

# Keeping on Track

*Half-Life 2*



## Single Player Level Design Document

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                            |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Table of Contents.....</b>                              | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Table of Figures.....</b>                               | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Document Revisions Table.....</b>                       | <b>7</b> |
| <b>Quick Summary.....</b>                                  | <b>1</b> |
| GAMEPLAY.....                                              | 1        |
| <i>General Game Flow.....</i>                              | 2        |
| <i>Major Elements.....</i>                                 | 3        |
| <i>Objective Summary.....</i>                              | 3        |
| OVERVIEW.....                                              | 4        |
| <i>Campaign.....</i>                                       | 4        |
| <i>Mission Location.....</i>                               | 4        |
| <i>Mission Difficulty (1[very easy]-5[very hard]).....</i> | 4        |
| <i>Mission Metrics.....</i>                                | 4        |
| <b>Level Details.....</b>                                  | <b>5</b> |
| LEVEL ATMOSPHERE/MOOD.....                                 | 5        |
| STORY.....                                                 | 5        |
| <i>Introduction.....</i>                                   | 5        |
| <i>In-Game.....</i>                                        | 5        |
| <i>Extro.....</i>                                          | 5        |
| <i>"60 seconds of gameplay".....</i>                       | 6        |
| MAJOR AREAS/VISUAL THEMES.....                             | 7        |
| <i>Area 1: The Stairway.....</i>                           | 8        |
| Text Description:.....                                     | 8        |
| Visual References.....                                     | 9        |
| <i>Area 2: The Train Yard (Part 1).....</i>                | 12       |
| Text Description:.....                                     | 12       |
| Visual References.....                                     | 13       |
| <i>Area 3: The Security Station.....</i>                   | 16       |
| Text Description:.....                                     | 16       |
| Visual References.....                                     | 17       |
| <i>Area 4: The Train Yard (Part 2).....</i>                | 19       |
| Text Description:.....                                     | 19       |
| Visual References.....                                     | 19       |
| LEVEL OBJECTIVES.....                                      | 20       |
| CHALLENGE HIGHLIGHTS.....                                  | 20       |
| <i>Area 1- The Stairway.....</i>                           | 20       |
| <i>Area 2- The Train Yard (Part 1).....</i>                | 20       |
| <i>Area 3- The Security Room.....</i>                      | 20       |
| <i>Area 4- The Train Yard (Part 2).....</i>                | 20       |
| WOW MOMENTS.....                                           | 20       |
| <i>Actors.....</i>                                         | 21       |
| Player.....                                                | 21       |
| Key Actors.....                                            | 21       |
| Supporting Actors:.....                                    | 22       |
| <i>User Interface.....</i>                                 | 23       |
| Pre-Game Information.....                                  | 23       |
| In-Game Information.....                                   | 23       |
| Post Game Information.....                                 | 23       |

|                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| HUD Elements.....                     | 23        |
| <b>Gameplay Details.....</b>          | <b>24</b> |
| <i>Level Progression Chart</i> .....  | 24        |
| <i>Gameplay Mechanics</i> .....       | 25        |
| <b>Overview Map.....</b>              | <b>26</b> |
| KEY.....                              | 26        |
| <b>Detailed Map Descriptions.....</b> | <b>28</b> |
| AREA 1: THE STAIRWAY.....             | 28        |
| <i>Map</i> .....                      | 28        |
| <i>Gameplay</i> .....                 | 28        |
| <i>Dialog</i> .....                   | 28        |
| <i>Visual References</i> .....        | 29        |
| AREA 2.1: THE FIRST LEDGE.....        | 30        |
| <i>Map</i> .....                      | 30        |
| <i>Gameplay</i> .....                 | 30        |
| <i>Dialog</i> .....                   | 30        |
| <i>Visual References</i> .....        | 31        |
| AREA 2.2: THE TRACKS (PART 1).....    | 32        |
| <i>Map</i> .....                      | 32        |
| <i>Gameplay</i> .....                 | 32        |
| <i>Dialog</i> .....                   | 32        |
| <i>Visual References</i> .....        | 33        |
| AREA 2.3: THE BOXCAR.....             | 34        |
| <i>Map</i> .....                      | 34        |
| <i>Gameplay</i> .....                 | 34        |
| <i>Dialog</i> .....                   | 34        |
| <i>Visual References</i> .....        | 35        |
| AREA 2.4: THE OTHER LEDGE.....        | 36        |
| <i>Map</i> .....                      | 36        |
| <i>Gameplay</i> .....                 | 36        |
| <i>Dialog</i> .....                   | 37        |
| <i>Visual References</i> .....        | 37        |
| AREA 3: THE SECURITY ROOM.....        | 38        |
| <i>Map</i> .....                      | 38        |
| <i>Gameplay</i> .....                 | 38        |
| <i>Dialog</i> .....                   | 38        |
| <i>Visual References</i> .....        | 39        |
| AREA 4.1: THE TRACKS (PART 2).....    | 40        |
| <i>Map</i> .....                      | 40        |
| <i>Gameplay</i> .....                 | 40        |
| <i>Dialog</i> .....                   | 40        |
| <i>Visual References</i> .....        | 41        |
| AREA 4.2: THE GENERATOR LEDGE.....    | 42        |
| <i>Map</i> .....                      | 42        |
| <i>Gameplay</i> .....                 | 42        |
| <i>Dialog</i> .....                   | 42        |
| <i>Visual References</i> .....        | 43        |
| <b>Appendix A.....</b>                | <b>44</b> |

|                                                              |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| WHY IS THIS FUN?                                             | 44        |
| WHAT MAKES THIS SEQUENCE INTERESTING/MEMORABLE?              | 44        |
| HOW WILL YOU COMMUNICATE TO THE PLAYER WHAT THEY NEED TO DO? | 44        |
| HOW CAN THE PLAYER BREAK IT?                                 | 44        |
| <b>References.....</b>                                       | <b>45</b> |

# TABLE OF FIGURES

---

|                                                                                                                |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1: A train station                                                                                      | 1  |
| Figure 2: General Game Flow: Overview                                                                          | 2  |
| Figure 3: Ride the train out of the city                                                                       | 3  |
| Figure 4: Sample building interior                                                                             | 6  |
| Figure 5: Overview Map: Visual Themes and Connections                                                          | 7  |
| Figure 6: Area 1 - The Stairway                                                                                | 8  |
| Figure 7: The stairway is worn down and full of rubble like this, but has less plantlife                       | 9  |
| Figure 8: This sort of rubble, but not as much as in this picture                                              | 9  |
| Figure 9: Cement/stone stairway                                                                                | 10 |
| Figure 10: Landings at the top and bottom                                                                      | 10 |
| Figure 11: The stairway is fairly well lit                                                                     | 11 |
| Figure 12: Sample cement texture                                                                               | 11 |
| Figure 13: Area 2 - The Train Yard (Part 1)                                                                    | 12 |
| Figure 14: There is some overgrowth, but not this much                                                         | 13 |
| Figure 15: Barrels (explosive and non-explosive) are common in the Train Yard                                  | 13 |
| Figure 16: Trains not in motion can line up like this                                                          | 14 |
| Figure 17: There is an overpass above the tracks                                                               | 14 |
| Figure 18: Light shines between the bridges and buildings, making interesting shadows                          | 15 |
| Figure 19: The trains are kind of old and run down, but they still work                                        | 15 |
| Figure 20: Area 3 - The Security Station                                                                       | 16 |
| Figure 21: Supplies are piled in a corner                                                                      | 17 |
| Figure 22: There are a few desks scattered throughout the room                                                 | 17 |
| Figure 23: The room is mostly well lit                                                                         | 18 |
| Figure 24: Sample cement texture                                                                               | 18 |
| Figure 25: Area 1: The Train Yard (Part 2)                                                                     | 19 |
| Figure 26: Gordon Freeman                                                                                      | 21 |
| Figure 27: Combine Soldier                                                                                     | 21 |
| Figure 28: Headcrab                                                                                            | 22 |
| Figure 29: Combine Dropship (with Soldier Crate)                                                               | 22 |
| Figure 30: Standard <i>Half-Life 2</i> HUD Elements                                                            | 23 |
| Figure 31: Level Progression Chart                                                                             | 24 |
| Figure 32: Standard <i>Half-Life 2</i> Gameplay Mechanics                                                      | 25 |
| Figure 33: Overview Map                                                                                        | 26 |
| Figure 35: Key                                                                                                 | 26 |
| Figure 34: A large bridge crosses over the play area. Combine Soldiers can shoot down at the player from here. | 27 |
| Figure 36: Detail Map - The Stairway                                                                           | 28 |
| Figure 37: It is an outdoor stairway, open to the sun                                                          | 29 |
| Figure 38: The area surrounding the stairwell is full of rubble                                                | 29 |
| Figure 39: Detail Map - The First Ledge                                                                        | 30 |
| Figure 40: Combine Soldiers can bust out of some of these doors                                                | 31 |
| Figure 41: Fire escape style stairs                                                                            | 31 |
| Figure 42: Detail Map - The Tracks (Part 1)                                                                    | 32 |
| Figure 43: Train yard sample                                                                                   | 33 |
| Figure 44: Train yard sample                                                                                   | 33 |
| Figure 45: Detail Map – The Boxcar                                                                             | 34 |
| Figure 46: Boxcars fill the trainyard                                                                          | 35 |

|                                                         |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 47: Boxcars are filled with crates and supplies  | 35 |
| Figure 48: Detail Map - The Other Ledge                 | 36 |
| Figure 49: Chainlink fence                              | 37 |
| Figure 50: Explosive barrels                            | 37 |
| Figure 51: Detail Map - The Security Room               | 38 |
| Figure 52: A large window looks out over the Train Yard | 39 |
| Figure 53: Detail Map - The Tracks (Part 2)             | 40 |
| Figure 54: Combine forcefield                           | 41 |
| Figure 55: Detail Map - The Generator Ledge             | 42 |
| Figure 56: Shield generator                             | 43 |

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# DOCUMENT REVISIONS TABLE

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|     |             |                |          |
|-----|-------------|----------------|----------|
|     |             |                |          |
| 1.0 | Initial LDD | Prof. Oullette | 9/7/2011 |

# QUICK SUMMARY

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In *Keeping on Track*, players take control of Gordon Freeman as he forces his way through a Combine train depot. The player begins at the bottom of a stairwell that exits out into a train yard. The player must fight through Combine forces that seek to prevent their escape. The player must disable Combine force fields throughout the level. The level ends when the player jumps onto a moving train and rides it out of the city. This is a single player level for *Half-Life 2*.

## GAMEPLAY

Combine soldiers engage the player in a variety of interesting ways. They bust out of side buildings as the player traverses the area, or shoot down at the player from above. The chain link fences found throughout the train yard give them many opportunities to fire at the player, no matter where they are. Clever Combine take advantage of the explosive barrels found in the area, and drop them on the unsuspecting player. The player travels through boxcars, and jumps on top of them, using them to reach new areas.



Figure 1: A train station



## General Game Flow

The player begins running down a flight of stairs that lead out of a building and into a train yard. Combine soldiers bust through another door and shoot at the player through a chain link fence (1). The player runs down another flight of stairs to the tracks. Some of the boxcars are open, and the player climbs through them, finding ammo and headcrabs (2). As the player makes it to the other side of the tracks, a Combine soldier on a nearby building roof kicks an explosive barrel at the player (3). The player jumps across the rooftops of the boxcars, and reaches a new path (4). Combine soldiers at security checkpoint attack the player (5). The player crosses the tracks again, finding more ammo in an open boxcar (6). Another Combine soldier waits for the player at the top of a stairway, and he kicks an explosive barrel at the player (7). The player ends the level by destroying the Combine shield generator, and jumping onto a moving train as it leaves the city (8).

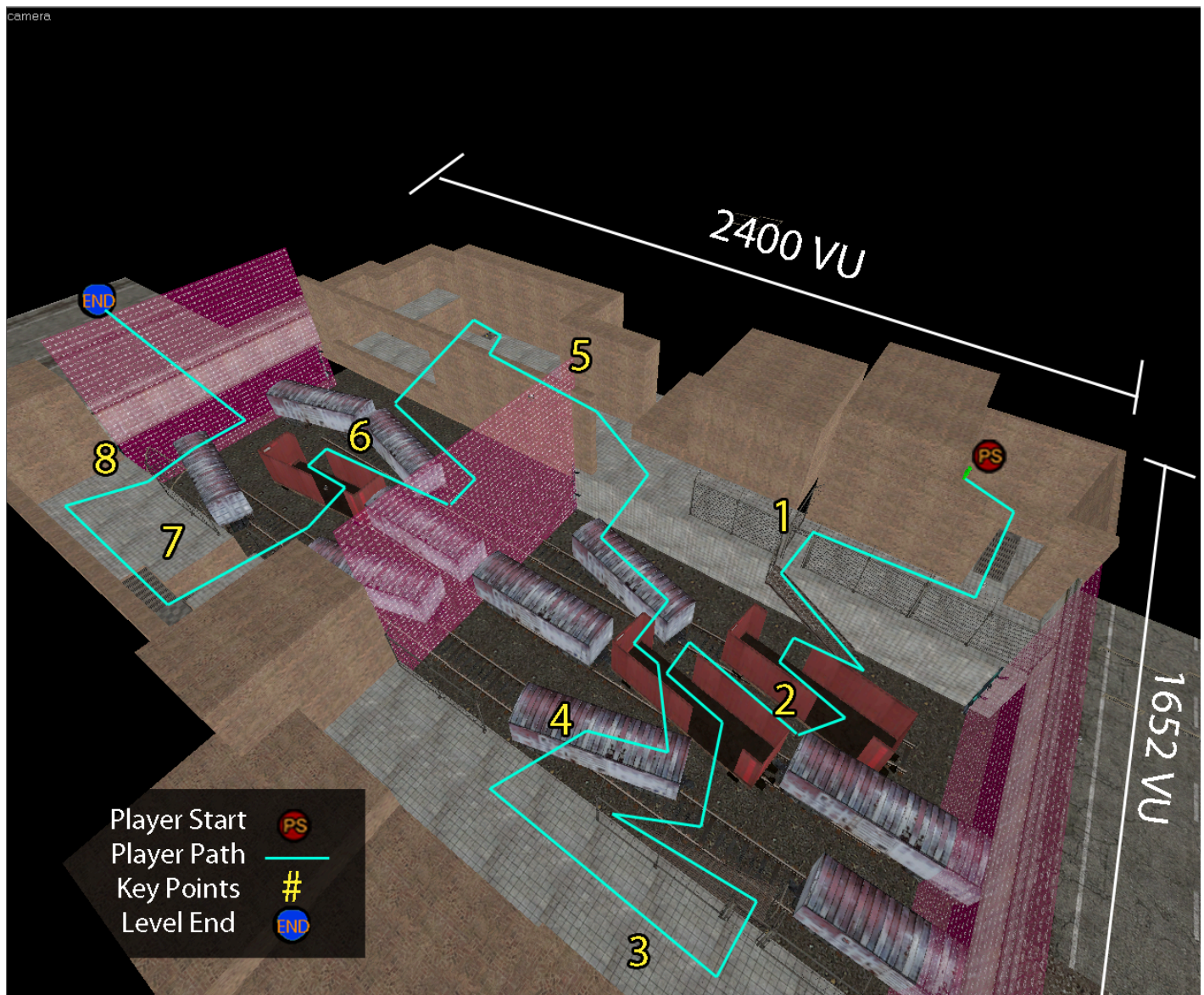


Figure 2: General Game Flow: Overview



## Major Elements

- *Hook: Combat Combine soldiers who have chased the player into a train yard*
- *Wow Moments:*
  - *Find ammo, supplies, and Headcrabs in abandoned boxcars*
  - *Combine soldiers drop explosive barrels toward the player*
  - *Disengage the Combine force field and jump on a passing train to escape*
- *Visual Elements:*
  - *Train yard*
  - *Building Interior*

## Objective Summary

- Primary Objective: Escape the city
  - Sub Objective: Find extra ammo in the boxcars
  - Sub Objective: Jump across the train tops
  - Sub Objective: Deactivate the Combine shield generator
  - Sub Objective: Jump on top of the train as it leaves the city



Figure 3: Ride the train out of the city

## OVERVIEW

### Campaign

- **The Resistance:** *Gordon Freeman has infiltrated City 18. His mission is to help The Resistance break free from the Combine's control.*
- **Level Position in Campaign:**
  - *Keeping on Track* is the second to last mission in the campaign
  - Gordon has helped the Resistance free their captured members and rebuild their defenses. However, word of Gordon's presence reaches the Combine. Not wanting to endanger the recently reformed Resistance, Gordon chooses to make a flashy escape from the city, to lead his pursuers away.
  - After this level ends, Gordon rides the train to the end of the line, and regroups with Alyx.
  - This is a side story that takes place sometime after the events of Half-Life 2:Episode 2

### Mission Location

- **Theme:** Fight Combine forces while exploring an old train yard
- **Mood:** Action packed and high adrenaline
- **Setting:** A train yard within the Half-Life universe
- **Time:** Late afternoon, early evening
- **Season:** Spring
- **Weather:** Clear skies

### Mission Difficulty (1[very easy]-5[very hard])

- **Start:** 1, a single Combine soldier opens fire on the player
- **Middle:** 3, as the player progresses, additional Combine soldiers emerge and attack the player
- **End:** 4, a shootout inside the train yard security checkpoint

### Mission Metrics

- **Play Time:** ~5 minutes
- **Physical Length:** ~10,000 Valve Units
- **Physical Area:** 2400 Valve Units long by 1652 Valve Units wide
- **Max New Characters:** 0
- **Max Visual Themes:** 2
  - Train yard
  - Building Interior

# LEVEL DETAILS

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## LEVEL ATMOSPHERE/MOOD

The mood of *Keeping on Track* is intense and filled with adrenaline. The player has a feeling of urgency, and feels chased through the level. Enemies spawn in the level by breaking through side doors and popping out as if they are chasing the player. Everything in the level is old and dirty, and covered in grunge. Combine radio chatter and helicopter sound effects play together with exciting music to keep the tension up. Lights accentuate the critical path and draw the player's eye in the right direction.

## STORY

### *Introduction*

- After a botched teleportation accident, Gordon Freeman finds himself in City 18.
- He quickly finds the local resistance headquarters, and helps fight off a Combine assault.
- Gordon learns that the Combine has captured many resistance members.
- Gordon leads a small group and successfully rescues the resistance members.
- The Combine is on high alert and sends a large force to pursue and eliminate Gordon.
- Gordon decides to lead the Combine away from the resistance as he escapes City 18.

### *In-Game*

- Gordon runs down a stairway that opens up into a train yard.
- Gordon hears a slam and sees a Combine soldier exit the building in front of him. Gordon shoots him through the chain link fence.
- Gordon runs through the train yard, gathering supplies found in old boxcars. Gordon crowbars a headcrab that jumps out at him.
- Gordon hears incoming drop ships as they drop off additional Combine forces on the overpass. They open fire on Gordon.
- As he reaches the other side of the train yard, a Combine soldier on a building rooftop kicks an explosive barrel down at Gordon. He evades the explosion.
- Gordon sees an opening in the Combine force field on the other side of the train yard. He nimbly jumps across boxcars to get there.
- Gordon eliminates Combine forces in a security office before continuing on his way.
- As he crosses the train yard, more Combine forces shoot at him from above the train tunnels.
- A Combine soldier on the stairway kicks an explosive barrel down at Gordon.
- Gordon destroys the Combine shield generator, and makes a running leap for a nearby train. He lands on top of it and rides it out of the city.

### *Extro*

- Gordon rides the train far out of the city, but Combine soldiers stop it at the next checkpoint.
- Gordon sneaks off the train and slips into the checkpoint. He finds radio equipment and is able to contact Alyx, who is nearby with the buggy looking for him.
- After fighting through Combine forces, they meet up and leave.

## ***“60 seconds of gameplay”***

- As Gordon sprints up the stairway, he hears a dull thud above him.
- He quickly glances upwards and sees a Combine soldier about to drop a flaming barrel of oil onto him.
- He dodges to the side and shoots the Combine soldier off the roof, while the barrel explodes into scraps of metal.
- Gordon notices a path leading around the Combine force field on the other side of the tracks.
- He nimbly hops across the boxcars, thankful that the train is not in motion.
- He hears the sound of distant gunfire, and a bullet goes whizzing by his ear.
- Newly arrived Combine soldiers are shooting down at him from above the train tunnel.
- Some of them repel down to the ledges below.
- Gordon quickly hops across the train to safety, and eliminates the Combine from safe cover.
- Gordon is cautious as he opens the door.
- As expected, it leads to a security station, with several Combine soldiers inside, waiting for him.
- Gordon takes out his sub-machinegun and fills the closest Combine with bullets.
- He quickly retreats behind the door to reload, and then sprints back into the room and takes cover behind a wall.
- He climbs a ladder and surprises the guard, then unloads the remainder of his bullets on the foes below.



Figure 4: Sample building interior



## MAJOR AREAS/VISUAL THEMES

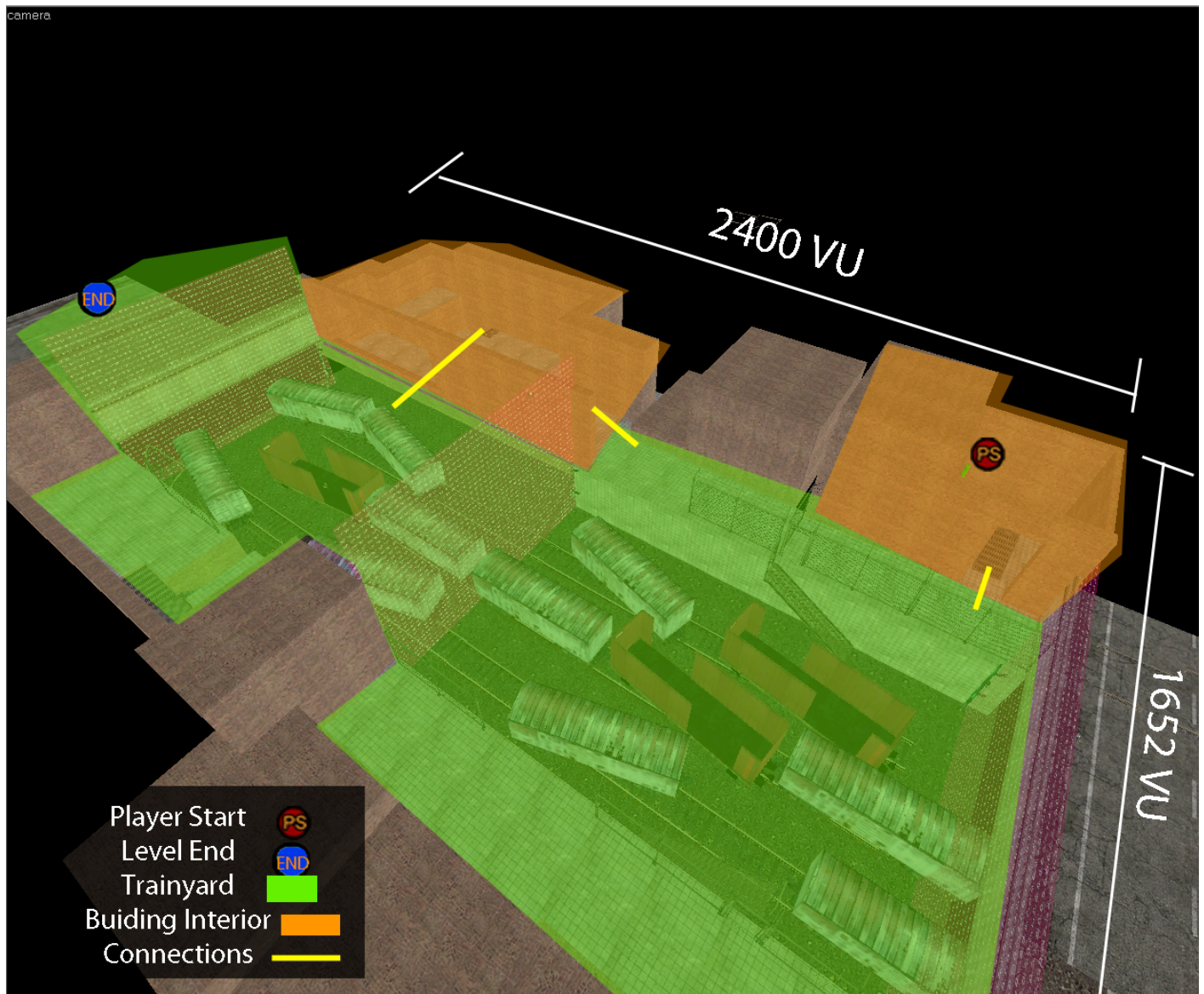


Figure 5: Overview Map: Visual Themes and Connections



## Area 1: The Stairway

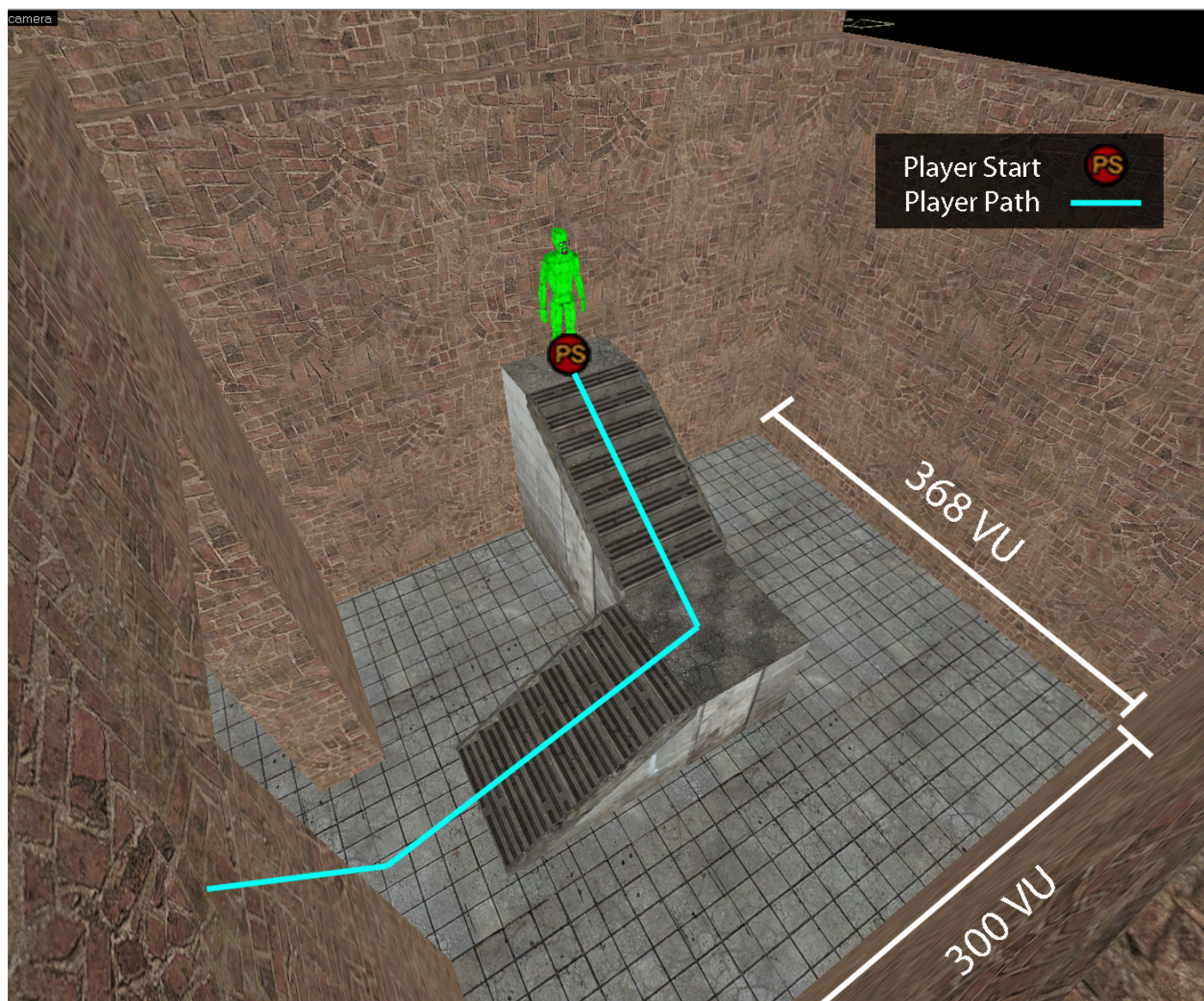


Figure 6: Area 1 - The Stairway

### **Text Description:**

*The Stairway leads out of a building and down to the train yard below. It is a rundown, concrete enclosure with trash on the ground, and serves as an entrance into the train yard.*



## **Visual References**

### **Terrain/Vegetation**



Figure 7: The stairway is old and full of rubble like this, but has less plant life



Figure 8: This sort of rubble, but not as much as in this picture





## Models/Architecture



Figure 9: Cement/stone stairway



Figure 10: Landings at the top and bottom



## Textures/Lighting

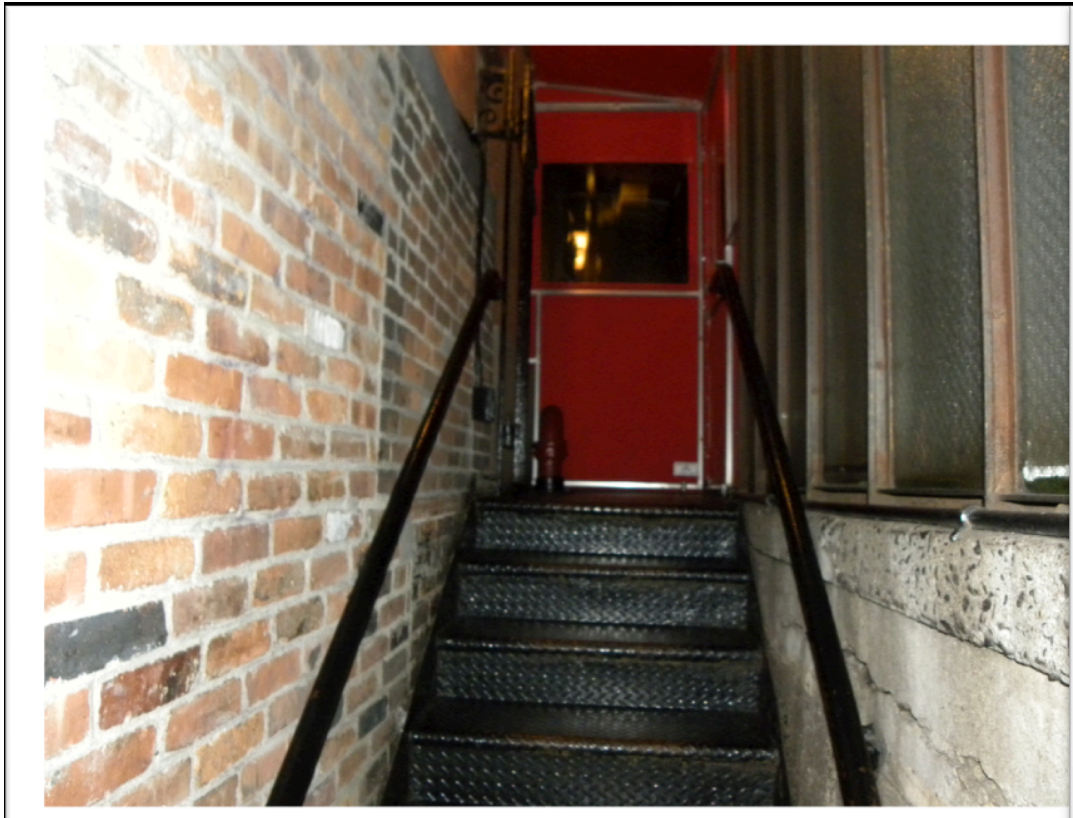


Figure 11: The stairway is open to the air and sunlight



Figure 12: Sample cement texture

## Characters/Vehicles – N/A



## Area 2: The Train Yard (Part 1)

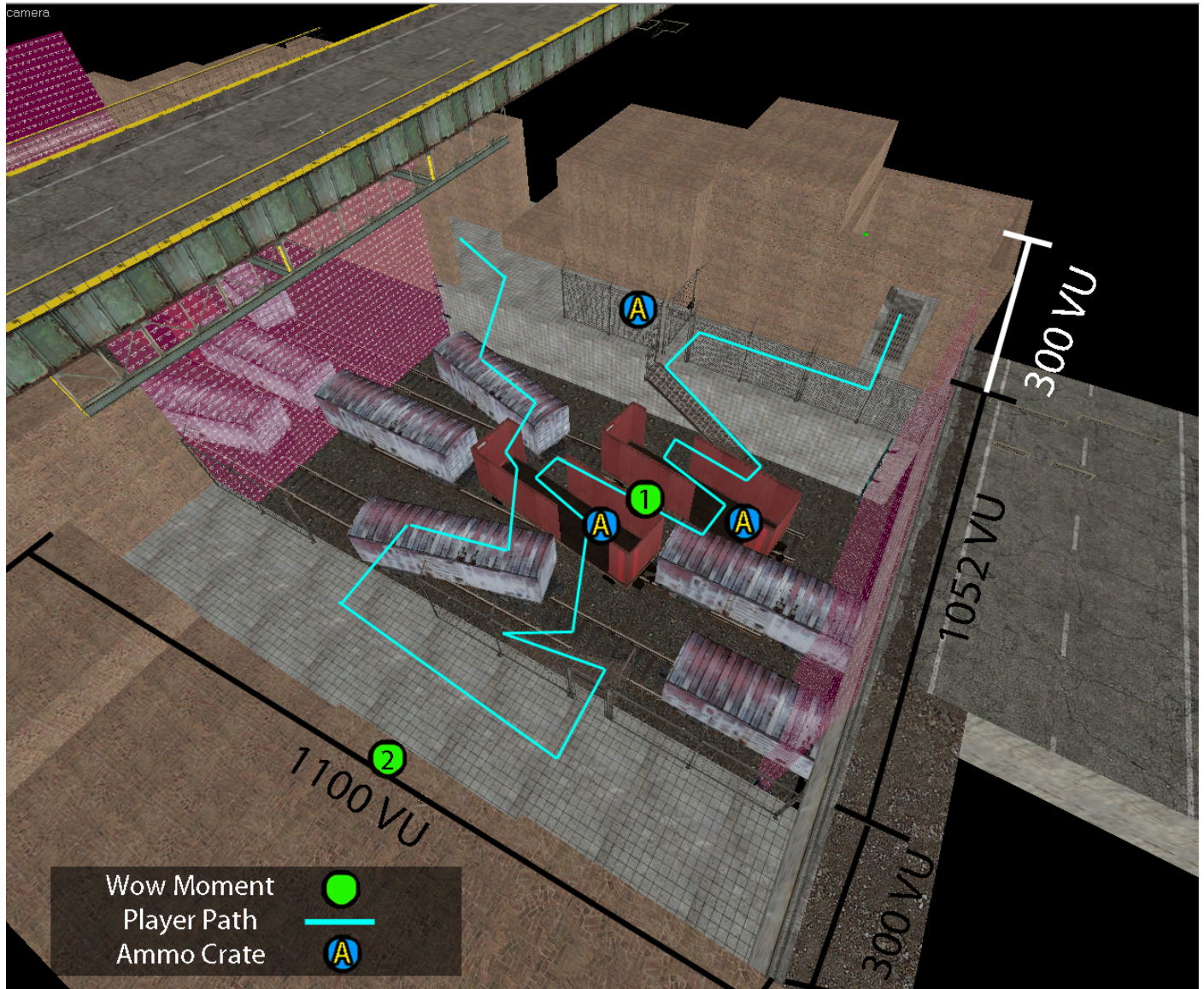


Figure 13: Area 2 - The Train Yard (Part 1)

### Text Description:

The Train yard is old and run down. Old boxcars litter the tracks, and some have even been derailed. The central track is still in use today, and has been loaded for a departure. Chain link fences block off the areas overlooking the train yard. Some of these fences have broken away over the years. Doors that lead into building are along the sides. Streets bridge overhead, giving an open view of the ground below.



## **Visual References**

### **Terrain/Vegetation**



Figure 14: There is some overgrowth, but not this much



Figure 15: Barrels (explosive and non-explosive) are common in the Train Yard

## Models/Architecture





Figure 16: Trains not in motion can line up like this



Figure 17: There is an overpass above the tracks



## Textures/Lighting



Figure 18: Light shines between the bridges and buildings, making interesting shadows

## Characters/Vehicles



Figure 19: The trains are kind of old and run down, but they still work



### Area 3: The Security Station

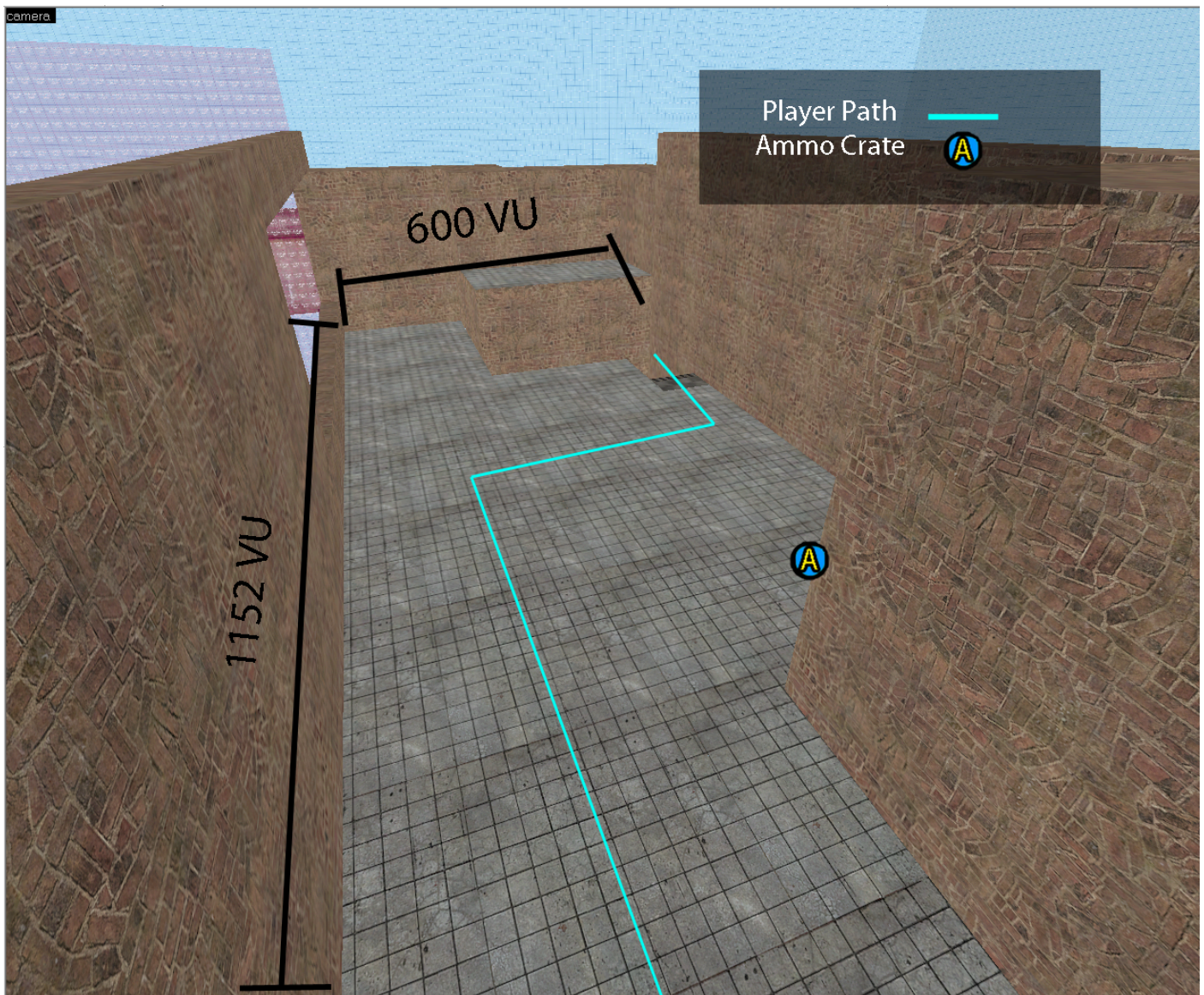


Figure 20: Area 3 - The Security Station

#### **Text Description:**

The Security Station is an old building that the Combine have renovated to suit their purposes. It houses equipment that they use to enforce their rules. It is neater than the surrounding buildings, but obviously worn down.

## **Visual References**

### **Terrain/Vegetation**



Figure 21: Supplies litter the corner of the room

### **Models/Architecture**





Figure 22: There are a few desks scattered throughout the room

## Textures/Lighting



Figure 23: A few fixtures light the room



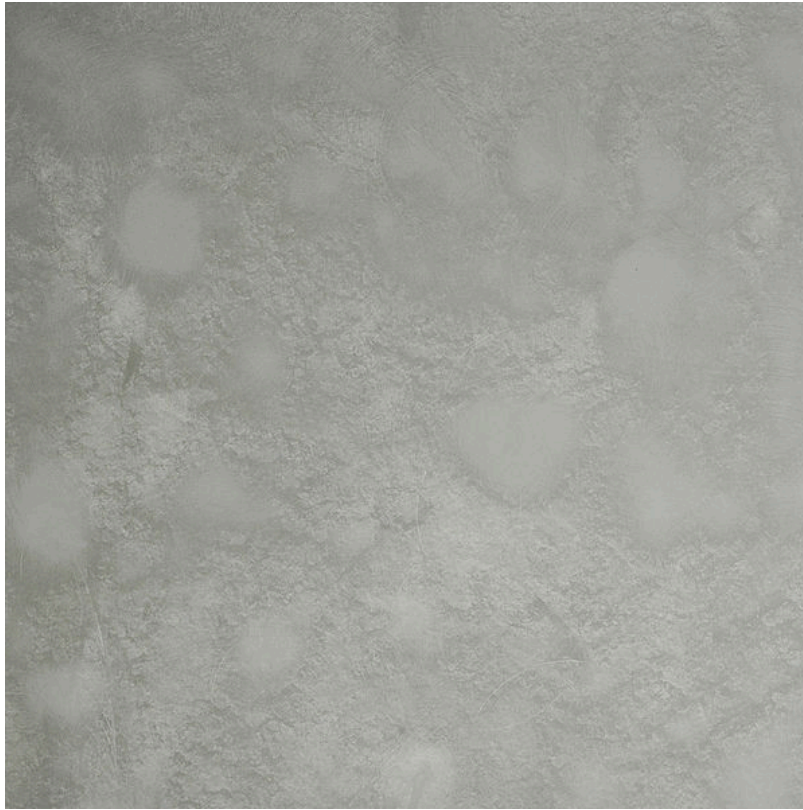
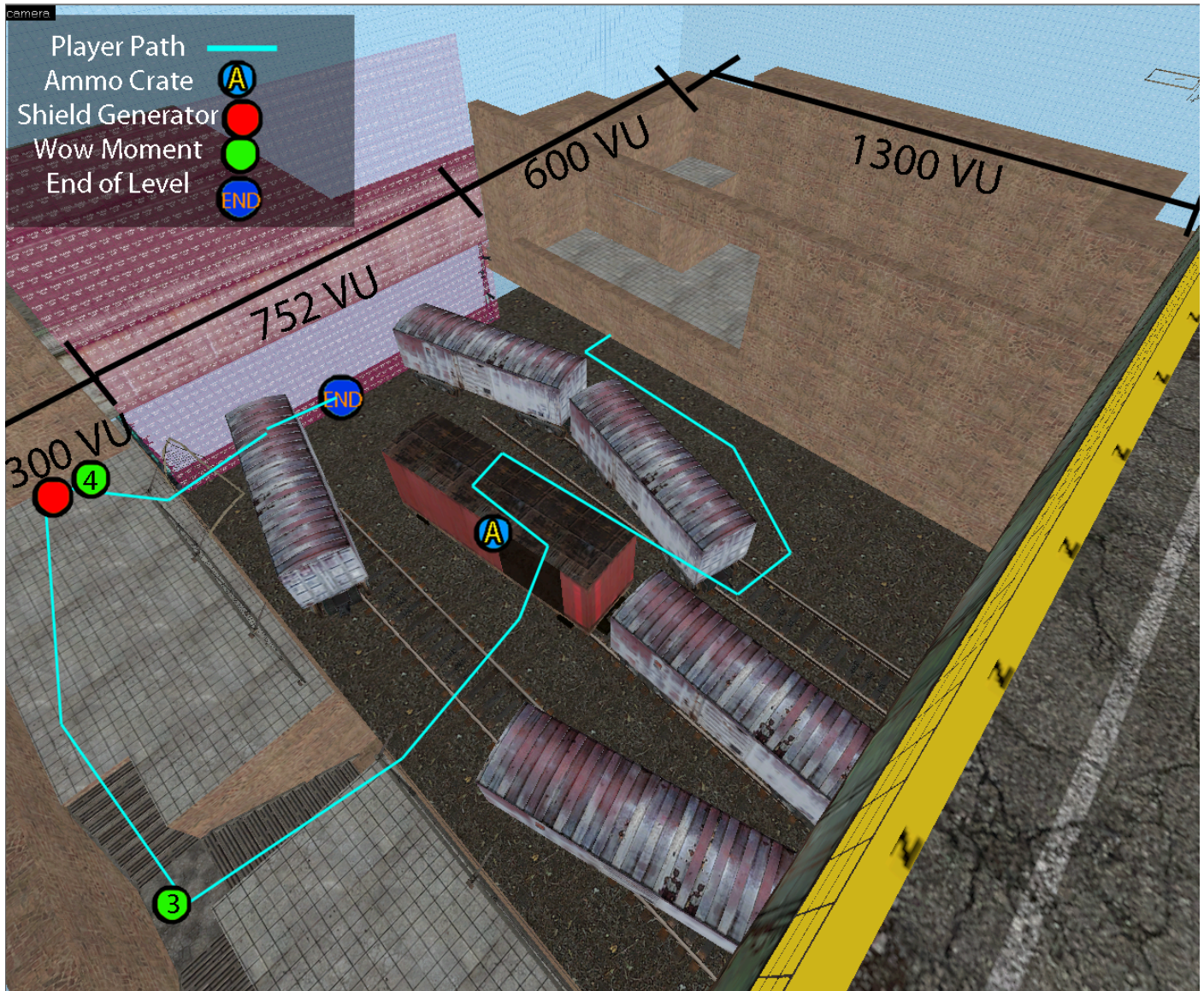


Figure 24: Sample cement texture

**Characters/Vehicles – N/A**

***Area 4: The Train Yard (Part 2)***



### Figure 25: Area 1: The Train Yard (Part 2)

**Text Description:**

The Train yard is old and run down. Old boxcars litter the tracks, and some have even been derailed. The central track is still in use today, and has been loaded for a departure. Chain link fences block off the areas overlooking the Train yard. Some of these fences have broken away over the years. Doors that lead into building are along the sides. Streets bridge overhead, giving an open view of the ground below.

## Visual References

**Terrain/Vegetation** – see Area 2 for references

**Models/Architecture** – see Area 2 for references

**Textures/Lighting** – see Area 2 for references

**Characters/Vehicles** – see Area 2 for references

## LEVEL OBJECTIVES

- **Primary:** Escape City 18
- **Secondary:** N/A
- **Bonus:** N/A
- **Hidden:** N/A

## CHALLENGE HIGHLIGHTS

### ***Area 1- The Stairway***

- **Combat:** N/A
- **Stealth:** N/A
- **Puzzles:** N/A
- **Conversation:** Pop up box with basic level info
- **Boss Battles:** N/A

### ***Area 2- The Train Yard (Part 1)***

- **Combat:** Multiple encounters with Combine Soldiers, and a few Headcrabs
- **Stealth:** N/A
- **Puzzles:** Jump across the train cars
- **Conversation:** N/A
- **Boss Battles:** N/A

### ***Area 3- The Security Room***

- **Combat:** Encounter with 3 Combine Soldiers
- **Stealth:** N/A
- **Puzzles:** N/A
- **Conversation:** N/A
- **Boss Battles:** N/A

### ***Area 4- The Train Yard (Part 2)***

- **Combat:** Multiple encounters with Combine Soldiers, and a few Headcrabs
- **Stealth:** N/A
- **Puzzles:** N/A
- **Conversation:** N/A
- **Boss Battles:** N/A

## WOW MOMENTS

- Moment 1 (Area 2: The Train yard (Part 1)): Player explores old boxcar and finds supplies and Headcrabs
- Moment 2 (Area 2: The Train yard (Part 1)): Combine soldier kicks and exploding barrel at the player
- Moment 3 (Area 4: The Train yard (Part 2)): Combine soldier kicks and exploding barrel at the player
- Moment 4 (Area 4: The Train yard (Part 2)): Player destroys Combine shield generator



## Actors

### Player

- **Model(s):** Gordon Freeman's arms
- **Inventory:** *Hazard Suit, Crowbar, and Handgun*
- **Start Location:** Area 1: The Stairway
- **Motives/Objectives:** Escape from City 18 and the Combine forces



Figure 26: Gordon Freeman

### Key Actors

#### Actor 1: Combine Soldier

- **Model(s):** Combine Soldier
- **Inventory:** SMG
- **Motives/Objectives:** Stop Gordon Freeman from escaping
- **Starting Location:** Several throughout all areas



Figure 27: Combine Soldier

### Actor 2: Headcrab

- **Model(s):** Headcrab
- **Inventory:** Nothing
- **Motives/Objectives:** Brainzzz...
- **Starting Location:** Inside the boxcars in areas 2 and 4



Figure 28: Headcrab

### Actor 3: Combine Dropship

- **Model(s):** Combine Dropship
- **Inventory:** Combine Soldiers
- **Motives/Objectives:** Deliver Combine Soldiers to the field
- **Starting Location:** The skies outside of the player's view



Figure 29: Combine Dropship (with Soldier Crate)

**Supporting Actors:**

- N/A



## ***User Interface***

### **Pre-Game Information**

- Briefing: N/A

### **In-Game Information**

- Introduction: Simple text pop up displaying mission goals
- In-Game: Props and light make key areas stand out to the player
- Objectives: Props and light make key areas stand out to the player
- Conclusion: The screen fades out as Gordon rides the train out of City 18

### **Post Game Information**

- Debriefing: N/A
- Stats: N/A

### **HUD Elements**

- Normal Elements Used: Health, Suit Energy, Auxiliary Energy, Ammo
- Special Elements Required: N/A



Figure 30: Standard *Half-Life 2* HUD Elements

# GAMEPLAY DETAILS

## Level Progression Chart

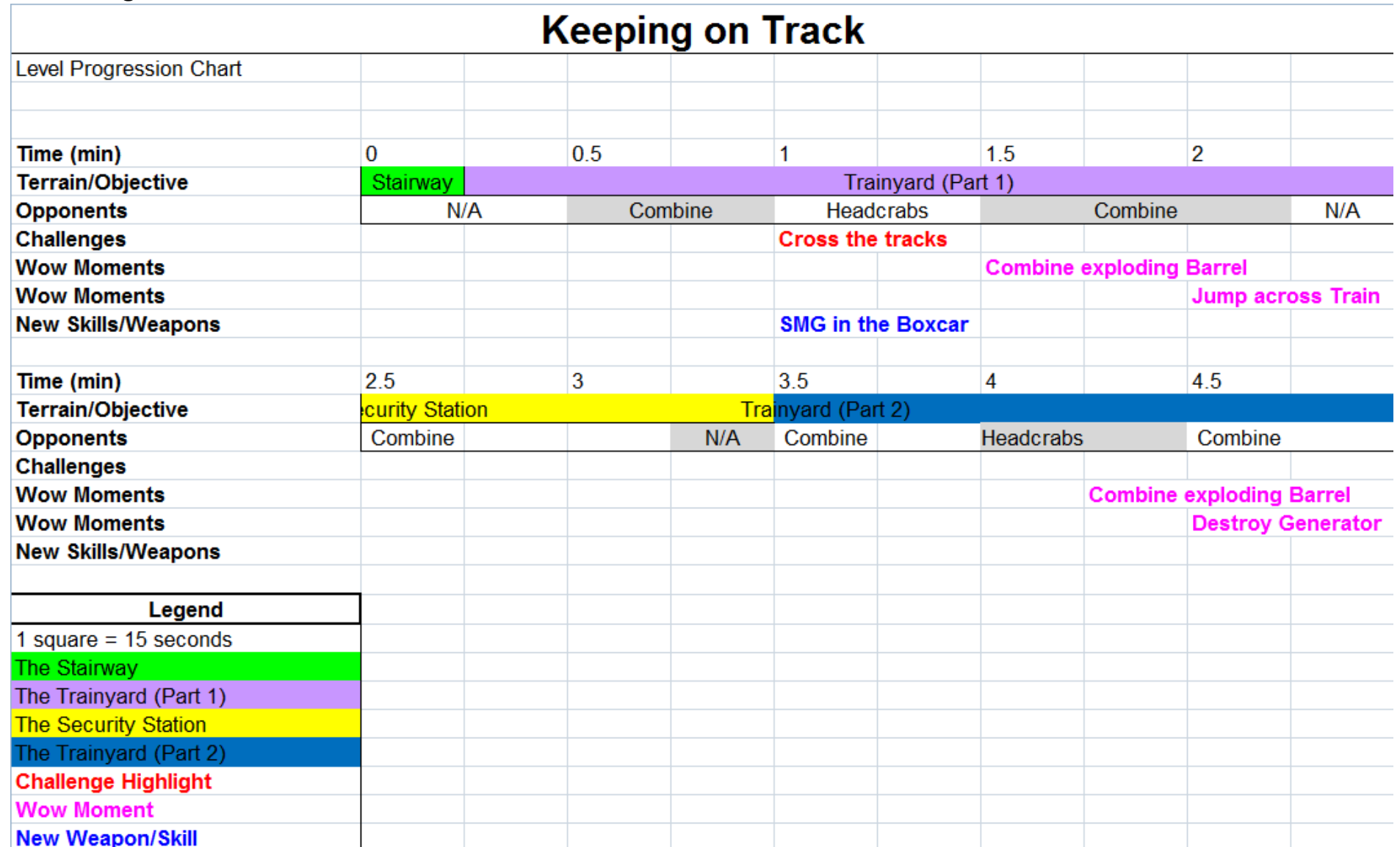


Figure 31: Level Progression Chart

## Gameplay Mechanics

### Prerequisite Skills:

- Moving
- Sprinting
- Jumping
- Aiming
- Shooting
- Physics

### Skills Learned

- Level Layout
- Destroy the generator



Figure 32: Standard *Half-Life 2* Gameplay Mechanics



# OVERVIEW MAP

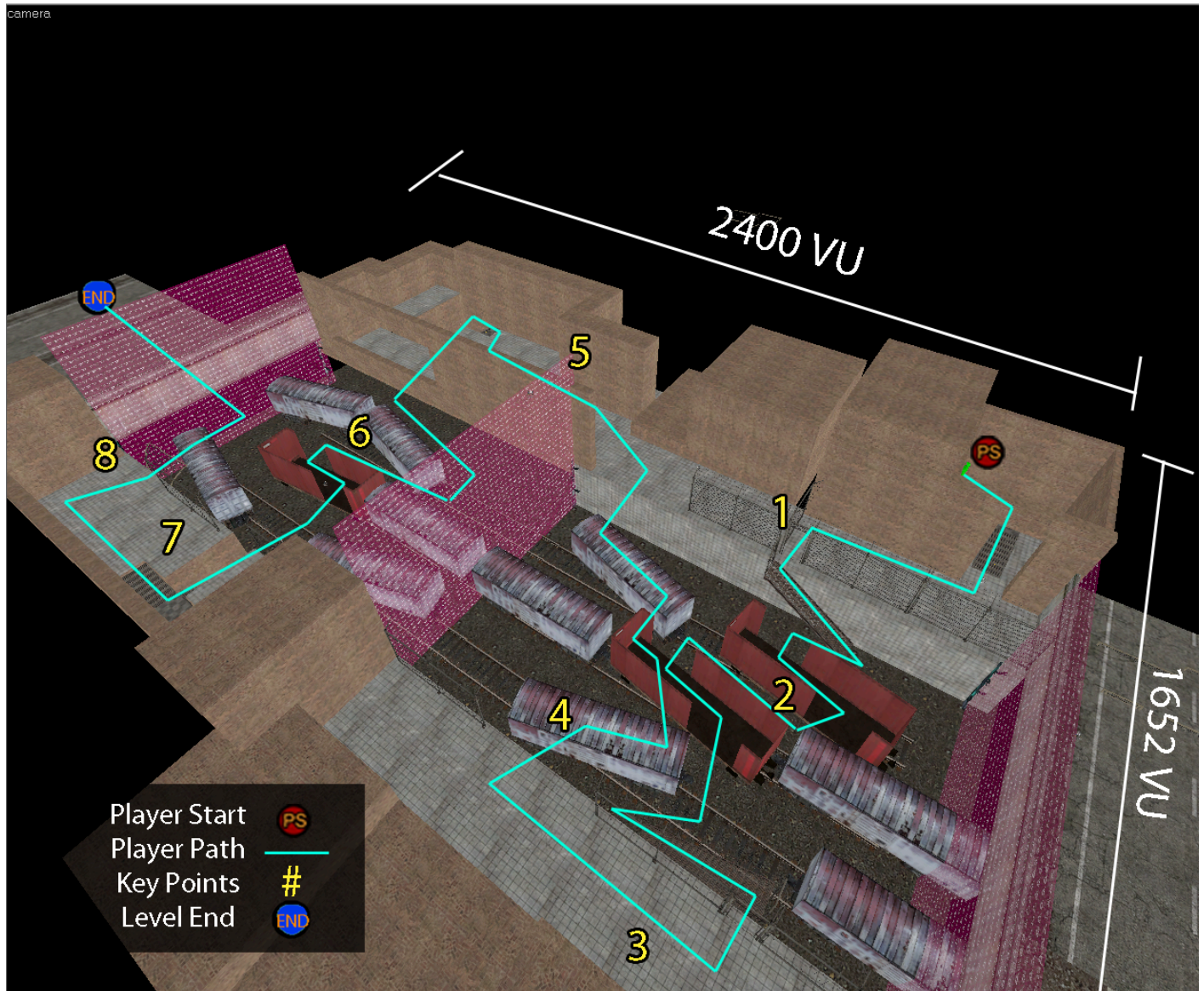


Figure 33: Overview Map

## KEY



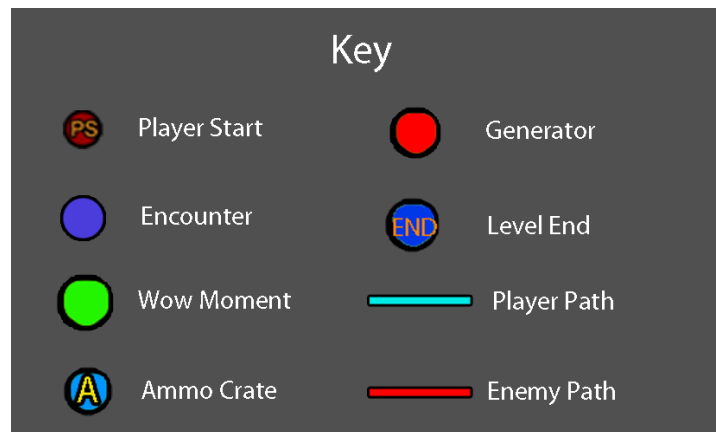


Figure 35: Key

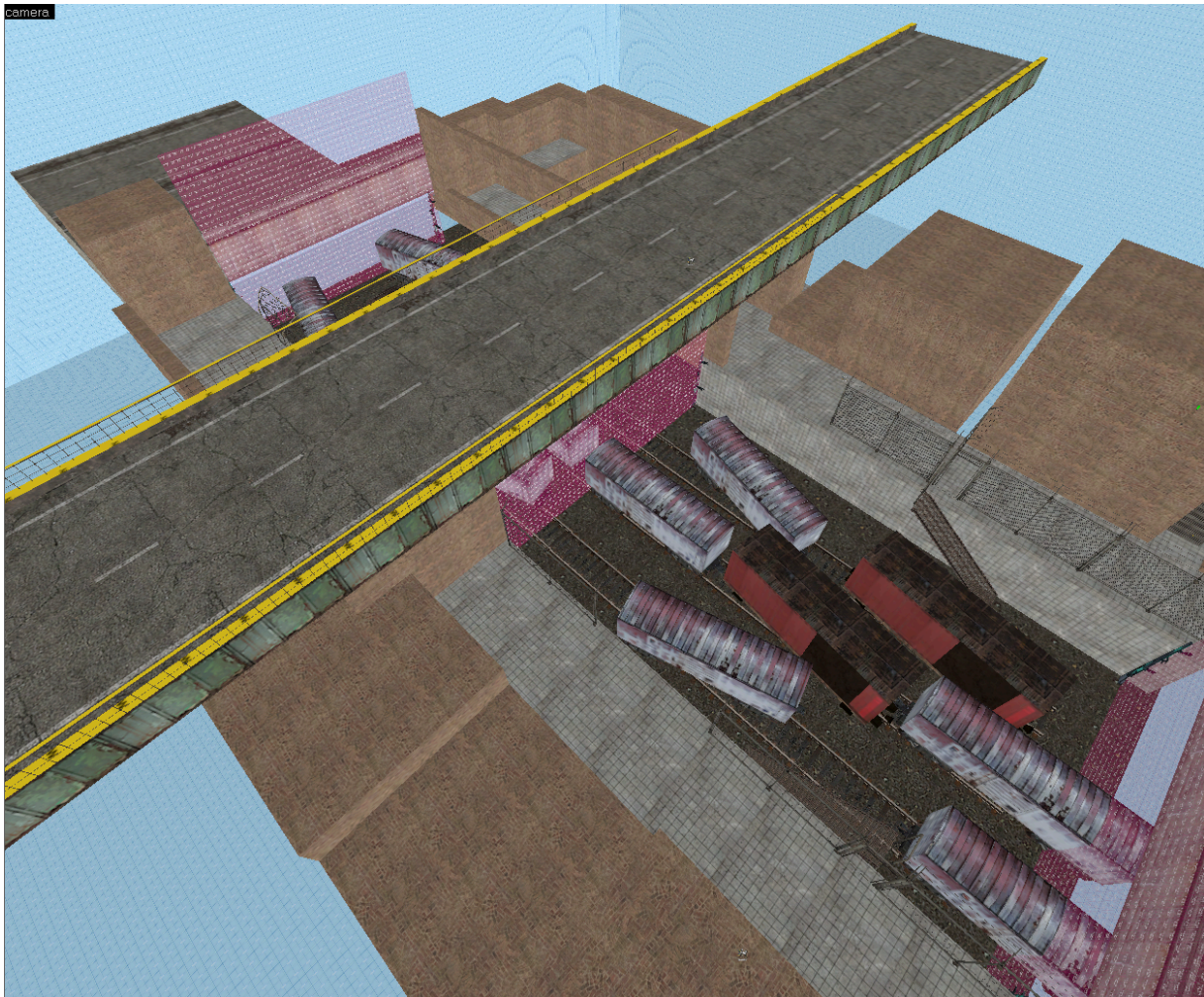


Figure 34: A large bridge crosses over the play area. Combine Soldiers can shoot down at the player from here.



# DETAILED MAP DESCRIPTIONS

## AREA 1: THE STAIRWAY

### Map

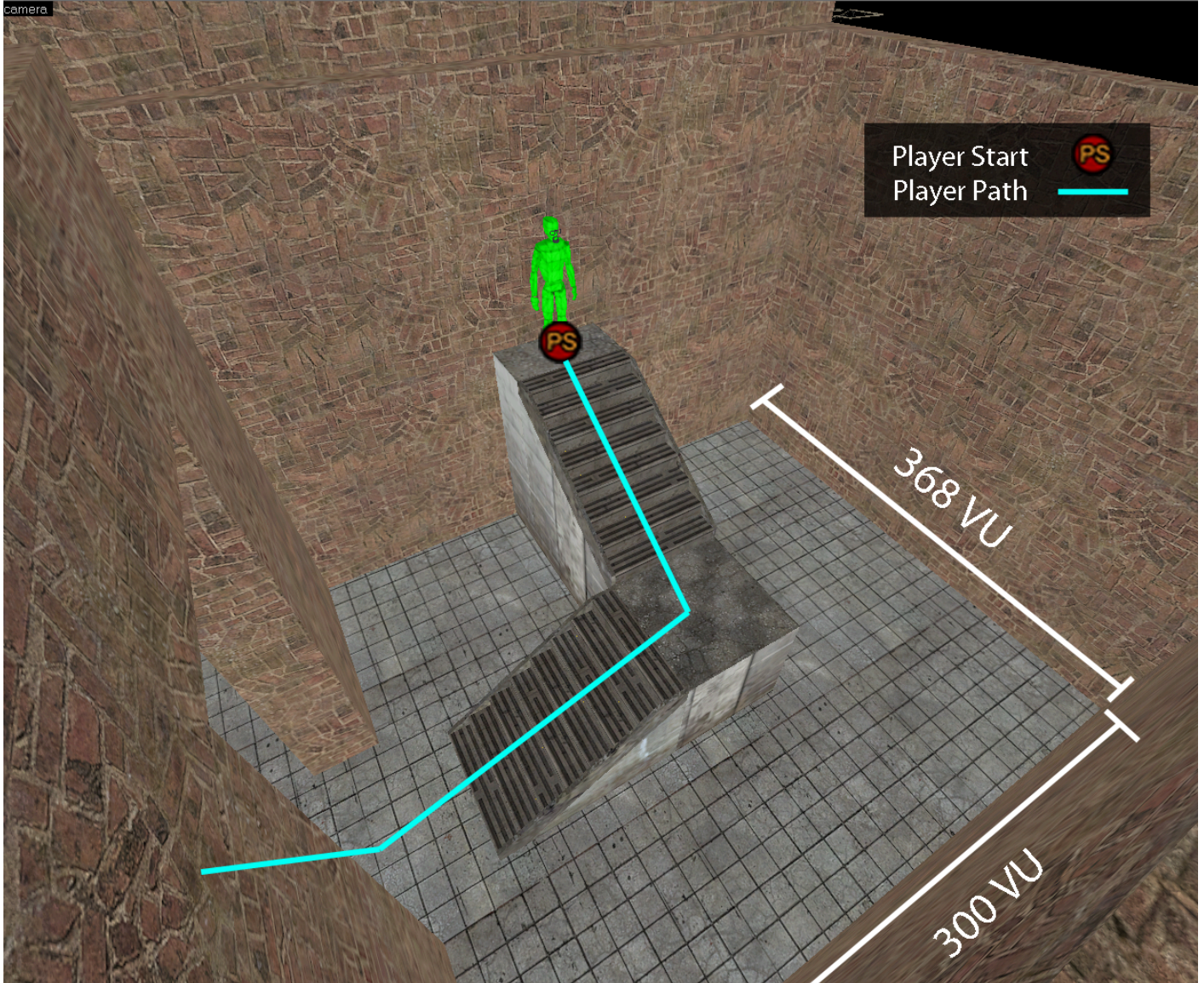


Figure 36: Detail Map - The Stairway

### Gameplay

- Player Initial Loadout
  - Hazard Suit
  - Crowbar
  - Handgun
- Encounters
  - N/A
- Challenges
  - N/A

### Dialog



- “Escape City 18”

## ***Visual References***



Figure 37: It is an outdoor stairway, open to the sun



Figure 38: The area surrounding the stairwell is full of rubble

## AREA 2.1: THE FIRST LEDGE

### Map



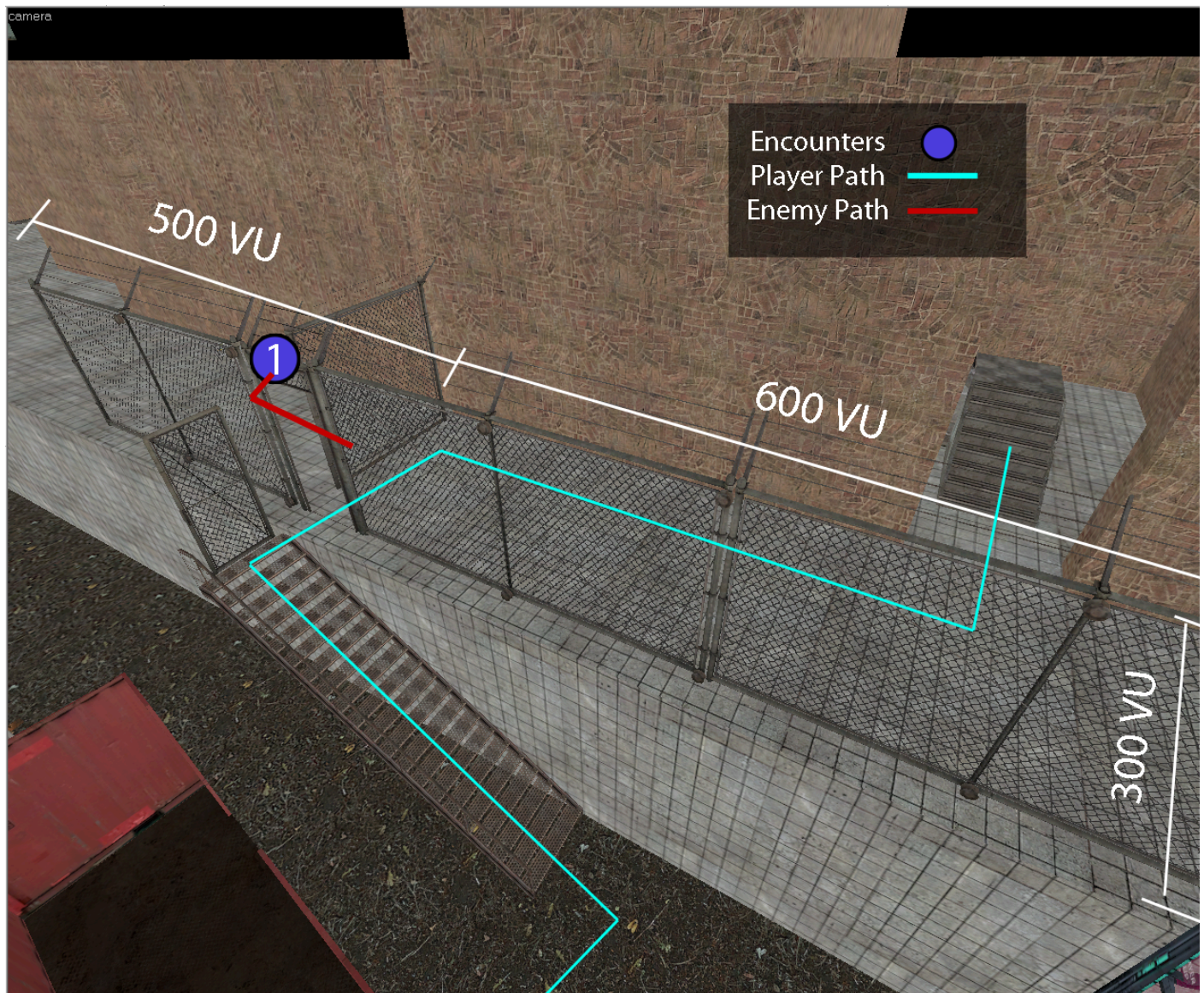


Figure 39: Detail Map - The First Ledge

## Gameplay

- Encounter 1
  - 1 Combine Soldier charges through a door as the player approaches the stairs/fence
  - Enemy Loadout : SMG (droppable)
  - Introductory fight
- Challenges
  - N/A

## Dialog

- N/A



## Visual References



Figure 40: Combine Soldiers can bust out of some of these doors



Figure 41: Fire escape style stairs



## AREA 2.2: THE TRACKS (PART 1)

### Map

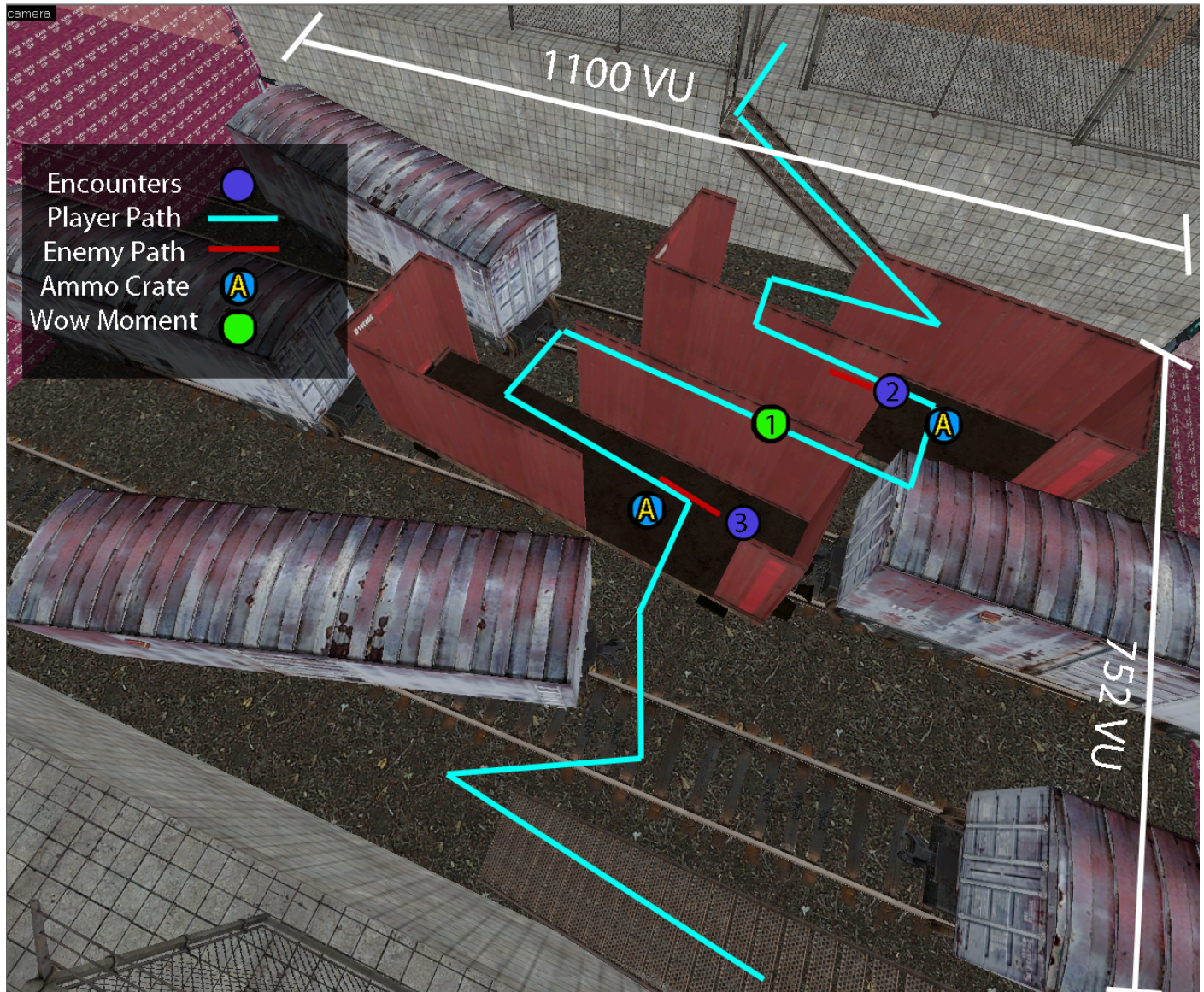


Figure 42: Detail Map - The Tracks (Part 1)

### Gameplay

- Encounter 2
  - o 1 Headcrab jumps at the player
  - o Enemy Loadout : none
  - o Starts hidden behind/under crates
- Encounter 3
  - o 1 Headcrab jumps at the player
  - o Enemy Loadout : none
  - o Starts hidden behind/under crates
- Challenges
  - o The player must make their way across the cluttered tracks and through the cluttered boxcars

### Dialog

- N/A



## Visual References



Figure 43: Train yard sample



Figure 44: Train yard sample



## AREA 2.3: THE BOXCAR

### Map

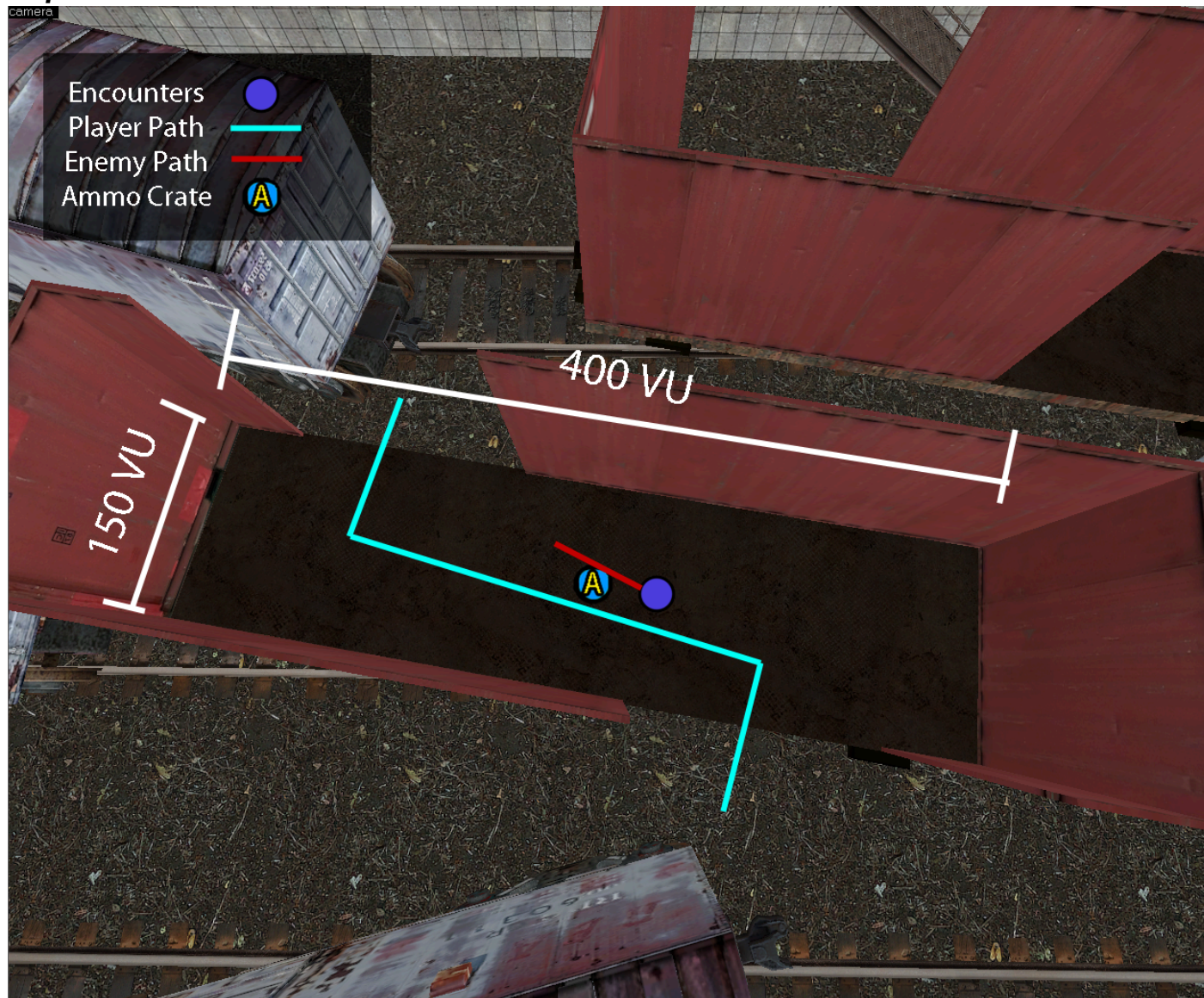


Figure 45: Detail Map – The Boxcar

### Gameplay

- Encounter 2 and 3
  - o 1 Headcrab jumps at the player
  - o Enemy Loadout : none
  - o Starts hidden behind/under crates
- Challenges
  - o The player must make their way through the cluttered boxcars

### Dialog

- N/A





## Visual References



Figure 46: Boxcars fill the train yard



Figure 47: Crates and supplies fill the Boxcars



## AREA 2.4: THE OTHER LEDGE

### Map

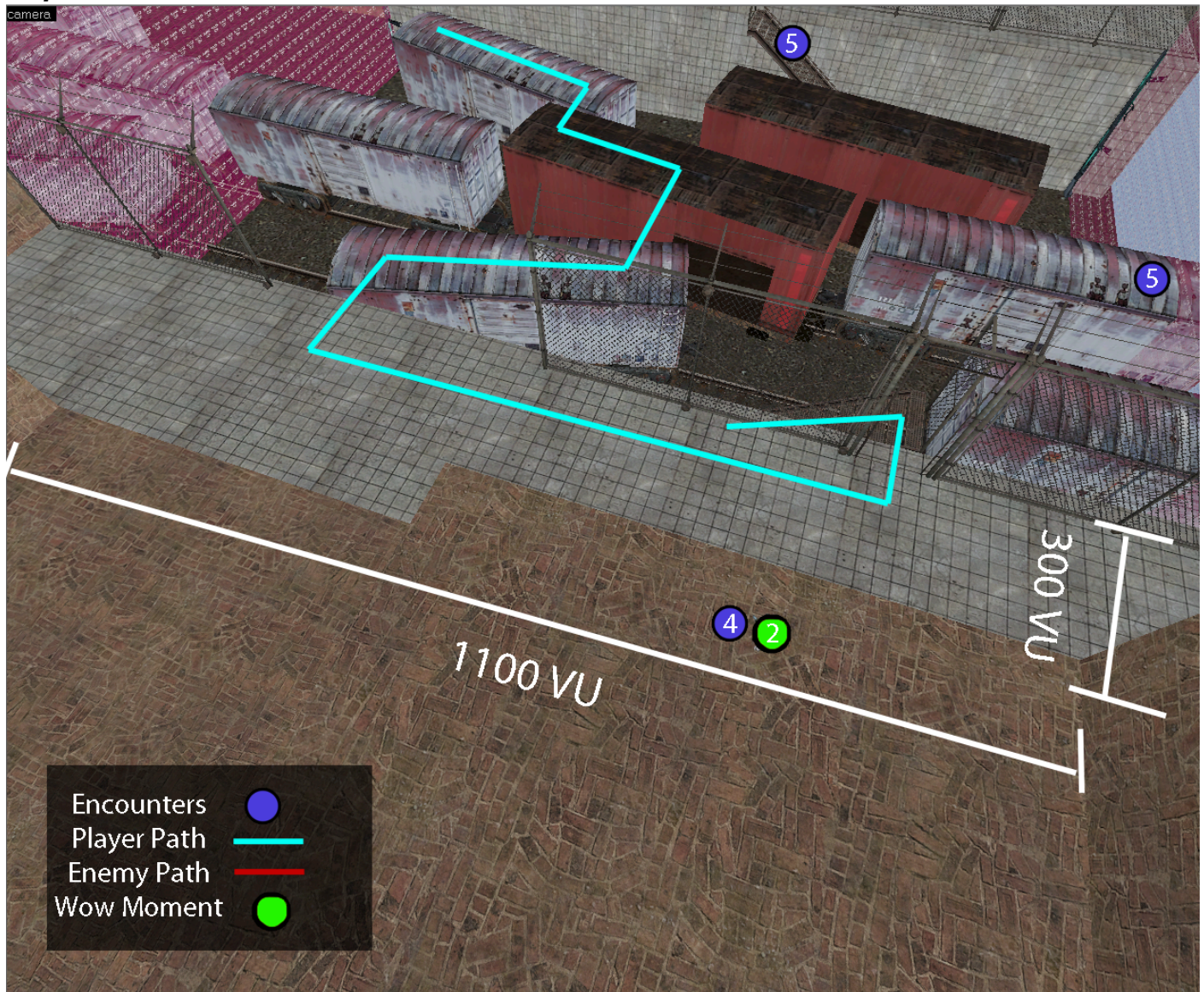


Figure 48: Detail Map - The Other Ledge

### Gameplay

- Encounter 4
  - o 1 Combine Soldiers drops an exploding barrel onto the player
  - o Enemy Loadout : SMG, exploding barrel
  - o Spawns as the player climbs up the stairs
- Encounter 5
  - o 1 Combine Soldiers attacks the player from across the Train yard
  - o 2 Combine Soldiers attack the player from the bridge above the train tunnel
  - o Enemy Loadout : SMG
  - o Spawn as the player jumps across onto the train
- Challenges
  - o The player must make their way across the train top



## ***Dialog***

- N/A

## ***Visual References***



Figure 49: Chain link fence





Figure 50: Explosive barrels

## AREA 3: THE SECURITY ROOM

### Map

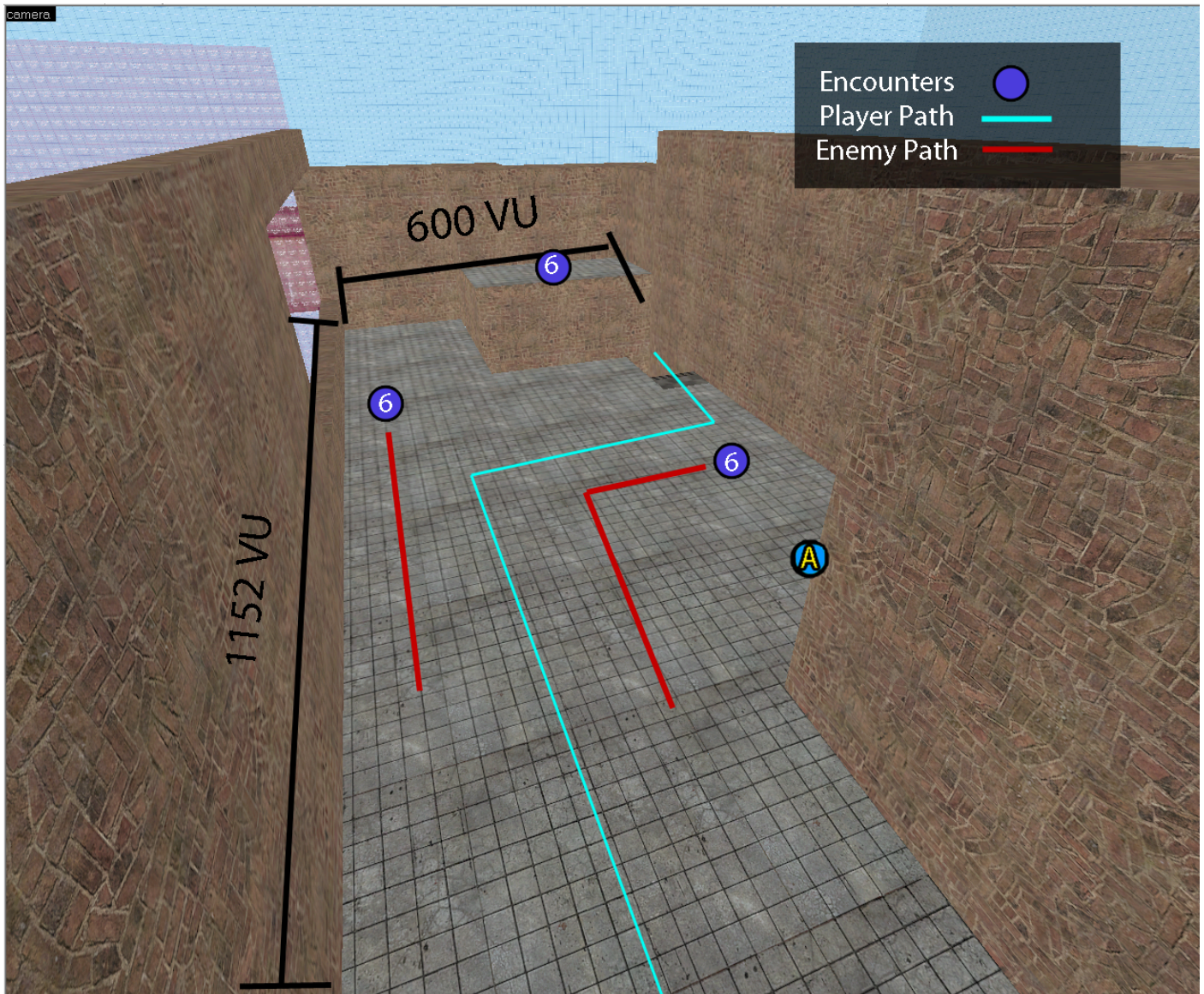


Figure 51: Detail Map - The Security Room

## Gameplay

- Encounter 6
  - o 3 Combine Soldiers throughout the room
  - o Enemy Loadout : SMG
  - o They are expecting the player, but do not search outside of the room
- Challenges
  - o N/A

## Dialog

- N/A



## Visual References



Figure 52: A large window looks out over the Train Yard

## AREA 4.1: THE TRACKS (PART 2)

### Map

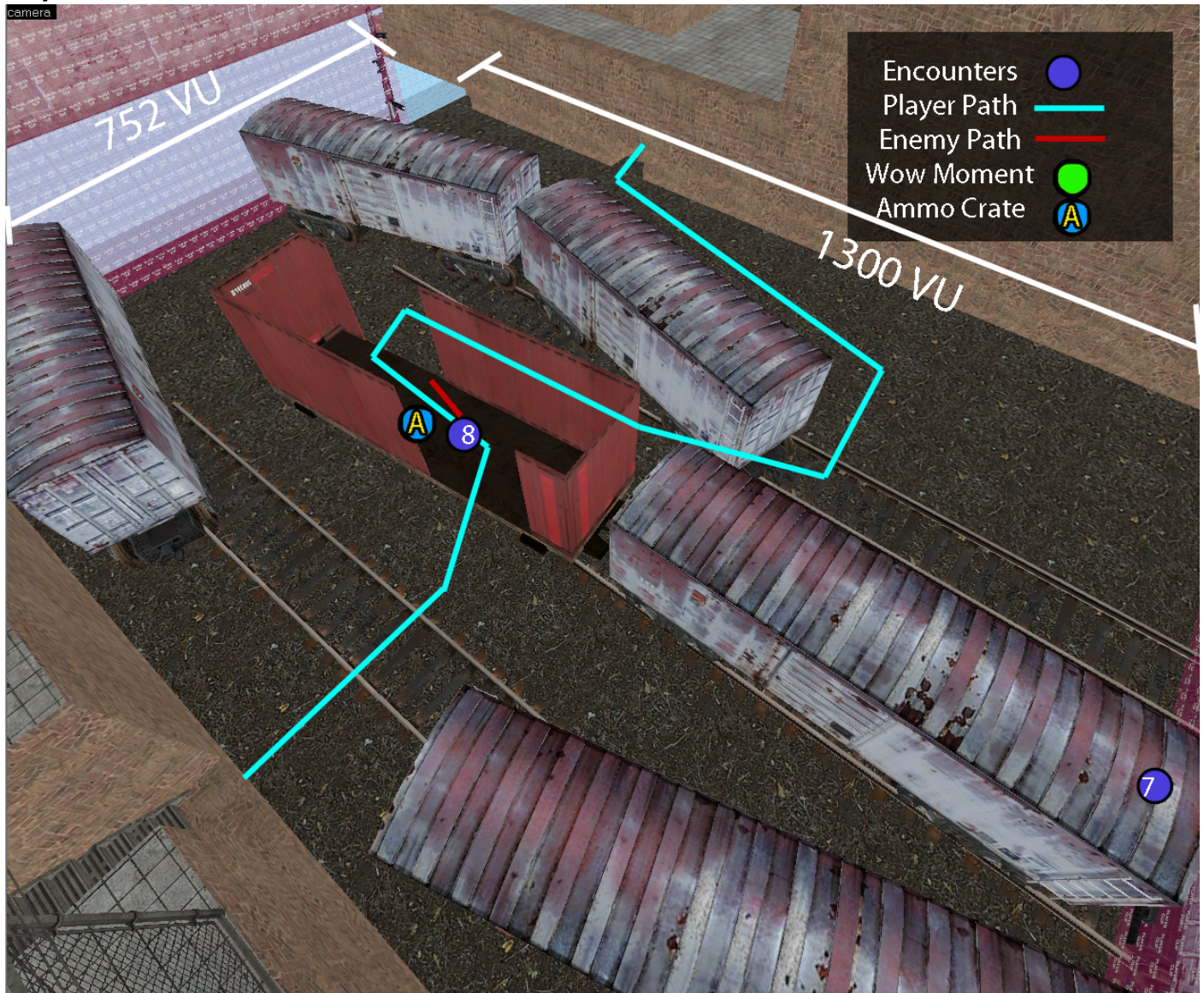


Figure 53: Detail Map - The Tracks (Part 2)

### Gameplay

- Encounter 7
  - o 3 Combine Soldiers shoot down at the player from the overpass
  - o Enemy Loadout: SMG
  - o Spawn as the player leaves the Security Room
- Encounter 8
  - o 1 Headcrab jumps at the player
  - o Enemy Loadout : none
  - o Starts hidden behind/under crates
- Challenges
  - o The player must make their way through the cluttered boxcars

### Dialog

- N/A



## Visual References

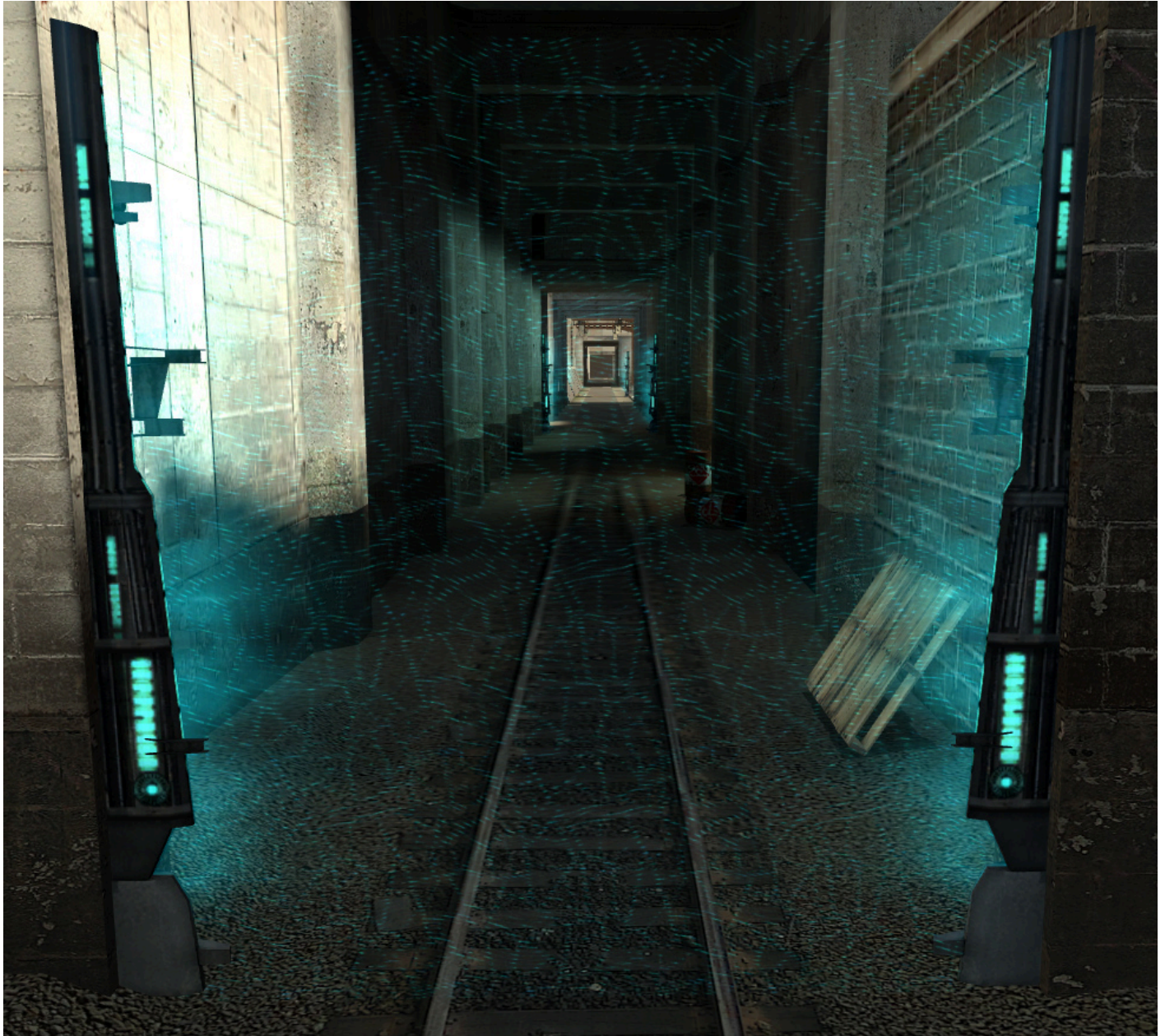


Figure 54: Combine force field



## AREA 4.2: THE GENERATOR LEDGE

### Map

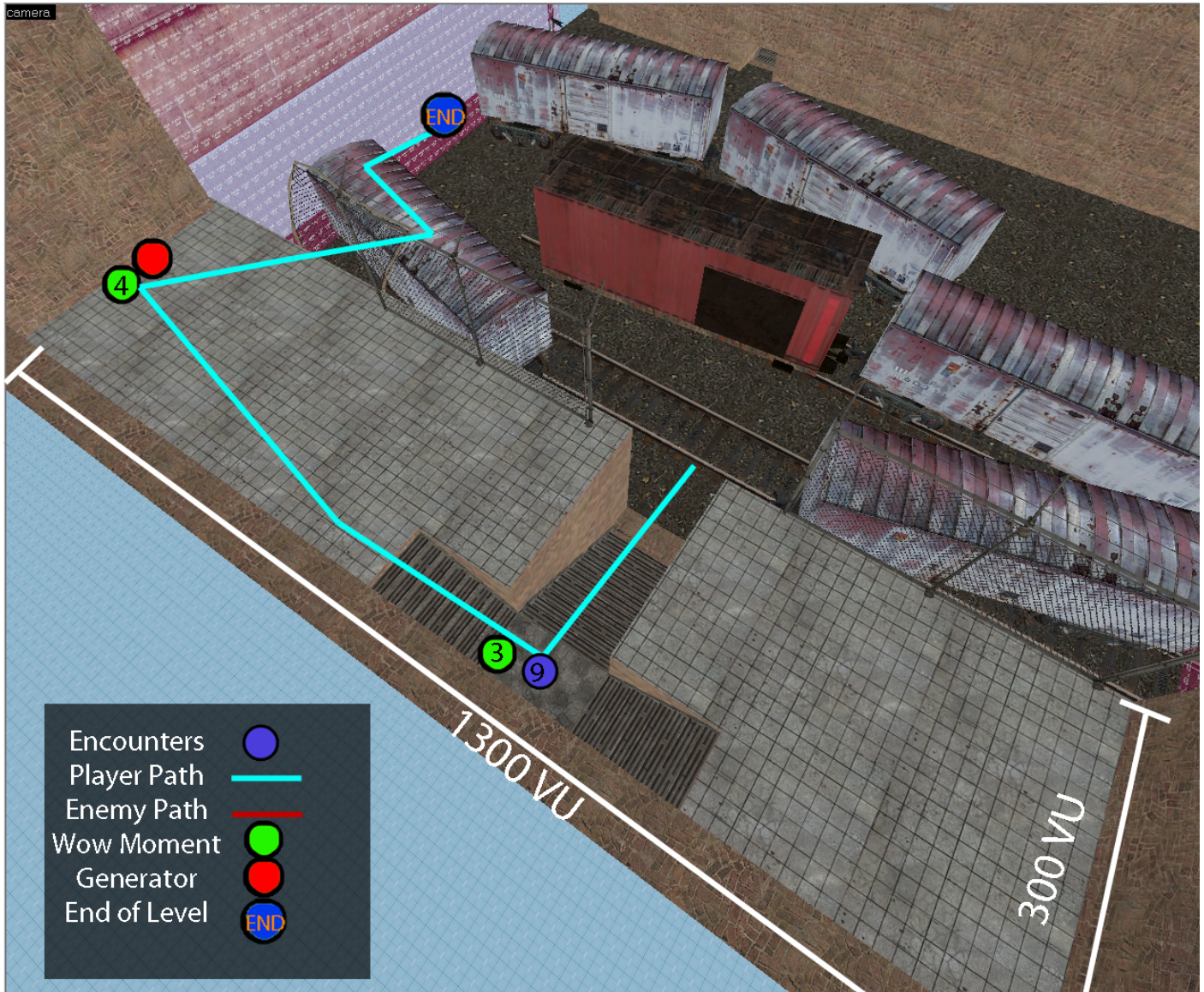


Figure 55: Detail Map - The Generator Ledge

### Gameplay

- Encounter 4
  - o 1 Combine Soldiers drops an exploding barrel onto the player
  - o Enemy Loadout : SMG, exploding barrel
  - o Spawns as the player climbs up the stairs
- Challenges
  - o Destroy the Combine shield generator
  - o Jump onto the moving train

### Dialog

- N/A



## Visual References



Figure 56: Shield generator

# APPENDIX A

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## WHY IS THIS FUN?

It is exciting and there is enough action to keep a players attention. There are standard shootout scenarios mixed together with slight puzzle/physics elements to keep gameplay interesting.

## WHAT MAKES THIS SEQUENCE INTERESTING/MEMORABLE?

The player should feel the excitement of the chase through a train yard. Blast away the foes in front, and shoot back at the ones behind. Escaping by jumping onto a moving train is an exciting conclusion.

## HOW WILL YOU COMMUNICATE TO THE PLAYER WHAT THEY NEED TO DO?

For Area 2:

The first Combine Soldier comes out of an area that the player can see, but cannot get to immediately. When the player looks at their surroundings, they should be able to realize that they can use the train tops as platforms.

For area 4:

Once the player leaves the Security Room, they have nowhere to go except across the tracks. When they reach the other side, the generator stands out from the surroundings, possibly with a colored light or a particle effect. Destroying it damages the fence, which makes a bridge for the player to jump easily onto the train.

## HOW CAN THE PLAYER BREAK IT?

All the Combine forces spawn via trigger boxes, so it is important to make them wide enough so the player cannot possibly miss them.

Theoretically, giving the player too many physics objects allow them to climb and avoid ever using the trains in Area 2.



# REFERENCES

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