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N. Korea angered by new Clancy game

By [Jeremy Kirk](#), Stars and Stripes

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YONGSAN GARRISON, South Korea — An Apache helicopter zooms over a dusky Korean landscape while camouflaged soldiers use a temple as cover among a burning vehicle and enemy fire. In another scene, soldiers advance on an airport — labeled so in Korean — with a Russian MiG-style fighter plane in a hangar. It's clear this is war against North Korea.

And by this fall, armchair warriors can lead the action.

“Tom Clancy’s Ghost Recon 2,” a first-person shooter game from Red Storm Entertainment, part of France-based Ubisoft Entertainment, is due for a November release on Nintendo Game Cube and PCs.

It’s already attracted North Korea’s attention. In a curt review, one of its government newspapers called the game “proof” of U.S. warmongering.

“Through propaganda, entertainment and movies,” read a recent online commentary in the Tongil Newspaper, Americans “have shown everyone their hatred for us. This may be just a game to them now, but a war will not be a game for them later. In war, they will only face miserable defeat and gruesome deaths.”

The game debuted at the Electronic Entertainment Expo trade show in Los Angeles last month, part of a lucrative series of games bearing the famous fiction author’s name.

The game’s scenario is somewhat rooted in real-world fact. But it quickly diverges: After a famine, a North Korean general diverts food aid to the military and slowly gains power.

In response, China cuts off weapons sales and North Korea turns to its old ally, Russia, for a secret alliance. Foot riots begin in North Korea and the general takes control of the army. He blames China for the famine and launches an

invasion.

Fearful of nuclear escalation with Russia, China tempers its response and seeks a multinational force to ease tensions on its border with North Korea. And that's where the game player — part of the Special Forces “ghosts” — goes in. The mission: knock out the North Korean general and cripple the North Korean threat.

Although it's true China has been somewhat irked lately about North Korea's recalcitrance, it's a far cry to say that North Korea would bite the hand that used to somewhat feed it, literally.

Although the North Korean aggression in the game is aimed in the wrong direction, the mission is not unlike what thousands of U.S. servicemembers train for every day in South Korea: a war against North Korea.

But the aggressive military tone of the game — and the sight of U.S. weapons systems against a distinctive Korean landscape — comes as the United States mulls how to deal with the communist country's suspected nuclear weapons program.

Red Storm Entertainment creates games with believable but fictitious story lines, wrote Christian Allen, one of “Ghost Recon 2's” designers, in response to questions from Stripes. China and North Korea offered a varied and exciting location for the game, he said. Past “Ghost Recon” settings have included the Georgian Republic, Ethiopia and Cuba, Allen wrote.

“When we developed the story background, we aimed at staying away from key current or specific events while still having a reasonable setting for a conflict,” Allen wrote. “Thus the idea of a famine that drives hard-line military members to start a conflict was chosen as our story line.”

For gamers, “Ghost Recon 2” is fast-paced, realistic slaughter-fest with the standard first-person shooter features. Players can select weapons such as grenades and machine guns, while working in tandem with a team of fighters to take an objective. Gun sights can be magnified for long-distance kills and the team weaves through military buildings, forests and other three-dimensional landscapes.

Level artists and designers do much research so that the locations look and feel authentic, Allen said. A Chinese-American consultant helped verify authenticity, and one of the game artists has a South Korean background, he said.

“Extra time was spent on the details, large and small, so that everything from the graffiti on a bridge to the spires on a pagoda will help immerse the player in the

setting,” Allen wrote.

Asian faces are absent, at least in the limited screen shots and games sequences on the company’s Web site. The enemy — often a well-camouflaged, scurrying combatant in the distance — falls bloodlessly to the ground; flesh isn’t seen.

But enemy soldiers are North Korean with varied uniforms, Allen wrote; the “ghosts” are U.S. Special Forces troops from different races who fight beside French, German and British troops.

The game isn’t intended as a general slur against North Korea’s character and motives, Red Storm said.

“We are focusing the story on a splinter group in the North Korean military that sparks this conflict, not the entire country,” Allen wrote.

— *Jennifer Kleckner contributed to this report.*

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