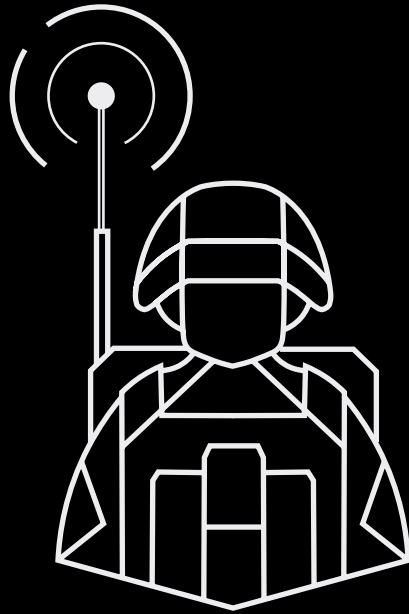




The Finnish Defence Forces



**FINNISH
MILITARY**
INTELLIGENCE REVIEW
2023

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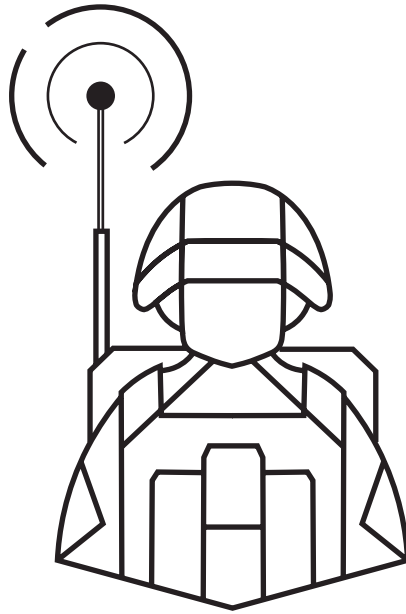
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Foreword by the Chief of Intelligence

The first public Finnish Military Intelligence Review was published in the spring of 2021. Already at that time there were signs that something unconventional, or at least something different, was about to happen. Dark clouds started gathering on European skies in the autumn of 2021 at the latest. Only a few of us could imagine, much less believe, that those dark clouds would bring a storm from the east in a few months' time. A storm that would not only bring destruction, but also have long-lasting effects on the lives of Finns and other Europeans.

Russia invaded Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022, from multiple directions on land, sea and air, and at the same time expanded the conflict it started in 2014. This time, Russia's attack on its neighbour had a significant impact also on the military strength in our neighbouring area. As a result of the war, a considerable number of Russian forces in the vicinity of Finland's border were deployed to Ukraine, which was one indicator of the scope of the attack and the desire to achieve a swift resolution.

In the months following the attack, Finns have come face-to-face with not only the horrors and cruelty of war in a new way, but also with the brave defence of a smaller nation against a larger aggressor. A few years ago, a large-scale war in Europe seemed impossible.

Russia's cruel invasion of Ukraine has reintroduced power politics into international relations in a very concrete manner. The belief that problems always have a peaceful solution has faded, as the most powerful and crude tools of international politics are being used. Therefore, the time after the previous review has been an extremely active period for military intelligence. We have followed the events of the war intensely, as well as its transnational cross-border effects on Finland and our neighbouring area.

One of the tasks of the Finnish Defence Forces is securing the livelihood and basic rights of the population and the freedom of action of the government, as well as defending the rule of law. Accomplishing the tasks requires well-functioning military intelligence.

The military intelligence system works around the clock and does its best to meet the information requirements of the leadership of the Finnish Defence Forces and of the state, and to provide our defence system with the intelligence information that it needs. Ultimately, it is about providing the state leadership and Defence Forces' leadership with an early warning on potential military events and threats facing our country. The volatile international situation

and quickly culminating threats underline the importance of the work.

The Act on Military Intelligence and the powers provided in it have proved to be functional and proportional. Improved information collection has provided intelligence analysis with more comprehensive material than previously. The justification of the existence of any intelligence agency lies in its sources that are not accessible to others and that are thoroughly analyzed. Finnish military intelligence has succeeded in that and is confidently looking into the future.

Finnish military intelligence has served the Finnish Defence Forces and the state leadership as an intelligence service for over one hundred years. Now it is becoming more public: something that was previously unheard of. Still, due to national security there are things in military intelligence that cannot be publicly discussed; secrets that should remain secret. Particularly in the current situation there is a need to protect the organization and its personnel against intelligence and countermeasures by foreign intelligence agencies.

This second military intelligence review offers you a situation update on the operating environment and a review of the past year. You can read more about the structure of the Finnish military intelligence system in the first published military intelligence review ¹.



Defence Command Chief of Intelligence,
Rear Admiral **Juha Vauhkonen**

¹ [Finnish Military Intelligence Review 2021](#)

Current Operating Environment of Finnish Military Intelligence

2022 and the beginning of 2023 have been characterized by the tightening international security situation due to the war in Ukraine, by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on societies, and insecurities relating to the global economy and its development. Among key global megatrends, climate change is a phenomenon that, as it advances and strengthens, has a large impact on various flashpoints around the world. Drought caused by climate change is a key reason and escalating factor for crises, particularly in Africa. Humanitarian disasters caused by climate change and armed conflicts, coupled with global economic instability, are not easy to manage. As a result of these, the prospects of conflict resolution in local and regional crises have deteriorated in many places.

CRISES AND CONFLICTS AROUND THE WORLD

From the perspective of monitoring the security situation and regional crises, developments in the Middle East have a significant impact on the security of Europe as well. Key actors in the Middle East are Iran and Saudi-Arabia in particular, as they strive to increase their regional influence. The years-long negotiations between the United States and Iran on the Iran nuclear deal have a major effect on the development of the situation in the Middle East during the next few years. A signed nuclear deal would help stabilize the security situation in the Persian Gulf.

Another key actor is Israel, which is striving to improve its relations with Arab states in the region. Türkiye is also a regional power. Increasing stability in the Middle East is an important goal, as instability creates space and conditions for radical Islamist organizations that are trying to obtain a foothold in Africa as well. The crises in Yemen, Syria and Libya that were ongoing in the beginning of the review period still remain unresolved today.

Despite the fact that the international community, and the intelligence community as part of it, were monitoring the situation in Afghanistan closely for almost twenty years, the collapse of the Western-backed government in Afghanistan came as a surprise. The speed of the Taliban's takeover exceeded all estimates and led to a rapid withdrawal of the remaining Western actors in Afghanistan in the early autumn of 2021.

Afghanistan's development in the near future is closely tied to the Taliban regime's ability to maintain civil order and to achieve a recognized position in the international community.

A noteworthy development in Africa has been Russia's attempt to expand its influence with the use of Private Military Companies. This has fuelled increased confrontations between local governments and international actors. For example, one such confrontation led to France ending its operations and withdrawing its forces from Mali. Russia's attack on Ukraine and the resulting war between two major grain exporters has caused alarm in Africa regarding the food supply of the continent.

Jeopardized food security, combined with increased drought caused by climate change, is a likely factor threatening the internal stability of African countries. The risk of instability is heightened by chronic socioeconomic problems and the spill-over effects of the global economic situation. All of the above-mentioned factors contribute to the regional refugee situation and the migration pressure directed at Europe.

In addition to the Western countries and Russia, China is also a significant actor in Africa, although it focuses more on economic cooperation on the continent. Its interests and modus operandi in Africa are different from Russia's, as Russia focuses more on security related cooperation. This is one reason why Russia and China have avoided significant competition in Africa thus far.



WAR IN EUROPE – SITUATION IN UKRAINE

As Russia launched its large-scale offensive in February 2022, Europe woke up to a new reality regarding the use of force. The security situation had been changing gradually since 2014, when Russia occupied the Crimean Peninsula, annexed it illegally and started supporting the separatist areas in Eastern Ukraine.

The seeds of power politics had been sown already in 2008 when Russia attacked its neighbour, Georgia. Already for a long time, Russia has maintained the image that the West, particularly the United States and NATO, has a hostile approach towards Russia. This is the rhetoric that Russia feeds its own population to justify the war in Ukraine. From the Russian perspective, the West is encroaching Russia's sphere of influence and this is against Russia's interests.

Russia has aggressively threatened and warned Western countries not to get involved in the war in Ukraine. Russia has, on numerous occasions, used the rhetoric of reminding other nations of its nuclear weapons, or even threatened with the use of nuclear weapons.

In the autumn of 2022 Russia announced the annexation of four (partially) occupied regions that belong to Ukraine. The annexation is not internationally recognized or legally valid.

Belarus has allowed the Russian Armed Forces to use its territory and airspace for operations in Ukraine. This has further restricted Belarus' room to manoeuvre on the international stage. In order to remain in power, the Belarussian re-

gime is dependent on Russian support.

The large Russian offensive launched in Ukraine in February 2022 has not achieved the objectives set for it. During the first weeks of the war, the Ukrainian Armed Forces were able to repel Russian attempts to capture Kyiv and other strategically important objectives. Russia captured large areas in Eastern and Southern Ukraine with ground attacks, but Ukraine has been able to retake some of these areas with counterattacks.

Furthermore, during the war the Russian Armed Forces have suffered major casualties, as well as materiel losses. Units of the Russian Armed Forces located close to Finland have also participated in the war in Ukraine and have suffered considerable losses. The Russian invasion has caused massive amounts of human suffering and economic losses, and it is already clear at this point that it will take years, if not decades to rebuild Ukraine, to restore the security situation and to improve the humanitarian situation. Additionally, it is obvious that relations between Russia and Ukraine have been destroyed for decades.

The Russian leadership has continued to tighten its grip on civil society by increasing control and by steering public opinion. This has been influenced by the continuing war in Ukraine, poor military success, and the effects of the Western political and economic sanctions. So far, there have not been any large protests in opposition to the war against Ukraine and the Russian political leadership has been able to maintain a relatively stable position.

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Duties of the Finnish Defence Forces include conducting surveillance of Finland's land and sea areas and airspace, as well as securing the nation's territorial integrity. Fulfilling the task requires a well-functioning intelligence system. Hamina-class missile fast attack craft displayed in the picture.



Long-term commitment to the war in Ukraine will very likely significantly restrict and redirect Russia's global power aspirations, at least for the duration of this decade. As part of increasing its global influence, Russia is involved in security and energy sector activities of many African nations, trying to thus replace the influence it has lost elsewhere.

CHINA AND PACIFIC REGION

Military and political cooperation between China and Russia has increased. Around the time of the Beijing Winter Olympics 2022, the countries issued a common declaration that further deepened their cooperation. The Chinese interpretation is that the West, and the United States in particular, seeks to expand its sphere of influence globally by increasing its military presence and by expanding its network of allies. In Chinese rhetoric this has also indirectly been the reason for the war in Ukraine. From China's perspective, issues regarding global security and great powers' spheres of influence are more important for global security developments than the conflicts of interests between individual states.

Lately, views on the position of Taiwan have considerably strained relations between China and the United States. China seeks the "reunification" of Taiwan mainly by diplomatic and economic means, but it has conducted military shows of force to demonstrate its military readiness. Furthermore, China sees that the increased cooperation between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, in the so-called AUKUS framework, seeks to limit its influence in the Pacific. China has politically not objected to Russia in regards to the war in Ukraine and it has assumed an observing role.

Asian countries that work together with the United States have not traditionally engaged in significant multilateral security cooperation. In the last few years, however, there have been active attempts to develop various cooperation networks. The particular goal of this cooperation is to slow down the growth of Chinese influence. Multilateral cooperation does not replace cooperation with the United States, but it complements it.

After the Second World War Japan adopted a pacifist approach, concentrating on national defence, but lately it has started to actively develop its armed forces and is considerably increasing its defence budget. Reinforcing its national defence capability will make Japan a more equal partner in its defence alliance with the United States in the long term and strengthens the country's role as a regional security actor.



F/A-18 Hornet is the main aircraft of the Finnish Air Force. The fleet will be replaced by F-35 multirole combat aircraft by the end of the decade.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

The most significant military-strategic events in the Baltic Sea region have been Finland and Sweden's decisions to seek NATO membership as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Denmark's decision in the summer to join the EU's Common Defence and Security Policy. The Danish EU defence cooperation opt-out had thus far restricted the country's security policy activities, for example in the areas of EU-NATO cooperation and development of Nordic cooperation, and prevented Denmark's participation in the EU's permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and military operations in a EU framework.

The level of military activity in Finland's military operating environment has remained high. Countries of the Baltic Sea region have organized national and international exercises on land, at sea and in the air. It is possible that Finland's NATO membership will affect the future deployment and operating plans of the Russian Armed Forces, when Russia's North-western border will also be NATO's new Eastern border.

The war in Europe tragically emphasizes the critical role of situational awareness in the decision-making of the state leadership and in national defence. Finland's military operating environment that had remained stable



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and relatively predictable for a long time has now changed drastically. Finland's position as a neighbour of Russia, which is using ruthless power politics to advance its interests, emphasizes the need for continuous situational awareness, intelligence analysis and monitoring of the operating environment in the Finnish Defence Forces. Monitoring the armed forces of the neighbouring area and the situation of the Baltic Sea security environment, as well as comprehensive situational awareness remain critically important from a national security perspective.

Although the conventional war between Russia and Ukraine is currently dominating the media landscape, the power struggle between great powers remains ongoing in other domains. Strategic competition between the United States and China, particularly in the cyber and space domains, will likely be emphasized in the next few years, as the countries strive to avoid escalating the situation into a conventional military conflict.

Another noteworthy phenomenon is broad-spectrum influencing. Broad-spectrum influencing refers to hostile actions outside the traditional elements of warfare, which use all available means and capabilities of a state in order to have an effect on the societal and na-

tional decision-making of the target state. The tools of broad-spectrum influencing are tailored according to the target's defence capability, and according to the desired objective and effect.

The number of available tools is large, ranging from political pressure and information influencing to computer network operations and military threats. The objective of broad-spectrum influencing is to cause disruptions in the functioning, decision-making and operational preconditions of the targeted society. A common denominator is to erode trust of the target society's population in the functionality of the political decision-making system and authorities. Broad-spectrum influencing also includes interfering with infrastructure that is central to the functioning of society, such as electricity infrastructure or online services maintained by the authorities.

Finnish society is well-prepared to identify and combat broad-spectrum influencing, through cooperation between authorities, civil society and business life. Despite a good level of preparedness, identifying broad spectrum influencing is difficult as it can be directed at the targeted society regularly or at random, which is also purposeful influencing, seeking to take advantage of the element of surprise.

Current Issues in Finnish Military Intelligence

Finnish military intelligence has had a very hectic year. Since Russia started concentrating its forces on the border with Ukraine in the autumn of 2021, the monitoring and analysis of the military and security policy operating environment has required additional resources. At the same time, the intelligence system has improved its capabilities and readiness for intelligence collection and analysis. The threats are versatile and broad, as well as difficult to assess and predict. Intelligence collection has been able to gather such sources for analysis that cannot otherwise be obtained.

Providing sufficient early warning of a military threat directed at Finland is the most important task of Finnish military intelligence. Military intelligence authorities face new challenges constantly as the operating environment becomes more technologically advanced, the threats more complex and information societies more dependent on technologies. The intelligence system must constantly be developed in order to accomplish the tasks. As a result of long-term development, military intelligence has a range of tools available for intelligence collection and

considerable analysis capability.

As elsewhere in the information society, the massive amount of information is a key challenge for military intelligence. Special attention must be paid to information management and handling. Hopefully, artificial intelligence and machine learning will provide all intelligence collection methods with significant additional capability in the near future. However, strengthening intelligence collection and analysis capabilities requires constant investment and work: you have to run to stay still.



Ministry of Defence issues intelligence priorities as commands to the Defence Command.

Intelligence Disciplines

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.

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.

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 people and the information they possess.

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

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.

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.

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 exploitation 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.

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.

Communications Intelligence (COMINT) is a sub-category of radio signals intelligence that targets 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.



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ACT ON MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

The conditions for intelligence collection improved with the 2019 legislative reform. The intelligence collection methods listed in chapter 4 of the Military Intelligence Act enable intelligence collection that we were previously unable to perform.

The decisions on intelligence collection methods are based on the intelligence task assigned by the Chief of Intelligence. That task in turn is based on the military intelligence focus areas that have been determined by a meeting of the President of the Republic and the Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy. Thus, each decision on an intelligence collection method is connected to the political guidance of the highest state leadership. Using a method requires that the prerequisites mentioned in the Act are met, the restrictions and prohibitions in the Act are followed, and that legal principles are considered, both in when deciding on whether to use a specific method and when using it. The military intelligence authority ensures the legitimacy of the activity by constant examination,

from the moment of decision to when the use of the collection method is ended.

Intelligence collection methods are used to obtain otherwise unobtainable information on the targets of military intelligence operations. Intelligence obtained with different intelligence collection methods supports creating a comprehensive situation picture in the military intelligence community.

Decisions on intelligence collection methods done by military intelligence authorities and District Courts have increased by approximately 17 % from 2020 to 2021, and by approximately 114 % from 2021 to 2022. The growth demonstrates that there has been a particular need for these powers. The methods have proved to be beneficial for the implementation of military intelligence activities.

Intelligence collection from network traffic is a completely new activity for Finnish military intelligence and this has also required new legislation. The amount of traffic in cross-border communication networks is very large, several terabytes per second, and this will increase further as technology advances.

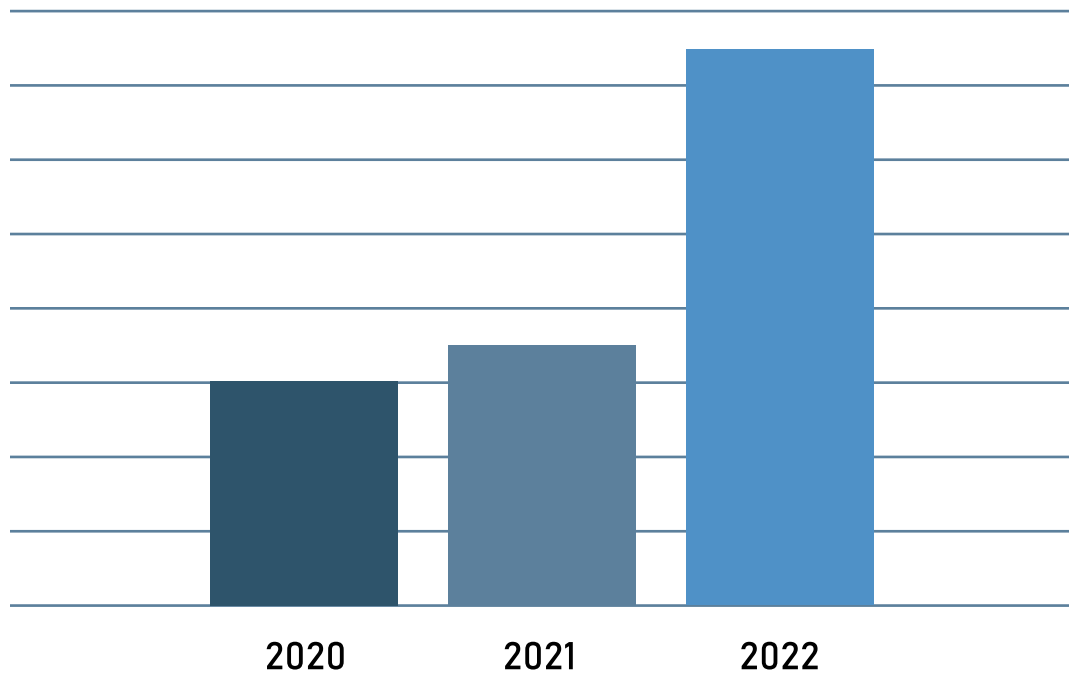


Table: Decisions on the use of intelligence collection methods 2020–2022.



Using the powers regarding the processing of technical data, military intelligence must momentarily collect technical data out of this massive amount of traffic in order to concentrate network traffic intelligence collection to the relevant part in the communication network and its traffic. This avoids conducting network traffic intelligence collection in such part of an information network that transfers data that is not of interest to the intelligence task.

The information collected from technical data processing has an immediate effect on intelligence collection done through network traffic intelligence, and particularly on directing it. The short time span of the data collection reduces the possibilities to detect routing changes and to identify new targets for military intelligence in network traffic.

Consequently, military intelligence sees that the functionality of the Act should be reviewed in light of the gained experiences. Military intelligence sees that during the processing of technical data, technical data from network traffic should be collected using other parameters in addition to the duration, and that this should be possible without extending the Act's scope of application. We should also be able to use the collected technical data better than the current legislation allows, in order to focus the intelligence collection more closely than just on the parts of the communication network and the changes happening in them.

Finnish military intelligence may participate

in international cooperation within the limits set in the Act on Military Intelligence, if approved by the Chief of Intelligence. The directives should be reviewed, in view of the future and the changed foreign and security policy situation. Internationalization in the intelligence community also includes the Services, i.e. Army, Navy and Air Force. The more independent role of the Services in international intelligence cooperation should be evaluated in cases where it does not concern the use of intelligence collection methods.

Extensive and independent legality control helps maintain the trust and acceptance of intelligence activities. Legality control done by the Intelligence Ombudsman has been done in real-time and it has been active and thorough. The Parliamentary Ombudsman has also, in their own legality control duties, examined the decisions on intelligence methods. In addition to the above-mentioned external control, the Chief of Defence Command Finland also oversees Finnish military intelligence. The Legal Division of Defence Command Finland, led by the Chief Legal Advisor, is responsible for legality control with real-time and quarterly inspections. Additionally, the Ministry of Defence conducts quarterly inspections, and the Intelligence Oversight Committee of the Finnish Parliament oversees intelligence. The oversight strengthens the acceptance of Finnish military intelligence in society and supports the purpose of military intelligence as part of national defence.

Navy ships have considerable ISR-capabilities.

MILITARY COUNTERINTELLIGENCE

The main task of military counterintelligence is to collect information on intelligence activity directed at Finland’s national defence by foreign intelligence services, and to conduct active measures to prevent it. Military counterintelligence supports protecting the defence system by preventing and exposing external and internal threats against national defence.

Changes in the operating environment have given rise to increasingly more complex threats. Success in the task requires close and continuous cooperation with different security actors in the Finnish Defence Forces and with other authorities.

During 2022, foreign states directed methodical intelligence collection at Finnish national defence. It was directed at defence and security policy decision-making, key infrastructure, Finnish Defence Forces activities and at ongoing strategic capability projects. The main effort of the intelligence collection has been directed at future and yet-to-be-published decisions and other information that is not available publicly. The intelligence services used different methods, such as Human Intelligence, to collect the information.

Another key activity that helps protect the defence system is personal security clearances. Their purpose is to prevent activities that endanger national security and national defence. The current situation in international relations and the receding of the COVID-19 pandemic was also reflected in the number of security clearance vettings. A total of 17 737 comprehensive, standard and concise security clearance vettings were conducted in 2022.

Additionally, intelligence collection directed at companies is a threat to the defence system, particularly in Defence Forces’ projects and in preparing for emergency conditions. Facility security clearances are another way of preventing intelligence gathering directed at companies. A total of 37 Facility Security Clearance vettings were conducted in 2022. Finland’s NATO membership will increase the demand for Personal and Facility Security Clearances.

Changes in Finland’s security policy environment in the next few years and changes in the entity of national defence are still of interest to foreign intelligence services. According to estimates by Finnish military intelligence, Finland’s national defence will face at least as many threats in 2023 as in previous years.

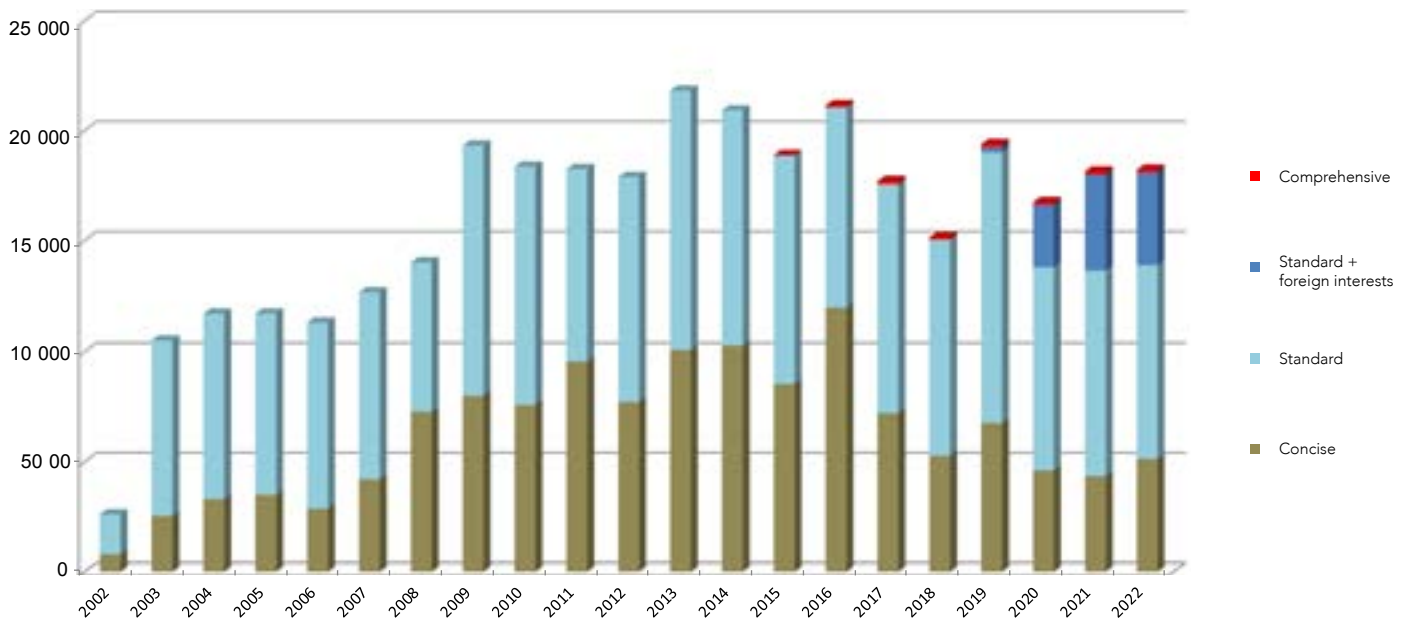


Table: Completed security clearance vettings 2002–2022.

FINNISH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OUTLOOK

Upon entry to NATO, Finland receives the full rights of a member of the Alliance with corresponding obligations. As a member of the Alliance, Finland will participate in NATO's common decision-making, defence planning and readiness as well as contributing to early warning processes.

NATO membership will also have an effect on Finnish military intelligence. Part of readiness is the aim to create a common situational awareness of the operating environment on the Alliance level, as well as an operational picture of global events and readiness to warn about threatening developments. More will be expect-

ed of military intelligence on the one hand, but on the other, NATO's information exchange and increased cooperation will create the opportunity to benefit from the resources and skills of other Alliance members.

Military security is seamlessly a part of comprehensive security. The importance of rapid national decision making is a key factor in the functioning of modern information societies. Developments in international relations are difficult to forecast and their effects are reflected in Finland's security in many ways, even unexpectedly fast. The military intelligence system is stronger than ever, and it is ready to fulfil its task to ensure the security of Finland and the Finnish people.

UAVs are part of the airborne intelligence capability. Catapults are used to launch Orbiter 2b UAVs.





The Finnish Defence Forces