



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF NAVAL RECORDS
701 S. COURTHOUSE ROAD, SUITE 1001
ARLINGTON, VA 22204-2490



Docket No: 6479-21
Ref: Signature Date



Dear Petitioner:

This is in reference to your application for correction of your naval record pursuant to Section 1552 of Title 10, United States Code. After careful and conscientious consideration of relevant portions of your naval record and your application, the Board for Correction of Naval Records (Board) found the evidence submitted insufficient to establish the existence of probable material error or injustice. Consequently, your application has been denied.

Although you did not file your application in a timely manner, the statute of limitations was waived in accordance with the 25 August 2017 guidance from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (Kurta Memo). A three-member panel of the Board, sitting in executive session, considered your application on 4 February 2022. The names and votes of the panel members will be furnished upon request. Your allegations of error and injustice were reviewed in accordance with administrative regulations and procedures applicable to the proceedings of this Board. Documentary material considered by the Board consisted of your application together with all material submitted in support thereof, relevant portions of your naval record, and applicable statutes, regulations, and policies, to include the Kurta Memo, the 3 September 2014 guidance from the Secretary of Defense regarding discharge upgrade requests by Veterans claiming post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Hagel Memo), and the 25 July 2018 guidance from the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness regarding equity, injustice, or clemency determinations (Wilkie Memo). Additionally, the Board also considered the advisory opinion (AO) furnished by a qualified mental health provider, which was previously provided to you. Although you were afforded an opportunity to submit an AO rebuttal, you did not do so.

The Board determined that your personal appearance, with or without counsel, would not materially add to their understanding of the issues involved. Therefore, the Board determined that a personal appearance was not necessary and considered your case based on the evidence of record.

You enlisted in the Navy on 9 July 2001. Your pre-enlistment medical examination on 7 July 2001 and self-reported medical history noted no psychiatric or neurologic conditions or

symptoms. On 6 January 2002 you reported for duty on board the █
in █.

On 14 September 2002 you received non-judicial punishment (NJP) for unauthorized absence (UA) and missing movement by design. You did not appeal your NJP. The same day your command issued you a "Page 13" counseling warning (Page 13). The Page 13 expressly warned you that any further deficiencies in performance and/or conduct may result in disciplinary action and in processing for administrative separation. However, on 3 March 2003 you received NJP for the wrongful use of a controlled substance and three separate UA specifications. You did not appeal your second NJP.

On 7 March 2003 your command notified you that you were being processed for an administrative discharge by reason of misconduct due to drug abuse. You waived your rights to consult with counsel, submit statements to the separation authority, and to present your case to an administrative separation board. Ultimately, on 6 May 2003 you were separated from the Navy for misconduct due to drug abuse with an other than honorable conditions (OTH) characterization of service and assigned an RE-4 reentry code.

As part of the Board review process, the BCNR Physician Advisor who is a licensed clinical psychologist (Ph.D.), reviewed your contentions and the available records and issued an AO dated 16 December 2021. The Ph.D. initially noted that you did not provide clarifying information about the trauma related to your purported PTSD or information about your mental health condition. The Ph.D. determined that your single statement in your service record about not being in the right frame of mind is not enough information to support a mental health condition. The Ph.D. concluded by opining that the evidence failed to establish you suffered from a mental health condition on active duty or your in-service misconduct could be mitigated by a mental health condition.

The Board carefully considered all potentially mitigating factors to determine whether the interests of justice warrant relief in your case in accordance with the Kurta, Hagel, and Wilkie Memos. These included, but were not limited to your contentions that: (a) you feel you had untreated service-connected mental health conditions leading you to use substances; (b) you reached out for help but did not get any assistance; and (c) you still have nightmares, depression, anxiety, and poor sleep that have not resolved because you are unable to obtain good mental health treatment. However, given the totality of the circumstances, the Board determined that your request does not merit relief.

In accordance with the Kurta, Hagel, and Wilkie Memos, the Board gave liberal and special consideration to your record of service, and your contentions about any traumatic or stressful events you experienced and their possible adverse impact on your service. However, the Board concluded that there was no convincing evidence that you suffered from any type of mental health condition while on active duty, or that any such mental health condition was related to or mitigated the misconduct that formed the basis of your discharge. As a result, the Board concluded that your misconduct was not due to mental health-related symptoms. Moreover, the

Board observed that you did not submit any clinical documentation or treatment records to support your mental health claims despite a request from BCNR on 18 October 2021 to specifically provide additional documentary material. The Board determined the record clearly reflected that your active duty misconduct was intentional and demonstrated you were unfit for further service. The Board also determined that the evidence of record did not demonstrate that you were not mentally responsible for your conduct or that you should otherwise not be held accountable for your actions.

Additionally, the Board noted that there is no provision of federal law or in Navy/Marine Corps regulations that allows for a discharge to be automatically upgraded after a specified number of months or years. The Board did not believe that your record was otherwise so meritorious as to deserve a discharge upgrade. The Board determined that characterization under OTH conditions is appropriate when the basis for separation is the commission of an act or acts constituting a significant departure from the conduct expected of a Sailor. Lastly, absent a material error or injustice, the Board declined to summarily upgrade a discharge solely for the purpose of facilitating VA benefits, or enhancing educational or employment opportunities. The Board carefully considered any matters submitted regarding your post-service conduct and accomplishments, however, even in light of the Wilkie Memo and reviewing the record holistically, the Board still concluded that given the totality of the circumstances your request does not merit relief. Accordingly, the Board determined that there was no impropriety or inequity in your discharge, and even under the liberal consideration standard for mental health conditions, the Board concluded that your misconduct clearly merited your receipt of an OTH.

You are entitled to have the Board reconsider its decision upon submission of new matters, which will require you to complete and submit a new DD Form 149. New matters are those not previously presented to or considered by the Board. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that a presumption of regularity attaches to all official records. Consequently, when applying for a correction of an official naval record, the burden is on the applicant to demonstrate the existence of probable material error or injustice.

Sincerely,

2/10/2022

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Executive Director

Signed by: █