

Beat: Technology

A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an Enigma!

Cyber Security Challenge Schools Final

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USPA NEWS - The Cyber Security Challenge UK Schools Final - known as Cyber Games 3.0 - was the culmination of a year of competitions designed to find the top cyber security school team in the country. Teams from eight schools took part in the final at Warwick University.

Tasked with challenges as varied as hacking into simulated nuclear facilities and cracking codes on an Enigma machine.

The theme of the final was 'cyber security through the ages' and each challenge was shaped around a particular decade from the last 70 years. GCHQ was part of the 1940s challenge, named 'Operation Critical Path', calling on the history of code-breaking from the Bletchley Park era.

To add to the wartime atmosphere, a tent was created from black cloth and the inside was decorated with an old radio and mocked-up decrypts, as well as a real Enigma machine, brought from the GCHQ museum. The facilitators were even dressed in 1940s costumes.

"We had a 'wow' from the student when entering the tent as it was quite dark and atmospheric inside," said one of the GCHQ participants. "All-in-all our challenge had a thumbs-up. Once word got round that we had an Enigma machine, we had lots of visitors wanting to take a look!"

The competitors had to track down four transmitter-wearing messenger 'pigeons' hidden around the building using a direction-finding aerial. Three of the messages instructed them how to set up the Enigma machine and the fourth gave them a code which they needed to decrypt.

The competition was intense with one of the teams even trying to alter the Enigma settings to make it harder for the students that followed!

The decoded message instructed the participants to 'Look under the desk' - this proved trickier than expected and it took some groups a while before they realised the clue was stuck to the underside of the table.

The winning team from Stockport School was presented with a trophy by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude, at an event marking the third anniversary of the UK Cyber Security Strategy, where they were also able to play with GCHQ's new code-making app Cryptoy, and compare the Enigma part of the app with their experience of the real thing.

Source: GCHQ

Download app link below

Article online:

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