



Gaming the Laws of War: Can Real Consequences Mean Real Fun?

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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE[®]

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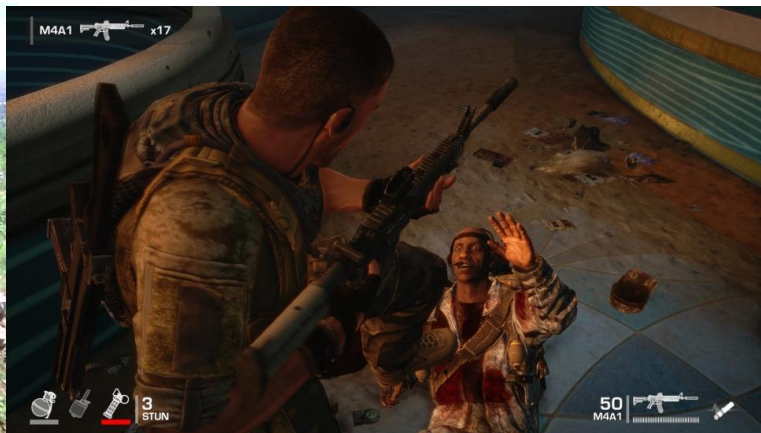
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What are the Laws of Armed Conflict (and why should I care)?





The Laws of Armed Conflict (LOAC) are an odd creation

- Tries to regulate conduct between people who are trying to kill each other
- Most of it is basically custom that developed over hundreds of years
 - People fought, figured out what worked and what didn't ... eventually they did the same thing enough that it became law





LOAC History

- With that kind of beginning, what kind of law are we likely to end up with?
- Basic & not too restrictive
 - If it's too complicated, soldiers can't apply it
 - If it's too restrictive, militaries will ignore it
- Some early drafts ...





(Enough) Principles of LOAC

- **Distinction**

- Differentiate between civilian and military persons and property, and only *target* the latter

- **Proportionality**

- Make sure anticipated *collateral damage* isn't excessive compared to the expected military advantage

- **Humanity**

- Don't cause unnecessary suffering



Distinction



Civilian building

Target



25 KILL STREAK!

Press 6 for TACTICAL NUKE.





Proportionality





Humanity





What makes LOAC unique?

- It's not like regular law that governs law enforcement officers and citizens
- Under LOAC you can lawfully:
 - Kill *some* people and break *some* things
 - Use lethal force as a *first option*
 - Cause some level of *collateral damage* and injury
 - Target people based on *who they are*





Why would gov'ts follow LOAC?

- Destroying purely civilian property is inefficient militarily
 - It just has to be rebuilt by someone, often by the invading/occupying power
 - Not rebuilding (i.e., leaving just a smokin' hole) can result in endless conflict
 - Wastes time, ammunition, fuel, effort, opportunity





Why does the military follow LOAC?

- It's difficult psychologically to murder and destroy for no legitimate reason
- Experience indicates it's a good way to lose military discipline, resulting in less effective action
- Offering enemy a legitimate surrender option is wise





What we're not saying ...

- "OMG, gaming is a war crime!"
- "You can't show violations of the law in games!"
- "You are evil for allowing players in your game to be immoral/unethical/illegal!"
- In fact, giving players a choice is the best way to illustrate the concepts ... and it makes for a richer in game experience



ICRC and Gaming



- Globally the ICRC works to prevent real-life violations of LOAC through education that focuses on:
 - Teaching the law & how to fight in compliance with it
 - Learning the benefits of following LOAC & the disadvantages of violating it
- With their unique interactive nature, repetitive play and broad appeal, video games may shape attitudes and opinions on war





LOAC and Gaming

- There can be a constructive place for LOAC in video games
- Featuring these moral and ethical dilemmas
 - Can offer a wider range of choices to players
 - Can challenge the player to play smarter
 - Can realistically reflect the dynamics of conflict today
 - Can have a positive impact on the players





LOAC in Gaming

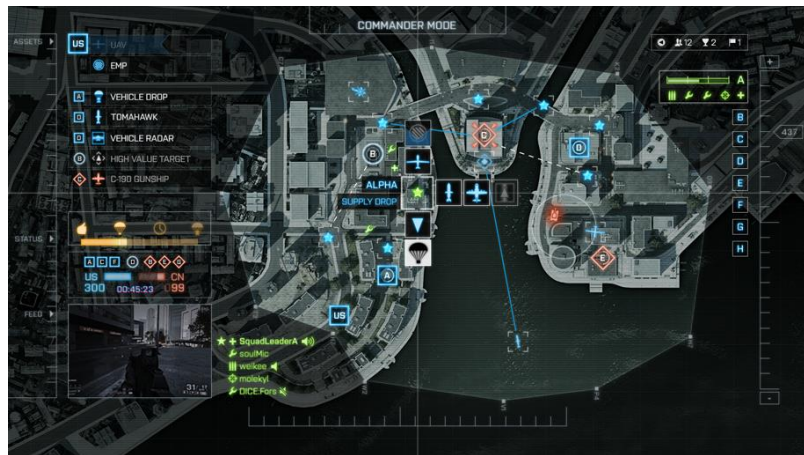
- Different than having police arrest for car theft in GTA
 - Purpose of most war-related games isn't to kill the most, it's to reach a strategic objective
 - Applying LOAC rules to Galaga wouldn't make sense (for example) because the objective is to shoot everything without discrimination





LOAC in Gaming Example

- For off map support, decisions on targeting and weaponeering could consider proportionality
 - Precision weapons normally result in less collateral damage
 - Using bigger weapons to strike military targets away from civilian areas





LOAC in Gaming Example

- During a clearance operation in an apartment building player can indiscriminately kill everyone, or can try not to harm the civilians
 - If all approaching civilians are killed, player might miss out on helpful information one civilian was attempting to deliver
 - Once civilians figure out they are being killed even if they aren't aggressive, they could all start fighting back, making the player's progress more difficult





LOAC in Gaming Example

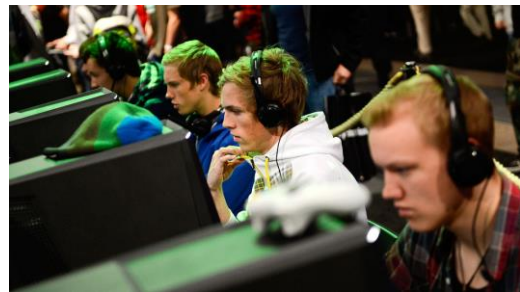
- Interrogation of prisoner offers choice of whether to torture for information
 - In some cases, a tortured prisoner will lie, maybe because he really doesn't have the information
 - Tortured prisoner's family might be competent fighters who seek revenge





A Warrior's Code

- LOAC wasn't written by a bunch of do-good professors in a library
 - It was written in blood by warriors over hundreds of years, starting at least as far back as the Roman Empire
- Following LOAC has proven over the course of centuries to be the *best* way to wage war
 - Adding this element of realism may prove to be the best way to game, too





<http://intercrossblog.icrc.org/>





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Games-engaged case study...





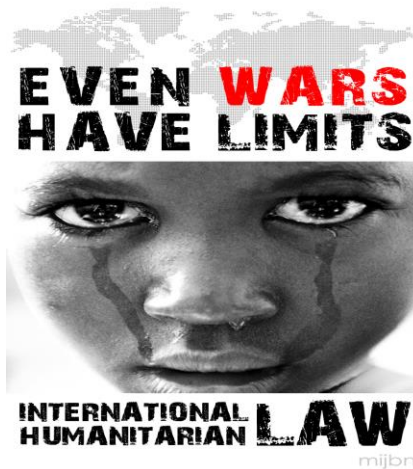
Playing v. Watching





Games Upholding LOAC

Whether you know/knew it or not...





Examples: Promoting IHL

Explicit



Implicit(?)





Implicit: *Call of Duty-Modern Warfare 2*

(2009)

- Tutorial
 - Simplified
 - Part of Play
 - “Training”





Explicit: *Valiant Hearts* (2014)

- Playing the destruction
 - Player cares for the wounded
 - Game/narrative portrays dignity for the dead





Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

- “No Russian” Mission
 - Agency? More ways to play?



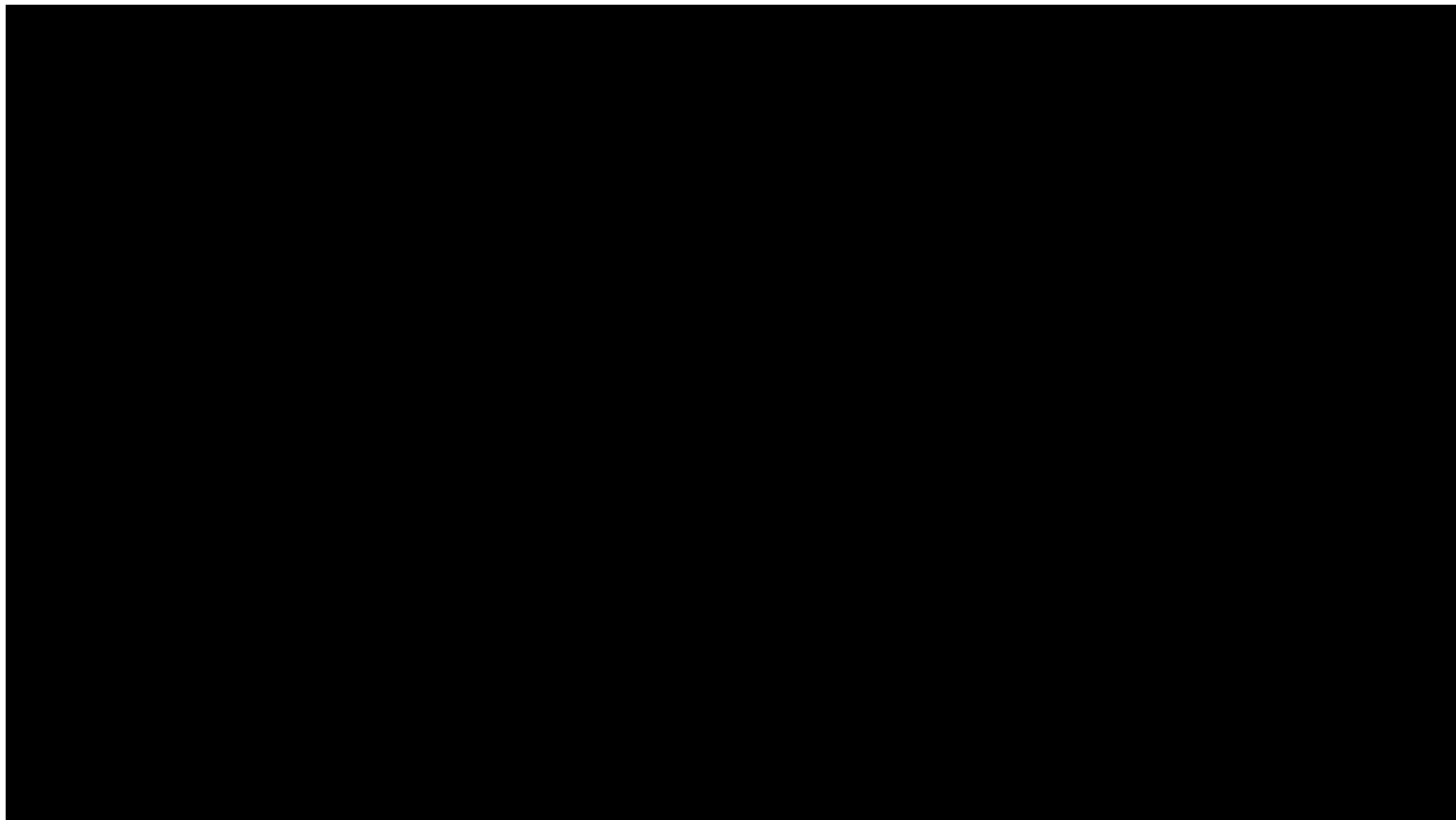
DISTURBING CONTENT NOTICE

The following mission may be disturbing or offensive to some players. You may skip this mission at any time in the pause menu.

(You will not be penalized in terms of Achievements or game completion.)

Yes

No





If realism is the goal...



LOAC = Opportunity





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Joris-Jan van 't Land
Project Lead, **Bohemia Interactive**



Bohemia Interactive

- *Independent* Czech developer & publisher
- Curiosity, Creativity, Community

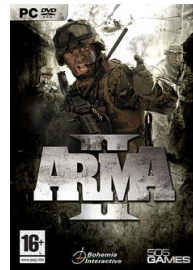
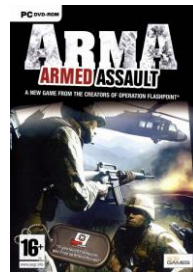


- Early Access



Arma Series

- 2001: Arma 0 (*OFP*)
- 2006: Arma 1
- 2009: Arma 2
- **2013: Arma 3**



- Infantry-centric **military simgame**
(combined arms support)
- Freedom, Authenticity, Scale, Modability



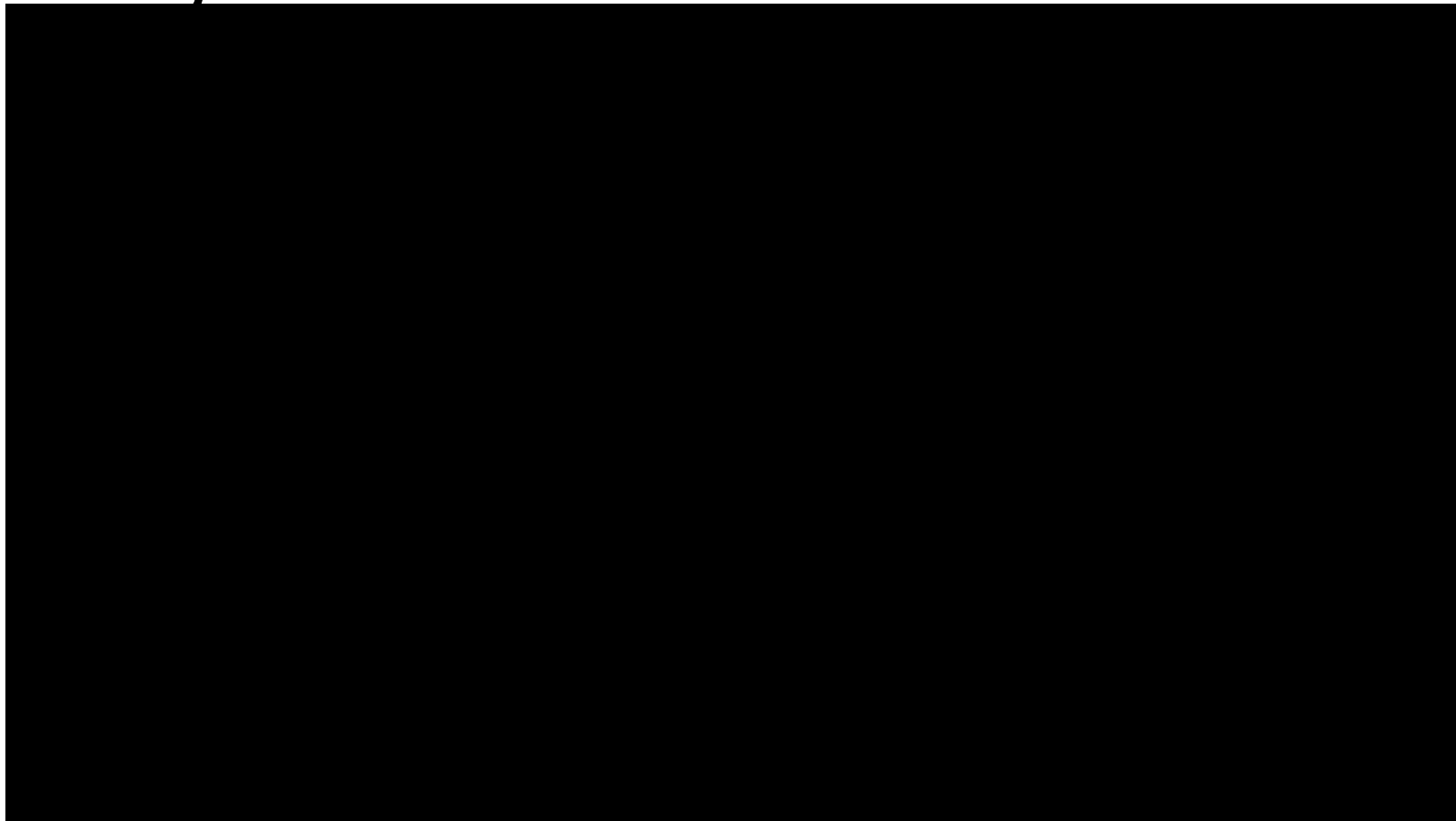
Arma & LOAC

- **Freedom & Simulation**
 - Sandbox
- **Authenticity**
- **Complex** modern conflicts
- 'Renegade'-mechanic
- Non-combatants
- ICRC's **Red Crystal**
 - Avoided as targets
 - Medic role designation





'Renegade'-mechanic





Opportunities

- Military **authenticity**
 - Anti-Personnel mines & Cluster / WP munitions
 - **Medical Treatment** & Battlefield Clearance
 - **Civilians**
- *Morale, Fear, Fatigue, Captivity, Trauma?*
 - *Unmanned / autonomous warfare?*
 - *Private Military Contractors?*





Dilemmas

- **War** as **entertainment**
- **Realism** versus **fun**
- **Freedom** or **censorship?**





BI & ICRC

- **Make Arma Not War**
 - Health Care in Danger Special Award
- On-site presentations
- Consultations
- Publications
- Karts DLC donation (Czech Red Cross)



ICRC