



Lightning Weekly



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OPERATION ARCHANGEL PURSUIT III SMOKES OUT THREATS



Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division and Iraqi soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 19th Brigade, 5th Division detonate firebombs with the intention of burning the underbrush of a section of palm groves, Dec. 22. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Walt Pels.

STORY BY
PFC Alisha Nye
14th Public Affairs Detachment

In theology, an archangel is a heavenly being who is meant to protect humankind by serving in the army of God.

Conserving and protecting the well-being of their fellow men is an ideal that Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, as well as their Iraqi army counterparts, took to heart during the appropriately named Operation Archangel Pursuit III.

"The purpose of the mission was to go into the town of Naqib and conserve it," said 1st Sgt. Dean Johnson, Battery A, 2nd Bn., 8th Field Artillery Regt. "Enemy forces came in the area and forced out the families who lived there."

The importance of saving this area is great. The town of Naqib, which is located in the Diyala province of Iraq, is an agricultural area that once provided the majority of the families in the vicinity with an income, Johnson explained.

"The area is a great farming area," said the Detroit, Mich., native. "The palm groves produce oranges, pomegranates and grapes as well as dates. That's how the families in the area made their money – made their

living, by farming."

However, where the palm groves once supplied the locals with a much needed livelihood, the underbrush of the palm groves now supply enemy forces with hiding spaces as well as a place to stash weapons.

"The problem with the palm groves is that they are overloaded with improvised explosive devices and booby traps," Johnson said. "When al Qaida took the area over it had a real impact on the families."

This is why coalition forces teamed up with key Iraqi army leaders and decided to unleash havoc on the one thing displacing the families of Naqib and preventing them from living normal lives. During Operation Archangel Pursuit III, the Soldiers of 2nd Bn., 8th Field Artillery Regt., with the assistance of their Iraqi army counterparts, transformed the underbrush into an inferno.

"The initial explosions burned off a lot of the fuel, and what that did was burn off the underbrush," Johnson said. "By clearing out the underbrush we can see straight through the palm groves so we can uncover and clear booby traps. We can clear out anything that may be in there – including bad guys."

Burning the underbrush not only heightened visibility, but it helped to keep Soldiers from getting harmed while going into the palm groves.

"Burning down the underbrush made it

possible to go into the palm groves without injury to the IA or coalition forces," Johnson said.

Now that the fire has burned out and threats have been found and destroyed, the main focus of the mission in Naqib is security, said Johnson.

"The Iraqi army is getting in there and securing the area so they can start bringing families back in," he said.

Johnson is hopeful that this will be the start of a larger mission to clear the palm groves in the entire Diyala province of threats to the families who reside there.

"Naqib is a small area, but it's a start," he said. "I'm hoping this will trickle throughout the province. It will help bring stability back."

Though the mission was considered to be a success, Johnson said it could not have been done without the Iraqi army spearheading the operation.

"They were the ones out front pulling security and patrolling," he said. "They are what made the operation successful. They know the area and without them I don't think we would have been as successful as we were. They are doing a tremendous job. They are ready for their country back."

ONE MAN'S TRASH IS ANOTHER MAN'S TREASURE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SPC Opal Vaughn
14th Public Affairs Detachment

There is a popular saying, "One man's trash is another man's treasure." And it is as true today as it was in the past.

At Forward Operating Base Warhorse, one unit is taking it to heart and really getting down and dirty for the good of the community as well as creating jobs and new opportunities for local nationals along the way. Since arriving to Warhorse, Forward Maintenance Company, 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, has been constantly busy by creating new job opportunities for young male local nationals looking for work.

As part of their ongoing program with Iraqi-Based Industrial Zone, Soldiers with FMC, 25th BSB, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., have created several jobs to include filling recycled burlap bags with sand, construction work, plumbing and even scrap metal work at a dump site.

"The local nationals could possibly one day be able to take over some of the responsibilities of KBR," explained Fairbanks, Alaska, native, Chief Warrant Officer three Anthony Neilko, the IBIZ Officer in Charge with FMC, 25th BSB, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. "A lot of the skills the local nationals possess are a great asset," Neilko continued, "They are a fix-it kind of people. If they see something broken, they know who and how to fix the problem and get the job done."

According to Neilko, he believes the future of the IBIZ has a lot of potential to expand, and this program is just the beginning of many more to come.

"We have a Turkish company which we've hired to remove all of the scrap metal off the FOB as part of our land field operation," Neilko stated. "There is so much scrap and junk that has been building up over the years that people have just dumped, and it needed to get cleaned up. So IBIZ put together this contract and in turn, as per the contract, the Turkish company has hired all Iraqis to do the work of removing the scrap metal."

"The local nationals then take the scrap metal to sell in the local communities and



Vanceboro, N.C. native, Sgt. Troy Waterman and Las Vegas native, Pvt. Eric Robinson, both Iraqi-Based Industrial Zone waste managers with Forward Maintenance Company, 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division sift through trash at the local dump.

They are able to make a profit off of it," Neilko stated. "It's not a new program, it's just recycling. Recycling trash for cash is something we are more familiar with in the states."

To monitor the on goings of the land field program, FMC has crew of Soldiers to supervise the local Iraqi nationals as well as to maintain security.

"My crew manages the Iraqis when they come through our area," said Vanceboro, N.C., native, Sgt. Troy Waterman, waste management non-commissioned officer in charge with FMC, 25th BSB, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. "We search their persons and their vehicles, and we go through all of the items they want to take off the FOB. All of this ensures they are not taking any hazardous or unauthorized materials into the local community."

Soldiers running the waste management point make sure the job they are tasked with is done thoroughly.

According to Waterman, each local national is searched by hand and removed of any material not authorized. This includes, but is not limited to any type of ammunition, military gear, weapons and digital media.

"One of the things we've noticed and have taken care of is the desire for copper," Neilko added. "The local nationals cannot take any copper off the FOB and there is a lot of copper here; the Iraqis want to take it

because it is worth a lot of money on the outside.

Getting this far in the program has not always been this easy for FMC. Along the road, FMC has encountered many problems including taking over for a previous unit, re-screening workers and maintaining security.

"When we first got here some of the contracts were already established, and some of the workers did not have all of the proper clearances to work with us," Neilko stated. "Since we are hiring people out in the local community, a big part of our job is 'who do you trust?' So we went back and re-screened all of our workers. As far as their working ability, all of our workers are pretty honest people but this can be swayed by outside influences at any time."

Neilko explained more, "We don't want our workers going home and something happening to them on the outside because they work for us. We have had a really good working relationship here with the local nationals and we would like to keep it that way."

Other aspects of IBIZs ongoing programs for local Iraqi nations include filling recycled burlap bags with sand, construction work and plumbing work.

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Pfc. Brian Born, Paralegal Specialist, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, inserts a needle to create a saline lock to introduce fluids intravenously to Spc. Heina Smith.

SOLDIERS HONE THEIR COMBAT READINESS IN COMBAT LIFE SAVER COURSE

**STORY AND PHOTO BY
SPC Jazz Burney
3rd IBCT, 25th ID**

Servicemembers from various units on Contingency Operating Base Speicher trained and participated in a condensed 3-day combat life saver course to learn or enhance their skills at the 345th Combat Support Hospital, Nov. 2008.

"More often in past Army combat situations those who experienced the true battles were the infantry, military police and those of combat military occupational specialties," said Sgt. 1st Class Clifton Joplin, non-commissioned officer in charge of medical education, 345th CSH. "Now because of the war we are fighting, the battle is no longer consolidated to certain MOS. We now have the task of training all Soldiers to the standard in life saving techniques across the board," he said.

Throughout the course, servicemembers were taught the basics of combat life saving: establishing superior fire power, learning the stages of care under fire, evaluation of a casualty, determining levels of consciousness, controlling bleeding, stabilizing a patient and evacuation procedures and methods.

Instructors at the CSH wanted to create a central place for joint medical training in order to teach one standard and produce the same results. This idea resulted in the CLS courses taught today, according to Joplin.

Spc. Ryan Chicoine a CLS instructor, 345th CSH, consistently emphasized, "The best medicine on the battlefield is fire superiority."

But the training isn't just for use in a combat zone.

"We are teaching a skill set to each service member so that they become more fluent with treating severe injuries ranging from the accident back in a motor pool, to stopping major arterial bleeding out on the battlefield - whatever situation is presented we want our forces to be able to react, adapt and possibly save each other's lives," said Joplin.

After the course the students shared why the course is important to them.

"The knowledge gained from the CLS class is a tremendous plus -- it teaches you to be able to react productively and exposes you to the gruesome and difficult situations that our line of work might present at any given time," said Senior Airman Paul Searles, Security Forces, 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron.

"Participation in the CLS course as a transportation specialist is good thing because with us being on the road as often as we are, there is a high possibility of us hitting an improvised explosive device," said Spc. Corey Smith, transportation specialist, 70th Transportation Company. "If any one of my battle buddies were to be injured, this training allows me to know how to help prolong their lives until the actual combat medics can come perform the advanced steps and ensure that Soldier's way back home safely," he said.

Smith brought out another important aspect of the training: self-aid.

"The training also teaches you how to stop bleeding and to introduce the necessary fluids to yourself if needed. There is always a possibility that your battle buddy might be engaging the enemy and can't tend to you; we need to know how to improvise for our own well being," he said.

TRASH continued from Page 2

"We also have an ongoing project which includes the need for sandbags," Neilko stated. "This used to be an old dump site for busted sandbags. We have the local nationals dump the old ones and refill new bags to be distributed about the post. The bags which are tattered or too busted to use are then recycled and reused at a later date. Meanwhile, it allows us to clean up the FOB as well," Neilko smiled.

Having an interpreter on hand at all times while dually learning basic Arabic phrases has eased the language barrier problems for FMC. "Any of my Soldiers can tell the local nationals to do something and they kind of understand each other enough to get the job done," Neilko said.

Neilko believes if his Soldiers, who supervise the work of the local nationals by pulling security, make a valid effort to communicate with the local nationals they are building a lasting relationship with. "The direction of the Army has changed to where we are no longer on a combat mission, now it's more we are trying to rebuild a nation. So communication has become that much more important not only for the U.S. but for the Iraqi people to stabilize their economy."

Neilko continued, "Once their economy gets up and running that means Soldiers won't have to come out here. If we do a rotation, it won't be 100,000 Soldiers; it may be only a few thousand."



Maj. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, Jr.

LIGHTNING 6 WEEKLY EDITORIAL

December 2008 marks the third holiday season spent deployed by the headquarters of the 25th Infantry Division since the beginning of the war on terror. In 2004 the unit spent the holidays in Bahgram, Afghanistan as the commanding headquarters of Joint Task Force 76 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. This was the division headquarters' first combat deployment since the Vietnam War. The division observed the 2006 holidays from Contingency Operating Base Speicher, near Tikrit, Iraq, as the operational headquarters for Multi-National Division – North, the command responsible for Iraq's northern provinces of Diyala, Salah Ad Din, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Sulaymaniah, Irbil, and Dahuk. December 2006 ushered in what would come to be known as the "surge," with the division receiving orders shortly after the holidays to extend its deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom to 15 months. Barely 12 months after returning home, the 25th Inf. Div. deployed again, this time in November 2008, to serve once more as the headquarters for MND-N, and spend its third holiday season away from home.

Whether with the 25th Inf. Div. for all three deployments, or with other units, many of the division's soldiers are serving their second, third, or even fourth tour of duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Some have spent consecutive holidays away from home due to tour extensions at the height of the surge. For many, those deployed and the families they leave behind, the holidays gain additional meaning and importance, as time with friends and family, previously taken for granted, becomes more precious. The holidays are still duty days while deployed, but soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines continue their missions and take what time they can to find a telephone, webcam, or instant messenger to say hello and share the holidays with children, spouses, parents, and friends. Families wait anxiously and plan their holidays to ensure not to miss that special call.

Deployed or not, the 25th Inf. Div. has always ensured those serving under its colors received a special holiday meal. Great effort and planning from food services personnel all culminate to provide a traditional meal of turkey, ham, dressing, sweet potatoes, etc. for all, regardless of location. From small combat outposts to large operational bases, service members are able to sit together and share the holidays with their "family" away from home.



Robert L. Caslen, Jr.
Major General, USA
Commanding

NEWS FROM THE HOME FRONT

HAWAII

Kailua – Nine days into his trip home for the holidays, President-elect Barack Obama continues to keep a low profile, with plans to play golf but none to greet local residents or speak to officials.

On this stay, which began Dec. 20, Obama has played three rounds of golf, worked out every morning except Christmas, and taken his family to Sea Life Park and for shave ice at Koko Marina.

He spent about an hour with Marines at Marine Corps Base Hawaii on Christmas night but has not held any public rallies like the one at Ke'ehi Lagoon that marked the start of his family's August vacation.

There are no public events scheduled for Obama on this trip, said Ben LaBolt, Obama's spokesman.

"While the president-elect continues to be briefed on global events and is keeping up to date with transition work, this is his last opportunity before taking office to spend an extended period of time with family and friends," LaBolt said in an e-mail to The Advertiser.

Obama, his wife, Michelle, and daughters Sasha and Malia are staying at Paradise Point Estates, an enclave of homes at the end of Kailuana Place in Kailua.

Local officials hoping to meet with the local boy president-elect were not disappointed with their lack of face time or communication. Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann, who will be attending the Jan. 20 inauguration in Washington, D.C., said he is planning to attend a U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting with Obama sometime between Jan. 16 and 19.

"It was a practice he had in place before he was elected president, and he continues to visit us during the holiday season. He's going to keep coming here, so I continue to ask everyone to please be respectful."

Gov. Linda Lingle said she will meet with Obama in February during policy discussions with fellow governors at the annual National Governors Association meetings. The discussions with Obama will focus on initiatives aimed at strengthening our economy, improving our infrastructure, achieving energy independence and developing a comprehensive broadband initiative.

"Hawaii residents are proud of President-elect Obama's local roots and the higher profile his election has afforded our state," Lingle said. "The president-elect faces many challenges in the coming weeks and months, and the people of Hawaii are proud that the Islands can provide him with an environment in which he feels comfortable and at home as he prepares to take office."

Obama stuck to his vacation routine

yesterday, working out at Marine Corps Base Hawaii and golfing with friends from Punahou and Chicago.

Obama teed off yesterday afternoon at Mid-Pacific Country Club, his second visit to the private club in Lanikai. He has also played at Olomana Golf Links on this vacation.

After arriving at the course, Obama greeted Punahou classmate Greg Orme with a hearty handshake and hug. Obama played a round with Punahou classmates Orme and Bobby Titcomb, Chicago friends Eric Whitaker and Martin Nesbitt, and aide Eugene Kang.

Obama wore sunglasses, a white shirt, khaki shorts, white and brown golf shoes, and a red baseball cap emblazoned with the City and County of Honolulu's Ocean Safety logo.

Obama worked out at the Marine base about 7:45 a.m., joined by his wife and Whitaker. He emerged at 8:37 a.m. and walked to a line of about 35 service members and family near the gym's entrance.

"How are you guys?" Obama asked as he approached the crowd.

Obama shook hands and exchanged greetings as onlookers snapped pictures.

TEXAS

Harker Heights – A slowing economy hasn't stopped area residents from purchasing spirits this year.

"Sales aren't excelling across the state and country," said Greg Glasscock, manager of Twin Liquors in Harker Heights. "This community is different. I don't think the military lays off when it comes to buying alcohol." Since opening in September, the store has benefited from record sales numbers, more so than their sister stores across Texas, Glasscock said. Glasscock has managed Twin Liquors stores in Austin, Round Rock, Taylor and Waco, but said the Harker Heights location has been the busier. Christmas Eve was his store's highest sales day, which Glasscock anticipates will be



Lisa Woodard stocks shelves Monday at Twin Liquors at Market Heights in Harker Heights.

dwarfed by New Year's Eve.

"We've had unbelievable sales here, but this business is not recession proof," Glasscock said. "About 20 percent of liquor stores went out of business during the last recession in the early '90s."

Bars and clubs have witnessed a decline in the number of drinks being sold, but liquor stores have not been hit too hard nationwide, according to The Nielsen Company reports.

More than 40 percent of bar managers, owners and bartenders surveyed in May reported they have seen a decrease in consumer traffic. They noted a decrease in the number of drinks ordered and said customers are ordering cheaper drinks.

Twin Liquors offers specials year round, including a discount on purchasing identical bottles or other featured brands.

Glasscock said his store has stocked up on popular merchandise and is pulling in as many employees as possible in preparation for Wednesday's alcohol-seeking onslaught.

Jamie Kern, manager of 19th Hole Liquor, Beer and Wine, said his store's holiday sales were slightly down from last year.

Kern said his store's sales normally increase around Halloween, but this year, they didn't go up until around Thanksgiving.

"It hasn't been too bad this year," Kern said. "I've noticed people are buying less expensive brands for different spirits."

NEW YORK

Watertown – A weekend of unseasonably high temperatures can melt two months of snow. It can't, however, erase the time and materials used by area municipalities to plow roads.

"The snow doesn't drive me crazy," said Bruce M. Rohr, town of Watertown highway superintendent. "But if it keeps up, we're going to be looking for more materials."

Mr. Rohr, along with other north country highway superintendents, is trying to conserve his snow removal budget only nine days after winter's official arrival.

"Every time it snows, we're out there," he said. "There have already been a lot of 12-hour, 20-hour days."

Both Watertown and Lowville have seen more than double the snowfall they historically receive for the month of December, 58.6 inches and 26.5 inches, respectively. Public works employees first manned plows this season Oct. 28.

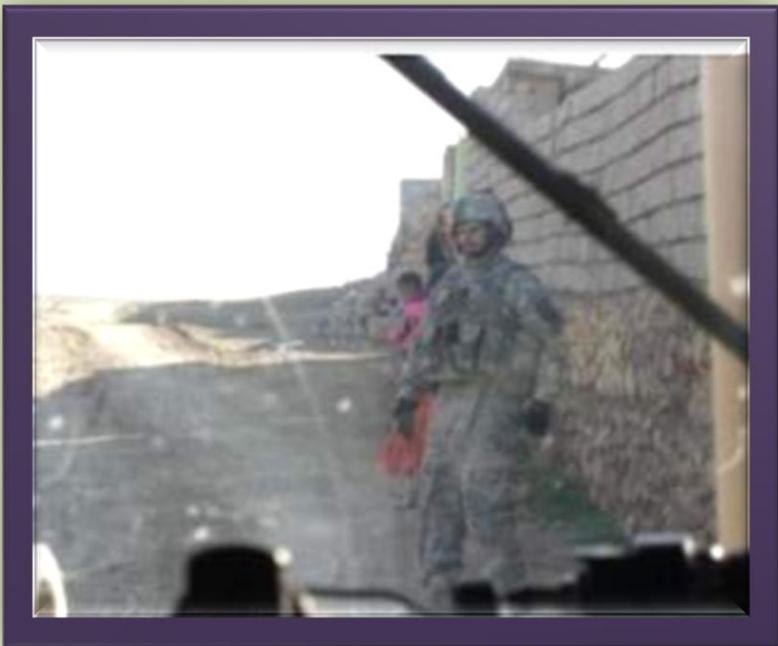
"When has it ever snowed that much before Halloween?" asked Peter E. Monaco, city of Watertown assistant superintendent of public works. "I sure as heck can't remember."

Town of Watertown plows made rounds 27 of the 31 days after Thanksgiving, Mr. Rohr said.

LIGHTNING HERO OF THE WEEK

SFC David Keener, III
Apache Troop, 1/3 ACR
Finchburg, MA

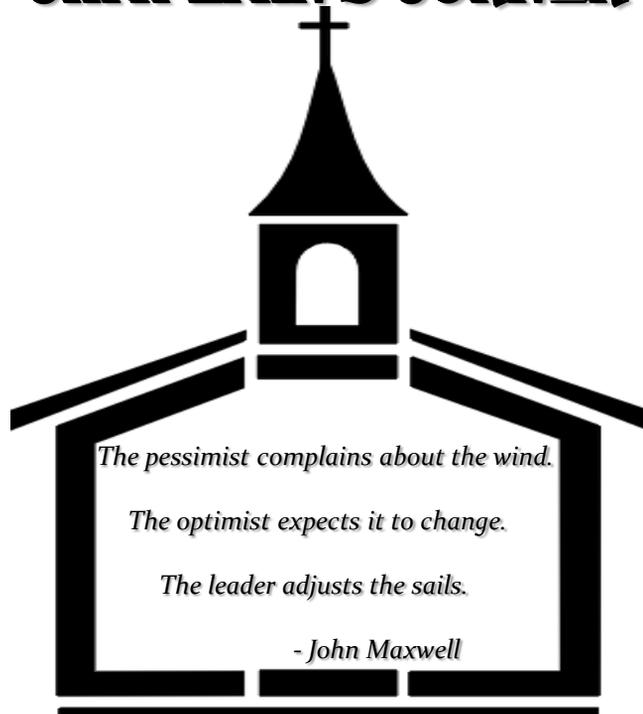
On 11 December 2008, after returning from Ash Shur IP Station, SFC Keener noticed a two-year old Iraqi boy, crying hysterically, and trapped next to a wall along a narrow street, in danger of being run over by a Coalition Force vehicle. SFC Keener immediately ordered his vehicle to stop so he could aid the small child. Picking up the child, SFC Keener returned him to the arms of his grateful parents. SFC Keener's actions that day most assuredly saved the young boy's life.



Sudoku

		3		4	8			
	4		9				6	
			2	7				3
4		6				1	7	
9				5				2
	3	1				5		4
3			6		4			
	1				2		5	
			1	3		9		

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER





Israel Pounds Hamas Buildings in "All-Out War"

With Tuesday's attacks on key Hamas structures and an incident at sea, Israel's defense minister said it is waging an "all-out war" on Gaza as fighting entered its fourth day.

The airstrikes, which Israel says are aimed at stopping the firing of rockets from Gaza into southern Israel, have killed more than 375 Palestinians, most of them Hamas militants, Palestinian medical sources said Tuesday.

Israel bombed a Hamas government compound early Tuesday, leveling at least three structures, including the foreign ministry building, eyewitnesses and Hamas security sources told CNN.

A Gaza-based journalist, whose name was withheld for security reasons, told CNN he heard 18 blasts in the area and that two fires were burning at the compound early Tuesday.

More bombs continued to drop over Gaza during the morning.

In the Mediterranean Sea, an Israeli patrol boat struck a boat carrying medical volunteers and supplies to Gaza early Tuesday as it attempted to intercept the vessel, witnesses and Israeli officials said. CNN correspondent Karl Penhaul was aboard the 60-foot, Gibraltar-registered Dignity when the contact occurred. In a radio message, the Israelis accused the vessel of being involved in terrorist activity, its captain said.

The Dignity was carrying 16 passengers and crew who were trying to reach Gaza through an Israeli blockade of the territory. It was "very severely rammed" by an Israeli patrol boat that had been pursuing the volunteer boat for about half an hour before the collision, and the crew said their vessel was struck intentionally, Penhaul said.

But Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor called allegations that the vessel was rammed deliberately "absurd." He said the volunteer boat was trying to outmaneuver the Israeli vessel when it was struck.

"This is why the collision occurred," Palmor said. "There is no intention on the part of the Israeli navy to ram anybody."

The bows of the two vessels struck each other. He said the Dignity was not "weaving about" and continued on its course as at least two Israeli vessels maneuvered around it.

SPORTING NEWS

Crennel Canned by Cleveland Following Disappointing '08 Season

Barely into another massive rebuilding project, the Cleveland Browns have already moved to Plan B.

Plan A -- or Plan Cowher -- has been scrapped.

Browns owner Randy Lerner made his second major move of the offseason Monday by firing coach Romeo Crennel, who lost 40 games in four seasons, never made the playoffs and went 0-8 against Pittsburgh, the only full-time Cleveland coach to go winless against the archrival Steelers.

Crennel's dismissal came less than 24 hours after Lerner fired general manager Phil Savage following a 31-0 loss in Pittsburgh. The Browns, who began the season pegged as one of the NFL's rising teams and ended it at 4-12 and in last place, began their offseason with a disheartening loss.

Bill Cowher isn't coming to Cleveland. The jut-jawed former Steelers coach and No. 1 target on Lerner's coaching wish list told the Browns he is not interested in joining them.

During a meeting on Saturday night in New York, Cowher, who has worked as a studio analyst for CBS since stepping down following the 2006 season, informed Lerner he has no intention of returning to coaching in 2009 and asked to be taken off the list of possible candidates.

"The explanation that he gave," Lerner said, "was that he was very focused on his kids and his life in North Carolina, and the way he's living in a noncoaching or, if you will, a civilian existence, and that he wasn't finished with that."

Lerner said he and Cowher had a long conversation about the Browns and Cowher's days as a player and assistant coach in Cleveland.

Cowher, who is certain to be coveted by several other teams, could change his mind. But Lerner said he left their meeting feeling as if it would be their last.

"He wasn't coy. He spoke very clearly," Lerner said. "He was very prepared to describe his position. It wasn't a dance." Lerner said he never got a chance to make a financial pitch to Cowher.

"It wasn't that kind of meeting," he said. "This was an informal visit to get out on the table that he was not prepared to be considered a candidate. Had I heard otherwise, I would have skipped that meeting and said let's get to it (business)."

So with Cowher apparently out of the picture, Lerner has turned his attention to

finding a replacement for Savage, who improved Cleveland's talent but had management deficiencies and embarrassed the club this season when he sent a profane e-mail to a fan following a win over Buffalo.

Lerner has been granted permission by New England to interview Scott Pioli, the Patriots' vice president of player personnel who helped assemble three Super Bowl winners as coach Bill Belichick's right-hand man.

The 43-year-old Pioli began his NFL career in Cleveland as a pro personnel assistant under Belichick in 1992. He has worked his way up and is now regarded as one of the league's premier front-office executives. Savage was seen similarly when the Browns hired him in 2005, but Lerner feels Pioli has a more expanded role than Savage did while he was Baltimore's director of player personnel.

Lerner did not know when he'll interview Pioli, who may be ready to step out of Belichick's shadow.

"He's very well trained," Lerner said. "I think he's got a very attractive football demeanor. It's the right time of life for him. He's a fundamentally good guy." Lerner intends to speak with another front office executive, but wouldn't divulge his name for competitive purposes.

As for his coaching search, Lerner said Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels, a 32-year-old native of Canton, Ohio, was on his list and that he will likely contact Eric Mangini, who was fired Monday by the New York Jets. Mangini began his pro career as an intern with Cleveland in the 1990s.

Lerner will abide by the league's Rooney Rule and interview at least one minority candidate. He said two interviews are being planned.

Lerner also expressed an interest in speaking with Bill Parcells if he leaves the Miami Dolphins. Floyd Reese, Charley Casserly and Tom Donahoe are other possibilities to become Cleveland's next GM. Lerner has also inquired about Mike Holmgren, who stepped down after 10 years coaching Seattle, and is planning to take a year off.

"I do not plan to stop there, but I don't expect that he won't take a year off," Lerner said. "I will make a further inquiry."

Lerner is determined to get his next round of hirings right. He feels responsible for the failures of Savage and Crennel, who were both new to their positions when they were hired in 2005.

LIGHTNING EXTRA

Ashura / Arba'een

Ashura (*tenth*) celebrated on the 10th of Muharram (7 January 2009)

Marks the death \ martyrdom of the 3rd Imam, Imam Husayn and his brother Abbas at the Battle of Karbala in 61 AH (680 AD)

Begins 40 days of mourning for Shi'a Muslims culminating on Arba'een

Starting on /around 1 Muharram (29 December 2008), Shi'a Muslims make pilgrimages to the Husayn and Abbas shrines in Karbala

Arba'een (fortieth) – 20 Sofar (15 February) occurs 40 days after Ashura

Shi'a Muslims will again make pilgrimages to the Husayn and Abbas shrines in Karbala, usually beginning 5 days prior (11 February 2009)

During both Ashura and Arba'een, Shi'a will conduct self-flagellation and dress in costumes to commemorate the battle, and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his family

A very emotionally charged celebration, the holiday commemorates one of the earliest and most significant struggles between Shi'a and Sunnis

Pilgrims and holy sites have often been targeted or attack by extremists

