



From the desk of Ick

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*A Ghost Recon Fan Site*

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## Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter: Ick's Pre-release Impressions

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, our small group of dedicated Ghost Recon fans was invited to the North Carolina offices of Red Storm Entertainment. I am fortunate to be part of a great group of friends, let alone get invited to tour Red Storm Entertainment.



The group including Christian Allen. Christian is kneeling in the first row.

Several months ago, my buddy Handlebars (an Xbox MVP/Forum moderator), started discussing an east coast group trip for our online friends. When I contacted Red Storm (in the course of discussing Summit Strike) they extended an invitation for my group to visit. With the release of Advanced Warfighter just around the corner who could pass up that kind of opportunity? Not me.

Red Storm is the lead studio for the multiplayer development of Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter, a

tactical shooter on X360. Red Storm is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ubisoft, one of the world's largest video game publishers. This next installment in its award-

winning squad-based military shooter, **Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter™** is slated to be released in early March of 2006.

This installment is the first in the series to enable the game's development teams to optimize the application of Xbox 360™ technology. They have certainly done just that. This is the best of the Ghost Recon Series.

Our group received a special welcome as a representation of the adult audience that enjoys the tactical aspect of the game. The tour included a presentation and a Q & A session with Christian Allen, lead designer. Christian has been instrumental in designing key elements of the game, including the highly technical characteristics of the weapons and the design & creation of several maps.

Top 10 changes with the advent of GRAW. Listed in order of impact on the game:	
1. Military ranking system for online play	6. Enhanced multiplayer engine to help reduce lag
2. XBOX 360 achievements	7. Enhanced Multiplayer Graphics
3. Great host game options including the ability to restrict individual weapons	8. Spawning changes including new 10 second rule
4. Smoke grenades	9. Drone
5. Online co-op only missions	10. Seven Base locations for siege

“Ick has been a particularly dedicated fan since the first game in the series,” said Christian Allen, Lead MP Designer, “as one of our most devoted fans, we were glad to finally get to meet him.” I actually operate a Ghost Recon fan site at [www.ick.bz](http://www.ick.bz). The site is dedicated to the Ghost Recon series. Check it out sometime if you enjoy Ghost Recon.

After a thorough introduction and tour of the facilities we were all pleased to get a firsthand look at the game from a true gamer perspective. As I recall, I think we were able to play the multiplayer game for over an hour. I was just one of those fortunate to get to play the game. I watched intently as almost everyone had a chance to try out the game.

It sure seems obvious to me that the key to this game online, like it was with the other Ghost Recon Games, is a great friends list. “If you can hook into players that appreciate the game for the same reasons you do, then this game will be an absolute blast,” said Bronk. I certainly agree. It isn't often Bronk and I agree since he is usually wrong.

Here are my thoughts on the game after just a short time playing, and a long time discussing, this much anticipated release.

#### Multiplayer adversarial

The multiplayer on Advanced Warfighter is a natural extension of Summit Strike, the most recent release in the Ghost Recon series. I recall Hoosierdaddynow saying “If people liked Summit Strike, I think they are going to be pleased with the multiplayer in Advanced Warfighter.” The graphics for multiplayer are incredible and the 5.1 surround effects are stunning. Audio is going to be even more "key" than ever before, so you better keep your ears open while you play. Barring some unforeseen circumstance this is the best multiplayer LIVE game produced to date, period. Beats the other Ghost Recon games thus far, and I am quite a fan of the series. I certainly enjoy Halo 2, but this has it beat for replay value.

**Great multiplayer graphics are paired with incredible audio enhancements.**

#### Co-op

Co-op also has a ton of options. “Boy I liked co-op before...I can't wait until I get to play this one” commented Politician, another one of my online friends.

#### Single Player Game

“The single player game is absolutely beautiful,” commented both Tac1333 and Mrs Tac1333. I didn't play it personally, but it sure looked sweet...and they are keeping with GR tradition.

### Spawn Camping

There are some new counters to spawn camping, but the inevitable push of the enemy into your spawn area cannot be avoided. They have done a good job at improving this...but let's admit it, what is the enemy to do, sit back and wait for permission to shoot? If this is still a problem for you, well then you are probably playing the wrong type of game. Play one of the new game types or stick with a no respawn game like siege or last man standing. Incidentally, while you choose your spawn location your map is visible and you can see where your team has most recently lost members.

### 10 second weapon selection rule at game start

After players enter the actual game play there is a 10 second time period delay before the game actually begins. This gives each player 10 seconds to pick their weapon before the game starts. This does a couple of things. First it gives players time to select the weapon carefully. “Players seemed more concerned with selecting their weapon quickly to get a time edge with the past GR games,” said FutileDr Death, “This gives everyone a chance to cycle through and pick different weapons without fear of being beat to the punch by a player that simply selects the default weapon and tries to charge into your zone.” This surprise charge affects the strategy element of the game adversely. I look for a positive effect to this change.

### Grenades (including smoke) and Explosives

In multiplayer you can bring smoke or fragmentation grenades, but not both. Different weapon classes carry different quantities of each. The new night vision cannot see through smoke grenades. The smoke grenades add a very tactical effect to the game. There are two changes though. The game does not have satchel charges or claymores. Satchel charges may be no big deal, but claymores have the potential to change games like siege quite a bit.

### Server Options

Several of the past Ghost Recon games were very customizable. Advanced Warfighter returns to this customization, and may have even more customization. For example, one of the options is the ability to have a limited number of respawns, a limited number of TEAM respawns, or a variety of other characteristics changed such as “no night vision”. On top of that the menu system is VERY well put together. As I recall there were several map (radar) settings like "no team on map" and "no map" options.

### Blind Siege

Blind siege now has seven base locations. Yes, seven. Apparently Red Storm has eliminated the siege games where the attacker spawns are close, shortening the game to a 30 second run-and-gun match. “This is sweet news,” commented Blacksheep01.

### Weapon Kit Restrictions

They have all the kit restrictions fans are used to seeing....except that NOW hosts can prevent specific weapons. For example, you could play as "no-silenced" restriction....or you could have your own restriction where you preclude all silenced weapons except for the MP5. The possibility of restricting individual weapons has unending possibilities for group fun. Imagine snipers only matches, AK-47 only matches, M16 only matches, or even rifles and smoke

**Weapon by  
weapon limitations  
opens up all kinds  
of options for  
multiplayer.**

grenade only matches....you get the idea.

### Potential problems with the XBOX 360 LIVE chat feature

As you may or may not be aware, players can open an “exclusive chat” with another player via the online functionality of the 360. My group does have some concerns that this might be abused in competitive matches, but unfortunately there is no counter to players cheating and using the XBOX 360 chat feature. A person in the dead room can open a chat with a player that is still alive and communicate. Obviously there are other drawbacks for players to do this, but there is no way for Advanced Warfighter to limit this new LIVE feature. I suppose this is nothing new to clan matches. I recall hearing stories of cell phone usage being used to cheat in this way, so perhaps this is nothing new.

### Soldier Selection and Weapon Selection

One of the neatest features is the ability for players to customize default settings for each of four character types. For example, I will select my rifleman "look" default to include a certain face, headgear, etc. I will also select these options for my Sniper character as well as gunner and grenadier. Even though I may never play as a sniper in multiplayer I have set his appearance settings. Once I enter a game the host sets up the map....I choose before each game which type of character I want to play as. Generally I will choose a rifleman I suppose.

If I choose a rifleman my default weapon selection is set, including my preferred fire setting (single, burst, full auto). Even though the game remembers my preference I can still choose any weapon I like after the game starts.

If I find a sniper rifle on the ground during play and choose to pick it up, but the pip closure for my rifleman player is extremely slow when using the sniper rifle. The sniper isn't my specialty, and there is an effect to that. This is a great feature.

### Projectile system and ballistics

Apparently GR is going to maintain the point to point random bullet trajectory like it has in past Ghost Recon games. Advanced Warfighter is not going to have "magnetic" bullets like Halo2 has. “This placed everyone at ease” said Fightingmango “nobody wanted another Halo 2 style automatic hit system.” By the way, the bullets in multiplayer do not have smoke trails. The weapons do have tracers though.

### Weapons of Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter

	Weapon / Item	Included in GRAW?	Notes	Soldier Class	Suppressed?
1	36K	Included	Formerly shown as G36K	Rifleman	
2	A4 Rifle	Included	Formerly the M16	Rifleman	
3	SCAR-H Rifle	Included		Rifleman	
4	MR-C	New	NEW to GR	Rifleman	
5	M8 Carbine	Included		Rifleman	
6	SCAR-L Carbine	Included		Rifleman	
7	T-95	Included		Rifleman	
8	SCAR-L CQC SD	Included	The weapon is still suppressed in GRAW.	Rifleman	Yes
9	SA-80	Included		Rifleman	
10	AK-47	Included		Rifleman	
11	MP5 SD	Included		Rifleman	
12	SCAR-H/EGLM	Included	Showed with M320 in GR2	Grenadier	
13	A4/M320	Included	Formerly the M16/M203	Grenadier	

14	M8/M320	Included		Grenadier	
15	T95/M320	Included	Formerly T95/T91	Grenadier	
16	M468-SD/M320	New	New and suppressed, this is essentially an M4 with the upper chambered for the new 6.8mm cartridge	Grenadier	Yes
17	MR-C/AGL	New	New, this is the CRYE caseless ammo	Grenadier	
18	SCAR-L/EGLM	Included		Grenadier	
19	SCAR-L CQC/EGLM	New	New, not shown with GL before. Silenced?	Grenadier	Yes
20	SA-80/M320	Included	Formerly SA-80/AG36	Grenadier	
21	MR-C LW	New	New, this weapon uses the CRYE caseless ammo.	Lone Wolf	
22	MR-C LW GL??	New	The new LW weapon has a new GL?	Lone Wolf	
23	T-95 LMG	Included		Gunner	
24	M60	New	New, formerly mounted only?	Gunner	
25	MG21 LMG	New	New	Gunner	
26	MK48 LMG	Included		Gunner	
27	KJY-88 Sniper	Included	This is the production version of the KBU-88 Sniper	Marksman	
28	M107 Sniper	New	New	Marksman	
29	SR-25 Sniper	New	New	Marksman	
30	SR AS50	New	New	Marksman	
31	PSG-1	New	New	Marksman	
32	M95 Sniper	New	New	Marksman	
33	M9	Included		Pistol	
34	M9SD	Included		Pistol	Yes
35	ZEUS MPAR	New	New	Rocket	
36	M67 Grenade	Included		Grenade	
37	Smoke Grenade	New	New	Grenade	

### Speed of the game

The oldest of the Ghost Recon games, now that I probably have "rose colored glasses" looking back, favored the player covering an area, NOT the run and gun mover. The newest series, GR2, favors more of the run and gun style player. Does the newest addition, GRAW, favor us with a faster game? It is hard to give an answer to this question. Again, we didn't have too much play time in the multiplayer. I will say this, the team that does not work together, especially with the advent of the drone, will generally get mutilated. Also, a team of rifleman should have a much harder time against a team that has a variety of classes. A team with a balance of snipers, riflemen, and gunners, when used properly, should be unbeatable against a team of rifleman using RAMBO tactics.

**Teamwork is more important than it has ever been.**

### Download Content

There is going to be Download Content for Advanced Warfighter and it is in the works. That is all I can say. If you can get Cubcake to tell you more than that, well then, more power to you.

### Premium (Pay for it) Download Content

I, for one, would gladly PAY for a consistent stream of DLC that includes more maps and game types. I am probably going to get a lot of flack from the community for saying that, but there it is. Granted the Ghost Recon series has a history of FREE content, but I would sure love to see more. I am willing to get out my wallet to get it. Red Storm had no comment on the topic of premium downloadable content.

### Achievements

The achievements are pretty cool. I can see spending the extra time trying to complete everything. I certainly enjoy the single player game. The achievements list is shown at the end of this article.

#### Rendering objects at longer ranges

Currently when I look at an enemy (in multiplayer) at a distance of, say, 100 meters, I can see him lying on what looks like bare ground. Sure, bushes and tree branches show for me...but HE thinks he is ALSO lying in grass...but I can clearly see he is not. Granted, BOTH players have this same aspect, but I sure would like to see a little more reality in the rendering of grass (for example) at longer ranges than the previous games.

Unfortunately rendering vegetation like grass over such a wide area demands extreme system resources. I would love to be proven wrong, but I don't think I am going to see this until the next generation of games. Perhaps this is further off than even that. Fortunately for Ghost Recon hard objects like walls, certain bushes, and trees do appear at longer ranges. Unfortunately light vegetation does not.

#### First Person View

The 360 version has a "first person" view, which can be easily switched to on the fly from a menu. This will be a nice feature when using cover.

#### Military Rank and Choosing a Country

One of the neatest features is the new online rank system. You pick a country when you set up your profile. Then, as you play online matches, you begin to "rank up" as you beat other players. Your rank tracks with a standard military ranking system....private, sergeant, lieutenant, etc. This will likely affect the "cut throat" aspect of gaming and unfortunately this will cause some friction, but overall bragging rights like this can be a good thing.

#### Drone

One of the neat aspects to online play is the introduction of the drone. The drone will track enemies within proximity while they are in view. This is advantageous, but can be very limited based on where your drone is located on the map. The drone can be shot down after multiple hits, and this affects game play. For that matter the drone can be "turned off" by the host. My group didn't get to experience this much, but it sure is a nice option. Both Booher and Demo Hammer observed that this is the one item that could change the game the most. "Glad we can turn it off if we want" commented Goofyfooter.

#### Southpaw controller settings

One problem that I really think they have to fix is the lack of the "southpaw" controller configuration. It seems obvious from the forums that many players use this controller setting and will find Advanced Warfighter unplayable. "Man, what were they thinking" commented x TheButcher x. "He is right" commented Deadly Falco. Surely adding southpaw settings is a priority, but I have not heard any promises yet.

#### Abuse of Game Limitations

Can anything be done with double sticking and difficulties hitting someone slow walking in the Ghost Recon series? Certainly there should be some difficulty hitting a moving target, but it seems that a large portion of this difficulty comes from players abusing bandwidth limitations. Are we stuck with this aspect of online gaming? Apparently this section of Advanced Warfighter has been streamlined. I have personally been told that you will see less double sticking and slow-walking abuses as this section has been improved.

## Glitches

Dodger33 asked a great question “How do glitches get into the game?” Apparently the average map (in a Red Storm game) gets something like 400 man-hours of testing before release. Yes, you read that right, the equivalent of one person playing just that map for 8 hours a day for 50 days. This person looks for glitches and errors during this time. In the first 30 days on LIVE the average map gets something like 400 man-YEARS of play time. This is why the public can find glitches that the developers cannot possibly discover in the amount of time it takes to get a game to production. On top of that certain aspects of LIVE play cannot be replicated. The way that massive amounts of people interact over a myriad of real-life internet connections cannot be reproduced and analyzed pre-launch.

## Game Production

Travis Getz, Marketing Art & Authenticity Coordinator, spent quite a bit of time explaining the finer details about the Ghost Recon games. Apparently the average game takes as much as 3 years to produce. The series is based on detailed research from a variety of sources. Red Storm has a room full of gear, equipment, and mock weapons. These items are kept on hand so that programmers and artists have accurate visuals. The staff also goes out of their way to experience such things as firing range trips and direct cooperation with the US Army.

## Red Storm Production Team Attitude

The staff has a genuine concern for what the community wants. If you asked ANY of the 18 of us that were there, there is NO doubt about that. Granted, they can't do everything we (the fans) want, but they definitely have a desire to keep the series true to the core mission of a realistic military simulator. Often they find that having a balance between, realism, fun, cool, and functional is quite a task.

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## Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter Achievements

Points	Description
25	1. Complete the training mission.
20	2. Heavyweight (Multiplayer) - Get a total of 10,000 kills in multiplayer.
20	3. Deadly (Multiplayer) - Get 4 kills in 4 seconds or less in multiplayer.
32	4. Unyielding (Multiplayer) - Get 30 kills before being killed in multiplayer.
16	5. Falcon (Multiplayer) - Shoot down 100 helicopters in multiplayer.
36	6. Sniper (Multiplayer) - Get a career total of 500 head shots in multiplayer.
28	7. Committed (Multiplayer) - Play for 8 hours straight in multiplayer.
24	8. Master of Ceremonies - Host at least 1000 matches.
8	9. Coop 1-1 - Win missions in the cooperative campaign.
8	10. Coop 1-2 - Win missions in the cooperative campaign.
2	11. Coop 1-3 - Win missions in the cooperative campaign.
8	12. Coop 1-4 - Win missions in the cooperative campaign.
40	13. World Champion (Multiplayer) - Climb to the top of the universal leaderboard.
32	14. Solo champion (Multiplayer) - Climb to the top of the solo leaderboard.
32	15. Team champion (Multiplayer) - Climb to the top of the team leaderboard.
25	16. Reach Ramirez (normal) - Reach Captain Ramirez's position.
25	17. Secure Ballantine (normal) - Secure the US president.
25	18. Escort Ruiz-Pena (normal) - Escort the Mexican president to US Embassy.
25	19. Neutralize rebel outpost (norm.) - Neutralize a rebel outpost blocking the highway.
25	20. Eliminate defenses (normal) - Eliminate Chapultepek castle defenses.

25	21. Secure US tanks (normal) - Take control of 50 US tanks stolen by rebels.
25	22. Protect US president (normal) - Locate and protect US president.
25	23. Reach the Football (normal) - Reach the Football's location.
25	24. Clear the way (normal) - Clear access to rebel HQ.
25	25. Capture Ontiveros (normal) - Capture General Ontiveros alive.
25	26. Locate the Football (normal) - Take the Football back from Carlos Ontiveros.
25	27. Reach Ramirez (hard) - Reach Captain Ramirez's position.
25	28. Secure Ballantine (hard) - Secure the US president.
25	29. Escort Ruiz-Pena (hard) - Escort the Mexican president to US Embassy.
25	30. Neutralize rebel outpost (hard) - Neutralize a rebel outpost blocking the highway.
25	31. Eliminate defenses (hard) - Eliminate Chapultepek castle defenses.
25	32. Secure US tanks (hard) - Take control of 50 US tanks stolen by rebels.
25	33. Protect US president (hard) - Locate and protect US president.
25	34. Reach the Football (hard) - Reach the Football's location.
25	35. Clear the way (hard) - Clear access to rebel HQ.
25	36. Capture Ontiveros (hard) - Capture General Ontiveros alive.
25	37. Locate the Football (hard) - Take the Football back from Carlos Ontiveros.
40	38. Perfect chapter 1 (Multiplayer) - Complete all primary and secondary objectives in chapter 1.
921	Total point. "Official" guides say there are 925 points. Not sure where the discrepancy is.

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