

Nimitz Multiplayer Design Proposal

Nimitz PS2 – Production Document

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1. Revisions

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- none yet

2. Abstract

As developers it is easy to become caught up in what other games are doing and copy the good ideas. In the case of Rainbow Six 3 multiplayer they implemented a classic Death Match (sharpshooter) and round based Quake Arena (survival) game play. Both are very fun game modes, but these do not offer a unique selling point or innovate the Rainbow brand. Instead they compete directly with other products that do not have the burden of selling realism.

Another approach developers have taken recently is implementing many classic multiplayer game modes such as Capture the Flag, Head hunters, Death Match, and Conquest, but with a Clancy theme. Often it is the case that these game modes never receive the attention and resources they require to be exceptional. Additionally, they tend to fracture the multiplayer audience into those who enjoy only one of the many available game modes. Historically one game mode tends to dominate and hold a majority of the audience. This is clearly demonstrated after reviewing the Xbox live tracking data of Ghost Recon. Out of twelve multiplayer game modes, 75% of the people playing were only playing two game modes. The other ten game modes are fractured with 0% - 5% of the online audience. The added value of trying to do all of the popular multiplayer modes is questionable with regards to player popularity, development payoff, design effort, interface complexity and game balancing.

3. Objective

The goal of Nimitz multiplayer is to create franchise game play that people only get in the RB6 series. This concept is similar to the multiplayer implementation of Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow. It has been extremely successful and reviewed universally as a major breakthrough in multiplayer game design. Other games such as Counter Strike (CS) focus on this model. For instance, a CS death match or capture the flag game modes do not exist. Instead, the CS multiplayer is focused on one game mode with variations such as bomb planting or rescuing hostages embedded in the map design. Players know what Counter Strike is and the result is a large, focused fan base.

Another defined goal for Nimitz is to dethrone Socom II as the definitive online military shooter for the Ps2. Socom II offers Ps2 owners a Zipper interactive version of Counter Strike. Other than being primarily outdoor focused with simple indoor areas, Zipper hardly strayed from the successful formula that CS created. In order to dethrone Zipper, Nimitz can either directly compete against Socom by implementing yet another version of Counter Strike or create a unique multiplayer game mode that is equally as fun.

Finally, it is important to note that this proposal will need to be reviewed when the multiplayer specs for Black Arrow are known. It is definitely an advantage for Nimitz to incorporate franchise features and designs when they are applicable to the objectives and within the scope of the design.

4. Adversarial Objective

The Rainbow single player game focuses on immersing the player in the roll of being a Rainbow Six special forces operative. It is this focus that that reviewers and players really enjoyed about the cooperative game modes. The goal is to have the adversarial multiplayer resemble the core experience of being a special forces operative and part of a four-man specialized team.

The single player game trains gamers on how to work with a team, thus teaching the basics of multiplayer. Online play has new features and gadgets that represents the final training the player receives on the path to becoming an elite operative. As such, everything the player does in the single player game is able to be done in multiplayer but with more tools, choices, and the challenge of real opponents.

Online Players can...	
Disarm Bombs	Clear rooms & utilizing multiple routes \ entry points
Plant Bombs \ Traps	Use night vision \ thermal vision
Rescue Hostages	Use Smoke grenades & white phosphorous flash grenades to obscure vision & provide cover
Escort VIPs	Snipe
Disable Cameras \ Use Cameras	Use cover and peeking
Breach, Shotgun, and Kick open doors	Hack computers & electronic locks
Use level based heavy weapon turrets	Disable \ Enable Lights
Kill people using a large variety of weapons	Destroy existing paths and open others that did not previously exist

4.1 Adversarial Online (Need a good name)

The core game play revolves around Rainbow operatives trying to defend or accomplish objectives while an opposing Mercenary team is attempting to do the same. In essence it is a reflection of a single player mission. The number of objectives and type vary from map to map and with in a map.

4.1.1 Gameplay example

Rainbow has seven objectives to accomplish within ten minutes needing only four of the seven to win the round. Two objectives are to secure and maintain control of two different key areas. Another two are plant bombs and make sure they are detonated successfully. While another is to disable a mercenary defended bomb and the last two are rescue and escort hostages.

On the other side, each Rainbow objective can be countered by the Mercenary team. Rainbow successfully plants a bomb, the Mercenaries counter it by disabling the bomb. Hostages that were rescued are intercepted in route and re-secured. The Mercenary team also has their own targets to bomb which Rainbow is supposed to prevent and keep the area secure. The mercenaries could choose to secure the area themselves rather than bomb the objective.

Objectives can be closed out. Example, if the Hostages make it back to Rainbow's extraction point or if a bomb is successfully detonated the objective would be considered closed and successful. Out of seven objectives four could be closed out, two by each team, thus leaving three objectives to fight over until time runs out. The team with the most objectives held and completed when time runs out wins the round. A default of three rounds are played with the overall winner being the team that wins the most rounds.

4.1.2 Squad Leader

The role of a squad leader, one who gives orders to other rainbow operatives, is a significant part of the core gameplay. Squad leaders in multiplayer give orders to other squad mates using the same single player mechanisms. Orders such as move to, open door, clear room, combat states and of course the go code command, are all accessible and help facilitate team work and create structure to each four man team.

4.1.3 Level design elements

Doors and room clearing also play an important role in the design of the multiplayer spaces. Doors create natural choke points in the level design and slow down the pace of moment. A door presents multiple decision for a player and consequences to consider. A locked door would take time to unlock or breach. Unlocking is a stealthier approach versus setting a breach charge that the enemy can hear. A door can be trapped by an opposing team thus adding an element of possible danger. Breaching a door takes time and detonates any would be traps. Kicking or using the shotgun on a door is quick but risky. Doors are also line of sight obstacles that can conceal a room of entrenched enemies waiting patiently on the other side.

Another focus when designing the multiplayer spaces is creating believable Clancy scenarios. Objectives are not arbitrary but instead add to the believability of the Rainbow mission. For instance, a group of hired mercenaries have infiltrated a high tech weapons research facility. Rainbow must secure and maintain two building entries and several key data locations. As primary objectives, Rainbow is required to rescue any hostages, prevent the assassination\kidnapping of a VIP researcher, and the destruction of a key laboratory.

4.2 Adversarial Split Screen Online

Further enforcing the notion of being on a Rainbow Team, two players can play together split screen while playing on-line against another team. In order to prevent cheating it is not a good idea to allow someone to play split screen and have each screen be on a different team.

4.3 Connecting Online

In a recent Ubi Soft press release regarding SC: Pandora Tomorrow 1.2 patch plans they stated the following, "Special attention has been paid to comments from players who've had difficulties joining servers. The development team has done everything possible to improve this part of the game. Our objective was to reduce the amount of time spent in the menus." This press release perfectly exemplifies issues with the current crop of online console games. Sadly, more time is spent either searching for online games, waiting in menus to play, loading sessions, or being dead and watching others play.

In order to prevent issues associated with connecting to games online and maximize the time players spend in the game. Several robust features are required that have not been done in previous Red Storm Clancy titles.

- Join on the fly – allows people to hop into any game server and start playing quickly
- One adversarial game mode – limits the number choices and time searching for games, and focuses the fan base
- Not returning to shell after a round – keep players playing the game instead of in a menu system
- Longer game rounds – ensures that people have ample time to play
- Multiple lives per round – prevents situation where people join a server, die and have to wait for the round to end
- In game weapon configuration and picking up weapons from the dead – allows people to play the game and change tactics during the session with out having to leave the session or go to a shell
- Switching teams while in game – allows players to balance the teams with out having to end the session

4.4 Character Customization

Character customization allows player to express themselves in multiple ways and creating unique visual identities. Another important aspect of customization is to help facilitate team \ clan affiliation by allowing players to associate themselves with a variety of insignias.

4.4.1 Offline customization

In a player profile screen the player can customize many aspects of their online persona including;

- Name and a set of initials that are displayed on a player's uniform in multiple locations

- Choose from a large selection of decal insignias that are displayed on an arm band, helmet and backpack
- Customization of skin color, hair color, body type, and height
- Create detailed and unique faces by manipulating facial features such as eyes, nose, mouth, jaw, cheekbones, forehead and facial hair
- Browse the variety of uniforms available in multiplayer

4.4.2 Online customization

In order to maintain Clancy believability and ensure distinctive friendly \ enemy outfits and character profiles, each map is associated with a limited selection of uniforms, helmets and accessories. For instance, in a desert environment, Rainbow players can select from several desert camouflage uniforms and helms. In comparison, it is out of character for Rainbow operatives to wear desert outfits while raiding a nuclear power facility or doing recon in a jungle environment. It is extremely important that players can always tell the difference between friendly and enemy units. Emphasizing different character profiles and uniform colors is a priority when determining what uniforms and gear each team can choose on a map to map basis.

4.5 Gear Configuration and Classes

Limiting the selection of weapons to predetermined “kits” of gear simplifies the weapon selection process and helps define specific roles within the multiplayer team. A kit is defined by four slots and each slot can only contain a specific class of weapon or gadget.

- Slot 1 or the primary weapon slot is reserved for shotguns, assault rifles, submachine guns, and light machine guns
- Slot 2 or the secondary weapon slot is reserved for pistols and grenade launchers
- Slot 3 and 4 are mixed media slots. They can contain everything from frag grenades, night vision goggles, to class defining gear such as electronics, demolitions, and squad leader kits.

After players become intimately familiar with the weapon choices and gear they can define custom load outs and save them to the memory card. A player might really enjoy using the shotgun with a grenade launcher instead of the default pistol, then save the configuration and have quick access to it in multiplayer games.

4.5.1 Achieving Balance and Creating Strategies

Another benefit of predefining kits is a paper-rock-scissors game balance can be developed. One player chose to take smoke to help provide cover. An enemy using infrared vision sees through the smoke and open fires on the unsuspecting player. A teammate wisely brought along flash grenades, tosses one out and temporarily blinds the enemy using the infrared vision. Additionally, each side can be further limited by what gear is available. Night vision goggles are only available to Rainbow operatives while infrared is limited to the Mercenaries.

Paper	Rock	Scissors
Smoke grenade: Obscures vision and protects against flash grenades	Flash grenade: Creates a intensely hot and bright explosion that temporarily renders infrared vision useless	Infrared Vision: Penetrates smoke allowing “hot” targets to be seen

5. Cooperative Objective

The cooperative game modes in RB6-3 Xbox and Ps2 are the most played and regarded as the most fun. In order to build upon the previous fan base, cooperative game play is a must-have feature. In several reviews of RB6-3 (Ps2) the lack of the cooperative online multiplayer was a major oversight. On the other hand, the introduction of split screen cooperative was well received. It is a natural progression of the franchise to take the best features of the previous titles and include them. The inclusion of split screen cooperative offline,

online, and the combinations of each takes the most popular game modes from the Xbox and Ps2 versions and combines them.

5.1 Cooperative Game modes

The RB6-3 Xbox has two cooperative game modes, Terrorist Hunt and the co-op single player campaign. In Terrorists hunt all the campaign levels are available but the placement and spawning of adversaries is random. The co-op single player campaign is the single player game but with no AI Rainbow operatives or sniper mini-games.

5.1.1 Cooperative Split Screen Offline

- 2 player split screen offline, play through the single player campaign \ terrorists hunt
- Save progress in order to prevent people from having to play through the entire game in one session

5.1.2 Cooperative Split Screen Online

- 2 to 4 players play cooperatively through the single player campaign \ terrorists hunt
- 2 player split screen online with 1 – 2 other players who might or might not be playing split screen

6. Outside the Scope: What we are not doing

Recreation of the sniper mini games in cooperative game mode is probably not possible. From a level design stand point, the Sniper Mini game levels are designed to be viewed from only one perspective. A major overhaul of the levels would be required if other players where actually playing the mission on the ground level.

- Cooperative single player campaign does not include Sniper mini games
- There are no Rainbow AI operatives in cooperative. All rainbow operatives are played by human players

Two player adversarial offline is outside the scope of this proposal as there would not be enough players to recreate the focus of the team based multiplayer game. If death match or other game modes are mandated and support two player head to head more appropriately then this feature would be reconsidered.

- No adversarial offline

At this time concerns have been stated in relation to destroying level paths \ opening new ones and having AI navigate the new changes in the level. In order to have both features but prevent this issue from occurring, levels with both AI and destroyable paths are not permitted.

- Do not mix hostage objectives with destructible spaces that change the navigation mesh

Multiplayer game modes found in Rainbow Six 3: Ravenshield that are **not** going to be implementing in Nimitz.

- Survival – Round based death match, last man standing wins
- Team Survival - Same as survival but last team standing wins
- Sharpshooter – Standard death match with unlimited respawns, highest number of kills when time runs out wins

Multiplayer game modes proposed in Rainbow Six: 3.5 that are **not** going to be implementing in Nimitz.

- Capture the Flag – one flag is in the middle of the map, each team tries to get the flag and return it to their capture point. Team with most captures at the end of the time limit wins.
- Conquest – A number of “camps” are places through out a map. Each teams goal is to control all of the camps simultaneously for specified duration.

7. Multiplayer Level Design Plan

Borrow content that makes sense from previous games in the franchise. Review favorite levels and designs from RB6 3 \ RB6 3.5 and other Clancy brands and determine how Nimitz can utilize them.

Maps are designed to accommodate 4- 16 players. The high concept of map design is to design levels for 16 players with an appropriate number of objectives. When there are less than the maximum amount of players the maps are easily scaled down, thus reducing the playable area and number of objectives.

- Process of allowing all those willing to participate to offer level design ideas
- Use the LC editing tools as a basis for creating multi-player levels
- Nimitz level building team uses levels created in the LC editor as basis for creating rough playable versions on the Ps2
- Through testing and an iterative design process make changes to the roughs
- Investigate use of Pandora Tomorrow multiplayer testing tool
- Pair down the level submissions and integrate good ideas where applicable
- Iterate game rule sets and variables through play testing
- Identify additional art assets and code requests
- Make final versions of the levels

8. Features

Round based goal oriented multiplayer

Multiple lives per round

Fix gun placements

Destructible level geometry

Swapping of weapon kits in the game

Picking up weapon kits from the dead

One adversarial game mode

Server optional return to shell design

Character Customization

Join on the fly

Switch teams while in the game

10 unique multiplayer maps

Turning off lights

Havoc based routes that can be destroyed

Map shows friendly players, objectives, who is talking, and bombs or “traps” team mates have placed or uncovered.

Voice support & hear team voices in the game environment

Clan support and character customizations

Squad Leader role and command structure similar to the single player game

Split screen options, wide screen mode and standard horizontal

Multiplayer specific gadgets and weapons

9. Concerns

- Sniper mode in multiplayer
- Hostage AI
- Destructible Geometry
- Join on the fly
- Picking up weapons and changing weapons in game
- Changing teams in game