

SUMMARY: The Applicant was discharged on January 5, 2021 in accordance with Air Force Instruction 36-3208, Administrative Separation of Airmen, with an Under Honorable Conditions (General) Service Characterization for Misconduct (Minor Infractions). The Applicant requested an upgrade of their Service Characterization, a change to the Narrative Reason for separation, and a change to the Reentry Code.

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 states, they are requesting the Board to grant a change to their discharge characterization from "General" to "Honorable," as they have been granted 70% disability due to depression and anxiety disorders suffered while serving in the Air Force. The Applicant says those disorders were due in part to abuse they experienced at the hands of their superiors after being transferred to their new base. As for the conduct that led to the "minor infractions" which became the basis for their discharge, the Applicant claims they regret their lack of judgment. However, the Applicant says they now understand that their decision-making abilities were influenced by their depression and anxiety. The Applicant states they do not think that the "minor infractions" they were discharged for would normally result in such a rapid process and in fact, they contend that their discharge was malicious and rushed, in part so that they would not qualify for additional benefits, such as retirement contribution matching and the GI Bill. The Applicant says their hope is that a change in their discharge status from General to Honorable will allow them to qualify for the GI Bill, which would help them achieve their new academic goals.

The record revealed the Applicant was disqualified from their career field and was given two chances to select a new career field for retaining but declined to do so. In response to the discharge recommendation the Applicant did not state they felt the discharge was malicious or any feelings of being rushed however they did provide explanation surrounding the instances of the documented misconduct. The board considered the Applicants in-service record, post service actions and all circumstances surrounding the discharge and determined to deny the Applicants request to upgrade their discharge.

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 box for "other mental health" on the application. The applicant contended he was unfairly targeted by his superiors after confiding to his commanding officer that he was mentally and emotionally distressed under COVID related restrictions and requested additional support and reassurance. The applicant contended he was systematically pushed out of the program from that moment forward. The applicant also contended "as for the conduct that led to the 'minor infractions' which became the basis for my dismissal, I do regret my lack of judgement. However, I now understand that my decision-making abilities were influenced by my depression and anxiety."

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

A review of the applicant's records revealed the applicant attended two mental health sessions during his time in service after he was notified of his discharge. The applicant endorsed symptoms of anxiety and low mood related to his discharge and not having an AFSC due to failing the Air Traffic Control career field courses. A review of the applicant's mental health records revealed the applicant's provider noted the applicant to be in no distress during the sessions and although he expressed interest in the behavior modification content was unwilling to utilize the skills. The applicant's records revealed the applicant's symptoms did not meet criteria for any diagnoses 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 to misconduct (minor infractions) with one year, ten months, twenty seven days time in service. A review of the applicant's discharge package revealed the applicant received five documented misconducts during his brief period in service; the applicant's records revealed the applicant's pattern of maladaptive behavior began prior to him washing out of the ATC career field. Additionally, the applicant's records revealed the applicant declined the career field he was selected for and was assigned to the COVID test facility while awaiting further career field assignment. The applicant's records revealed the applicant continued to exhibit maladaptive behavior, including failing to communicate with his superiors and making false statements. The discharge authority stated "Although he has been stationed here a relatively short time, the quantity of disciplinary actions in that short time, and his lack of improvement demonstrate to me an inability to conform to or adhere to basic military standards and professionalism. All rehabilitative efforts thus far have failed. [The applicant] has demonstrated willful non-compliance on multiple occasions, and I believe he should be discharged with a Under Honorable Conditions (General) service characterization."

A review of the applicant's records revealed the applicant described symptom development in response to receiving disciplinary action and difficulty coping with stressors contributed to additional occupational problems. There is no evidence a mental health condition caused the misconduct(s) that led to the applicant's discharge. There is evidence the applicant exhibited and endorsed difficulty adjusting to the military lifestyle and poor coping skills which may explain the applicant's misconduct but it does not constitute a mental health condition and does not mitigate the misconduct(s) that led to the applicant's discharge. Regarding the applicant's concurrence with his VA ratings, 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 a mental health condition 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 was not mitigated 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 (Minor Infractions), and the Reentry Code shall remain 2B. The DRB results were approved by the Presiding Officer on July 21, 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://afrbportal.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)