

# No Time for Conspiracy Games

Tuesday's terrorist attacks have prompted a popular online game, which questions the U.S. government, to temporarily shutter its services. By Brad King.



**A POPULAR ONLINE** conspiracy game suspended service on Tuesday after real-life terrorist attacks killed thousands of people in New York City and Washington, D.C.

Electronic Arts temporarily shuttered its online government conspiracy game Majestic.

The eagerly anticipated role-playing game went dark at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, according to Jerry Schmitz, a company spokesman.

"Due to current national events, we are temporarily suspending Majestic and will return soon," a short message flashed to players as they tried to log into the game.

The company hasn't released numbers yet, but over 100,000 people had pre-registered for the game. There has been no word from the company on when play is expected to resume.

"Nobody asked us to shut the game down; it just didn't seem appropriate to keep it going while this tragedy was taking place," Schmitz said.

The Electronic Arts game has players attempting to infiltrate a "shadow" government that is conducting mind-control experiments on American citizens. In the game, those citizens are often forced to carry out various actions such as murder and sabotage against enemies of the state.

Throughout the course of the game, Majestic players are given a series of puzzles to solve, each of which advances the plot. Clues can surface at any time, and when a player gets stuck, a computer-generated character known as the Silent Partner sends instant messages to push a player along.

Players are forced to look for answers outside the confines of the PC, as they receive phone calls and faxes that help them solve the puzzles.

Real life has affected other online games, which were forced to deal with the topic that is on nearly everyone's mind.

Sony's Everquest has allowed its staff to work reduced hours during the crisis. While the 2.7 million players continue playing Lineage, the game's message boards are filled with discussions about the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Some found it best to stay out of the public discussion. The makers of Quake and Doom, two popular action games, did not mention news of the attacks on their sites.

Gaming companies weren't alone in altering their activities. Yesterday's attacks forced a tongue-in-cheek political group to halt its services as well.

JustSayBlow.com, a lobbying organization attempting to overturn a policy that denies federal aid to college students who refuse to answer questions about their past drug use, announced it would shutter its website for the immediate future.

John Hlinko's organization has attacked President George W. Bush's credibility and drug policy. Through the site, people can send billfold-sized mirrors with powdered residue to the White House.

"JustSayBlow.com will be temporarily suspending its campaign in light of today's tragic events," Hlinko said. "There will be time for politics later. Please take whatever

activist energy and donations you would've used for JustSayBlow, and instead shift them towards helping the victims."

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