Imperator

Engagement Zones

May 23, 2005

1. Overview

Engagement zones are dynamically launched areas with mission content that does not respawn through standard means. They are designed for one or more groups of players who are "engaging" a given enemy in a particular situation. The skill and experience rewards may vary, depending on the difficulty of the engagement zones. In the lower levels, only about 25% of a character's advancement is designed to take place within these areas, ramping up to about 65% in the higher level areas. The intention is that players spend roughly 50% of their entire character advancement time (250 hours) in engagement zones. Because there are varying difficulty factors, engagement zones lend themselves well to high reusability. However, it is never the intention that players constantly repeat the same engagement zone. Ideally, players should be able to participate in every engagement zone once for the remaining sum of their total character advancement time, which is 250 hours.

There will be 60 engagement zones available to the players across the entire leveling spectrum, distributed evenly across the four hubs. Each engagement spans a 10-level range, but two versions of each will be available to the players, one of lower difficulty and one of higher. More engagements will be available to the players are higher levels than lower. On average, they should last from one to two hours of game play per session with shorter duration engagement zones at the lower level range and longer ones towards the higher.

Nine types of engagement zones have been identified. The types generally demote what type of layout the zone will have, though much of the content within may be similar. The nine types are: bubble, linear, web, gauntlet, ebb & flow (Magestorm type), pyramid, radiating, "Starship Trooper," and freeform.

2. Bubble

A bubble type engagement zone is laid out in sections. Each section is a self-contained, compartmentalized "bubble." Upon entering a bubble type engagement zone, players will be presented with the overall objective of the engagement and then a list of their current objectives. Only objectives in that bubble will be presented as "current objectives." Once the overall objective for that bubble part is completed, the players will gain access to the next bubble section. This new section will have a new list of objectives.

Example of a Bubble Engagement Zone:
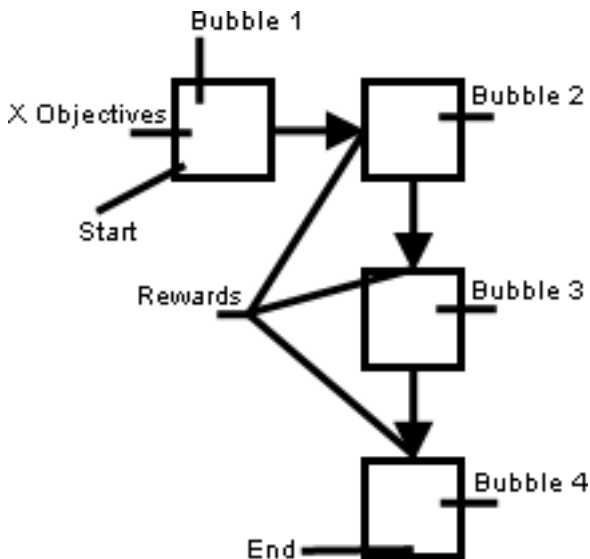
The above diagram displays four different bubble sections of the bubble type engagement zone. Each bubble contains a certain number of objectives to complete before opening the next bubble. Individual groups of players are rewarded for each objective they complete. When all of the objectives in an entire bubble section have been complete, everyone in the engagement is rewarded and everyone receives access to the next bubble section. When the entire engagement zone is completed, everyone in the entire engagement is rewarded and the engagement ends.

Example flow-through of bubble section 1:

- Engagement Goal: Prevent the escape of Mxyzptlk (capture or kill type)
  - Bubble 1
    - Kill 20 monsters
    - Hold location for 3 minutes
    - Repair 10 conduits
      - Kill boss

- Sabotage 3 receivers
  - Kill 50 monsters from a generator that keeps respawning until the number is met
  - Recover keys to the door
- Bubble 2
- Bubble 3
- Bubble 4

When a player first arrives, they see the overall engagement goal and then the objectives in the first bubble. They do not see the objectives in bubbles 2-4. Some objectives may be chained, meaning that accomplishing a particular objective reveals one or more additional objectives. In the flow-through above, repairing 10 conduits unlocks the objective of killing a boss and sabotaging three receivers. Other objectives may be linked. For example, one objective may initiate a timer that requires two other objectives be completed within a given amount of time.

Point of Rewards:

- Individual group rewards for completing an objective
- Zone-wide rewards for unlocking a bubble
- Zone-wide rewards for completing the engagement

Questions/Rules to define:

- How do you reward a group for completing an objective that is "kill x number of monsters" and several different groups contribute to that?
  - Do you have to assign an objective to your group?
    - If so, is it possible for a group to lock out objectives from others?
- Need to determine at what point new people are unable to join the effort so they cannot come in late just to get free rewards.

3. Pyramid

The pyramid engagement zone type is technically a different take on the bubble engagement zone. Like the bubble, it is divided in to multiple sections, each with their own set of objectives. Different than the bubble, however, the pyramid requires a certain percentage of objectives to be completed before the next tier of the pyramid becomes available. Of those new objectives, a certain percentage must again be completed before access to the third tier is granted. The biggest difference is that the objectives in the tiers may repopulate if no one keeps them in check. In this sense, the pyramid is very similar to the Ebb & Flow type. [Note: I am least certain about the application of this type of engagement type]
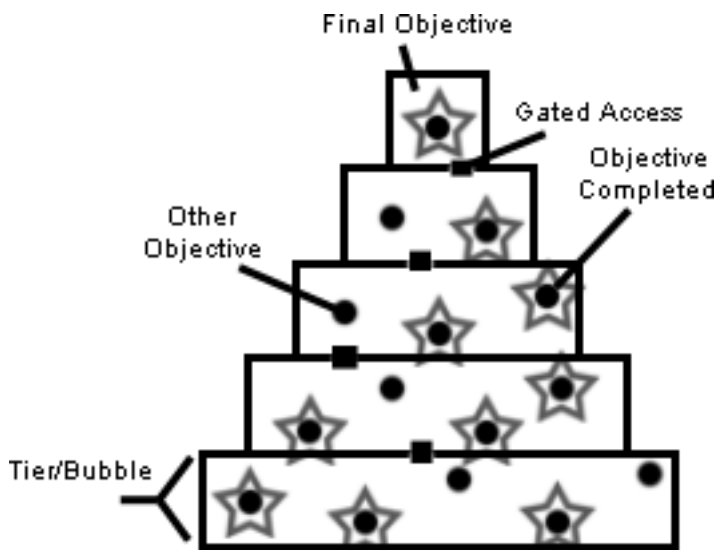
- Engagement Goal: Cause Unimind Facility to Self Destruct

    - Tier 1 (Bottom)

        - Keep Unimind scout drones under 5

        - Blockade all access tubes

        - Capture relay stations (3)

        - Reroute power away from unimind recharging stations

        - Override the security gate in tier 1

    - Tier 2

        - Do 3/4 objectives here

    - Tier 3

        - Do 2/3 of the objectives here

- o Tier 4
  - ▪ Do 1/2 of the objectives here
- o Tier 5
  - ▪ Hack in to the unimind facilty and cause it to self destruct (interact with the Unimind mainframe)

4. Linear

A linear engagement zone is a series of chained objectives that must be completed before the players can conclude the engagement zone. All players involved in a linear style zone will generally move in roughly the same direction through the zone during the course of the engagement.

Linear Engagement Zone:
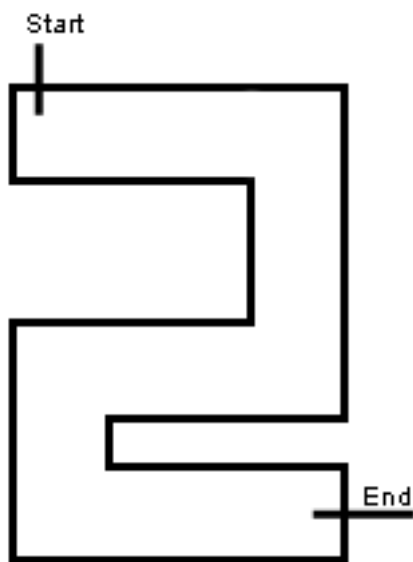
Example flow-through of linear engagement (indented bullets imply that you cannot move to that objective until the one before it has been completed):

- • Engagement Goal: Kill Godzilla
  - o Kill 3 Baby Zilla Patrols
    - ▪ Destroy 20 Zilla Eggs
      - • Rescue Custodian (receive key from custodian)
        - o User key to unlock double doors
   - ▪ Kill Adolescent Zillas in basketball court

- Godzilla gets mad and shows up; Kill Godzilla

5. Web

A web style engagement zone has a clear beginning/staging location, but it does not have a clear ending location. Instead of fighting towards one specific end goal, the completion of all objectives within the engagement zone (perhaps within a specific amount of time) would constitute a victory. An alternative/advanced version of this may cause a "boss" event to occur once all of the objectives in the zone are completed. With the alternative version, the "boss" event would need to be defeated before the engagement is complete.

Web Engagement Zone:
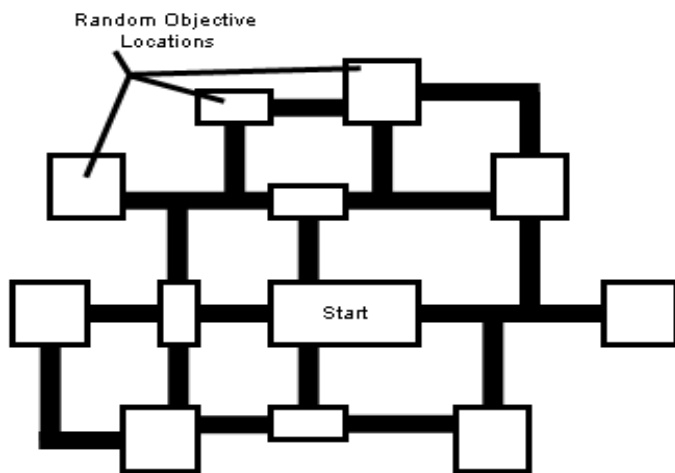
- Engagement Goal: Get the Julius Caesar Space Station back online and functional
    o Repair 25 power generators
    o Replace 25 fuses
    o Kill all Xanshui sweeper patrols (25 patrols)
    o Find and disable 13 detonators
    o Arrest (Kidnap type) the 5 Roman turncoats
    o Kill Captain Tkatlc
    o Destroy all 10 of the Mayan boarding vessles
        ▪ Inform Viritori command that all is secure (after all objectives have been completed)

6.   Freeform

The freeform type, comparable to the web, makes best use of open terrain areas that can potentially spread players out from each other. Grouping smaller objectives together works towards the completion of the bigger objective, this may or may not be a specific event (i.e. completing all of the smaller objectives equals the completion of the larger goal).

Freeform Engagement Zone:
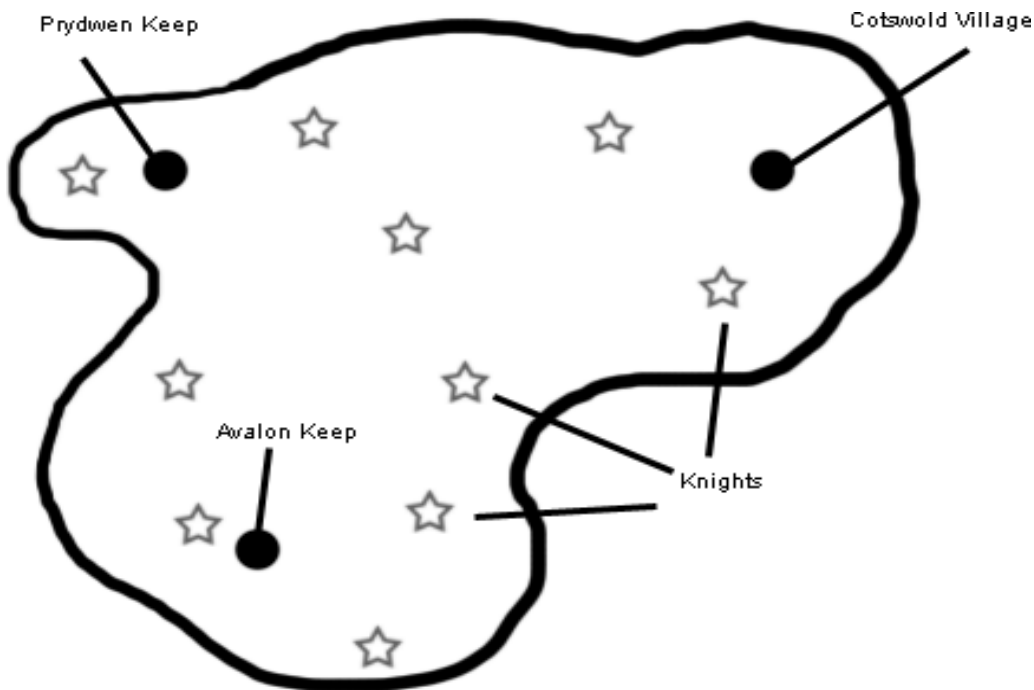
- Engagement Goal: Return Control of Albion to British.

    - Capture Avalon Keep

    - Capture Prydwen Keep

    - Capture Cotswold Village

    - Kill 25 Norse Commanders

    - Repair 10 communication relays

    - Rescue 10 Knights of the Round Table

        - Kill the Troll King (Advanced Version)

7. Ebb & Flow (Magestorm)

The entire concept for the Ebb & Flow model revolves around capturing areas and dealing with reinforcements while capturing new areas. You start by capturing one or more locations. Once you do that, new capture objectives are listed. However, moving to capture new locations will cause previously captured areas to be attacked. So, the player-force will need to divide it's energies to both capture the new area and maintain the old area. This is comparable to Magestorm where you bias pools and have to keep those pools while at the same time biasing more. This engagement type can be used in multiple types of areas, but is most suitable to a city/urban situation.

Ebb & Flow Type:
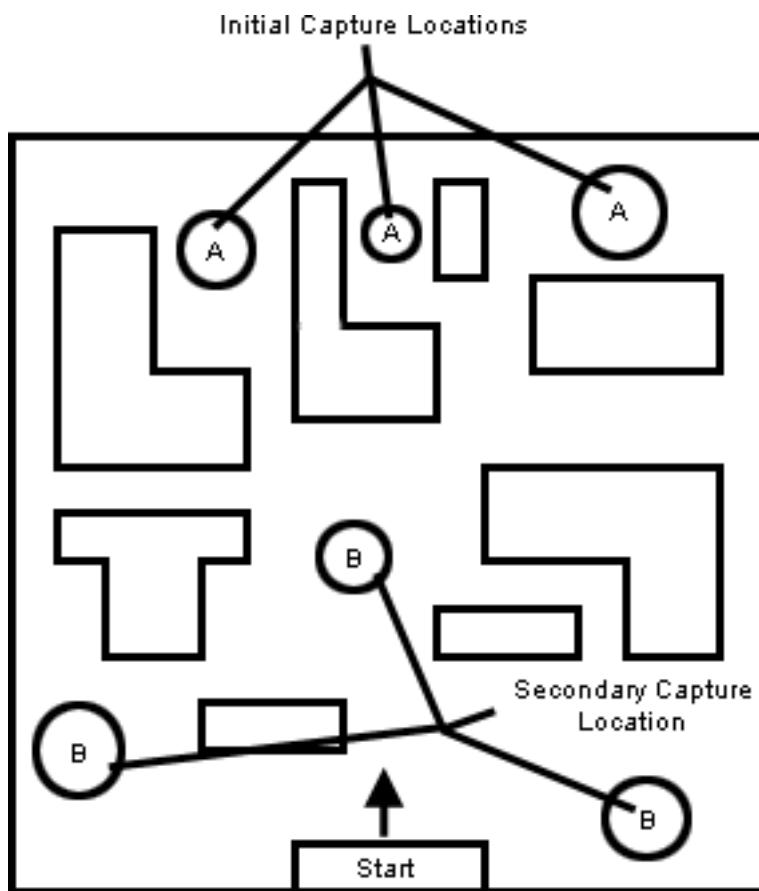
- Engagement Goal: Retake Luna Military Facility

    o Initial Objectives

        ▪ Capture the Armory

        ▪ Capture the Observation Post

        ▪ Capture the Infirmary

- Follow-up Objectives (become available once the first three have been captured)
  - Secure (capture) the west gate
  - Secure (capture) the central courtyard
  - Secure (capture) the south landing pad
- If any of the locations in the initial objectives list are lost, then the secondary objectives are removed and the objective listing would re-adjust to retaking the areas that were lost. (?)

8.   Radiating

In a radiating engagement zones, players start somewhere in the center of the zone. They are then given a few funneled directions in which they can move. Each direction, or arm, radiates outward from the center. Each arm contains its own list of objectives, similar to the bubble sections of the bubble type engagement zone. The lists of objectives in the arm go towards providing access to the main objective at the end of that arm. Once the entire main arm objectives are completed, the engagement is either over or a final zone-wide objective becomes available (such as a boss). The objectives within each arm may or may not be in a linear arrangement (similar to the linear engagement zone type)

Radiating Engagement Type:
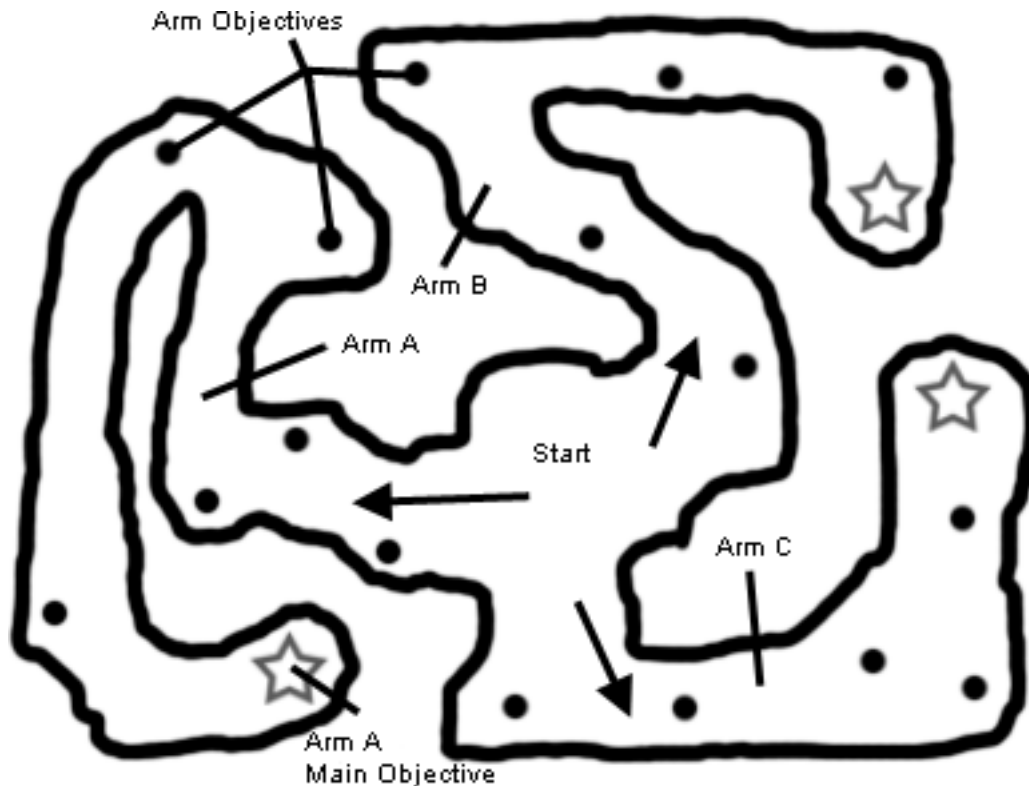
- Engagement Goal: Capture Mayan General Ratackaw

  o   Arm A: Capture and Interrogate Subcommander Ocatl

    ▪ Defeat Mayan Sentries (5)

    ▪ Remove (kill) Gate Guard

    ▪ Disable (interact) Gate

- Interrogate (defeat without killing) Mayan bodyguards

- Get access code from Mayan security officer

  - Capture/Interrogate (defeat without killing) Sub Commander Ocatl

- Arm B: Send a false message to General Ratackaw using a Mayan channel (get to the end of the arm and interact with the main Mayan communications terminal)

  - Series of objectives lead up to the end of Arm B.

- Arm C: Sabotage the main Mayan landing bay (which will force the returning General to enter the compound through another entrance)

  - Series of objectives lead up to the end of Arm C.

- Engagement Final Objective

  - Capture General Ratackaw (using the trap that has been set for him)

9. "Starship Trooper"

Unlike other engagement zone types that require to you to traverse across a specific area, the "Starship Trooper" engagement zone requires the players to stay in/around a particular location and fend off waves of enemies for a given amount of time. The name comes from the scene in *Starship Troopers* where the marines had to defend against the hordes of bugs in the Mormon compound until the shuttle came to rescue them. [A possible alternative/addition that may go with this is a means of destroying/disabling the mechanism that is allowing the waves of monsters to get in to the area. This is similar to the game of *Gauntlet* where you had to destroy the generator object to stop the monsters from spawning. For example, if an engagement of this type takes place on a Starship, you may be able to disable the docking shuttles the enemy is using. If it takes place on the ground, you may have to shoot down troop transports.]

Starship Trooper Type:
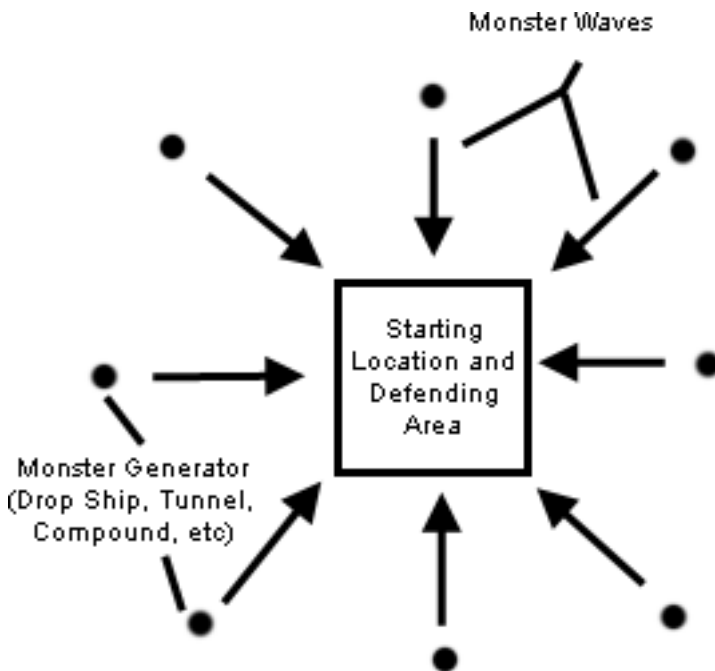
- Engagement Goal: Rescue Senator Varian

    o You must survive for 60 minutes (there can be one or more than one defending location) against 10 waves of monsters, each separated by 6 minutes until the rescue shuttle arrives

    o Senator Varian must be kept alive

        ▪ Bonuses are applied for each additional civilian that survives

    o (Possibly divide the defending area in to several smaller "capture" sections)

10. Gauntlet/King of the Mountain

The Gauntlet or King of the Mountain type engagement involves the players racing through an obstacle of monsters towards a central goal. The starting point for different groups of players would be in different locations and can be viewed as the reverse of the radiating engagement zone type. [Note: I am not certain this engagement type is appropriate for a PvE setting, and may be more appropriate for PvP/RvR applications if we come to it]

Gauntlet Type:
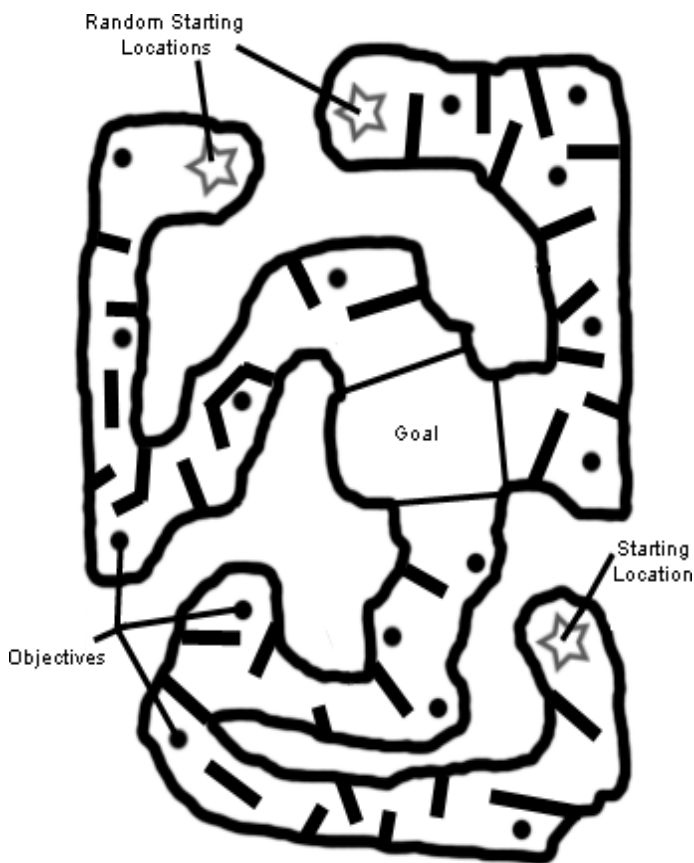
- Engagement Goal: Get to the engineering level in the space station and prevent it from overloading; this must be completed in 60 minutes.

  - Each wing has its own set of objectives that allows the players to gain access to the central area, which is the target destination. Depending on which wing the players start in, their objectives may be different.

11. Objective Types

Nearly all of the war zone mission types are applicable for objectives types within the engagement zones. Here are the objective type classifications:

11.1. Acquisition (Acquire)

Any mission that involves a player obtaining a virtual item from a monster is an acquisition mission. An example of an acquisition mission might be to have the player kill Mayan drones until they have acquired five intact circuitry boards.

[requires virtual object counter, ability to show icons that "fill up" as the acquired item is found]

11.2. Ambush

An ambush mission type attempts to intercept and delay or disable the enemy as they move through territory. Success is achieved by preventing the enemy from moving some specified fraction of his forces to the exit zone before a timer expires or before the target "gets away."

11.3. Assassinate/Kill Boss

Assassination or boss kill missions require the player(s) to kill a specified monster or enemy. The monster is frequently accompanied by minions and other obstacles that the players must overcome before attempting to defeat the monster itself.

11.4. Assault

An assault is any mission that requires an entire area to be cleared of enemy NPCs.

11.5. Build

A build type mission requires the player to start with a "blank slate," and with the necessary tools (provided by us) build a specific structure or component. This could be as simple as building up a wall, establishing a radio tower, or putting together a vehicle. While the objective does not require the player to engage in combat, most build missions will involve NPCs that try to destroy that which the player is trying to build.

[requires art for building, build action ability/button, check for components (requirements)]

11.6. Capture (Location)

A mission of this type requires the players to gain control of a location and either hold it for a specific amount of time or simply gain control and move on to the next "capture the flag" location.

[requires time activated conversion, like in BF1942 or Splatterball/Magestorm; ability to display captured areas on the map]

11.7.Collect

Collection missions require the player to pick up items from the world as opposed to acquiring them from enemies. An example of a collection mission may be to collect five power relays from the scrap yard area in Tartarus.

[requires virtual object counter]

11.8.Courier

Courier missions require the player to deliver a message or virtual object from one location to another, including from one war zone to another hub or war zone. While simple in nature, most courier missions will require players to traverse through enemy territory in order to complete their task. [May not be appropriate for engagement zones, though there may be one or two applications where it might work]

11.9.Defend

A defend objective is an attempt to prevent the capture of a location for a specified period of time. The players may be required to defend an existing location, or something they have built or fortified as a sub-step to the defense.

11.10.Destroy/Sabotage

These missions require the players to destroy one or more enemy installations or objects, such as vehicles, weapons, small buildings, etc. This mission type will never target a large structure. However, destroying several smaller structures within the confines of a larger area may be constituted as destroying that larger location.

11.11.Escort/Protect

An escort or protect mission type is an attempt to prevent the capture or elimination of an object (such as a vehicle) or individual that may not be tied to a specific world location for a specified amount of time or until a particular exit destination is reached. Protect missions imply that the protection object is stationary while escort missions imply that the protection object is in motion through an area.

11.12.Fortify/Repair

Fortify/repair missions are similar to build missions except that they require the player to interact with an existing object in the area and attempt to improve upon it.

[requires the ability to highlight world .nifs, change the mouse cursor to repair or fortify state, allow right-click drop down menu that defines the action the player is taking (i.e. repair the computer, fortify the wall,)]

11.13.Interact

An interact mission is any mission that requires the player to interact with an object. Either accessing a data terminal or unlocking a gate would both be classified as interact missions.

[requires the ability to highlight world .nifs, change the mouse cursor to an interact state, allow right-click drop down menu that defines the action the player is taking (i.e. hack the computer, examine the log, look under the scrap metal)]

11.14.Kidnap (Capture NPC)

Any mission that requires the player to subdue or capture an NPC (rather than killing it) constitutes as a kidnap mission. The player may be required to fight the NPC as with the assassination mission type, but the enemy will go in to "I surrender mode" before it can be killed. A mission of this type may or may not require the NPC to be escorted back to any specific area.

11.15.Patrol

Patrol missions require the player to move from location to the next, and in those areas, engaging and defeating specific monsters in combat.

11.16.Pursuit

Pursuit is similar to ambush except that the players are required to catch up with the enemy before they are able to reach the exit point of the mission area. This will usually center around one or more NPCs or objects that must be "disabled or destroyed" that will constitute success or failure.

[requires the ability to track moving objects/npcs on a map]

11.17.Reconnaissance

Reconnaissance missions involve the players spying on enemy NPCs. To do this, the player must get within a specified distance to the monster(s). Then using a function we supply, "report" on the enemies actions. [May not be appropriate for engagement zones]

[requires a "reconnaissance" icon and functionality]

11.18.Recover

Missions that require players to find a specific virtual object, data, or information, generally in a specific location, are recover missions. Recover missions frequently require the player to return with said object/data/information to a specified location.

11.19.Rescue/Aid

Rescue/aid missions require the players to locate one or more NPCs and render aid appropriately. The following variations may fall under this mission type: simply locating the

NPC, escorting them out of an area, healing them, bringing them a cure, freeing prisoners, etc.

11.20. Scout

Scouting requires players to move from one specified location to another. This is similar to a patrol except that defeating monsters is not part of the mission requirement. Scout missions frequently require the player to move carefully through enemy territory. [May not be appropriate for engagement zones]

11.21. Skirmish

Any mission that requires a player to kill a specific number of monsters is a skirmish. Skirmishes are the most frequently seen missions within the general warzone area. A simple skirmish mission may require a player to destroy 10 Mayan drones; or it may require the player to destroy 3 Mayan drones, then 3 xanshui, then 3 Mayan soldiers. The breakup of types and numbers of monsters to kill may vary.

11.22. Survival

This is frequently termed as a ring event in other games. The players must remain in a given location (or possibly more from one location to another) while waves of enemies attack them. The entire point of this mission is to stay alive through the duration of the event.

[requires visible timer]

12. System Needs

In order to get the engagement system up and running, there are a number of code-supported needs that must be met. Here are the needs as they stand so far:

- Engagement Tool Interface – We believe that engagement zones will need a separate tool and implementation mechanism from standard missions

- Engagement zone objectives need to be assigned on an area-by-area basis (sometimes zone wide or sometimes sections of a zone) to everyone in that area rather than on each character. People in that area only see the objectives for that area.

- Ability for some objectives to open up other objectives (and shut them down if a criteria is lost, such as in the case of the ebb & flow type of engagement)

- Ability to link objectives (e.g. you complete one objective that is linked to two others, and as a result, you must complete the other two in 10 minutes)

- Ability to reward people per objective, per section/bubble, or per zone achievement

- Ability to trigger messages/sounds when certain objectives have been completed so that everyone who is part of the engagement knows that something has been done.

- Need to determine rules for engagement zones, including rules for:

    o those who show up late

    o those who leave early

    o those who disband/change groups

    o what to do in objectives where multiple groups had a hand in completing them (such as killing 200 monsters)

    o launching the zones (are they server launched or do we require the players to launch as a consensual group)