

Mindef offers new short-term cyber specialist scheme

Scheme for NSF's aims to attract those with cyber security expertise

Lim Min Zhang

The Ministry of Defence (Mindef) will train full-time national servicemen (NSFs) who have an aptitude for cyber security to become elite cyber defenders in the regular service, with a new short-term contract scheme.

From yesterday, any national service pre-enlistee enlisting from the second half of this year onwards, when the pilot scheme starts, can apply for it. If selected, they will serve a total of three or four years in uniform, earning regular service pay after first completing a minimum period as NSF's.

These cyber specialists will take classes under the Singapore Institute of Technology's (SIT) cyber security degree once a week, while de-

ployed in advanced cyber defence roles such as penetration testing, cyber forensics and malware analysis. The classes will earn them academic credits for an SIT degree later.

Mindef will start with 50 to 70 of these Cyber Specialist Awards for the first year, and 80 to 90 when the trial ends after the first year.

The aim is to attract people with cyber security expertise – an increasing need, given how cyber attacks are getting more frequent, and how skilled individuals with deep expertise make a critical difference in this domain.

The awards come under a new Cyber NSF Scheme, which also includes NSF cyber operators performing more basic roles such as round-the-clock threat monitoring and analysis. There will be about 60 operators a year in this role. Personnel de-

ployed in cyber security roles since last year are also considered operators under this scheme.

The cyber vocation was announced during last March's parliamentary debate on Mindef's spending plans.

Yesterday, Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) and Second Minister for Defence Ong Ye Kung was at the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Mindef and SIT. He said the Cyber NSF Scheme was a marrying of three trends.

"One is the operational requirements of SAF to defend our country better, especially in the area of cyber defence. Two, the rise of a young group that is actually very *au fait* (well-versed) with cyber defence, and we want to tap and leverage their expertise."

"Three, an evolution in teaching methods in all our institutes of higher learning, where it is not just pure lectures but also hands-on experience at the same time," he said.

The MOU was signed at the SIT campus in Dover Road by Mr David Koh, deputy secretary (special projects) at Mindef, and Professor Loh Han Tong, SIT's deputy president (academic) and provost.

The collaboration also involves the Cyber Security Agency and SkillsFuture Singapore. The agreement is the first work-learn programme between Mindef and an educational institute where NSF's can attend academic courses while employed in an operational role.

Mr Koh, who is also defence cyber chief, said: "The proliferation of cyber attacks is a clear sign that cyberspace is the next battle-

field, and cyber security is a national imperative."

Applicants will be tested on skills and aptitude in cryptography, security architecture and application security. They will also undergo psychometric tests and complete practical problem-solving scenarios.

The award recipients will get to go for professional certifications such as Sysadmin, Audit, Network and Security (Sans) Institute courses, and could be promoted up to the rank of First Sergeant.

NSF's in the cyber vocation will be deployed in a range of operational roles in four broad areas: cyber security monitoring, threat assessment and response, vulnerability audit and penetration testing, and malware analysis and cyber forensics.

mzlim@sph.com.sg



Soldiers at a demonstration showing how they would handle cyber threats at the Cyber Defence Test and Evaluation Centre in December last year. Mindef will start with 50 to 70 Cyber Specialist Awards for the first year.
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