



America's Army Background

Military games, which model the military's past, present, or future, are one of the most popular computer and video gaming genres for young Americans. By capitalizing on the populations' desire for military gaming, as well as the flexibility of the gaming medium for entertaining and educating, the Army created the *America's Army* game, one of the most played military action games.

The America's Army game idea was conceived in 1999 as a way for using computer game technology to provide the public with a virtual Soldier experience that was engaging, informative, and entertaining. This game-based approach would allow players to explore Soldiering in an entertaining online multiplayer environment where they could see the importance of the individual Soldier within Army teams. The game was an ideal medium for the Army to engage in strategic communication with Internet-savvy young Americans and their influencers, and let them learn about Army career opportunities and benefits.

Given the Army's need to create the most authentic Army game which showed the organization from the barracks to the battlefield, the product had to be created by scratch by an internal team with much help from Subject Matter Experts throughout the Army. The America's Army team gained unlimited access to the units and training modeled in the game. This development process of working with Subject Matter Experts ensured that everything from the weapons functionality and sounds to the Soldiers' movements and training is authentically Army.

The teen-rated free game was revealed in late May 2002 at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, the game industry's largest tradeshow. The innovative *America's Army* PC action game provided players with an inside perspective and a virtual role in the high-tech Army, allowing them to explore Soldiering in training and in simulated missions. In this official game of the U.S. Army, players were bound by Rules of Engagement (ROE) and grew in experience as they navigated challenges in teamwork-based, multiplayer force-on-force operations. In the game, as in the Army, accomplishing missions required a team effort and adherence to the seven Army Core Values. Through its emphasis on team play, the game demonstrated these Army values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage, and makes them integral to success in *America's Army*.

The Army began distributing *America's Army* on July 4, 2002, in the form of a special *Operations (RECON)* Internet download which immediately rose to the top of download and gameplay charts. Within its first two months in service *Operations (RECON)* had exceeded 2.5 million downloads yielding 716,000 unique player accounts, of which

432,000 players had successfully completed the five missions comprising basic training. Over the years more than 15 million players have registered for accounts and have spent more than 278 million hours exploring the Army within *America's Army*.

Since the game's initial launch, other versions such as *America's Army: Special Forces* and *America's Army 3*, each featuring new maps and missions that were rolled out over the years, have kept *America's Army* as one of the most enduring gaming brands in the market. The Army released a beta version of *America's Army: Proving Grounds* in August 2013 and the final version was released on Steam in October 2015. Players experience the current day Army with *America's Army: Proving Grounds* which brings the best features of the previous games to an *AA* environment that stresses small unit tactical maneuvers. The game is rated T for Teen and can be downloaded free from Steam.

In July of 2017, the *America's Army* series was deployed to the console market. With its launch on the Sony Playstation 4, *America's Army: Proving Grounds* brings the latest version of the totally free PC game to next gen home systems. Optimized for consoles, players will still engage in authentic tactical maneuvers and learn the Army values.

America's Army is extremely successful as a virtual portal within popular culture through which Americans can explore Soldiering within the U.S. Army. The game is played on PCs around the world on a daily basis, and during game play, fans are educated on the values and opportunities that make the Army the world's premier land force. Over the years the game's has been selected for awards including: Computer Gaming World's Editors Choice; nominated finalist for the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences' Best PC Action Game of the Year; finalist for the 2005 Innovations in American Government Awards sponsored by the Harvard University School of Government; and several award records from Guinness in 2009 including most downloaded war game.

With the game's popularity having grown with each of its dozens of new version releases, the *America's Army* brand expanded to showcase the Army through a variety of products including a Comics series.

The *America's Army Comics* is a 15 issue series that lets readers explore the story behind the acclaimed America's Army game and delve deep into the lives of U.S. Army Soldiers while on mission or back at the Forward Operating Base. Published through IDW, AA Comics are available through the America's Army website (www.americasarmy.com), IDW (<http://www.idwpublishing.com/product-category/americas-army/>), and ComiXology for virtually every digital platform including browser, iOS and Android apps, Apple iBooks, Nook, Kindle Fire and others. The animated AA Comics App is available on iTunes and Google Play.

In the series, U.S. Army Soldiers are deployed to a tiny foreign nation in the middle of a desperate conflict. What starts as a humanitarian relief effort quickly escalates into something more mysterious that could endanger the region and even the world. AA Comics are an exciting ride and highly entertaining, but also revealing about the lives of

Soldiers, the missions they do, their high-tech gear, their values, jobs and skill sets and the vast support network on which they rely.

The *America's Army* outreach products are some of the Army's best and most effective programs for educating young adults about the Army and what it's like to be a Soldier. All of the *America's Army* public outreach and government projects are produced by the Army Game Studio, part of the AMRDEC Systems, Simulation, and Software Integration Directorate at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville Alabama. The Army Game Studio houses the development and management staff for the America's Army outreach products as well as numerous Military and Government applications.

The Army Game Studio will continue its path forward on the cutting edge of technology to tell the Army story. Through new online and mobile products, different aspects of the Army will be showcased and users will gain greater understanding into the life of a Soldier and the dynamic nature of Soldiering.