

The Military and Videogames : Glamourising War and Imperialism

Games as military technology

The US military has a history of using computer technology to develop nuclear bombs, train pilots in flight simulators, and tank crews in tank simulators. In more recent times, the US army has been using videogames as recruiting and propaganda tools.

Computers, videogames and the military have a long history together. The earliest computers were used by atomic and hydrogen bomb researchers. While the development of video game technology led to an early video games *Battlezone* being converted into a training tool for US army tank crews. In addition, flight simulators were an early use of powerful military computers, used to give jet fighter pilots experience, without having to leave the ground in a real plane.

As video game graphics and technology have improved, and the budgets of games have steadily risen, the military is connected with more and more games. This is either through direct involvement, or through the hiring of ex-military experts, to give the games a greater sense of realism.

Full Spectrum Warrior released in 2005, was a game that taught players to fight in 4 man infantry squads. The game was developed in conjunction with the US military, and a military-only version was used in the training of real soldiers. The US military also released a free-to-download game called *America's Army*, as a pure recruiting tool, to compete with other multiplayer "First Person Shooter" games, such as *Counter-Strike*.

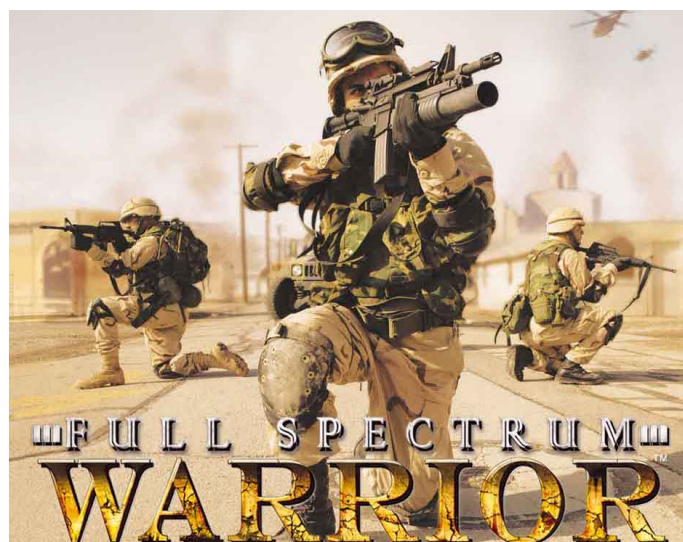
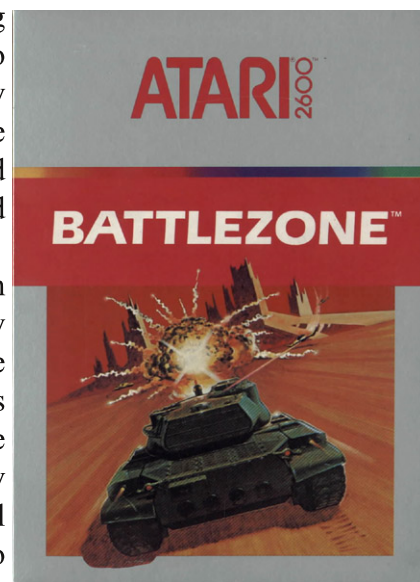
Imaginary Conflicts as Imperialist (and Racist) Propaganda

These games typically feature a plot in which the United States government intervenes in a smaller, 3rd world nation, in the name of protecting "democracy", "defending freedom" and "fighting

terrorism". However, in light of the lies told about the Iraq War, these stories are nothing but propaganda to make the US military and government look good to both all within and outside America's borders. After all, these games do not mention the US government's drive to secure oil in Iraq; the lies claiming the existence of "weapon's of mass destruction"; the torture of civilians in places like Abu Ghraib prison; or the millions of innocents killed due to "collateral damage".

For kids growing up on video games, US Army Special Forces are the "heroic good guys", and "treacherous terrorists" with faces shrouded by scarves are the "bad guys". It is easy to imagine that many teenagers will want to sign up to the military,

having learned and embraced military language, weaponry and tactics. But the truth of war is not easy, nor glamorous, nor is it just, as "Iraq Veterans Against the War" will testify.



The author recommends a healthy dose of "Team Fortress 2" as an alternative to militaristic "First Person Shooters"