



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

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Docket No: 6888-21

Ref: Signature Date

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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 25 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 originally enlisted in the Navy on 11 September 1984. Your pre-enlistment medical examination on 3 January 1984 and self-reported medical history noted both no psychiatric or neurologic conditions or symptoms. On 22 September 1986 you received non-judicial

punishment (NJP) for the wrongful use of a controlled substance (cocaine). You did not appeal your NJP. On 6 May 1988 you reenlisted for four years.

On 25 December 1990 you commenced an unauthorized absence (UA) that terminated after two days with your apprehension on 27 December 1990. Upon your return to military control you underwent a urinalysis test. On 28 December 1990 you received NJP for both UA and the wrongful use of cocaine.

On 8 January 1991 your command notified you that you were being processed for an administrative discharge by reason of misconduct due to drug abuse. You consulted with counsel and elected your rights to present your case to an administrative separation board (Adsep Board). In the interim, a Navy Medical Officer determined that you were not physically or psychologically dependent on drugs.

On 20 February 1991 an Adsep Board convened to hear your case. Following the presentation of evidence and witness testimony, the Adsep Board members unanimously determined that you committed the misconduct as charged and recommended that you be separated from the Navy with an other than honorable conditions (OTH) characterization of service. On 28 March 1991 your separation medical examination and self-reported medical history noted both no psychiatric or neurologic conditions or symptoms. Ultimately, on 28 March 1991 you were discharged from the Navy for misconduct with an 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 14 January 2022. The Ph.D. initially noted that your service record did not contain evidence of a mental health condition diagnosis or reported psychological symptoms/behavioral changes indicative of a diagnosable mental health condition. The Ph.D. concluded by opining that the evidence failed to establish you suffered from PTSD on active duty, or that your misconduct could be attributed to PTSD.

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 felt as though your mother's passing in 1985 completely changed you; (b) three weeks after she passed you received deployment orders and felt during that time that followed you really had no outlet, felt like you had lost all of your support system, and had nowhere to turn; (c) you trusted in your fellow Sailors a bit too much at times and would later act out and make a couple of stupid choices that ended up costing you your naval career; (d) your choices were uncharacteristic of you; and (e) you have not used any controlled substances since your discharge and have been a very productive citizen and maintained a great employment record. 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 16 November 2021 to specifically provide additional documentary material. The Board also noted the significant inconsistencies between your current explanation for your behavior and your sworn testimony at your February 1991 Adsep Board offering vastly different reasons for your drug use. The Board determined the record clearly reflected that your active duty misconduct was intentional and willful 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,

3/3/2022

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Executive Director

Signed by: █