

SUMMARY: The Applicant was discharged on January 14, 2022 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 11 July 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 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 is requesting the Board to take into consideration their letters of evaluation and character of service, as well as their deployment records before they began coping with onset mental health conditions. While the Applicant truly regrets their behavior, they claim they were, and presently are, dealing with mental issues that were beyond their control. Therefore, the misconduct is due to mental health condition.

The Applicant requested an upgrade to their characterization based on in-service accomplishments and a mental health condition. The records revealed the Applicant failed a Urine Analysis, it was determined the Applicant used an illegal substance over a period of several months. The Applicant stated the discharge did not consider the good things they did while serving in the Air Force. The DRB took note of the Applicant's duty performance as documented by their performance reports, awards and decorations, and other accomplishments. It found the seriousness of the Applicant's willful misconduct offset the positive aspects of their service. The DRB found no evidence to indicate the Applicant was unaware of the Air Force policy of zero tolerance for illegal drug use. The DRB determined to deny the Applicants request for an upgrade to their 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 "other mental health" on the application. The applicant contended "I am respectfully requesting the Board to take into consideration my letters of evaluation and character of service, as well as my deployment records before I began coping with onset mental health conditions. While I truly regret my behavior at the time, I was (and still am) dealing with mental issues that were beyond my control."

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

A review of the applicant's records revealed the applicant attended one mental health session after he was notified of discharge and reported an addiction to marijuana for the past two years, symptoms of anxiety, feeling unhappy, and occupational problems. The applicant declined substance use treatment services and did not return to the mental health clinic for further services. There is no evidence the applicant exhibited or endorsed any clinically significant features of PTSD, or any other mental health condition, during his time in service or based on a review of the available post-service records. There is no evidence the applicant received the diagnosis of PTSD during his time in service.

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 Misconduct (drug abuse) with four years, five months, fourteen days time in service. A review of the applicant's discharge package revealed the applicant tested positive for THC at least eight times during his time in service.

The applicant's records revealed the applicant's mood symptoms were likely onset by applicant's heavy and maladaptive patterns of substance use. The applicant was discharged due to drug use (marijuana)., A review of the applicant's military entrance records revealed the applicant endorsed pre-service marijuana use. Based on the available evidence in the applicant's records along with the applicant's testimony in his application, there is evidence the applicant reported occupational stress and a toxic work environment during his time in service. The applicant reported to providers that he chose to use alcohol and 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.

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

Because the applicant's discharge was not mitigated or excused by a mental health condition, the applicant's discharge was 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 August 14, 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)