

SUMMARY: The Applicant was discharged on 22 July 2022 in accordance with Department of the Air Force Instruction 36-3211, *Military Separations*, with an Uncharacterized Discharge for Condition, not a disability. 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 19 December 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 did not include any 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 contended they were not prepared for the adversity of non-acceptance during basic military training and the non-acceptance began a constant distraction in technical school. They are seeking an upgrade to their reentry code to join the military again. They state they are ready to take on the challenges of being in the military and will not fail if they are giving a second chance.

The DRB determined that the Applicant's discharge was both proper and equitable. A review of the Applicant's discharge package revealed that they voluntarily sought treatment at the behavioral health clinic during their technical school training. Upon undergoing an initial mental health evaluation, the Applicant disclosed that they had begun to experience reservations about their military service shortly after receiving notification of their impending deployment to basic military training (BMT). In an effort to cope with the resultant feelings of sadness and anxiety, the Applicant had consulted with their military training instructor (MTI) and the chaplain. However, the symptoms persisted and eventually compromised the Applicant's

ability to function effectively. The Applicant reported that they had become increasingly concerned about the recurrence of self-harming thoughts, which they had previously experienced. Specifically, the Applicant acknowledged that, in February 2021, they had engaged in self-mutilation by cutting their arm with a knife on approximately three occasions per week for a period of four weeks, and that they had repeated this behavior on one occasion in either November or December 2021. The Applicant attributed their self-harming tendencies to feelings of being overwhelmed by their military service. The medical team subsequently determined that the Applicant's pre-existing self-mutilation behavior, combined with their current adjustment disorder and mixed anxiety and depressive mood, rendered them unfit for general military service in accordance with the guidelines outlined in DoDI 6130.03, *Medical Standards for Military Service*. Furthermore, it was noted that the Applicant had failed to disclose their history of mental health treatment, depression, and self-harming behavior on the AF Form 2807-2, *Accessions Medical History Report*. The Applicant was informed that, given their current circumstances, they were eligible to pursue an entry-level separation (ELS). The Applicant voluntarily elected to pursue this option. Prior to making this decision, the Applicant was advised that an approved discharge would result in an entry-level separation, which may have rendered them ineligible for future reenlistment in the Air Force. The Applicant waived their right to counsel and declined the opportunity to submit a written response to the proposed discharge. The entry-level separation was approved. Due to this the DRB denied the Applicant's request to change their reentry code.

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 is requesting to change their RE code to allow them to re-enlist in the Air Force. They contended they were not prepared for the adversity of non-acceptance during basic military training and the non-acceptance began a constant distraction in technical school. They were not themselves, had a limited mindset, and felt like they were someone they were not. They made an appointment at BAS and instantly regretted it. They did not know what they were doing, what would happen, and how it would end. They felt they were throwing away everything they worked so hard for by attending that appointment. They were very emotional although they did not want to leave. They had grown since being discharged and took full responsibility for allowing their weak mindset to define them. They believed they deserved a second chance, learned from their mistake, and would not fail.

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

The Applicant voluntarily walked into BAS due to feeling distress causing them to experience anxiety and depressed mood from the training environment. They were evaluated and were diagnosed with Adjustment Disorder with Mixed Anxiety and Depressed Mood. During this evaluation, they disclosed having a prior history of engaging in self-militating behaviors before they entered the Air Force. They did not report this significant history during their MEPS. They were also given a diagnosis of a Personal History of Other Mental and Behavioral Disorders from the evaluation for their prior service condition/behaviors.

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

The Applicant had anxiety and depressive symptoms before they reported to basic military training (BMT). They presented to BAS because these symptoms exacerbated over time making it difficult for them to tolerate their symptoms and impacting their ability to function. Their symptoms included having little to no appetite, crying daily, difficulties with breathing, feeling guilty about being unable to adjust to the military environment and disappointing their family, and worrying about having thoughts of harming themselves. They were recommended and discharged under ELS for having an unsuiting mental health condition of an adjustment disorder and having a prior mental health history or EPTS [Existed Prior to Service] condition that they did not disclose during MEPS that made them disqualifying for military service. There is no evidence their military service had permanently aggravated their EPTS condition. There is no inequity or impropriety identified with their ELS for having an unsuiting and disqualifying/EPTS mental health condition. Thus, their unsuiting and disqualifying mental health conditions caused their discharge, but they do not excuse or mitigate their discharge.

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

Since their mental health condition does not excuse or mitigate their discharge, their mental health condition also does not outweigh their original discharge. The Applicant had submitted letters from their post-service mental health providers attesting to the Applicant receiving mental health treatment after their military service and with treatment, their symptoms and condition had improved and resolved. They opined they are medically fit to return to active duty. While the opinions of their post-service mental health providers are acknowledged, the Applicant did have a history of difficulties coping and adapting to the military environment causing the decompensation of their mood and overall functioning including elevating their safety risk. This significant history makes them disqualified for military service and their request to change their RE code to allow for reenlistment is not supported by the current regulation of DoDI 6130.03.

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 change the reentry 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 “Condition, Not a Disability,” and the reentry code shall remain “2C.” The DRB results were approved by the Presiding Officer on 10 January 2024. 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)