence is also collected through defence at-



Five-phase intelligence cycle.

tachés. One duty of defence attachés is to acquire information on their host nations' security policy and armed forces and report on these to the leadership of the Defence Forces. This activity is part of the human intelligence discipline. Intelligence collection by defence attachés is open and in compliance with diplomatic culture.

Military intelligence works together with national and international colleagues. With NATO membership, the Alliance is now a very important international cooperation framework for military intelligence.

### Intelligence and Secrecy

Intelligence and matters related to it are classified. Intelligence must safeguard its own sources and information on the one hand, as well as its infor-

mation shortages, and on the other hand, it must protect its personnel, operating procedures and capabilities. If a source is exposed, the source may be lost. Relevant information may be obtained by combining small fragments of information, which may be irrelevant alone but help in creating an overall picture of the intelligence target. A further reason for keeping intelligence operating procedures secret is that a successful operation may be repeated, if necessary.

The capabilities and organisation of intelligence are developed to respond to future challenges in order to maintain the decision-makers' situational awareness in the operating environment.



Military intelligence may get a request for intelligence from, for example, the Minister of Defence. Minister of Defence Antti Häkkinen, speaking at the House of Nobility.

## Intelligence Disciplines

**Acoustic Intelligence (ACINT)** is a sub-category of Measurement and Signatures Intelligence (MASINT). It is used to collect and process acoustic phenomena. Acoustic Intelligence is especially used in the medium of water.

**Communications Intelligence (COMINT)** is a sub-category of radio signals intelligence targeted at data transmission signals transmitted on radio waves. Data collection and processing may be directed at the information content and technical parameters of the signal, the location of the signal source or any other information on the signal that produces intelligence on the user of the signal or the system used.

**Electronic Intelligence (ELINT)** is a sub-category of radio signals intelligence where intelligence is produced from the collection and processing of radio transmissions other than those used for communications. The most typical targets are radar and navigation signals.

**Foreign Instrumentation Signals Intelligence (FISINT)** is a sub-category of radio signals intelligence where the collecting is targeted at technical signals between technical systems when the signals do not contain confidential communications.

**Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT)** consists of imagery analysis and geospatial data where information associated with a geographic location is processed to describe and assess the characteristics of the target.

**Human Intelligence (HUMINT)** is an intelligence discipline targeting humans and the information they possess.

**Imagery Intelligence (IMINT)** means taking images of intelligence targets and interpreting them.

**Measurement and Signatures Intelligence (MASINT)** is a technical intelligence category. It seeks to detect or identify a target, follow it and describe its signatures. Examples of measurement and signatures intelligence include use of information produced by acoustic sensors and seismological sensors used for monitoring as well as CBRN defence-related sampling and analysis.

**Medical Intelligence (MEDINT)** refers to intelligence on entities related to the health of humans and animals. The objective of medical intelligence is, in particular, to identify health threats and analyse the risks they pose to friendly forces.

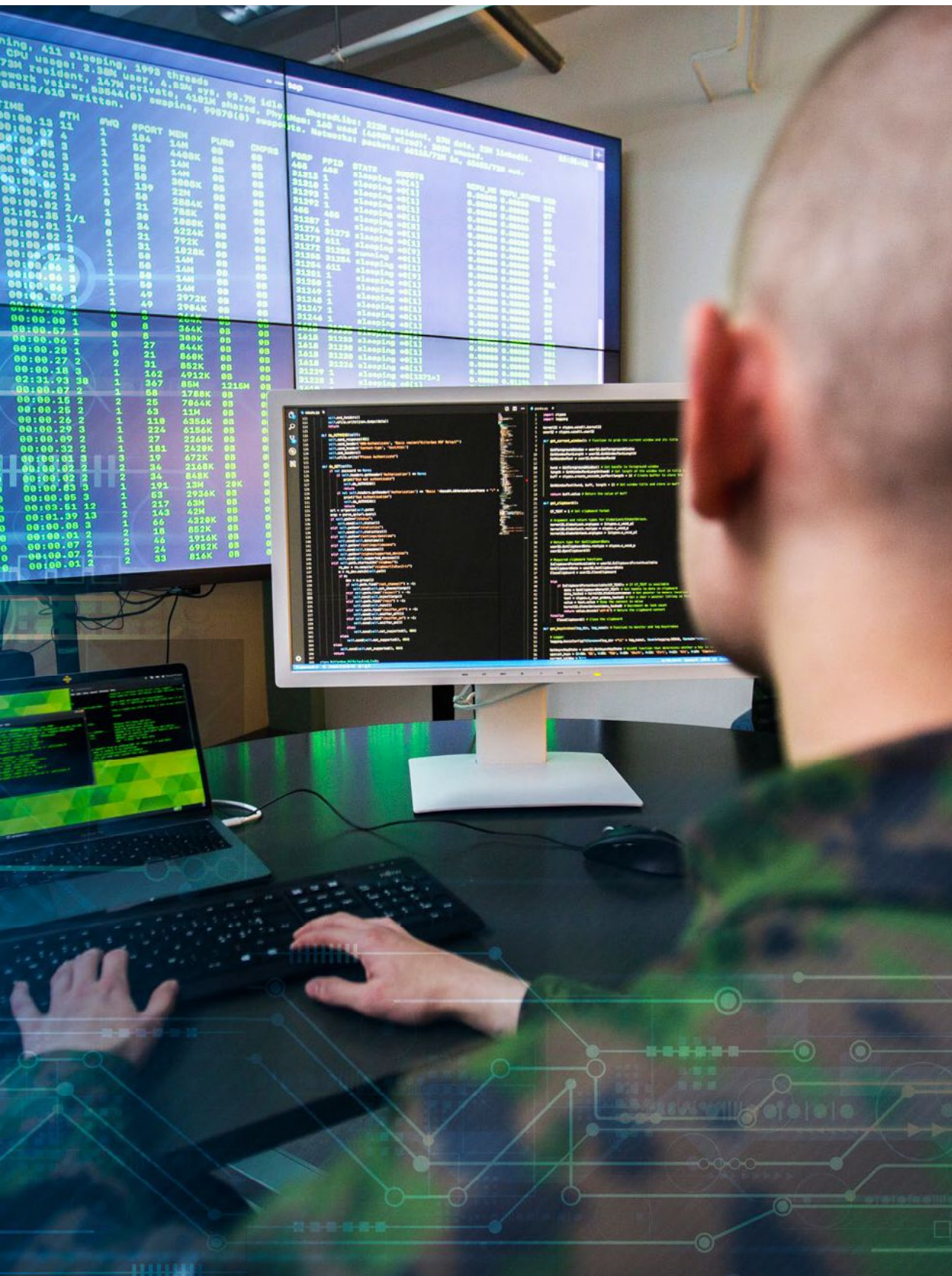
**Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)** refers to collecting information from public sources. These include social media, traditional media, official statements and documents, as well as research literature.

**Signals Intelligence (SIGINT)** refers to intelligence targeting electromagnetic signals. In Finland, Signals Intelligence is divided into radio signals intelligence, network traffic intelligence and foreign computer network exploitation. Radio signals intelligence is typically divided into communications intelligence (COMINT, targeting communications), electronic intelligence (ELINT, targeting radar signals) and foreign instrumentation signals intelligence (FISINT, targeting internal signals of systems). The entity formed by network traffic intelligence and foreign computer network intelligence is known as digital network intelligence.

**Technological Intelligence (TECHINT)** is examining weapons, other systems and equipment used by armed forces to be able to develop countermeasures and operating procedures.









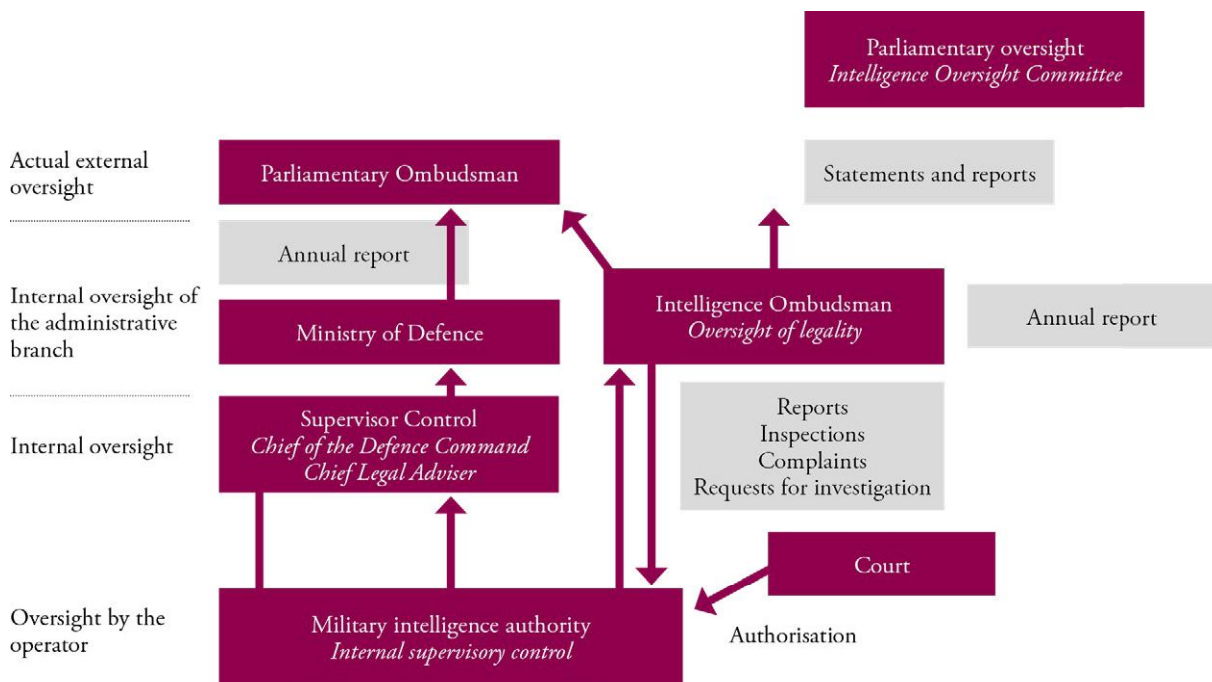
## Legality Oversight of Military Intelligence

Military intelligence is overseen both internally and externally. Oversight of military intelligence is comprehensive also by international standards.

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The Intelligence Oversight Committee of the Finnish Parliament is responsible for parliamentary oversight of military intelligence.



Legality Oversight of military intelligence is multi-layered and extensive.

Intelligence supports protecting the state and society against external threats. Members of society have to be able to trust that intelligence activities are in accordance with our laws and that the activities fully serve the interests of society. In a state governed by the rule of law, intelligence activities require extensive and independent oversight of legality.

A key external actor for intelligence authorities is the Intelligence Ombudsman, who in part oversees the legality of military intelligence. The military intelligence authority must notify the Ombudsman about decisions concerning an intelligence collection method or requirements delivered to the District Court. The Intelligence Ombudsman has the right to get the necessary information from the military intelligence authority in order to conduct oversight, and they also have the right to access military intelligence systems. The Ombudsman conducts oversight in real time, and by law they have the right to abort or end the use of an intelligence collection method if they see that the military intelligence authority has done something illegal during intelligence operations.

In addition to the Intelligence Ombudsman, the Parliamentary Ombudsman oversees military intelligence. Their right to get information is based on the Finnish Constitution. Then there is the Intelligence Oversight Committee of the Finnish Parliament that is the parliamentary overseer of military intelligence activities. The Committee oversees the appropriateness and fitness for purpose of military intelligence activities and assesses the military intelligence focus areas provided by the higher state leadership.

In addition to external oversight, military intelligence is overseen by the Chief of the Defence Command. The Legal Division of Defence Command Finland, led by the Chief Legal Adviser, is responsible for legality oversight, conducted by quarterly and pinpointed inspections. The oversight strengthens the acceptance of Finnish Military Intelligence in society and supports the purpose of it as part of national defence.

## Short History of Finnish Military Intelligence

The origins of Finnish military intelligence go back over a hundred years. During its entire existence, military intelligence has served the Finnish state leadership and the Finnish Defence Forces both in war and in times of peace.

During the First World War, in 1915, activists resisting Russian oppression in Finland and some of the Finnish jaegers who had received military training in Germany, started to collect intelligence on Imperial Russian forces in Finland. The activity was coordinated from Stockholm, led by a jaeger and Master of Arts, Isak Alfthan, who was originally from Vyborg. The network of agents stretched all the way to Saint Petersburg, Russia. The information was passed on to the general staffs of Sweden and Germany, which also funded the activities. Information was sent to Stockholm, for example on postcards written in invisible ink.

### **Civil War 1918**

Finland declared her independence on 6 December 1917. The intelligence activities of the independent Finland began shortly before the Finnish Civil War in 1918. In January 1918, an intelligence office was established in the General Headquarters of the Commander of the White Army, Lieutenant General Mannerheim, who was the future Marshal of Finland and President of the Republic.

The activities used the networks previously constructed by the activists and the jaegers. By monitoring the telephone and telegram traffic of the Reds and the Russian forces, the General Headquarters found out about the Russian plans to arm the Finnish Red Guards and to establish Russian units to assist the Red Guards. The General Headquarters often had a better operational picture of the Red Forces than the Red Headquarters itself, which enabled the correctly timed start of operations.



Jaeger Lieutenant, Master of Arts, Isak Alfthan was the first Finnish Chief of Intelligence (pictured as a Captain).



00061

General-Kvartermästaren.

22 / I 18.

Spanings-afdelningen.

Cirkulär N:1

Med hänsyn af den vikt, som fullt säkra underrättelser angående fiendens styrka, dislokation, rörelser, beväpning, ammunition, förråder af olika slag, bevakning m.m. medför icke allenast för den lokala organisationen utan äfven för hela ledningen, bör vid hvarje distrikt anställas djärfva och listiga personer för att handhafva kunskepare tjänsten. Dessa personer böra organisera en fullständig öfvervakning af såväl de ryska truppers minsta rörelser, genom dem, eller deras bekanta flickor, kypare i af dem besökta kafeer m.m. få reda på deras afsikter, deras förbindelser med våra hüliganer m.m. samt likaså hålla reda på röda gardenas afsikter, försöka få in i ledningen någon af de våra för att i tid få reda på deras afsikter planer för eventuella motåtgärders skull. Speciellt viktiga äro alla underrättelser angående fästningarna Wiborg, Sveaborg, Porkkala och den ryska flottan.

Distriktcheferna böra en gång i veckan regelbundet inlemla rapport till Gen. Kwart. öfver kunske. afd. meddelanden, viktiga meddelanden böra med de snabbaste till buds stående medel (telef., telegr. kurirer ) insändas.

Generalkvartermästaren.

### **Development of Intelligence Before World War 2**

After the Civil War, the tasks of foreign intelligence and counter espionage were concentrated within the General Staff. In the 1920s, the names of the three main branches became established as the International Office (*ulkomaatoimisto*), the Statistics Office (*tilastotoimisto*), which was responsible for intelligence matters in regards to the Soviet Union, and the Surveillance Office (*valvontatoimisto*), which was responsible for counter espionage. In 1927, a new intelligence discipline, signals intelligence, was added to the tasks of the Statistics Office. By the end of the 1930s the activities of the office expanded and the strength of its personnel grew. Intelligence concerning the Soviet Union was exchanged with a number of foreign countries.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Finland had military attachés in the following countries and areas: Scandinavia, the Baltic States, the Soviet Union, large Central European states, and the United States (from 1939).

There was also intelligence cooperation with the Frontier Guard and with the National Investigative Police, who had their own covert intelligence collection operations across the border. The intelligence field organisation, which was subordinate to the General Staff, had dozens of agents in the Soviet Union, and the military attaché in Moscow ran a separate network of agents.

### **Intelligence During the Winter War 1939–1940**

The non-aggression pact signed between Germany and the Soviet Union in August 1939, and the included division into spheres of influence (the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) provided the Soviet Union with the opportunity to try to annex Finland. During the Winter War (30 November 1939–13 March 1940), the military intelligence of the General Headquarters was led by Colonel Lars Melander, who had the Intelligence Division, the Surveillance Division and the International Office under his command. Most of the personnel consisted of reservists who had attended multiple refresher training exercises during the late 1930s.

The information collected by the Signals Intelligence Company or the Intelligence Division was relayed to the Operations Division of the General Headquar-

ters. The Surveillance Division led its field organisation, which operated at the headquarters of the Corps and Divisions.

During the Winter War, the General Headquarters was able to expand and increase intelligence collection, which yielded good results. The total strength of intelligence led by the General Headquarters was approximately 300 people. Military intelligence remained vigilant even after the Moscow Peace Treaty (13 March 1940).



Colonel Aladár Paasonen was the Finnish Chief of Intelligence 1942–1944.

### **Continuation War Against the Soviet Union**

At the start of the Continuation War in June 1941, the unit organisation of military intelligence was very similar to what it was at the beginning of the Winter War. The General Headquarters' Intelligence Detachment consisted of three divisions: the International Division, the Intelligence Division and the Surveillance Division. The International Division monitored the military situation in combat theatres outside of Finland. It was divided into the International Office, which dealt with intelligence collected about foreign countries, and into the Military Attaché Office.

The key parts of the Intelligence Division were the



Intelligence Office, Signals Intelligence Office and Interrogation Office. The Intelligence Office had under its command the General Headquarters' Signals Intelligence Battalion and Detached Battalion 4, which was responsible for long-range reconnaissance. The Signals Intelligence Office, led by Lieutenant Colonel Reino Hallamaa, led signals intelligence operations.

The Intelligence Division was in command of the long-range reconnaissance detachments, the Signals Intelligence Battalion and human intelligence. It operated nearly 24/7 and the chief of the intelligence detachment passed information and assessments to the highest leadership of the state and of the Defence Forces.

The position of the Surveillance Division as a national security actor was highlighted when the State Police was subordinated to the General Headquarters.

In 1942, Colonel Aladár Paasonen was assigned as the Chief of the Intelligence Detachment. In 1944, Reino Hallamaa, who had been promoted to Colonel, became the Chief of the Intelligence Division. In late summer 1944, the strength of the General Headquarters' intelligence organisation was 1,600–



Colonel Reino Hallamaa created Finland's signals intelligence in the 1920s and 1930s and rose to become the Chief of the Statistics Office.



Imagery Intelligence developed rapidly during World War 2 and produced vital intelligence.

1,800 people, of whom 1,200 were in signals intelligence. Finnish military intelligence was small by international comparison. It did, however, succeed very well in its job during the attack phase and the trench warfare phase of the Continuation War. During 1944, intelligence received information that the Soviet Union was preparing for a major offensive, but failed to convince the highest wartime leadership of the growing threat of attack.

### **Rundown of Military Intelligence 1944–1945**

The interim peace treaty in September 1944 did not cause immediate changes in the organisation of the Finnish Defence Forces. The General Headquarters intelligence organisation continued operating unchanged. Due to the insecure situation, steps were taken to safeguard the capabilities of military intelligence. This included sending personnel and materiel to Sweden (so-called Operation Stella Polaris).

As the Defence Forces shifted to a peacetime organisation in December 1944, the wartime organisation of military intelligence was dismantled and peacetime intelligence, surveillance and counter espionage were assigned to the International Division of the Defence Staff. Colonel Paasonen became the Chief of Division and Colonel Hallamaa was assigned as the chief of the most important intelligence unit, the Statistics Office. Intelligence was directed at Soviet forces across the border, at the Porkkala Naval Base and at the Allied Control Commission led by the Soviet Union. Intelligence was also needed in the Lapland War (15 September 1944–27 April 1945) against the Germans as the interim peace treaty required that Finland drive the German forces out of the country.

Defence Staff intelligence organs were disbanded in the summer of 1945. To cap it all, the surveillance and counter espionage tasks of the Finnish Defence Forces were transferred to the State Police, which was now in Communist hands. There were political reasons behind the disbandment of military intelligence, such as the so-called weapons cache case, the demands by the Soviet-controlled Allied Control Commission and the tense domestic political situation.

Even though military intelligence was rundown, the leadership of the Defence Forces needed information and analyses about the military operating environment. For this reason, a small office was established



Major Lauri Sutela was a key figure in rebuilding military intelligence in the 1950s (Colonel in this picture).

inside the International Division from the remains of military intelligence, and it continued limited collection of military information, with a low profile and few resources. This made it possible to maintain a passable strategic and operational picture for the leadership of the Finnish Defence Forces. These activities were based on the use of public sources, a network of military attachés after 1948, on unofficial information collection and on the professional skills of experienced personnel.

### **Military Intelligence Is Quietly Rebuilt 1959–1961**

After defence planning was restarted at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, more effective intelligence collection and analysis capability was needed. In 1956, then Major Lauri Sutela (future General and Commander of the Finnish Defence Forces) was assigned to the Operations Division of the Defence Staff to plan military intelligence. During 1959–1961, an intelligence command unit was established in the Defence Staff. It was first given the cover name of Inspection Division, because the steps had to be cautious due to the realities of the Cold War.

All the tasks related to intelligence were merged into the Inspection Division, giving Military Intelligence the command organisation it so desperately needed.



Because of the sensitivities of the Cold War, they attempted to keep the entire existence of military intelligence a secret. The Finnish Intelligence Research Establishment was established in 1960, first under the Inspector of Signals, and in 1988, it was attached to the Air Force, but remained under the guidance of the Defence Staff intelligence leadership. It was put back under the direct command of what was now Defence Command Finland in 2011.

In the beginning of the 1990s, the intelligence organisation, led by the Chief of Intelligence, included the Intelligence Division, the Investigation Division and the International Division of the Defence Command, the Finnish Intelligence Research Establishment (as part of the Air Force), and the Military Attaches abroad.

Throughout the Cold War, military intelligence did its job effectively, the most important task being monitoring and assessing the threat posed by the Soviet Union.

### **Intelligence Remains Important After the Cold War**

Around the time of the end of the Cold War in

1989–1992, the political leadership of the country had an increased need for security political and military information and analysis. During international crises, the Chief of Intelligence and the Defence Staff Intelligence Division started to regularly brief also the highest state leadership. A strong intelligence system proved its necessity as international developments and crises became more difficult to foresee after the Cold War.

The most significant recent changes are the establishment of the Defence Forces Military Intelligence Centre in 2007 and its amalgamation with the Finnish Intelligence Research Establishment in 2014, which led to the establishment of the Finnish Defence Intelligence Agency.

The organisation of the Finnish Defence Intelligence Agency was reviewed in the late 2010s and some changes were made to the names of its subordinate units. Structures intended for the application of the Act on Military Intelligence were established at that time. Although military intelligence has served the leadership of the state and of the Defence Forces since 1918, its existence and actions have become known to the public at large only during the 21st century.



The Chiefs of Intelligence from the later years of the Cold War posing for a picture. From the left: Yrjö Viitasaari (1990–2001), Raimo Heiskanen (1971–1982), Aulis Tuominen (1982–1986) and Pertti Nykänen (1986–1990).

# Military Intelligence and Finnish Society

Despite its over 100-year history and nationally important task, military intelligence has been quite an invisible part of Finnish society up until the 2000s. Only the discussion about the Act on Military Intelligence in the late 2010s brought military intelligence to the wider public eye.

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In Finland, civil society and the Finnish Defence Forces have a close relationship.





Finnish Defence Forces arranges public events actively. NH-90 helicopter at the event “Military aviation as a profession” at the Jyväskylä airport in 2024.

Due to Finland’s position, military intelligence has executed its important tasks behind a veil of secrecy. Particularly during the dangerous atmosphere of the Cold War, Finnish military intelligence remained invisible to the public and even its existence was not admitted – after all, Finland was neutral at the time and had friendly relations with the Soviet Union. At the same time, the key task of military intelligence was to collect intelligence and assess the threat posed by the Soviets. Those serving in military intelligence formed a secret circle, and not even the family back home knew exactly where they worked. The relative size of the military intelligence system, its effectiveness and risks to compromising capabilities and targets have required invisibility.

The Finnish Defence Forces is a trusted and respected institution in Finland and military intelligence and its personnel enjoy that same respect. Military intelligence as part of the Defence Forces is above all an external security actor, and does not raise such worries or suspicions as internal security organisations sometime may raise in civil society.

Due to the classified nature of intelligence, meaningful conversations about it are often problematic, and

the basic understanding of the general public about the purpose and methods of intelligence is rather flimsy. The authorities cannot speak much about intelligence, which creates room for misunderstandings. Still, intelligence is an essential part of national security, and a topic of public discussion as such. Internationally, academic Intelligence Studies are a way to produce informative and dispassionate research for public discussion. Intelligence Studies are in their infancy in Finland, but it is a growing discipline that will create an even better foundation for conversations in the future.

Finns feel that Finland and Finnish society are worth defending. In surveys, 79% of Finns share the opinion that Finns must defend themselves in all situations, even if the outcome seems uncertain. The numbers are very high globally. Military intelligence is a key contributor to national security and, as such, a respected part of Finnish society, ready to serve Finland and to ensure the security of the people every day, all year round.









The Military intelligence works  
for the security of Finland  
and the Finns.







**The Finnish Defence Forces**  
puolustusvoimat.fi