

FOREWORD

DEAR READER,

Troubled times whet the thirst for information that would introduce clarity to the inevitably noisy context of public information. The Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service's seventh annual report strives to meet this goal. We discuss topics we consider important from the point of view of public awareness in Estonia as of the end of 2021.

For the Foreign Intelligence Service, the keywords of 2021 were the Russian military exercise Zapad and escalation in the direction of Ukraine, as well as the hybrid attack staged by the Belarusian regime on NATO's eastern border.

As of the beginning of 2022, our focus remains on the Kremlin's aggression against Ukraine, which has led to the sharpest confrontation with the West in decades and could also lead to Russia exerting pressure elsewhere in the coming months. Although a direct military offensive against Estonia and the other Baltic states is unlikely this year, various types of hybrid crises are probable. We might also see a renewed attempt to weaponize refugees. The presence of Russian forces in Belarus is worthy of particular attention.

Once again, we also focus on China. The unprecedented Chinese reprisal against Lithuania in 2021 points to China's increasingly aggressive foreign policy in our region. In cooperation with the governments and security services of other democratic nations, we must make sure to have a comprehensive assessment of Beijing's ambitions.

One of the main tasks of an intelligence agency is providing the leadership of the country with an early warning of crises. In addition, the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service provides analysis of broader international developments in diplomacy, energy, influence operations and other areas and assesses their impact on national security. Intelligence agencies' reports are based on information it has gathered and ideally also validated. While speculation can be intellectually stimulating and, in some cases, necessary, it is not the reason why governments have intelligence agencies. There might be countries where governments make decisions based on advice from fortune tellers or crystal balls but I can assure you the Republic of Estonia is not one of them. Here I would like to praise our entire workforce who have done an exceptional job as a team to supply Estonia's leadership with due information and analysis required to make important decisions.

The Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. First established in late 1992 as the Information Service, a unit working from a single office space in Tallinn, it has grown into an intelligence agency with considerable resources and expertise. The mission is to protect Estonia against external security threats. In meeting this challenge, we are not alone, working closely with national and numerous international partner services on a daily basis.

Bravely onward toward the next decades! *Unguibus et rostro* – with talons and beak!

Mikk Marran
Director General of the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service
Tallinn, 31 January 2022