

The Swedish
Security Service
2020

We need additional efforts and an increased will to keep Sweden safe.
This cannot wait, the threats are real and they exist here and now.

More people need to do more and think one step ahead.

KLAS FRIBERG, HEAD OF THE SWEDISH SECURITY SERVICE



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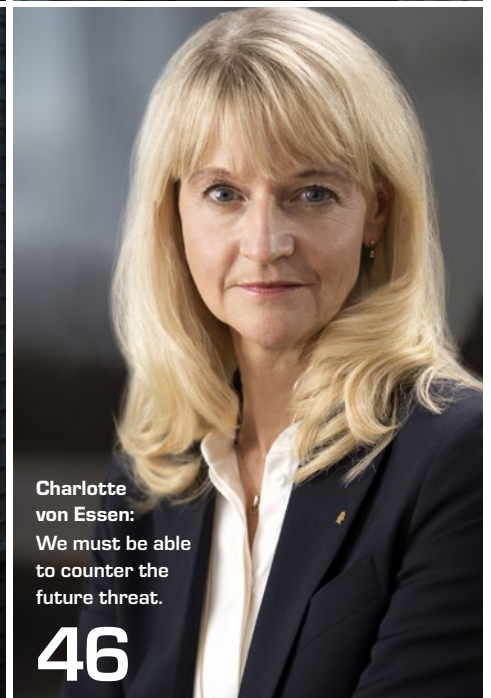
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Klas Friberg:

The most important incidents are the ones that never happen

The security threat to Sweden has increased, and the Security Service assesses that it **will continue to do so** over the coming years. The rapid digitalisation process, global political polarisation and the ongoing pandemic are some of the factors that have not only led to more intensified activities from hostile states, but also furthered the growth of extremist environments.

When asked to sum up 2020 and provide a report on the security situation in 2021, Klas Friberg, Head of the Swedish Security Service, states that Sweden's security is increasingly at risk.

"We face security threats posed by hostile states and violent extremists alike, and it is clear that those who wish to harm Sweden and our democracy have increased their capability. At the same time, our society has grown more vulnerable. The ongoing pandemic also affects many factors of importance to Sweden's security."

Klas Friberg stresses that Sweden could be better prepared to counter the threats – both the ones posed by hostile states and the ones posed by violent extremists.

"More efforts are required across society. This cannot wait, the threats are real and they exist here and now."

After three years as Head of the Security Service, Klas Friberg is of the opinion that while decision-makers, government agencies and businesses have to some extent come to view security in a new light, this is not enough to reduce the gap between the threat and the protective

measures currently in place – something the Security Service has long argued for.

"We need additional efforts and an increased will to keep Sweden safe. Our hope in providing this situation report is that more stakeholders will take action against the security threats. That more people will understand that

«Our hope in providing this situation report is that more stakeholders will take action against the security threats.»

what is considered an opportunity today may very well pose a security threat tomorrow. That more people will think one step ahead."

As an example, Klas Friberg lists foreign investments, acquisitions or business collaborations in Sweden. The results today are new jobs and new money for the owners. →



Klas Friberg

Head of the Swedish Security Service since 1 March 2018. Klas Friberg is a lawyer and chief of police. He has been Head of the Västra Götaland Police Patrol Department and Head of the Västra Götaland Criminal Investigation Department. After a few years as Head of the National Bureau of Investigation, he assumed the post as Chief Commissioner of Västra Götaland County Police, and later held the post as Head of Police Region Väst.

Tomorrow, the result may be that skills and innovations that are important to Sweden no longer remain in the country. Or that the situation is exploited to influence Swedish decision-making. Or that the capability of hostile states to gather information of importance to Swedish security increases.

“We have to be able to connect the puzzle pieces. The threat posed by hostile state is long-term. These states use all resources available to them. They have time and money, huge staff resources and vast technical capabilities. Their actions are based on security and foreign policy objectives, as well as domestic interests.”

Hostile states do not always have the intent to harm Sweden – their primary purpose may be to benefit themselves, and the threats may be both direct and indirect.

In a similar way, the threat posed by violent extremism is both short-term and long-term. The political polarisation that has taken place in many parts of the world over the past few years provides a breeding ground for violent extremism, and rapid technological developments give rise to online communities, connecting violent extremists to individuals at the fringes of extremist environments. The result is an increased risk of terrorist attacks, and, in the long run, an increased threat to our democracy.

“The development in many countries over the past few years, for example the January 2021 storming of the United States Capitol, has shown us that democracy is under threat. We must never take it for granted.”

The Service’s efforts to counter the changed threat have intensified over the past few years. With the current situation, the efforts to prevent and counter threats to Sweden’s security, and to our citizens’ rights and freedoms, will intensify further.

“The Security Service’s mission is to secure the future of our democracy, and this includes handling the changed threat. We also need to make others understand what is required for a secure Sweden and to contribute to it. Sweden’s security is a joint concern.”

As part of its efforts to ensure a secure Sweden, the Security Service is continuing to develop its own IT and technology capabilities. Strengthening the Service’s technological competency will make it better equipped to fulfil its remit.

“The Security Service, too, needs cutting-edge technology to counter the threats.”

Sweden’s security policy position has deteriorated, and the Security Service assesses that the intelligence threat will remain high over the next five years.

The ongoing pandemic is assessed to have played a part in worsening existing vulnerabilities and creating new ones. As a result of the pandemic, the Security Service has had to focus on new sectors that may be of interest to hostile states, such as healthcare and biomedicine.

You said that there has been a change in how security is viewed. What did you mean by this?

“First and foremost, I was thinking of the Government’s proposition on Sweden’s total defence, which was adopted by the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) in December, but also recently introduced and upcoming legislation in the area of protective security.”

In the proposition on total defence, the Government states that protective security is vital to Sweden’s capability to handle antagonistic threats and to reduce vulnerabilities on all levels of society. Protective security is referred to as the basis for total defence as a whole.

“In its proposition, the Government also states that Sweden needs to further increase its capability to defend itself in the cyber arena. The Government highlights the seriousness of these types of attacks by stating that a cyber-attack, in some cases, can be considered akin to a military attack. In this context, you need to keep in mind that cyber-attacks targeting various parts of our society are constantly ongoing. And that the protective security efforts are progressing too slowly.”

The digitalisation process and technological developments, which are in themselves positive things, have helped strengthen the cyber espionage capabilities of hostile states, and this method has grown more important. Every day, attempts are made to obtain information of importance to Sweden’s national security, to unlawfully influence Swedish decision-making, or to carry out other security-threatening activities.

The Security Service assesses that this development will continue.

How serious is the situation?

“The attacks are extensive enough to threaten Swedish jobs, welfare and competitiveness – our

«The attacks affect our fundamental rights and freedoms, our political independence and our territorial sovereignty.»

economic prosperity. They also affect our fundamental rights and freedoms, our political independence and our territorial sovereignty. The cyber-attacks, combined with insufficient protective security efforts, risk revealing Sweden's total defence capability as it grows. In short – the situation is serious.”

In December 2020, the Government decided to establish a cyber security centre, with the Security Service as one of the responsible agencies. How will this increase our resilience?

“It is positive that the Government has made a decision on a national centre for cyber security. While we already have well-functioning collaboration in the cyber area, our joint capability will increase according to a formula where one and one equals three. But a cyber centre alone cannot handle the challenges present within the cyber security area.”

Over the next few years, entities involved in security-sensitive activities, as well as other essential services, are expected to connect to the planned 5G network. This will increase the number of possible attack targets, and give rise to new vulnerabilities. This was taken into account by the Government and the Riksdag when they established that the future 5G network will part of Swedish critical infrastructure.

“This concerns Sweden’s future security. Society will be dependent on 5G, and we need to ensure that hostile states cannot use the 5G network to gather sensitive information or for influencing, control or sabotage purposes.”

What will happen if Sweden cannot guarantee a secure 5G rollout?

“The 5G network rollout is important to Sweden and necessary for social progress. At the same time, entities engaged in security-sensitive activities as well as other essential services will be using the 5G network. This gives hostile states huge opportunities to covertly gather information that may harm Sweden. It also means that one single cyber-attack may have far-reaching consequences, for example on critical infrastructure and our national economy.”

Over the past year, the Security Service has handled several cases clearly showing the intent and capability of hostile states to coordinate their activities. Cases have involved everything from cyber-attacks and suspected espionage to attempts to procure critical products related to weapons of mass destruction. But there have also been cases where the Security Service, in close collaboration with the Prosecution Authority, has investigated how hostile states have threatened and used violence

against regime critics having sought refuge in Sweden, as well as cases of state-supported terrorism.

One possible future development is that hostile states will increasingly use individuals in violent extremist environments to increase polarisation, carry out subversive activities or commit terrorist attacks.

“In this context, I am very grateful for the Security Service’s well-functioning cooperation with our partners, both nationally and internationally. We cooperate with the Military Intelligence and Security Service (MUST), the National Defence Radio Establishment (FRA) and the other Nordic security services on a daily basis. We also maintain close contact with security and intelligence services around the world.”

Well-functioning collaboration with other public agencies, in Sweden as well as abroad, is vital for success in countering violent extremism. The increased polarisation in society contributes to the growth of extremist environments, while support activities carried out in Sweden and other countries increase their scope for action. The ongoing pandemic is also used in violent extremist propaganda, linking it to an ideological discourse. The Security Service assesses that subversive activities will continue, and that the risk of terrorist attacks will remain elevated over the coming years.

“Long-term efforts to curb the growth of extremist environments are necessary to be able to handle the threats to our democracy. The Security Service’s work has resulted in the closure of schools run by individuals who contribute to radicalisation, and in individuals who pose a security threat no longer being able to remain in Sweden.”

Together with other agencies, primarily the Police Authority, the Security Service has also engaged in efforts to decrease the scope for action for individuals in the extremist environments. These efforts have included identification of individuals who pose a security threat, and reducing the cash flow to violent extremism – from foreign financing as well as public funding received by anti-democratic and violent organisations.

“The Security Service’s remit is to counter threats to Sweden’s security and our citizens’ rights and freedoms. This is what we work toward every day. For us, the most important incidents are the ones that never happen. More stakeholders in society need to be of this mind-set. Keeping Sweden secure requires resources, perseverance and a long-term approach. Sweden must not be a sanctuary for terrorists or for those engaging in security-threatening activities on behalf of hostile states.” ●

Read more

about how the Security Service wants to counter the increased security threat in the interview with Charlotte von Essen, Deputy Head of the Security Service, on page 46.

Threats and vulnerabilities affecting Sweden's national security

Hostile states and violent extremists alike pose security threats to Sweden. Our democratic values are challenged by the broadened threat posed by hostile states, while there are still flaws in the protection of our most critical assets. The attack threat remains elevated and is affected by events around the world. **The Security Service assesses that the security threats are increasing.**

A broadened and more complex threat

The threat to Sweden has broadened and grown more complex in nature. The traditional intelligence threat remains, while there has also been an increase in security-threatening activities. The attacks and activities target our constitutional rights and freedoms, economic prosperity, political decision-making and territorial sovereignty. Sweden is an attractive country to hostile states.

All resources are used

Hostile states use and combine all available resources to reach their goals, basing their security-threatening activities on their own strategic objectives. The attacks are constant and affect Sweden's democracy. Attacks on regime critics in Sweden and abroad indicate that hostile states are taking greater risks.

Digitalisation and cyber attacks

The digitalisation process, which is expected to accelerate further with the 5G network rollout, will increase vulnerabilities. Hostile states have a high capability in the cyber area, which will grow more important for intelligence gathering as well as for malicious attacks. A malicious cyber-attack by a hostile state could have very serious consequences for Sweden's security.

Insufficient protective security

Insufficient protective security is of particular concern, as this, in combination with the high capability of hostile states, leads to severe vulnerabilities. This may lead to sabotage of security-sensitive operations, or the disclosure of security-classified information.

Elevated attack threat

The attack threat posed by the violent right-wing extremist movement and the violent Islamist movement remains elevated. The threat is affected by events around the world. The terrorist threat is transnational, with the internet acting as a platform for both radicalisation and calls to carry out terrorist attacks. The boundaries between violent and non-violent right-wing extremism are becoming less and less clear.

Increased scope for action

The increasing polarisation in society contributes to the growth of extremist environments. Coupled with money received through public funding, this increases the scope for action for violent extremists, which in turn could further increase the attack threat. New communication platforms also give violent extremists better opportunities to covertly carry out security-threatening activities.

Subversive activities continue

Subversive activities, which seek to prevent citizens from exercising their fundamental rights and freedoms, are used by all three violent extremist movements. Members of the extremist movements commit crimes such as threats and violence, and harass and discredit politicians, government officials and public servants, mostly in order to influence decisions.

The Swedish Security Service in brief

The Swedish Security 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.

Protecting Sweden

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 its goals and remit are set forth. The appropriation directions, renewed every year, are classified. The Service is to monitor world developments so as to be able to rapidly adjust its 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 its governance, planning and reporting are classified, on the grounds of national security.

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. The Service may also process personal data when people apply for security-classified positions. This procedure includes checks against the Criminal Records Registry. The 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 The Service strives to be as open as possible about its work and conclusions. However, the Service's first consideration is always its operations and national security. The Service's working methods cannot be disclosed and sources must always be protected. In ongoing criminal investigations, the 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 The Swedish Security Service is supervised by:

- The bodies supervising the national administration, such as the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Office of the Chancellor of Justice.
- The Commission on Security and Integrity Protection (SIN). SIN inspects how the Service handles personal data and also acts at the request of private individuals to check any use of intrusive measures.
- The Service's oversight council, tasked with ensuring public transparency. The members of this council, representing all the Riksdag parties, are appointed by the Government. They closely monitor the Service's operational activities and may provide advice and suggestions to the Head of the Security Service.

Threats To ensure the functioning and maintenance of Sweden's democracy and sovereignty, the Head of State, the Riksdag and the Government, as well as information on Sweden's national defence and key buildings, are to be regarded as critical assets.

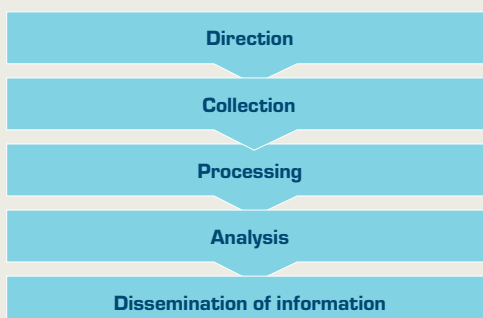


A threat arises when an individual, an organisation or a hostile state has both the intent and the capability to commit a criminal act, e.g. a terrorist attack or espionage. Intent and capability may change over time, and the Security Service modifies its assessments and adjusts its measures in response to the current situation.

Intrusive measures: For example telephone interception or camera surveillance.

Intelligence work

The Security Service's intelligence work is carried out both nationally and internationally. Intelligence work consists of:



National collection of information is carried out through surveillance, human sources, interrogations, contacts with other public agencies and organisations, etc.

In an international context, intelligence enabling the Service to meet its remit is often gathered by its liaison officers posted abroad.

Once the information has been processed, investigated and analysed, and conclusions have been drawn, these are further processed by the Service. A criminal investigation may be launched and conducted by the Service or by a prosecutor. Information may also be shared with the Government, 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.

Areas of operation



Protective security

Raising the level of security across society through analyses, records checks, inspections of and recommendations to public agencies, municipalities, regions and companies operating in sectors critical to national security.



Counter-intelligence

Preventing and detecting espionage and other unlawful intelligence activities targeting Sweden and Swedish interests abroad, foreign interests in Sweden, and refugees.



Counter-terrorism

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

Countering harassment, threats, violence, coercion or corruption aimed at harming Sweden's democratic system of government.



Dignitary protection

Protecting the central government and foreign diplomatic representatives, and ensuring security at state visits and similar events.

Additional remits

Counter-proliferation

The Service's work also includes counter-proliferation, which involves preventing the proliferation, procurement and production of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The Service's 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. This work is carried out in close cooperation with other public agencies.

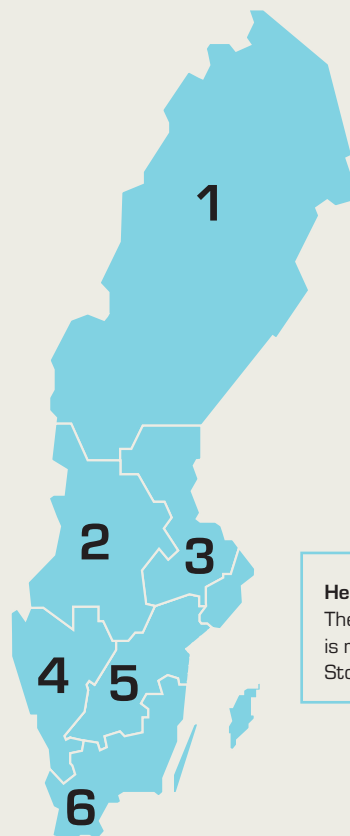
Aliens cases

The Swedish Security Service's remit includes preventing individuals who pose or may come to pose a security threat from staying or settling in Sweden. The Service's role in relation to aliens legislation and as a referral body for the Swedish Migration Agency is a key element of this work.

The Security Service nationwide

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

- 1 Nord in Umeå:**
The counties of Jämtland, Norrbotten, Västerbotten and Västernorrland.
- 2 Bergslagen in Örebro:**
The counties of Dalarna, Värmland and Örebro.
- 3 Mitt in Uppsala:**
The counties of Gävleborg, Uppsala and Västmanland.
- 4 Väst in Gothenburg:**
The counties of Halland and Västra Götaland.
- 5 Öst in Linköping:**
The counties of Jönköping, Södermanland and Östergötland.
- 6 Syd in Malmö:**
The counties of Blekinge, Kalmar, Kronoberg and Skåne.



Head office: Solna, Stockholm

The Security Service's head office is responsible for the counties of Stockholm and Gotland.



Swedish interests are threatened by hostile states

Sweden is an attractive country to hostile states. The attacks are constant. They target commercial interests, research and development, military activities, political decision-making and human rights and freedoms. At the same time, protective security efforts are insufficient.

Extensive attacks on democracy

Cyber-attacks, espionage and attempts to murder dissidents.

The attacks and activities from hostile states target everything from our constitutional rights and freedoms to our economic prosperity, political decision-making and territorial sovereignty.

Sweden is, in many ways, an attractive target.

The threat to Sweden has changed. Traditional attacks continue to occur, such as the stealing of information from high-tech industry and research, attempts to influence political decisions and mapping of critical facilities. But over the past few years, the activities have broadened. The countries that wish to harm Sweden use all resources available to them, in a structured and systematic manner, acting on their own or via proxies.

“Sweden’s strategic geographical location, our strong protection of democratic rights and freedoms, a competitive high-tech sector and groups of people who have sought refuge here to get away from the regime in their country of origin are all reasons why hostile states carry out security-threatening activities in and against Sweden”, says Anna Sjöberg, Head of Operations at the Security Service.

The understanding of protective security has increased, but there are not enough measures in place to protect what must be protected – and sometimes, such measures are altogether absent.

“The high capability of hostile states, combined with the insufficient protective security efforts of possible targets, leads to vulnerabilities in maintaining a secure Sweden. When protective security measures are incommensurate, this may lead to sabotage of security-sensitive operations or the disclosure of security-classified information”, says Anna Sjöberg.

The Service has also noted that the security-threatening activities of foreign countries target

more areas than previously, and that there are more and more connections between different areas. For example, economic pressure is used to obtain political goals. These activities may cause harm to Sweden’s economic prosperity and to our human rights and freedoms, as well as our ability to defend ourselves, which is the basis of our democratic society. At the same time, not all activities by hostile states aim to harm Sweden – the primary purpose might be to benefit their own country.

The Service knows that foreign direct investments in Sweden, to a very high extent, correspond to other countries’ various plans and policies for technological, civilian and military development. In Sweden, there is free and close collaboration between the sectors of education, research and business, which is difficult to copy. The purpose may be to exploit

technology, development and know-how and to gain access to well-educated and skilled personnel. Direct investments make it possible to be part of various networks and development platforms in sectors prioritised by hostile states.

As a direct result, jobs, know-how and innovations risk disappearing from Sweden when entities within world-leading research are mapped and drained of information.

“Swedish technology, products, know-how and information are highly valuable to hostile states, to enable them to realise their industrial plans, production and military development. Lawful as well as unlawful methods are used.”

Anna Sjöberg also stresses that Sweden is →

«The understanding has increased, but there are not enough measures in place to protect what must be protected.»



engaged in many positive collaborations with other countries.

“This concerns, for instance, trade agreements and other collaborations that are vital to Sweden’s development.”

Several countries engage in various types of espionage and security-threatening activities targeting Sweden. The most substantial threat to Sweden is posed by Russia, China and Iran. The regimes in these countries aim to create stability for their own regimes and to strengthen their countries’ status as economic, political and military superpowers. These states are acting more offensively than previously to support their own interests and to force others to act according to their will. These countries typically spend vast amounts of money and human resources over the course of many years, sometimes decades, to achieve their security policy objectives. To reach their goals, they use resources throughout their entire society, and are able to coordinate these well.

Russia, China and Iran collect information and know-how from Swedish universities and institutes for higher education and research. They also engage in attempts to recruit personnel and to influence Swedish researchers.

The Russian and Chinese activities targeting Swedish research and development are primarily aimed at technological and military research, and at dual-use products. These activities are largely linked to the development goals of these countries.

“The Security Service has made various efforts to raise knowledge and awareness of the security-threatening activities targeting Sweden. We have talked to heads of protective security and staff at universities and institutes for higher education and research. We are also engaged in knowledge-boosting efforts aimed at trade and industry”, says Anna Sjöberg.

Cyber espionage has become an ever more important tool for stealing information or engaging in security-threatening activities, for example through constant attempts to breach firewalls in order to gain access to IT servers and steal information.

For instance, a backdoor may be installed in a network and then used for unrestricted and undetected entry and exit for a long time.

Swedish world-leading research and innovation is one target for such attacks. The aim is to steal know-how and take over companies in order to unlawfully build competence and capability. The Security Service estimates the monetary value of

unlawfully collected information and know-how to amount to billions of Swedish kronor every year.

“There are likely numerous unrecorded cases. As protective security efforts are often not as prioritised as they should be, the ability to withstand an attack or to detect a breach of the systems is often lacking.”

The Security Service knows of numerous groups that engage in cyber-espionage against Sweden on the behalf of foreign intelligence services.

Meanwhile, decision-makers and politicians are pressured to change or halt decisions, and journalists are pressured in order to influence their media reports. Smear campaigns are carried out to present a picture of Sweden as a country in chaos, in contrast to the well-functioning country in question. Individual citizens are also targets of harassment and pressure, and their lives are monitored. Sweden’s democracy and territorial sovereignty are being challenged.

The Security Service constantly works to counter and prevent espionage and security-threatening activities. This includes constant gathering of information in order to analyse it, assess it and take action, sometimes quickly. Other times, the

«The monetary value of unlawfully collected information and know-how is estimated to amount to billions of Swedish kronor every year.»



Cyber espionage has become an ever more important tool for stealing information or engaging in security-threatening activities.

Service must engage in systematic, long-term and persistent work for several years before acting. The Service also engages in security-enhancing efforts by reducing vulnerabilities related to critical assets and services. This involves contacting entities that may be of interest to foreign intelligence services and informing them of the intelligence threat, cyber security and methods used to recruit agents.

Well-functioning protective security measures are vital to protect Sweden. Insufficient protective security is, therefore, an area of particular concern. Protective security should constitute a threshold to prevent attacks.

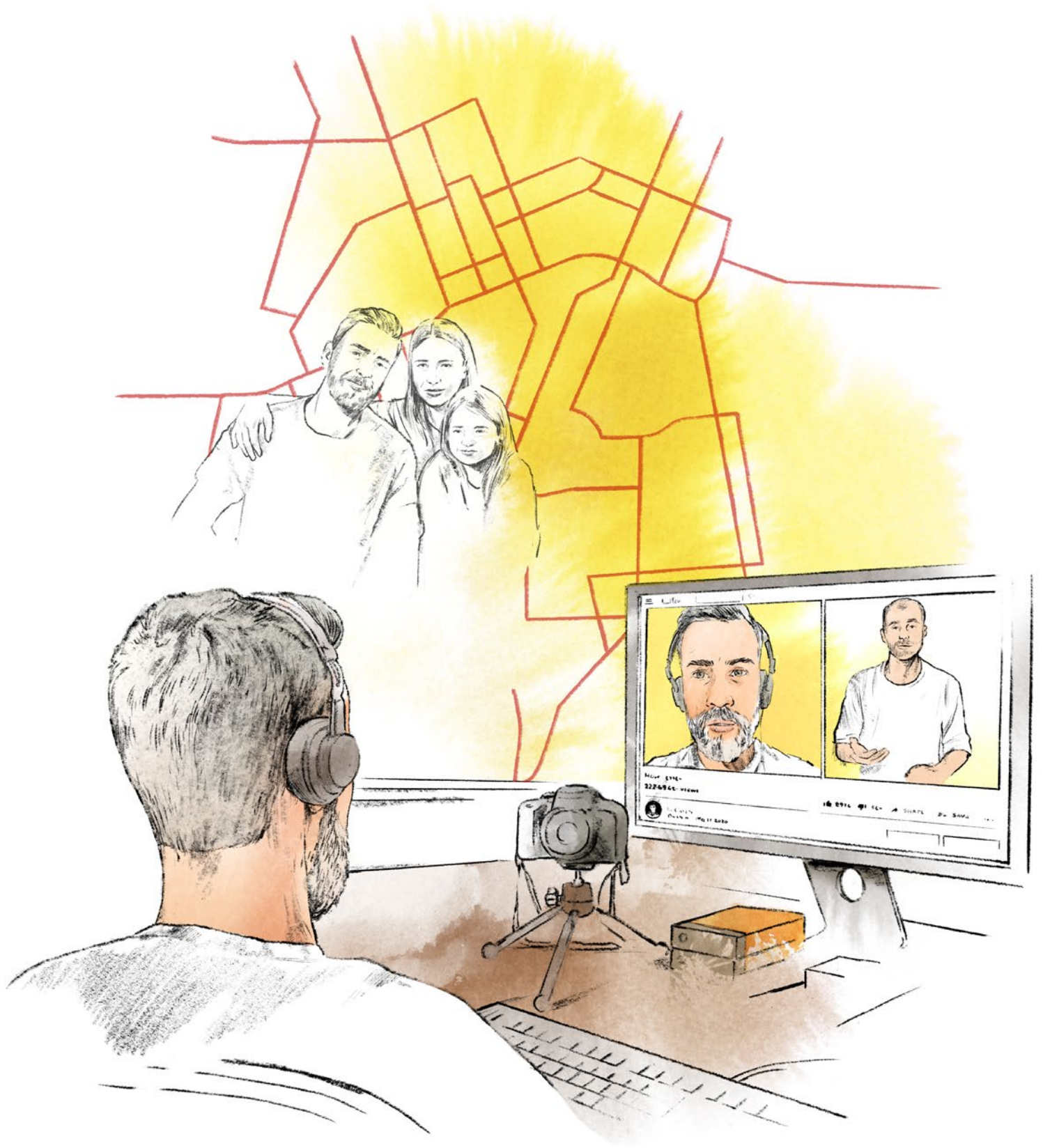
“Security must be more highly prioritised.

Consider security early on and keep it in mind for all sorts of development. For protective security to have an impact on entities handling critical assets and services, it must permeate all areas of operation, and these issues must be handled by the top management, as they are the ones who can set aside the time and resources needed. This makes it possible to identify the most critical assets and services and how to protect them”, says Anna Sjöberg. ●

The threat posed by hostile states

The broadened threat posed by hostile states has evolved in recent years, and increased over the past five years. Today, there are more countries carrying out intelligence activities targeting Sweden, and they are targeting more areas. Instead of a traditional intelligence threat, where individual countries were either interested in espionage targeting refugees, industrial espionage, influencing politicians or military espionage, hostile states now target several areas at the same time. The threat actors cause harm to Sweden’s economic prosperity and to our fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as our ability to defend ourselves, which is the basis of our democratic society. There are also more and more connections between different areas, such as engaging in economic pressure to reach political goals.

The Security Service assesses that the intelligence threat will remain high in the coming years. It will mainly focus on commercial targets, military targets, technology, research and development, and individuals who have sought refuge in Sweden. Hostile states will also continue to attempt to influence Swedish political stances, as well as to broadcast an image of Sweden as a country on the brink of collapse in their own countries. The intent and capability to use violence against dissidents who have sought refuge in Sweden will also remain.



The investigation soon showed that a foreign regime may be behind the attack in Gävle. The victim stated that he is a political video blogger, and that his blog might be the motive for the crime.

A state-sanctioned murder attempt

Over the past five years, Sweden has seen intensified and broadened activities and attacks by other countries. In early 2020, **a Chechen citizen was the victim of a murder attempt in an apartment in Gävle.**

Emergency services received the call at lunchtime on Wednesday, 26 February 2020: a suspected knife attack in an apartment in central Gävle. The first police patrol to arrive at the scene was met by an injured man sitting on the floor in the hallway with a bleeding gash on his forehead. In the bedroom, they found another bleeding man, dressed in outerwear. At the foot of the bed was a blood-splattered hammer.

The man in the hallway had just survived a murder attempt in his own apartment. He had been woken up by a heavy blow from a hammer to his head, and, though dizzy, had managed to overpower and incapacitate his attacker, who had just attempted to commit a state-sanctioned murder.

Every day, all year round, Sweden is subjected to attacks, espionage and security-threatening activities. These activities and attacks target Sweden as a country, but also individuals or groups that other countries try to counter.

“One reason that authoritarian regimes monitor, threaten, or even go as far as attempting to assassinate individuals who are exercising their democratic rights in Sweden is a need for regime stability. The perceived threat to the stability of a totalitarian regime knows no boundaries”, says Kennet Alexandersson, senior analyst at the Security Service.

Both injured men were taken to hospital. An initial interview was held with the victim. He was worried about his family, who lives in another country. He stated that “if they got to me, they may have got to my family”. The man explained that he is a political blogger living under threat.

A prosecutor in Gävle launched a criminal investigation into attempted murder, but the investigation quickly

showed that the case was not as simple as that. There were indications that the regime of another country may be behind the crime. The criminal investigation was therefore transferred to the Security Service and a prosecutor at the National Security Unit of the Prosecution Authority.

The Security Service's mission is to prevent and counter, but also investigate, crimes against Sweden's national security, such as espionage and unlawful intelligence activities. The Service also investigates other crimes, such as murder or attempted murder where a foreign regime is suspected of being responsible. The attempted murder in Gävle is one example of this.

“Although the attempted murder itself took place in Sweden, it was preceded by extensive planning and reconnaissance in Sweden as well as abroad, carried out by a foreign regime. For example, a car was purchased in another country and driven to Sweden, flight tickets and visas

were paid for, and the perpetrator was promised a reward of € 60,000 for completing his task”, says Jörgen, who works as an investigator at the Security Service.

Interrogations and interviews with the suspect, the victim and a woman with whom the victim had entered into a relationship revealed that the planning of the murder had begun several months earlier in the Chechen Republic, a constituent republic of Russia. The perpetrator's task had been set and planned in meetings in the Chechen capital Grozny and in Moscow.

The Security Service knows that several countries are involved in security-threatening activities targeting Sweden. The most substantial threat is posed by authoritarian regimes that can devote significant resources to →

**«The perceived threat
to the stability of a
totalitarian regime knows
no boundaries.»**



Authoritarian regimes can mobilise significant resources to achieve their goals.

achieve their set security policy goals, and have the ability to mobilise capabilities throughout their entire society.

“Authoritarian regimes spend vast amounts of money and time, in some cases decades, to reach their security policy goals. They have thousands of employees and are able to mobilise all areas of their societies, from public institutions to private enterprises, to reach these goals”, says Kennet Alexandersson.

While the interviews and interrogations helped make the details of the attempted murder clearer, extensive investigate efforts, analyses of seized materials, evaluation of evidence and other investigative measures remained to be carried out. The fact that the individuals involved originate from Russia complicated the investigation.

“In order to obtain access to information and check facts in Russia, the prosecutor submitted a

request for mutual legal assistance. Unfortunately, our request was ignored. Instead, we had to use other methods and collaborations to proceed with our investigation”, says Jörgen.

When authoritarian regimes commit crimes such as espionage, this is done covertly. Various clandestine methods are used to provide a misleading or false picture of what is really going on. Some examples are the use of false names or cover positions. Similar methods are used when authoritarian regimes sanction murders.

The investigation took a new turn when it became clear that the woman with whom the victim had entered into a relationship was involved in the murder plans.

The woman has a background in the Chechen Republic, but has lived abroad for some time and has no links to the regime. A person close to the woman, with links to the Chechen regime, used threats to coerce her to contact and monitor the victim. She was then instructed over the phone to open the door for the perpetrator on the morning of the crime.

The perpetrator originates from another country and has no links to the Chechen regime. He was coerced and threatened by individuals in Sweden and in Russia to assassinate a Chechen individual. The perpetrator received instructions over the phone to enter the apartment.

In its judgement, the Gävle District Court wrote that “it appears obvious that an affluent power is behind the crime”. The District Court stated that the attempted murder was very costly, with expenses for transport, hotel stays and pocket money for the perpetrator, who was offered a total of € 60,000 in payment. Furthermore, the District Court stated that a large number of individuals were involved, that several trips by plane and train occurred, that a car was purchased abroad and transported to Sweden, and that a reconnaissance trip to Gävle took place.

The District Court sentenced the perpetrators to ten and eight years’ imprisonment respectively, as well as expulsion, on the counts of attempted murder and aiding and abetting attempted murder. The judgement of the District Court has been appealed and will be tried by the Court of Appeal in the spring of 2021.

The victim remains active as a video blogger.

The regime in the Chechen Republic has not officially commented on the events in Gävle. Russia has yet to reply to Sweden’s request for mutual legal assistance. The Security Service’s work to counter and investigate security-threatening or criminal activities by authoritarian regimes continues. ●

Kennet Alexandersson,
senior analyst,
counter-intelligence



Serious threats to Sweden's security

Hostile states are engaged in activities that threaten Sweden's national security. The Security Service has noted **a broadened and deepened threat that affects Sweden in more ways** than before. The security-threatening activities carried out by hostile states are based on these states' own strategic goals and aim to strengthen them. The most substantial threat to Sweden is posed by Russia, China and Iran.

Russia

Russia has the intent and capability to undermine our country's security and capacity to act. This is manifested through continuous security-threatening activities targeting Swedish society.

In recent years, the West has seen numerous displays of how far Russia is willing to go to reach its goals. The annexation of Crimea, deportation of Western diplomats, the attempted murder of a former intelligence officer in 2018 and the attempted murder of a leading Russian opposition politician in August of 2020 are just some examples. Russia has also carried out influence operations targeting the general elections in several countries.

As part of the Baltic Sea region, Sweden is important to Russia for military, economic and security-political reasons. The aim of Russia's activities targeting Sweden is to keep Sweden militarily non-aligned and out of NATO.

Russia continuously uses a number of lawful and unlawful methods while staying below the threshold of armed conflict. The aim is to weaken the political, economic and military cooperation between Sweden and other countries. According to the Defence Commission, it cannot be ruled out that Russia might use military measures against Sweden.

State-owned Russian media portrays Sweden as a country in chaos and decay. One of the aims of this is to strengthen the Russian regime's status amongst its own population. The political survival of the Russian regime is highly prioritised by the Russian leadership.

Through the use of intelligence officers operating under diplomatic cover, Russia recruits agents to spy on Sweden. One in three Russian diplomats in Sweden are intelligence officers operating under diplomatic cover. Russia also engages in influence operations through so-called proxies: other groups that carry out activities on behalf of the regime.

By spreading fake news and disinformation in social and

traditional media, Russia seeks to influence decision-making, opinions or behaviour among decision-makers or specifically targeted groups in Sweden.

Russia also engages in industrial espionage targeting Swedish industry, research and development. Through methods such as cyber espionage, Russia collects information on e.g. Swedish infrastructure and technology, for immediate or future use.

Russia also carries out intelligence activities against individuals in Sweden with Russian backgrounds, for example through the use of serious threats. The targeted individuals are either considered a threat to the Russian regime, or may have access to information of interest.

China

The Chinese Communist Party permeates the Chinese government and society as a whole. China's expressed ambition is to increase its global influence and advance to a position as a global superpower; militarily, economically and politically. As the Chinese economy grows, so does the Chinese state's need for intelligence in order to support these interests.

China has both the intent and the capability to weaken and limit Sweden's capacity to act in cases where Sweden's actions are considered a threat to Chinese interests. Although geographically far from China, Sweden rests firmly within the Chinese sphere of interest when it comes to achieving China's long-term military, economic and political goals.

China's economic plans are clearly tied to its security policy objectives.

China actively seeks information on technology and know-how available and developed in Sweden. Industrial espionage and the acquisition of Swedish energy and tech companies are two methods used by China to ensure the success of its five-year plans. This is exemplified by the legal

The broadened threat from hostile states affects Sweden's security:



obligation for Chinese-owned companies to share technology and know-how with China's civilian and military intelligence services. A fusion is taking place between civilian and military activities, meaning that civil technology is incorporated into military materiel development, in order to further China's military capabilities.

China is heavily invested in growing as a space nation, and is developing its space capabilities for both civilian and military purposes.

The Chinese state has been known to exploit Chinese citizens active at Swedish universities and institutes for higher education and research to obtain technology and know-how in order to increase its military capabilities.

In addition to engaging in industrial espionage and strategic acquisitions, China also has an interest in other Swedish sectors. One example is Sweden's actions on issues that the Chinese regime considers internal matters, such as official Swedish support for Swedish citizens imprisoned in China. Chinese intelligence services and other government agencies strive to monitor Sweden's actions, and to spread a message that supports the Chinese state's stance, using both covert and overt influence operations.

China's intelligence activities also involve espionage against dissidents and the Tibetan and Uyghur communities in Sweden. These activities are seen by China as part of its efforts to protect its territorial integrity from perceived threats and to protect the Communist Party. In this regard, the Chinese state engages in intelligence activities and influence operations against Sweden to secure the survival of the regime.

The intelligence threat posed by China has become broader and deeper in scope, and nowadays also includes cyber espionage, strategic acquisitions, 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.

Much like Russian intelligence officers, Chinese intelligence officers also operate under diplomatic cover in Sweden. The Chinese intelligence services also use journalistic cover positions.

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. The Iranian regime uses its intelligence services to carry out security-threatening activities in Sweden. This involves monitoring regime critics and targets in Sweden linked to opposition groups considered by Iran as being or potentially being destabilising or potentially destabilising to the regime.

The primary goal of the Iranian regime is to secure its own survival by countering internal and external threats wherever identified, including in Sweden. Exiled opposition groups are considered an internal threat located outside the country's borders. Such groups and individuals exist in Sweden.

There are several international examples of how the actions of the Iranian leadership have endangered people's lives and well-being. Planning and preparation for such actions have taken place in Sweden.

Iran is also engaged in industrial espionage, mainly targeting Swedish high-tech industry and Swedish products that could be used in Iran's nuclear weapons programme. Iran spends vast amounts of resources on this, and some of these resources are used in Sweden. ●

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New centre

to strengthen Sweden's cyber security

Cyber-attacks targeting Sweden are not only a reality, they are also extensive. In December 2020, the Government decided that a National Centre for Cyber Security was to be established as a step towards strengthening Sweden's ability and resilience in this area. This centre will play an important role in Sweden's efforts to reduce the gap between threats and security in the cyber area.

The purpose of the National Centre for Cyber Security is to pool resources to strengthen Sweden's ability to prevent, detect and respond to antagonistic cyber-attacks targeting Sweden.

The Security Service, the Armed Forces, the National Defence Radio Establishment (FRA) and the Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) have been tasked with setting up the centre. They will work in close cooperation with the Defence Materiel Administration (FMV), the Police Authority and the Post and Telecom Authority (PTS).

While the above-mentioned agencies already cooperate extensively in the cyber area, the Cyber Security Centre will allow for more seamless and integrated collaboration between the agencies involved, thereby increasing Sweden's capability in the cyber area.

Preparations for the Centre, by the Security Service and the other six agencies involved, were already underway months before the formal decision and budget allocation. These efforts will intensify in 2021. The co-location of staff and capabilities, as well as the recruitment of a head and other key functions, are in a planning stage.

The support provided by the Centre will increase as the allocation of resources proceeds. The Centre and its synergies will develop gradually in the period 2021–2023, when it will be evaluated by the Government. A decision will then be made on the Centre's focus and operation post-2023.

Once fully established, the Centre will be a contributing factor to enhancing the protection against antagonistic threats and reducing digital vulnerabilities. One central aspect will be coordinated efforts with joint analyses and situation reports on threats, vulnerabilities, risks and protective capabilities. The Centre will also be able to advise the Government Offices on strategic issues related to cyber security.

A well-developed centre for cyber security will also provide opportunities for enhanced collaboration with trade and industry. On the whole, the Security Service assesses that the Centre will be a powerful tool in Sweden's continued efforts to develop the foundation of a modern total defence.

The agencies that make up the Centre will retain their respective areas of responsibility in



the information and cyber security area, in parallel to the Centre's activities.

Cyber-attacks by state actors targeting Swedish interests are constant and grow ever more advanced. Attacks with purely criminal motives are also constant, targeting public agencies, businesses and individuals alike. The Security Service assesses that the direct and indirect costs incurred by cyber-attacks amount to billions of Swedish kronor.

Cyber espionage is also used to steal information of importance to Sweden's national security, in attempts to unlawfully influence Swedish decision-making, or to carry out other security-threatening activities. These actions affect Sweden's sovereignty and, in the long run, our democracy. As the Government stated in its total defence proposition, the consequences of a cyber-attack by a hostile state on critical assets and IT systems may be at par with the consequences of a conventional military attack.

Today, there is a gap between threats and security in the cyber area, and it keeps growing. The National Centre for Cyber Security will play a very important part in reducing this gap. ●

5G

5G will play an important role in the digitalisation of society. At the same time, the information being shared becomes more vulnerable to attacks or manipulation **when more and more units and systems are interconnected.**

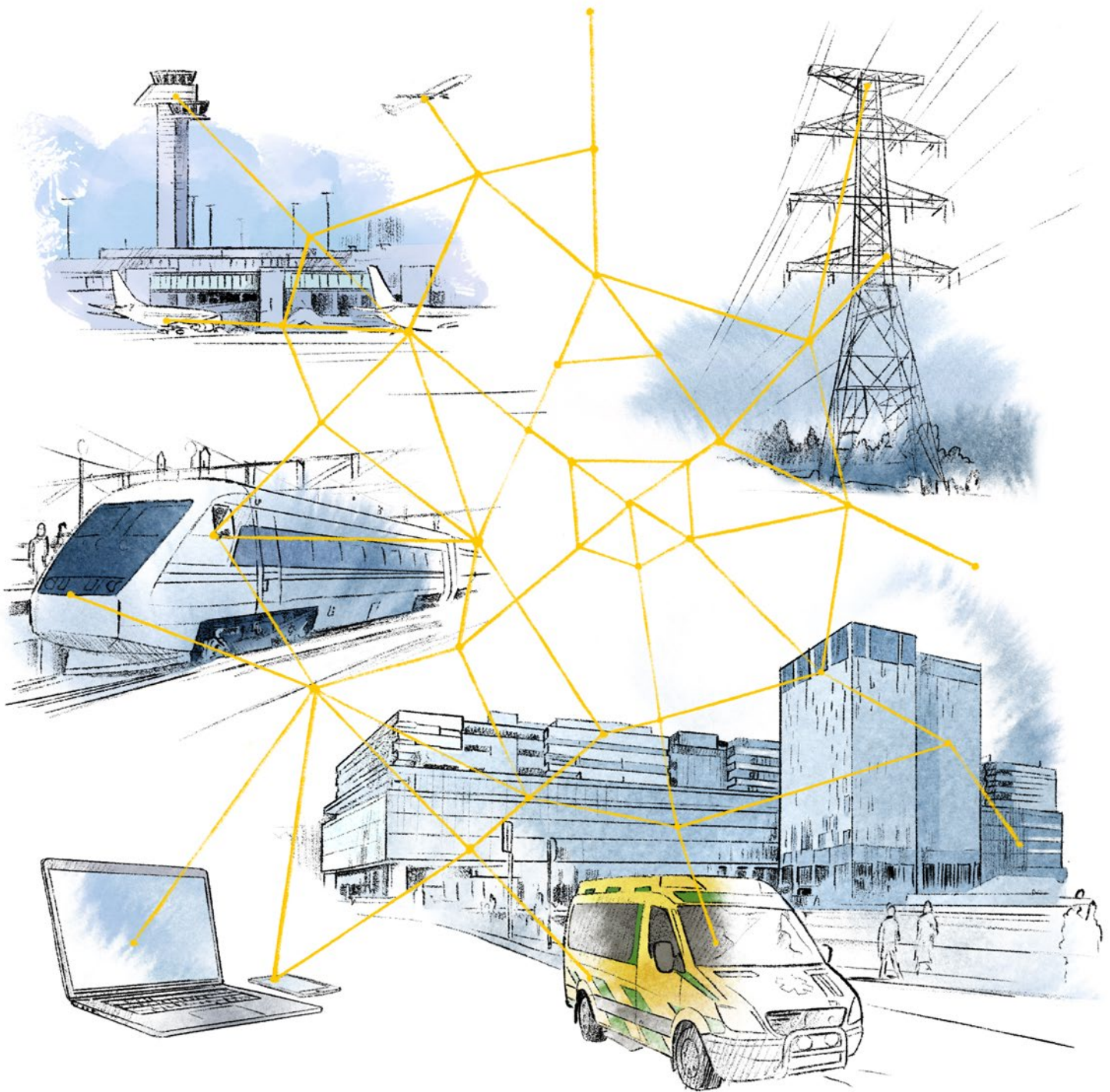
The technological developments delivered by 5G will enable mobile networks with considerably higher speeds, lower costs, higher capacity and significantly more connected units than previously.

Although this will have many advantages for society as a whole, vulnerabilities will increase. Vulnerabilities in the 5G network may be exploited to manipulate or attack systems and wireless digital infrastructure. Critical information systems may be subjected to hacker attacks, total defence efforts and industrial operations may be targets of sabotage or espionage, and other attacks on networks or information systems may take place.

When many critical services become dependent on 5G, IT incidents may have extensive consequences for society as a whole and for the integrity of individual citizens. This may be the case if such incidents occur in financial systems, traffic command centres, administrative and medical systems within the health care sector, digital control systems for electricity and water supply, and electronic communications. As such, attacks on wireless digital infrastructure can affect Sweden's security.

The Government has stated that Sweden must be prepared for the challenges brought on by the 5G network rollout. Ahead of the allocation of the radio frequencies for the future 5G network, an amendment was made to the Electronic Communications Act, stipulating that a license must not be granted if the radio use can be assumed to cause harm to Sweden's security. In connection with this amendment, the Government stressed that it is only the Security Service and the Armed Forces that have the overall picture as concerns the security situation and threats to Sweden. The most important parts of the digital infrastructure need to be secure enough to protect critical services and assets. The new provisions therefore stipulate that the Post and Telecom Authority (PTS), which is the government agency responsible for granting licenses, must consult with the Security Service and the Armed Forces prior to granting licenses.

The invitation to participate in the auctioning of radio frequencies in the 5G network expired in the spring of 2020. In connection with this, the Security Service and the Armed Forces issued a joint policy document, stipulating the security aspects to be considered in regards to the appli-



«The actors involved in the 5G network rollout will be able to influence the functionality and security of the network over time to a greater extent than previously.»

cant operators. This included that the network must be designed not only so as to withstand attacks, but also to prevent unlawful control, manipulation and collection of information. A risk assessment of operators, suppliers and subcontractors must also be carried out.

The Security Service's assessment is based on information that the Service has access to in its capacity as a security and intelligence service,

and the work has involved several of the Service's areas of operation. The actors involved in the 5G network rollout will be able to influence the functionality and security of the network over time to a greater extent than previously. From a security perspective, it has therefore been necessary to consider not only how the network is constructed, but also which actors are involved. ●



Åsa Ahl works with protective security.

Protecting the most critical assets

Sweden is one of the most digitalised and globalised countries in the world. While in itself positive, this has also led to a more vulnerable society. **Swedish companies and public agencies are constantly subjected to various attacks.** More entities are now required to report security-threatening incidents to the Security Service.

The Riksdag has decided on the overarching goals for Sweden's total defence for the years 2021–2025, stating that well-functioning protective security efforts provide the basis for the entire total defence.

Protecting the most critical assets and services, which are of importance to how Sweden functions as a country, is thus more important than ever. One vital part of this work is that public agencies and companies make an analysis of whether and how their operations have a bearing on Sweden's security, and how these should be

protected. A non-existent or incomplete protective security analysis is the most common vulnerability in terms of protective security in Sweden.

“The companies and public agencies we meet with want to get it right, and they have a better understanding of protective security than they previously did. However, they often have to attend

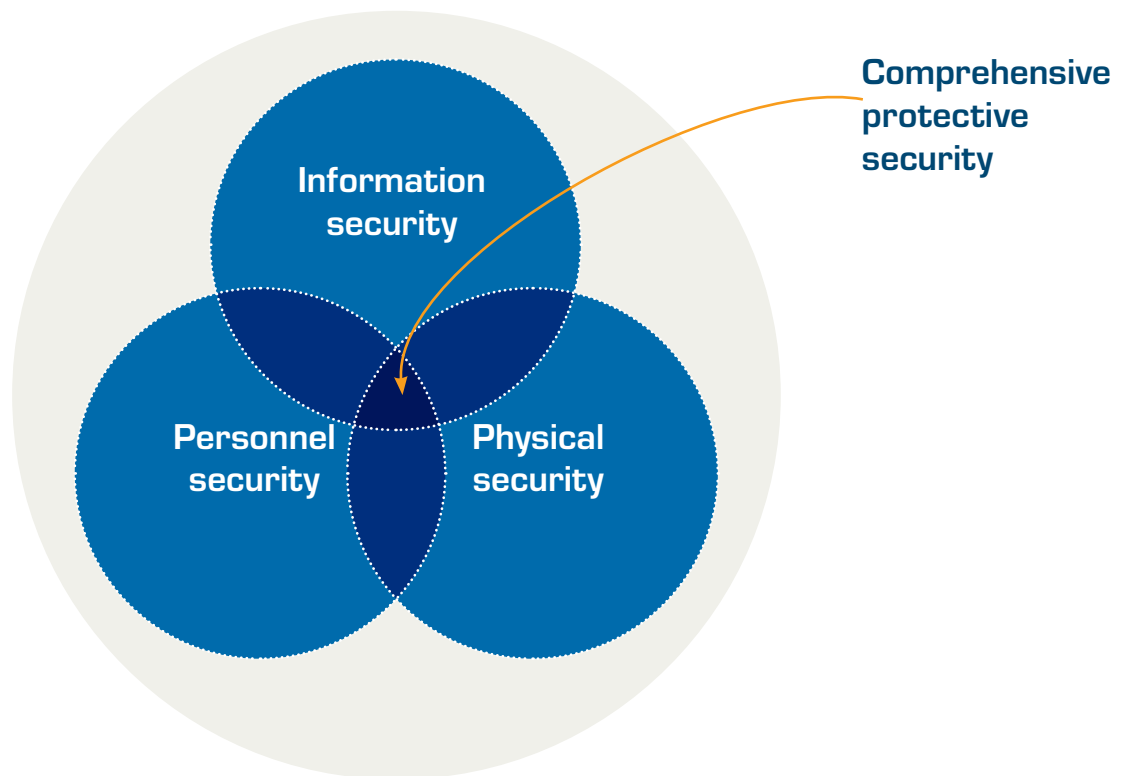
to urgent vulnerabilities as a result of not spending enough time and resources on the basic analysis of whether their operations are security-sensitive, and if so, which parts”, says Åsa Ahl, who works with protective security at the Security Service.

«The companies and public agencies we meet with want to get it right, and also have a better understanding of protective security than they previously did.»

The Security Service has published guidelines to help companies and public agencies with their protective security efforts. These contain concrete tips and advice for all aspects of adequate protective security. The primary advice concerns the protective security analysis. One vital question that public

agencies as well as companies need to address is what the consequences would be for Sweden if all or some of their operations were attacked.

“This involves putting on your protective security glasses and thoroughly considering all aspects of your operations, and how an attack on certain of these could affect Sweden as a country. →



All aspects of protective security need to co-exist and overlap in order to provide comprehensive protection.

These efforts need to be given time, involve all areas of operation, and be prioritised by management.”

One of the sectors to which the Security Service has provided protective security advice over the past years is universities and institutes for higher education and research. Free research and the exchange that exists between institutes across the world is vital for viable research. At the same time, the Security Service has noted that intelligence activities targeting universities and institutes for higher education and research have intensified, and that protective security efforts need to be taken more seriously.

From an international aspect, Russia, China and Iran pose an intelligence threat to research and development. Attempts to recruitment and influence researchers in Sweden are some of the methods used.

The research and development sector has also been largely unaware of what its critical assets are, and has given low priority to protective

security efforts. There have also been a number of security-threatening incidents.

The Security Service carries out inspections of companies that are engaged in security-sensitive operations, for example ones related to Sweden’s energy supply, food and water, financial systems, protection and security or research and development.

An inspection may be initiated by the Security Service or as a result of a report on security-threatening incidents. Even though more and more companies and public agencies actually do submit reports, there are still many unrecorded cases, and reports from more entities are needed.

“The fact that more companies and public agencies are submitting reports is important, not only because it allows them to take appropriate measures to protect their critical assets, but also to be able to see the incident from a broader perspective. Have there been similar incidents elsewhere? How does this affect Sweden’s security on the whole?” says Åsa Ahl. ●



The guidelines contain concrete tips and advice for all aspects of adequate protective security. Available at sakerhetspolisen.se



OPERATIONAL AREA

Dignitary protection

The Security Service's dignitary protection unit **protects the central government** and ensures that it can carry out its work safely and securely.

Mission

The Security Service is responsible for the protection of the central government, which includes the following functions: the Prime Minister, the Government Ministers, the State Secretaries, the Speaker, the Members of Parliament, the Head of State and the heir to the throne. Protection is also provided for foreign diplomatic representatives and during state visits and similar events. On a case to case basis, personal protection may also be provided for other functions.

Threat assessments for the central government are made to ensure that commensurate protection efforts are in place. They take into account not only the intent and capability of known actors, but also vulnerabilities that may lead to an increased threat.

Requirement-based security measures



Information and advice, such as which precautions a protectee should take in their daily life, or informing the Police Authority that an activity will take place in a certain location.



Secure transports and technical security measures, such as installing alarms in homes.



Close protection officers combined with fixed site security.

Planning of security measures

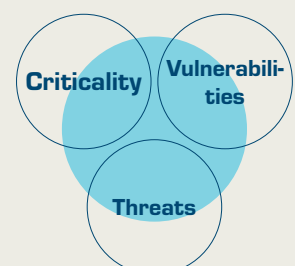
The decision of which security-enhancing measures to use is made following an assessment of the below aspects:

Criticality: The consequences if a critical function were to be negatively affected, for instance if a protectee were to be prevented from carrying out their work in a secure manner.

Vulnerability: A quality or aspect of a protectee which might be exploited by a threat-actor with both the intent and the capability to carry out an attack.

Threat: The intent to physically attack a protectee and the capability to realise this intent. This may change and develop over time.

Changes in capabilities are often unknown or impossible to assess. For this reason, security measures used for especially critical functions must be commensurate with the assumed capabilities of potential assailants, so as to withstand attacks over time.







Terrorism and extremism in a new age

Terrorism and other ideologically motivated crimes pose a threat to democracy. The Security Service works around the clock, 365 days a year, to detect and prevent these crimes – to ensure that what must not happen does not happen.



Blurred boundaries in extremist environments

The number of attacks carried out in the West increased once again in 2020, breaking the previous trend. **Attacks in other parts of the world affect the extremist environments in Sweden.** All three extremist environments consider themselves part of an international context, supporting ideas and ideologies rather than any particular organisations.

Ahn-Za Hagström,
senior analyst,
counter-terrorism and
counter-subversion

Since 2017, there has been a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks carried out in the West. This trend was broken in 2020. The overall terrorist threat to Sweden remains elevated, which means that a terrorist attack could take place in Sweden. Currently, the Security Service assesses that the attack threat posed by the violent right-wing extremist environment is equal to that posed by the violent Islamist extremist movement. The main attack threat is assessed to be posed by lone actors, who, in addition to ideological convictions, may have personal reasons to act. An attack could likely be carried out using relatively simple means.

However, the threat to the democratic system is not solely made up of attack threats. The Security Service makes continuous assessments of the various trends that may affect the threat to national security. The threat is complex, and aspects to be considered are target choice, type of threat, and possible timing. All three of the violent extremist environments monitored by the Security Service – violent right-wing extremism, violent left-wing extremism and violent Islamist extremism – engage in subversive activities. They pose a threat to our democracy and prevent individuals from exercising their democratic rights and freedoms. Crimes that are carried out systematically and repeatedly so as to change the social order are serious and of interest to the Security Service. Examples of such crimes are the use of systematic violence or threats and harassment aimed at politicians, journalists and government officials.

“The aim of these crimes is to decrease public trust in our society and our politicians,” says Ahn-Za Hagström, senior analyst at the Security Service.

There are individuals in all three extremist environments who pose a long-term threat to Sweden through their involvement in various support activities, such as financing of terrorism,

radicalisation and recruitment. These support activities help the extremist environments grow and increase the room for action for their members, which in turn affects the attack threat.

Like the threat they pose, the various extremist environments are also complex and consist of individuals, groups, networks and organisations. The Security Service assesses that lone actors on the fringes of the extremist environments are the most likely to carry out attacks or other violent crimes. One tendency seen in all three environments is that they consider themselves part of an international context, supporting ideas and

ideologies rather than any particular organisations.

The digitalisation process has made the extremist environments global and more accessible. New digital platforms offer vast possibilities for communicating and connecting with like-minded individuals. There have been

many cases where lone actors in Sweden have received support in the form of instructions, tips and inspiration from individuals all around the world, even though their attacks were carried out locally and single-handedly.

Nowadays, the call to action is often to “do what you can with what you have,” which is a more simple modus operandi than previously seen, but also one that is more difficult for security services to detect and monitor.

“Previously, the perpetrators perhaps had to acquire weapons or explosives and get in contact with each other. For these reasons, such plans were easier to detect. Now, the instructions are to use what you have, which could be anything from a kitchen knife to a car that you drive into a crowd of people. It’s also easier to find instructions online, for example on how to manufacture explosives.”

The Security Service is not interested in whether an opinion in itself is extreme or radical. The right to have an opinion is the heart of democracy. What →

«Terrorist attacks and other violent crimes can also be considered a way of communicating.»



Step by step, a lone-actor terrorist is born. Feelings of loneliness and isolation may lead to individuals being drawn to extremist circles, and they can easily find inspiration online.



«People get involved in extremist environments for different reasons, and do not always fully agree with the violent ideology initially.»

the Security Service is interested in, in its mission to protect democracy, is whether a person is extreme or radicalised to a point where they consider crime to be a necessary method to change the social order – that the person has the intent and capability to commit crimes based on their ideology.

“People get involved in extremist environments for different reasons, and do not always fully agree with the violent ideology initially. They might lack a sense of community, purpose or belonging, and find some ideas that draw them in, and only later come to embrace the violent ideology.”

There are individuals who are not clearly part of an extremist environment, but in various ways sympathise with or share the worldview of such an environment, who are affected and shaped by online messages that normalise and advocate violence.

“For some time we have seen that the boundaries between violent right-wing extremism and non-violent right-wing extremism are becoming blurred. The discourse within non-violent right-wing extremist circles is growing more similar to what we see in the violent circles. Jokes and memes with calls for and glorification of attacks appear more and more often.”

The Security Service also sees a trend where different driving forces are consolidated into personal ideologies. Individuals in or at the fringes of extremist environments may be influenced by radical nationalism, racism and xenophobia, antisemitism, alienation, segregation, misogyny or contempt for politicians. They may also be triggered into action by issues relating to animal rights, the climate, LGBTIQ+ rights, gender equality and equal opportunities.

The targets of ideologically motivated crimes vary depending on what the individuals or groups behind them wish to achieve. In some cases, their goal is to cause as much physical harm as possible, with the aim of harming and killing as many people as they can. Targets of such attacks may be markets, concerts, shopping centres or tourist areas. This type

of attack is not as common as attacks aimed at symbolic targets. An attack on a mosque, church, synagogue, association premises or similar may have an extensive deterring effect and lead to individuals not daring to practice their faith, openly showing their sexual orientation or getting involved in certain political issues.

“Terrorist attacks and other violent crimes can also be considered a way of communicating. By attacking different targets, messages are sent to different groups. This may involve spreading fear amongst an ethnic group or inspiring and encouraging like-minded individuals to also carry out attacks, to do what they can with the tools at their disposal.”

The Security Service assesses that violent right-wing extremists in Sweden and across Europe have a growing interest in eco-fascism and environmental and animal rights issues. The climate crisis is blamed on increased immigration, the overpopulation of the earth and the lack of action by politicians concerning these issues. The ideology is based on nationalism, anti-Semitism and accelerationism, which is the belief that society needs to collapse at a more rapid pace through more radical methods. Proponents of accelerationism are of the opinion that terrorist attacks are necessary to speed up the collapse of society so that a new world order can be established.

Crises in society are also exploited by extremist environments to increase polarisation and the lack of faith in society or parts thereof. The ongoing pandemic is no exception; all three extremist environments monitored by the Security Service use it for propaganda purposes by drawing parallels to their ideologies and blaming the consequences of the pandemic on the state, authorities or other parts of society. This is assessed to continue also when the spread of the disease decreases. Analysing and monitoring the extremist environments’ activities linked to the pandemic is complex work that will continue for quite some time. ●

Acting now prevents future attacks

The growth of violent extremist environments is a serious threat, **fuelled by polarisation and alienation**, according to Fredrik Hallström and Susanna Trehörning, Head and Deputy Head of the Security Service's Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Subversion Unit

The polarisation in society contributes to the growth of these environments and increases their ability to commit acts of violence.

Focusing on attack threats is not enough to counter the threat posed by the extremist environments. A wider approach must be used to counter radicalisation, recruitment and financing, which all add to the threat to Swedish democracy. Society as a whole has a responsibility to stop the growth of extremist environments. Schools, municipalities and other public agencies play an important part in this. The Government now has a strategy to prevent terrorism and violent extremism, and society as a whole needs to apply this strategy more and make better use of the tools already in place.

“If someone is left out, you have to get involved. Several stakeholders in society have a responsibility to step in when there are children who are not attending school, who lack a sense of community and who risk being drawn into an extremist environment. The good forces in society, especially male role models, need to step up and offer something other than violent extremism”, says Susanna Trehörning.

“Efforts must also be made to counter the more business-like aspects of the violent extremist movements, 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”, Fredrik Hallström continues.

In its operational activities, the Security Service has noted that there are individuals linked to violent extremism who are active in organisations that receive public funding. Due to the lack of transparency in the system, it is difficult to estimate how much public funding organisations linked to violent extremist environments have received, but it amounts to hundreds of millions of Swedish kronor.

“We can see that public funds are handed out to organisations that appear legitimate on the surface, but where individuals who have returned from conflict areas engage in activities that support violent extremism. Money may be sent abroad to support terrorist organisations, used to invite radical lecturers or for other undemocratic activities. The state and municipalities should not be funding organisations that do not live up to democratic terms and conditions”, says Fredrik Hallström.

In order to find out whether these organisations do live up to democratic terms and conditions, a deeper analysis is needed. The Security Service therefore advocates the setting up of a knowledge centre to support public agencies with knowledge in the form of assessments of organisations, actors, extremism and anti-democratic circles that receive public funding in the form of government or municipal subsidies.



Historically, this has been a problem in all three extremist environments monitored by our Service, but the problem is currently mainly found in the violent Islamist environment.

Together with other agencies, the Security Service contributed to the closure of five schools in 2020. A number of schools that were under the influence of key individuals within the violent Islamist environment have been identified. Most of these are assessed to have had a long-term goal to segregate, recruit and radicalise children and young people. These closures have prevented tens of millions of Swedish kronor being paid to these schools and their owners. The closures have also led to children and young people being at less risk

of being influenced by individuals who promote or sympathise with violent Islamism.

“These schools promote an anti-democratic perspective, and there is a risk that they become a platform for radicalisation”, says Fredrik Hallström.

In 2020, a handful of individuals returned from former conflict areas in Syria and Iraq. The returnees do not form a homogeneous group. The majority of those who have returned are assessed to remain radicalised and affected by their experiences in the conflict areas, whereas others are not. As such, each individual’s intent and capability must always be assessed, upon their return as well as at a later stage. It is important to →

Fredrik Hallström and Susanna Trehörning, Head and Deputy Head of the Security Service’s Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Subversion Unit.

focus not only on those who have returned, but to keep in mind that the environment that they left still remains and constitutes a breeding ground for extremism. These environments have continued to grow and have increased the risk of radicalisation. This also calls for action from several public agencies.

“The Security Service is no longer the only agency to handle returnees. The Police Authority, the Migration Agency and Social Services are involved in different ways than previously”, says Susanna Trehörning.

Several agencies already have a structure of collaboration in place as concerns returnees from conflict areas. These include the Centre for Preventing Violent Extremism (CVE), the Migration Agency, the Police Authority, the National Agency for Education, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR), the Security Service and the Prosecution Authority. Municipalities that may be involved in receiving returnees have made preparations for this, and if there are children involved, Social Services are contacted.

“Different agencies have different tools, and as such, it is important that more of them are involved. The CVE has played a key role, and has done a good job of coordinating the work and collaborating with the municipalities concerned”, says Fredrik Hallström.

In addition to the fact that the legislation concerning terrorist travel applies only to a small number of individuals who have travelled to conflict areas after 1 April 2016, it is difficult to secure enough evidence from unstable conflict

areas to corroborate that an individual has actually committed a crime. Under current legislation, there is no general ban on travelling abroad to engage in combat training or weapons handling training. This is a problem as it increases the extremist environments’ capability to carry out terrorist attacks in Sweden. Just as there are individuals in the violent Islamist environment who have travelled abroad to participate in combat or training, there are similar tendencies within the violent right-wing extremist environment.

“There are countries that are of interest to Swedish right-wing extremists”, says Fredrik Hallström.

The Security Service notes that individuals who are part of violent extremist environments exploit gaps in Swedish legislation in other areas, and often commit crimes other than ideologically motivates ones. Examples include organised crime and systematic abuse of the welfare system.

“All of the crimes they commit – theft, handling stolen goods, fraud, benefit fraud and so on – provide scope for action for influential individuals, networks and groups within the violent extremist environments. For this reason, we have intensified our collaboration with the Police Authority, and we are working more closely together than ever before”, says Fredrik Hallström.

“The Security Service wants it to be difficult to be based in Sweden if you support terrorist activities. This is what we aim for in our operations. The more we disrupt the extremist environments and limit their economic flows, the harder it is for these individuals to engage in support activities”, says Susanna Trehörning.

The Security Service spends a lot of resources on identifying and assessing individuals who pose a security threat to Sweden. Some 200 of them have been issued an expulsion order, but it has only been possible to enforce a third of these. This means that some of the individuals assessed by the Security Service to pose a security threat remain in Sweden and are able to engage in security-threatening activities.

“This is a big problem. We can’t just ignore people who pose a security threat because their expulsion cannot be enforced”, says Susanna Trehörning.

“The fact that we have to continue to spend time and resources on assessing these individuals and using threat-reducing measures against them affects the Security Service’s efficiency. As long as they remain in the country, they can engage in harmful activities”, says Fredrik Hallström. ●

Travellers to conflict areas or combat training camps – and those who return

Since 2012, some 300 individuals have travelled from Sweden to conflict areas in order to join a terrorist organisation, engage in combat training or join a combat unit. Most of them have travelled to conflict areas in the Middle East. Approximately half of them have since returned to Sweden. The Security Service makes individual assessments of all returnees from conflict areas or combat training camps, based on their intent and capability to commit crimes.

The assessments are based on monitoring of each individual in the context of the threat they may pose. Returnees may have gained experiences that have increased their capability or strengthened their conviction to carry out attacks. They may also have increased their contact networks or obtained a certain status among other violent extremists, who in turn may carry out ideologically motivated crimes, influence others or otherwise support terrorism.



MISSION

Aliens cases

The Security Service assesses whether an individual poses a threat.



Mission: to prevent individuals who are not Swedish citizens – and who are assessed to pose a threat to Sweden’s security – from staying or settling in Sweden.



Our work is governed by three acts: The Swedish Citizenship Act, the Act concerning Special Controls in Respect of Aliens (LSU) and the Aliens Act.



Established collaboration with the Swedish Migration Agency: The Security Service is involved in the process surrounding cases related to residency and citizenship.

The Security Service is a referral body for the Migration Agency

- The Migration Agency **refers a case** to the Security Service for comments.
- The Security Service assesses whether the individual in question might pose a security threat and sends a **written assessment** to the Migration Agency. The Security Service may recommend that the individual’s application **be rejected** for security reasons.
- **The final decision** is made by the Migration Agency. If the Migration Agency decides to reject an application, the applicant may lodge an appeal with the Migration Court. In cases where the Security Service has recommended a rejection, the Service becomes a party in the appeal proceedings.

The Security Service requests an expulsion under the Act concerning Special Controls in Respect of Aliens

- The Security Service requests to the Migration Agency to have an individual who is assessed to pose a security threat expelled. In connection with this request, the Security Service may detain the individual.
- The Migration Agency examines the request and decides whether the individual should remain in detention or not. The Security 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, for example as to whether it is possible to expel an individual to a certain country.


When an expulsion order cannot be enforced

In cases where the individual faces risks such as persecution, torture or extra-judicial punishment in their country of origin, the expulsion order must not be enforced.

When an expulsion order cannot be enforced, the individual in question may be obligated to report to a police station at set times, often several days a week.

The measures taken against individuals who cannot be expelled are commensurate with the threat they are assessed to pose, and are designed to make it more difficult for them to engage in security-threatening activities. Even if an individual cannot be expelled at a certain point in time, the expulsion may be enforced at a later stage, should conditions change.





Sweden must be better equipped to secure the future of our democracy

Those who wish to harm Sweden and our democracy have increased their capability. Sweden is not sufficiently equipped to face the threats posed by hostile states or violent extremist environments. A collective national effort is needed.

Charlotte von Essen:

We must be able to counter the future threat

Sweden's future security depends on how we handle the changing threat. In order to counter the security-threatening activities carried out by both hostile states and violent extremists, we need **new legislation and wider prioritisation of Sweden's security.**

The Security Service has said it many times, but it is vital for our future that Sweden's security is more highly prioritised. It is not enough that we know – we also have to act. Steps must be taken across society and through collective national efforts on every level of the civil service", says Charlotte von Essen, Deputy Head of the Swedish Security Service.

The changing threat is a constant factor in the Security Service's work. The Service assesses that the security threats posed by hostile states as well as violent extremists will increase over the coming years, aided by the rapid digitalisation process and technological developments. At the same time, there are flaws not only in the protective security efforts, but also in the cooperation needed to face the threats.

"There needs to be a joint focus and agreement on what must be done in Sweden. We have to create opportunities to enhance our capabilities,

coordination and planning in order to be able to handle the threats posed by hostile states and violent extremists, as well as the vulnerabilities. For these reasons, we welcome the ongoing efforts to produce a new national security strategy."

The understanding of the threat posed by hostile states has increased, says Charlotte von Essen, referring to public debate as well as the Security Service's talks with decision-makers and other government agencies.

"This understanding helps our work progress, and gives us better opportunities to counter the security-threatening activities hostile states are engaged in here and now. At the same time, a lot remains to be done."

What do you consider to be the biggest challenge?

"Making more people act proactively. More people need to understand that the various elements of →



Charlotte von Essen

Deputy Head of the Security Service since 15 May 2017. Charlotte von Essen has a background as an assessor at the Stockholm Administrative Court of Appeal. She has been a legal advisor, Deputy Director-General and Director-General for Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Justice. Upon her appointment as Deputy Head of the Security Service, she was Head of the Uppsala Administrative Court.

«More people need to understand that the various elements of the broadened threat are connected, and take the necessary measures to protect Sweden, both in the short and long run.»



the broadened threat are connected, to see the whole picture – and take the necessary measures to protect Sweden, both in the short and long run. One positive example is the new 5G legislation, which ensures that Sweden can take advantage of vital technological developments without compromising security. This approach will be important in the future if we want to reach a point where we can reduce the gap between threats and security. One important mission for the Security Service is to contribute to these efforts by sharing our knowledge.”

In the past few years, there have been several positive changes to protective security legislation. But it is not only in the area of protective security that the Security Service sees the need for legislation tailored to technological and societal developments. One area that needs to be reviewed concerns law enforcement agencies’ possibilities to access information from messaging services in apps and social media. In practically every case handled by the Security Service, the communication between the individuals involved takes place through messaging services and apps, but the possibilities of finding out who has been in contact with whom and when are limited.

“While hostile states and violent extremists conduct security-threatening activities online to an ever-increasing extent, the Security Service does not have all the tools necessary to prevent

and counter threats to Sweden’s security and our citizens’ rights and freedoms”, says Charlotte von Essen.

The increasing online activity puts new demands on the ability to handle the information flow.

“The amount of information is vast and ever-increasing. Our mission is to identify the threats and threat-actors in that information – in other words, to find the needle in an ever-growing haystack. If we are to succeed, we need to be able to process information in a new, more efficient way. One example is to use automated processing to a larger extent.”

Wouldn't this entail that the Security Service would gain access to significant amounts of information?

“Many people assume that the Security Service has access to considerably more information than we actually do. New methods of communication appear constantly and are used by those who want to harm Sweden and our democracy – criminals, terrorists, and hostile states. The Security Service’s mission is to secure the future of our democracy, and to make sure that what must not happen does not happen. To ensure this, we need to be able to process information in a way that allows us access to the right information. A modern security service must be able to find the unknown threat before it is realised.”●

The archive

– a part of Swedish history

The modern day history of the Swedish Security Service **stretches over a hundred years**. In connection with World War I, the First Bureau of the General Staff, or the Police Bureau as it was called, was established. While the Service's tasks, organisation and working methods have all changed over time, its main remit – to protect our democracy and prevent crimes against our national security – remains.

Something else that remains is the Security Service's archive, in which much of the material that has been received or used by Swedish security services over the past 100 years is still kept. At some point, most of the material is either sent to the National Archives or destroyed, but some is kept in the archive. The Security Service does not have its own museum. The archive functions as somewhat of a historical exposé of all the threats to Sweden's security that have been handled over the past century.

Walking through the archive is like walking through Swedish contemporary history. Archived material from spy cases dating back to Sweden in the inter- and post-war periods is gathered in neat, often aged and fragile folders. Compilations listing "convicted spies and traitors" from the 1940s are kept next to spy maps from Stockholm in the 1950s, microphone, camera and surveillance equipment from the 1960s, and much, much more.

Yellowing newspaper clippings from famous and

obscure events throughout history, as well as type-written reports, statements and minutes tell a story of all the work that has been put in by so many people over the years, all with the aim of protecting Sweden. Each object and every document constitute a small part of the Security Service's, and Sweden's, history.

A security service is unique among government agencies, as much of its activities are subject to secrecy. Secrecy for the sake of secrecy is never the goal, but a prerequisite for an agency such as the Security Service being able to carry out its work. The actors targeted by the Security Service must not know how its work is carried out.

As a result, much of the Security Service's archive is subject to secrecy. Even objects from long ago may be important puzzle pieces to someone wishing to gather information on the Service's methods. However, the passage of time makes it possible to lift the veil of secrecy on some of the objects used throughout history. ●

Matchbox camera

The ability to covertly gather relevant information is important to a security service. As such, surveillance officers are one of the most valuable resources for the Service's operational work. For obvious reasons, the equipment they use is subject to strict secrecy. This camera, disguised as a matchbox, was a real piece of cutting-edge technology in its day. Many surveillance subjects were unknowingly caught on film using this camera.





Letter opener

The Security Service's predecessor during World War II was called the General Security Service (1938–1946). One important task carried out by one of the Service's departments, the Central Bureau, was postal control. Some 300 members of staff were employed to open letters and other mail and go through their contents. During World War II, as many as 200,000 letters per week were opened. Steam was used to dissolve the glue and open the letters. Regular tea kettles were often used, but there were also specially made letter openers. One such letter opener is pictured here. It is accompanied in the archive by a nine-page document titled "Memo on technical working methods for postal control", dated 12 June 1941. This document contains instructions such as "when steam exits the pipe, move the envelope back and forth with its back facing the pipe at a distance of 4–5 centimetres, allowing, as efficiently as possible, the steam to hit the glue stripe at the upper tab."

Letter box

Exchange of information between individuals is vital to successful intelligence work. Today, this type of communication takes place mainly through encrypted digital channels. However, during the Cold War, the passing on of important information was much more analogue. This log functioned as a "letter box", where the person leaving the information could place it in the hollowed-out space to be collected by its intended recipient at a later point. No one knows exactly when the log ended up with the Security Service, but it has been kept as a reminder that our adversaries are innovative – and that many things are not what they first appear to be.



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The Swedish Security Service is responsible for ensuring that what must not happen does not happen. Therefore, our work is preventive. We avert threats to Sweden's security and to our citizens' rights and freedoms. Because our mission is to secure the future of our democracy. This we carry out resolutely and with a long term perspective. We protect the central government and Sweden's secrets. We counter espionage, extremism and terrorism. For us, the most important incidents are the ones that never happen.



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