



## Army game to debut this summer

by Heike Hasenauer

FORT BELVOIR, Va. (Army News Service, May 23, 2002) -- Starting in July, kids, as well as adults, will have the opportunity to play a realistic, interactive computer game that will take them on a virtual tour inside the Army.

"America's Army," to be distributed free of charge on the Web at [americasarmy.com](http://americasarmy.com), will allow players to "experience" everything from the enlistment process at a recruiting station, to jumping out of a C-130 aircraft during an airborne operation and retrieving stolen Stinger missiles from enemy forces, said Lt. Col. George Juntiff, the Army Game Project's operations officer.

The Army's intent is not only to enhance kids' - and adults' - video-game-playing experiences and spark interest in the Army as a potential career, but reintroduce the Army to the population at large, said Paul Boyce, an Army spokesman at the Pentagon.

The idea for an Army game originated at the Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., as a recruiting tool for the assistant secretary of the Army for Reserve Affairs two years ago, said Maj. Christopher Chambers, deputy director of the Army Game Project.

The estimated \$8 million game - developed by computer scientists and master's degree program personnel from the joint services at the Naval Postgraduate School's Modeling Virtual Environments and Simulation institute, MOVES, in Monterey, Calif., - will evolve over five years to cover all the Army's military occupational specialties, said Professor Michael Zyda, MOVES institute director.

The game, which is actually a two-part CD, one called "Soldiers," the other "Army Operations," currently includes 20 combat-arms MOSs, Zyda said.

In the "Army Operations" portion of the game, players can enter any of 20 infantry-squad-related scenarios, said "Operations"-CD producer Professor Michael Capps.

Real-life imagery of weapons, equipment and terrain have been coupled with an emphasis on training, Capps said. "We want players to have a good time, but we want them to know, too, that when a soldier enlists in the Army, he's not simply taken to the top of a tower and told to jump. Training prepares him for whatever job he's expected to do."

In the "Soldiers" CD, players choose one of four existing soldiers as their game piece or create their own soldier, said NPS Professor John Hiles, who designed the "Soldiers" portion of the game.

The pre-selected characters possess both good and not- -so-good-character traits, Hiles said.

"Players are given six resources and seven values to choose from as they make decisions that guide the character," Hiles said.

Recently showcased at one of the largest annual expositions for the computer-game industry, the Electronics Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, Calif., "America's Army," was favorably received by representatives from some of the foremost gaming companies in the world, Army officials said.

They estimate one million of the double-CD game will be distributed to a target audience of 13- to 44-year-olds nationwide.

(Editor's note: Heike Hasenauer is a staff writer for Soldier's magazine. For more in-depth coverage, look for her story in Soldiers magazine's August issue.)

