



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

█
Docket No. 2585-23
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 limitation 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 22 September 2023. 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 an advisory opinion (AO) furnished by qualified mental health provider and your response to the AO.

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.

After a previous period of Honorable service, you re-enlisted in the U.S. Navy and began a second period of active duty service on 27 January 1988. Your pre-enlistment physical examination, on 22 January 1988, and self-reported medical history noted no psychiatric or neurologic conditions, symptoms, or treatment/counseling history.

On 22 June 1988, your command issued you a “Page 13” counseling warning (Page 13) for failing to properly take care of some minor traffic violations. The Page 13 advised you that further deficiencies in performance and/or conduct may result in disciplinary action and in processing for administrative discharge. You did not submit a Page 11 rebuttal statement.

On 17 September 1988, you commenced a period of unauthorized absence (UA) that terminated after sixteen (16) days on 3 October 1988. On 6 October 1988, you received non-judicial punishment (NJP) for your 16-day UA. You did not appeal your NJP.

On 3 January 1989, you commenced a period of unauthorized absence (UA) that terminated after twenty-six (26) days on 29 January 1989. While in a UA status, you missed the movement of the █ from █, █. On 6 February 1989, your command vacated and enforced the suspended portion of your October 1988 NJP. On 10 February 1989, you received NJP for your 26-day UA. You did not appeal your NJP.

On 3 March 1989, you received NJP for failing to obey a lawful order when you failed to properly stand watch. You did not appeal your NJP.

Following your third NJP, your command notified you that you were being processed for an administrative discharge by reason of misconduct due to a pattern of misconduct. You waived your rights to consult with counsel, include written rebuttal statements, and to request a hearing before an administrative separation board. On 17 March 1989, the Separation Authority approved and directed your separation from the Navy for a pattern of misconduct with an under Other Than Honorable conditions (OTH) characterization of service. Ultimately, on 30 March 1989, you were discharged from the Navy for misconduct with an OTH characterization of service and assigned an RE-4 reentry code.

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 desire for a discharge upgrade and contentions that: (a) at the time you were discharged you were an immature twenty year old, (b) you did not understand what you were signing, and did not understand that what you were signing was being used against you in a court setting, (c) you started facing symptoms of depression that led into drug use which dominated a large period of your life, (d) you have been to several treatment centers, (e) because your military per diem could not be used for housing given your discharge status that sent you into a deeper depression and deeper into drug use, (f) due to being young and immature you made the wrong decisions which hurt your naval career by using alcohol and drugs, and (g) the Navy recruiter did not do his job correctly by reenlisting you with seventeen (17) traffic warrants. For purposes of clemency and equity consideration, the Board considered the entirety of the evidence you provided in support of your application.

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 7 August 2023. The Ph.D. stated in pertinent part:

There is no evidence that he was diagnosed with a mental health condition in military service, or that he exhibited any psychological symptoms or behavioral changes indicative of a diagnosable mental health condition. Throughout his disciplinary processing, there were no concerns raised of a mental health condition that would have warranted a referral for evaluation. Post-service, he has provided evidence of mental health concerns that are temporally remote to his military service and appear unrelated. Unfortunately, his personal statement is not sufficiently detailed to establish clinical symptoms in service or provide a nexus with his misconduct, particularly given his statement that his UA was related to legal issues and civilian incarceration. Additional records (e.g., post-service mental health records describing the Petitioner's diagnosis, symptoms, and their specific link to his misconduct) may aid in rendering an alternate opinion.

The Ph.D. concluded, "it is my clinical opinion there is insufficient evidence of a diagnosis of PTSD that may be attributed to military service. There is in-service evidence of mental health concerns that may be attributed to military service. There is insufficient evidence to attribute his misconduct to PTSD or another mental health condition."

Following a review of your AO rebuttal submission, the Ph.D. did not change or otherwise modify their original AO.

After thorough review, the Board concluded these potentially mitigating factors were insufficient to warrant relief. In accordance with the Hagel, Kurta, 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 of any nexus between any PTSD or other mental health conditions and/or related symptoms and your misconduct, and determined that there was insufficient evidence to support the argument that any such PTSD or other mental health conditions 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 conditions or symptoms. Moreover, even if the Board assumed that your misconduct was somehow attributable to any mental health conditions, the Board unequivocally concluded that the severity of your misconduct far outweighed any and all mitigation offered by such mental health conditions. The Board determined the record reflected that your 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 not be held accountable for your actions.

The Board observed that character of military service is based, in part, on conduct and overall trait averages which are computed from marks assigned during periodic evaluations. Your overall active duty trait average calculated from your available performance evaluations during your enlistment was approximately 1.0 in conduct. Navy regulations in place at the time of your discharge recommended a minimum trait average of 3.0 in conduct (proper military behavior), for a fully honorable characterization of service. The Board concluded that your conduct marks during your active duty career were a direct result of your pattern of serious misconduct which further justified your OTH discharge characterization.

The Board did not believe that your record was otherwise so meritorious as to deserve a discharge upgrade. The Board concluded that significant negative aspects of your conduct and/or performance greatly outweighed any positive aspects of your military record. 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. Therefore, while the Board carefully considered the evidence you submitted in mitigation, even in light of the Kurta, Hagel, and Wilkie Memos and reviewing the record liberally and holistically, the Board did not find evidence of an error or injustice that warrants granting you the relief you requested or granting relief as a matter of clemency or equity. Ultimately, the Board concluded the mitigation evidence you provided was insufficient to outweigh the seriousness of your misconduct. Accordingly, given the totality of the circumstances, the Board determined that your request does not merit relief.

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,

9/26/2023

