

Massively's exclusive look at Line of Defense, a new MMOFPS

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by Beau Hindman on Feb 1st 2011 5:30PM

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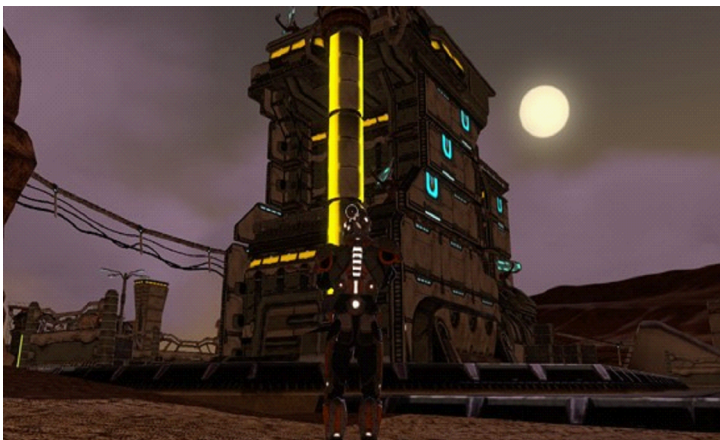
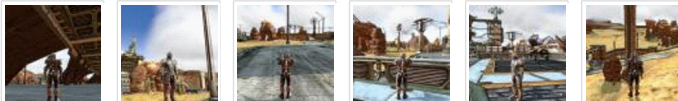


We all enjoy a good shooter, don't we? It's even more fun if we can play it with dozens (if not hundreds) of our closest friends, so we were excited to hear about the new MMOFPS that [3000AD](#) and [Derek Smart](#) are making and will publishing through [Quest Online](#). It sounds like there will be some cool twists and unique innovations in this new title, a game called [Line of Defense](#), so we were happy to ask someone at the source.

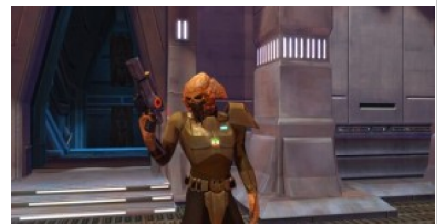
Mr. Smart, President of QOL, was kind enough to give us the scoop on this upcoming game. Grab a comfortable seat, because this interview has a *lot* of information for you to digest. Check it out after the cut!

[Update: We've added some additional exclusive screenshots to the gallery, courtesy of Derek Smart. We also corrected the information about the proper publisher and creator of the game.]

Line of Defense screens

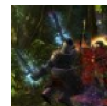


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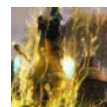
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Massively: How would you describe the gameplay of *LOD*? First-person shooter? Area-control strategy?

Derek Smart: If I were to describe the gameplay, I would say that it is open-world FPS mayhem. The area-control strategy really takes a backseat to that in terms of the confusion and mayhem that I envision. Basically, you have two sides battling for supremacy on an otherwise-abandoned planet. This planet contains various continents (each one relatively about 16x16 km), and each one contains a primary base about 2x3 km in size. These bases were controlled by the Terran Military arm of Galactic Command. Since they didn't pay too much attention to it, the Insurgents, another Terran faction, showed up and set up camp in some of them. From there, they used those bases to wreak havoc on the Terran forces operating on the planet. So GALCOM had enough and sent in troops to kick out the Insurgents. It went downhill from there.

Players arrive in the game by way of standard space deployment to a station above the planet. Here you create your character, pick a weapons loadout, then head for the transporter device that takes you to a base on the planet. Of course, you can choose to stay on the station for the duration of your gameplay experience if you so choose. Upon the player's arrival on the planet, the gameplay is utterly simple and straightforward. You have to fight for control of all the four bases on the four continents. In order to capture a base, you have to either disable or destroy its defense systems. And it's not just one system. There are several, ranging from the base's shields and radar to its defense weapon systems. Some you have to destroy (they can be repaired); others you have to disable by hacking into and disabling them. Once a base has all its primary systems destroyed or disabled, it switches sides. The tide of war flows in this fashion -- and in real time with no resets, since the game is persistent and not round, session- or instance-based. So if you leave the game with one side controlling two bases, you may return the next day to find that they lost them.



With the recent announcement of *Tribes Universe* and *PlanetSide Next*, how will *Line of Defense* stand out?

There are a lot of things that make *LOD* stand out from those two or any other similar game for that matter. While we're blending certain gameplay elements from not only my previous games but also standard games, our focus is on making the game simple and fun -- with zero complexity or grind. Basically, we're not trying to build on someone else's game, but rather we're taking what we've done before, improving on it and catering to a specific audience.

"I am not a big fan of any sort of grind, crafting, resource collection or anything of the sort in my games. So with *LOD* we're focusing on pure tactical mayhem..."

After all, what is the point of trying to compete by doing a run-of-the-mill cookie-cutter FPS game? Everyone has one of those. First and foremost, I am not a big fan of any sort of grind, crafting, resource collection or anything of the sort in my games. So with *LOD* we're focusing on pure tactical mayhem in space and on planets, but on a much smaller scale than my previous offerings. Character progression is based on acquiring Combat Experience Points, which translate to higher ranks and thus access to unique CTC that each rank unlocks. You gain CEP from various activities such as killing other players, destroying

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various units, healing other players, hacking into a base's data systems (to disable the base shields), etc. In addition to that, you have Combat Training Certificates, which are required to use many of the game's vehicles (aircrafts, gunships, naval units, etc.), access to base units, etc.

The combination of CEP and CTC is critical to character progression because they determine what assets you can control, what datapads you can hack, what weapons you have access to, etc. Going this route, you can choose to either build up your character as a stealth player (the guy who sneaks around disabling things, taking potshots at others) or as a mayhem (tank) player who has access to weapons of mass destruction. You can also train your character along different paths and then roll them all into one powerful class if you so choose. Everything is open in this regard. Players also have the ability to build their own bases and outposts within the game using building prefabs and such. All across the landscape, you can find specially marked plots of land that you can lease. Once you've done that, you can then buy your building prefabs, deploy them, and then buy defense units to protect your base. For example, a group of players can pool together and build a base. This acts as player housing, which they have to protect by buying and deploying things like shield units, surface-to-air units, etc. This becomes their base of ops, and from there they can wage war on the battlefield without being caught without resources if all the friendly bases have been taken over or whatnot. This is basically a FARP, and yes, I'm considering the ability to construct mobile FARPs as well.

**"If you have a base, you can
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gunship and go do it."**

For those who can afford it, you can also buy and equip your own special assets. These range from vehicles and hover bikes to aircraft and gunships. Once purchased, they are only accessible to you, and so you never have to go running around looking for what few player controlled assets there may be in the battlefield. If you have a base, you can pretty much have a few assets parked there and ready for use. Want to go on a low altitude strike? Well, go grab your gunship and go do it. You can also hire clone marines to act as your teammates. Once created, they act similarly to pets experienced in standard MMO games. The difference being that their sole purpose is to defend and escort you. So even if you don't want to join a human fireteam (guild), a loner can just hire these clones and automatically form their own fireteam. They come with a variety of classes, skills and gear sets. Plus we have space combat environments because the space area above the contested planet is fully accessible, complete with fully functional stations (the equivalent of the planetary bases). Player characters can move from the planet to the space stations and vice versa using teleportation devices. You also have some spacecraft that work in both space and on planets. So with access to those, you can engage in aerial and space combat, though on a much smaller (but fun!) scale than experienced in my previous games. The game is pure twitch PvP and with no PvE elements. Though, at some point, we may add PvE elements since the game design supports both types – I just opted to focus on PvP right from the start.



How does the game work as far as number of players? Will players be instanced onto a map or will there be a persistent world element to the game?

The game is a persistent, open world with no instancing whatsoever. We designed and developed a brand-new game engine specifically for this purpose. In fact, at one point we were considering using the All Aspects engine for this game, but it was determined that we needed to start from scratch in order to have a clean slate that would better cater to this game. Instead what we're going to do is deploy various cloud

server instances, each supporting a maximum number of players. Each server instance will be hosting a cluster of four continents and four space regions. Later, as we open up new areas (and thus continents) on the planet, we will provide in-game links to each. So for example a player on server A can server hop to server B and vice versa -- using his same character and without ever leaving the game world. We're going to be scaling up, not down, and over time we would end up with various server instances hosting several thousands of players.

Do you have any ideas as to what the system requirements might be?

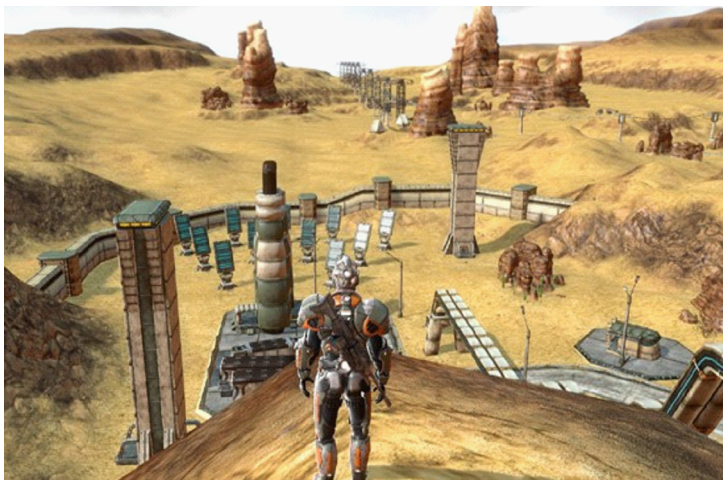
Yes, actually I do. Because I'm looking to deploy the game in international territories right off the bat, the goal for system requirements is to keep it within the realms of a system that can play a 2009 game. So for the minimum requirements we're looking at the following. Anything higher is of course good.

Windows Vista or Windows 7
Intel Core 2 Duo 2.4GHz or AMD X2 2.8GHz
2GB RAM
256MB graphics card w/ Shader Model 3.0

Note that Windows XP is not in that list. This is because we simply don't want to (officially) support a legacy OS because then we might as well support DOS. The game probably will work on XP, but we're just not going to support it.

Achieving balance in shooter-style games is often very hard to do. What challenges can you expect, and how will you try to overcome them?

To be honest, this is the least of my worries. While game balancing itself is a balancing act, the end result is in the weapons, not the player dynamics. You're either a good player or a terrible player, regardless of what weapon you are wielding. So as long as the weapons vary, it all comes down to player skill instead of rolling the dice type stats related balancing.



Are there going to be any sort of microtransactions in the game? If so, what do you say to fearful players who are concerned about "buying power?"

Yes. The game will have a hybrid business model. There will be a free-to-play aspect as well as a premium aspect that gives access to certain assets and gameplay features. Both will have access to microtransactions with stuff ranging from special weapons and equipment (tracers, rifle scopes or parabellum bullets) to player housing prefabs and vehicles.

I'm not too concerned about "buying power" because, at the end of the day, it all depends on how you choose to play the game. Sure we want to make money, so we're going to be looking very closely at how to do that without making it so that the more money you have the more likely you are to win. Because the game is pure PvP, even if you go out and buy the biggest gun and ammo for it, unless you are a skilled player, you simply have no guarantees.

We'd like to thank Mr. Smart for taking the time out to talk to us! You can find more information about [Line of Defense at the official site](#).