

**SUMMARY:** The Applicant was discharged on February 1, 2012 in accordance with Air Force Instruction 36-3208, Administrative Separation of Airmen, with an Under Honorable Conditions (General) Service Characterization for Misconduct – (Drug Abuse). The Applicant requested an upgrade of their Service Characterization.

The Applicant requested the Board be completed based on a Record Review. The Board was conducted on 13 March 2025. 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, including evidence submitted by the Applicant. The Board thoroughly reviewed 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 (LOR) for a Positive Urinalysis for Marijuana
- LOR for Disrespectful to two Noncommissioned officers
- LOR for False Statement
- LOR for Derelict in duties
- LOR for Wrongful use of Government Travel Card

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 expressed a deep sense of pride in their military service, but also revealed that the transition from home to Basic Military Training and Technical School was difficult, leading to feelings of anxiety and isolation. They went on to describe how a deployment to Afghanistan, with its frequent rocket attacks, exacerbated their struggles, causing sleep disturbances and emotional distress that persisted even after returning to their duty station. It was during this period, the Applicant stated, that they turned to marijuana as a coping mechanism, finding that it provided relief from insomnia, stress, and allowed them to function better overall. The Applicant

acknowledged that this ultimately led to their discharge. Now drug-free, a college graduate with honors, and actively managing PTSD, the Applicant is seeking an upgrade to their service characterization.

The DRB determined that while the applicant attributed their marijuana use to anxiety and difficulties adapting to military life, no clear evidence within their service record directly linked their PTSD or other mental health conditions to the misconduct. Instead, records highlight a pre-existing pattern of misconduct, including disobeying orders and misusing a Government Travel Card, suggesting the drug use was part of a broader behavioral pattern rather than solely a consequence of mental health struggles. Furthermore, the applicant's awareness of the military's zero-tolerance drug policy and their admission of using marijuana after returning from leave indicated a premeditated decision. While acknowledging the applicant's current VA disability rating for PTSD, the board underscored the distinct evaluation criteria used by the VA and the military, ultimately deeming the applicant's discharge status appropriate.

**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 checked the boxes for "PTSD" and "other mental health" on the application. The applicant contended, in part, "Joining the Air Force was the first time I was away from home and family, and it was a huge adjustment. The anxiety of not knowing what to expect and the fear of the unknown led me into a downward spiral mentally... After an amazing weekend with my family came another devastating blow, I would not be going home but instead straight to Keesler AFB for AIT. Although I was excited to start my new career, I had been away from my family for so long that it was taking a toll on me. I missed many birthdays and holidays, as well as losing someone very dear to me, all while being away at basic training and AIT. After all my training was complete, I could finally return home, and it was the happiest I had been in weeks. About 2 weeks later, I arrived at my duty station at Moody AFB, which was another huge adjustment as it was my first time being so far away from home and living alone. Although there were a few bumps in the road, I acclimated the environment as best as possible." The applicant contended that she had been deployed to Afghanistan and that "I felt as if I came back a different person. The amount of new fears and anxieties I came back with was insurmountable. Unable to sleep once I was back home, I began to try different things to help. Alcohol was the first thing I turned to, but having to report for duty the next morning made it hard to hide, so I began to try marijuana. I noticed that it helped me fall asleep and sleep throughout the night, and I also felt less anxious. Unfortunately, it was not the best choice, and that one choice cost me my career, and I think about it every day, filled with regret."*

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

*There is no evidence that the applicant sought or received any mental health treatment during her time in service. There is no evidence that the applicant exhibited any clinically significant features of PTSD, or any other mental health condition, during her time in service.*

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

*A review of the applicant's DD214 revealed that the applicant was discharged with a general character of service due to misconduct (drug abuse) for two years, one month, and twenty-four days in service. A review of the applicant's discharge package revealed that the applicant exhibited a pattern of misconduct that began before the applicant's deployment and continued upon return from deployment with no nexus to a mental health condition or the deployment. In a review of the applicant's response to her Letter of Reprimand for drug use, the applicant stated, "While on leave, feeling happy to be back in the United States, I smoked marijuana with some friends. I know that consuming marijuana in the U.S. Air Force is unacceptable, but I was not thinking at the moment. I let the emotions of being back in the United States and home with family and friends get to me." The intent of liberal consideration generally does not apply to premeditated misconduct(s), including misuse of a government travel card and making a false statement. The applicant provided written testimony to the board as part of her request for relief. She stated she had difficulty adjusting to the military lifestyle and being away from her family. The applicant was discharged due to drug use (marijuana). The applicant's service records reveal a history of pre-service drug and alcohol use. Based on the available evidence in the applicant's records and the applicant's testimony in her application, there is evidence that the applicant was having difficulty adjusting to military life. The applicant reported that she chose to use alcohol and drugs in a way that was incompatible with military service, which may explain the applicant's drug use. Still, it does not mitigate the applicant's misconduct.*

*The applicant provided her VA rating as evidence in support of her contention. A review of the applicant's initial post-service exam revealed that the applicant received a diagnosis of alcohol abuse and depression that was not likely to have been incurred as the result of her military service and was considered to be her primary diagnosis. The applicant's post-service records revealed that the applicant's symptoms did not meet the criteria for PTSD seven years post-discharge. However, the applicant's records revealed that the applicant has continued to appeal for compensation. Based on the available evidence and records, the applicant's mental health condition is as likely as not developed post-service.*

*Regarding the applicant's concurrence with her current VA rating, the VA, operating under a different set of laws than the military, is empowered to offer compensation for any medical or mental health condition with an established nexus to military service without regard to its impact on a member's fitness to serve, the narrative reason for release from service, or the length of time that has transpired since the date of discharge. The VA may also conduct periodic reevaluations to adjust the disability rating as the level of impairment from a given condition may improve or worsen over the veteran's life. At the "snapshot in time" of the applicant's service, there is no evidence that the applicant had a mental health condition that caused or mitigated the misconduct(s) that led to the applicant's discharge.*

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

*Because the applicant's discharge is not mitigated or excused by an in-service mental health condition, the applicant's discharge is also not outweighed.*

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 AND 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. The DRB voted unanimously to **deny** the Applicant's request. Therefore, the awarded Service Characterization shall remain "Under Honorable Conditions (General)," the Narrative Reason for separation shall remain Misconduct – (Drug Abuse), and the Reentry Code shall remain "2B". The DRB results were approved by the Presiding Officer on April 16, 2025.

Should the Applicant wish to appeal this decision, they 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.

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

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

Attachment:  
Examiner's Brief (Applicant Only)