

The Pains of a Phantom: A Metal Gear Solid V Report

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## Introduction

*Metal Gear Solid V: the Phantom Pain* is the sixth entry into the mainline *Metal Gear* Solid franchise. It is the third game chronologically and is a continuation of Snake's, aka Big Boss's, story in being a freelance captain of a mercenary group.

The game has a prequel demo called *Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeros* that is a tech demo to show off the new engine that Hideo Kojima's team created and sets up the story of this game. It takes place roughly a year after *Peace-walker* and showcases the falling of Snake's military group which ends with him in a nine-year coma.

*MGSV: The Phantom Pain* starts up in 1984 and essentially is the last story till the modern-day timeline of the *Metal Gear* franchise. You spend the time in this title rebuilding what once was and getting revenge on those that wronged you all those years ago.

## Development

This game was initially tested with *Ground Zero's* on the Xbox 360, Xbox One, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, and PC ("Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeros" Wikipedia, 2025). The reason behind splitting the game into two parts is because the team wanted to gauge fan response to the newly created engine (Wood, 2013). Part two is *MGSV: the Phantom Pain* which was more focused on being the first next generation *Metal Gear* experience by focusing on that hardware. It is also the first *Metal Gear* to release on all major platforms at the same time rather than years after a PlayStation launch. This is all thanks to the development of the Fox Engine (EXPLAIN FOX ENGINE MORE) between the MGS team and Konami as its goal was to be able to easily cross develop the games on multiple platforms at once (PC Gamer, 2015).

The engines before were made with the PlayStation API in mind only made specifically for those games. They were coded from scratch with no specific engine developed for them. *MGS4* is the example of which it is described as the codes for the games being very hardware focused, hardcoded to pull resources from the PlayStation systems over the years. These games were difficult to port over according to Blue Point Studios which is only other team to mess with the code after the original developers (“Metal Gear Solid HD Collection” Wikipedia, 2025).

*MGSV* was teased for years starting in 2011, shortly after *MGS4* had its time in the spotlight. The teases consisted of the game’s creator and his team hinting at making another *Metal Gear* but denying that they truly were making another. After that period, they finally showed off Ground Zeros around 2013, which marked the beginning of the marketing campaign and major development updates for the game (PC Gamer, 2015). They chose to show off the new open world segments saying that they wanted to break free from the linear and railroad design of the pervious entries (Wood, 2013). *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain* launched on September 1, 2015, to both very positive and negative takes on the changes the franchises formulas (“Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain” Wikipedia, 2025).

## Director Kojima

Hideo Kojima is the creator of *Metal Gear* and has been director of every single mainline title in the franchise even if he didn’t do much with the games code development. He is a big movie fan and that oftentimes spills over into his videogames. *MGS4* holds the world record for the longest videogame cutscene at over an hour and a half. Story is something baked deeply into his titles, and he never got to conclude *Metal Gear* as he wanted being forced by Konami to pick up the loose ends and write another plot time and time again. Unfortunately, Kojima has a big

ego and that can be seen with his fights with his publishers at Konami and he often put down the fanbase for not making the games sell way more.

## Voice Actor Changes

The franchise has been voice acted by the same people since 1998 when *Metal Gear Solid* released on the PlayStation 1 (“Metal Gear Solid” Wikipedia, 2025). Kojima is unfortunately a big movie fan and wanted to be able to get movie worthy talent in his games. Screen Rant went into detail researching this choice in change stating that Kojima wanted Kurt Russel as the main character’s voice (Baird, 2015). Kurt Russel’s character from *Escape from New York* is the inspiration for the design and behavior of Solid Snake. Screen Rant also said, “The Kurt Russel comment suggests that Kojima wanted a big-name celebrity to play the role of Solid/Naked Snake, and he finally managed to nab one in Kiefer Sutherland” (Baird, 2015).

The change from the amazing voice work of David Hater to Kiefer Sutherland is odd to many fans as other actors just got replaced by known voice acting talent that are just much younger than the original. Sutherland is really the only major actor in the cast, but that doesn’t take away from the amazing voice recasting. One example would be that of Troy Baker as the titular Revolver Ocelot who fills you in on the training and most tutorials that you may have a run in with.

## Fox-Engine

The team at Konami sought to make a brand-new game engine to really showcase their incredible ideas and new sandbox features with MGSV. Once again, like *MGS4* and *Peace-Walker* the camera takes a third person perspective, and the gameplay elements are tuned to this point of view.

Fox engine on the other hand is so durable that it almost never stutters from explosions, the various weather effects, or the particles that plaster the screen with the skull unit encounters. Physics are greatly enhanced with gravity being a lethal force to both you and your enemies. You can throw items and enemies all over the place as well as do minor platforming actions. The active combat capabilities have been enhanced allowing for a much quicker dodge and hand-to-hand combat interactions. All the characters are motion captured, and choreography had hands on help from real soldiers to truly make the animations sign on the new engine.

## Plot

This report is in regards the prequel timeline taking place with *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, *Metal Gear Solid: Peace-Walker*, *Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeros*, and *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*. These events take place between 1964-1984 covering the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. *Peace-Walker* is an important staple as it is when Snake, known as Big Boss, creates his private military group called MSF. Snake gains a reputation from his own and MSF's successful operations making him a legend among soldiers all over the planet. He and MSF builds up their power and standing for a whole year before the events of *MGSV: Ground Zeros*.

*Ground Zeros* is a solo operation where in Snake attempts to save former allies from a prison island. It takes place over one day in 1975 with Snake successfully extracting both subjects. Unfortunately, it was a trap as when arriving back at MSF homebase he finds it being destroyed by another private military called XOF. A bomb detonates inside of the helicopter Snake is in sending him into a nine-year coma.

Snake wakes up in 1984 dazed, confused, and almost killed within the first hour of his waking. XOF is breaking into the hospital trying to finish what they started nine-years ago by killing Snake, but he escapes with the help of another patient. You spend a great portion of the game rebuilding Mother Base capturing enemy soldiers to rebuild the mercenary army that was lost. Occasionally you'll run into XOF forces that have a hidden plan to end the world, putting you right in the line of danger again. Rebuild the Legend, save the world, and get your revenge for your phantom pains.

## Reception

This is a game that people either love or completely and utterly hate. On the side of the people that hate the game is the lackluster story of the game. When compared to the other games the story of *MGSV* is a convoluted mess that tries to tie up loose ends that were left open for fan interpretation. Kojima never wanted to make any more games after *Metal Gear Solid*, so he left mysteries for fans to speculate on. Konami forced him to make title after title so the answer to the mysterious kept getting worse and worse with each game. *MGS4* and *MGSV* are the worst of the bunch having the most unsatisfactory and convoluted explanations for the loose ends of a nearly twenty-year-old franchise.

While it's fair to criticize the undercooked story of the game, the gameplay is probably the most polished it will ever be. This game has one of the best sandboxes in any videogame out there. You have a great many options for both non-lethal and lethal methods for dispatching foes. The movement has neat tricks that you can learn and adapt in any given situation, plus you can make loadout for different approaches you may take. There's also a fun side game of managing your home base and where research, materials, and manpower go. Stealth is fantastic allowing

for some creative plays with the weather, your camo, and of course boxes. A lot of time went into this game and even now it is not finished like the developers had planned yet it rivals modern releases in terms of content.

## Fan Response

*Metal Gear* fans always seem to have this game on their mind as it is one of the staples of the big three games loved by the fanbase. *MGS2*, *MGS3*, and *MGSV* get talked about to this day, often overshadowing all the other main entries and spin-offs. The franchise is loved even with its flaws and *MGSV* is one of its biggest flaws.

A wonderful review by Super Bunnyhop goes over the general fan view of the game and the complexities its sandbox of tools to work with. He says that the game is one of a kind and probably one of the better stealth games out there (Super Bunnyhop, 2015). He also goes into detail regarding the hate which is almost exclusively on the lackluster story that barely treads new ground in the franchise. He claims that it is disappointing that is the final story being told by Kojima in the *Metal Gear* Universe and wishes it could've been better than the final product (Super Bunnyhop, 2015).

Another big thing that leads to people hating the game is Kojima leaving by the end of its first year being out. It's hated for is the massive amount of content cut including a concluding chapter that has never seen the light of day. Plus, it's hated for the unsatisfying conclusion to the franchise.



## Critics/Awards

Critics had high praise for the game either giving it a nine or a ten (Wikipedia, 2025). The story honestly doesn't seem to be a big concern for reviewers nearly as much as it was for the fanbase which had been following this story since the very beginning of *Metal Gear*. It does take a more complicated and deep approach to telling the story just like the other game. That is often something critics love and put on a pedestal above all other parts of a game.

One review I found written weeks before launch was archived due to controversy and current day changes to the company. Oddly enough, Game Informer's review that barely goes over the positives and negatives of this game only really describing a single mission and calling it a masterpiece (Juba, 2015). IGN had more detail and higher praise listed in their review calling it a "Masterpiece" at an astonishing ten out of ten for story and gameplay (Ingenito V, 2015). Similarly, the fan's critics had a lot to say about all the controversy a few months after they published their reviews.

## Post-launch Controversy

MGSV had another big issue besides the split between fans or the constant need to update the online infrastructure. That big issue was the large set of controversies that followed in the months after the game came out. Whether it be the Kojima Konami issue, cut content, or the massive Konami boycott, MGSV has a crazy legacy that it has left on the gaming world.

## Kojima vs Konami

The game awards in December of 2015 had MGSV winning multiple awards, but Kojima was not present to accept them because Konami banned from doing so after some controversy arose between the two parties (Osborn and Macy, 2015). A common theory is that Kojima made his publisher Konami incredible angry by constantly wanting to end their money-making franchise. Time and time again Konami hated that he wrote each game to be the concluding title and *MGSV* story was the one that broke the camels back.

Konami claimed that Kojima spent more money than they were willing to put into the games creation with him making a new engine, hiring movie actors, employing veteran military personal, and other behind the scenes purchases (Osborn and Macy, 2015). They often painted him as a supervillain that was incredible cruel to his workers, but all his employees and even people not under him said that Konami was lying (Osborn and Macy, 2015). Even worst, according to an article by IGN the year after MGSV released Konami wiped his name and tried to wipe his involvement from the game, which Kojima seemed to know would happen and made a side mission in Ground Zeros with the exact same objective (Osborn and Macy, 2015).

Konami also seemed to want to change the company's direction to Pachinko gambling machines and mobile games in 2016 (Osborn and Macy, 2015). However, they did have one more idea with *Metal Gear* before making the switch. This idea was to make a zombie survival game in the period where that was becoming redundant and no longer popular with audiences. By this point zombies were such a common mode and theme in so many different games that it was just a bad time. The amount of zombie content since 2010 consisted of *Halo's* infected game mode, *COD: Zombies*, *Left 4 Dead*, *Last of Us*, *The Walking Dead*, and the metric ton of horrible

B movies that popped up (Chole, 2024). Zombies just had run its course being overused as a plot point that it wasn't nearly as new and exciting as back in 2010. It really showed their lack of direction or knowledge of what fans want from them. *Metal Gear Survive* launched in 2018 with both underwhelming sales and reviews regarding it as the worst *Metal Gear* game ever released (Chole, 2024). Konami then sat on *Metal Gear* and its other franchises for years while focusing on Pachinko even dropping mobile shortly after failing multiple projects.

## Cut Content

Unfortunately, because of the bond breaking down between the game's director and the IP's holder, MGSV never got a good ending. For years people speculated that maybe there was a plan for a chapter three since chapter two consisted in a lot of rising action and loose ends untied. Did You Know Gaming is one of the more reputable sources that investigated the data mining done by players on the PC port of the game. DYKG claims that Konami still has Kojima's unfinished chapter three and purposely sabotaged the development at the final stages and wanted this chapter to never come to the public eye (DYKG). Konami would be looking for a reason to say that Kojima wasn't delivering on his promised to justify his firing so it could be a likely conclusion.

Chapter three would've covered the final steps of XOF's plans, the metal gear fight, and the conclusion to the team member Quiet's story (DYKG). It also would've had the metal gear like tank as another vehicle choice for the end game traversal and heavy combat scenarios. Chapter three may have added one final open world zone to explore, a handful of missions, and a final boss experience to rival that of the other games. It is a travesty that this game never reached its full potential.

## Konami Boycott

Konami has a lot of people that hate it after all these issues coming to a boycott of the company and the whole sum of its products. Many players are refusing to purchase the Master Collection vol 1 or the *Metal Gear Solid: Delta* remake of MGS3 releasing later this year.

## Conclusion

*Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain* is a divisive entry into the Metal Gear Franchise and is the last hurrah of Director Hideo Kojima's Team. Konami lost the one thing that made their game good just as they have done to the likes of *Castlevania* and *Silent Hill*. Despite this, I love *MGSV* with it being within my top 5 favorite games of all time. That is because I love this game even though it is hated by many fans, I love this game even though it is unfinished, and I love this game despite it truly being the death of *Metal Gear* as a whole.

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