= Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell : Blacklist =

Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell : Blacklist is an action @-@ adventure stealth video game developed by Ubisoft Toronto and published by Ubisoft . The sixth installment of the Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell series , it is the sequel of Splinter Cell : Conviction . The game was released worldwide for Microsoft Windows , PlayStation 3 , Wii U , and Xbox 360 in August 2013 .

Players control Sam Fisher , a spymaster working for the Fourth Echelon , in a mission to stop the Engineers , a group of terrorists which is trying to coerce the United States into recalling all of its troops stationed abroad . Blacklist 's gameplay is similar to its predecessors , with players tasked with completing objectives and defeating enemies . The game endeavors to combine elements of its predecessors , including the action focus of Conviction and the stealth focus of the older games . Blacklist marks the return of the asymmetrical multiplayer mode Spies vs. Mercs , which was introduced in Pandora Tomorrow .

It is the first title developed by Ubisoft Toronto , a studio founded by Ubisoft in 2009 . The game was directed by Maxime Béland , who had worked on Conviction , and produced by Jade Raymond . To prepare for this game , Béland studied reviews and feature lists of the latter . Blacklist is the first Splinter Cell game starring Eric Johnson as Sam Fisher , since series veteran Michael Ironside was unable to perform motion capture for the game . The Toronto studio focused on the game 's Windows , PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 versions , and its later @-@ announced Wii U version was developed by Ubisoft Shanghai .

Blacklist 's pre @-@ release reception was generally positive , despite criticism of its new voice actor . The game received generally positive reviews when it was released , with praise for its level design , story , and multiplayer mode . However , criticism was directed at its dated graphics . It failed to meet Ubisoft 's sales expectations , with sales of two million copies three months after its release .

= = Gameplay = =

In Blacklist , players assume control of series protagonist Sam Fisher as he seeks to stop a terrorist group called the Engineers . The gameplay emphasizes stealth , and utilizes the third @-@ person perspective . During the game , players can rotate its camera , run , crouch and leap over obstacles . Since Blacklist intended to continue the " aggressive stealth " of Conviction while retaining the traditional stealth features of the older games , it combines action and stealth , and allows players to use different approaches and methods to complete objectives and defeat enemies . Players can complete levels without being noticed by the non @-@ playable characters ' artificial intelligence by taking cover or using other traditional stealth methods . If the player chooses to kill enemies , other enemies are alerted when they see their companions ' dead bodies . To avoid this , players can hide corpses . Fisher can also create a strategically advantageous dark environment by destroying nearby lights , and is equipped with customizable night @-@ vision and sonar goggles to detect enemies in darkness and see through walls . He also has the Tri @-@ Rotor , a compact surveillance drone which can spy on enemies , create distractions , give electric shocks , and self @-@ destruct to kill enemies .

Players can play a more aggressive run @-@ and @-@ gun game by using gadgets and weapons to eliminate enemies . They can interact with environmental objects , such as ledges and zip @-@ lines , to navigate levels . Conviction 's mark @-@ and @-@ execute system returns in Blacklist , with refinements and additions to allow players to mark several targets . When they attack , they can kill all marked targets instantly . Improvements made the system work more fluidly . A variety of enemies (including soldiers and dogs) are encountered in the game , following the protagonist and alerting their companions . Players have the option to kill them , leave them untouched , or incapacitate them , and the game classifies their choices in one of three categories : Ghost (stealthy play) , Panther (stealthy , aggressive play) , and Assault (aggressive play) .

When players kill (or avoid) targets and complete objectives , experience points and money are awarded to buy (or improve) weapons , and upgrade the Paladin airship and Sam 's suit and

equipment ; the upgrades improve efficiency in completing missions . Experience gained depends on the difficulty level and how the game is played ; the greater the stealth , the greater the reward . According to Ubisoft Toronto , the system , known as " universal economy " , was intended to satisfy players ; every action has a corresponding reward .

The Paladin is the game 's hub . Between missions , players can interact with crew members on the ship and view the game 's objectives . Crew members also offer the protagonist side missions to complete . Before a mission Fisher can deploy the strategic mission interface , allowing players to see enemy positions and plan attacks and routes . Players can also use the interface to access multiplayer modes and missions .

Although the game has interrogation sequences involving questioning (or torturing) targets , it does not have Conviction 's interactive torture scenes . Players can still decide whether to spare their targets or kill them after interrogation , and these decisions influence the relationship between Fisher and other crew members .

Blacklist has platform @-@ specific features , including voice integration with Xbox 360 's Kinect peripheral which allows players to distract enemies before attacking . A player can also use the Kinect sensor to control the protagonist with their body instead of the Xbox 360 controller . In the Wii U version , the Gamepad controller 's touchscreen is an interface , accessing gadgets and other features from the protagonist 's arm @-@ mounted computer (OPSAT) , and incorporating screen and motion controls to highlight enemies with thermal vision when using Killing in Motion . The Wii U version was not shipped with the game 's cooperative mode .

= = = Multiplayer modes = = =

The " Spies vs. Mercs " competitive mode introduced in Pandora Tomorrow again appears in Blacklist . An asymmetrical multiplayer mode , it pits two teams (with different gadgets , playing as spies or mercenaries) against each other . Spies , in third @-@ person perspective , are equipped with smoke grenades and flashbangs and are tasked with hacking computer stations heavily guarded by mercenaries . Mercenaries , in first person , can access lethal and longer @-@ range weapons despite being unable to stealth @-@ kill enemies . The mode has two varieties : Classic , supporting four players , and Blacklist , supporting eight .

Blacklist also has a co @-@ operative multiplayer mode , where each mission can be accessed by talking with the crew of the Paladin . Crew members offer a variety of missions and requirements for completing them , and players play as Fisher or his colleague Briggs ; both have the same abilities . The game has a total of 14 missions , with split @-@ screen play supported . In addition to co @-@ op and Spies vs. Mercs , Blacklist has other multiplayer modes including Uplink control , Team Deathmatch , and Extraction .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Characters = = =

Blacklist again features Sam Fisher , who is now the spymaster and commander of the newly installed Fourth Echelon . The game also sees the return of Fisher 's old ally , Anna (Grim) Grímsdóttir , and new characters such as Isaac Briggs and Charlie Cole . Several supporting characters from Conviction reappear , including Victor Coste , Patricia Caldwell , and Andriy Kobin .

= = = Main campaign = = =

Sam Fisher is leaving Andersen Air Force Base when a terrorist organization assaults the base , wounding Paladin Nine Security co @-@ worker and best friend Victor Coste . Soon afterwards a faction known as the Engineers takes responsibility , announcing a series of attacks on the United States , the titular Blacklist , which will continue until the U.S. recalls its troops deployed abroad .

U.S. President Caldwell assigns Fisher , his colleague Charlie Cole , CIA agent Isaac Briggs and Anna Grímsdóttir to Fourth Echelon , a new special @-@ ops and counter @-@ terrorism unit . Charged with stopping the Engineers , the group uses the cargo plane Paladin as its command center . Fourth Echelon first aims to secure Andriy Kobin , a CIA hostage believed to possess information on the Engineers . Fisher extracts him from a safe house in Benghazi , and learns that his associates have ties to the Engineers . Infiltrating an insurgent stronghold , he finds an executed U.S. soldier and learns from a video recording that the executioner is Majid Sadiq ; a former MI6 agent , Sadiq demands the Fourth Echelon to stop interfering .

Believing that their next target is a water @-@ filtration plant near Navy Pier , Fisher infiltrates the Engineers and prevents the release of a biological toxin into the water supply . Kobin then tells him that mercenary supplier Reza Nouri may be allied with the Engineers . Sam assaults Nouri 's mansion , capturing him for questioning . When he learns about an Engineer sleeper cell in London , Fisher infiltrates an abandoned mill and discovers chemical bombs in a shipping bay . Opening a bomb to plant a tracking device , he is exposed to nerve gas . Incapacitated and apparently dying , Fisher is captured by Sadiq and rescued by Briggs ; in the ensuing confrontation , Sadiq escapes while Briggs provides first aid to Sam .

The fully healed Fisher and Briggs then deploy to Philadelphia . When they find four bombs being loaded onto trains , they follow the bombs to a rail yard and disarm them . Boarding a departing train of Engineers , Fisher fights his way through the cars and pursues an Engineer leader (who escapes into a station and is killed by a police officer) .

Briggs uses his CIA credentials to have Fisher sent to the Guantanamo Bay detention camp , allowing him to continue interrogating Nouri . Nouri confirms that Sadiq is head of the Engineers , and says that Sadiq knows the identities of the Fourth Echelon leaders . Escaping from the prison , Briggs and Fisher reach the Paladin in Yucatán and escape when the plane is attacked by Sadiq . Fourth Echelon restarts the plane with Kobin 's help , and Sadiq executes a Blacklist attack on the largest U.S. gas reserve in Louisiana .

As the president begins continuity @-@ of @-@ government procedures , Fisher shuts down the burning plant and averts a chain reaction to the next reserve . When he captures another senior Engineer , he learns about Sadiq 's final plan : to disclose all U.S. military secrets . Sadiq kidnaps the Secretary of Defense and holds them at the Site F government bunker under Denver International Airport . Disregarding the president 's order , Fourth Echelon infiltrates the base . Despite Cole 's infiltration of Sadiq 's team , Sadiq 's men capture Briggs and torture the secretary of defense into authorizing the transfer . Briggs intervenes , killing the secretary and halting Sadiq 's plan .

The Engineers try to flee Site F , using Briggs and the hostages as human shields . Fisher , disguised as an Air Force hostage , helps Delta Force marksmen open fire on Sadiq and his men . Sadiq escapes on foot , and Fisher disarms and seriously wounds him . Sadiq boasts that he has already won ; if he dies twelve nations supporting the Engineers will declare war on the U.S. and if he is tried , he will leak U.S. information . Although Fisher spares Sadiq , he detains him . President Caldwell publicly covers Sadiq 's imprisonment by announcing his death , and the game ends as Fourth Echelon continues its operations ; in a post @-@ credits scene , a recovered Coste and Fisher prepare to interrogate Sadiq .

= = = Co @-@ op missions = = =

Intertwined with the main plot , the co @-@ op missions begin with Fisher and Briggs infiltrating Kashmir . Finding a group of smugglers linked to the Engineers , Fisher and Briggs discover intelligence connecting them to the Russian intelligence organization Voron , before they escape during a drone attack .

Following a lead to a friendly missile base in Bangalore , they find the Indian inhabitants dead and Voron agents stealing the warhead from a missile . Securing the missile and learning that the agents are led by a man named Cherski , Fisher and Briggs escape as the building is destroyed and Indian authorities arrive . Unaware of Cherski 's identity , Fisher and Briggs track him to a Voron base in

Chittagong and find him living in a nearby apartment . They breach Cherski 's panic room and find two people ; uncertain which one is Cherski , they begin interrogating both and learn about a secret base in Russia .

Fisher and Briggs reach an abandoned naukograd , surviving a drone attack , and find a secure medical facility said to contain an OpSat (satellite uplink device used by Fourth Echelon operatives) with vital Voron information . Instead , the base contains a comatose man . Rescuing the man , Fisher and Briggs narrowly escape as the base self @-@ destructs and return the patient to the Paladin . Grim identifies him as Mikhail " Kestrel " Loskov and Kobin confirms his identity , noting that they have a history (detailed in Conviction) . When he questions Kobin (who asks if Kestrel 's gunshot wound has put him into a coma) , Fisher notes that no one had told Kobin how Kestrel had been incapacitated .

= = Development = =

Ubisoft Montreal 's success inspired the company to continue its Canadian expansion , and a new studio , Ubisoft Toronto , was announced on July 6 , 2009 . Headed by Jade Raymond , the studio focuses on the creation of triple @-@ A video games and intellectual property . It worked on a new installment of the Splinter Cell series , which was in parallel development with an unnamed project , and the Toronto team was made up of Ubisoft Montreal 's core Conviction team . Maxime Béland , who had worked on Conviction , was the game 's creative director , and in November 2010 Raymond confirmed that her studio was developing Splinter Cell 6 . Ubisoft Toronto was the game 's lead developer , with assistance from Ubisoft Montreal . Ubisoft Shanghai developed the game 's co @-@ operative multiplayer mode . The Toronto studio focused on the game 's Windows , PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 versions , with the Wii U version developed by Ubisoft Shanghai .

In 2010 , the series ' fifth installment , Conviction , was released . Although it received generally positive reviews , it was criticized by series fans for lacking some features . Béland considered Conviction a " stepping stone " for him when he prepared for the development of Blacklist . The development team studied Conviction 's reviews and feature lists , deciding to discard its " black @-@ and @-@ white " stealth approach , and also deciding to bring back the Spies vs. Mercs mode introduced in Pandora Tomorrow . Béland called the mode 's return " the easiest decision of [his] life " , since the team considered its absence Conviction 's greatest misstep . Ubisoft sent questionnaires through Uplay to thousands of players to collect feedback on Conviction 's new features . When players called Conviction 's campaign weak and short , the team added a stronger storyline and greater character depth by introducing the Fourth Echelon and Fisher as a leader (a series first) . To encourage repeat play the team introduced the aircraft hub and the strategic mission interface , a player menu .

According to Ubisoft Toronto founder Jade Raymond , the series had become too grueling and complicated for modern gamers , and its popularity had suffered relative to Ubisoft flagship franchises such as Assassin 's Creed and Far Cry . The Toronto studio hoped to introduce the franchise to a broader audience , while remaining tactical and hardcore for long @-@ term series fans . It introduced a perfectionist mode , significantly increasing the game 's difficulty by removing some of Fisher 's abilities . The team also introduced accessible , action @-@ oriented gameplay segments which would suit new players , crafting open @-@ ended levels which could be reached with different approaches to broaden the variety of play . The developers re @-@ worked the controls to increase gameplay fluidity , allowing players to automatically leap over objects and traverse a simplified environment .

During Blacklist 's development , its team faced a variety of challenges . The first was to create stealth which was satisfying and fun for players . According to the team , players gain satisfaction from stealth with freedom and choices which allow them to develop a plan . Players must experiment , with each decision having consequences . Game director Patrick Redding compared it to the development of an ecosystem ; the team designed a dynamic artificial intelligence which would react differently to players ' actions , making levels feel alive and adding randomness . Encouraging the " panther " style of play (aggressive stealth) , the team incorporated elements

from the original Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell (where one mistake would abort a mission) and Conviction (where stealth seamlessly becomes combat) . This approach , the team thought , could help players to feel like elite , silent predators .

Series veteran Michael Ironside did not reprise his role as the voice of Sam Fisher . His part was played by Eric Johnson , who also performed the motion capture . In a Blacklist developer diary , Ironside said that he was passing the torch to another actor . According to Ubisoft executives the change was made to take advantage of new performance @-@ capture technology to enrich the game experience , and Ironside assisted Johnson with the role . Elias Toufexis , voice and performance @-@ capture actor for Andriy Kobin in Splinter Cell : Conviction , said that he would return for the new game .

Unlike Conviction , the game would have no interactive torture sequences . Instead , players could choose whether to kill or incapacitate a target after interrogation . The system was not complex , and it was hoped that players would choose based on instinct . According to Béland , every player choice is gray and there are no right or wrong choices . However , the game demo has an interactive torture scene in which players can decide how deeply a knife penetrates a person 's shoulder . After a mixed @-@ to @-@ negative response , Ubisoft removed the scene from its final product .

= = = Marketing = = =

Splinter Cell : Blacklist was introduced at E3 2012 's Microsoft press conference on June 4 , 2012 , for Microsoft Windows , PlayStation 3 , and Xbox 360 . In February 2013 , a Wii U version was rumored to be in development , and Ubisoft confirmed the report two months later . Originally scheduled for release in early 2013 , the game was pushed back to August on January 16 , 2013 . On August 3 , 2013 , Ubisoft confirmed that the game had been declared gold , indicating that it was being prepared for duplication and release . Splinter Cell : Blacklist was released in North America on August 20 and in Europe three days later for Microsoft Windows , PlayStation 3 , Wii U , and Xbox 360 .

The Paladin Collector 's Edition , a limited edition of the game , has a remote @-@ controlled plane , the graphic novel Splinter Cell Echoes , a Billionaire 's Yacht co @-@ op map , an Upper Echelon pack with a Dead Coast map , gold sonar goggles , and a limited @-@ edition poster . Splinter Cell : Blacklist - Spider Bot , a 2D puzzle game tie @-@ in , was released for Android and iOS platforms on June 10 , 2013 and is available on Google Play and the App Store respectively . Homeland , downloadable content for the game , was released on September 26 , 2013 . It added a crossbow , several new costumes , and two new missions which can be completed alone or with another player .

= = Reception = =

= = = Before release = = =

Although Joystiq 's Mike Schramm praised Blacklist 's early screenshots and videos for removing Conviction 's monochromatic visuals , its new voice actor was not received well by some fans . Ubisoft responded with a statement that Ironside was not returning as Fisher because an actor " physically capable " of a motion @-@ capture performance was needed , and Johnson was hired for the role .

= = = Critical reception = = =

Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell : Blacklist received positive reviews . The review aggregator websites GameRankings and Metacritic rated the PlayStation 3 version at 85 % and 84 out of 100 , the Xbox 360 version 84 % and 82 out of 100 , the PC version 80 % and 82 out of 100 , and the Wii U version

79 % and 75 out of 100 .

The game 's design was praised by most reviewers . Ryan McCaffrey of IGN praised the gameplay 's variety and player options , which he thought made Blacklist the best installment in the series since Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell : Chaos Theory . According to McCaffrey , the game was a satisfying stealth experience and an excellent , capable shooter (increasing its replay value) . He noted that several segments forced players to use the Mark and Execute feature , frustrating players who favored stealth over action . Ben Reeves of Game Informer praised the return and refinement of Mark and Execute , which he found satisfying , and praised the game 's intense , varied mission design . Tom Bramwell of Eurogamer disliked the game 's direction , particularly its action elements (which he compared to 2012 's Hitman : Absolution) .

Blacklist 's campaign was also generally praised . According to IGN 's McCaffrey , the game 's story is superior to those of its predecessors : well @-@ balanced and believable . He criticized Sam Fisher 's new voice actor , whom he thought failed to replicate Ironside 's charm . Ben Reeves praised the story 's plot twists and sympathetic characters . On the Joystiq blog , Xav De Matos liked the game 's narrative urgency and engaging plot twists but criticized its rushed ending . Simon Miller of VideoGamer.com called the game forgettable and boring , with Fisher 's new voice actor failing to bring personality to the character . Eurogamer 's Bramwell also criticized the game 's lack of character development .

Its multiplayer features were praised ; according to McCaffrey , the co @-@ operative multiplayer mode had enough content for a separate game . Although he appreciated Spies vs. Mercs ' faster pace , he found the mode less innovative than its predecessor . Reeves partially agreed , describing the revived Spies vs. Mercs mode as refreshing , intense , and bloody . De Matos wrote that it was one of the best multiplayer modes he had ever experienced , and the Blacklist version had evolved and modernized while remaining creative . Daniel Bloodworth of GameTrailers praised the game 's satisfying co @-@ op design , which tasks players to plan and coordinate strategy .

Blacklist 's graphics and lack of difficulty were criticized . McCaffrey found the visuals unimpressive and most character models to be ugly ; he also noted technical problems , such as screen @-@ tearing and frame rate issues . Bloodworth criticized the game 's invisible wall and unresponsive controls in certain segments , although he thought those minor issues did not drag down its overall experience . McCaffrey noted that even when the game is played in perfectionist mode , it is less challenging than its predecessors . He thought Blacklist gave players too many rewards , making its universal @-@ economy system a useless feature . Bloodworth was puzzled by the game 's unlock system , which he said hindered its credibility .

= = = Sales = = =

Ubisoft hoped that Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell : Blacklist would sell at least five million copies . The game debuted at number two on the UK retail software sales chart in its first week of release , behind Saints Row IV . It was August 's fourth @-@ bestselling game in the United States . On October 16 , 2013 Ubisoft announced that Blacklist had failed to meet sales expectations , and on November 13 it was announced that the game had sold two million copies worldwide .