

Level Design Doc – Infinite Spoils

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Level Name: Infinite Spoils

Featured in: *Halo: Combat Evolved* dlc – The Cole Protocol

Premise:

A group of Covenant Jackals, led by their leader Reth, are planning something sinister against a human colony in The Rubble, an asteroid belt on the fringes of human controlled space. Gray Team, consisting of three Spartan-IIs, along with Lieutenant Keyes and ODSTs (Orbital Drop Shock Troopers), must find out what the Jackals are up to by infiltrating their flagship, *Infinite Spoils*. But they are not the only ones interested in the Jackals. Elites sent by the Prophet of Regret, including the future Arbiter himself, also seek to confront the Jackals about their heretical trade with the humans of The Rubble. **The player will take on the role of Jai**, one of the Spartan-IIs of Gray Team, as they board *Infinite Spoils* and race to uncover the Jackals' plans.

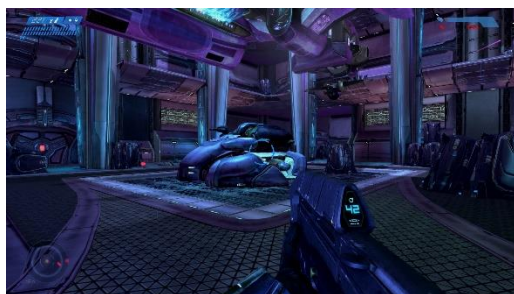


Gameplay Beats (Storyboard):



(1) Board *Infinite Spoils*

Jai, Keyes, and the ODSTs are on board *Mighty Sparrow*, a human freighter. The Rubble's AI, Julianna, releases an asteroid for them to use as cover as they sneak up on the Jackal raider *Infinite Spoils*, currently docked in The Rubble. With the element of surprise, they board the raider via a vulnerable airlock and the level begins.



(2) Battle through the raider to the Bridge

The player fights alongside human forces through a large airlock area, a few encounters in corridors and one other spacious room (either a supply room, life support, or serving some other function on the raider), until a final fight for the Bridge. The player and any surviving allies acquire the Jackals' plans and prepare to leave *Infinite Spoils*.



(3) Save the humans aboard *Mighty Sparrow*

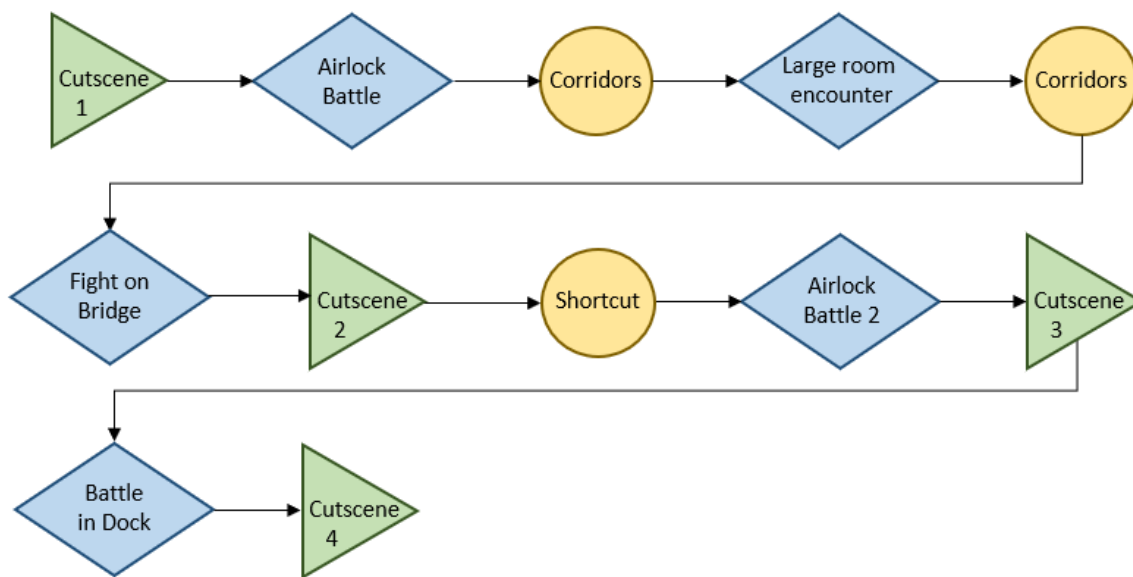
Covenant Elites led by Thel 'Vadamee arrive and start hammering *Mighty Sparrow* from their ship. The player returns to the airlock to evacuate Keyes and the crew aboard the crippled freighter. The player fights Elites while the crew make their escape, until there is a cutscene with Thel. The ODST Sergeant, Faison, is killed and the player is urged to retreat and assist Keyes at the Docks.



(4) Fight through the Dock to end the level

The previous cutscene continues, with the player disabling a door between them and the Elites and racing to the Docks. The player rendezvous with Keyes, while the *Infinite Spoils* disembarks. Keyes informs the player that Jackals are fighting ODSs in the adjacent docking bay and they should open the airlocks to eliminate the Jackals that aren't wearing proper gear. The player fights through some Jackals and Grunts to get to the airlock control, then must fight through the final adjacent docking bay.

Flowchart



Cutscenes

- (1) **Intro** – *Mighty Sparrow* drifting behind asteroid, then boarding *Infinite Spoils*
- (2) **Bridge** – Securing the Bridge, acquiring the Jackals' plans, detecting the arrival of the Elites, the player being requested to assist evacuating the crew aboard *Mighty Sparrow*
- (3) **Airlock Battle 2** – The player and Faison distract the Elites from humans escaping *Mighty Sparrow*. Faison is killed, Jai has a brief showdown with Thel, but is called upon by Keyes, who needs immediate assistance in the Dock. Jai retreats, disabling a door between himself and the Elites.
- (4) **Final** – A final cutscene plays after the battle in the Dock and another Spartan, Adriana, advises the humans to board their ship, *Petya*, and use it as their new command center.

What makes the level interesting

The setting of the level is an asteroid belt, which triggers innate **curiosity and excitement** (something is cool about big rocks floating in space). Previously, *Halo: Combat Evolved* (*Halo: CE*) featured Covenant fighting together. In this level, they are presented as **separate factions** – renegade Jackals vs. Elites. This sparks some intrigue and drama. The level (and dlc overall) also **adds depth to characters** the player may be familiar with, Captain Keyes and Thel, otherwise known as The Arbiter, prior to the events of *Halo*.

In Detail: Final Battle in Dock

This battle involves the player fighting Jackal enemy types and Grunts alongside Keyes and ODSTs, in order to reach the Control Room and plug in Julianna, the AI, into the Dock's systems. Julianna opens the airlocks in the adjacent docking bay and the player follows their allies inside to finish off Jackal enemies and conclude the level.

The battle features some verticality, owing to the cavernous asteroid area housing the Dock. Also, when the airlocks are opened, the player is situated such that they are looking through windows into the adjacent dock and can witness the impact of opening the airlocks.

Enemies

Enemy types in the Dock:

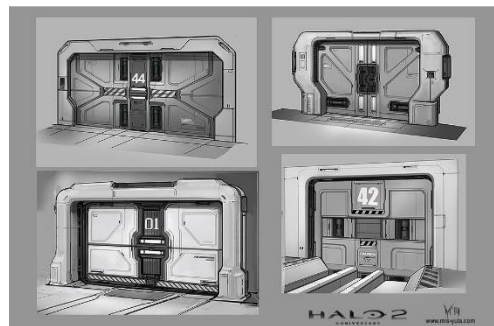
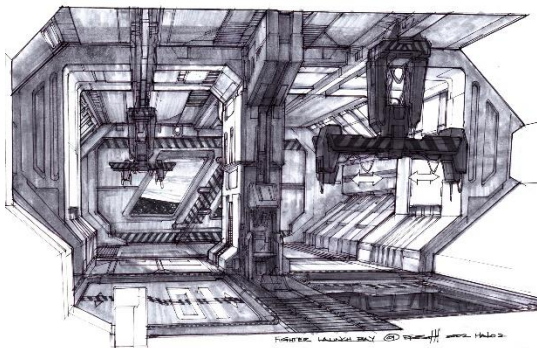
- "Captain" Jackal with extra armor and a new weapon
- Shield Jackals armed with modified plasma pistols
- Jackals using modified Carbines
- Jackals with Carbines and Jetpacks
- Jackals using modified Beam Rifles
- Grunts armed with modified plasma pistols and plasma grenades

Allies

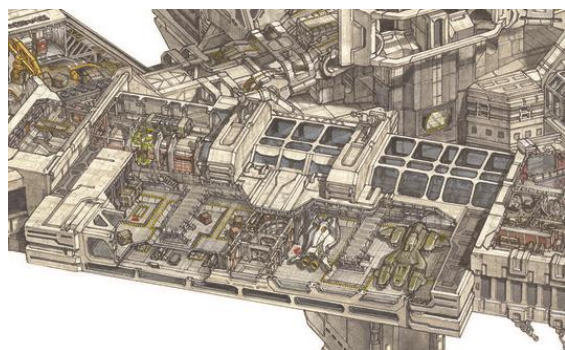
Allies in the Dock:

- ODSTs
- Lieutenant Keyes
- Other crewmembers
- Julianna (AI)

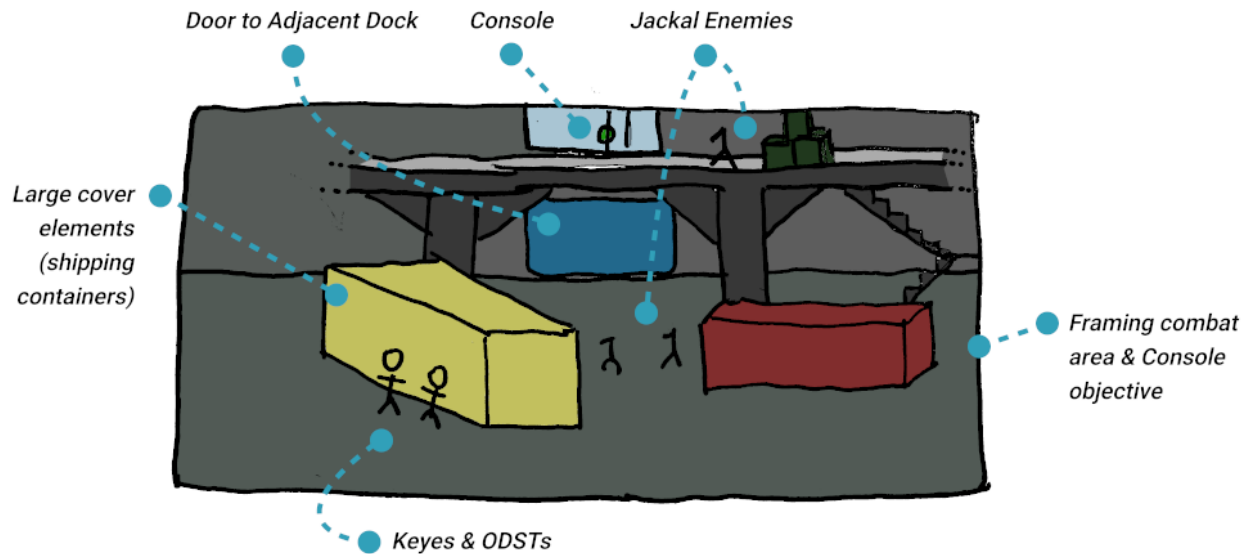
References



Halo 2 concept art by Eddie Smith (left) and Yulia Misyul (right). *Halo 2* screenshot and picture from *Halo: Warfleet* (below).



Sketch



Uncertainties and Challenges

It feels disloyal to the story to change events in *The Cole Protocol* to fit gameplay and level design. Maybe its important to maintain the moments that **resonate with people the most**. For that reason, the level features the meeting between Jai and Thel (one of the **earliest encounters between Spartans and Elites**), but making the player retreat from a fight with a cutscene **might not be a positive experience** for the player.

Somehow Captain Keyes needs to survive the fight in the Dock, so handling his AI and behavior can be tricky. Maybe he isn't involved in combat that much, if at all.

In *Halo: CE* the player fights against a variety of Covenant enemy types. In this level, the Jackals may only be accompanied by Grunts, not fighting alongside Elites. Hopefully a new "Captain" Jackal enemy and modified weaponry, from human trade, can **keep things fresh**.

Initial Blockout

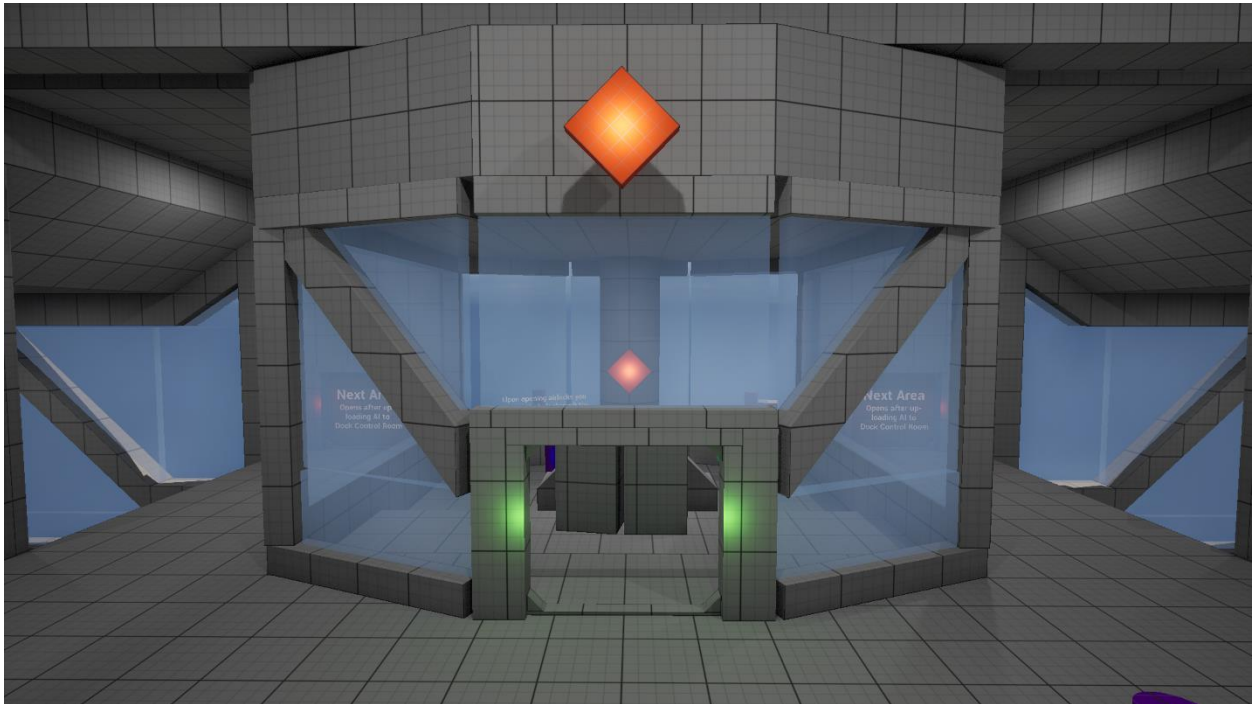
Overview of initial Dock area, Control Room acts as a **landmark**. It is elevated and visible to player right away. It is also supported by a navigation (NAV) marker on the player's HUD. Shipping container on center ramp provides cover and **options** for the player to engage in combat by going left or right.



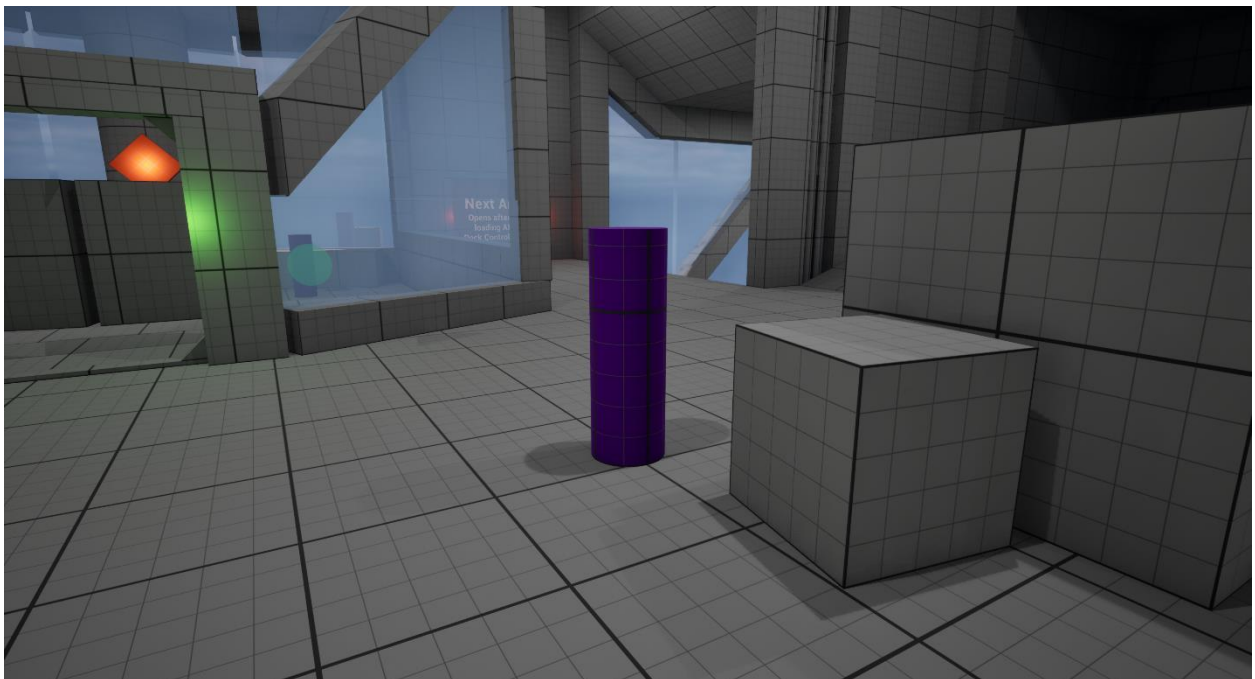
Player objective provided by Keys/NPCs as soon as player enters area, **out of view** of enemies so the player is not distracted/engaged in combat before receiving their objective.



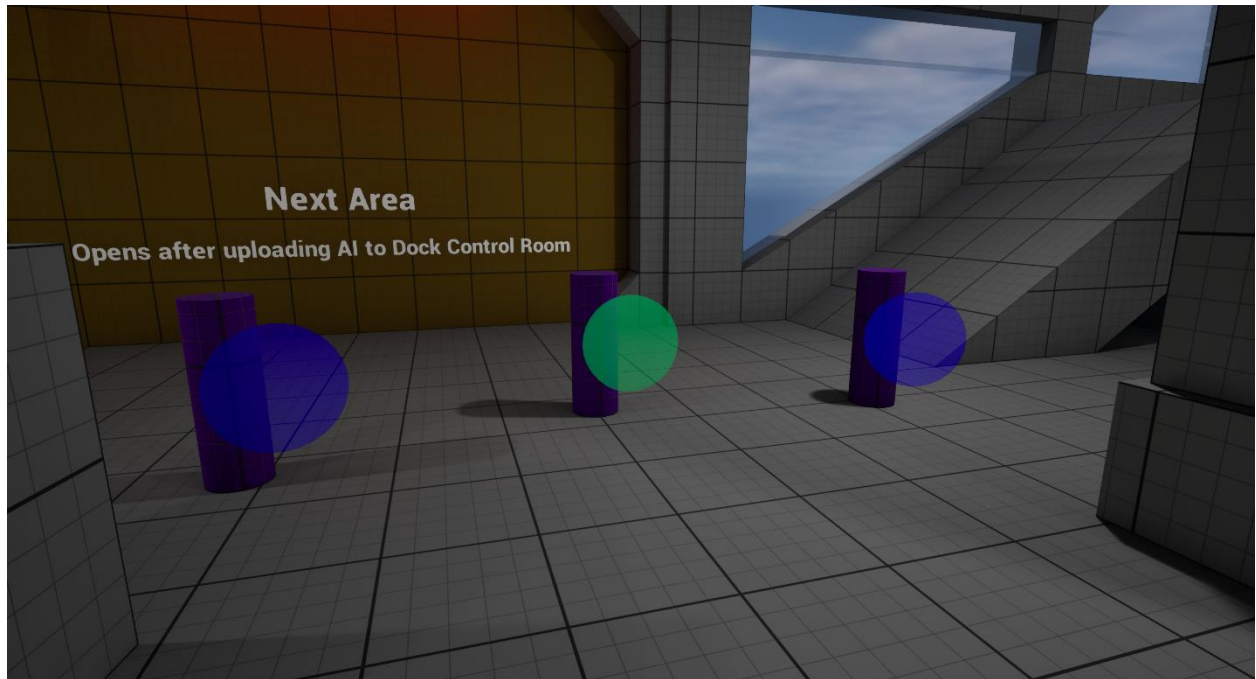
Navigation (NAV) marker on the Control Room visible on player HUD



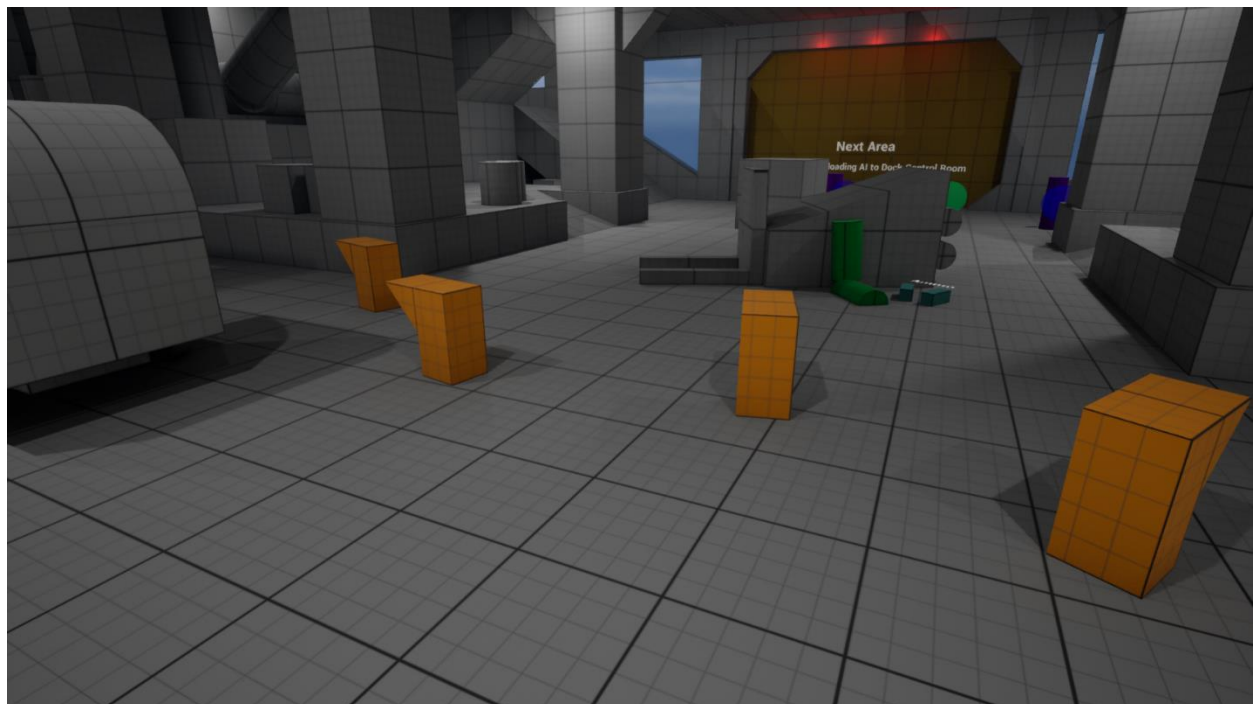
Ranged enemy Jackals



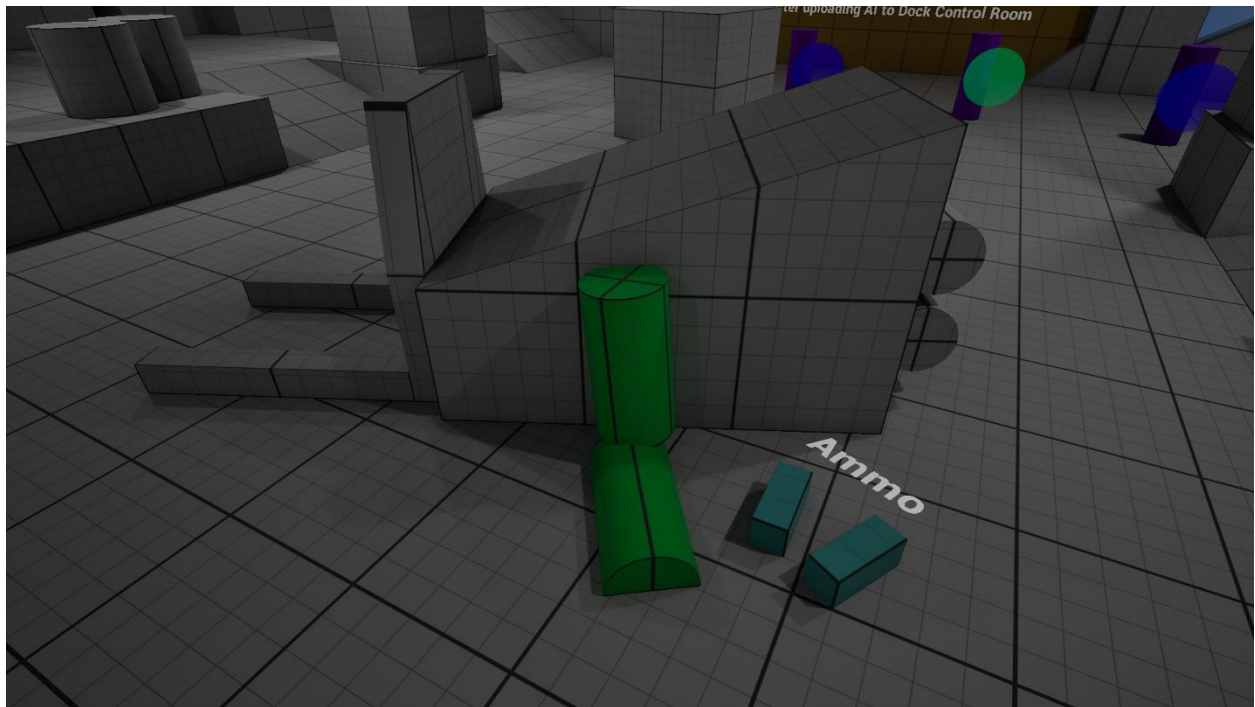
Shielded enemy Jackals (in a squad of **three**, similar to *Halo: CE*)



Enemy Grunts (in a squad of **four**, similar to *Halo: CE*)



Supplies for the player can be found near fallen Marines. This is another feature of *Halo: CE* levels.



Inside the Control Room. Slight **elevation change** added so the player starts above their enemies. Cover elements also **split the room** so player can choose two ways to approach combat. Encounter with special Jackal type (red). Player witnesses a **scripted event** occurring opposite side of the windows upon uploading AI to the "rocky" textured box.

