

SUMMARY: The Applicant was discharged on 25 April 2017 in accordance with Air Force Instruction 36-3208, *Administrative Separation of Airmen*, with an Entry Level Separation Discharge for Adjustment Disorder. The Applicant appealed for a change to the reentry code.

The Applicant requested the Board be completed based on a records only review. The Board was conducted on 11 July 2024. The Applicant was not represented by counsel.

The attached examiner's brief (provided to applicant only), extracted from available service records, contains pertinent data regarding the circumstances and character of the Applicant's military service.

DISCUSSION: The Discharge Review Board (DRB), under its responsibility to examine the propriety and equity of an applicant's discharge, is authorized to change the characterization of service and the narrative reason for discharge if such changes are warranted. If applicable, the Board can also change the Applicant's reentry code. In reviewing discharges, the Board presumes regularity in the conduct of governmental affairs unless there is substantial credible evidence to rebut the presumption, to include evidence submitted by the Applicant. The Board completed a thorough review of the circumstances that led to the discharge and the discharge process to determine if the discharge met the pertinent standards of equity and propriety.

The documentary evidence the Board considered as part of the review includes, but is not limited to the DD Form 293, *Application for the Review of Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States*, and any additional documentation submitted by applicant and/or counsel; the Applicant's personnel file from the Automated Records Management System (ARMS); and the DRB Brief detailing the Applicant's service information and a summary of the case.

The Applicant requested a change to their Reentry Code (RE Code) from 2C, asserting that the code is unjustified and does not accurately reflect the nature of their separation. The Applicant argues that their separation was not involuntary, as the RE Code implies. The Applicant provided character references and a psychological evaluation indicating they are clear of any abnormal mental health concerns.

The DRB determined that the Applicant was separated with an Entry Level Separation (ELS) due to a diagnosis of adjustment disorder with mixed anxiety and depression, which was self-reported during Basic Military Training. This condition escalated to suicidal ideations, leading to an 11-day hospitalization. Although the Applicant claims they were promised a return to training, no evidence supports this in the official records. The RE Code 2C was assigned, indicating involuntary separation due to a condition that hindered military service.

While the Applicant provided a post-service psychological evaluation showing no current mental health concerns, the Board's focus is on the condition at the time of discharge. During this time the Applicant's symptoms impaired their ability to perform military duties, and the Applicant expressed a desire for separation. The Board recognizes the need for accurate and non-stigmatizing separation codes and thus recommends changing the narrative reason for separation to "Condition, not a disability." However, the RE Code 2C remains justified, accurately reflecting the circumstances of the Applicant's discharge.

LIBERAL CONSIDERATION: Due to evidence of a mental health diagnosis and/or experiences of sexual assault or sexual harassment and/or records documenting that one or more symptoms of mental health conditions and/or experiences of sexual assault or sexual harassment existed/occurred during military service found in the Applicant's record, the Board considered the case based on the liberal consideration (LC)

standards required by guidance from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and 10 USC §1553. The Board included a member who is a physician, clinical psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker with training on mental health issues connected with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI) or other trauma. Specifically, the Board reviewed the four questions the Under Secretary of Defense provided that Boards should consider when weighing evidence in requests for modification of discharges due in whole or in part to mental health conditions, including PTSD; TBI; sexual assault, and sexual harassment. The Board considered the following:

1. Did the veteran have a condition or experience that may excuse or mitigate the discharge?

The Applicant checked the box for “other mental health” on the application. The Applicant contended “I don’t believe my re-code was justified. It was not in terms of involuntary means as the re-code describes. In the processing for the behavioral center, I was sent to after a while of being at med bay, they asked me if I would like to return to my flight to continue basic training.”

2. Did that condition exist/experience occur during military service?

A review of the Applicant’s records revealed the Applicant received outpatient and inpatient mental health service during his time in basic military training and received the diagnosis, in service, of adjustment disorder with mixed anxiety and depression.

3. Does that condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge?

The Applicant submitted a psychological evaluation report conducted post service in support of their claim. The report stated the Applicant wished to have their re-entry code changed with intent to re-enlist and stated “[The Applicant] was interviewed in-person and provided his own historical information.” The report also stated “[the Applicant reported that approximately seven years ago they had joined the military. However, they experienced a depressive episode and was treated in an inpatient psychiatric center. The Applicant eventually was medically discharged with an honorable rating.” A review of the Applicant’s records revealed the Applicant was given an uncharacterized entry level separation (ELS) due to an adjustment disorder.

The Discharge Review Board is not the waiver authority for re-entry and will not opine on the Applicant’s current fitness for military service. The Applicant was discharged due to their adjustment disorder, under the provisions of AFPD 36-32, and AFI 36-3208, Chapter 5, Section 5B, Involuntary Convenience of the Government, Paragraph 5.11, Conditions that Interfere with Military Service, specifically Paragraph 5.11.9.3. At the “snapshot in time” of the Applicant’s service the Applicant’s records revealed the Applicant exhibited and endorsed symptoms of a mental health condition, adjustment disorder with mixed anxiety and depression, that impaired their ability to effectively perform their military duties. Further, the Applicant’s records revealed the Applicant made it known they did not desire to continue military training and felt symptom improvement upon learning they would be granted an entry level separation. There is no evidence the Applicant’s discharge was improper or did not follow the requirements of Entry Level Separation IAW 36-3208.

4. Does that condition or experience outweigh the discharge?

The Applicant’s discharge was caused by an un-suited mental health condition, thus their discharge is not mitigated nor outweighed by his mental health condition (i.e. the characterization, or re-entry code). However, in response to the Applicant’s request, the Board recognizes the importance of accurate separation codes that do not inadvertently stigmatize Service members or disclose sensitive information. In July 2018, “condition, not a disability” was designated as the appropriate code family for separations based on non-disability mental health conditions. The Board recommends granting a change in the Applicant’s narrative reason for separation to “condition, not a disability.”

Additionally, the Board considered the factors laid out in the attachment to the Under Secretary of Defense

memorandum, *Guidance to Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records Regarding Equity, Injustice, or Clemency Determinations*, dated 25 June 2018, known as the “Wilkie Memo.” The Board considered the factors listed in paragraphs (6)(a)-(6)(l) and (7)(a)-(7)(r) of this memorandum and found no evidence of inequity or impropriety.

FINDING: The DRB voted unanimously to **grant** a change to the Applicant’s narrative reason, however voted unanimously to **deny** the request to change the reentry code.

Should the Applicant wish to appeal this decision, the Applicant must request a personal appearance before this Board before applying for relief to the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR). In accordance with DAFI 36-2603, *Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records*, all applicants before the AFBCMR must first exhaust available administrative avenues of relief before applying to the AFBCMR, otherwise their AFBCMR case will be administratively closed until such time that the Applicant avails themselves of the available avenue of relief. Therefore, should the Applicant wish to appeal this decision, they must first exercise their right to make a personal appearance before the AFDRB.

CONCLUSION: After a thorough review of the available evidence, to include the Applicant’s issues, summary of service, service/medical record entries, and discharge process, the Board found the discharge was proper and equitable. Therefore, the awarded characterization of service shall remain “Entry Level Separation,” the narrative reason for separation shall Change to “Condition Not a Disability,” and the reentry code shall remain “2C.” The Air Force DRB (AFDRB) results were approved by the Presiding Officer on 3 September 2024. If desired, the Applicant can request a list of the Board members and their votes by writing to:

Air Force Review Boards Agency
Attn: Discharge Review Board
3351 Celmers Lane
Joint Base Andrews, NAF Washington, MD 20762-6602

Instructions on how to appeal an AFDRB decision can be found at <https://afrbaportal.azurewebsites.us>.

Attachment:
Examiner's Brief (Applicant Only)