

Finnish military ranks

Finnish military ranks form a system that incorporates features from Swedish, German, and Russian armed forces. In addition, the system has some typically Finnish characteristics that are mostly due to the personnel structure of the Finnish Defence Forces. The ranks have official names in Finnish and Swedish languages and official English translations. The Swedish forms are used in all Swedish-languages communications in Finland, e.g. in Swedish-speaking units of Finnish Defence Force. The system of ranks in the Swedish Armed Forces is slightly different.

Finland practices universal conscription of men (c. 80% of each age cohort), and maintains only a cadre of paid personnel for training and maintaining military readiness. Most of lower ranks are conscripts, and leave service as *sotamies* (Private) or *korpraali* (Private 1st Class). Junior leaders, about 20% of age cohort, serve 12 months and leave service as *alikersantti* (Corporal) or *kersantti* (Sergeant). 10% of conscripts are trained as reserve officers, serving 12 months, and leave service usually as *vänrikki* (2nd Lieutenant) or in the Navy as *aliluutnantti* (Ensign). In principle, there should be no distinction between reserve and active ranks, and NCOs and reserve officers can be promoted in reserve, up to *everstiluutnantti* (Lieutenant Colonel). During peace time, reservists are inactive, i.e. they do not receive pay or have a position in the chain of command. Reservists are in duty only when mobilized during a crisis or when attending mandatory or voluntary refresher exercises. Nevertheless, reserve NCO or officer ranks are an entrance requirement to a military or border guard career.

Rank and file and non-commissioned officers are promoted to their ranks by the commander of a brigade or equivalent, with the exception of the highest NCO ranks of *ylivääpeli* (Master Sergeant) and *sotilasmestari* (Sergeant Major), who are promoted by the service commander and Chief of Staff of the Defence Command, respectively. All officers from *vänrikki* (2nd Lieutenant) and higher are promoted to their ranks and commissioned to their offices by the President of Finland.^[1] Professional officers are trained at the Finnish National Defence University. Career officers graduate first as *sotatieteen kandidaatti* (Bachelor of Military Science), with an automatic promotion to *luutnantti* (Lieutenant), then work for 3–4 years' work as temporary officers. After this, they continue their studies to *sotatieteen maisteri* (Master of Military Science) and are promoted to *yliluutnantti* (1st Lieutenant). After graduation, they are promoted to *kapteeni* (Captain) and a commission to a permanent office.

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Table of ranks

The ranks currently used by the Finnish Defence Forces are (Finnish name above, and Swedish name below):^[2]

Army and air force operational ranks

Equivalent	NATO	OF-10	OF-9	OF-8	OF-7	OF-6	OF-5	OF-4	OF-3	OF-2		OF-1	
	code												
 Finland (Edit)		No equivalent											
			<i>Kenraali</i>	<i>Kenraaliluutnantti</i>	<i>Kenraalimajuri</i>	<i>Prikaatikenraali</i>	<i>Eversti</i>	<i>Everstiluutnantti</i>	<i>Majuri</i>	<i>Kapteeni</i>	<i>Yliluutnantti</i>	<i>Luutnantti</i>	<i>Vänrikki</i>
			<i>General</i>	<i>Generallöjtnant</i>	<i>Generalmajor</i>	<i>Brigadgeneral</i>	<i>Överste</i>	<i>Överstelöjtnant</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Kapten</i>	<i>Premiärlöjtnant</i>	<i>Löjtnant</i>	<i>Fänrik</i>
											1st Lt.	Lt.	2nd Lt.

 Finland (Edit)						
	Sotilasmestari <i>Militärmästare</i> Sergeant Major	Ylivääpeli <i>Överfältväbel</i> Master Sergeant	Vääpeli <i>Fältväbel</i> Sergeant 1st class	Ylikersantti <i>Översergeant</i> Staff Sergeant	Kersantti <i>Sergeant</i> Sergeant	Alikersantti <i>Undersergeant</i> Corporal
Equivalent NATO code	OR-9	OR-8	OR-7	OR-6	OR-5	OR-4

Equivalent NATO code	OF-10	OF-9	OF-8	OF-7	OF-6	OF-5	OF-4	OF-3	OF-2	
 Finland (Edit)	No equivalent									
		Kenraali General	Kenraaliluutnantti Generallöjtnant	Kenraalimajuri Generalmajor	Prikaatikenraali Brigadgeneral	Eversti Överste	Everstiluutnantti Överstelöjtnant	Majuri Major	Kapteeni Kapten	Yliiluutnantti Premiärlöjtn
 Finland (Edit)										
Equivalent NATO Code		OR-9	OR-8	OR-7		OR-6				OR-5
		Sotilasmestari <i>Militärmästare</i>	Ylivääpeli <i>Överfältväbel</i>	Vääpeli <i>Fältväbel</i>		Ylikersantti <i>Översergeant</i>				Kersantti <i>Sergeant</i>

Navy operational ranks

Equivalent NATO code	OF-10	OF-9	OF-8	OF-7	OF-6	OF-5	OF-4	OF-3	OF-2	OF-1		
 Finland (Edit)	No equivalent											
		<u>Amiraali</u>	<u>Vara-amiraali</u>	<u>Kontra-amiraali</u>	<u>Lippueamiraali</u>	<u>Kommodori</u>	<u>Komentaja</u>	<u>Komentajakapteeni</u>	<u>Kapteeniluutnantti</u>	<u>Yliiluutnantti</u>	<u>Luutnantti</u>	<u>Aliluutnantti</u>
 Finland (Edit)												
Equivalent NATO code		OR-9	OR-8	OR-7		OR-6			OR-5			OF-4
		<u>Sotilasmestari</u> <u>Militärmästare</u>	<u>Ylipursimies</u> <u>Överbåtsman</u>	<u>Pursimies</u> <u>Båtsman</u>		<u>Ylikersantti</u> <u>Översergeant</u>			<u>Kersantti</u> <u>Sergeant</u>			<u>Alikersantti</u> <u>Undersergeant</u>

Army training ranks

Rank	Translation	Equivalent rank	Collar insignia M/05 field insignia
Kadetti Kadet	Cadet	Senior to 2nd lieutenant	 
Upseerikokelas Officersaspirant	Officer candidate	Senior to conscript sergeant	 
Upseerioppilas Officerselev	Officer student	Senior to conscript corporal	 

Aliupseerioppilas Underofficerselev	NCO student	Private 1st class		
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Navy training ranks

Rank	Translation	Equivalent rank	Shoulder insignia	Sleeve insignia
Kadetti Kadet	Midshipman	Senior to ensign	—	
Upseerikokelas Officersaspirant	Officer candidate	Senior to conscript petty officer, 2nd class	—	
Upseerioppilas Officerselev	Officer student	Petty officer, 3rd class	—	
Aliupseerioppilas Underofficerselev	NCO student	Seaman apprentice	—	

Military chaplains

Rank	Translation	Equivalent rank	Collar insignia	Shoulder insignia
Kenttäpiispa Fältbiskopen	Field Bishop	Brigadier General (OF-6)		
Kenttärovasti Fältprost	Field Provost	Lieutenant Colonel (OF-4)		
Sotilaspastori Militärpastor	Military Pastor	Captain (OF-2)		

Personnel groups

The military personnel of the Finnish Defence Forces is divided into three groups:^[3]

- command personnel (*päällystö*)
- junior command personnel (*alipäällystö*)
- rank and file (*miehistö*)

Ranks *sotamies* and *korpraali* comprise the rank-and-file (*miehistö*). Soldiers in the rank of a private always have a branch or service specific title such as *tykkimies* "gunner" or *matruusi*, "seaman apprentice"; the non-specific rank of *sotamies* is no longer in use (see below). The NCO students rank as privates until they are promoted to the rank of Corporal.

The junior command personnel are formed from the professional or reserve NCOs and conscripts serving in ranks of corporal, officer student, sergeant or officer candidate or their naval equivalents. However, by regulation, all professional servicemen outrank conscripts.

The command personnel is formed of commissioned officers, commissioned officer specialists, warrant officers (*opistoupseeri*) and cadets.

Reservists belong to the personnel group determined by their military rank, but hold the position in the chain of command only from the moment they report to duty (or should have reported to duty) to the moment they have been discharged and have left the military installation. Unlike conscripts, the reservists rank with the professional military personnel without prejudice. The highest rank available to reserve officers is major, and in exceptional cases, lieutenant colonel.

Insignia

The insignia is different from other European systems by some features. Stars are not used in the insignia. Large roses, instead of oak leaves, denote ranks from major to colonel. Generals wear lions (Lion of Finland), not stars. The qualifiers *yli* "Senior" and *ali* "Junior" are used in the names of some ranks; for example, *kersantti* is "Sergeant", while *alikersantti* is "Junior Sergeant" (Corporal).

In the army the insignia are placed in the collar in parade and service uniforms M/58 and M/83 and in field uniforms M/62 and M/91. The airforce places the insignia on the sleeve of M/51 instead of the collar. In the navy where they have different parade dress they place the ranks on the sleeve and they also have the M/83 insignia on the shoulders. If the insignia are placed on the arm or on the sleeve, sleeve insignia are used. In the modern field uniform M/05, the collar insignia are placed on the chest. The colours of the background and the lining on the Army and Air Force collar patches indicate branch of specialization. In field uniforms, the collar patches do not carry branch colours, borders or corner accents. The national flag is carried in all uniforms and the unit insignia on background of the serviceman's branch colour is carried on the arm in battledress M/91 and M/05. However, conscripts' field uniforms may

omit all insignia except the rank markings. In the table above, the army insignia for ranks from Private to Major are depicted on infantry collar patches, with the exception of Officer Student, which features Reserve Officer School collar patches. General officers' collar patches are most often gold on red. However, in some cases, the background of the collar patch retains the original colour of his branch of service.

In the Navy uniform, officers and Warrant officers wear the Lion of Finland on the top of their insignia, while Non-commissioned officers use the special insignia of their duty branch. In field uniforms, these emblems are dropped. Specialist officers always wear their specialist insignia in addition to their rank insignia on the collar patches. On sleeve and shoulder insignia, the specialty is denoted by coloured insignia background.

The NCO students do not wear any collar insignia. Their sole rank insignia consists of a silver line worn on the shoulder or arm of all uniforms, except in M/05 where the silver line is worn on the chest.



Corporal

Exceptions

General officers

The ranks of field marshal (*sotamarsalkka*) and Marshal of Finland (*Suomen marsalkka*) were bestowed on Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim in 1933 and 1942, respectively. These are officially not military ranks but honorific titles, but were used like military ranks senior to the rank of general. The insignia used was a general's insignia added with crossed marshal's baton.

All generals from brigadier general to general are addressed as "Mr./Mrs. General" ("*herra/rouva kenraali*"), and similarly for admirals.

Historical honorary titles

The rank of general may, as a sign of special recognition, include a service branch: those historically used were general of infantry (*jalkaväenkenraali*), general of cavalry (*ratsuväenkenraali*) and general of artillery (*tykistökenraali*). These additions do not affect seniority. There are no living general officers with such recognition, the last one being General of Infantry Adolf Ehrnrooth (1905–2004).

Personnel who fought in the Finnish Jaegers of the German Army during World War I are often referred to as such, e.g. *jääkärivevsti* "Jaeger colonel".



Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, Marshal of Finland.

Military civil servants and specialist officers

Personnel serving in technical duties belonging to the officers without officer training hold the position of military civil servant (*sotilasvirkamies*). Their rank is comparable to either first lieutenant, lieutenant and staff sergeant, depending on the level of the civilian education required to serve in this position. The lowest class is reserved for non-salaried military civil servants. Usually the military civil servants are an exception as their positions are likely to be filled by special officers, who have received officer training and hold commissions in addition to civilian academic education. The most typical specialties are engineering and medicine. Civilian interpreters hired for UN peace keeping missions abroad are typically ranked as first lieutenant or lieutenant, according to their civilian education level.

Reservists may be promoted up to the rank of major both in special and normal officer ranks, if they show extraordinary commitment to national defence. In rare cases, reservists have been promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Chaplains serve in the ranks of chaplain (*sotilaspastori*), senior chaplain (*kenttärövästi*, literally, "field dean"), and chaplain general (*kenttäpiispa*, literally, "field bishop"), corresponding to the ranks of captain, lieutenant colonel, and brigadier general, respectively. In addition, they have a personal rank into which they revert at the end of their clerical service in the Finnish Defence Force. Conscript chaplains and deacons serve in their personal rank.^[4]

Officer training

Conscripts who have passed a reserve officer course, serve as officer candidates (*upseerikokelas*) and are considered NCOs ranking always above conscript sergeants but below any career personnel.^[5] They are addressed *rouva/herra kokelas* or *rouva/herra upseerikokelas*. At the end of their service period, they are promoted to second lieutenants.

Cadets (*kadetti*) are career military who have already passed their conscription and obtained the reserve officer's training and are now attending their professional officer education in the National Defence University. Cadets are senior to second lieutenants. In addition, the cadets may hold a cadet NCO rank which pertains to the seniority inside the Cadet Corps but does not affect their ranks in relation to other military personnel.

NCO ranks

The NCO ranks in the Finnish Defence Force are filled by conscripts, career NCOs and contractual military personnel. The basic NCO rank "professional military person" (*sotilasammattihenkilö*) was abolished in 2006. It was position reserved for career NCOs who had not received conscript NCO training. Its relation to other rank and file ranks was unspecified. Career NCOs usually serve in the ranks of sergeant major, master sergeant, sergeant first class, staff sergeant and sergeant

The contractual military personnel (*sopimussotilaat*) serve in their reserve ranks. Until 2007, reserve officers served in the rank of staff sergeant. This practice has now been abolished and nowadays reserve officers use their reserve rank. As conscript, contractual and career NCOs may serve in the rank of sergeant, career NCO sergeants use a small sword insignia in conjunction of the chevrons to distinguish them from conscript and contractual sergeants.



Field marshal insignia consisting of the three heraldic lions of a full general and crossed marshal's batons.

After discharge from the military, both career NCOs and contractual military personnel revert to their personal reserve ranks. The conscripts may hold the NCO rank of officer cadet, sergeant, officer student, or corporal. Reserve personnel may hold any NCO rank.

Special positions

There are some positions, which resemble military ranks in their name, but are not. The position of the "sergeant major of a company" (or other unit such as battery in artillery) is called *komppanianvääpeli* "sergeant first class of the company". In past times it was the position of the unit's most senior career NCO, but nowadays the post is held often by someone from sergeant up to senior lieutenant in training units, or by a conscript NCO (*alikersantti*, *kersantti* etc.) in mobilized units. Another example is *komendantti*, which is not a rank but a security/executive officer position in a brigade. While the rank of *komentaja* is found in the navy, in general use it refers to a commander of a battalion or a larger unit.

Privates

Sotamies is the generic rank for private, however the rank of *sotamies*, as such, is no longer used in any service branch. The rank is always given the name specific to the service branch:

- Jaeger (*jääkäri*) in infantry (including mortar personnel, who may be subordinated to artillery units)
- Signalist (*viestimies*) in signals corps
- Armourman (*panssarimies*) in tank units and armour *jaeger* (*panssarijääkäri*) in mechanised infantry
- Driver (*autosotamies*) in transport corps
- Gunner (*tykkimies*) in anti-aircraft corps, field artillery and coastal units of the navy
- NBC private (*suojelumies*) in NBC defence units
- Engineer (*pioneeri*) in engineers
- Airman (*lentosotamies*) in the air force
- Seaman (*matruusi*) in the navy
- Coastal *jaeger* (*rannikkojääkäri*) in certain units of Uusimaa Brigade (*Uudenmaan prikaati*)
- Dragoon (*rakuuna*) in the Dragoon Squadron of Army Warfare School (*Rakuunaeskadroona/Maasotakoulu*) - This squadron was disbanded in December 2016
- Cavalryman (*ratsumies*) in the Häme Regiment (*Hämeen rykmentti*) – This regiment was disbanded in December 2014.
- Guard *jaeger* (*kaartinjääkäri*) in Guard Jaeger Regiment (*Kaartin jääkärirykmentti*)
- Border *jaeger* (*rajajääkäri*) in the border guards (conscript rank, enlisted border guard personnel are NCOs in ranks of border guard (*nuorempi rajavartija*, sergeant), senior border guard (*vanhempi rajavartija*, between staff sergeant and sergeant first class), border guard sergeant (*ylirajavartija*, between sergeant first class and master sergeant) and border guard master sergeant (*rajavartiimestari*).)

Roughly 10 percent of all privates are promoted to the rank of private 1st class (*Korpraali*) during their service. In comparison, non-commissioned officer students (*Aliupseerioppilas*) hold either the permanent rank of private or private 1st class and rank accordingly. The rank of *alokas* is used to denote privates in basic training. The recruit, *alokas* is a new private, who has not been trained enough to have given a military oath or military guarantee. After having given an oath or such guarantee, the private soldier is not called anymore *alokas*, but he or she will be addressed as private or corresponding private level military rank.

Paratroop jaeger (*laskuvarjojääkäri*) and Special jaeger (*erikoisjääkäri*) in Utti Jaeger Regiment (*Utin jääkärirykmentti*) and Special border jaeger (*erikoisrajajääkäri*) in Special Border Jaeger Company of Border and Coast Guard School (*Raja- ja merivartiokoulu*) are not ranks, but specializations, where NCO training is given and thus each graduate is at minimum *alikersantti*.

Historically, the rank of *sotamies* was used in generic infantry units, while the rank of jaeger was used in specific jaeger battalions, which derived their traditions from the Jäger Movement.

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External links

- Finnish Army Insignia of Rank (in Finnish) (<https://archive.today/20130213141755/http://www.puolustusvoimat.fi/portal/puolustusvoimat.fi/?urile=wcm:path:/SU+Puolustusvoimat.fi/Puolustusvoimat.fi/Puolustusvoimat/Varusmiehille/Arvomerkit+ja+tunnusvarit/Arvomerkit+ja+tunnusvarit>)
- Finnish Navy Insignia of Rank (in Finnish) (<http://www.puolustusvoimat.fi/portal/puolustusvoimat.fi/?urile=wcm:path:/SU+Puolustusvoimat.fi/Puolustusvoimat/Varusmiehille/Arvomerkit+ja+tunnusvarit/merivoimien+arvomerkit/merivoimien+arvomerkit>)
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