

SUMMARY: The Applicant was discharged on August 31, 2021 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 and a change to the Narrative Reason for separation.

The Applicant requested the Board be completed based on a Record Review. The Board was conducted on December 18, 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:
-Article 15 for dereliction of performance, advising another Airman on how to obtain a fake driver's license;
wrongful use of marijuana

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 requests a discharge upgrade, citing a combination of in-service and post-service factor to include a hostile work environment, prejudiced leadership, and three concussions. Since discharge the Applicant stated they have been diagnosed with severe anxiety and bipolar disorder. They stated the goal for the upgrade is to access their GI Bill benefits to attend school.

The DRB determined the discharge was proper and equitable. A thorough review of the record confirmed the discharge was based on substantiated misconduct, including wrongful use of marijuana, inappropriate behavior on social media, and advising another Airman on how to obtain a fake driver's license. The Applicant failed to provide any documentation to corroborate their contentions of facing a hostile work environment and prejudiced

leadership. Regarding the claim of concussions, the service record contained no medical evidence of a loss of consciousness or traumatic brain injury.

While the Board acknowledges that the applicant's current service characterization renders them ineligible for Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits, this consequence does not constitute an inequity or impropriety that would justify an upgrade. Therefore, the Board denied the request to upgrade the Service Characterization and change the Narrative Reason for separation.

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 "TBI" and "other mental health" on the application. The Applicant contended "While stationed in [location] I was under severe stress due to a hostile work environment and prejudice superiors. I also suffered from three concussions, one of which happening[sic] in the workplace, in a span of 8 months. Since leaving the service, I have been diagnosed with severe anxiety and bipolar disorder. These mental disabilities have led me to be unable to sustain a work and social life as a young veteran. Being unable to continue with normal adult tasks has furthered my depression and I'm hoping that with a reclassification of my discharge type to Honorable, I will be able to use my GI Bill and find purpose again by going back to school."

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

A review of the Applicant's in-service medical records revealed the Applicant received mental health services during their time in service including therapy and medication management. The Applicant endorsed symptoms of anxiety related to pre-service trauma, separation from their primary support due to entering the military, and occupational dissatisfaction. The Applicant's in-service records revealed the Applicant reported their anxiety symptoms abated with medication and therapy. The Applicant received the diagnosis, in-service, of adjustment disorder. The Applicant's records revealed the Applicant was command referred to substance use services due to a positive urinalysis and completed substance use education sessions. The Applicant's medical records revealed the Applicant two incident in which their head was hit: during a hiking trip in a cave, and during their duty day when a whiteboard fell off the wall. The Applicant's records revealed that neither incident resulted in loss of consciousness, although the Applicant endorsed symptoms of headache after the incidents. There was no record or medical documentation of TBI sequelae. Further, the Applicant's records revealed the Applicant reported that their mental health symptoms abated after the incidents of hitting their head.

The Applicant listed "VBA supporting claim 1," "VBA supporting claim 2," and "medical records" as documentation submitted in support of their claim. The Applicant submitted post-service treatment records from their services received at the VA. No in-service medical records were received by the Applicant.

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

A review of the Applicant's DD214 revealed the Applicant was discharged with a General character of service due to misconduct (drug abuse) with two years, seven months, twenty-nine days time in service. A review of the

Applicant's discharge package revealed the Applicant was discharged due to drug abuse and misconduct including marijuana use, advised another Airman how to obtain a fake driver's license, and engaged in inappropriate social media behavior by communicating a threat. A review of the Applicant's response to their discharge notification included a statement from the Applicant that they never abused drugs of any sort. The Applicant made their request for an honorable discharge characterization known in their discharge response, and also indicated their desire for honorable discharge is due to their desire to receive the GI Bill which was considered by the Applicant's discharge authority at the time of their discharge. There is no evidence of a mitigating nexus between the Applicant's in-service mental health conditions and the misconduct(s) for which they were discharged. The Applicant's records revealed that the Applicant exhibited and endorsed difficulty adjusting to the military lifestyle due to separation from their support system and poor coping skills which may explain the Applicant's misconduct but it does not mitigate the misconduct(s) that led to the Applicant's discharge, including advising another airman of how to obtain a fake drivers license and using social media to communicate a threat. It is unlikely that these misconducts were caused by or correlated to a mental health condition or TBI. The Applicant contended that during their time in-service they "was under severe stress due to a hostile work environment and prejudice superiors." The Applicant did not provide any evidence or supporting documentation regarding this claim. Further a review of the Applicant's discharge package revealed the Applicant's discharge authority stated the Applicant "was given multiple 'fresh starts' as they bounced around to different units. In each unit there was a pattern of misconduct. Once they got to the [named unit] they were given another fresh start and the unit tried to rehabilitate by lettering them know all of the previous misconduct would not follow them." The discharge authority also stated "[t]he drug use and fake ID investigation cannot be overlooked and warrant discharge...Respondent's blatant disregard of the law is contrary to good order and discipline." The Applicant did not provide any clarifying or specific information or testimony regarding their contention of a hostile work place as a mitigator for the misconducts that led to their discharge.

The Applicant submitted their 2023 VA rating decision as evidence; 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 for the purpose of adjusting the disability rating as the level of impairment from a given condition may improve or worsen over the life of the veteran. At the time of the Applicant's service, there is no evidence the Applicant's mental health conditions or claimed TBI 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 in-service mental health conditions did not excuse or mitigate the Applicant's discharge, a mental health condition nor contended experience of TBI also did not outweigh the Applicant's discharge. The severity and persistence of the Applicant's misconduct was not outweighed by the Applicant's mental health condition or TBI.

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 January 20, 2026.

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)