

**SUMMARY:** The Applicant was discharged on 14 September 2022 in accordance with Air Force Instruction 36-3208, *Administrative Separation of Airmen*, with an Uncharacterized discharge for Erroneous Entry. The Applicant appealed for an upgrade of their discharge characterization, a change to the discharge narrative reason, a change to the reentry code, and a change to the separation code.

The Applicant requested the Board be completed based on a records only review. The Board was conducted on 19 December 2024. The Applicant was 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:

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 an upgrade to their character of service, narrative reason, separation code, and reentry code due to inequity. The Applicant expressed to their military training instructor (MTI) that they were feeling stress of adjusting to military life which had an impact on their mental health. They were referred to behavioral health and was diagnosed with adjustment disorder with mixed anxiety and depressed mood. Medical stated the condition was so severe that the Applicant would be disqualified from continued military service. The Applicant was counselled regarding the psychologist's recommendation and the possibility of a waiver. However, the Applicant declined to apply for a waiver, and instead elected to process out of the Air Force. The Applicant now realizes the stress was normal for adjusting to military life. The Applicant seeks to correct their discharge and demonstrate that they do not have an adjustment disorder, and that they are more physically and mentally fit for military service. In support of that they provided a

mental and behavioral health consultation, that stated they do not meet the criteria for psychiatric medication.

The DRB determined the Applicant's discharge was fair and equitable. The Applicant was referred to behavioral health by their MTI during their third week of basic military training. The Applicant's discharge package included their intake mental health evaluation. The Applicant reported they had been experiencing symptoms for the past three weeks that were consistent with adjustment disorder diagnosis to include emotional numbness, decreased interest, anger, and suicidal thinking. The medical team determined the Applicant's mixed anxiety and depressed mood is disqualifying for general military service per the DoDI 6130.03. The Applicant was informed based on their current state, they had the right to pursue an entry level separation (ELS). They were also given the opportunity to address their issues in the behavioral health clinic. The Applicant voluntarily opted to pursue an ELS. This is corroborated by the Applicant and counsel's statements. The Applicant was aware if the discharge was approved their discharge would be described as an entry level separation, and they may be ineligible for reenlistment in the Air Force. The Applicant was entitled to seek counsel in response to their discharge which they denied and wrote "I did not fight my case because everything is correct. I want to go home at this time with family." Due to these factors the DRB denied the Applicant request to change their narrative reason, reentry code, and separation code.

The Applicant requested their uncharacterized Entry Level Separation be upgraded to Honorable. However, this would violate policy in accordance with AFI 36-3208, which states Airmen are in entry level status during the first 180 days of continuous active military service and if a separation action is initiated during this time, they will receive an entry level separation without service characterization. Therefore, the Applicant's request to upgrade to Honorable could not be approved.

**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's legal counsel on behalf of the Applicant contended that the Applicant felt overwhelmed and began to question their decision to enlist in the Air Force upon their arrival at Joint Base San Antonio. Their emotions got the best of them, and they talked to their MTIs about leaving the Air Force. They regretted their decision to leave the Air Force and believed that if they had not been misdiagnosed with an adjustment disorder, they would have successfully completed their training and succeeded as an Airman. Their legal counsel alleged an error was made with their discharge because their stressor of adjusting to the military (they also had several personal matters in their home life that added to their stress of being in training) was "normal" and other trainees had similar feelings about the transition from civilian to military life. They were sent to behavioral health rather than receiving counseling and mentorship from their senior enlisted instructors. Since their discharge, they sought to correct their discharge and demonstrate that they do not have an adjustment disorder and that they are more than physically and mentally fit for military service. They had sought consultation for their mental and behavioral health concerns, but it was determined they did not meet the criteria for psychiatric medication and has never been treated for mental health-related*

concerns.

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

*The Applicant was first seen at BAS while at BMT by referral of their MTI after they expressed having increased symptoms of irritability, anger, low motivation, loss of interest, depression, rapid heartbeat, feeling like a burden, and suicidal ideation caused by having difficulties adjusting to the military. They were seen for the second time at BAS in August 2022 for a follow-up appointment and continued having difficulties adjusting to the military—they endorsed emotional numbness, decreased interest, low motivation, pervasive sadness, feeling like a burden, anger, agitation, irritability, accelerated heart rate, trouble concentrating, and suicidal ideation. They were given a diagnosis of Adjustment Disorder with Mixed Anxiety and Depressed Mood from these two encounters/evaluations. They met with their PCM in August 2022 for a separation physical examination and denied having any suicidal or homicidal ideation and no other mental health issues were reported.*

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

*The Applicant was recommended and discharged from service for having an unsuiting and disqualifying mental health condition identified as Adjustment Disorder with Mixed Anxiety and Depressed Mood. There is no evidence that they were misdiagnosed with this condition as claimed. Their anxiety and depressive symptoms were developed in reaction to their situational stressor of adjusting to the military which impaired their ability to complete their training and function appropriately in the military. Once their situational stressor of being in the military was in the process of being removed or removed completely, they no longer felt anxious or depressed. This is evidenced by their separation physical examination with their PCM where they no longer had suicidal ideation and did not endorse having any mental health issues because they knew they were separating and their post-service psychiatric evaluation performed on 30 January 2024 determining they did not meet the diagnostic criteria for any mental disorders. They no longer felt distressed because they were not in the military, so their condition and symptoms had resolved by the time they completed their post-service psychiatric evaluation. Their clinical presentation and the timeline of the resolution of their anxiety and depressive symptoms are consistent with the diagnostic criteria for Adjustment Disorder with Mixed Anxiety and Depressed Mood. Thus, there is no error, inequity, or impropriety identified with their mental disorder diagnosis. The Applicant's unsuiting and disqualifying mental health condition caused their discharge from service, but their condition does not excuse or mitigate their discharge.*

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

*Since the Applicant's unsuiting and disqualifying mental health condition does not excuse or mitigate their discharge, their mental health condition also does not outweigh their original discharge. There is no inequity or impropriety identified with their discharge from a mental health perspective. They were discharged under ELS, and this is in accordance with past and present regulations.*

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, to change the discharge narrative reason, to change the reentry code, and to change the separation code.

**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 “Uncharacterized,” the narrative reason for separation shall remain “Erroneous Entry,” and the reentry code shall remain “2C.” The DRB results were approved by the Presiding Officer on 14 January 2025. If desired, the Applicant can request a list of the Board members and their votes by writing to:

Air Force 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)