

Playtester Session 01

Date: 25 Oct 2023

Play Tester: M.R

Session Duration: 2hrs

Map Version: PV1 -22nd Oct

Ravine Trail

No issues.

Rocky Clearings A

Player held back to scope out the enemy, assumed there would be additional enemies nearby out of sight and then they took a stealth kill approach.

Rocky Clearings B

Moved through area and verbalised their thinking as they went, their thoughts matched my intentions.

Issues:

- Player managed to climb up between the manmade balcony and the first plateau, meaning they cut out the stairs and see through gate.
- Pistol npc not going to their assigned control zone

Cave

Player immediately investigated the see through wall and spotted the exit on the other side. They managed to get through the wall, I reset them. They found the hidden crawl tunnel shortly afterward. This could be hidden slightly better.

Issues:

- player was able to get through the see through wall. (I had to intervene)
- Hidden crawl tunnel too easily seen, whole cave too light.
- reduce fall distance into Cave pothole as this dealt damage.

Frozen Pool - Enemies

Player approached the encounter using stealth, using the boulders I placed for that reason. They attacked once the npcs had wandered far apart

Issues:

- After killing the npc's, other npc voices could be heard nearby and were showing on the compass, there shouldn't have been any other npc's spawned into the map yet - repeat the bug and attempt to find the rouge npc.
- npcs spawned in too late, player saw them drop in.

Frozen Pool - Navigation Puzzle

The player was so distracted with trying to push through the 'see through frozen waterfall' wall that they didn't register the man made structure inside the cave, and so they didn't form an objective. When they found the entrance to the ice they didn't form a link to the cave behind the frozen waterfall.

Under the water the player was disoriented. They weren't sure why they were there. They told me they thought it was an optional path for a bonus reward.

The player drowned on their first attempt to swim. I'd not turned on Water Breathing thinking this swim wouldn't pose any issue, t I was totally wrong.

Issues:

- player couldn't climb back out the water once they entered the broken ice.
- Player didn't mentally register the walkway inside the cave, subsequently the underwater swim, which is disorientating, didn't feel like the critical path and left the player feeling stumped.

Generator Area

Player entered and peered through the first window into the Generator Room, they spotted the key + gun table. They move upstairs and explored, discovering the 'key requiring gate'. They managed to squeeze through the grate and drop into the generator room. We reset the session as this was game breaking.

They next shot through the grate and blew up the fuel tanks below, they then immediately headed down to the new hole in the wall and entered the generator room. Collected the key and new weapon and headed back up along the return path. They heard the npc's on their return and decided to let the npc's walk into their trap at the base of the stairs.

They engaged the enemies in a gunfight in the main room, beating them.

After this the player became quite disorientated and couldn't quite figure out which way was forward. Eventually they requested my help. They explained that they thought the 'Bridge Drop Off' at the start of the 'Utility Tunnels' area would just drop them off in a tunnel they had moved through earlier near the generator room so they felt they were missing something so kept searching elsewhere.

After playing the area I took them on a tour of the area flying around in the editor. They pointed out that the 2 stairwells were really throwing them off because they couldn't remember which led where.

Observation - Their health depleted much quicker than I expected and they often had to seek shelter, almost dying a couple of times. I'll add more armour and health pickup opportunities, especially armour in combat area as this applies immediately upon collection so the player can concentrate on fighting.

Issues:

- I noticed that the utility area's entrance door hadn't closed after the explosion was triggered as it should have. Player thankfully ignored this time.
- They were disorientated by the 2 identical stairwells.
- player was able to wiggle their way through it and drop down into the generator room breaking the level.

- the destructible physics meshes keep 'popping' out of position when knocked by the player. Testing required to find a workaround or alternative destructible mesh without physics properties.
- the player didn't notice the green pipe which I included as a subtle guidance helper. This isn't really an issue.
- the red alarm light in the utility tunnel area is playing before the explosion happens.

Utility Tunnels

Player encountered the flamer, they were overwhelmed and died.

When they retried they succeeded, however the 'retreat' blocking surprise npcs almost caught them off guard.

Once the flamer was taken out they cleared up the remainder and made their way straight up the ladder.

Issues:

- No where for the player to hide between the retreat room and the flamer encounter, they only have a few seconds to react or can easily die.
- The surprise pistol npcs are frustrating and only add confusion.

Fuel Store

Played out exactly as I envisioned, player said they really liked that area.

They just wished they had got to see the explosive chain reaction.

Fire Fight Tower

The player thought the courtyard was the 'optional explore' path, and that the actual 'explore' path was the crit path. This is because the explore path had a door entering the bigger central building which lead towards the greater remainder of the level.

Inside the courtyard they blew up all the barrels, and scoured the immediate area for pickups.

They made their way up in combat smoothly, they were overwhelmed at one point by enemies charging them from a flank. This happened as I hadn't predicted a player might camp where this player did.

The player didn't make the connection between the Fuel Store and the Tower Courtyard. The connection is a helicopter wreckage which has crashed through the floor and serves as a landmark, it also created the hole which the fire spreads up through.

Issues:

- 2nd floor corner room; 2 units flank from the rear while the player is occupied, no reason for them to be watching their rear, so seems a bit unfair.
- Player ran out of grenades, which was frustrating because it meant they missed an opportunity I designed for a grenade throw.

Helipad

Played out nicely.

Issues:

- I think more cover and health packs would offer a better balance here.

Comms Control Centre

Player entered and camped by the entrance as they were overwhelmed by the complex interior layout. They moved into the building it played well. They naturally gravitated towards the way up onto the roof. They collected the sniper rifle at the base of the rubble and boxes.

Once on the ruins roof they cleared the few enemies there and used the sniper rifle to engage the sniper enemy on the adjacent tower, they soon noticed the highlighted explosive canister and shot it, triggering the next combat phase. They used the sniper rifle to take down the helicopter, and grenades and shotgun to quickly deal with the Bounty Targets and their bodyguards. It took them a moment to realise those were the targets.

The 'breadcrumb' npc got their attention, they headed back across the platforming roof section above the ruins inferno and exited the ruins.

Issues:

- Tough sniper enemy didn't unspawn after tower explosion triggered.
- Rooftop arena cover is a bit too busy and making player movement awkward.
- The Bounty Targets were kinda lost amongst all the chaos, the player didn't realise there were special units in play until just before killing the 2nd of 'The Twins'.
- The combat felt non-stop from the moment they landed on the Helipad, it all blends together.

Escape Route

Player approached using stealth, engaged npc's and used the cover area I intended them to. They discovered the rpg launcher and used it to take out one of the trucks once enough npc's had gathered near it. The truck npc's weren't engaged in combat with the player. The player chose not to use the rpg launcher on the 2nd truck and used their sniper rifle to 'mark' their target and then shoot them blind through foliage and fences etc. They then used a flanking path to get close and scout the exit gate for more opponents. They drove one of the jeeps to leave the facility, and headed for the level exit marker.

Issues:

- Npcs didn't register the player even after they blew up one of their trucks.
- Trucks engagement lines are obscured by the environment
- RPG weapon too powerful.

Other Notes

- They understood the core theme of the level.
- Definitely litter the level with more supplies, health and armour. The player character quickly loses health while under fire and they player can quickly deplete health packs. This factor is also useful to increase tension by restricting health packs through tougher but less chaotic encounters.

- I wasn't happy with the targets encounter scenario. The targets didn't stand out from the other enemy npc's, and the encounter setup didn't feel very spectacular, like the player hadn't entered a new situation. There's alot going on leading up to the target intro moment which stretches the player's attention thin, it's all a bit mushy.

Internal Testing Session

I play through the level a few times to iron out any obvious technical issues in preparation for External Play Test Session 2.

Selt Testing Notes by location

- Ravine
 - Took dmg on first jump - decided to keep this because it only does a tiny bit of damage, and it also teaches the player their health can regenerate.
 - Crawl section not low enough, can be walked through.
- Station Entrance Path + rocky clearing area
 - Can't climb the alt path (right at boulder)
 - Grate at first guard causes weird player movement, add a blocking volume to walk on.
 - Add some extra cover to help encourage a stealth take down of the first npc.
 - Retexture steps
- Cave
 - Add sound fx volume for cave interior?
- Frozen River > Frozen Pool
 - There's still an npc spawned in who shouldn't be, from the pool they're in the direction of the target tower, it could be the target as they have be present from level start, but I could hear them speak, so might be closer.
- Utilities Basement: Generator Area
 - Breakable wall still dev texture.
 - Retexture generator machine.
 - Key not visible from windows, make very obvious, add highlight.
 - Light in extra supply room is affecting geometry beyond itself, try toggling cast shadows?
 - ADD A BLOCKING MESH TO THE FLOOR GRILL!
 - Make highlights on explosives less intense.
 - Area entry door not closed after explosion event.
 - Retexture broken pipe tips at flood hall.
 - Not all npcs appeared, resistance was a bit weak. 2nd play worked?
 - Lower fire effect slightly central grate, bit too obscuring of upper walkway enemies.
 - Give player body armour before the enemy encounter.
 - Added sound fx volume for entire 'inside' area.

- Utilities Basement: Tunnels
 - Flamethrower npc didn't charge out
 - No alarm sound in tunnels.
 - Remove armour pu from bridge, and ammo
 - Place makeshift barricade at top of stairs behind flamer npc
 - Rifle npc's not being very aggressive at tunnels exit room?
 - Consider some cover from the surprise pistol npcs once the flamer attacks.
- Fuel Store
 - Add some lighting as the flame fx don't add lighting, it's too dark.
- Courtyard Block
 - Flare didn't shoot up from target tower.
 - Objective marker didn't spawn correctly. Appears only as player periphery marker? This appears to be an editor bug. I should try the 'Set Visible' script again, set invisible at level start, then visible when I want it should fix?
 - Add second flare shot if player approaches the locked gate/ target tower view.
 - Use lmg unit in the top wall hole position, add blocking mesh to avoid them being flung out by an explosion. Place the armour and health pack in a more exposed position so the lmg poses a threat if the player wants them.
- Helipad
 - Sniper seems to be totally ineffective, not aiming or shooting at character.
 - The doorway rush units didn't come out quick enough, they should storm out as soon as the player moves through the spawn trigger.
- Comms Control Centre
 - Trigger volume for attack spawns needs adjusted to cover new entry space.
 - Door npc's seem to be going to one control zone rather than the 2.
 - Vip berserker npc stuck in idle. Add more npcs, to the 'sniper tower'
 - Turn off the skull and bones icon once the target is defeated.
 - Add more health packs here because the sniper can take almost all the player's health in a single shot.
 - Change sniper's cover back to the higher wall so when they are stunned the player can't shoot them. I think it'll be better if I skew it so that triggering the explosion is the intended way to defeat the sniper.
- Comms Station Main Entrance Bridge / Path
- Comms Station Main Entrance Perimeter Area
 - Remove free-roaming VIP
 - 2nd truck arrived later than wanted
- Exit Road

Other Notes:

Noticed a map marker, it might be the note at the bottom of the pothole? - it's definitely related to the skull marker I use for the target npc. It's not a high priority fix as it's not visible for the majority of the level.

Wayyyy too many supplies available. Reward areas feel pointless. The enemies drop ammo so there's little need for loads of extra bits dropped about. I think this is because I feel like there has to be something to collect everywhere.

Body armour should be sparingly used. Healthpacks can be fairly common, they're an aid not a necessity as the character has health regen.

Ammo never felt short of supply, most the npcs drop around 30 rifle ammo, which means the player almost always has a full rifle. I'll try a run where I remove all the pickups and then play through the level noting areas they would likely be the most rewarding.

No Pickups/Supplies Playthrough

Ammo wasn't an issue, there were a few moments where I came close to depletion but that added some tension dynamics. The ammo drops by taking out npc's is plentiful, and often results in 'risky grab' moments.

Health pickups - these are a bit more tricky. They aren't needed but they do offer a feeling of safety and get the player back into the action.

Body Armour - very useful, as it is applied immediately and buffers the player. These can be offered at the most intense moments of combat to keep the player in active combat and help them avoid dying at climactic moments. There will be very few placed throughout the level and mostly along crit paths, or used as enticement into risky areas.

Play Tester Session 02

Date: 25th Oct 2023

Play Tester: K.M

Session Duration: 90mins

Map Version: PV1 24th Oct

Mountain Trail

Played as intended.

Frozen Pool

They chose to sneak around the enemies, and then attacked at an opportune moment. They investigated the frozen waterfall and managed to squeeze through the ice gaps [reset session]. On attempt 2 they located the hole in the ice and understood immediately they had to swim to get behind the frozen waterfall.

Issues:

- Waterfall looks tempting to try and crawl through + missing a blocking volume...

Generator Basement

Issues:

- got confused by the two stair wells being too similar still

- didn't notice the grate in the floor of the main room.
- flooded 1 way gate was bypassed. They managed to skirt along the wall and use bits of the floor edge geometry to skip across [reset player].

Utility tunnel

They charged past the flamer and ran into a dead end which they just managed to survive however the 'surprise' retreat room enemies almost took them out during the flamer encounter chaos.

Issues:

- Still not enough decent cover options in the retreat hallway

CCC Target Encounter

When they entered the ruins they clocked they were getting closer to their targets. They were focussed on clearing out the ruins of enemies and momentarily lost their way, but the rubble climb route quickly reorientated them. They collected the sniper rifle before climbing the rubble. They shot the sniper enemy who entered stun. They took out the other enemies on the ruins roof, but the sniper npc was still stun locked, it took a moment of nothing happening for the player to scope the tower and notice the explosive canister.

Once the tower exploded the attack heli flew in and the player hurried to find cover, but the environment made this look a clunky ordeal. The final wave melee units rushed the player who for a moment was almost killed by being forced out into the open with the heli firing at them. They killed a Bounty Target without registering it, then they downed the chopper, finally realising the HUD target counter had changed they understood the remaining enemy was a Target. They used the cover to get up close and used the shovel to beat the target to death and then kicked them off the tower declaring victory. Whatever works.

Issues:

- Rooftop arena too messy and awkward to move through.
- Melee units in final wave distracting from heli and target engagement
- Sniper unit is a proper sulker.
- Need a stronger signal for the targets entering the arena?

Escape Route

This area would benefit from more pickups. Detonator explosives were collected by a heavy ammo pickup, which I didn't intend, however they gave the player the option to hide beneath the truck positions and lob the explosive over then run to take cover and trigger the explosion, which was cool. So I'll include these packs.

Revisions

- add more pickups
- Add body healthpacks near truck positions, help player avoid dying at the finish line.
- offer explosives near the trucks to help the player.

Play Tester Session 3

Date: 6th Dec 2023

Play Tester: M.G

Session Duration: 90mins

Map Version: PV2A 3rd Dec

Mountain Trail

Almost managed to walk along rocks to right of ravine drop and access last area.

Rev: make clear no go

Rocky Area B

Explored, realised the secret jump route, good. Reached cave entrance plateau, didn't see pothole, felt they were meant to climb higher.

Rev: make pothole entrance visually stronger

Cave

Backtracked checking for loot

Frozen River

Frozen Pool

Good encounter with enemies

Lost in water, exited, made mental connection between waterfall and underwater swim, succeeded

Generator Area

Went well. Didn't notice main locked gate, found key then found door, still enjoyed the area.

Bug: alarm sound fx playing again, inconsistent whether plays, not managed to isolate causation.

Utility Tunnels

Played out almost ideally.

Revision: swap pistol retreat space npc to melee npc

Fuel Store

Player solved the problem a unique way.

They stood at the top of the ladder trapdoor, threw a grenade, then jumped backwards and down into the ladder tunnel, grenade triggered the explosion, they climbed up and exited the area.

Fire Fight Tower

Died through overwhelm. First floor, corner room, melee (eyes and ears) unit caused confusion.

Rev: check where the trigger is for the 2 assault who arrive on the first floor on crit path rear.

Helipad

Pinned down, went up onto the helipad but cover wasn't strong enough, so had to bail.

Rev: add more health/armour

Add stronger cover to helipad.

Bug: no bang sound when smoke grenade deployed, smoke effect not spawning quick enough, ai seen spawning in.

CCR (Climb)

Rev:

-make the return path post grapple more gappy/appear more dangerous. /

-Make the doorway after the bridge swing obstacle less likely to catch the player and 'jerk their movement /

-make health jump smaller

Bug: jump forward velocity being killed at top optional health pack leap

CCR Roof (Target Encounter)

Lots of player deaths, heli wave too many enemies in surrounding leading to disorientation, no where safe to take cover.

Super Sniper entered 'stun state' flow of encounter disrupted as nothing was happening until the player decided to shoot the explosive cannister triggering the next wave.

Target NPCs failed to zipline, shot on tower, entered prolonged 'stun state', player had to use a well aimed grenade to take out.

Player fell at first jump, looked like their velocity was killed?

Rev:

Make main arena larger, add some better cover.

Remove the melee npc from wave 2

Remove the surrounding ruin assaulters/reduce/make cover so that player can avoid them.

Sniper dodge>sniper eliminate>heli attack>target entrance/combat

Q.how to ensure the target successfully ziplines in? I think smoke grenades or maybe the tower is covered in smoke from the fire enveloping it?

Escape Route

Multiple deaths, maybe player frustrated/tired by now.

Grenade launcher was missed, currently on show by the footpath gateway.

Revs

Move grenade launcher to be as obvious as possible, maybe add a 2nd?

Breadcrumbs?

Remove sniper npc.

Half the assaulters that run in mid map

Bugs: npc trucks taking long time to reach defence positions

Finish

Player ran past optional vehicle, finished on foot.

After session player feedback -

Found the first few outdoors areas a bit boring, once the action started it felt like a proper level. Felt that the enemies were sometimes landing shots on them through walls etc.

Play Tester Session 4

Date: 17th Dec 2023

Play Tester: M.P

Session Duration:: 130mins

Map Version: PV2B 17th Dec

Ravine Trail (Level Start)

Understood where they were supposed to be going. Registered the distant ruins, No issues.

Rocky Clearing A & B

Manged to get out of bounds, they told me they did it to test whether they could, and understood where the level wanted theme to jump across the boulder.

Took out the opponents stealthily.

Cave

Immediately drawn to the see through wall, formed objective to reach the bright exit area. Explored the cave, trying a few of the dud recesses in the walls, discovered the crawl tunnel and exited the cave.

They didn't remember the shovel/missed it. They didn't look up once out the cave to see the Ruins.

Frozen Pool

Used a stealth approach to get into a good position then took out the 2 guards. Overlooked the see through Frozen Waterfall showing the hidden cave + walkway.

Entered underwater and explored uncertain what they were looking for. Used the light ravs and other landmarking assets to orientate themselves. Found the exit into the cave and recognised it as 'looks like the way forward'.

Generator Area

Quickly understood they needed a key for the main locked gate. Understood there was a "secret" room, and although they discovered and looked down through the secret entry hole, they dismissed and chose to explore the environment. It seemed they forgot about secret entry hole as they continued to wander the area trying to build up their understanding of the layout.

I noticed when they looking through the 'teaser' views into the secret room, the table with the Key and other supplies weren't attracting enough attention.

Combat went well.

They discovered the bonus pickup area inside the generator room. I thought I'd put more rewards there but must have forgot.

Utility Tunnels

They died first time against the flamerthrower npc, because they didn't know how to put flames out once their character was set alight.

2nd attempt they succeeded, using the retreat space and long hallway to their advantage.

They asked to play the area again. This time they played more aggressive, and chose to try running through the area and past the enemy waves. They succeeded, completely skipping the encounter before it could develop. They reached the ladder to exit and said 'the flames will sort them out', which is exactly what happens. I didn't intend this but I thought it was a cool strategy to think of using the spreading fire as a weapon.

Fuel Store

They deduced immediately they needed to use the explosives to blow a hole in the wall to escape. They also thought the spreading fire which followed them up the ladder might cause an explosion which is what I was after. They decided to shoot the explosives for fun, blowing themselves to bits. 2nd run they had a 'ahh maybe I can shoot it from here' moment, which was exactly what I was after.

Fire Fight Tower

Didn't notice the helipad as walking cliff path, didn't notice zipline, didn't notice West Tower Flare (didn't appear to have a negative impact on the experience)

Caught off guard by the 2 melee units at floor 2 start. (i think I flagged this to be fixed in the previous test?)

Could jump through the wall crack (give safe view of courtyard fire spreading) (add a invisible wall)

Wanted to climb up the boxes to reach the 1st floor - make this less tempting (remove the boxes, lower the floor as if collapsed/rubble) use invisi mesh to deny climb)

Helipad

Died repeatedly. Tester playstyle was to attempt to run and gun. They also tried to blitz the area and run straight for the Ruins entrance, skipping combat, but enemies overwhelmed them.

Once the player resorted to carefully using the cover options, they overcame the area fairly easily. I think stronger cover options at the far end of the pad would help, and reduce the free-roaming melee (think 3rd from smoke rush wave?)

CCC Climb

All good, payer recognised the grappling hook pickup area from when they passed through the utility tunnels.

They said they found the climb section a bit confusing but from watching them they progressed through it as I envisioned someone would.

CCC Roof (Target Encounter)

Waaaaaay too difficult. Lots of deaths.

They enjoyed the sniper putting pressure on them to sprint between cover and moved across the roof, but there were far too many standard enemies which were forcing them out of cover with grenades, and then being struck by the sniper enemy. I was sure the player would get frustrated by this but they said they didn't mind and knew they could do it if they approached it with more tact. They did switch up their playstyle, but the combat still didn't look great to watch.

Improve cover, lessen enemy count. More healthpacks.

Bug - sniper enemy not unspawning again. Should unspawn when the tower explosion is triggered. (fix idea- unspawn the floor the sniper stands on and have them drop down through the tower out of player view, use a 'deathzone'? on the fall down to remove them)

Remove melee units that zipline in before 'The Twins' bounty targets. Have the targets fight from separate more confined zones. I only want the player fighting the Bounty Targets, no other units.

Remove units from surrounding ruins on player exit roof

Escape Route

Again, far too difficult.

The HMG trucks are kind of annoying, they do too much damage.

Player didn't notice the sneaky path onto the manmade platform structure (mountain trail locked gate), instead ran ou into the open and up the stairs.

After discussing the experience with the player it was clear that the 2 heavy machine gun mounted trucks were too much, and the sniper had too much of vantage over the area too, they felt like they were getting pummelled from every angle.

Revisions made:

- I removed the VIP 'free roaming' unit
- I changed the trucks from 50cals to m60's, much less damage per round. Removed LMG units from truck units, replaced with standard assault.
- I added more health supplies
- Removed the sniper unit.
- Added spotlights which light up the HMG truck positions, help the player see them

Cave Road (Finish)

Got in the abandoned truck outside the gates, drove through the cave and finished.