TERRORBULL GAMES

'WAR ON TERROR' BOARD GAME ENTERS NEW ERA

Cambridge, UK, 15 December 2010 **Four years ago, three friends formed TerrorBull Games and self-published a satirical board game they'd designed in protest to the Iraq war. "War on Terror, the boardgame" was released to rabid condemnation and glowing praise. Today sees the release of a new edition of the controversial game, bringing it up to date with many new elements, including "Indigenous Terrorists", "Holy Nuclear Armageddon" and "God".**

A list of *War on Terror*'s achievements reads like a far-fetched joke: Over the years, the game has elicited death threats; was once classified a dangerous weapon by the police; was exhibited in the Berlin Academy of Arts, occupies a place in the permanent collections of the Imperial War Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Bodleian Library; is championed by Amnesty International and the Nobel Peace Centre; was used in Graham Linehan's The I.T. Crowd; performs as an education aid for several university professors and has been referenced and analysed in more than one PHD thesis. To put it mildly, this isn't territory that any board game should be straying into. But then again, this isn't your average board game.

In four short years *War on Terror* has built a massive cult following, selling 25,000 copies worldwide – almost unheard of from an independent release. But *War on Terror* has defied many conventions, not just in terms of sales. With no money and the industry and retail mainstay against them, TerrorBull Games has survived thanks mainly to the loyal support they've engendered from both fans and notable individuals alike.

In 2006, shortly after release, when the largest Toy & Game fair in the world, Essen Spiel, banned TerrorBull Games for exhibiting because the 'War on Terror' was (in the words of the organiser) "sicker than a swastika", TerrorBull Games accepted this bizarre fate. A group of Dutch fans, however, refused to take it lying down and made up protest t-shirts of their own, before petitioning the organisers in person not to censor our game.

Then in 2009, after the Kent Police had confiscated the game, branding the included balaclava "criminal", investigative journalist and film-maker, John Pilger, showed his enthusiasm and support, describing the game as "extraordinary".

These are just two examples of the extraordinary depth of feeling that a simple board game has generated. It's clear that *War on Terror* fans see it as much more than just a game.

Last year, historian Benjamin Woolley, speaking in the BBC series 'Games Britannia', went one step further and placed *War on Terror* at the culmination of over 2000 years of gaming history. Woolley asserted that *War on Terror, the boardgame* is "unlike anything that has gone before" in exploring the "battles that are shaping our history in a satirical way".

With the acceptance of *War on Terror* into the John Johnson collection of the Bodleian Library this May, the game has perhaps cemented its place in cultural history. But for TerrorBull Games, this is just the beginning. The ambitions of the company are nothing short of changing the world for the better, through the use of serious games that don't take themselves too seriously. It's a new idea, but one that's already catching on, with Greenpeace this week being the first organisation to commission a game from the playful satirists (http://www.terrorbullgames.co.uk/deepseadesperation).

Co-inventor, Andrew Sheerin commented:

> "I think people are gradually getting used to the idea that you can use games like any other medium to engage, ask questions, provoke thought and discussion... even about very difficult subjects. Why not?"

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Editor's notes

i.   Hi-res images and press pack available at: http://www.terrorbullgames.co.uk/press/

ii.   Inventors, Andrew Sheerin and Andy Tompkins and illustrator Tom Morgan-Jones, are available for interview and comment: +44 (0)845 643 1513 or info@terrorbullgames.co.uk