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U.S. Army invades game business

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LOS ANGELES--Look sharp, game industry--you're in the Army now.

The U.S. Army announced Wednesday at the Electronic Entertainment Expo trade show that it is developing PC games to serve as recruiting tools. Two games will be distributed as a free package, titled "America's Army," starting this August at recruiting events, through game magazines and by request at the game [Web site](#).

"Soldiers" is role-playing and strategy game in which the player assumes the identity of a new recruit, who develops and changes through the course of a military career. "Operations" is a squad-based shooting game featuring Army Rangers engaged in missions based on real-life operations and training exercises. Both games were created by teams at the Naval Post-Graduate School in Monterey, Calif.

Commander Brian Osborne, a Naval Post-Graduate School student who developed the software engine for "Soldiers" as his doctoral thesis, said the Army's goal was to develop new recruiting tools that spoke to today's youth and conveyed more information than traditional recruiting methods.

"It gets the Army's message across in a way that 17- to 24-year-old males will be inclined to listen to," he said. "The goal is to show what the Army is like...and to maybe break through some of the stereotypes about the Army."

"Soldiers" attempts to give a realistic view of military life, including abusive drill sergeants and trips to the PX. A player's progress is based on how well he or she develops military values such as discipline and physical fitness and how his goals match up with Army goals.

"I think kids who might be interested in the military would learn a lot from this," Osborne said. "They'll see its not all running and shooting."

"Operations" also emphasizes realism, said Michael Capps, the game's designer and producer. He said the Army insisted on realistic weaponry, from accurate reload rates for rifles to consistent use of smoke grenades. "We had kind of tried to avoid those because they're so hard to program, but the Army was very clear about having a game that portrayed them responsibly and correctly," he said.

"Operations" will also include a multiplayer game, with the Army maintaining 140 servers to host games and hiring round-the-clock administrators to enforce game rules. Cheaters get

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