



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

IN THE MATTER OF: DOCKET NUMBER: BC-2024-01368

COUNSEL: NONE

HEARING REQUESTED: NO

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

1. Her bad conduct discharge (BCD) be upgraded.

2. Her charges related to her court-martial conviction be expunged from her records.

3. Her grade of senior airman (E-4) be restored.

APPLICANT'S CONTENTIONS

She accepts responsibility, regrets her actions and lying about the incident. At the time of her court-martial, she did not discuss the abuse she experienced. It is still difficult for her to think about the severe anxiety she suffered due to the incident and the people she surrounded herself with. She was a victim of torture and severe physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her fellow airmen, which resulted in her complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The abuse she endured from her former husband became a significant contributing factor to her behavioral changes that led to her court-martial and BCD. There were numerous incidents in which her former husband, who was also a service member, physically, verbally, and emotionally abused her and physically abused their dog. She received bruises, cuts, and sores on her scalp when he tore out her hair. He bit her on the nose. She received a severe cut on her hand leaving a permanent scar and numbness when she slipped on a cooking knife when he attacked her. She required toe surgery when she awkwardly tripped after he pushed her into a glass coffee table, and she tore her rotator cuff when she fell over a couch attempting to defend herself from him. He also held a gun to her head. She reported her abuse to her leadership and medical providers and his colleagues were aware of his history of aggressive and violent behaviors. She received therapy for the abuse and met with three different mental health providers during service. With extensive therapy from her last/third therapist, she was able to find the strength to leave her husband.

The abuse, harassment and intimidation from her former husband did not end at this point as he continued to engage in these behaviors after she left him. The abuse she suffered affected her mental and physical condition as she would experience anxiety and severe depression and had

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long-term physical/reproductive issues. She tried to request her medical records from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) to corroborate her claims but only received records for her toe surgery. She was informed by the NPRC, her medical records could only be given to a physician because they were sensitive.

She performed duties for Release of Information when she was alone for the holidays and decided to invite her former colleagues/friends from the Medical Records department for a social gathering. While drinking beer and talking, her friends used the fireplace to burn medical records from their office. She admitted to allowing them to do so. Thinking back on the incident, she is stunned that she allowed such a bizarre act to occur in her friend's home. She justified the burning of the records because they were digital and the old paper records did not matter. She was the only person implicated in the incident. She regrets her actions and for putting her friend's career at risk because she allowed the act to occur in his home. She was under investigation by the Office of Special Investigation (OSI) and later, her direct supervisor ordered an independent investigation into her alleged inappropriate relationship with a married sergeant.

From the stressful OSI investigation and an incident of a colleague's dog dying under her watch, she was admitted to the inpatient unit and was hospitalized for five days. She had anxiety and was frightened during her hospital stay and was relieved once discharged. She was being harassed by others when going through the court-martial proceedings. Her supervisor issued a "Be on the Lookout" (BOLO) for her and listed her as absent without leave (AWOL) while she was on convalescent leave. Her confusion and depression worsened by the harassment she experienced, and she missed a flight to the base for a psychiatric evaluation for her court-martial process. She was evaluated but did not know the results of the evaluation. Her attorney advised her to plea to the charges in exchange for a reduced sentence and reduction in grade. She accepted the advice because she could not deal with a lengthy sentence. She served her confinement and once released, she continued to endure verbal harassment from fellow service members until she was discharged from service.

She still suffers from anxiety disorder and occasionally experiences unprovoked anxiety attacks. She has worked vigorously on her mental health and professional life. Despite these obstacles, she graduated from college, works in the mortgage industry, has been married for over 22 years, helps her husband with his business, and volunteers in her community. Her experiences as a victim of abuse and PTSD qualify her for upgrade of her discharge.

In support of her request for a discharge upgrade, the applicant provides a personal statement, a copy of her college diploma, a witness statement, and character statements.

The applicant's complete submission is at Exhibit A.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The applicant is a former Air Force airman basic (E-1).

On 30 Oct 95, the applicant was issued a Letter of Reprimand (LOR) for dereliction of duty for failing to show for work on 28 Oct 95. The applicant provided comments to this LOR apologizing for the incident and further explaining why she did not show up.

On 31 May 96, the applicant was issued a LOR for insubordinate conduct towards a non-commissioned officer (NCO) on 22 May 96. The applicant used profanity after being told she could not leave early because she was late that morning.

On 30 Aug 96, the applicant was issued a LOR for assault on the night of 23-24 Aug 96. The applicant provided a response in which she explained the conflict she was having with the other airman. She was also issued a referral Enlisted Performance Report (EPR) due to this incident.

On 21 Nov 96, AF Form 3070A, *Record of Nonjudicial Punishment Proceedings*, indicates the applicant received nonjudicial punishment (NJP), Article 15 for using disrespectful language towards an NCO and another airman on or about 5 Nov 96. She received a reduction in grade to airman (E-2), suspended through 20 May 97, at which time would be remitted, unless sooner vacated and 30 days of extra duty. The applicant provided a response explaining her point of view.

On 14 Feb 97, an investigation found the allegation against the applicant for adultery was unfounded but did find she was engaged in an unprofessional relationship with an NCO.

On 27 Feb 97, the applicant was issued a Letter of Counseling (LOC) for using disrespectful language towards her supervisor on 21 Jan 97.

On 28 May 97, the applicant was issued a LOR for failing to attend training on 7 May 97.

On 6 Jun 97, the applicant requested a sanity board due to the charges, violations of Articles 107 and 108 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The defense stated witnesses testified the applicant's behavior during the charged timeframe was extremely erratic, her duty performance had steadily decreased, which corresponded to her marital problems, and due to the seeking of treatment through mental health prior to the incidents.

On 21 Jul 97, the applicant made an offer for a pre-trial agreement to accept a guilty plea of a lesser charge of destruction of government property of a value less than \$100.00 and furthermore agreed to a trial by a military judge and waived her rights to a trial by a jury. On this same date, an appendix to the pre-trial agreement stated the convening authority would not approve a sentence of confinement in excess of 12 months, a fine, or a dishonorable discharge. Both were accepted by the convening authority on 22 Jul 97.

On 20 Aug 97 through 15 Oct 97, several legal reviews were conducted and the staff judge advocate recommended the approved sentence be adjudged.

On 17 Oct 97, the convening authority published General Court-Martial Order (GCMO) number

The Order stated the applicant pled guilty and was found guilty of one charge and one

specification of willfully destroying military property by burning medical records of a value less than \$100.00 between on or about 22 Dec 96 and 7 Jan 97 (Article 108). The applicant was sentenced to confinement for three months, reduction to the grade of airman basic, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and discharge from the service with a BCD.

On 13 Jan 97, the Sanity Board Evaluation indicated the applicant did not have a severe mental disease or defect at the time of the alleged criminal conduct and had sufficient mental capacity to understand the nature of the court martial proceedings. She was diagnosed with an axis II borderline personality disorder.

On 30 Jan 98, the applicant submitted a request for appeal because the applicant's counsel stated she desired to be retained in the Air Force despite her conviction and her defense counsel at the time of her court-martial implied a punitive discharge was appropriate punishment and omitted evidence of her awards.

On 27 Apr 98, the Court of Criminal Appeals concluded the findings and sentence were correct in law and fact, the sentence was not inappropriate, and no error prejudicial to the substantial rights of the applicant was committed.

On 2 May 98 and 12 Jun 98, the applicant submitted another appeal stating the court erred by not setting aside the applicant's sentence because the conflict between her assertion in her unsworn statement she wanted to use her GI Bill benefits and defense counsel's concession a BCD was an appropriate punishment. Furthermore, the courts erred by finding the staff judge advocate did not commit plain error by failing to refer the convening authority to the applicant's three awards and ribbon.

On 26 Aug 98, the Court of Appeals denied the applicant's petition for a grant of review of the decision of the Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals.

On 9 Sep 98, the convening authority published GCMO number. The Order stated the sentence as promulgated in GCMO number was affirmed with the BCD being executed.

On 22 Sep 98, the applicant received a BCD. Her narrative reason for separation is "Court Martial" and she was credited with 4 years, 6 months, and 25 days of total active service.

For more information, see the excerpt of the applicant's record at Exhibit B and the advisories at Exhibits E and F.

POST-SERVICE INFORMATION

On 7 May 24, the Board staff sent the applicant a request for post-service information and advised the applicant she should provide a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Identity History Summary Check, which would indicate whether or not she had an arrest record. In the alternative, the applicant could provide proof of employment in which background checks are part of the hiring



process (Exhibit C). The applicant replied on 8 May 24 and provided an FBI report. According to the report, the applicant has had no arrests since discharge.

The applicant's complete response is at Exhibit D.

APPLICABLE AUTHORITY/GUIDANCE

This Board is without authority to reverse, set aside, or otherwise expunge a court-martial conviction. Rather, in accordance with Title 10, U.S.C., Section 1552(f), actions by this Board regarding courts-martial are limited to two types: 1) corrections reflecting actions taken by the reviewing officials pursuant to the UCMJ; for example, if a convening authority or appellate court took action but that action was not reflected in an Air Force record; and 2) action on only the sentence of the court-martial and solely for the purpose of clemency.

On 3 Sep 14, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum providing guidance to the Military Department Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records as they carefully consider each petition regarding discharge upgrade requests by veterans claiming PTSD. In addition, time limits to reconsider decisions will be liberally waived for applications covered by this guidance.

On 25 Aug 17, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD P&R) issued clarifying guidance to Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records considering requests by veterans for modification of their discharges due in whole or in part to mental health conditions [PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), sexual assault, or sexual harassment]. Liberal consideration will be given to veterans petitioning for discharge relief when the application for relief is based in whole or in part on the aforementioned conditions.

Under Consideration of Mitigating Factors, it is noted that PTSD is not a likely cause of premeditated misconduct. Correction Boards will exercise caution in weighing evidence of mitigation in all cases of misconduct by carefully considering the likely causal relationship of symptoms to the misconduct. Liberal consideration does not mandate an upgrade. Relief may be appropriate, however, for minor misconduct commonly associated with the aforementioned mental health conditions and some significant misconduct sufficiently justified or outweighed by the facts and circumstances.

Boards are directed to consider the following main questions when assessing requests due to mental health conditions including PTSD, TBI, sexual assault, or sexual harassment:

- a. Did the veteran have a condition or experience that may excuse or mitigate the discharge?
- b. Did that condition exist/experience occur during military service?
- c. Does that condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge?
- d. Does that condition or experience outweigh the discharge?

On 25 Jul 18, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued supplemental guidance, known as the Wilkie Memo, to military corrections boards in determining whether relief

is warranted based on equity, injustice, or clemency. These standards authorize the board to grant relief in order to ensure fundamental fairness. Clemency refers to relief specifically granted from a criminal sentence and is a part of the broad authority Boards have to ensure fundamental fairness. This guidance applies to more than clemency from sentencing in a court-martial; it also applies to any other corrections, including changes in a discharge, which may be warranted on equity or relief from injustice grounds. This guidance does not mandate relief, but rather provides standards and principles to guide Boards in application of their equitable relief authority. Each case will be assessed on its own merits. The relative weight of each principle and whether the principle supports relief in a particular case, are within the sound discretion of each Board. In determining whether to grant relief on the basis of equity, an injustice, or clemency grounds, the Board should refer to paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Wilkie Memo.

On 7 May 24, the Board staff provided the applicant a copy of the liberal consideration guidance (Exhibit C).

Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 36-3211, *Military Separations*, describes the authorized service characterizations.

Honorable. The quality of the airman's service generally has met Department of the Air Force standards of acceptable conduct and performance of duty or when a member's service is otherwise so meritorious that any other characterization would be inappropriate.

General (Under Honorable Conditions). If an airman's service has been honest and faithful, this characterization is warranted when significant negative aspects of the airman's conduct or performance of duty outweigh positive aspects of the member's military record.

Under Other than Honorable Conditions. This characterization is used when basing the reason for separation on a pattern of behavior or one or more acts or omissions that constitute a significant departure from the conduct expected of members. The member must have an opportunity for a hearing by an administrative discharge board or request discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial. Examples of such behavior, acts, or omissions include but are not limited to:

- The use of force or violence to produce serious bodily injury or death.
- Abuse of a special position of trust.
- Disregard by a superior of customary superior subordinate relationships.
- Acts or omissions that endanger the security of the United States.
- Acts or omissions that endanger the health and welfare of other members of the DAF.
- Deliberate acts or omissions that seriously endanger the health and safety of other persons.
- Rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, rape of a child, sexual abuse of a child, sexual harassment, and attempts to commit these offenses.

AIR FORCE EVALUATION

The AFRBA Psychological Advisor completed a review of all available records and finds insufficient evidence to support the applicant's request. The applicant's contentions are plausible, but there is no actual evidence or records to support any of her contentions. As the applicant mentioned, her full or entire service treatment records are not available or submitted for review. Despite this anomaly, her separation physical examination report was included in her military personnel records revealing she denied having or experiencing any mental health-related issues such as problems with anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties and memory issues. She also reported she was in good health and was on no medications. From this objective record and her existing military records, there is no evidence she had any mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, or PTSD during service. She claimed she received a substance abuse evaluation, therapy treatment services, inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, and a psychiatric evaluation for her court-martial during service; however, none of these records are available to substantiate her claims. At this time, there is no evidence or records her mental health conditions of anxiety, depression, and PTSD which she developed in response to enduring abuse from her former husband or others existed or occurred during her military service. In fact, there are no records she was ever diagnosed with anxiety, depression, PTSD, or any other mental disorder in her lifetime. The burden of proof is placed on the applicant to submit the necessary records to support her contentions.

The applicant claimed she endured significant and traumatic physical, verbal, and emotional abuse from her former husband, colleagues, and leadership at the time of service. Although it is plausible she had these experiences, there is also no evidence or records of these experiences existing or occurring during her military service. She contends she reported her abuse to her leadership, medical provider, and mental health providers, but there are no records of these reports. She did, however, submit a witness statement from a friend/former fellow service member corroborating her experiences of abuse from her former husband and poor treatment from her colleagues and leadership during service. The validity of the applicant's traumatic and abusive experiences is not disputed, but it is whether her mental health condition developed from these experiences could excuse or mitigate her misconduct and discharge. The Psychological Advisor opines it does not. The applicant was found guilty and convicted at a general court-martial for burning medical records. Whether she participated in the actual burning of the medical records or willfully allowed this act to occur does not matter. Her action was a serious offense and could not be excused or mitigated by her mental health condition or traumatic experiences. She admitted to willfully not doing anything at the time to stop the misconduct and since she was a Health Services Management Apprentice or Outpatient Records Apprentice, she had been repeatedly well-informed and educated on the proper procedures of handling confidential and sensitive medical records. She knew the act was wrong and inappropriate. Moreover, she tried to justify her actions by believing, because the records were digital or converted to electronic versions, the destruction of paper records did not matter. This is not a true statement or an appropriate rationale. For historical reference, the military did not start transferring paper records to the electronic medical records systems until the mid-2000s, which was well after her misconduct and her discharge from the service. Her mental health condition, whether producing anxiety, depression, confusion, mental paralysis, or post-traumatic stress symptoms at the time of the misconduct does not excuse or Work-Prod

condone her poor behaviors. Having a mental health condition does not exempt her from taking responsibility for her egregious behaviors.

Liberal consideration is applied to the applicant's request for an upgrade of her discharge due to her contention of having a mental health condition. Liberal consideration does not apply to her request for restoration of her grade or expungement of her military arrest records because this policy does not cover these requests. It is reminded that liberal consideration does not mandate an upgrade per policy guidance. The following are responses to the four questions from the Kurta Memorandum from the available records for review:

- 1. Did the veteran have a condition or experience that may excuse or mitigate the discharge? The applicant contends she was physically, verbally, and emotionally abused by her former husband, fellow airmen/colleagues, and leadership causing her to develop complex PTSD. She claimed at the time of the incident of her friends burning medical records, she was mentally paralyzed by her traumatic experiences causing her to not say or do anything to stop their actions. This incident and her inaction led to her general court-martial conviction and subsequent BCD.
- 2. Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service?

The applicant's service treatment records are not available or submitted by the applicant for review. There is no evidence or records to confirm she had any mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, or PTSD during service or in her lifetime. She did receive a separation physical examination and denied having mental health-related problems or symptoms of anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances or memory problems. She reported in her statement in response to her referral EPR, she received a substance abuse evaluation following an alcohol-related incident and she was found to not have any alcohol issues. She claimed she received mental health treatment, inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, and a psychiatric evaluation for her court-martial during service but these records are not available for review. There are no records substantiating her report that she experienced physical, verbal, and emotional abuse from her former husband, colleagues, and leadership during service.

- 3. Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? Although it is plausible she endured physical, verbal, and emotional abuse from the aforementioned individuals causing her to develop anxiety, depression or PTSD during service despite no evidence, her mental health condition from her traumatic experiences does not excuse or mitigate her discharge. Her misconduct from her involvement in destroying medical records that led to her general court-martial conviction was an egregious and serious offense and could not be disregarded even by her mental health condition. Having a mental health condition does not exempt her from taking responsibility for her actions and does not excuse or mitigate her discharge.
- 4. Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? Since the applicant's mental health condition from her traumatic experiences does not excuse or mitigate her discharge, her mental health condition also does not outweigh her original discharge.

The complete advisory opinion is at Exhibit E.



AIR FORCE EVALUATION

AF/JAJI recommends denying the application. The applicant has provided no evidence of an error in any record of action taken by the reviewing authority of her court-martial. Therefore, the only correction for consideration is action on the applicant's court-martial sentence for purposes of clemency. The AFBCMR may determine whether clemency is warranted or appropriate in the applicant's case, or whether there is a basis for relief under the equity, injustice, or clemency considerations pursuant to the Wilkie Memorandum, or the guidance for liberal consideration of mental health issues pursuant to the Kurta Memorandum. While the applicant's post-conviction life appears to be successful and free of further misconduct, she does not take responsibility for her actions leading to her court-martial. In her application, she minimizes her involvement in the offense she was convicted of by stating it was her colleagues who burned the medical records while she stood by. However, this contradicts her guilty plea, statements to the military judge, and signed stipulation of fact admitting to the offense.

Concerning the applicant's asserted anxiety, depression, and PTSD, the Psychological Advisor determined the applicant's stated experiences of abuse may have occurred causing her to develop mental health conditions; however, there is no record of the asserted mental health conditions, nor would those conditions excuse her misconduct. In accordance with paragraph 19 of the attachment to the Kurta Memorandum, premediated misconduct is not generally excused by mental health conditions. The applicant's offense involved premeditated misconduct. She requested compensatory time off in exchange for filing all the backlogged medical records before her supervisor returned from leave and removed the records from the work center to a private residence where they were burned. Furthermore, the applicant's service record is marked with a significant disciplinary history prior to and after the misconduct leading to her court-martial conviction.

The complete advisory opinion is at Exhibit F.

APPLICANT'S REVIEW OF AIR FORCE EVALUATION

The Board sent copies of the advisory opinions to the applicant on 19 Nov 24 for comment (Exhibit G) but has received no response.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

- 1. The application was timely filed. Given the requirement for passage of time, all discharge upgrade requests under fundamental fairness or clemency are technically untimely. However, it would be illogical to deny a discharge upgrade application as untimely, since the Board typically looks for over 15 years of good conduct post-service. Therefore, the Board declines to assert the three-year limitation period established by 10 U.S.C. Section 1552(b).
- 2. The applicant exhausted all available non-judicial relief before applying to the Board.

3. After reviewing all Exhibits, the Board concludes the applicant is not the victim of an error or injustice. The Board finds no evidence that the sentence of the military court was improper or that it exceeded the limitations set forth in the UCMJ. Nor was the discharge or punishment unduly harsh or disproportionate to the offenses committed; therefore, the Board finds no compelling reason to grant the applicant's request to expunge her records to remove her conviction or restore her grade to E-4. Additionally, the Board concurs with the recommendations and rationale of the AFRBA Psychological Advisor and AF/JAJI and finds a preponderance of the evidence does not substantiate the applicant's contentions. There is no evidence the applicant was diagnosed with a mental health condition while in the service or thereafter. The Board notes the applicant's contentions she was physically and verbally abused and she received treatment for such; but there is no evidence to support this. The burden of proof is placed on the applicant to submit evidence to support her claim. Furthermore, the Board finds the nature of her misconduct was premeditated and egregious in nature. The Board applied liberal consideration to the evidence submitted by the applicant; however, it is not sufficient to grant the applicant's request. The applicant did not provide any evidence or records to substantiate her claim a mental health condition in service caused her misconduct, thus her condition does not mitigate or excuse her discharge. In the interest of justice, the Board considered upgrading the discharge based on clemency; however, given the evidence presented, the Board finds no basis to do so. The Board contemplated the many principles included in the Wilkie Memorandum to determine whether to grant relief; however, the Board does not find the evidence presented is sufficient to conclude the applicant's post-service activities overcame the misconduct for which she was discharged. The Board finds the applicant did not show remorse for her actions and blamed others, stating she did not burn any of the records which is contradictory to the evidence presented at trial. Additionally, this Board carefully weighs requests to upgrade the character of a discharge and in doing so, considers whether the impact of an applicant's contributions to his or her community since leaving the service are sufficient enough for the Board to conclude they overcame the misconduct that precipitated the discharge. While the applicant has presented some supporting statements indicating she has apparently made a successful post-service transition, the Board does not find the documentation sufficient to upgrade the applicant's discharge at this time. In this respect, the supporting statements from the applicant's work colleagues indicate their admiration for the applicant and the way she has lived her life since her separation, indicating her professionalism and dedication to her work. applicant retains the right to request reconsideration of this decision, which could be in the form of additional character statements, or testimonials from community leaders/members specifically describing how her efforts in the community have impacted others. Should the applicant provide documentation pertaining to her post-service accomplishments and activities, this Board would be willing to review the materials for possible reconsideration of her request based on clemency. Therefore, the Board recommends against correcting the applicant's records.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board recommends informing the applicant the evidence did not demonstrate material error or injustice, and the Board will reconsider the application only upon receipt of relevant evidence not already presented.

CERTIFICATION

The following quorum of the Board, as defined in DAFI 36-2603, *Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR)*, paragraph 2.1, considered Docket Number BC-2024-01368 in Executive Session on 6 Jun 25:

, Panel Chair , Panel Member , Panel Member

All members voted against correcting the record. The panel considered the following:

Exhibit A: Application, DD Form 149, w/atchs, dated 11 Apr 24.

Exhibit B: Documentary Evidence, including relevant excerpts from official records.

Exhibit C: Letter, SAF/MRBC, w/atchs (Post-Service Request and Liberal Consideration Guidance), dated 7 May 24.

Exhibit D: FBI Report, dated 8 May 24.

Exhibit E: Advisory Opinion, AFRBA Psychological Advisor, dated 12 Aug 24.

Exhibit F: Advisory Opinion, AF/JAJI, dated 7 Nov 24.

Exhibit G: Notification of Advisory, SAF/MRBC to Applicant, dated 19 Nov 24.

Exhibit G: Applicant's Response, w/atchs, dated DD MMM YY.

Taken together with all Exhibits, this document constitutes the true and complete Record of Proceedings, as required by DAFI 36-2603, paragraph 4.12.9.

