



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

■  
Docket No. 4015-23  
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 3 January 2024. 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). The Board also considered the advisory opinion (AO) furnished by a qualified mental health professional. Although you were afforded an opportunity to submit an AO rebuttal, you chose not to do so.

You enlisted in the Navy and began a period of active duty on 30 April 1980. You subsequently completed your active-duty period of service with an Honorable characterization of service and transferred to the Navy Reserve on 29 April 1984. You subsequently reenlisted into the Navy and commenced another period of active duty on 20 July 1987.

On 3 December 1987, you were referred by the Drug and Alcohol Program (DAPA) counselor for a medical evaluation due to your admission of an "alcohol problem" and possible drug use. You were evaluated and diagnosed with alcohol and cocaine abuse. On 17 December 1987, you

received non-judicial punishment (NJP) for unauthorized absence (UA) and wrongful use of cocaine. On 3 March 1988, you received a second NJP for having lost your military identification card, UA, and wrongful use of cocaine.

On 8 March 1988, you were notified that you were being recommended for administrative discharge from the Navy by reason of misconduct due to drug abuse. You waived your procedural right to consult with military counsel and to present your case to an administrative discharge board. The commanding officer forwarded your administrative separation package to the separation authority (SA) recommending your administrative discharge from the Navy with an Other Than Honorable (OTH) characterization of service. The SA approved the recommendation for administrative discharge and directed your OTH discharge from the Navy by reason of misconduct due to drug abuse. On 20 April 1988, you were so discharged.

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 to change your discharge character of service to gain access to veterans' benefits that have been denied to you over 30 years. The Board considered your contentions that: (1) after your participation in operations in █ during your first enlistment you began suffering from conditions associated with PTSD and thus you began recreational use of non-prescribed prescription medication to cope with your trauma, and (2) you managed to overcome your drug abuse habit and reenlisted for a second term, due to the lack of proper leadership and the availability of counseling at that time you unfortunately failed a "drug examination" and was subsequently discharged. You assert that you proudly served your country with honor and dignity during your six years of active-duty service, you learned values in the military that are still relevant in your everyday life, and you continue to strive for self-improvement and to make a positive impact. For purposes of clemency and equity consideration, the Board noted you did not provide supporting documentation describing post-service accomplishments or advocacy letters.

As part of the Board's review, a qualified mental health professional reviewed your request and provided the Board with an AO on 16 November 2023. The AO noted in pertinent part:

There is no evidence that the Petitioner was diagnosed with a mental health condition or suffered from PTSD while in military service other than alcohol and cocaine abuse. He did not submit any medical evidence in support of his claim. His personal statement is not sufficiently detailed to establish clinical symptoms or provide a nexus with his misconduct. Additional records (e.g., post-service mental health records describing the Petitioner's diagnosis, symptoms, and their specific link to his misconduct) would aid in rendering an alternate opinion.

The AO concluded, "it is my considered clinical opinion there is insufficient evidence of a mental health condition that may be attributed to military service. There is insufficient evidence that his misconduct could be attributed to a mental health condition."

After thorough review, the Board concluded your potentially mitigating factors were insufficient to warrant relief. Specifically, the Board determined that your misconduct, as evidenced by your NJPs, outweighed these mitigating factors. In making this finding, the Board considered the seriousness of your misconduct and the fact it involved multiple drug offenses. The Board determined that illegal drug use by a service member is contrary to military core values and policy, renders such members unfit for duty, and poses an unnecessary risk to the safety of their fellow service members. The Board also considered the likely negative effect your misconduct had on the good order and discipline of your command. Further, the Board concurred with the AO that there is insufficient evidence of a mental health condition that may be attributed to military service, and there is insufficient evidence that your misconduct could be attributed to a mental health condition. As the AO explained, your personal statement is not sufficiently detailed to establish clinical symptoms or provide a nexus with your misconduct. Additionally, there is no evidence that you were diagnosed with a mental health condition or suffered from PTSD while in military service. Therefore, the Board 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. As a result, the Board concluded your conduct constituted a significant departure from that expected of a service member and continues to warrant an OTH characterization. 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. Accordingly, given the totality of the circumstances, the Board determined 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,

1/19/2024

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Executive Director

Signed by: █