



Finnish Defence Forces International Centre

Our reference

FINCENT, MAJ Fredrik Wallenberg

Phone: +46-(0)70-815 7233

e-mail: fredrik.wallenberg@fincen.fi

October 9, 2025

INVITATION TO APPLY

Approaches to Protection of Civilians in NATO and UN Operations (NATO UN POC) Course

**Self-Study Phase 18 December 2025 – 15 February 2026
and Residential Phase 2 –13 March 2026**

Finnish Defence Forces International Centre, Helsinki, Finland

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Approaches to Protection of Civilians in NATO and UN Operations (NATO UN POC) Course is organised by the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre, FINCENT. Course consist of two phases: self-study phase and residential phase. The online self-study phase takes 3 – 4 full working days (30 hours) and can be conducted from 18 December 2025 to 15 February 2026. Fully completed self-study is requisite for entering the residential course phase. The residential phase will be conducted 2 – 13 March 2026 (90 hours) in Helsinki, Finland.

2. APPROACHES TO PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN NATO AND UN OPERATIONS COURSE (NATO UN POC)

2.1 Purpose and aim

The Approaches to Protection of Civilians in NATO and UN Operations (NATO UN POC) Course aim is to improve the understanding of the military role, alongside other protection actors, when people, society and populations are directly attacked in 21st century conflicts, including so-called non-shooting wars. The military role in protection and provision of human security from deliberate targeting is poorly understood, regardless of organisation. Therefore, it is essential to bring military and non-military audiences together to explore and better understand the utility and limitations of military force in protection and human security, whether in a UN peace operations context, in civil wars or on large scale combat against state-based threats. The learners are introduced to a set of tools to analyse, plan, execute and evaluate protection efforts, based on a systematic and structured approach of analysis and matching of military and non-military actions.

Although the main focus is on protection from threats of physical violence, the scope covers the full range, including unintentional, accidental and incidental harm civilians are exposed to, from all sides and across all types of wars. To understand how military protectors may cause inadvertent and long-term reverberating consequences on a populace – the course also examines how the military can support other non-kinetic actions to reduce the damaging effects war has on civilians.

In total, the course empowers participants not only with new knowledge critical for integrating human security in military operations, but also with personal tools to enhance learning, communicative and empathic consciousness – essential 21st century professional competences.

Self-Study Phase

The purpose of the self-study is to establish a baseline for learners from diverse organisational and professional backgrounds. The material is designed to be engaging, and you'll even see a dash of competition to 'spice up' your learning process.

After completing the pre-course self-study phase, you should be able to:

- explain how variations in threats against civilians determine the military role in protection
- summarise key aspects of the NATO and UN PoC policies
- compare the approaches to PoC between NATO and UN, with criteria you find relevant
- explain how International Law governs PoC and why these conventions are under pressure
- formulate key aspects of humanitarian work and challenges in conflict zones
- explore how hybrid threats and war can be understood, and their potential relationship with PoC and Human Security

Residential Phase

The residential phase of the course consists of five modules:

1. Military Role
2. Operational Environment
3. Threat Analysis
4. Establishing security
5. Applying Competences

The Residential Phase learning outcomes are

- Knowledge: Explain the role, utility, and limitations of military force in protecting civilians from physical violence in contemporary armed conflict.
- Skills: Analyse variations in threats to civilians in armed conflict.
- Competence: Evaluate how and with what tools military forces may reduce violence against civilians in armed conflict.

The final module – Applying Competences - includes an exercise where the learners apply insights from the course main aims; aided by cutting-edge EdTech learning tools in XR, learners will analyse threats to civilians in ways they have never experienced before. This final activity will also include collaboration on development of relevant responses tailored to specific threats.

The course is designed around the principles of flipped classroom and consists of interactive lessons with active learning methods, case studies, individual and small group assignments.

This course fills the NATO requirement for strategic and operational level by equipping participants to reach Proficiency level 300 – Independent (Employ, Execute, Incorporate) after on-the-job training.

The self-study assignments must be completed **no later than 15th February 2026**.

3. PARTICIPATION

3.1 Student Criteria

This Course has been designed for both military and civilian staff working at the strategic or operational level in NATO, NATO-Partners or UN T/PCC Nations and IO/NGO's working with NATO or UN in these operational environments.

To be eligible to attend the course, applicants must fulfil the following criteria:

- Military Officers (OF-3 through OF-5) working at the strategic or operational level in NATO, NATO-Partners or UN T/PCC.
- Personnel working in analysis, planning, operational, management or leadership roles and who are required to or are positioned to act on Protection of Civilians in their respective organisations.
- Personnel in NATO Command and NATO Force Structure.
- NATO Partner nations' staff.
- UN Staff (All Levels), UN TCC Staff.
- Basic computer skills including the use of Microsoft Office.
- English skills equivalent to a professional user level (NATO STANAG 6001 level 3-2-3-2/Common European Framework of Reference for Language level B2-C1/Upper Intermediate–Advanced level).

Protection of civilians is a priority task, not a specialist topic. Therefore, to implement POC successfully in the planning and conduct of operations and missions, the involvement of the entire military staff is required.

Due to the interactive nature of the course, a wide breadth of backgrounds and expertise is desirable. Therefore, representation is encouraged from all the military staff codes/functions; civilian organisations and subject matter experts on various topics linking into protection of civilians.

3.2 Security Clearance

The course is UNCLASSIFIED. A security clearance is not required.

3.3 Passport and Visa Requirement

A valid passport is needed to enter Finland. FINCENT is located in the Campus of the National Defence University which is a military area. Passport is the only valid ID accepted from the non-Finnish visitors.

Participants, or their national authorities, are responsible for visa arrangements (if needed). Participants are advised to contact, well in advance, proper diplomatic agencies for up-to-date information. It is the individual's responsibility to apply for and obtain their visa and to have the proper travel documentation.

4. APPLICATION

Student applications have to be submitted using the LYYTI Management system. The application form can be found online at:

<https://www.lyyti.in/NATOUNPOC-1-2026>



The last day for applications is 12th of December 2025.

For non-EU applicants, it is compulsory to provide the following attachments:

- a scanned colour copy of the applicant's passport. The passport pages have to contain the picture, full name, nationality, date of birth, passport number and passport expiry date. When filling out the application form, write your name exactly as it is written in your passport.
- an official request letter using the organization's formal style document. The letter should include the reason for the application, an explanation of the expected benefit for the applicant and the sending organization, and whether a subsidy is requested. If a subsidy is requested, the letter has to explain in detail what is required.

Subsidized student places are available for nations only upon a special request by the nominating nation. Whether a subsidy is granted or not is decided on a case-by-case basis by FINCENT. The decision will be announced to the selected students in the course confirmation letter.

Please note: every seat on the course has to be applied separately using the online application system. FINCENT request to have priority list of candidates from nations or organizations requesting multiple seats for the course.

All documents have to be written in English. Please do not attach any letters or other documents in any other language as they will be disregarded.

FINCENT will inform all applicants by **16th of December 2025** whether or not they have been admitted to the course. If admitted to the course, the student will receive a Course Confirmation along with a pre-course information package providing further details about the course. The selection process will be carried out according to the course needs (a balance between military and civilian in NATO, UN and humanitarian personnel, as well as a balance between strategic and operational level personnel).

5. ADMINISTRATION

5.1 Payment of the course

The teaching on this course is free of charge. Course expenses are 650€ per student. The expenses cover accommodation at FINCENT Campus from Sunday 1 March to Friday 13 March 2026 including the weekend. FINCENT offers the course social events and transportation from and to the Helsinki Airport.

5.2 Other costs related to the course

Students are responsible for their travels to Helsinki. Other expenses to be paid by the students are daily meals. Average price for three meals at the National Defence University Dining Hall is estimated to 20 euros daily.

5.3 Self-studies phase (Online)

The obligatory pre-course material and assignments will be available online for the selected students from **18th of December 2025**. The pre-course online study is to be completed by **15th of February, 2026**. The estimate workload is 3–4 full working days (30 hours).

5.4 Residential phase

The residential phase will be conducted at FINCENT (Helsinki, Finland) 2 –13 March 2026.

6. Next NATO UN POC course

The next course of the NATO UN POC residential phase will be on 7 – 18 September 2026 including 11 full working days (90 hours). The self-study phase will open earlier and the exact timings will be verified later. For latest information and updates, visit <https://puolustusvoimat.fi/en/web/fincent/nato-un-poc1>

7. CONTACT

Questions regarding the course content, methods and learning outcomes can also be asked by contacting the Integrated Security Discipline Department Head and Course OPR Virpi Levomaa (virpi.levomaa@fincent.fi).

Other questions concerning the course administration and practicalities, please contact FINCENT Student administration: fincentstudent@mil.fi.

Course webpage with a video can be found here:
<https://puolustusvoimat.fi/en/web/fincen/nato-un-poc1>

More information about FINCENT can be found at www.fincen.fi

WELCOME to the course organized by the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre!

Esapekka Vehkaoja
Colonel
Commandant FINCENT