

**SUCCESS STORY**

# Ministry of Defence Expands Cyber Preparedness with Immersive Labs



## Background

The United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence (MOD) works to protect people, territories, values, and interests at home and overseas to ensure national security and safeguard prosperity. The organisation is composed of personnel in the Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force.

## Challenge

In 2016, MOD security leaders recognized they needed a comprehensive program for upskilling all branches against rapidly evolving cyber threats. Historically, their cyber training program focused solely on legacy certifications that involved sending individuals to one-off, on-site training seminars without the continuous development available to all personnel.

The initial approach lacked synergy and connective tissue between trainings and was selective in its availability to personnel. Additionally, trainees often did not retain the information from these courses as it was infrequently exercised, resulting in a quantifiable loss on return of investment.

### CHALLENGE

- Lack of ongoing exercises to ensure cyber skills were attained and retained
- Identified cyber skills upskilling as an area to increase impacts across team cohesion and responses
- Organizational focus to improve retention and development of cyber-skilled soldiers

### SOLUTION

- Immersive Labs Cyber Resilience Platform

### RESULTS

- Integrated team exercising into a cohesive cybersecurity program; linked to future exercises and supplemented with engaging, hands-on labs to upskill individuals
- Bolstered team response accuracy by more than 5x over the first three exercises
- Increased MITRE mapping coverage to over 98% across the 227 techniques

### OUTCOMES

- Continuously prove cyber capability across the organisation, aligned to security frameworks
- Improve speed and quality of response to emerging threats

## Solution

MOD leaders recognized an opportunity to expand their approach to upskilling. Moving forward, their programs would offer ongoing and inclusive access to exercising, maintaining and upskilling in addition to selective participation in on-site seminars. With the Immersive Labs platform being made available to all MOD personnel, newly acquired skills could be exercised regularly and not just in an ad hoc manner.

Since adopting the **Immersive Labs Cyber Resilience platform**, the MOD has implemented monthly technical exercising for 150 participants across the organisation through a cyber range scenario.

The platform provides a competitive lens, with team sim results accessible to commanding officers, enabling them to evaluate the skill levels of both team and individual performances. Immersive Labs then provides aligned skill paths with hands-on labs for individual users to upskill on any identified gaps..

## Benefits

Since implementing the Immersive Labs platform, the MOD has seen broad positive impacts to their cyber training program:

**Establish an Upskilling Ecosystem:** The competitive nature of Immersive Labs team simulations has fostered the latest cyber knowledge across all different ministry branches. Each participant is also able to address their individual skill gaps through a combination of larger team exercises and relevant lab content. Empowering personnel to take ownership of growing their cyber skills has been one of the greatest successes for both cyber and non-cyber roles.

According to Sergeant Mark Johnson, Adjutant General's Corps, Staff and Personnel Support, "Immersive Labs gave me the skills and confidence to take on a defence cyber competition. With its simple and effective learning environment, I was able to enhance my cyber security skills and prepare for success. Immersive Labs is the ultimate tool for anyone looking to excel in the fast-paced world of cybersecurity."

**Improved Team Continuity:** Individual turnover causes a loss of institutional knowledge while impeding the wider team's ability to respond to cyber threats. Since adopting the Immersive Labs platform, the MOD can achieve a level of training continuity among existing users, while quickly bringing new users up to speed via a coherent, personalised, and prescriptive learning paths. New joiners can upskill on historical, emerging, and evolving threats while continuing to expand MITRE coverage within the organisation as a complementary team of experts.

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Cyber is a new domain of war. You can pick up any sort of publication and see that cybersecurity is a priority and that upskilling is critical. From every industry and organisation, this is real.

Major Peter Malan  
Ministry of Defence  
May 2023

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If you don't have the ability to continually reinforce learning, you lose that skill over time. Without Immersive Labs, we would not be giving our soldiers the opportunity to develop, upskill, and challenge themselves.

Major Peter Malan  
Ministry of Defence  
May 2023

## Outcomes

Among the measurable impacts since implementation, accuracy has skyrocketed five-fold since the first exercise, with some teams reaching as high as 97% accuracy, as well as MITRE coverage of over 98%. Teams are now able to collaborate, refine skills between exercises, and gain recognition within the organisation for their knowledge, growth, and cyber expertise.

These programs have assisted in transforming the Army into an adaptive modern force, capable of competing in the Digital Age and creating career pathways linked to skills over traditional stove piped career structures.

## Looking Forward

The MOD also aims to increase the efficacy of recruitment and retention efforts, while creating new career progression paths for personnel. The National Cyber Force will continue to recruit personnel from various branches to step into skilled cyber roles through the benchmarking and skills identification available on the Immersive Labs platform.

With the Immersive Labs platform now available to all MOD personnel, MOD leaders have the ability to identify candidates with strong cyber knowledge and recruit them for advanced roles, despite background. Armed with the ability to view team members' performance on high-difficulty materials, opportunities have increased for both the National Cyber Force and for personnel hoping to diversify their career paths and to expand into to help build the future of cyber resilience for the UK Ministry of Defense.

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This regular learning, developing and competing is fantastic for keeping personnel engaged and feeling invested in while avoiding skill fade between competitions.

Major Peter Malan  
Ministry of Defence  
September 2023

Immersive Labs is trusted by the world's largest organizations and governments, including Citi, Pfizer, Humana, HSBC, the UK Ministry of Defence, and the UK National Health Service. We are backed by Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Ten Eleven Ventures, Summit Partners, Insight Partners, Citi Ventures, and Menlo Ventures.

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