

To Dame Brionna of Stanway, Captain of the Archducal Guard, member of the Privy Council, Chief Military Adviser to the Throne.

From Clarence Strawberry, Director of Military Intelligence

RE: Updates

On the Western Provinces - Situations internally appear to have stabilized a bit more. At least 6 dozen small bands (10 to 100) humanoids remain inside the borders and some are traveling back and forth as the border is porous and not heavily secured. There are also at least a half dozen bands of bandits that seem to include some ex-military types and in at least one case a powerful mage. Prey for all of these irregular forces are the remaining isolated farms, logging camps and small thorps and dorps along with shallow cave mining and mushroom farming operations. Most remaining villages and above are walled, and garrisoned, at least marginally. Towns and cities are in no danger from bands this size (other than possibly via infiltration and thievery).

Actions presently being taken by deployed forces -- A patrol schedule has been set up. Because of the size of some of the irregular bands, patrols are set at a minimum of a commander, an adjunct and 50 men. Most patrols have some clerical or magical support. As a result there are 20 patrols, as most of the rest of deployed troops are either on garrison duty or are deployed in centralized camps to provide rapid response as needed and/or to secure the border.

Challenges -- The irregular bands are more mobile than the military patrols as well as more numerous and are opposed to pitched conflicts, preferring hit and run/robbery/temporary seizures and if pressed the use of hostages if available to negotiate escape. (we are obeying the Archducal stricture on the importance of the lives of the commons - so two bands have managed to negotiate a guarded trip to the border in exchange for releasing captives.)

Suggestions -- A unit of scout vollers with one or two heavy support craft or transports would be extremely useful. Slightly less useful but still a very helpful addition - units of knights, which can move more rapidly than regular troops - even if horsed). Either of these two options if available will reduce the irregular's mobility advantage and somewhat reduce their ability to hide or find concealment. Stealth is less possible from an airborne observer and the speed with which knights can move often offer surprise against foes. I am aware of the thin supply of both of these resources, but wish to bring them up as possibilities

On the Western Border - Two hordes remain well west of the border. Both suffered significant losses against Archducal forces. They are wary of each other. Remnants of the defeated armies of the Ram (so called) are beginning to stream back north - well west of our border. All forces are in defeat and all are wary of one another, at least to date. We do not see any

significant additional danger from these forces. They have no appetite for renewed conflict and, frankly, know that winter is coming soon.

Actions presently being taken -- a band of military scouts have been scattered outside our border in the wildlands. They have blended into the terrain and report as they can. Their observations inform our decisions.

Suggestions -- This is another area that scout vollers would be useful. We cannot expand our borders westward into the wildlands for several reasons, ranging from treaties with coastal powers about buffers to lack of manpower to petty local warlords who lay claim to scattered keeps, walled towns and holdings and who have stayed rigidly neutral in our recent conflicts. They have stayed within their walls and in several cases successfully turned away parts of the (admittedly hurried) northern armies as they went south. While they could be conquered and added to Canberry over time, it would not be a quick victory and was never in the past a priority - particularly considering the buffer treaties with greater powers at the coast. On the other hand, overflight and observation is not forbidden and would allow us to know the disposition and condition of the hordes and northern forces.

On the Southern Holdings (what are we officially calling these?) -- The presence of the title granted by her marriage to the Archduke has settled many of the problems here. In three ways:

1. Her own people are now cohering to her more willingly. They see strength forthcoming and a future belonging to a greater power (it is worth remembering that the Confederacy was, prior to the disaster arguably one of the 4 most powerful non - elven nations on the globe). The past conditions the commons there to function best as part of a great power, so foreseeing themselves as part of an even greater power than the one they previously belonged to encourages them to new and harder efforts, and more universal cohesion.
2. Many lesser bandits bands and small time slavers - already discouraged by the active engagement in opposing their operations by House Moriquendi'rím are absolutely terrified of a steady influx of the Arch duke's troops and facing justice from a great power whose influence spans half a continent and are now diverting away from the poorly defended settlements and villages.
3. The Archduke's hand on the situation is encouraging some investors to come to the aid of the struggling settlements, which while they have some salvaged wealth have nothing compared to the wealth needed to restore a population in the millions to the status of an equal partner in the Archduchy. Investors, feeling that the debt will now be guaranteed ethically, if not legally by the Archduke for his spouse, are opening their purses to fund industry, new farms, plantations, and villages. This will take some time to unfold, but it will greatly speed the recovery, as long as security can be provided.

Suggestions -- we have limited resources, however, I would suggest that it is important to maintain the "illusion" that large numbers of the Archduke's troops are going to be transferred to the Southern holdings. This might be maintained by transferring a trickle of troops from the

Southlands, as the situation there continues to stabilize, with some fanfare, to the Southern holdings. Gradually building up a presence which will actually be quite limited but which will be able to train the militias that the princess is raising to provide breadth to the backbone she has of refugee troops, as mentioned in prior dispatches.

Respectfully submitted, by my hand.