

Herding Ghosts

A few glitches in Recon 2

Let's start with the facts. One: *Summit Strike* is a squad-based first-person-shooter. Two: it's a stand-alone expansion to the popular *Ghost Recon 2*. And three: legions of Tom Clancy followers are, at this very moment, reconnoitering our newspaper's HQ in preparation for a full frontal assault should I dare to malign their beloved leader's game. With all that in mind, let me just say this: Tom Clancy's *Summit Strike* is the best damned game I have ever played. No, seriously; it's incredible. It's so good that I couldn't What? They're gone? Oh, thank god. The truth is that *Summit Strike* is a solid expansion to a solid game, but it falls

far short of delivering the level of accuracy and realism that one would expect from a Red Storm product.

The gist of the single player campaign is this: You play the leader of a team of elite commandoes sent into Kazakstan to help eliminate the threat of Asad Rahil, a Pakistani terrorist with his own private army and a serious grudge against the West. As stories go, it's a bit melodramatic, but it's standard Clancy and it allows the Ghosts plenty of opportunities to strut their stuff.

Missions are varied, from a mountain assault against fixed artillery positions to a nighttime defense of an allied bunker complex. The campaign even gives the player an opportunity to try a few Lone Wolf missions, where the game's main character is on his own without the support of the rest of his four-man fire team. Each missions map is large and open-ended – allowing players to decide on their own how best to accomplish each mission – and scenery is rendered in impressive detail.

The variety of equipment that players can choose from at the outset of each mission is another impressive feature of the game. Prefer a sniper rifle for your team leader? Go ahead and choose from a whole list of them. Decide that sniping



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2: SUMMIT STRIKE

Publisher, UBISOFT • Platform, XBOX
Price, \$29.99 • ESRB rating, T (Teen)
What's cool: Large maps, open-ended missions and an interesting single-player storyline. Extensive multiplayer content. What's uncool: Poor AI for both enemies and teammates, an extremely high level of difficulty even on normal difficulty levels and frustrating squad management controls
Gameplay 3, Graphics 4, Sound 4

isn't for you and instead want to rock and roll with a Squad Assault Weapon? That's fine, too. You can even change what sidearm your character carries as well as which kinds of grenades he has at his disposal. The one thing that you can't seem to change is how amazingly inept your fellow Ghosts often prove themselves to be.

The problem is with the game's AI. While your squad mates do a fine job of locating and eliminating enemy soldiers, they do a piss poor job of keeping their asses out of harms way. Partly, this is due to the way in which you can give your team members orders. Normally the other three Ghosts follow you around and take their cues from what you're doing, but you can also give them other commands, like orders to lay down suppressing fire or to flank out to the left or right. Unfortunately, when ordering them to advance or to head out to a flank, you can't order them to a specific place. You try to send them to a firing position with perfect cover and they'll often stop short or press right on by. The only thing that ends up saving their asses is fact that the enemy's AI is equally pathetic, with opposing soldiers often running around like scared kindergarteners rather than hardened terrorists and trained soldiers.

Then again, when Tom Clancy's forces come for you, maybe everybody turns into a scared kindergartener. After all, Clancy once sold insurance.

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