

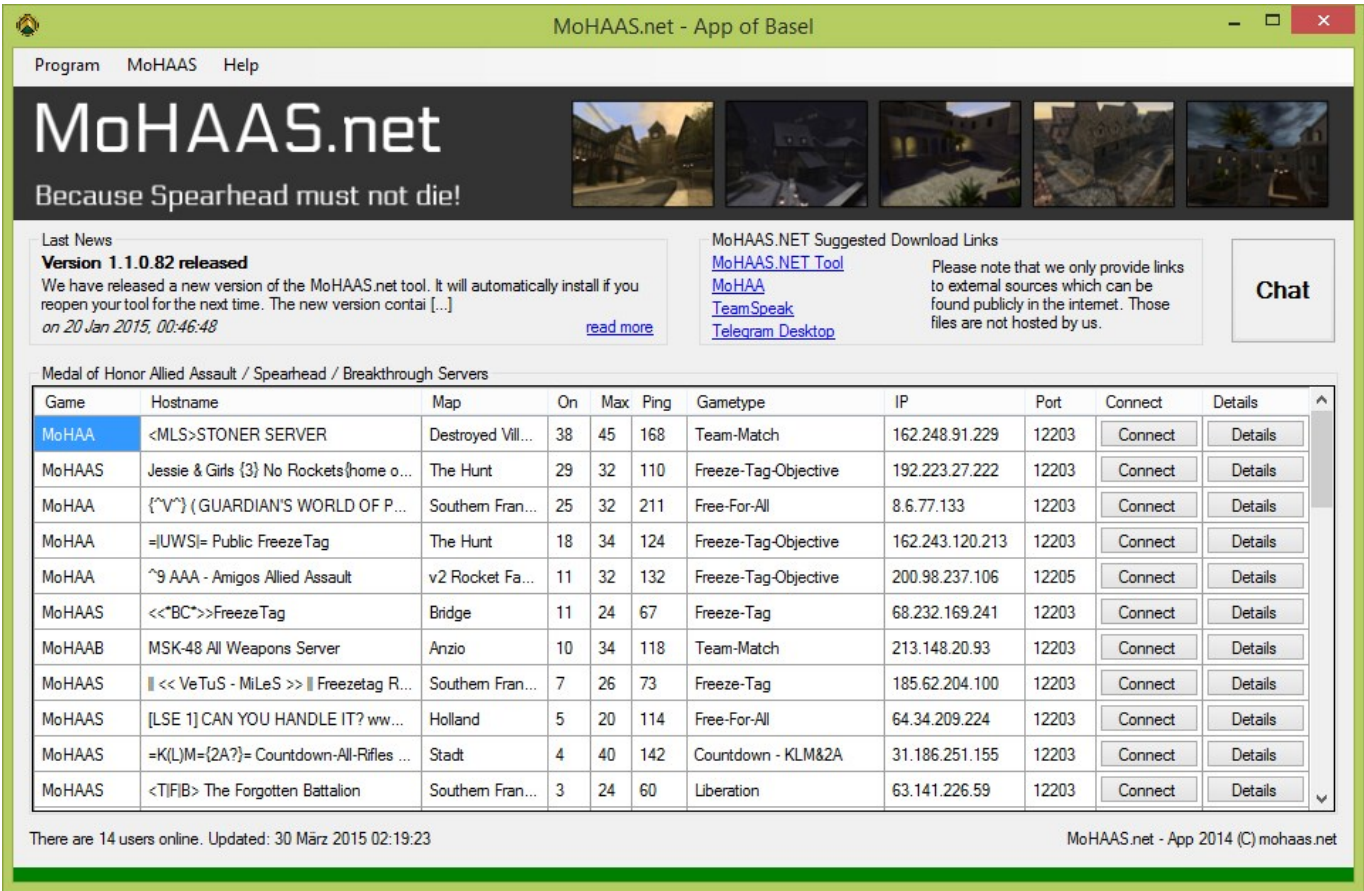


Cheating is a problem in most Spearhead servers. The MoHAAS.net community has the goal to unite players and reduce the amount of cheaters.

Controversial program

The MoHAAS.net tool has gained many fans all over the world, but some people are still afraid of its capabilities. We have spoken to its creators.

Made by the MoHAAS.net community.



The first impression of our tool when launching it from www.mohaas.net.

It shows a server list, latest news, download links and a chat button among many other things.

Today we are going to make an interview with two of the lead software engineers of the MoHAAS.net community. In this interview, we would like to cover the most asked questions and critical accusations of our users. The questions were posed by WhiteLightning from KLM and LiquidNinja from 2A.

Who are you?

modder: My nickname is modder and I am from Basel, Switzerland. I am one of the founders of 2a-clan and co-initiator of the MoHAAS.net community. Our clan has been founded in 2004 and has a long going history. We started as a Spearhead Demo clan and eventually moved to the full version game in 2008.

wappe: I am wappe and from Helsinki, Finland. I joined 2a-clan seven years ago, after being recruited by modder. Since then, we have become real life friends and met several times in different places.

Why did you create the MoHAAS.net community?

modder: The game has always fascinated me. Not because of the gaming itself, but because of the people we interacted with. In the last decade, many thousand people have joined our servers. In April 2014, I heard about the fact that GameSpy was going to shut down its services. There was a little bit of panic in the whole community. Some client side fixes have been created by different communities. We thought it would be nice to have a nice server list which is independent from other services. We wanted to host our own server list, where we would manually add servers. That is why I teamed up with Laurens - known as Appelpitje from the GUN clan - and launched mohaas.net.

wappe: In MoHAA, there is a great developer community called xnull, who even rescripted and published parts of MoHAA as a new version. This means, there are better countermeasures against cheats in MoHAA. In Spearhead, there was no real community anymore. That is why we thought it would be nice to unite the large clans

of Spearhead and bring them together in a community. And we always wanted to create an anti-cheat one day.

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Is "because mohaas must not die" purely the reason why you have founded the mohaas.net community? Or is there another reason behind the whole thing (i.e. full control over the community)?

modder: Whoever knows me will say that I have always wanted world domination. Roger Federer once said, there is just the number one and the rest. This is our motto.

wappe: Lol of course not. We just love the game and we were really worried that there are no community solutions for Spearhead. As I said, MoHAA has an active developer community, Spearhead is pretty left alone.

modder: Exactly. I always hoped to get the most important communities of Spearhead closer together. Of course, the GameSpy shutdown was a good chance to make that happen. And I think, we made a good first step. But our path never ends, there is a lot of work to do.

After a few weeks you have launched a website, you also created the tool. But what is the MoHAAS.net tool?

modder: First, the tool was just a .NET click-once application that showed a list of servers. Its main goals is and always will be to show the community servers to the players. In January, we also integrated anti-cheat functionality to make catching cheaters more efficient for server admins.

wappe: We suffered a lot from cheaters for the last years, and especially in Europe the amount of cheaters has increased a lot. We felt that many other clans had the same problems, so we decided to take a step further and integrate an anti-cheat into the tool.

modder: People have to understand that the tool is just one small piece of the whole puzzle. The whole project consists of our forum, a wiki, the website with the server list and player statistics and finally the tool that you can install on your computer.

What the hell is .NET click-once? That sounds scary.

wappe: .NET is a framework developed by Microsoft. To break it down to a simple sentence: It lets you easily create programs.

modder: Click-once stands for an application that is started by an internet source - in our case mohaas.net. If you open the executable from mohaas.net, the application will install on your computer and run from there.

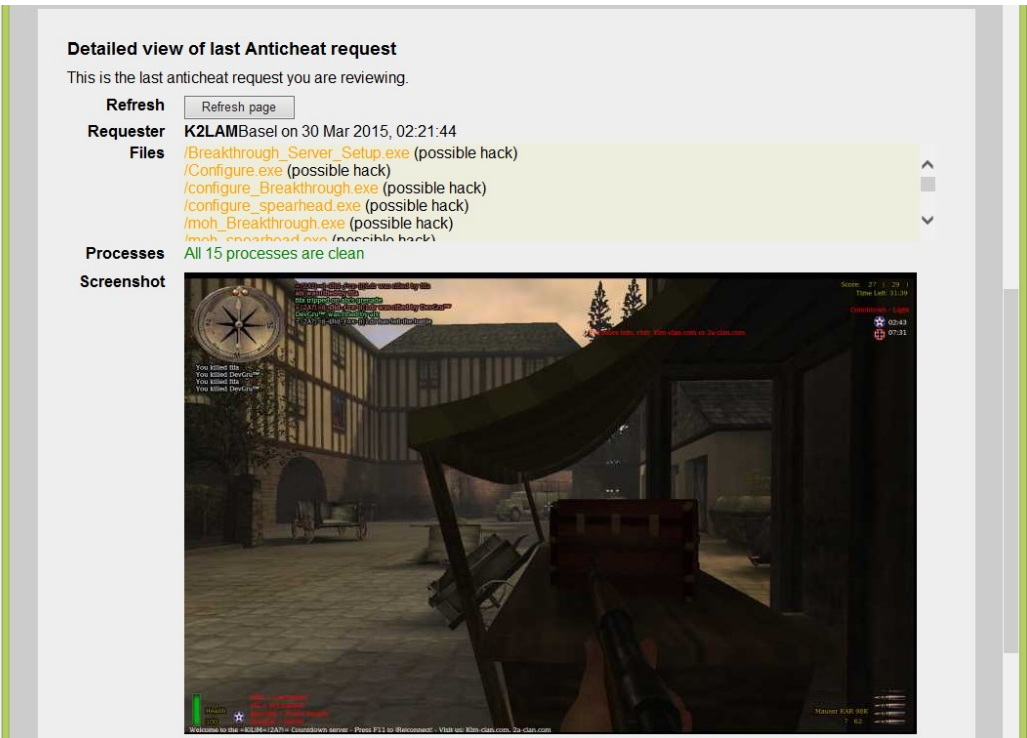
wappe: The great thing about click-once is that the user does not have to care about updates. If you start the application, it will check mohaas.net if a new version is available.

modder: Yeah. It was important to us that the application is as simple as possible. Most people hate updates, also I do. But with a click-once application, updating is so simple.

wappe: This is also why there is always that load screen when you start the MoHAAS.net tool. It simply checks for updates at start.

That sounds nice. But why all the work if there are other server list fixes?

modder: For players who had one of the mentioned fixes, there was no real need for the tool until this year. You are absolutely right about that! The nice thing about the tool is that you can directly connect to a server when you click the "Connect" button. It just starts the game and you're in. I think that people are used to this kind of application already, for example XFire had a great success with that. For server owners, mohaas.net is a great thing. They received a platform to show to the people that their server is alive. Additionally, they know that mohaas.net is tracking player



The MoHAAS.net admin panel lets server owners review a player’s in-game screen. If the tool detects cheats in the MoHAA folder of the user, the server owners are notified.

statistics, so you could always check your server’s activity on the mohaas.net website.

wappe: We always had the plan of making an anti-cheat tool for the Spearhead community. MoHAA is so much better off with the Reborn fix made by xnull, but Spearhead has always been neglected. We felt like we should do something against the cheaters and develop an anti-cheat tool.

Our future plan is to add a map-downloader for custom maps.

modder: Our future plan is also to integrate a map-downloader, so all players could easily join servers with custom maps.

So who did actually create the MoHAAS.net tool?

modder: The MoHAAS.net tool consists of different parts: The forum was made by me and Appelpitje, the rest was initiated by me. Unfortunately, Appelpitje could not be active in the tool development because of his private life. That is why I started most of the work alone. But I always kept contact with Appelpitje and we still chat regularly about our ideas.

wappe: As I am co-leader of 2A and I personally know modder, we both decided that it was a good idea for me to join the development after modder’s kick-start. In the fall of 2014, we decided to work on the anti-cheat function on the tool. That is when I started helping in the development of the client-side tool.

If I want to use the tool, I have to install a setup.exe file from mohaas.net. Is that safe?

modder: It is as safe as it can be. We have secured our tool and website with a certificate that states they are property of MoHAAS.net tool, to be precise of Wappe. If you do not believe that, you can check the website certificate if you browse to <https://www.mohaas.net>.

How can I know that I install a certified software?

modder: If you download the MoHAAS.net tool and try to install it, the first window will show

the publisher and developers of the tool. If these names show MoHAAS.net or wappe’s real name, you can be sure that the software is certified.

The MoHAAS.net tool is signed by a certificate which proves our identity.

wappe: Our tool has been signed with a certificate. This is like a warranty for the user. It tells him the real name of the publishers, so in the end we are standing up here with our full name.

modder: Don’t forget that Microsoft has approved of the MoHAAS.net tool. Otherwise there would be a security alert from the Windows UAC (user account control) which was introduced in Windows Vista.

Rumors say that the tool spies on my PC, is that true?

modder: This is my favorite question so far, because it is one of the most discussed things amongst developers as well.

wappe: What we want is gameplay without cheats. Now imagine if you are searching for them, how far can you go without violating the privacy of the users? That is the question in the end. Believe me, we have had long discussions about this topic and I think we have found a very fair solution.

modder: Exactly. We can guarantee you: Our tool would never browse or even store personal files. It only looks through the folder that the game is working with (usually located in C, Program Files, MoHAA). The tool does not scan or open any other folders. By the way, even if it did, it would only care about game related files.

The tool does not scan or open anything else than the game folder.

For example, the tool simply ignores jpg files. So even if personal images were in the MoHAA folder, the tool would not notice them at all.

wappe: There is one more thing though. Unfortunately, there are many executable (*.exe) cheats out there. That is why the tool is regularly verifying processes on a computer. Of course it only searches for cheats like aimbots and doesn’t care at all about other processes.

modder: Indeed, those exe cheats are very annoying. Some aimbots are very effective and totally destroy the game for other players. We made sure that the tool can catch them as well.

I summarize: The tool can scan my MoHAA folder and look for cheat files. Also, it checks my running computer processes. But what are you doing with this data?

modder: That is correct. Explaining the specifics would be very complicated though and fill another ten pages.

wappe: I think it is important for people to know that the tool does not automatically collect data.

The tool checks the game files and processes for cheats. If cheats are detected, the player is flagged as a cheater and automatically kicked from servers that use the MoHAAS.net admin panel.

modder: Only if an admin of a MoHAAS.net community server makes an anti-cheat request (as shown in the image above), the tool will upload the game file names and a game screenshot. That is all we are collecting from the users, and you can of course read that in the privacy policy of MoHAAS.net.

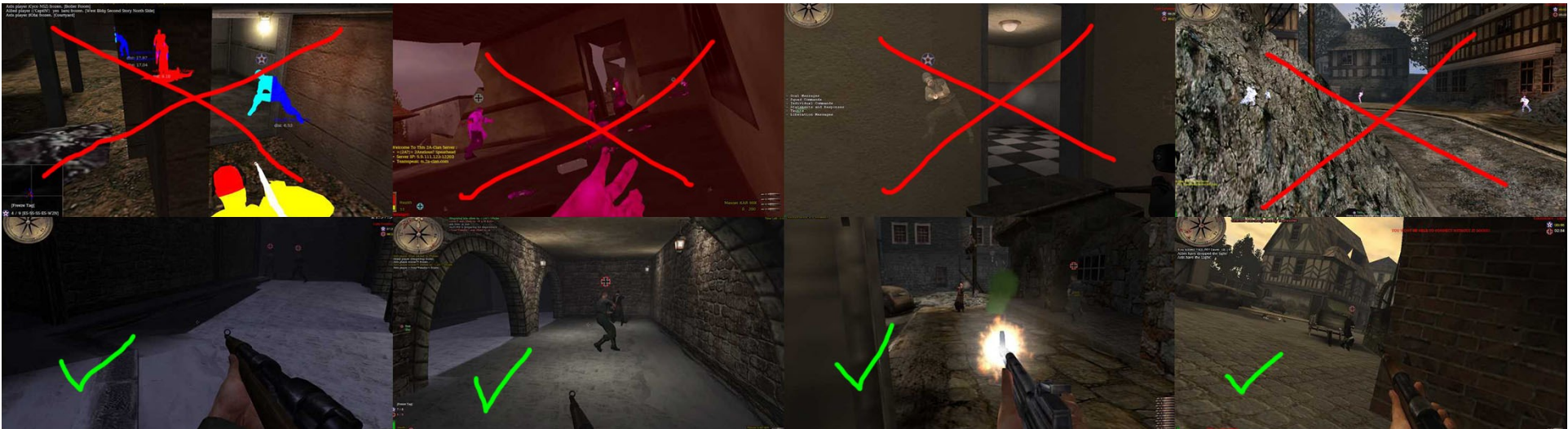
Why does the tool take screenshots of my game?

modder: Screenshotting is a very effective way to spot cheats, many anti-cheat programs take screenshots of players. Of course automated programs can search for cheats, but nothing is better than the human eye.

wappe: Many server holders use the in-game screenshotting function and try to catch cheaters. Unfortunately, cheaters have bypassed this function or simply do not send the screenshots when asked. Our tool fills that void and sends screenshots automatically.

We honestly did our best to protect the privacy of the tool users.

modder: Even here we did our best to protect the privacy of the tool users. We only allow screenshots of the game window; a screenshot request by an admin is simply ignored if the user is not playing. We really made sure that no admin, not even me, can abuse the screenshotting function.



One of the goals of the tool is to help players to get a clean game.
Above in the first line you can see cheats caught by the MoHAAS.net tool.
In the second line you can see the same players when they came back clean.

Caring about privacy sounds very complicated.

wappe: Indeed. That’s why we have spent already hundreds of hours developing the tool and the website.

modder: If you know something about developing computer programs, you know that it is always very time consuming. We would be total fools if we made the MoHAAS.net tool spy on people. First of all, it would be total nonsense, what would we even want with the data? And secondly, we stand here with our names and signed software which would be blocked within a few minutes by Microsoft or any anti-virus program if it were abusive.

We would be total fools if we made the MoHAAS.net tool spy on people.

That sounds logical. Let’s now talk a bit about issues with the tool. Does the tool make my PC lag?

wappe: There are two types of lag, FPS or internet lag. It is very unlikely that any kind of lag appears with the tool, because the tool needs very few resources.

modder: The tool will scan your MoHAA folders from time to time. But these scans are done when you are not in-game, so you should not notice any lag of that scan. But the tool needs to send a signal to our server every 15 seconds. Otherwise we would not know that your connection is still alive. All other tool activity is shut down during gaming sessions. We tried to keep the possible performance bottlenecks to a minimum.

wappe: Some people have a really bad internet connection and a bad ping. It is possible that they feel a little bit of lag. But we can assure you that the tool uses way less bandwidth than the game itself. Also, in comparison to the game, our tool only consumes bandwidth every 15 seconds, the game uses it constantly.

I heard many people have to change resolution to play. I don’t want that.

modder: As with any other program, there can be problems or bugs in the beginning. We have put a big effort into improving this issue. Actually, it should be fixed in version 1.2. The tool gives you a lot of setup options now to modify your game settings. Just try it out!

On which servers can I play with the tool?

modder: You can play any server that you want.

wappe: The tool is just a door opener for the game. It does not prevent you from joining any other server.

modder: But it is very comfortable to play on a server that is listed in the tool, because it has a button to directly connect to it.

Is the tool preventing cheats?

modder: No, and it was never intended to do that. The tool does only offer people to access servers from the community and tries to detect the most known cheats. It will not stop you from cheating in the game, but it will report you if you have been caught. To summarize: We try to detect, but not prevent cheating.

wappe: Having no cheaters in online games is like saying there will be no war in the world. There will be always cheaters in the game.

modder: Wait. I think we can at least detect most of them, which is already great. And the admin panel of the tool allows server admins to spot cheaters faster. If you catch a cheater within the MoHAAS.net admin panel, you can easily ban him.

If I were a server admin, why would I use the tool on my server?

modder: First of all, the tool is the gate to the world. Users of the tool will find your servers and can easily connect. Of course there are other ways to connect your servers, but as there are a lot of servers in the tool, you would be excluded from possible clientele.

The tool is the gate to the Spearhead gaming world. It lets players find and admins manage the servers.

wappe: In the end of 2014, we have integrated an administration platform (kick, ban, check players for cheats) and anti-cheat code into the MoHAAS.net tool. This allows administrators of servers to take control over their servers and players in a simple way.

How reliable is mohaas.net?

modder: It is as good as it can be. Of course we do not have a huge server farm providing for the stability of the service. But we tried our best to set up a good environment for the little money we have. Don’t forget that no one except me is paying for this project so far. You could say that this is my legacy to Spearhead. I simply wanted to give our community something back. The more people that take this chance, the happier I am.

This project is my legacy to Spearhead.

What if mohaas.net runs out of money, or license owners decide to stop hosting the service?

wappe: If no one else would step in, it would be dead as fast as GameSpy.

modder: The only thing I can say here: I am probably one of the biggest constants of this game. I am into this game for 12 years already, and our clan 2A is over 10 years old. It is very unlikely that I would give up a project in which we have invested so much time for the last few months.

Where is the mohaas.net server located?

wappe: The server is located in Germany.

modder: There are different reasons for that. Let me explain: The founders of MoHAAS.net are European, so it was an obvious choice to use a European provider. Germany is a very good location because it is in the center of Europe, close to the most important internet node in Europe (Frankfurt, Germany). Also, Germany has very fair prices and their law is very strict regarding privacy. There is no such thing as NSA intruders in Germany, and Germany’s laws are protecting hosters against them.

That was hell of an interview guys. Thanks a lot for your effort and your time!

wappe: I hope that most of the community questions have been answered now. If you have any concerns or more questions, just ask them in our forum or by mail to info@mohaas.net.

modder: Thanks for trusting us and our tool. In the end, we all have the same goals: Saving the game. Because Spearhead must not die.