

GameSpot Battlefield 2 Interview

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GameSpot: We're told that Battlefield 2 will feature a conflict in a fictitious Middle Eastern country between US and Middle Eastern forces. Is there anything else that you can tell us about the setting? We imagine that there will be plenty of desert and urban-style battlefields, but are there any others you can tell us about?

Sean Decker: Actually, the Middle East is only half the battle. Battlefield 2 will also ship with conflicts taking place in Manchuria, pitting the US against China. The battles here will take place in settings very far removed from the desert settings of the Middle East. The Chinese Army has the most modern weapons, some of which are currently in a prototype phase.

The Middle Eastern Coalition (MEC) was formed out of a number of current-day Arab states that felt their futures were brighter together rather than apart. It would draw parallels with today's European Union. The MEC is anything but a terrorist state. It's well armed, [because it] used its oil reserves to purchase the best equipment on the market, including some European weapons. It is also highly trained and motivated.

As for the settings, the Middle East is a vast place, so we wanted to explore some of the areas that people might not consider when they think of the Middle East, such as the swamps around Al Basrah, the mountains of Northern Syria, as well as the beaches of Oman. Half the battles will also take place in Northern Manchuria, pitting the US against the Chinese.

GameSpot: Battlefield Vietnam covered a controversial conflict in American history, but the game managed to present both sides well. Do you have any concerns that Battlefield 2 may be associated with the current US conflict in Iraq? Will the game attempt to portray the war on terror in any way?

Sean Decker: We will not portray terror in any way. All sides in this game are portrayed as professional armies.

The Battlefield franchise has never tried to take sides in any conflict, for one very simple reason: Our focus has always been large multiplayer games. So, if it isn't fun to play on all sides, then the game itself isn't fun. Battlefield creates the sandbox and the toys. You get to bring your friends and your imagination.

GameSpot: What are some of the lessons learned from the feedback from Battlefield 1942 and Vietnam? On the flip side, what can a Battlefield veteran expect to be new in Battlefield 2?

Sean Decker: As I mentioned before, if any side isn't fun to play, then the game isn't fun. One of the lessons this translates into for us is balance...in weapons, vehicles, abilities, and maps. If players feel that there is an imbalance, it ruins the experience for them. "Rock-paper-scissors" is [an important concept] for us.

Another lesson learned was that people want to be free to try crazy things. They want to do parachute base jumping off of bridges or stand on the wings of a bomber in flight. They want to be able to stack a jeep full of explosives and use it to destroy an enemy tank.

And Battlefield 2 will offer a lot more to the Battlefield veteran. Players will, of course, be able to play with modern weapons and vehicles, such as wire-guided antitank missiles, laser-guided bombs, and the joint strike fighter. They will also be able to play the game

with squads and commanders. These give them some unique tools to help them play together more effectively. These tools include being able to track their teammates, use the built-in voice-over-IP real-time chat to talk to their squads, and even spawn in on their squad leaders' locations when they die. Another great feature is that the game will have built-in tracking of statistics and rankings of all the players worldwide who play on ranked servers. This allows you to build up a history with your player, unlock new weapons, and earn various rewards.

GameSpot: What can you tell us about the two new character classes--the heavy weapons support class and the Special Forces class--and how will they differ from existing classes?

Sean Decker: The special operations kit is somewhat like your typical commando. He is armed with a short-range weapon, has light armor, and is able to move quickly. At the same time, he comes with a bag of tricks that lets him blow up enemy equipment and [lets him] paint enemy targets with a laser to guide in friendly missiles.

The heavy weapons kit is almost the complete opposite of the commando. He is armed with a machine gun with a lot of firepower and range. He moves slower but has heavier body armor. He also has the ability to hand out ammunition to his fellow players and [can] score points for doing so.

GameSpot: Are Battlefield 2's maps going to be bigger? The reason we ask is that the maps in Battlefield Vietnam never feel big enough when you're strapped to a jet fighter. You're always in danger of flying off and "deserting" the battle. Does your feedback indicate whether players want bigger, smaller, or simply better maps?

Sean Decker: We've actually done quick a bit of research on what type of maps people enjoy, including the size of the maps, the vehicle ratio, and so on. The result was that people didn't really care about the size of the map as long as it was balanced. One of the important facts that came, though, was that people felt that a huge map like Gazala wasn't balanced or fun if there weren't a lot of people on it. On the other hand, a map like Berlin is a blast to play with 16 players, but it feels crowded with 64--to the point of not being fun. Armed with that information, we have made each map scalable from 16 players to 100 players. When a level is set for a particular number of players, say 32, the playable area, spawn points, and number of vehicles are all adjusted to fit that number of players, [which] maintains balance.

GameSpot: Modern weapons are more lethal and accurate than ever. How will this be reflected in the game, and how do you balance lethality versus gameplay?

Sean Decker: Battlefield has always been about skill. To have a weapon that just automatically kills your opponent--with no skill [involved in the action]--is not something we want to introduce, so we have ensured that each weapon has a "game within a game." An example would be firing an antitank missile. A player can fire and guide his AT missile over a distance to hit an enemy tank just by keeping his crosshairs on the bad guy. Pretty simple. But, at the same time, the player in the tank gets a warning whenever a hostile player aims an AT missile at him, and [the player gets] a more urgent warning when one is fired at him. To add to the mix, the player in the tank can fire one of his few smoke grenades to throw off an incoming AT missile. Now it becomes a bit more like a game of cat and mouse, and [it] involves a lot more skill.

GameSpot: There's a very strong love/hate affair with the helicopter in Battlefield Vietnam. We've heard that the helicopter controls in Battlefield 2 will be easier on the player, but by how much?

Sean Decker: This is one subject where we have heard people vehemently express their opinions. The problem is that the community seems to be divided between those who want easier controls and those who want harder, more-exact controls. We are still adjusting our controls, and we're still play-testing. We'll probably arrive somewhere in the middle.

GameSpot: Battlefield Vietnam had an amazing soundtrack that featured many famous protest songs of the 1960s and 1970s. Any

plans to do something similar with Battlefield 2?

Sean Decker: We thought long and hard about this and actually had a pretty difficult problem to overcome: What is the musical anthem of the near future, or even today? Do you mix Britney Spears with Drowning Pool? How about Nora Jones with Eminem? Travis Tritt with Outkast? (My vote would have been for Drowning Pool.)

We don't see a body of music that sets the flavor of the near future or today that everyone could identify with, as with Vietnam. Perhaps in 15 years that will be different.

GameSpot: As expected, Battlefield 2 looks a lot sharper than previous Battlefield games. Could you tell us about the graphics engine? What are some of the improvements and new features, and what are the levels and situations that you'll be able to create using it?

Sean Decker: The graphics engine is completely new and built in-house here in Stockholm, Sweden. The new graphics engine allows us to give players a much more immersive experience: more details on vehicles, players, and buildings, dynamic shadows, more environmental destruction, new effects--like helicopter rotor wash and a tinnitus visual effect when an explosion goes off too close to your character. These are all new to the Battlefield world.

GameSpot: We're intrigued by the concept of Battlefield TV, which will let you save and watch your games from a third-person perspective, sort of like an instant replay. What more can you tell us about this feature?

Sean Decker: As players of Battlefield, we all had some fantastic moments that could only be shared if you showed it to someone--a "you had to be there" kind of moment.

We decided to make that a reality by enabling servers to record matches and share those files [with] the community. The files are much smaller than a movie file, like an AVI, and can be played within the Battlefield 2 engine. Players can take those files and change and save camera angles, as well as play them back at various speeds. This feature also allows you to take great screenshots. Clans should also find this a useful feature, as you can record and publish a clan match. Clans could conceivably have their entire playing history available on the Web for people to view.

GameSpot: Finally, do you have any amazing war stories that you've experienced so far in the game?

Sean Decker: Actually, this relates to Battlefield VCR. We use that tool to record our matches so we can more easily spot bugs we need to fix. We had a play test about two months ago in which an Su-27 Flanker fighter jet fired a missile at a UH-60 BlackHawk helicopter. The missile missed the helicopter, but the jet pilot swore up and down that he hit it and that there was a bug. We went to the recording file and slowed the speed down to 5 percent to watch the encounter second by second. The result was that the missile actually would have hit the helicopter, but instead it passed right through the open doors. No bug...and another "you had to be there" moment, except this time we have pictures and movies to prove it.

GameSpot: We've seen the footage (which is linked below). Thanks for sharing it, as well as your time, with us.

Courtesy of [GameSpot](#)