

Spy games play out at Russian consulate in San Francisco

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Russian videogame titan 1C Company has been showing journalists its newest titles at events at the Russian consulate in San Francisco.

Pretend spies intent on swiping submarine plans were being hunted in the Russian consulate in San Francisco as Friday morning neared.

The make-believe agents of espionage were journalists gathered in the basement of the consulate after dark Thursday for glimpses at new titles from Russian videogame titan 1C Company.

Aptly, videogames being played on computers or [Xbox 360](#) consoles ringing the large room included "Death to Spies: Moment of Truth," a stealth action title starring a captain in a Soviet counterintelligence service called "SMERSH."

SMERSH, a Russian acronym that means "Death to Spies," was the name of a set of Soviet military counterintelligence departments that were formed during World War II, according to 1C.

In the case of the "I C a Spy" game played by journalists, death was not a threatened outcome for trying to steal submarine plans from a locked carry case and sneak them out of the building unnoticed.

Variations of the game have been played at 1C's three annual North America events, two of which have been at the consulate in San Francisco.

"The 'I C a Spy' game, which has actually worried the KGB in the room before," 1C North America media handler David Tractenberg said while explaining the rules to smiling listeners whose minds quickly set to plotting.

"You all think I'm joking."

Lights dimmed. Games commenced. The consulate chef served cuisine from his homeland. Russian vodka untainted by mixers was sipped from shot glasses.

Shapely women in form-fitting yellow-and-black body suits and faux-fur white caps mingled with videogame players and employees of 1C or its partners.

"A Russian company once again introduces itself here in California in the heart of the United States high technologies," said Russian Federation Deputy Consul General Khalit Aysin.

"I think that is very important. Today's annual meeting is one of the good possibilities for Russian business."

US-based Aspyr Media teamed with 1C to bring "Moment of Truth" and "XIII Century" medieval battle computer games to North America.

Century strategy titles let people play as Middle Ages military leaders heading vast armies, and "test their steel against neighboring nations," according to Aspyr.

Aspyr and 1C also showed off a "Men of War: Red Tide" strategy game in which players command elite Soviet Marines, nicknamed "Black Coats" in Black Sea battle theaters.

"World War II buffs will get a treat out of this one," said Eric Duncan of Aspyr.

1C also let players virtually take to the skies with a "IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey" title based on large-scale aerial combat over ground-based military operations in World War II.

Combat settings include The Battle of Britain and The Battle of the Bulge.

"Birds of Prey" features dogfights and anti-aircraft fire based on what real military pilots faced, according to Jeremy Barnett of 505 Games, publisher of the title.

"A lot of work went into making it authentic and accurate," Barnett said.

1C also showed fantasy titles and additions to its winning "King's Bounty" swashbuckling pirate adventure videogames.

"It's fun for people to come over to official Russian territory," Anatoly Subbotin of 1C said as people played the company's games on what is politically-deemed Russian soil.

"We aim at making games interesting for Russians, Europeans, and Americans. We try to internationalize our games as much as possible."

The make-believe spy game ended with someone snatching the locked case, dashing up stairs and out the front doors; setting off metal detector alarms along the way.

"I was picturing more stealth," said Tractenberg, who thought up the Spy party [game](#).

"Perhaps setting up a diversion like someone faking a heart attack while a collaborator slipped away with the plans."

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