

SUMMARY: The Applicant was discharged on February 15, 2024 in accordance with Department of the Air Force Instruction 36-3211, *Military Separations*, 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 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:
-Letter of Reprimand for drug abuse

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 did not contend any impropriety or inequity surrounding their discharge. They stated during service they faced significant personal challenges, including addressing a traumatic experience of sexual assault and grooming. While processing these emotions in therapy, they stated they struggled with anxiety, guilt, and other overwhelming feelings. In an effort to cope, the Applicant stated they made the regrettable decision to use marijuana, a choice they knew was against the UCMJ.

The DRB determined the discharge to be proper and equitable. A thorough review confirmed the separation was for a positive urinalysis for THC. The Board acknowledged the applicant's submitted evidence, which corroborated that they were undergoing therapy for a sexual assault. However, the Board found that the applicant willingly consumed marijuana with the full understanding that it was a punishable offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). In addition, the Applicant did not provide substantial

documentation that would warrant an upgrade under the Wilkie Factors. The DRB concluded that the negative aspects of this willful misconduct outweighed the positive aspects of the Applicant's military service and mitigating circumstances. Therefore, the Board denied the Applicant's request for an upgrade of their Service Characterization.

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 "sexual assault/harassment" on the application. The Applicant contended "During my time in the Air Force, I faced significant personal challenges, including addressing a traumatic experience of sexual assault and grooming. While processing these emotions in therapy, I struggled with anxiety, guilt, and other overwhelming feelings. In an effort to cope, I made the regrettable decision to use marijuana, a choice I knew was against the UCMJ. I took accountability for this mistake and accepted the consequences of my actions. However, I ask the board to consider my service in its entirety. My mistake doesn't define who I am or the contributions I made during my service. I take pride in the dedication, hard work, and sacrifices I gave. Despite this error in judgment, I worked to embody the core values of the Air Force. An upgraded discharge would allow me to better reflect the positive aspects of my service and ensure that my time in uniform is remembered as a whole, rather than through the lens of a single mistake. Also, it would help ensure that my future is not disproportionately affected by a single mistake, enabling me to move forward and contribute positively to my professional life."

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

A review of the Applicant's in-service records revealed the Applicant received mental health services during their time in service on multiple occasions. The Applicant's records revealed the Applicant initially sought mental health services in request to be removed from a deployment due to feeling anxious and "not ready" and additionally reported they did not cope well with change and reported stress due to having to financially support their family members. The Applicant returned to the mental health clinic approximately two years later due to relational difficulties after informing their husband of a sexual assault experience approximately one year prior. The Applicant's records revealed the Applicant met criteria for PTSD at the time they initiated mental health services but did not meet diagnostic criteria for PTSD upon completion of 10 mental health therapy sessions, at which time the Applicant requested to terminate mental health services and reported symptom resolution.

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 four years, eleven months, twenty-seven days time in service. A review of the documentation submitted by the Applicant revealed they reported on the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Data form (DSAID) approximates dates that their experience of sexual assault occurred as within a period of four months, no year of the experience was listed.

A review of the Applicant's records revealed the Applicant tested positive for THC during a random urinalysis and tested positive in subsequent urinalysis testing. The Applicant's records revealed the Applicant endorsed

using marijuana “regularly” for more than three months until they tested positive. The Applicant’s record revealed the Applicant tested positive for THC on multiple occasions during their time in service and reported to investigators that they used marijuana products with their husband weekly or near weekly for many months prior to their positive urinalysis. The Applicant stated in their response to their Letter of Reprimand “During the period in question, I was grappling with significant personal challenges, including the loss of my grandparents and undergoing therapy for a sexual assault that I reported. These circumstances placed an immense emotional burden on me, impacting my mental well-being and, subsequently, affecting my marriage. Additionally, my family was experiencing financial difficulties, adding further stress to an already challenging situation. In an attempt to cope with these overwhelming challenges, I regrettably turned to marijuana as a means of escape. I acknowledge that this was a poor choice and a violation of the Air Force’s policies. I take full responsibility for my actions, and I deeply regret the lapse in judgment that I had.” Based on a review the available records, the Applicant’s experience of sexual assault and any impacts were known and considered at the time of the Applicant’s discharge and were not found to be mitigating by the discharge authority. The Applicant did not make any claims of inequity or impropriety regarding their discharge. The Applicant was discharged due to drug use (marijuana). The Applicant’s service records reveal a history of pre-service marijuana use, Based on the available records along with the Applicant’s testimony in their application, there is evidence the Applicant was having difficulty adjusting to the military lifestyle. The Applicant reported they chose to use drugs in a way that was incompatible with military service, which may explain the Applicant’s drug use, but it does not mitigate the Applicant’s misconduct that led to their discharge.

The Applicant submitted their VA medical records as evidence in support of their request for upgrade in order to utilize post-service benefits. 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 was no evidence of a mitigating nexus between the Applicant’s mental health condition and the misconduct that led to the Applicant’s discharge.

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

Based on a review of the available records, the Applicant’s mental health condition and experience of sexual assault were known and considered at the time of their discharge. No inequity or impropriety related to the consideration of the Applicant’s mental health condition or experience of sexual assault was found a in review of the Applicant’s records, thus the Applicant’s discharge was not outweighed by a mental health condition or experience of sexual assault.

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.

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)