Level Design Test Brief

Overview

This brief will contain instructions on what we would expect to see during pre-production phases of development on a Sniper Elite title at Rebellion. Completion of this brief should deliver multiple documents that provide the framework that is necessary to get a level "signed off" and give a clear idea of what will be created. These documents could be used by another Level Designer as a starting point for creating a level, so exploring and documenting details thoroughly is important.

What is the game?

Sniper Elite is a Third-Person Stealth/Action game, typically set in World War 2. The player primarily plays the role of Karl Fairburne, an Elite Sniper.

The player's primary weapon is the sniper rifle. We heavily encourage the player to find good vantage points, the best angle to shoot from and take impressive, well-timed long shots as the main way to play the game. Additionally, the player has a secondary weapon and a sidearm. Also at the player's disposal, they have a multitude of traps, explosives and items to use to help them defeat and distract the opposing forces.

We have an advanced traversal systems, which allows the player to traverse the environment and avoid detection in many interesting ways. These include climbing, hanging, shimmying, and leaping across gaps or using zip lines. We encourage players to think intelligently about how they use the environment to avoid patrols, flank enemies and find the best vantage points. Often, traversal will be necessary as a stealth tool to avoid detection.

For the purposes of this brief – the game is set in Germany, 1943.

Sandbox Design Approach

The Level Design approach is to design a sandbox – we want players to be able to complete objectives and explore the mission location in any order they choose, this is at the core of the Level Design. This should not to be confused with open-world design, the level is still contained within a set mission and each mission has its own place in the overall storyline.

The game supports 2 player co-op so Level Design has to take in to consideration that 2 players could be split up around the level. And that 2 players could be completing two different objectives or engaged in two different combat encounters at once.

Deliverable

After completing this brief, we would expect to see a document covering the following:

1. Research & Reference
2. Defined gameplay pillars and theme
3. Overview of the level
4. Objectives and Level Flow
5. Key Character(s)
6. Proposal for Intro and Outro Cutscenes
7. Asset List
8. Level Map

1. Research & Reference

Before creating the level, make sure the theme and setting is thoroughly researched. Typically this would be done alongside an environment artist to establish a vision for the level. Research anything that will be relevant to the mission and collect relevant reference images. For example if the mission is set in a wooded valley with a railway gun, collect reference of valleys, forests, trains, railway guns etc.

2. Gameplay Pillars and Theme

The Gameplay Pillars and Theme should be the backbone of the level and define what makes this level unique from the other levels in terms of gameplay and setting. For example "Stealth Infiltration" could be a core pillar, meaning that all of the gameplay for this level should keep in mind that the aim is to make the player feel like they are infiltrating.

This should also define what makes this level memorable. This can be a visual identity as well as story setting. For example "The Viaduct level where you blow up the big railway gun".

3. Overview of the level

The overview should describe in a short paragraph what the level is and what it is about. Similar to reading the blurb on a book, this should sell the level to someone and give them a high-level understanding of what the level is and where it fits in the game. This should also summarise the story of the level at a glance.

4. Objectives and Level Flow

Provide a detailed summary of objectives the player will encounter in the mission. This should give an overview of exactly what the player is going to be doing in the mission for each objective, how the objective ties into the story, whether it's a required or optional objective, and ways the objective can be completed.

Consider giving players multiple ways of completing objectives. For example, players may be tasked with destroying a railway gun, they can of course blow it up using satchel charges which will be noisy and alert everyone nearby. But we could also let players sabotage the gun so it destroys itself the next time it fires which would allow players to remain undetected.

5. Key Characters

Provide an overview of key characters the player expects to encounter in this mission, how they fit in to the mission and overall story of the game and how they will be interacting with them. This could include enemy targets the player has to assassinate or friendly NPCs the player will meet in the mission.

6. Proposal for Intro and Outro Cutscenes

Provide a proposal for how the player will be starting and ending the level. Karl will be entering the level somehow – this could include entering in via boat and a secluded cove, being dropped off by a friendly partisan in a truck etc. The way of entering the level should match the story of the level and reflect the actual start location in the level.

Also detail how the mission will end. For example the mission might end upon blowing up the viaduct with the railway gun on top of it, with Karl standing in the distance watching the bridge collapse. Or Karl could find a boat to sneak off the Island. Sometimes there are multiple ways to complete the mission and multiple extraction points, these should be considered.

7. Asset List

Typically done alongside a level artist. Provide an overview of unique assets you think the level will require. For example if the mission is to blow up a railway gun on the back of a train, it's safe to assume the railway gun is probably a unique asset.

8. Level Map

Finally, provide top down 2D maps of the level. Include as many maps as you find necessary.

Maps should show:
- Layout of the level
- Player start and end locations
- Objective locations
    - Also where key objective items may be found (You'll need a satchel charge to blow up the viaduct for example)
- Planned enemy locations and guestimate of enemy numbers in each area
- Planned locations for collectibles