



Members of a 7th Signal Command Cyber Protection Team work in a virtual-training environment on Fort Gordon, Ga., on June 5, 2015. (Photo by Bill Bengston)

# Deadline For New Cyber Military Occupational Specialty Applications Looms

By Laura Levering – Army News Service

The Army is looking for Soldiers who want to sign on as part of the cyber branch.

**A**n Army Military Personnel, or MILPER, message published in June notified Soldiers of the opportunity to reclassify into the 17C military occupational specialty, which is called cyber operations specialist. Soldiers have until Aug. 31 to submit their packet for the first school date. Those who miss it will have to wait until the next course announcement.

“It’s on the individual,” said Master Sgt. Mike Perry, Cyber Protection Brigade career counselor on Fort Gordon, Georgia. “I always believed that if you want to get something, you’ll motivate yourself to get it.”

Highly-motivated individuals are precisely what the cyber branch is seeking, he said.

The primary duty of a cyber-operations specialist is to “provide offensive and defensive cyberspace operations in support of the full range of military operations by enabling actions and generating effects across all domains.”

Despite it being a field that might seem most suitable for those with an intelligence or technical background, the 17C MOS is open to all Soldiers in ranks E-1 through E-8, per MILPER message 15-164.

Training for the new MOS lasts 12 months, and is conducted in two phases. The first phase happens at the Cyber Center of Excellence on Fort Gordon, Georgia. The second phase happens in Pensacola, Florida, where Soldiers will attend the Joint Cyber Analysis Course.

Newly-minted 17C MOS Soldiers will be assigned to one of its seven functional areas. Though individuals are designated one functional area, there will be ample opportunities to cross-train in the other associated skill areas.

“With a lot of other MOSs, you learn your specific job, and that’s it,” said Sgt. Maj. Michael D. Redmon, Fort Gordon command career counselor. “These Soldiers get an opportunity to sit next to one another and learn from each other constantly.”

There is also unmatched potential for additional training, schools, and professional growth development. The 17C course alone is enough reason for some Soldiers to consider changing fields. Perry said that the certification Soldiers will get by having attended the course is significant.

Acceptance into the course will be determined by the strength of the Soldier's application packet. It's a packet that requires careful planning, Sgt. Sandra Richter said.

"I wouldn't say it was necessarily difficult, but it's a very open-ended packet," said Richter, an intelligence analyst with the Cyber Protection Brigade.

"It's almost kind of like an ego check," Perry said. "You're writing about yourself, so it's a self-assessment."

It took Richter about two months to complete her packet because she had to wait for documents such as high school transcripts. Other documents took time to receive but were not required.

"I personally waited on a letter of recommendation, and that's not something that was asked for, but I thought it was something that would really help me out," Richter said. "I knew I had to make myself stand out."

Since being assigned to a cyber unit, Richter's interest in cyber has grown. She said she has gotten a closer look at what she described as the "more techni-

cal side" of things, and wants to immerse herself in it instead of watching from afar.

"As an analyst, a lot of times we have to pull back and look at the 'big picture,'" she said. "I want to get into the details, and I think reclassifying to this new branch will give me that opportunity."

Richter feels confident she has a good chance at being accepted for the course. She credits her chain of command for providing what was needed to give her that confidence.

"The brigade has supported me every step of the way," Richter said. "My leadership scheduled an Army Psychological Fitness Test [APFT] for me and helped me gather items I needed for the packet."

Applicants will be notified of their acceptance or denial in October. Perry said the best advice he can give to Soldiers, who miss this round's deadline would be to have their packet prepared well in advance of the next round, which is yet to be determined.

"Most everything can be done well ahead of time, except for things that must be within a certain time window, such as the APFT," Perry said.

The first training date is projected for the second quarter of 2016. Soldiers should talk with their career counselors and visit the cyber school's website for more information and tips on how to complete the packet. ■

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