

Over the next hour, while I watched and listened, the clone troopers put together a list of twelve locations that might fit what I was looking for. A few of them seemed like stretches, but when Ahsoka showed up about twenty minutes in, she was able to confirm a few and suggest crossing out those that might not be that useful. As you could imagine, the atmosphere was both nostalgic and somber, as these warriors wandered through their histories, looking for relevant memories.

Once the group was done, I thanked them profusely and told those of them who could to take the day off. Not exactly the best reward, but once we started using the information, I planned to celebrate more if we actually got a hit.

As for the list itself, rather than immediately submitting it to Intelligence, I instead waited for two days until 2nd Group returned, the nine clone troopers that made up the ground team sitting down and adding to the list where they could. After that, I settled in to wait for the nearly three hundred clones waiting and discussing their options on the *Fury*. Thankfully, it didn't take much longer for them to do that, as after the following morning, Commander Frost contacted me, asking if I could come up to the *Fury* and talk.

I arrived at their hall just as they were finishing breakfast, Commander Frost immediately inviting me to sit with him.

"Commander, good to see you again," I said, shaking his hand. "Have you and your men reached a conclusion?"

"We have. There are two hundred and eighty-seven of us here, and one hundred and seventy-three of us would like to join the Skyforged Vanguard. On top of that, Sixty-four more of us would like to stay on Nirn and find civilian jobs. The remaining fifty... They would like to be released on a few different planets across the Outer Rim."

"That is fantastic, Commander Frost," I said with a happy smile. "We are happy to welcome you all to the family. There is an induction process, and I'm afraid those of you who wish to leave won't be able to see the planet or anything else, but I am happy to welcome you all."

Thankfully, with a decision reached, we could finally start moving people around. The fifty clone troopers who wished to leave were quickly tested to confirm that they had no idea where they were, and that they weren't trying to get back to the Empire. After I was done with that, we handed each of them five hundred credits, a [blaster pistol](#), a spare blaster pack, a simple comms unit, and a single datapad. All of those things, save the credits, had been recovered as we stripped down the secret deep space storage facility, so there wasn't much of a loss on our end.

By the end of the day, the troopers who wished to had said their final goodbyes and left, shipped off in a dozen different freighters, all of them set off to the Outer Rim. With them gone, I sat down with the remaining troopers, explained my magic and explained my truth spell, before

testing them one by one. Thankfully, all of them were being honest with their intentions, and we did not uncover any secret agents or disloyal troopers.

With everyone confirmed as honest and eager to get off the ship, we started talking about what sort of roles they wanted to fill. A significant chunk of the troopers volunteered as crew for starships in various positions, from gunners to engineers. They would be spread around our various starships, with a warning that they would likely be moved again the next time we found a ship that needed crew. This way, they could get to know how we worked, meet some of their fellow members, and have something to do, all while giving us a bit of a buffer for when we snagged our next starship.

We also had quite a few pilots, rescued from Tie fighters or from their ships. They would be working under Toggle, getting mixed in with normal hires to create another four starfighter squadrons, which we would spread among our starships as they were assembled.

Then there were the sixty-four troopers who wanted to leave the military behind them. Surprisingly enough, there were already people reaching out, looking to hire them for civilian jobs. There were offers from all sorts of people, from farmers to electricians, and even the burgeoning delivery service that distributed packaged goods bought off planet. Flip, the clone in charge of our medical services, both civilian and for the Skyforged, eagerly snapped up seven of the ten medics among the troopers, the other three wanting to focus their time on other pursuits.

Finally, from a hundred and seventy-three clones, fifty-two of them wanted to continue to fight. They had seen the type of equipment I made sure my people had, and were looking forward to fighting for a group that actually cared about their well-being. While I was eager to have them on board, I still hadn't quite figured out what I was going to do with a considerable influx of ground troops.

I had several options, all of which were interesting and had potential. I could spread the out between the existing Groups, adding more ground teams to each. I could also start building a 5th Group, filling it with clones. I could also finally give 3rd Group some ground forces. The *Hope* had plenty of room in its hold for a rapid strike force of LAATi, and for fifty troopers. That would go against everything we had planned for the naval-focused Group, but giving them some flexibility wasn't exactly a bad idea.

Rather than fielding the question by myself, I called together some of my people, including Commander Frost. We sat down in one of the many meeting rooms of the *Fury* to discuss how best to distribute the new troops.

"Adding more into existing groups seems pointless," Corvak pointed out almost immediately. "We already break them up frequently to better fit specific missions. If we made them even larger, especially with ground troops, they would only get split up even more."

"That... That is an excellent point," I said, nodding in appreciation. "If we are just going to break the teams up, putting them in the group doesn't make sense. Are you in favor of a 5th group then, Corvak?"

"It makes the most sense," He pointed out simply.

"Making a full group might not be enough," Lieutenant Rider pointed out. "Our tactics lean heavily towards low numbers, high effectiveness. With that model, small ground teams are most effective. Breaking up fifty-two people into groups of that style would mean four teams of thirteen, preferably more if you don't mind being uneven."

"Well... if that's the case, why don't we make a 5th Group... *and* put ground teams on the *Hope*?" Tatnia pointed out. "Having teams, especially ones prepared to board other ships on board our largest carrier, seems like a good idea to me. And another group would just mean more money coming in. As long as we can afford to expand, I think we should do both."

"Plus, it means we can split off the *Hope* and *Wonder* to run missions on their own while the rest of the 3rd Group focuses on being our navy backup," Ahsoka added. "The *Hope* is an effective ship, and with a ground force of their own, they should be able to take on pretty significant missions."

"Can we afford to expand?" I asked, looking over to Quartermaster Finder.

"As long as it's done in the usual way, by stealing most of it, absolutely," He confirmed with a nod. "We have more than enough credits to upgrade a group-sized fleet to our standards. And our income is enough that, barring any significant slowdown, the loss would be negligible."

"...What about a 5th and 6th Group, in rapid succession?" I asked after a moment of pause. "I have several more Jedi looking to start working with us, and with any luck, Cal and his friends will want to join in on that as well."

That question caught Finder off guard for a moment. He did some mental math and confirmed a few things on his datapad before finally nodding.

"As long as our teams are consistently working on bringing in resources, then yes," Finder eventually responded. "Especially if your new idea for more automated resources works as well as you're hoping."

The mention of the new way of looking for resources caught a few people's attention, as I hadn't had the chance to spread the knowledge around. It was not as if I was hiding it, but rather waiting until it had a chance to shake out a few options for testing before bringing it up.

"Let's not rely on something we can't guarantee," I responded, shaking my head. "We start with building 5th Group as we explore our new strategy. After that, if everything is running smoothly, we can work on 6th Group. Commander Frost, does that sound fair to you? Two teams on the *Hope*, then two teams in the 5th group, then another group working with 6th fleet, which might take a bit longer to put together."

Frost looked at me, then the rest of the group, before looking back at me, looking unsure and confused.

"I think that sounds fair, Admiral, but... You talk as if finding new ships is as easy as... well, a walk in the park," he said, scratching a beard that was starting to form on his face. "Won't this take some time to put together?"

"We can set the Intel team to start focusing primarily on targets with assets that will work as transport and combat ships," I said, getting a nod from Sheora, who was barely present, tapping on a datapad in the corner. "That will hopefully bear fruit pretty quickly. Shouldn't take more than a month to get the group up and running."

"Before you ask, yes, he is being serious," Lieutenant Rider said, stopping Commander Frost before he could continue. "Between luck, methodology, and superior equipment... somehow we stumbled into being really good at stealing and commandeering ships for the cause. At this point... it's kind of our specialty."

"The Boss is the one who is good at it," Corvak pointed out. "The rest of us get by by asking 'What would Deacon do?'"

"Steal everything not nailed down," Sheora said from the corner.

"Don't feel restricted by mission parameters," Nal added. "There is always more to take."

"The bad guys can't hurt you if you're outside the box," Julius added with a smirk.

"Don't start a fight that you aren't certain you can win," Finder added, just a hint of a smile on his usually stoic face.

"Alright, alright, you guys can extol my many virtues later," I said, shaking my head. "Let's focus on this before moving on to my accolades, shall we?"

"As fun as torturing the Boss is, I'm more interested in this new idea that was mentioned," Tatnia said, giving a look with a raised eyebrow. "Care to fill me in?"

"Once the first step was completed, I was gonna bring it to everyone's attention anyway," I responded with a shrug. "The central core, which has been our primary source of intel on CIS assets, is starting to run dry. We need a new source of intel if we want to gather more automated resources. Thankfully, we have plenty of people who can lead us to places we can restart that trail."

I gestured to Commander Forst, who nodded in understanding, but wasn't quite clear on what exactly I was looking for, since I hadn't had time to run it past him yet.

"With our new members' help, we could locate all the intel we want in the form of ships, land assets, and more that have not been fully destroyed, were abandoned, or any other interesting scenario," I explained. "Once they work together to form a list of possible options, all that's left for us to track them down and see where they lead."

I continued to outline the general idea, presenting it as a way to gain significant automated assets that could help stabilize our growth and allow us to compete more directly

with Imperial forces. This was about more than ships and battle droids, I wanted production and sustainability.

"We basically ran a test run with Lieutenant Rider's group, though his actual ground team was away. Even with a smaller group, we already have a few interesting leads," I explained, Lieutenant Rider nodding from his seat. "Once our list is complete, then we run it past Sheora and her team to check for any relevant modern information, such as Imperial fleet movements or recent disasters. After that, we can start dispatching groups to check the locations for intel. I'm hoping that some of the leads will result in enough salvage and reclamation that it will at least partially cover the time spent."

"Admiral, the books aren't *that* tight," Finder pointed out. "If you start spending millions buying ships and refurbishing them, that might change, but we are good for now, we can afford some flexibility."

"What kind of liquid credits are we looking at right now?" I asked, suddenly curious.

"Free and clear, we have about twenty million credits," He responded, tapping his datapad. "We have about eight million in various products looking to be sold, mostly starfighters."

I nodded, running through what we had discussed in my head. There was a lot of information, and now I needed to line it all up and come to a final conclusion.

"Alright, here is the play. Commander Frost, divide your men into five groups. It will take time to arm and armor them, so we will work on them one by one. Once a team is ready, they will go on missions with various groups to give them some experience and let them see how we work," I explained. "Eventually, I want all five teams up and running armed, enchanted, and fully trained to our particular brand of crazy. While they are being armed and trained, we will piece together a 5th Group. Not every mission can be dedicated to this; we still need income, but I trust Intel and the group leaders to make every mission worthwhile. The goal is two full teams on the Hope, two in our new group, and one ready for the 6th."

I looked around, watching everyone nod and agree with my orders, waiting for me to continue.

"While everyone is doing that, 1st group will be investigating our leads on locating CIS assets," I explained. "Sometimes we will split up to cover more ground, we may take a break for specific missions, but that will be our main focus. Beyond that, as usual, we play it by ear, keep an eye out for targets of opportunity, and continue to grow at a reasonable pace. Well... reasonable for us."

That got a chuckle from the group, and I smiled.

"Commander Frost, head back to your men and explain what is happening, and let them know what sort of things we are looking for," I said with a nod. "I'll have some datapads sent

down for you so you can all start to write your ideas down. We can start moving you down to the surface as soon as possible."

With my part said, we continued to talk about a few more details, things like pay for those who were joining us and what sort of training and missions they could expect. Once the meeting was closed, I shook hands with everyone and excused myself, eventually heading back down to the surface with Ahsoka. Mara Jade had been stewing for a few days now, and before the 1st Group left to start investigating our CIS leads, I wanted to have a chat.