

Sean Pierson is dropping a controversial attempt to become a Toronto police officer. The Stouffville resident, who once fought as "Pimp Daddy", hopes to fight in Toronto in 2011.

Fighter chooses ring over police battle

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Sean Pierson wants to set the record straight.

The 34-year-old mixed martial arts fighter from Stouffville wants people to know it was his choice not to pursue a career with Toronto Police.

Pierson's decision was simplified after receiving word from the force it turned down his conditional employment pending further investigation Tuesday.

Part of the reason given was he once fought under the persona of "Pimp Daddy".

By no means was it because he is a fighter, Toronto Police said.

But they also added there were concerns about him possibly requiring time off to prepare for matches.

That nickname or stage name, Pierson said, was given to him years ago by friends.

"Back then, I didn't think it would affect my future," he said. "I didn't think it would be a negative. Back then, we took it as a fun thing. No offence is given to anyone."

The married small-town resident told the force about the nickname when he applied to become a police officer.

He made his long-awaited debut in the

Ultimate Fighting Championship series circuit, winning on the UFC 124 card in Montreal last Saturday.

"What people don't understand is that it was my choice. I admire and respect the Toronto Police and that's why I applied. I was gifted with a choice of either applying with the Toronto Police or in going the mixed martial arts route at the same time.

"The Toronto Police said to me they had some concerns and I respected their concerns. But I'm the one that had to choose.

"At 34 years of age I have a small window of opportunity and I've chosen to take this route for the next year or two and then re-evaluate my career and possibly re-apply to try and serve my community," he said. "Right now, I'm chasing my dream of being a pro UFC fighter.

"The Toronto Police did nothing wrong and I respect that. There's no bitterness on my part."

Next?

Pierson hopes to fight again when the UFC makes its debut in Ontario at the Rogers Centre in Toronto April 30.

"It'll be up to (UFC president) Dana White for them to come back to me and I've got to get over some injuries that I had in Montreal and I will get over them," he said.

Clouds of Stouffville to dust of Kandahar

I left Stouffville in a grey overcast sky for Kandahar, Afghanistan. I always have such mixed emotions leaving my home town for military deployment - a mix of anxiety, excitement and melancholy.

I went to The Earl of Whitchurch for a beer with my father, which is our family's tradition for departures.

On the way out of town, I looked back through the taxi's rear window at Stouffville's Main Street. I wondered if I will see the town differently when I come back. It crossed my mind there is a small but real chance this could be the last time that I ever saw Stouffville.

I arrived in Valcartier, Que., to complete the final preparations for my task in Kandahar. As it was the men who left for the First World War from Stouffville, CFB Valcartier is the staging area again for the current Canadian expeditionary force.

I arrived in darkness with snow falling. After dinner, I spent the night in an old barracks alone, except for myself and my thoughts.

On departure day or "D-Day" in military parlance, I woke up early for a 6 a.m. breakfast of anything you could want: pancakes and french toast with real maple syrup, eggs any style, beans, home fries, ham, bacon or sausage. I saw some of the members of the Royal 22nd Regiment who will be on the flight with me to Kandahar at breakfast. Some of them are very young, 19 or 20 years old. Some of them are already veterans of Afghanistan and its battles.

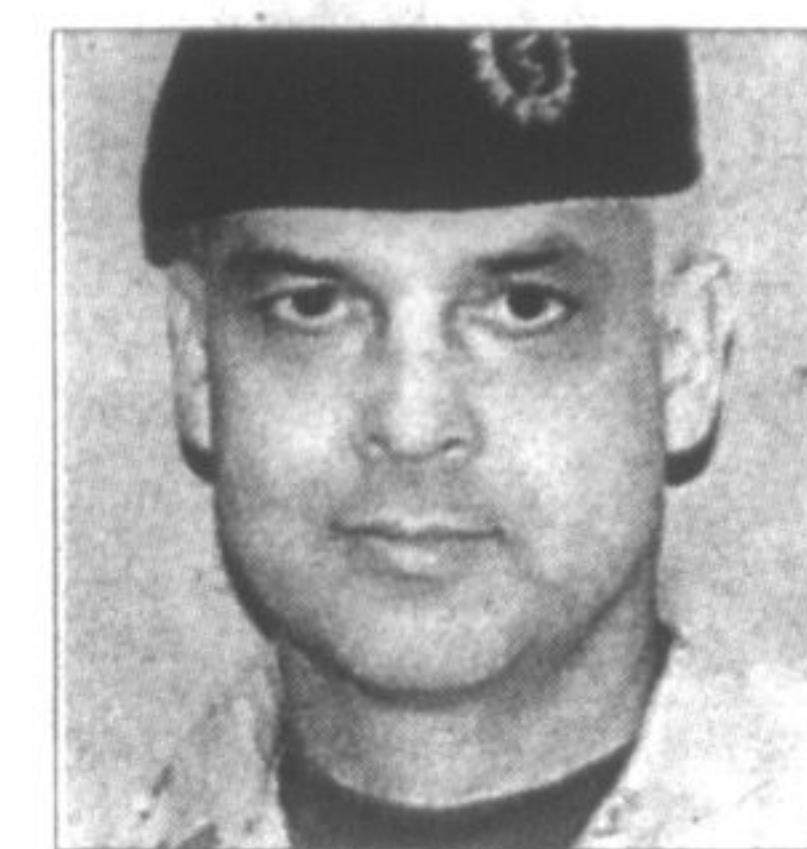
After breakfast, we assembled in a large drill hall to stand in long lines to ensure all of our paperwork was in good order. We then loaded our backpacks and duffle bags onto trucks bound for the airport in Quebec City.

In those long lines, I wondered if any of these soldiers are destined to be on my operating table. One always wonders what faces will not be coming back?

Dec. 8 - Kandahar, Afghanistan

Our aircraft, a massive Canadian C-17 transport plane, touched down in Kandahar and it opened its huge rear ramp down to the darkness of Afghanistan at midnight. As the ramp opened we got our first smells of Kandahar, the smell of burning garbage and jet fuel. The dust of Afghanistan rolled over us as the plane taxied to stop. We were then ordered out of the plane to a makeshift reception area where we received a briefing of what to do when a rocket attack falls upon the camp.

Again, in typical army fashion, we stood in line and completed more paperwork and were then put on a truck to our over-



Andrew Beckett

Kandahar Dispatches

night quarters, a large noisy circus tent with rows of bunk beds with about 200 Canadian troops already in it, some sleeping, some looking for their baggage as we soon started doing.

The next morning we arose in the early hours of darkness and went to morning ablutions through the dark, cold and dusty morning. As the day broke, it became evident the dust is pervasive here.

Dust covers everything: your skin, clothes, hair and equipment. It has the consistency of baby powder. It puffs up with every step you take. Soldiers look like they are walking with a haze of smoke around them as they march to their tasks.

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The camp at Kandahar is bustling, swarming with soldiers and civilian contractors, from more than a dozen nations: Romanian, Slovakian, British, Australian, New Zealanders, French, Jordanian and many more. The two most represented groups are Canadian and American, of course.

The camp itself is a sprawling warren of concrete blast walls, stacked ATCO trailers, sea containers and barbed wire.

The traffic in the camp is very heavy and regulated by four-way stop signs, not unlike Main Street, Stouffville on a Saturday back when the flea market was a major attraction in town.

Except the traffic consists of every vehicle you can think of, from Toyota pick-up trucks to main battle tanks, grinding down the graveled roads.

Dr. Andrew Beckett of Stouffville is in Kandahar this winter working as a trauma surgeon. The Sunnybrook hospital doctor is writing about his experiences for The Sun-Tribune.

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