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MPs row over Modern Warfare game

By Daniel Emery
Technology reporter, BBC News



The game puts the player in the role of present-day combat troops

Video gamers are being asked to join a Facebook group set up to help defend games from critics.

Set up by MP Tom Watson, the group aims to coordinate responses to articles in the media which, gamers claim, do not give a fair view of their hobby.

Mr Watson set up the group in reaction to comments from fellow Labour MP Keith Vaz who strongly criticised Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2.

The game goes on sale on 10 November and is expected to break sales records.

Quoted in the Daily Mail, Mr Vaz said he was "absolutely shocked" by the violence portrayed in the game. Modern Warfare 2 is rated 18 in the UK.

Set in a near-future scenario, Modern Warfare 2 sees The West engaged in fight for survival against Russian ultra-nationalists.

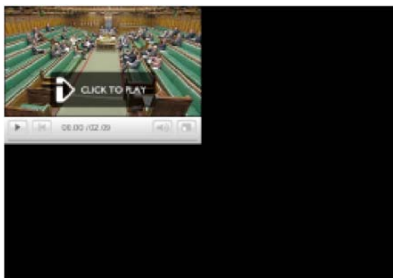
Mr Vaz's disquiet centres around one section in which undercover soldiers pose as terrorists and are asked to help shoot civilians. Footage of the section caused controversy when it was leaked onto the internet.

The MP for Leicester East pledged to raise the issue in Parliament on the day prior to the release.

Publisher Activision said the section was "not representative of overall experience". Warning screens advise players that the scene may be upsetting.

Announcing the Gamers' Voice group on Twitter, Mr Watson said the group was for gamers that want to form a pressure group.

The Facebook description of Gamers' Voice describes it as "unashamedly pro-video games".



Labour MP Keith Vaz: "It contains such scenes of brutality that even the manufacturers have put in warnings within the game"

“ Tom Watson is planning to hit back with his own views on the gaming industry ”

Rory Cellan-Jones
Technology correspondent

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"We aim to discuss how UK video gamers can find their voice in newspapers and government," it said.

Title challenge

More than 10,000 stores across the world, including 320 plus in the UK, are expected to open at midnight to let gamers get their hands on the title.

Although the game has not yet gone on sale, it is already breaking sales records. Online retailer Amazon said the pre-order sales are already 50% higher than for Grand Theft Auto 4 - which until now had the most successful release ever.



▶ [Modern Warfare prepares to strike](#)

Play.com say that, at the peak of demand, it was getting more than 150 pre-orders per minute.

Piers Harding-Rolls - an analyst with Screen Digest - told BBC News there was a huge anticipation for the game.

"It's a traditional first person shooter game which in terms of the game space is one of the most popular between 18-35 year-old males.

"With forecast worldwide sales over 10 million in the run up to Christmas, Modern Warfare 2 expected sales revenues compare very well with the biggest blockbuster movie releases," he said.

Footage from Activision's Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

Time line

The series started life back in 2003, using the Quake game engine. It was set in a WWII environment letting users play various missions as a British, American, and Russian soldier.

Although popular with gamers, it was not until the fourth instalment of the game - Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare - that it really became mass market.

"The last product by the developer Infinity Ward - Modern Warfare - was very good quality and in terms of sales and keeps on selling. There was no real decline in price over a long period of time," said Mr Harding-Rolls.

While the plot of the first Modern Warfare followed a vaguely plausible line, this latest version sees players hunting the leader of a radical Russian ultranationalist organisation called Vladimir Makarov.

"As far as the story goes, Makarov is this super villain and you are this task force," Infinity Ward creative strategist Robert Bowling said in a recent interview.

"And it's good versus evil. So we really like to be cinematic but also not let that ruin the fun."






The game looks set to prove highly profitable for publisher Activision.

"With an average sales price of \$60 and estimated wholesale revenues of around \$400m, the publisher can expect a very positive

Christmas quarter," said Mr Harding-Rolls.

However, UK prices are expected to be higher than that, with console versions of the game coming with a recommended retail price of £55 and PC editions retailing at £50.

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