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There has been a fundamental shift in the threat to Sweden. Not only has globalisation and digital transformation led to increasing vulnerabilities, hostile states have also intensified their efforts to weaken our country. Intelligence activities are rife, and in 2019 it became all the more evident that a wider range of stakeholders across society must give higher priority to Sweden’s national security.

Technological advancements have generated numerous new methods by which hostile states collect information. Attacks also target an increasing number of areas, including individuals’ constitutional rights and freedoms, our country’s economic prosperity, and our political and territorial sovereignty.

Russia’s current strategy, aimed to achieve its security policy objectives without armed conflict, is geared towards influencing and weakening Sweden, the EU and other countries in the West. In addition to unlawful intelligence activities targeting security-sensitive sectors, Russia is using influence operations and economic leverage as well as seeking to increase polarisation across society.

China engages in sophisticated cyber espionage aimed to benefit its own economic development and increase its military capacity. Its activities include large-scale
intelligence collection and theft of technology and R & D.

We have also noted that both Russia and China target individuals promoting democracy and human rights.

In protecting Sweden and our democratic system, the Security Service works relentlessly to prevent hostile states from engaging in unlawful intelligence activities against our country. In 2019, we detected and investigated several intelligence officers and their agents.

We know that sensitive information is constantly being collected by hostile states, long before we reach a potential heightened state of alert. Such activities, which are aimed to destabilise our country — if or when this is considered necessary — pose a new and deeper threat to national security.

Today's technological advancements bring significant challenges. We know, for instance, that the roll-out of 5G and the development of the Internet of Things, by which everyday devices are connected to the internet, will have an impact on national security for a long time. The potential of this is yet to be fully understood.

Looking ahead, this wider, deeper and more complex threat, coupled with increasing vulnerabilities, calls for a higher priority to be given to national security on the strategic political level, by public agencies and industry. Keeping Sweden safe requires resources, perseverance and a long-term approach. We cannot afford not to prioritise the protection of our country.

The Security Service welcomes the new Protective Security Act, which came into force in 2019. This act, and how it is complied with, plays a key role in reducing vulnerabilities across society, and we have published guidelines in this area. There is also the building-up of a national cyber security centre to be staffed by experts from several government agencies, including the Security Service. Responding to the threat requires a team effort.

The Total Defence Exercise 2020 provides an opportunity to practise team work. As stakeholders in this exercise, our main task is to prevent unlawful intelligence activities by hostile nations. We know from past experience that this type of exercise attracts much attention from other countries.

The security threat to Sweden also comes from violent extremists, posing both a short-term and a long-term threat to democracy. In 2019, the debate largely concerned individuals who had travelled to and returned from conflict areas. As much as these individuals must be monitored, it is equally important to focus on contexts they left, and which are still thriving. In this respect, all sectors of society have a key role to play in keeping our country safe.

In 2019, the Security Service also noted developments in violent right-wing extremism. There is an increased risk that individuals inspired by this ideology may carry out terrorist attacks or commit other serious violent crimes. Such attacks have recently been carried out in e.g. Norway, Germany, New Zealand and the US. Violent right-wing extremism is gaining ground and attracting more supporters. This trend is supported by hostile states, which stand to benefit from an increasing polarisation across society.

In the past year, much effort has been put into preventing the growth of extremism, e.g. by using all available legislation against individuals involved in radicalisation, financing and recruitment. It is a matter of great concern that a relatively large number of organisations with links to violent extremism receive public funding in the form of subsidies, amounting to millions of Swedish kronor, which in the long term could benefit these circles.

Increasing threats and vulnerabilities present significant challenges and difficult priorities to our Service. We must expand and further advance our technical expertise while at the same time dealing with a reality in which the number of operational cases has doubled in the past decade. The cases have also become more complex.

Another challenge relates to legislation and its application, which in several areas is not keeping pace with the new threat landscape.

In recent years, hostile states have increased their intent to exert influence over Sweden and Swedish interests, and their capability to do so has expanded. All of us must therefore pay more attention to security — whether in protecting sensitive information or preventing violent extremism.

Klas Friberg,
Head of the Swedish Security Service
The Security Service in brief

Our Service is both a security service and a police service, with a nationwide remit. A security service is tasked with increasing the level of national security by detecting and preventing security threats to their country and its critical assets, and by reducing vulnerabilities associated with these assets.

Governance
The Security Service operates under the Government, and the Head of the Security Service has the ultimate responsibility for its operation. It is governed by instructions and appropriation directions, in which the goals and remit are set forth. The appropriation directions, renewed every year, are classified. Our Service is to monitor world developments so as to be able to rapidly adjust our operational activities in response to new situations. The Security Service is also governed by various statutes, such as the Police Act. What distinguishes the Security Service from other government agencies is that most of the documents covering our governance, planning and reporting are classified, on the grounds of national security.

Threats
To ensure the functioning and maintenance of Sweden’s democracy and sovereignty, the Head of State, the Government and the Parliament, as well as information on Sweden’s national defence and key buildings, are to be regarded as critical assets. A threat arises when an individual, an organisation or a hostile state has both the intent and the capability to commit a criminal act, e.g. a terrorist attack or espionage. Intent and capability may change over time, and we modify our assessments and adjust our measures in response to the current situation.

Intelligence
Our intelligence work is carried out both nationally and internationally. This work consists of the direction, collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of information. National collection of information is carried out through surveillance, human sources, interrogations, contacts with other public agencies and organisations, etc. Once the information has been processed, investigated and analysed, and conclusions have been drawn, these are further processed by our Service; a criminal investigation may be launched and conducted by our investigators or a prosecutor. Information may also be shared with other public agencies or organisations to allow them to take appropriate measures within their areas of responsibility. Initiating legal proceedings, declaring a foreign diplomat persona non grata in Sweden, or improving protection in some respect are all examples of such measures. In an international context, intelligence enabling us to meet our remit is often gathered by our liaison officers posted abroad.

Registers
Under the Act concerning the Swedish Security Service’s Processing of Personal Data, the Security Service may process personal data when this is necessary to prevent, avert or detect offences against national security. Our Service may also process personal data when people apply for security-classified positions. This procedure includes checks against police records. Our Service is not allowed to register personal data based solely on what is known about a person’s racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, health or sexual orientation.
Secrecy
Our Service strives to be as open as possible about our work and conclusions. However, our first consideration is always our operations and national security. Our working methods cannot be disclosed and sources must be protected. In ongoing criminal investigations, our Service, just like the Police Authority, must leave it to the person heading the investigation to decide on the extent of investigation secrecy, the purpose of which is to prevent investigations from being jeopardised or hampered.

Transparency
Our Service is inspected not only by the bodies supervising the national administration, such as the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Office of the Chancellor of Justice, but also by the Commission on Security and Integrity Protection (SIN). SIN inspects how our Service handles personal data and also acts at the request of private individuals to check the use of intrusive measures. The Security Service is also overseen by a council tasked with ensuring public transparency. The members of this oversight council, appointed by the Government and representing all parliamentary parties, closely monitor our operational activities and may provide advice and suggestions to the Head of the Security Service.

The Security Service – nationwide

Our Service has a nationwide remit and operates from our head office in Solna and from six regional offices. These offices act on behalf of the head office to collect information and take threat-reducing measures, often in cooperation with other public agencies, including the Police Authority. They also provide protective security information and advice, and take part in the protection of the central government. Our regional offices thus support and contribute to our operational activities from their regional perspectives.

Regional offices
- Nord in Umeå: the counties of Västerbotten, Jämtland and Norrbotten.
- Mitt in Uppsala: the counties of Gävleborg, Uppsala and Västmanland.
- Bergslagen in Örebro: the counties of Dalarna, Värmland and Örebro.
- Väst in Gothenburg: the counties of Halland and Västra Götaland.
- Syd in Malmö: the counties of Blekinge, Kalmar, Kronoberg and Skåne.
- Öst in Linköping: the counties of Jönköping, Södermanland and Östergötland.
The Security Service cooperates extensively with both national and international partners. Much of this cooperation serves to share experiences and information, but it also involves mutual investigative and operational support.

National cooperation
Our Service's most important national cooperation partners are other intelligence and law-enforcement agencies, such as the Military Intelligence and Security Service, the National Defence Radio Establishment, the Police Authority and the Economic Crime Authority. Much of this cooperation serves to share experiences and information, but it also involves investigative and operational support, for instance by providing the Police Authority with expertise, threat assessments, surveillance and analyses.

In terms of dignitary protection, our Service works closely with local police to plan and implement protective measures within their respective geographical areas of responsibility.

Our Service also cooperates with entities covered by the protective security legislation: government agencies, municipalities, regions and certain companies.

The Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Council, made up of 14 Swedish government agencies, aims to strengthen Sweden's ability to counter terrorism. The council held its first meeting at the beginning of 2005, on the initiative of our Service. The council is led and convened by the Head of the Security Service, and the other participants are the heads of the member agencies: the Economic Crime Authority, the National Defence Radio Establishment, the Armed Forces, the Prison and Probation Service, the Coast Guard, the Migration Agency, the Civil Contin-

The Security Service has five main areas of operation:

**Counter-intelligence**
- involves preventing and detecting espionage and other unlawful intelligence activities targeting Sweden and Swedish interests abroad, foreign interests in Sweden, and refugees.

**Protective security**
- involves raising the level of security across society through analyses, records checks, inspections of and recommendations to public agencies and companies operating in sectors critical to national security.

**Dignitary protection**
- involves protecting the central government and foreign diplomatic representatives, and ensuring security at state visits and similar events.

**Counter-terrorism**
- involves preventing and detecting terrorism targeting Sweden, Swedish interests abroad and foreign interests in Sweden, acts of terrorism in other countries, international terrorist networks in Sweden as well as the support and financing of terrorism.

**Counter-subversion**
- involves countering harassment, threats, violence, coercion or corruption aimed at harming Sweden’s democratic system of government.

**Counter-proliferation**
- involves countering proliferation, which involves preventing the proliferation, procurement and production of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Our primary task in this area is to prevent the transfer of expertise, products, substances or micro-organisms from or via Sweden to actors seeking to procure or develop WMDs or their means of delivery. This work is carried out in close cooperation with other public agencies.

Our Service is also tasked with preventing individuals who pose or may come to pose a security threat to Sweden from staying or settling in Sweden. Our role under aliens legislation, and as a referral body for the Migration Agency, is a key element in this work.
agencies Agency, the Police Authority, the Tax Agency, the Radiation Safety Authority, the Defence Research Agency, the Transport Agency and the Prosecution Authority.

The National Centre for Terrorist Threat Assessment (NCT) is a permanent cross-agency working group, staffed by the Security Service, the National Defence Radio Establishment and the Military Intelligence and Security Service. The NCT is tasked with long-term and short-term assessments of the terrorist threat to Sweden and Swedish interests. The NCT’s terrorist threat level scale applies to all of Sweden, over time, and is based on strategic and forward-looking assessments of actors’ intent and capability to carry out terrorist attacks targeting Sweden.

International cooperation
As global developments may have consequences for Sweden and affect the threat to national security, our Service depends on well-developed international cooperation. Our closest partners are the security services of the Nordic countries, the EU and other countries in the West.

Europol is the law-enforcement agency of the EU aimed to assist the EU member states in further strengthening their cooperation in order to prevent and counter organised transnational crime and terrorism. Our Service has a liaison officer stationed at the Europol headquarters.

Interpol is the world’s largest international police organisation with about 190 member countries tasked with preventing and countering transnational crime by enabling and facilitating police cooperation. Interpol focuses on five prioritised crime areas, including terrorism.

The UN and the EU are two important international players whose decisions and activities often impact on our Service’s work, for instance when these bodies make decisions on sanctions and other restrictive measures. International cooperation rests not only on shared values but also on numerous conventions and treaties that Sweden has signed, primarily as a member of the EU and the UN.

As a member of the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG), a cooperation platform established in 2001, our Service cooperates with 30 security services of the EU, Norway and Switzerland. It enables us to share intelligence quicker, cut down on the red tape and work even more effectively to counter terrorism. Together we have, so far, prevented several terrorist attacks from being carried out in Europe.
Threats and vulnerabilities impacting on Sweden’s national security

Globalisation and digital technology not only present brand new opportunities but also come with new and changing vulnerabilities. Hostile states take advantage of gaps in security to collect information and to influence decision-makers and others. International terrorism changed slightly in 2019, with an increase in the number of terrorist attacks in the West carried out by violent right-wing extremists. These are some assessments made by the Security Service as regards the threats to Sweden.

The security policy situation in Sweden has deteriorated. Global developments are marked by increasing great-power competition weakening international standards and cooperation. With increasing unpredictability, hostile states more and more often deliberately act below the threshold of armed conflict.

The cyber threat could do serious harm to critical infrastructure in Sweden. Digital transformation, coupled with more devices being connected to the internet and unrectified major gaps in IT security, poses an increased risk of disruptions to essential services. Cyber attacks targeting other countries could also have serious consequences for Sweden.

Hostile states carry out overt and covert influence operations against Sweden at national, regional and local levels. Last year, in addition to the intelligence threat posed by Russia, it became evident that China is overtly seeking to influence constitutional rights and freedoms in Sweden.

In the past year, the Security Service noticed an increased interest from hostile states in individuals in Sweden with close personal ties to other countries. This applies both to individuals regarded by these countries as regime critics, and to individuals holding security-sensitive positions.

Sweden’s total defence planning has resumed to increase our country’s capacity in case of armed conflict. One part of this is to strengthen Sweden’s ability to withstand unlawful intelligence activities, cyber attacks and influence operations. Weaknesses in protective security may have serious consequences for national security.

There are individuals in violent extremist circles who systematically use violence, threats and harassment against politicians, representatives of society and minority groups. More individuals at the fringes of these circles appear to be sympathising with their ideologies, which suggests these are hotbeds for recruitment and growth. This development has an impact on the long-term threat to Sweden’s democracy and security.

In 2019, there was an increase in the number of terrorist attacks in the West carried out by violent right-wing extremists, while the number of terrorist attacks motivated by violent Islamist extremism decreased from a high level. Most attacks were carried out by lone actors, often self-radicalised by violent propaganda online and on social media platforms.
Democracy under threat on several fronts

24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the Security Service protects Sweden’s democratic system and national security. We have an unwavering commitment to our mission.
Foreign intelligence officers hiding among embassy staff, recruiting spies and stealing information. Agents stalking regime critics. Violent extremists manufacturing and handling weapons, and lone actors spewing hatred and threats on social media and going after members of the central government.

“The threat to Sweden and our democracy is extensive. Terrorism and attack threats are tangible threats giving rise to strong emotions. The threat posed by intelligence and influence operations tends to be more subtle and difficult to grasp. The Security Service must handle all threats — from preventing extremist circles from recruiting new members to protecting classified information from falling into the wrong hands”, says Johan Olsson, Head of Operations at the Security Service.

Rapid global developments have an impact on national security. We closely monitor the growing tensions and developments in our geographical proximity as well as in the Middle East and in the rest of the world. Sweden is facing a threat that is both broader and deeper than before, and various unlawful activities and attacks are constantly taking place. The methods vary, and technological advancements provide hostile states with new ways to both legally and illegally collect intelligence and other types of information, spread disinformation and attempt to influence decision-makers.

Digital technology presents brand new opportunities for unlawful intelligence activities, critical infrastructure sabotage and influence operations, and the internet and social media provide more possibilities for radicalisation, recruitment and attack plotting.

“Increasing polarisation across society and the tense security policy situation are strong forces adding to the threat posed by hostile states and violent extremism. With increasing threats, these actors also extend their scope of action”, says Johan Olsson.

Constant intelligence work

The remit of the Security Service is to prevent and detect crimes against Sweden’s security, counter terrorism and protect the central government. By extension, our main objective is to protect Sweden’s democratic system, constitutional rights and freedoms, and national security. Our efforts include detecting suspected espionage, countering threats and harassments aimed at members of the central government and investigating crimes such as terrorism and critical infrastructure trespass. Most importantly, we seek to prevent serious crimes from being committed in the first place. We do this by constant intelligence work.

Difficult balancing act

Each month, the Security Service handles thousands of pieces of intelligence concerning everything from extremism and attack threats to espionage, critical infrastructure trespass and threats to members of the central government. This intelligence is collected by the Security Service itself or received from other public agencies in Sweden and abroad, or from the public. Every piece of intelligence is assessed, to be either dismissed or passed on for further analysis by the Security Service itself or by other public agencies.

“It is a difficult balancing act, where some pieces of information can be dis-
missed while others require immediate action or measures to be taken further down the line. We handle a never-ending flow of information. There is information about immediate threats and long-term threats — much like running a 100-metre race while at the same time running a marathon. That is the challenge”, says Johan Olsson.

The threat to Sweden comes in many shapes and forms, such as intelligence officers, front companies, research delegations and cyber attacks. We make every effort to prevent hostile states from engaging in unlawful intelligence activities targeting our country, whereby stolen information and knowledge could be used against Sweden, instantly or later. Last year, media reported on several of our interventions in this area.

**Extensive attacks**

Yesterday’s threats concerned unlawful intelligence activities including refugee espionage targeting individuals living in exile in Sweden, attacks against companies and attempts to influence political decision-making. Today, we see more countries forcefully seeking to exert influence over individuals whom they regard as regime critics.

Hostile states target individuals’ constitutional rights and freedoms, our country’s economy, and our political and territorial sovereignty.

Around 15 countries currently have intelligence officers posted to Sweden. The most substantial threat comes from Russia and China. Hostile states carry out overt and covert influence operations against Sweden. In addition to the intelligence threat posed by Russia, it has become evident that China is overtly seeking to influence constitutional rights and freedoms in Sweden. There have been instances of both refugee espionage and attempts to influence Swedish politicians and media.

We have noted an increased interest from hostile states in individuals in Sweden with close personal ties to other countries. This applies both to individuals regarded by these countries as regime critics, and individuals holding security-sensitive positions.

When information and secrets are stolen, this also leads to major financial losses and may affect employment rates, economic growth and prosperity. The intelligence threat is tangible and poses a security threat to Sweden.

“It is evident that the constant activities and attacks carried out by hostile states are gradually restricting Sweden’s scope of action.”

Johan Olsson is Head of Operations at the Security Service.
are gradually restricting Sweden’s scope of action and undermining fundamental structures and values on which our society is built”, says Johan Olsson.

The Security Service has limited powers when it comes to taking action against activities that are not strictly illegal. Our powers are aimed at targeting criminal activities. Other activities with a potential long-term impact on national security include foreign strategic acquisitions and influence operations.

**5G, AI and IoT**

Incidents in other countries indicate that hostile states have both the intent and the capability to carry out cyber attacks that could harm critical infrastructure in Sweden. Digital transformation, coupled with more devices being connected to the internet and unrectified major gaps in IT security, poses an increased risk of disruptions to essential services.

Some of the challenges in relation to technological advancements and security in the coming years will include the fifth generation of mobile telecommunications technology (5G), artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), by which everyday devices are connected to the internet.

In these increasingly unpredictable times, hostile states are more confrontational but remain below the threshold of armed conflict.

“Intelligence activities are carried out to such an extent that there are consequences for national security. For example, information and knowledge collected by a hostile state may be used instantly, or later, to influence political decisions and Sweden’s standpoints on various issues. These activities also lead to major financial losses that could affect employment rates and economic growth in Sweden.” says Johan Olsson.

Those responsible for ensuring systematic and efficient protection of critical assets sometimes fall short when it comes to implementing adequate protective security measures. The Security Service has an important task to fulfil in this context, by providing advice and support to increase the capability of other public agencies to meet the challenges in this field.

Fundamentally, this is about national security and protecting our country’s critical assets. Cooperation between public agencies and other stakeholders is a key factor for increasing resilience and responding to current threats and challenges. The term whole-of-government approach is used in some countries and refers to joint actions taken across society to achieve specific goals and respond to a broader threat.

**Total defence planning**

Sweden’s total defence must be built on solid foundations. Unless our country is capable of countering the activities and attacks taking place here and now, we will not succeed in developing our total defence capacity. Information and expertise must be given commensurate protection already today. Adequate protective security measures, implemented to safeguard information and expertise, make up the very basis of Sweden’s total defence.

One of the most important tasks of the Security Service in relation of Sweden’s total defence planning is to protect the central government. In addition to providing physical protection, this also involves producing situation reports to facilitate decision-making and ensuring
that critical information is correct.

**Changes to terrorism**

International terrorism changed slightly in 2019. The number of terrorist attacks in the West motivated by violent Islamist extremism decreased from a high level while the number of attacks motivated by violent right-wing extremism increased. As in previous years, most attacks were carried out by lone actors, often self-radicalised by violent propaganda online and on social media platforms.

“Violent right-wing extremism is gaining ground and attracting more supporters. There is an increasing risk that individuals inspired by this ideology will carry out attacks or commit other violent crimes. Radicalisation processes can be swift and are often difficult to detect. One violent extremists in Sweden has grown from hundreds to thousands, and their arenas have shifted from basement premises to school corporations and foundations, and from hour-long online lectures to action-packed videos on social media.

There are individuals in violent extremist circles who systematically use violence, threats and harassment against politicians, representatives of society and minority groups. More individuals at the fringes of these circles appear to be sympathising with their ideologies, which suggests these are hotbeds for recruitment and growth. This development has an impact on the long-term threat to Sweden’s democracy and security.

**Challenges on the horizon**

Focusing on attack threats alone is not enough to counter the threat posed by extremist circles. A wider approach to counter radicalisation, recruitment and financing is also needed as these activities may increase the threat. Preventing the growth of extremism is a responsibility shared by all of society.

Efforts must also be made to counter the institutionalisation that has taken place within violent extremist circles, where radicalisation, recruitment and financing may now be carried out via companies, foundations and associations with a turnover of hundreds of millions of Swedish kronor. Another challenge is posed by individuals hiding among migrants. A growing number of individuals whose expulsion orders cannot be enforced still remain in Sweden.

“Handling today’s threats, whether they are short-term or long-term threats, is a challenge. It is about national security and protecting our democracy.”

of our major challenges is finding these individuals, who often hide on encrypted platforms”, says Johan Olsson.

Our efforts to counter violent extremism consist on the one hand of detecting attack plotting and averting attacks, and on the other of countering radicalisation, recruitment and financing. These two strands reflect a short-term and a long-term threat, which are interconnected.

“Without a violent extremist scene there would be no attack plots — and the size of the scene affects the attack threat. At the same time, the growth of violent extremism not only leads to attacks but also to increased polarisation across society. This polarisation and the role played in it by violent extremist circles present as much of a threat to democracy as does the risk of attacks”, says Johan Olsson.

**From hundreds to thousands**

Over the past ten years, the number of
Surge in espionage from the East

Collecting sensitive information, exerting diplomatic pressure and conducting electronic attacks are some of the activities engaged in by hostile states to undermine Sweden. China and Russia in particular stand out as the main actors, and we have identified a new and deeper threat to Sweden’s national security.

Intelligence activities undertaken by other countries have become both broader and deeper in scope. Every day of the year, foreign intelligence officers seek to collect classified information about Sweden, monitor minority groups and engage in security-threatening activities.

“Existing standards are challenged by non-democratic countries constantly seeking to shift the boundaries of what is acceptable”, says Daniel Stenling, Head of Counter-Intelligence at the Security Service.

“There is a high and constant intelligence threat to Sweden, the intensity of which varies over time. This is a strategy and a tool in itself, making it difficult to predict how the threat will evolve”, says Kennet Alexandersson, Senior Analyst at the Security Service.

When intelligence officers, or agents recruited by them, collect sensitive or classified information, or when they monitor minority groups, they commit offences against Sweden’s security. We refer to these crimes as unlawful intelligence activities or espionage targeting refugees. Last year, as a result of our efforts in this area, several agents who had been recruited by foreign intelligence officers were arrested and, in some instances, sentenced to prison for having engaged in such activities.

The information and expertise that intelligence officers seek to collect are of great value to Sweden. Both time and money must be invested to ensure their security and protection.

“We estimate the monetary value of unlawfully collected information and expertise to be in the billions. These activities lead to financial losses, potentially affecting jobs and economic growth in Sweden. Some of the information that hostile states seek to collect cannot be quantified in monetary terms. Such information is vital to the functioning of our society and may be used by hostile states in the future”, says Kennet Alexandersson.

The Security Service works relentlessly to prevent and counter crimes against Sweden’s national security. Right now, Sweden is holding its first total defence exercise in 30 years. This is an important step towards increasing resilience and raising awareness about actions to be taken should Swedish military preparedness increase in the event of a potential war. According to the Defence Commission, a military attack on Sweden is currently unlikely, but cannot be ruled out.

While no country presently has the explicit intent to wage war against Sweden, several countries are actively seeking to undermine Sweden’s power to act. They do this by a combination of intelligence and security-threatening activities targeting e.g. public agencies and private companies with the intention of weakening our country or achieving their own security policy objectives without provoking a costly armed conflict.

“The countries engaging in security-threatening activities against Sweden typically spend vast amounts of money and human resources over many years, sometimes decades, to achieve their security policy objectives”, says Kennet Alexandersson.

In this context, Russia holds quite a unique position. One in three diplomats at Russian missions in Sweden are intelligence officers operating under diplo-
motic cover. In addition to traditional intelligence activities, Russia also engages in security-threatening activities aimed at undermining Sweden and achieving Russia’s security policy objectives, for instance by ensuring that Sweden is militarily non-aligned, or by weakening and creating division in Western economic and military cooperation structures.

China has come to pose an increasing intelligence threat to Sweden in the past year. Although Sweden is geographically far away from China, Swedish innovations and know-how are of interest to the Chinese government.

“Russia has posed the greatest intelligence threat to Sweden for a long time. Recently, we have noted an increase in China’s intelligence activities, which are now on a par with Russia’s. However, the nature of their threats differs. For China, the strategic objectives include obtaining technology and knowledge in Sweden, both through their intelligence services and Chinese-owned civilian companies, which are obliged to share technology and knowledge with China’s military”, says Kennet Alexandersson.

In the past year, China has also had a harsh tone towards Sweden and Swedish representatives. The Security Service has noted how China seeks to exert influence over political decision-making with a view to strengthening its position and protecting its territorial integrity from perceived threats. These activities also serve to protect the Communist Party and anchor its worldview both in China and abroad. Last year, Chinese representatives sought to prevent Swedish political representatives from drawing attention to individuals disapproved of by the Chinese government.

Security-threatening activities are illegal, such as electronic attacks, unlawful threats, economic crime and murder, whereas some are legal, as in the case of influence operations and strategic acquisitions.

“We estimate the monetary value of unlawfully collected information and expertise to be in the billions.”
It is important that the Security Service keeps an eye on the economic and security policy objectives and doctrines of other countries, as these underpin their actions.

“These activities often have a background in decisions made in other countries. We have noted, for instance, that influence operations and propaganda spreading by hostile states are often carried out by Swedish extremist groups acting as proxies. We are also aware that hostile states are interested in strategic acquisitions of critical infrastructure, technology and knowledge, for instance in connection with public procurement”, says Kennet Alexandersson.

Due to the combined use of legal and illegal methods, the Security Service must respond to the threat in different ways. To be able to address security-threatening activities more effectively, we need other types of tools. Today, influence operations against Sweden are not a crime under Swedish legislation but fall largely within the boundaries of freedom of expression as set forth in the Swedish Constitution.

One way of approaching security-threatening activities rests on effective coordination between public agencies and private companies, whose activities are of interest to hostile states. This is sometimes referred to as a whole-of-government approach, by which joint actions are taken across society to achieve specific goals or respond to specific threats.

“From Sweden’s perspective, all of society must counter security-threatening activities targeting our country on a daily basis.”

says Daniel Stenling.
To increase Sweden’s capability to respond to the cyber security threat, collaboration between certain government agencies will be stepped up with the creation of a national cyber security centre. The centre will increase the capability of the agencies involved to fulfil their respective remits as well as enhance the overall national capability to prevent, detect and respond to cyber attacks and other IT-related incidents that could harm national security.

In the longer term, the centre will prepare joint analyses and situation reports of threats and vulnerabilities, disseminate information between the agencies and other stakeholders, and coordinate responses to cyber attacks and other IT-related incidents.

Deeper cooperation calls for both technical and legal mechanisms allowing for classified information to be shared. The new centre can initially be funded and staffed under the remit of each participating agency.

The agencies involved are the Defence Materiel Administration, the National Defence Radio Establishment, the Armed Forces, the Civil Contingencies Agency, the Police Authority, the Post and Telecom Authority and the Security Service.

Security services are tasked with increasing the level of security in their respective country. During the Total Defence Exercise 2020, the Security Service handles the intelligence threat to this exercise. Sweden’s total defence planning has resumed. When the Total Defence Exercise 2020 began in the autumn of 2019, it was the first such exercise in 30 years. More than 400 stakeholders from the civil and military defence sectors will be trained in various total defence duties throughout 2020. The role of the Security Service is mainly to handle the intelligence threat to the exercise and, by extension, to Sweden. Sensitive information is constantly being collected by hostile states, long before we reach a potential heightened state of alert.

We know from past experience that this type of exercise attracts much attention from hostile states. This has been evident in connection with previous exercises held by the Armed Forces, where certain countries have showed a considerable interest both before and during the exercises.
Countries spying on Sweden

Around 15 countries engage in intelligence activities in Sweden and have intelligence officers posted to our country. Threats, espionage, influence operations and acquisition of strategic assets are some ways in which other countries attempt to weaken Sweden and undermine democracy.

Russia

Russia has the intent and capability to undermine Sweden’s power to act.

In the past few years, Russia has repeatedly demonstrated to the West that it is prepared to go beyond intelligence activities to achieve its political objectives, as exemplified by the poisoning of a former Russian intelligence officer and his daughter in the UK in 2018. Russia has also carried out influence operations against general elections in several countries.

Russia’s objectives include preventing countries from joining NATO and ensuring that Sweden remains militarily non-aligned. As part of the Baltic Sea region, Sweden is important to Russia’s military and security policy.

Russia uses a range of legal and illegal methods to influence other countries with a view to achieving its security policy objectives without provoking armed conflict. This is exemplified by Russia’s attempts to weaken Sweden’s and other countries’ political, economic and military cooperation.

Recent years have seen military interventions by Russia in Ukraine and Syria. According to the Defence Commission, Russia currently has no ambition to use military measures against Sweden – although changing ambitions cannot be ruled out. It is evident, however, that Russia is seeking to portray Sweden as a country characterised by chaos and decay. One of the aims of this is to strengthen the unity of the Russian nation.

Examples of Russian activities targeting Sweden

- Espionage. By using intelligence officers under diplomatic cover, Russia recruits agents and collects information about Sweden. One in three diplomats at Russian missions in Sweden are intelligence officers operating under diplomatic cover.
- Influence by proxy. Russia assigns others, such as extremist groups, to carry out its activities and achieve its goals.
- Influence operations. By spreading fake news and disinformation in social and traditional media, Russia seeks to influence decision-making, opinions or behaviour among members of the central government or specifically targeted groups in Sweden.
- Acquisition of strategic assets. Russia’s interest in, or acquisition of, Swedish infrastructure and technology represents another means by which Russia exerts influence. This is done either directly or via Russian-controlled companies.
- Cyber espionage. Russia actively seeks to collect information on e.g. Swedish infrastructure and technology to be used instantly or later.
China has the intent and capability to undermine Sweden's power to act.

Although Sweden is geographically far away from China, our country falls within China’s sphere of interest when it comes to achieving its long-term goals in the areas of security, economy and politics. China’s economic plans are also tied to its security policy objectives. Its interest in Sweden is not so much an interest in our country as an interest in our technology and knowledge. Industrial espionage and the acquisition of Swedish energy and tech companies are two methods by which China seeks to ensure the success of its five-year plans. This is exemplified by the legal obligation put on Chinese-owned companies to share technology and knowledge with China’s civilian and military intelligence services.

China’s intelligence activities also involve espionage targeting regime critics and the Tibetan and Uyghur communities in Sweden. These activities are seen by China as steps towards protecting its territorial integrity from perceived threats and protecting the Communist Party.

The intelligence threat posed by China has become broader and deeper in scope, to also include cyber espionage, acquisition of strategic assets, and pressure or threats exerted against Swedish political decision-makers, researchers, public figures and others. One way in which China exerts pressure is by using or threatening to use various economic tools as a lever should other countries engage in activities disapproved of by the Chinese government.

Iran

Iran is mainly involved in industrial espionage and intelligence activities targeting refugees. Iran’s intelligence activities targeting refugees are mainly geared towards minority groups considered by the Iranian regime to pose a threat. We know that regime critics and specific targets in Sweden with links to Shia and Sunni Muslims are being monitored for this reason.

The main focus of Iran’s industrial espionage is Swedish high-tech industry and Swedish products that could be used in Iran’s nuclear weapons programme.
Aproaching the ferry terminal, he is arrested by officers from our Service. A search of his person reveals that he is carrying 6,000 dollars in cash and a number of empty medicine packs. He is taken into custody at a Stockholm police station, where he is charged with aggravated unlawful intelligence activities targeting exile Tibetans in Sweden. He denies the charges.

Unlawful intelligence activities against the person, also known as refugee espionage, is a serious offence against Sweden’s security. It is defined in the Swedish Criminal Code as seeking “to benefit a foreign power, in this country, secretly or using fraudulent or improper means, by conducting activities to obtain information about the personal circumstances of another person or being an accomplice to such activities.”

In order for an individual to be convicted of refugee espionage, there must be evidence that the activities were conducted over a long period of time, covertly and with certain precautions, and that they were not isolated acts but a series of acts.

The remit of the Security Service includes preventing and detecting refugee espionage in Sweden. If there is information to indicate that such activities are being conducted by a spy, or as we say, agent, our Service will collect intelligence and take investigative measures. The case of the spy who took the ferry is an example of an investigation into Chinese refugee espionage.

**Initial suspicions**

Chinese refugee espionage is not a new phenomenon. An earlier investigation revealed that the agent, later arrested in Nynäshamn, was one of several contacts of a Chinese intelligence officer posted under cover to Sweden. However, at the time, there was not sufficient evidence to charge him with any crime.

As a result of the investigation, another man was in 2010 convicted of refugee espionage targeting the Uyghur diaspora in Sweden. He had handed over information to the Chinese intelligence officer, who following the investigation returned to China.

The extensive media coverage of the trial, and the subsequent conviction, contributed to raising general awareness of Chinese refugee espionage in Sweden.

**New indications of refugee espionage**

In July 2015, our Service learnt that the agent — who had come to our attention during the investigation into refugee espionage targeting the Uyghur diaspora — could be involved in similar activities targeting exile Tibetans in Sweden. These suspicions prompted our Service to
launch a criminal investigation, headed by a prosecutor at the National Security Unit of the Prosecution Authority.

By intercepting the agent’s telephone and gathering information on his travels abroad, we found that he had made recurring trips to Poland and other countries.

Following his arrest, and after initial interrogations at the police station, the agent was transferred to a Stockholm remand prison, where he was interrogated again. Henry, an investigator at the Security Service, was one of the interrogating officers:

“Surveillance had revealed that he had travelled about 15 times to Poland to meet with an intelligence officer. On most occasions, he had returned to Sweden immediately”, says Henry.

The agent claimed that the 6,000 dollars came from the sale of a property in China, and that the money had been given to him by a friend in Poland. However, we knew that he had returned from Poland carrying such amounts in cash before.

In fact, telephone interception had revealed that the agent, after another trip to Poland, made a call to the police to report his ID card lost, stating that he may have lost it in Stockholm. He then called a contact in China to explain that his wallet containing 6,000 dollars had been stolen in Poland. He implied that he had received the money from a colleague

“A conviction in 2010 contributed to raising general awareness of China’s refugee espionage in Sweden.”
of the intelligence officer, now living in China, with whom he had previously been in contact in Sweden. The colleague was now in Poland.

When confronted with this information, the agent claimed that the stolen money came from the sale of Indian cashmere scarves. When asked about previous deposits into his bank account, made shortly after his returns from Poland, he gave other explanations.

“When interrogated, the agent was talkative and said he had made money from currency exchange and casino gambling”, says Henry.

In actual fact, he had been monitored by our Service, and we knew that he had systematically gathered personal information on individuals belonging to the Tibetan diaspora, which he had handed over without their knowledge to Chinese intelligence officers in return for money.

“Payment was effected when he met with the intelligence officer who gave him Chinese medicine packs containing cash”, says Henry.

**Sentenced to prison**

Although the agent pleaded not guilty, the district court convicted him of aggravated unlawful intelligence activities against the person, sentencing him to prison. An appeal against the district court judgment was lodged with the court of appeal, which upheld the prison sentence. In its judgment, the court of appeal ruled that the agent: “has been well integrated into the Tibetan diaspora in Sweden and it has been easy for him to gather information on people belonging to this community. His contacts with B and the Chinese intelligence service have been extensive. Although the information gathered was seemingly trivial, the nature of the crime is such that even this type of information could cause great damage to Tibetans in Sweden as well as to their relatives in Tibet. This is showcased not least by what one of the witnesses stated concerning a relative in Tibet who had been urged by representatives of the Chinese government to make sure their daughter in Sweden behaves properly.”
The information handed over to China concerned personal data, including information on family ties, relatives and friends in China that the Chinese government could use to exert pressure and threats, or as bait to recruit more agents. This illustrates the modus of the Chinese intelligence services; how they identify and recruit an individual — an agent — with access to a specific community otherwise inaccessible to them. By using agents, the intelligence services gain access to information on individuals or communities that the Chinese government wants to control, which is then used to predict the actions of these but also to exert violence or threats of violence to make them give up their political activities or encourage them to spy on others belonging to their community.

“Refugee espionage is a very serious crime. It undermines democracy when vulnerable people who have fled their country are intimidated from exercising their constitutional rights and freedoms in Sweden. In addition, it may result in people in their countries of origin being subjected to violations including torture, says Daniel Stenling, Head of Counter-Intelligence at the Security Service.

The case of the spy who took the ferry illustrates how complex investigations into refugee espionage can be, and that such activities often span several countries and involve methods that develop and change over time.

Note: Henry is not the investigator’s real name.
Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

Each year, illicit attempts are made to procure products and know-how in Sweden for use in other countries’ weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programmes. The remit of the Security Service includes countering such attempts. In addition to intensive intelligence work, targeted information campaigns have proven to be an efficient method.

Our Service is committed to limiting access to and proliferation of WMDs (nuclear weapons, biological and chemical weapons, and their means of delivery, such as ballistic robots). For this reason, products and know-how must be prevented from exiting the country and being made available to other states. Our remit also includes preventing chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear substances (CBRN) from ending up in the wrong hands.

Crimes to combat

The goal is to prevent Swedish companies and research institutes from knowingly or unknowingly contributing to other countries’ WMD programmes. The majority of the products needed to produce WMDs are not unique to weapons manufacturing, but feature in several types of industries that manufacture common civilian products. Such products, for example vacuum pumps, which may also be used to produce WMDs, are known as dual-use products.

Why such crime takes place in Sweden

Sweden has an open research culture with extensive international contacts, which is a contributing factor to our country’s leading position in a number of technological areas. While this is very positive, cutting-edge technology and expertise could also be used for military purposes. For this reason, attention needs to be paid to who gets access to this know-how. This factor, together with Sweden’s extensive export industry, makes our country attractive to countries wishing to produce WMDs. This applies to products and know-how for the manufacturing as well as development of WMDs.

Several states that the Security Service suspects of having WMD programmes require advanced research expertise from outside their own countries. States needing to advance their expertise could send researchers to universities abroad, or initiate a collaborative project between one of their universities and a Swedish university. In such cases, the focus is usually on areas where the know-how gained could be used both for civilian purposes and in WMD programmes.

How to prevent crimes

One of the most important ways of preventing the proliferation of WMDs is to have an active dialogue with companies, research institutes and public agencies that have access to the products, technology or expertise needed to develop such weapons. Many companies are not aware that they are manufacturing items that could be used in the development of WMDs. For this reason, our Service visits companies, trade fairs, industry associations and research institutes to reduce the risk that these become involved in procurement for WMD programmes. During these visits, we provide information about current legislation and the importance of applying for an export permit for products subject to export control. The visits are sometimes made together with the Inspectorate of Strategic Products. In counter-proliferation matters, our partners include Customs, the Defence Research Agency, the Radiation Safety Authority and the Armed Forces.

Our Service is also involved in international efforts to prevent the transfer of products and know-how from or via Sweden.

Thwarted attempts in 2019

In 2019, the Security Service helped thwart a number of attempts to procure products or know-how used to produce WMDs. Our goal is to continue to prevent procurement attempts, mainly through information efforts. In order for our Service, other law-enforcement agencies and export control authorities to detect such attempts, intensive intelligence work, information sharing and close collaboration with other public agencies and sectors are required.
Protecting critical assets

Despite a growing understanding of the importance of protective security across Swedish society, the Security Service still identifies gaps in security among public agencies and other stakeholders responsible for handling critical assets. Meanwhile, attacks undermining Sweden’s national security continue.

More stakeholders than ever before are tasked with safeguarding Sweden’s critical assets. At the same time, technological and digital transformation gives rise to a wide range of new vulnerabilities, and the number of attacks has increased. The development of protective security measures has not kept pace with these risks. This has led to a gap between protection and vulnerabilities, increasing the risk of hostile states accessing critical assets, which could have severe and costly implications for national security that could take a long time to repair.

Our Service’s inventories of critical assets have identified a number of remaining weaknesses in relation to protective security at entities responsible for handling these assets.

“Efforts to protect critical assets must be stepped up. There is still a considerable gap between vulnerabilities and protective security. To bridge this gap, more knowledge about threats, vulnerabilities and protective security is needed, and a higher priority must be given to these issues”, says Anna Sjöberg, Head of the Security Department at the Security Service, where protective security matters are handled.

Knowledge about the threat posed to a specific critical asset or sector is necessary in order to take adequate protective security measures. Knowledge about the particular context of a critical asset is also key, as is awareness of dependencies on other sectors and systems and the interplay between various protective security measures. Understanding how certain information could be put to use, when combined with other data, is also important.

“There will always be uncertainties as to which pieces of the puzzle adversaries have already gotten hold of and which pieces are still missing to create a full picture. In order to prevent hostile states from completing the puzzle, the protection of critical assets is particularly important”, says Anna Sjöberg.

A new Protective Security Act came into force in April 2019, the provisions of which apply to both public agencies and private companies operating in security-sensitive sectors. The act has improved the opportunities to mitigate vulnerabilities that have been highlighted by our Service for a number of years. The new act covers more sectors than its predecessor, and the demands put on those undertaking activities with a bearing on Sweden’s security are clearer and better adapted to existing threats.

“All sectors of society have a role to play in reducing vulnerabilities and giving a higher priority to these matters. The new legislation is helpful in this regard, for instance by drawing attention to the role of both public agencies and private companies when it comes...
to protecting critical assets”, says Anna Sjöberg.

Sweden’s total defence planning has resumed. Private companies are now active in sectors of key importance to our country’s total defence. One reason for rebuilding our civil defence is to increase Sweden’s ability to withstand unlawful intelligence activities, cyber attacks and influence operations.

“Total defence planning must rest on a strong foundation. It follows that protective security measures must be in place to mitigate both current and future attacks. Should this not be the case, we would lack any capacity to rebuild the total defence”, says Anna Sjöberg.

Effective protective security measures provide the very foundation of the total defence. Commensurate protective security must be in place before total defence planning begins. “For protective security to have an impact on entities handling critical assets, it must permeate all areas of operation engaged in by that particular stakeholder. Also, the highest management level responsible for setting aside time and resources must handle these issues. It’s all about developing a healthy security culture”, says Anna Sjöberg.

All aspects of protective security must be in place. Superior locks and alarms, or cutting-edge IT security solutions will not help if security procedures and staff loyalty are missing.

**Protective security analyses are essential**

For a stakeholder to find a balanced level of protective security, a thorough analysis is required to identify which assets need protecting and where these are located. Before designing any protective security measures, it is also necessary to establish

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**Increased supervision of security-sensitive activities**

In 2020, our Service will intensify our supervision in relation to protective security. We will focus specifically on sectors where a potential attack by adversaries would have the most serious consequences for national security.

The new Protective Security Act came into force in April 2019. In the past year, we carried out only a limited number of inspections, so as to give stakeholders operating in security-sensitive sectors a chance to adapt their protective security measures to the new legislation. Our supervision will gradually increase in 2020, with a principal focus on management and control of protective security efforts, and on protective security analyses.

Inspections will prioritise stakeholders conducting the most security-sensitive activities and primarily look at those sectors where a potential attack would have the most serious consequences for our country. Should we identify any gaps in security, they must be addressed as quickly as possible. In such instances, the Security Service may e.g. provide guidance on how the legislation should be interpreted.

**How are inspections carried out?**

Decision to initiate an inspection is either in line with long-term planning or taken when deemed necessary. Several factors may decide which areas to focus the inspection on, e.g. the nature of the security-sensitive activities, identified vulnerabilities and gaps in security, or a need to adapt to external changes.

**What do we do?**

Inspections typically involve examining documentation, holding interviews with staff members with key roles in relation to protective security, or performing penetration tests of IT systems to identify vulnerabilities. We also examine whether the relevant protective security requirements have been met.

**What if there are weaknesses in protective security?**

Should any protective security weaknesses come to light, we communicate this information to the stakeholder concerned, which must then address these issues. In situations when protective security matters have been given a low priority, this is often due to a lack of resources and sometimes skills shortage.

Inspections allow entities handling critical assets to structurally evaluate the protective security measures they have taken thus far. Sometimes our inspections lead to a broader commitment to these issues across a public agency or private company, which may boost their overall security culture.
which tools and capabilities are available to adversaries so as to be able to take adequate measures to withstand these.

Protective security analyses are essential to protective security efforts. Such analyses are primarily aimed to identify critical assets but also to ensure that time and resources are allocated correctly, which has cost-saving effects. A stakeholder’s knowledge about its critical assets, and need for protective security measures, also helps making plans and shaping priorities. Such knowledge may also underpin requirement specifications used in connection with outsourcing.

These analyses also make it easier to assess whether all components making up an effective protective security system have been accounted for, i.e. personnel security, physical security and information security.

### Cyber espionage explained

#### One example

1. A foreign intelligence service wants to obtain sensitive information from another country.
2. The service establishes which entity has access to this information and selects a suitable person.
3. A malicious code, exploiting a recently identified vulnerability, is chosen to match the IT system of the entity storing the sought-after information.
4. The malicious code is sent as an attachment to an email, designed in such a way that the person will consider the email trustworthy.
5. When the person opens the email, the malicious code is activated.
6. The service has now gained access to this person’s computer and can advance further into the network of the entity in search of the sought-after information.
7. To minimise the risk of exposure, the sought-after information is exported using the same cloud service as that used by the targeted entity.
8. The service can now pass on the collected information to their government.

### Secure mobile and wireless communications

There is a constant intelligence threat to Sweden that over time has become both deeper and broader in scope. We know that several countries are using electronic intelligence, which will likely increase along with the rapid technological advancements. In light of this, we assess that there is going to be a growing demand for secure mobile and wireless communications in the future.

On 1 January 2020, new provisions of the Electronic Communications Act (2003:388) came into force with the purpose of protecting Sweden’s national security when radio transmitters are used. These provisions also impact on the attribution of the new 5G network frequencies. As of 1 February 2020, the Post and Telecom Authority, which is the government agency tasked with attributing 5G network frequencies, must consult with the Security Service and the Armed Forces as stipulated in the Electronic Communications Ordinance (2003:396) in assessing whether radio use in accordance with a license application can be assumed to cause harm to Sweden’s security, and whether it is necessary to attach certain conditions to such a licence. The Post and Telecom Authority gathers information to be used by the Security Service and the Armed Forces in assessing this. The provisions regulating our efforts to protect the most critical assets are set forth in the Protective Security Act (2018:585).

134 930

The number of records checks carried out by the Security Service in 2019.
Handling different types of intelligence

Each month, the Security Service handles thousands of pieces of intelligence concerning everything from extremism and attack threats to espionage, critical infrastructure trespass and threats to members of the central government. This intelligence is collected by the Security Service itself or received from other public agencies in Sweden and abroad, or from the public. Every piece of intelligence is assessed, to be either dismissed or passed on for further analysis by the Security Service itself or by other public agencies.
individual posting threatening comments about a member of the Swedish Parliament.

**10:17** Tip concerning three individuals said to be raising money for the Islamic State, one of whom will reportedly be leaving for Iraq shortly.

**10:22** Information regarding a distressed asylum seeker, threatening to take their own life or the lives of others, if they are not granted asylum.

**10:29** Tip regarding a former pupil at a school in central Sweden who has expressed a desire to carry out a school shooting in retaliation for feeling ill-treated.

**10:37** Phone call from an individual living in southern Sweden against a shopping centre during the upcoming national holiday.

**12:17** Phone call from an individual working in southern Sweden about a young person engaged in criminal activities involving firearms.

**12:45** A walk-in at the Security Service headquarters wanting to inform about threats to Sweden’s national security related to a country in the Middle East.

**13:00** Information about a letter stating that two IS terrorists are allegedly on their way from the Middle East to a country in Europe where they intend to carry out an attack against a shopping centre. Unless they are paid a large sum of money they will go ahead with their plan.

**13:12** Tip regarding an individual in Sweden, who on their Facebook page has posted a picture of IS terrorists about to execute prisoners and who calls on others to do the same to Swedish people.

**13:20** Phone call from the Police Authority regarding a suspect, known to our Service, who will be called in for questioning in connection with a case of unlawful threat.

**13:55** Information from a Swedish agency about an asylum seeker who is wanted for attempted murder.

**14:04** Request for information from the security service of a neighbouring country regarding potential threats in relation to a terrorist organisation.

**15:02** Phone call for the second time today from an individual frequently contacting the Security Service to discuss their theories regarding the Olof Palme murder.

**15:15** Information from a Swedish agency that two individuals with known links to terrorism have been stopped on the E4 motorway.

**15:22** Phone call from an individual handling subsidies to various organisations, who is concerned that some of this money is going towards radicalisation.

**15:29** Tip regarding the owner of a pizzeria in central Sweden who donates large sums of money

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**15.22 Phone call from an individual handling subsidies to various organisations, who is concerned that some of this money is going towards radicalisation.**

who is worried that a high school pupil is showing signs of becoming increasingly radicalised.

**10:58** Request for information from a European partner service regarding a Swedish citizen visiting their country and whom they suspect is planning to commit racist crimes.

**11:03** Phone call from an individual, in their professional capacity, wanting to consult the Security Service about an anonymous letter containing information on a pupil with possible links to extremism.

**11:32** Phone call from a Swedish agency which has received a tip regarding posts on social media about an attack being planned

**13:12** Tip regarding an individual in Sweden, who on their Facebook page has posted a picture of IS terrorists about to execute prisoners and who calls on others to do the same to Swedish people.

**13:55** Information from a Swedish agency about an asylum seeker who is wanted for attempted murder.

**14:04** Request for information from the security service of a neighbouring country regarding potential threats in relation to a terrorist organisation.

**15:35** Request for information from a European partner service concerning a criminal network with links to Sweden and an ongoing investigation into weapons smuggling.

**17:57** Information from a Swedish agency warning that terrorist attacks could occur abroad during the upcoming national holiday.

**20:58** Tip regarding a Facebook profile encouraging people to kill Swedes.

**22:22** Phone call from a care home resident, well-known to our Service, who just wants to chat.

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Footnote: Certain times, places and other details have been modified to protect informants and safeguard our operational work.
From masked and anonymous to visible and proud

Developments in the extremist movements

The violent right-wing extremist ideology is assessed to be attracting more supporters than before. In 2019, several terrorist attacks motivated by violent right-wing extremism were carried out around the world, and there is a long-term threat to democracy posed by all extremist movements. In order for society to counter this threat, knowledge about the mechanisms of extremism must increase.

Violent extremism is founded on individuals’ intent and capability to commit crimes to subvert the existing social order. The violent right-wing, left-wing and Islamist extremist movements are held together by their respective beliefs, considering crime a legitimate part of their ideological struggle.

Individuals in or at the fringes of extremist circles are also driven by ideas associated with radical nationalism, racism and xenophobia, antisemitism, alienation, segregation, and antifeminism or sheer misogyny. They may also take action propelled by animal rights activism, climate activism and issues associated with LGBT rights, equality and equity.

“It is no coincidence that the number of supporters appears to be increasing and that these issues are currently on the agenda. Extremist circles become more active when they get the impression, through traditional or social media, that many others share their ideas and that society is not reacting to their perceived problems and grievances. That is the current situation”, says Fredrik Hallström, Head of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Subversion at the Security Service.

Ahn-Za Hagström, Senior Analyst at the Security Service, is closely monitoring the developments in the extremist movements.

“A nationalistic parties are on the rise in the West, and society and public debate are becoming increasingly polarised. Some individuals believe society and politicians are incapable of tackling their perceived problems, and every day they find evidence that they are right. This view is fuelled when the number of extremist movements and supporters appears to be increasing”, says Ahn-Za Hagström.

Continuous assessments are made of the various extremist movements, taking into account different trends that may affect the threat to national security. For instance, our Service has noticed that violent right-wing extremism, which used to consist of a limited, organised circle of white supremacists, is now gaining ground and attracting more supporters. The core values of violent right-wing extremism include not only racism and xenophobia, but also nationalism, misogyny and anti-LGBT rights.

Such ideas may propel individuals at the fringes of extremist circles to take action, which has recently come to light following a number of terrorist attacks and other violent crimes around the world. In 2019, several terrorist attacks motivated by violent right-wing extremism were carried out in the West. A common feature of several perpetrators was that they were not clearly linked to any right-wing organisation, but had been inspired online and on social media platforms.

From masked and anonymous – to visible and proud

This caption describes the development that our Service has seen, and that has emerged over time, both in Sweden and elsewhere.
We assess that this development will continue in the years to come.

“Those individuals most prone to commit crimes are not necessarily members of a group or an organisation. Instead, their community is built online, giving rise to a narrative based on hatred, which normalises and justifies the use of violence”, says Fredrik Hallström.

In order for society to counter extremism, knowledge about the mechanisms of extremism must increase. For instance, ideologically motivated crime is made up of more components than mere organisations. When a certain action is taken against a specific target, this may depend on factors and circumstances other than someone’s organisational affiliation. We have seen that different beliefs are consolidated into a personal ideology. Drawing on racism and xenophobia, antifeminism and conspiracy theories, individuals build their own worldviews.

“It is a mix of different ideologies and personal beliefs, making it difficult to tell one from the other and assess to what extent crimes are ideologically motivated”, says Ahn-Za Hagström.

The challenge for our Service is to detect and assess individuals who may pose a threat, i.e. both lone actors who are not inspired or directed by others and those who are.

“Individuals in all extremist movements are being urged to ‘do whatever you can, using available means, wherever you are’. In addition to attacks and other serious violent crimes, they also aim to polarise public debate, seeking to provoke societal collapse. New technology allows for these tactics to be successful”, says Ahn-Za Hagström.

Violent extremism is not a national phenomenon; it has international ramifications, not least when actors are inspired online as digitalisation makes it easier to produce and disseminate propaganda. One example of this is when extremists suggest that “the country we once knew no longer exists” and “politicians and law-enforcement agencies have lost control”. Such arguments create a sentiment of “we are riding a wave of success — we must act now, or it will be too late”.

Events around the world and voices in alternative media fuel extremist ideologies and increase their attraction.

“I cannot stress enough the importance of internet to violent extremism. New digital platforms offer vast possibilities for communicating and connecting with like-minded individuals. This is where they find inspiration, express their affiliation or pledge allegiance to a certain leader, movement or vision. The actors, who used to be masked and anonymous, are now visible and proud”, says Fredrik Hallström.

Videos and images of executions or other gross violence are found in almost all house searches carried out as part of our Service’s counter-terrorism efforts.

**Two-pronged threat from the extremist movements**

The flow of intelligence remains at a high level, and our Service handles many pieces of intelligence on attack plotting or existing intents to attack Sweden.

We regularly receive information on fire-

"We must focus both on the short-term and the long-term threat. It is not a matter of one or the other.” says Ahn-Za Hagström.

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However, the threat to democracy consists not only of terrorist attacks and other serious violent crimes. Our Service has, for some time, pointed out that extremist circles systematically use violence, threats and harassment, or criminal acts that may not individually be considered gross, by which they seek to subvert or change our democratic system of government. This poses a long-term threat to democracy.

“More individuals appear to be sympathising with extremist ideologies or their ideas, which suggests these are hotbeds for recruitment. This growth affects the long-term threat to our democracy. For this reason, we must focus both on the short-term and the long-term threat. It is not a matter of one or the other. We must also take the long-term threat seriously, as this is the future short-term threat”, says Ahn-Za Hagström.
Extremist circles have grown significantly in recent years. The threat posed by these circles includes attacks but also a more long-term threat to democracy. Curbing the growth of extremism is therefore crucial to counter the terrorist threat to Sweden and to protect our democracy.

“Much of the long-term action to counter extremism is taken by a broad range of stakeholders, which has paid off. Yet, this is not enough. More stakeholders in society must do more”, says Fredrik Hallström, Head of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Subversion at the Security Service.

In order to protect Sweden and our democracy, the Security Service monitors individuals in extremist circles engaging in crime.

The activities of extremist circles are complex, and not everything they do to undermine fundamental democratic principles is criminalised or falls under our remit. More knowledge about the mechanisms of ideologically motivated crime is necessary to enable all stakeholders across society to counter violent extremism and protect our democracy.

“Our Service must continue to share knowledge about extremism to increase our society’s ability to take appropriate counter-measures, and be aware of those who have an impact on crime by radicalising, inspiring and instructing others”, says Fredrik Hallström.

Extremist circles use both legal and
illegal methods based on their objectives and worldviews by which they legitimate their actions.

“One success factor for our long-term action is working steadily and methodically, without letting go of our overall strategic priorities when faced with sudden operational situations”, says Fredrik Hallström.

Cooperation yielding results
Measures taken by the Security Service are based on extensive intelligence efforts. Our objective, in the short term, is to prevent terrorist attacks and other violent crimes and, in the long term, to curb the growth of extremist circles, limit their room for manoeuvre and capability to fuel the threat to Sweden's security. To achieve this, we share well-targeted information and cooperate with other stakeholders to investigate and prevent crime.

The Security Service and the Police Authority cooperate closely, and share information daily to reduce the threat from extremist circles by taking appropriate and timely measures against targeted individuals. Our information is passed on to local police to allow them to take crime-reducing measures against individuals engaging in crime, but also to implement adequate and effective crime prevention strategies.

“Our intelligence flow indicates that local police receive our information, for instance on firearms, and can act on it to prevent offences. Above all, they are given the opportunity to cooperate with other stakeholders. Cooperation also allows for knowledge about individuals linked to violent circles to be shared”, says Fredrik Hallström.

Returnees from conflict areas
Some individuals who left Sweden to join a terrorist organisation in a conflict area may return even more convinced that acts of violence are needed to achieve change in society. They may also enjoy a certain status among their peers, allowing them to influence and recruit others, thereby contributing to the growth of extremist circles.

“Everyone who travelled did not engage in combat, nor did everyone travel for that purpose, but the majority of those who travelled did so because they sympathise with the Islamic State or its values, which are in stark contrast to our democratic values, such as the rights and freedoms of everyone regardless of gender and religious beliefs. They travelled in search of a different social order and possibly also because they do not want to adapt to our society”, says Ahn-Za Hagström, Senior Analyst at the Security Service.

She points out that it is likely that some individuals who have returned to Sweden are disillusioned, no longer sympathise with the Islamic State, and are traumatised by their experiences in the conflict areas.
“Intent and capability must always be assessed for each individual, when they return but also at a later stage. We must focus not only on individuals who may return, but also on the extremist circles from which they once travelled, and which are still hotbeds for extremism. Their decisions to leave were taken in a Swedish context, and probably influenced by local circumstances”, says Ahn-Za Hagström.

**Measures to counter security-threatening activities**
In 2019, our Service took action under the Act concerning Special Controls in Respect of Aliens against a number of foreign citizens who had leading roles in extremist circles, and applied to the Migration Agency for the expulsion of these individuals. Our actions are always the result of long-standing and extensive intelligence work, and based on different pieces of information indicating that an individual has actively engaged in security-threatening activities, meaning that one single piece of intelligence would not be sufficient. “These individuals were linked to violent Islamist extremism and had radicalised others for a long time. This legislation allows for the expulsion of individuals posing a security threat, which may curb the growth of extremism”, says Fredrik Hallström.

Aliens cases and criminal investigations are two separate processes. In each application for expulsion, our Service makes a thorough assessment of the accuracy of the available information on the individual concerned and ensures that the conditions for their expulsion are met. Should it not be possible to enforce an expulsion order, our Service may continue to monitor them, for instance by imposing an obligation to report to a police station. “Some individuals are expelled. Even in situations when an expulsion order cannot be enforced, the message is clear, and the obligation to report to a police station hinders individuals from conducting security-threatening activities,” says Fredrik Hallström.

Individuals for whom an expulsion order has been issued are no longer allowed to work, study or conduct business in Sweden.

"Bringing a case to prosecution or having someone convicted is not our main objective. Our number one priority is keeping Sweden safe.”

**Local prevention work**
In the past year, our Service has put much effort into providing knowledge and information to support stakeholders across society involved in prevention work. “Our broad knowledge about extremism can be used as a catalyst, and the tools for prevention work are found at the local level. Cooperation with other bodies, such as the Police Authority and the Center for Preventing Violent Extremism, is key”, says Fredrik Hallström.

The violent right-wing, left-wing and Islamist extremist movements use various
platforms to communicate their agendas. Our Service’s operational work has shown that a relatively high number of organisations linked to violent extremism receive public funding in the form of government or local authority subsidies, amounting to millions of Swedish kronor, which may eventually contribute to radicalisation and further growth of extremist circles in Sweden.

Such platforms could be schools, foundations and cultural associations. One way of curbing the growth of extremism is to prevent these organisations from receiving public funding.

The Security Service is one of several public agencies with relevant information in this area. We must continue to highlight these issues, and provide favourable conditions for other stakeholders to take action. As a security service, we mainly engage in intelligence activities.

The use of intelligence information is often restricted, and sources and methods used to collect such information must be protected. The information that we can share, and that other public agencies may need, is therefore limited to open source information, available to everyone.

“Together, we may curb the growth of extremism by preventing schools from being used as platforms for radicalisation, rendering the financing of foundations and the dissemination of violent propaganda more difficult, and having foreign citizens with leading roles in extremist circles expelled,” says Fredrik Hallström.

Keeping Sweden safe
With our constant intelligence work, carried out 24/7, the information puzzle is constantly growing. As our efforts are aimed at detecting and preventing terrorist attacks, plans are thwarted at an early stage.

“We always intervene at an early stage and would never take any risks when it comes to human life. Bringing a case to prosecution or having someone convicted is not our main objective. Our number one priority is keeping Sweden safe”, says Fredrik Hallström.

Should evidence in a criminal investigation, for instance into preparation to commit a terrorist offence, not be sufficient for a conviction, our Service may nevertheless have prevented criminal acts from taking place — and protected human life. It follows that no conclusions can be drawn about what our Service knows, or which measures have been used as part our intelligence work, simply by reading a criminal investigation report.

“Legal provisions allow us to restrain individuals attempting to subvert our democracy. However, more stakeholders in society must do more. Our Service will continue to take various measures to curb the growth of extremism and keep Sweden safe”, says Fredrik Hallström.
A complex mission in changing times

Nothing can be left to chance when it comes to protecting the individuals whose security is the responsibility of the Security Service. Thorough preparations and protective measures down to the last detail are key in fulfilling our mission.

The Security Service is responsible for the close protection of the central government, which includes members of the Royal Family, members of parliament, government ministers and state secretaries. The protection consists of a number of measures aimed to ensure that the protectees remain safe. The most stringent security measure is the use of close protection officers (CPOs).

“Our mission is complex and CPOs must be prepared to act on very short notice”, says Fredrik Bratt, Head of Dignitary Protection at the Security Service. Dignitary protection largely involves taking proactive measures so that protectees can safely carry out their duties, move around freely and maintain close contact with members of the public.

It is a common misconception that the only duty of a CPO is to stay in close proximity to a protectee and to intervene should something unexpected happen. However, this is only one part of the job, which is also much about avoiding risks and dangers, and having a plan for actions to be taken should this become necessary.

Preparations ahead of an event are extensive and often rely on close cooperation between the Security Service and the Police Authority. The Security Service is responsible for the overall design of the dignitary protection and for close protective measures, whereas the Police Authority is in charge of site security.
“Being a CPO is largely about planning, reconnaissance, making assessments and being a good team player. CPOs work independently and have a high degree of personal responsibility. The job requires an ability to plan ahead and make professional judgements,” says Fredrik Bratt.

Fredrik Bratt stresses the importance of good social skills and an ability to work with others. CPOs must be able to make assessments that may vary both in character and complexity. There are also instances when they must act immediately, without any preparation.

“Our CPOs are highly professional. They are also strongly committed and take great pride in what they do”, says Fredrik Bratt.

Technological advancements have an impact also on dignitary protection. Nowadays, it is easy to share information online and through social media, which means that making a threat or urging others to commit a crime can be done both quickly and easily.

“A post made by one of our protectees may spread quickly through social media, and if its content is perceived as controversial, the threat to the protectee may increase almost instantly. This is one aspect of our changing society that we need to take into account”, says Fredrik Bratt.

Knowledge and information are cornerstones in our threat and vulnerability assessments. Close cooperation with other public agencies and other sectors of society is another key to successfully protecting the central government.

“The security of our protectees is our number one priority. For this reason, dignitary protection capabilities must constantly evolve, especially when it comes to the CPOs. Our efforts in this area never stop and we draw from the extensive knowledge and experience of our CPOs.”

Fredrik Bratt adds that this work is facilitated by the supportive environment of the Security Service with its focus on development and improvement.

“Our mission is complex and CPOs must be prepared to act on very short notice.”
Our Service is a referral body for the Migration Agency in relation to aliens cases, and may also apply to the Migration Agency to have an individual expelled. The Migration Agency refers certain cases to the Security Service. Put simply, our Service replies to questions from the Migration Agency, primarily concerning individuals who have applied for a Swedish residence permit or citizenship.

If our Service has reason to believe that an individual may pose a security threat, we conduct an investigation. Based on what is known about the individual’s background, contacts and activities, in Sweden or elsewhere, we assess whether they could come to engage in security-threatening activities, such as espionage and terrorism, or is linked to such activities.

Once the investigation has been completed, we submit our opinion to the Migration Agency. Our Service may recommend that an application be rejected for security reasons, but the final decision is made by the Migration Agency.

If the Migration Agency decides to reject someone’s application, the applicant may lodge an appeal. In cases where our Service has recommended a rejection, we become a party in the appeal proceedings.

Under the Act concerning Special Controls in Respect of Aliens, the Security Service may take special measures against foreign citizens assessed to pose a threat to Sweden’s security. If our Service assesses that an alien is linked to security-threatening activities, such as espionage or terrorism, we will apply to the Migration Agency to have the alien expelled.

In this connection, our Service may decide that an individual is to be temporarily detained, or placed under supervision, should this be considered sufficient. A detainee could be placed in a prison, remand centre or police arrest. The Migration Agency examines our application and decides on whether the individual should remain in detention.

When the Migration Agency processes matters of detention and expulsion, the individual concerned is given the opportunity to submit comments. Detention orders may be appealed to the Migration Court of Appeal, and expulsion orders may be appealed to the Government. Prior to the Government’s decision, the Migration Court of Appeal must give its opinion.

Legal provisions

If an alien is assessed to pose a threat to Sweden’s security, our Service will apply to the Migration Agency to have the alien expelled, and may decide that they are to be temporarily detained.

The Migration Agency examines our application and decides on whether the individual should remain in detention. Our Service and the individual concerned are given the opportunity to submit comments during this process.

Detention orders may be appealed to the Migration Court of Appeal. Detention orders are continuously re-examined by the Migration Agency.

Expulsion orders may be appealed to the Government. Prior to the Government’s decision, the Migration Court of Appeal must hold a hearing and give its opinion as to whether an individual could be expelled to a certain country.

If the court assesses that an expulsion order cannot be enforced, the Government must conform to this assessment.

Residence permit applications

In 2019, the Security Service received 667 referrals and recommended a rejection in 127 cases.

Citizenship applications

In 2019, the Security Service assessed 856 cases of interest and recommended a rejection in 148 cases.
The Swedish Security Service detects and prevents offences against national security, counters terrorism and protects the central government. We do this to safeguard Sweden’s democratic system, the rights and freedoms of our citizens and to protect national security.