4 million decide to be all they can be
— online

Combat training? The Army spent $7 million to develop "America's Army," which has become one of the top five online games.

'America's Army' offers taste of military life

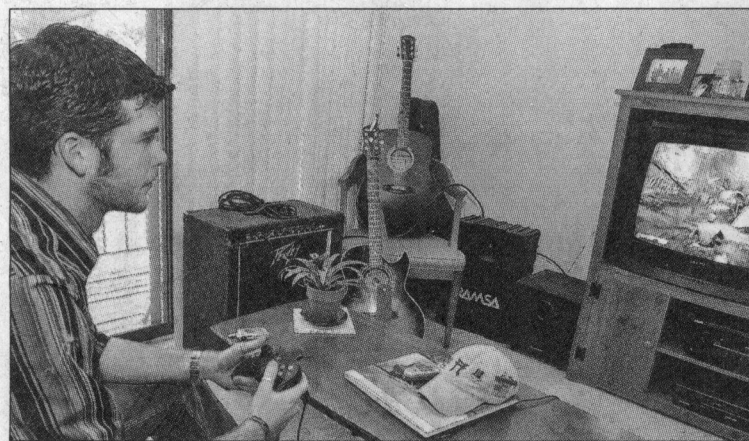By **JIM LYNCH**
Gannett News Service

The video game on Justin Day's television screen is not quite the fantasy experience for him that it is for many other players.

Day, 22, is a veteran who has seen combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also is a gamer — a fan of first-person combat games, such as "Conflict: Desert Storm II — Back to Baghdad."

No game accurately conveys the terror in real combat, he said, and many make human life seem less fragile than it really is.

"It gives the wrong impression when you can run around, get shot 18 times, and there's a health meter there telling you you're still alive," said Day, of Waterford.

The games Day and others are playing are part of a genre of video games so popular that even the Army

is capitalizing on them, to the offense of some who view them as an attempt to make a profit off killing.

Hitting their target

Though the Army says its versions are intended to provide a glimpse into military life — not necessarily to serve as a recruiting tool — one expert says it's clear that they are hitting their

Killing time: Justin Day, who served in the Army from 2000 to 2003, plays the X-Box game "Shellshock Nam 67." Day said some war video games make human life seem less fragile than it is.

BRANDY BAKER
Gannett News Service

e **INSIDE**
Technology

▶ **Minolta's digital camera** for serious photographers heads up the New Products column.
Page 7D

target.

"The Army is now recruiting amongst a generation of the computer-liter-

spending an estimated $7 million to develop "America's Army."

"America's Army" reached top five status last month among online games. It soon will be joined by the Air Force's "USAF: Air Dominance."

Each year since the 2002 release of "America's Army," recruiting has risen. In 2003, the Army signed up 74,132 recruits. In

2004, that number is up to 77,587. Paul Boyce, an Army public affairs officer at the Pentagon, said there is no way to know how many people have enlisted as a result of the game.

"Hopefully, the answer is none," Boyce said. "The Army is a career opportunity that you need to ask hard questions about. Is it right for me, is it right for

ate," said David Segal, executive director of the Maryland-based Center for Research on Military Organization. "And video games are a great way of doing that."

Combat games that recreate historical events — from the D-Day landing at Normandy to the Ho Chi Minh

my family, and is it right for my country?"

Game reflects values

"America's Army" does things a little differently than some combat games. You won't often see players shooting their own teammates or violating military guidelines without repercussions, and it lacks the gore of other com-

mercial combat games.

Players also agree to go through a simulated basic training session where they are exposed to the Army's seven core values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and courage.

The military has helped private software developers with games. The Navy provided tech-

SEE **ONLINE** | Page 10D

nical support for "SOCOM II: U.S. Navy Seals," an online game available for the Sony PlayStation2. "Close Combat: First to Fight," an urban warfare simulation, was put together with the help of the Marine Corps.

Electronic Arts has sold 6 million copies of its World War II-based "Medal of Honor: Front Line" game.

Online: Military works with companies to create games