

Britain seeking 'Xbox generation' spies (Update)

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Britain launched a new spy recruitment drive on Thursday aimed at "Xbox generation" youngsters without a university education but with social media and computer game skills to counter the threat of cyber attack.

Foreign Secretary William Hague launched the apprenticeship scheme in a speech at Bletchley Park in southern England, where Nazi Germany's Enigma codes were broken in World War II.

Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) intelligence agency, which was located at Bletchley Park during the war, is looking for 100 new recruits from outside the traditional university route.

Instead, applications are being sought from youngsters with A-level qualifications—normally taken by pupils who stay an extra two years at school until the age of 18—or vocational qualifications in science, technology or engineering.

"We face constant and growing threats from crime and attacks in cyberspace," Hague said.

"We want to step up our efforts to find the most talented people to help sustain and secure the UK's code-breaking and cyber expertise for the future.

"It will be the young innovators of this generation who will help keep our country safe in years to come against threats which are every bit as serious as some of those confronted in the Second World War."

Recruits will spend two years learning about communications, security and engineering and take up roles at GCHQ or in the other intelligence agencies.

"If the UK is to maintain a leading role on cyber issues to enhance the UK's economic growth, we must harness experts from the 'Xbox generation' who have grown up with a world of social media, global connectivity and interactive gaming," a Foreign Office spokeswoman said.

GCHQ, whose website carries the motto "keeping our society safe and successful in the Internet age", is based in a doughnut-shaped building in Cheltenham, southwest England. It employs around 5,300 people.

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