

SUMMARY: The Applicant was discharged on 08 June 2023 in accordance with Air Force Instruction 36-3208, *Administrative Separation of Airmen*, with an Under Honorable Conditions – (General) discharge for Alcohol Rehabilitation Failure. The Applicant appealed for an upgrade of their discharge characterization and a change to the reentry code.

The Applicant requested the Board be completed based on a records only review. The Board was conducted on 26 November 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 DRB provided a notice to inform the service member of resources available to help answer their questions about the application process and/or to help them supplement their application, to include information on the types of evidence that can be submitted to support a claim; information regarding potential eligibility for mental health treatment and evaluation services offered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA); general information regarding Veterans Service Organizations that may assist with DRB applications, and their right to retain counsel; a link to a database of legal services organizations that serve members of the military, veterans, and their families; the weblink to the VA's Directory of Veteran's Service Organizations; and information regarding reasonable accommodation requests from the DRB in the application and adjudication process.

The Applicant's record of service included the following documented misconduct leading up to their discharge:

- Letter of Reprimand for Engaging in unprofessional communication expressing an intent to inflict physical harm on a supervisor.

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 states that they were experiencing a notable escalation in the severity of their major depression symptoms.

The DRB determined that the Applicant's discharge was justified due to failure to comply with the ADAPT program, demonstrating a pattern of misconduct, lack of engagement, and unwillingness to follow treatment plans. Despite extensive support and treatment opportunities, the Applicant showed no improvement or commitment to recovery.

While the Applicant cited major depression and childhood trauma (EPTS) as factors, there was no evidence these conditions were aggravated by military service. Alcohol abuse was the primary issue, and their serious behaviors, including threats of violence, could not be excused. Despite a commander's recommendation for an Honorable discharge, the board found the Applicant's lack of accountability and continued misconduct outweighed this recommendation, warranting denial of the upgrade.

LIBERAL CONSIDERATION: Due to the Applicant's contentions or 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 contends, "I was experiencing an increase in major depression symptoms during that time."

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

There is evidence and records indicating that the Applicant suffered from and received treatment for depression during their service. Their depression was reported to have been caused primarily by childhood trauma and family problems, which were pre-existing (EPTS) conditions. They reported using alcohol as a coping mechanism for these issues. While they also experienced marital problems during service that contributed to their depression, they were already dealing with significant depression stemming from their past childhood trauma and family problems before the marital issues began.

During their service, the Applicant received extensive treatment, including individual psychotherapy, medication management, ADAPT Level 1 Outpatient Treatment, four residential/inpatient treatments at Laurel Ridge and Oceans Behavioral Hospital, PHP treatment at Laurel Ridge, and three IOP treatments at Oceans Behavioral Hospital. These treatments addressed their alcohol use, anxiety, depression, and childhood trauma.

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

There is no evidence that the Applicant's EPTS conditions or problems were aggravated by their military service. This is supported by their commander's memorandum, which stated that they had "dutifully supported the mission as an Airman in the weather flight" despite their mental health challenges, aside from receiving an LOR for communicating a threat to their supervisor. There is no evidence that their military service or duties exacerbated or aggravated their EPTS conditions, including depression.

The Applicant reported and acknowledged that they coped with their EPTS conditions through alcohol use, which ultimately led to their ADAPT failure and discharge from service because they were unable to abstain from alcohol during treatment. While their alcohol use may explain some behaviors, it does not excuse them. Their alcohol abuse was deemed an unsuiting mental health condition for continued military service.

Additionally, the Applicant expressed homicidal ideation on multiple occasions, both while sober and intoxicated, and had access to means and methods. They also received an LOR for communicating a threat to their supervisor. These behaviors are serious and cannot be excused, even in the context of their mental

health condition. Therefore, their mental health condition does not excuse or mitigate their discharge.

4. Does that condition, or experience outweigh the discharge?

Since the Applicant's mental health condition does not excuse or mitigate their discharge, it also does not outweigh the circumstances of their original discharge.

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 **deny** the Applicant’s request to upgrade their discharge characterization and 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 “Under Honorable Conditions – (General),” the narrative reason for separation shall remain “Alcohol Rehabilitation Failure,” and the reentry code shall remain “2B.” The DRB results were approved by the Presiding Officer on 23 December 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, MD 20762-6435

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

Attachment:
Examiner's Brief (Applicant Only)