

12. Info Warriors, Get Your Pins

Qualification programs limited to cyber intensive commands, for now (NAVY TIMES 04 OCT 10) ... Mark Faram

The new Enlisted Information Dominance Warfare Specialist program is up and running.

A Sept. 20 fleetwide message announced the release of the program's instruction by Navy Cyber Forces Command in Little Creek, Va.

The program, approved in February, was designed for sailors in the 44,000-member Information Dominance Corps: information systems technicians, cryptologic technicians, intelligence specialists and aerographer's mates. Sailors in other ratings can qualify provided they're at a command offering the program.

Sailors who earn the pin will also be able to use the designator IDW in their official title after their rank.

The office program has also been finalized, but wasn't announced in the NAVADMIN. Both the officer and enlisted pins are expected to be available in exchanges by mid-October, officials say.

The commands that can offer the pin will be limited at first, according to Force Master Chief (AW/SW) Jay Powers, the top sailor at Navy Cyber Forces Command.

"This will ensure the program gets off to a good start since these commands are centers of gravity for the Information Dominance Corps," Powers said. "As the program matures, we can consider expansion to other units."

Sailors in cyber ratings initially assigned to other types of commands must first qualify in that command's primary warfare specialty. For example, an IT assigned to a cruiser won't be able to get his information dominance pin; his mandatory qualification will be enlisted surface warfare specialist.

But for those initially assigned to a command that has an EIDWS qualification program, the pin will be mandatory. Sailors E-3 and below will have up to 30 months to qualify, while sailors E-4 and above must get it done in 18 months.

Some sailors have already qualified, Powers said, but he stressed that there will be no "grandfathering" anyone into the program. Sources told Navy Times in February the idea was under consideration, but being hotly contested.

"There will be no fast-tracking or grandfathering of qualifications," Powers said. "Eligible sailors must enroll, complete all [personal qualifications standards and] pass a written test as well as an oral board."

Powers describe the qualification as "very difficult," and said anything seen as making it easier for a select few would "erode the credibility of EIDWS."