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## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

### RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

IN THE MATTER OF:

DOCKET NUMBER: BC-2024-02186

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COUNSEL: NONE

HEARING REQUESTED: NO

### APPLICANT'S REQUEST

His DD Form 214, *Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty*, Block 24, *Character of Service* for the period 4 May 89 through 9 Aug 89 be changed from "Uncharacterized" to "Honorable."

### APPLICANT'S CONTENTIONS

His retirement is imminent as an Air National Guard (ANG) Technician. He paid into the Federal Civil Retirement System (FERS) and bought back his military active-duty time. However, his retirement counselor informed him that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will not accept any time specified as "Uncharacterized." In addition, OPM will reject the entire active duty buy-back if even one period is not accepted. As such, failure to change his discharge to "Honorable" for the three month period while at Officer Training School (OTS) will result in the loss of 11 years of creditable service towards retirement and a financial hardship.

The applicant's complete submission is at Exhibit A.

### STATEMENT OF FACTS

The applicant is an Air Reserve Technician (ART) lieutenant colonel (O-5).

According to DD Form 214, for period of service 4 May 89 to 9 Aug 89, the applicant was discharged in the grade of staff sergeant (E-5) after he completed three months and six days of active service to attend OTS. Block 23, *Type of Separation*, states "Entry Level Separation" and Block 24, *Character of Service*, reflects "Uncharacterized."

According to DD Form 214, for period of service 10 Aug 89 to 3 Apr 00, the applicant was discharged in the grade of captain (O-3) after he completed 10 years, 7 months, and 24 days of active service. Block 23, *Type of Separation*, states "Resignation" and Block 24, *Character of Service*, reflects "Honorable."

For more information, see the excerpt of the applicant's record at Exhibit B and the advisory at Exhibit C.

### APPLICABLE AUTHORITY/GUIDANCE

**DoDI 1332.14, *Enlisted Administrative Separations*, incorporating changes through 23 Jun 22:**

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Enclosure 3, section 2 – *Selected Changes in Service Obligation*

Paragraph a(3) states an enlisted Service member may be separated due to an acceptance of an active duty commission or appointment, or acceptance into a program leading to such commission or appointment in any branch of Military Service.

Paragraph b(1) states the characterization or description is honorable unless the separation is an entry-level separation and is required in accordance with section 3 of Enclosure 4.

Enclosure 4, section 3 – *Characterization of Service or Description of Separation*

Paragraph c(1)(a)2 states an uncharacterized separation will be described as an entry-level if separation is initiated while an enlisted Service member is in entry-level status, except when the Secretary concerned, on a case-by-case basis, determined that characterization of service as honorable is clearly warranted by the presence of unusual military duty. The characterization is authorized when the Service member is separated under Enclosure 3 by reason of selected changes in service obligation.

**AFI 36-3208, *Administrative Separation of Airmen*, Section 2B—Changes in Service Obligation:**

1.19.1. Entry Level Separation. Airmen are in entry level status during the first 180 days of continuous active military service or the first 180 days of continuous active military service after a break of more than 92 days of active service. Determine the member's status by the date of notification; thus, if the member is in entry level status when initiating the separation action, describe it as an entry level separation unless:

1.19.1.2. The Secretary of the Air Force determines, on a case-by-case basis, that characterization as honorable is clearly warranted by unusual circumstances of personal conduct and performance of military duty...Use this characterization if the reason for separation is:

1.19.1.2.1. A change in military status according to Chapter 2

2.9. Determining Eligibility. Eligibility for separation under this section is based on a change, or a proposed change, in a member's obligation to serve the full term of an enlistment contract. Such a change may involve appointment to officer status, a new term of enlistment, separation from the active force to serve with one of the Reserve forces, or a defect in the enlistment. On receipt of evidence that a member is qualified for separation for one of the reasons in this section, the separation authority: 2.9.1. Concurs in the action and establishes a DOS consistent with the reason for the separation; etc.

2.10. Type of Separation. Characterize the service of airmen separated for a reason in paragraphs 2.11 through 2.18 as honorable unless an entry-level separation is required according to paragraph 1.19 Separation from a void enlistment under paragraph 2.19 will be by order of release from custody and control of the Air Force. Describe separation under paragraph 2.20 for minority as an entry-level separation.

2.11. Completion of Officer Training. Discharge graduates of officer training contingent on their acceptance of appointment as commissioned officers. Make the discharge effective the day before they take the oath of office as Air Force officers. Do not deliver the discharge documents until

after the oath of office has been executed. For more information about these separations, see AFI 36-2013, *Airman Commissioning Programs and Officer Training School* (formerly AFR 53-20).

## AIR FORCE EVALUATION

AFPC/DPMSSR (Transitions), recommends granting the applicants request to change the service characterization from “Uncharacterized” to “Honorable” on his DD Form 214. DPMSSR states for many years, OTS operated under their own internal policy with regards to characterizing the service of their graduates. Discussions with them have indicated their policy has shifted from time to time through the years, with some periods in the 1970s being characterized and some periods in the 1980s and 1990s listed as uncharacterized. OTS has been allowed to make the determination since they prepare DD Form 214s on all of their OTS students.

DPMSSR further states individuals attending OTS are there in an active-duty status and therefore fall under active-duty personnel policy. AFPC has reviewed the current DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* and former enlisted separations AFI 36-3208, and they both offer flexibility to give OTS graduates an honorable service characterization even though they are in entry level status. As a result, and in consultation with AFPC Legal representatives (AFPC/JA), AFPC recommends approval of the change of characterization to “honorable” for anyone submitting a BCMR application who is a graduate from OTS who was given characterization of “uncharacterized” or “N/A” and who is requesting a favorable service characterization.

The complete advisory opinion is at Exhibit C.

## APPLICANT’S REVIEW OF AIR FORCE EVALUATION

The Board sent a copy of the advisory opinion to the applicant on 6 Aug 24 for comment (Exhibit D), but has received no response.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

1. The application was timely filed.
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 the victim of an error or injustice. The Board concurs with the rationale and recommendation of AFPC/DPMSSR and finds a preponderance of the evidence substantiates the applicant’s contentions. The Board notes that applicant was separated on 9 Aug 89 in the grade of staff sergeant when he completed OTS and was immediately appointed an officer on active duty with no break in service. In accordance with DoDI, 1332.14 section 3 of Enclosure 4 the separation was for a change in the applicant’s service obligation, which authorizes an “Honorable” character of service. Furthermore, AFI 36-3208, Paragraph 2.10. *Type of Separation*, states that an “Honorable” characterization should be provided for reasons listed in paragraphs 2.11 through 2.18 and according to the reason in paragraph 2.11., completion of officer training is one of the reasons the service can be characterized as “Honorable.” Therefore, the Board recommends correcting the applicant’s records as indicated below.

## RECOMMENDATION

The pertinent military records of the Department of the Air Force relating to APPLICANT be corrected to show his DD Form 214, *Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty*, for

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period of service 4 May 1989 through 9 August 1989, Block 24, *Character of Service*, be changed from “Uncharacterized” to reflect “Honorable.”

#### **CERTIFICATION**

The following quorum of the Board, as defined in Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 36-2603, *Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR)*, paragraph 2.1, considered Docket Number BC-2024-02186 in Executive Session on 8 Oct 24:

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All members voted to correct the record. The panel considered the following:

Exhibit A: Application, DD Form 149, w/atchs, dated 13 Jun 24.

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

Exhibit C: Advisory opinion, AFPC/DPMSSR, dated 5 Aug 24.

Exhibit D: Notification of advisory, SAF/MRBC to applicant, dated 6 Aug 24.

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.

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