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America's Army

Publisher: [U.S. Army](#) Developer: [U.S. Army](#) Genre: [Action](#)

Release Date: [July 2002](#)

GAMESPACE News

E3 2002: America's Army impressions

Your tax dollars paid for the development of this team-based, multiplayer-focused, realistic shooter. And it looks surprisingly solid.

Every E3 is full of surprises. This year, one of those surprises is America's Army, a squad-based, multiplayer-focused first-person shooter that puts you in the combat boots of a US Army infantryman. Earlier this week, we learned that [the US Army licensed the Unreal engine](#) for use with its forthcoming game. But no one could have expected that the result of this deal, a game called America's Army, is already nearing completion--or that it could be any good.

The game will be available at the beginning of July. What's more, it looks solid. Sporting an attention to detail and realism that rivals last year's highly acclaimed Operation Flashpoint, America's Army is supposed to simulate the experience of real-life small arms combat. Weapons can jam. Reloading takes time. Support is vital. Stealth is important. It's certainly complex, but judging by our first impression, much like in Operation Flashpoint, the realism doesn't really get in the way of the game being fun. On the contrary, the realism means that America's Army has a different feel to it than more action-oriented multiplayer shooters like Counter-Strike.

America's Army is free. The developers make no excuses for the fact that the game, essentially, is a marketing tool. Someone making the tough calls at the Army realized that many young men are also gamers--they're already interested in competitive multiplayer games involving guns and squad tactics. Whoever green-lighted this project was also smart enough to realize that gamers don't play just anything--they play what's good. As such, the development team chosen for this project consists of experienced designers and artists who have worked on plenty of other projects in the past. The resulting game looks professional and *is* professional--it's a big-budget product, not just some two-bit Quake mod. Does America's Army make a ham-fisted

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effort to get you to enlist in the armed forces? No, it doesn't appear to. But it is filled with that same sense of military pride, patriotism, and camaraderie as seen in recent war movies like *Black Hawk Down* and *Saving Private Ryan*. It's also informational in nature, since, needless to say, all the equipment seen in the game is highly authentic. Is America's Army an insidious ploy? It's certainly seductive. The game received a T rating from the ESRB but features lifelike animations and plenty of action.

The visuals are quite well done, particularly the weapon models. Reload animations are intricately complex and really show that each of the various weapons in the game is a sophisticated mechanical device and not just a simple matter of point and shoot. As mentioned, weapons can jam, and different weapons are more or less likely to do so, both depending on the weapon and on how you use it. The game's audio also seems impressive. Weapon effects are clear and distinctive. Subtle details abound, such as how shell casings sound different depending on what type of floor surface they hit.

America's Army lets players communicate silently using the Army's military hand gestures--it's a nice touch. Another interesting feature is that, prior to taking on a certain role in the multiplayer mode, you need to complete a certain aspect of basic training. For instance, you'll need to go through a sniper rifle training program before you're able to use one in multiplayer.


One of the oddest aspects of America's Army is that, while the core gameplay pits the US Army's forces against terrorists, you can play only as the "good guys." You cannot actually play as a terrorist, yet to you, the opposing team will always appear as terrorists. Similarly, while the weapons available to you include things such as the M4 assault rifle and the M-60 machine gun, the enemy uses things like AK-47s. Should you kill an enemy, you can pick up his AK. But you will never start a round with one. That's to simulate the idea of picking up foreign equipment in the field. At any rate, the notion of perceiving the opposing team as terrorists certainly raises some philosophical questions.


America's Army will include more than 20 maps when it is first released, and additional maps will become available later on. There will be live servers running the game at that time, but you can also set up your own dedicated servers. America's Army looks at least as promising as any military-themed shooter currently available. We'll have more information on this decidedly unusual game soon.


By Greg Kasavin, [GameSpot PC](#) [POSTED: 05/25/02]


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