

IN THE CASE OF: [REDACTED]

BOARD DATE: 21 October 2024

DOCKET NUMBER: AR20240002884

APPLICANT REQUESTS:

- an upgrade of his under other than honorable conditions discharge to honorable
- a video/telephonic appearance before the Board

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING DOCUMENT(S) CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD:

- DD Form 149 (Application for Correction of Military Record)
- DD Form 293 (Application for the Review of Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States)

FACTS:

1. The applicant did not file within the 3-year time frame provided in Title 10, U.S. Code, section 1552(b); however, the Army Board for Correction of Military Records (ABCMR) conducted a substantive review of this case and determined it is in the interest of justice to excuse the applicant's failure to timely file.
2. The application states that he experienced severe and uncomfortable racial actions from his superiors. He believes if he were allowed to continue his military career and he would have retired. He feels he should have received an honorable discharge. He suffers from nightmares about the racial situation he endured for 38 years, which led to his discharge from the military. This struggle is a daily conversation with his children, wife, family, and relatives. He says he reported his issues to the company commander while he was AWOL, among other issues.
3. A review of the applicant's service record shows:
 - a. He enlisted in the Regular Army on 5 July 1984.
 - b. A DD Form 458 (Charge Sheet) shows on 19 July 1985 a charge was preferred on the applicant: on or about 24 May 1985 the applicant was absent without leave (AWOL) and returned on or about 15 July 1985.

c. On 19 July 1985, the applicant consulted with legal counsel and requested a discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial under the provisions of Army Regulation (AR) 635-200 (Personnel Separations – Enlisted Personnel), Chapter 10.

- he was making the request of his own free will
- maximum punishment
- he was guilty of at least one or more of the charges against him or of a lesser included offense
- he does not desire further rehabilitation or further military service
- if his request for discharge was accepted, he may be discharged under other conditions other than honorable
- he would be deprived of many or all Army benefits, he may be ineligible for many, or all benefits administered by the Veterans Administration,
- he may be deprived of his rights and benefits as a Veteran under both Federal and State law
- he must apply to the Army Discharge Review Board or the Army Board for the Correction of Military Records for a review of discharge, but there was no automatic upgrading
- he may expect to encounter substantial prejudice in civilian life

d. On 30 July 1985, the immediate commander recommended approval and issuance of a discharge of under other than honorable conditions.

e. On 16 August 1985, the separation authority approved the applicant's request for discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial. He would be issued an Under Other Than Honorable Conditions Discharge Certificate and the applicant would be reduced to private (E-1).

f. Orders 238-42, dated 26 August 1985, discharged the applicant from active duty with an effective date of 6 September 1985.

g. On 6 September 1985, he was discharged from active duty with an under other than honorable conditions characterization of service. His DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) shows he completed 1 year and 11 days of active service with 50 days of lost time. The narrative reason for separation is listed as "For the Good of the Service - In Lieu of Court-Martial."

4. By regulation (AR 635-200), an individual who has committed an offense or offenses, the punishment for which, includes a bad conduct or dishonorable discharge, may submit a request for discharge for the good of the service. An Under Other than Honorable Discharge Certificate normally is appropriate for a member who is discharged for the good of the service or in lieu of trial by court-martial.

5. In reaching its determination, the Board can consider the applicant's petition and his service record in accordance with the published equity, injustice, or clemency determination guidance.
6. By regulation (AR 15-185), an applicant is not entitled to a hearing before the ABCMR. Hearings may be authorized by a panel of the ABCMR or by the Director of the ABCMR.

7. MEDICAL REVIEW:

- a. Background: The applicant is applying to the ABCMR requesting consideration of an upgrade to his characterization of service from under other than honorable conditions (UOTHC) to honorable. He contends he experienced undiagnosed PTSD that mitigates his misconduct.
- b. The specific facts and circumstances of the case can be found in the ABCMR Record of Proceedings (ROP). Pertinent to this advisory are the following:
 - The applicant enlisted into the Regular Army on 5 July 1984.
 - The applicant's charge sheet dated 17 July 1985 showed he was AWOL from May to July 1985, and he requested discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial.
 - The applicant was discharged on 6 September 1985.
- c. Review of Available Records: The Army Review Boards Agency (ARBA) Behavioral Health Advisor reviewed the supporting documents contained in the applicant's file. The applicant asserts he experienced severe and uncomfortable racial actions from his superiors, which contributed to his misconduct, and he endorsed PTSD as a mitigating factor. The application did not contain any medical or mental health records. There was insufficient evidence that the applicant was diagnosed with PTSD or another psychiatric condition while on active service.
- d. The Joint Legacy Viewer (JLV), which includes medical and mental health records from DoD and VA, was also reviewed and showed no history of mental health related treatment or diagnoses.
- e. Based on the available information, it is the opinion of the Agency Behavioral Health Advisor that there is insufficient evidence to support that the applicant had a condition or experience that mitigates his misconduct.

f. Kurta Questions:

- (1) Did the applicant have a condition or experience that may excuse or mitigate the discharge? Yes. The applicant asserts he had an undiagnosed mental health condition,

including PTSD, at the time of the misconduct. However, there was no evidence, beyond self-report, of any mental health symptoms or conditions.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? Yes, the applicant asserts he was experiencing a mental health condition while on active service.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? No. A review of military medical and mental health records revealed no documentation of any mental health condition(s) while on active service. There is insufficient evidence, beyond self-report, that the applicant was experiencing a mental health condition while on active service. However, the applicant contends he had a mental health condition or an experience that mitigated his misconduct, and per Liberal Consideration his contention is sufficient for the board's consideration.

BOARD DISCUSSION:

1. After reviewing the application, all supporting documents, and the evidence found within the military record, the Board found that relief was not warranted.
2. The Board carefully considered the applicant's request, supporting documents, evidence in the records, and published Department of Defense guidance for liberal consideration of discharge upgrade requests. The Board considered the applicant's statement and record of service, the frequency and nature of the applicant's misconduct and the reason for separation. The Board considered the review and conclusions of the medical reviewer to include the responses to the Kurta questions. The applicant was charged with being absent without leave from May to July 1985, punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice with a punitive discharge. After being charged, he consulted with counsel and voluntarily requested discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial. The Board found no error or injustice in the separation proceedings and designated characterization of service. The Board noted the applicant's length of absence and, while noting the applicant's statement regarding the presence of a behavioral health, concurred with the medical advisor's review finding insufficient evidence the applicant had a condition or experience during service that mitigated his misconduct. Based on a preponderance of the evidence, the Board concluded that the characterization of service the applicant received upon separation was not in error or unjust.

BOARD VOTE:

Mbr 1 Mbr 2 Mbr 3

:	:	:	GRANT FULL RELIEF
:	:	:	GRANT PARTIAL RELIEF
:	:	:	GRANT FORMAL HEARING
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	DENY APPLICATION

BOARD DETERMINATION/RECOMMENDATION:

The evidence presented does not demonstrate the existence of a probable error or injustice. Therefore, the Board determined the overall merits of this case are insufficient as a basis for correction of the records of the individual concerned.

4/28/2025

X [REDACTED]

CHAIRPERSON
[REDACTED]

I certify that herein is recorded the true and complete record of the proceedings of the Army Board for Correction of Military Records in this case.

REFERENCES:

1. Title 10, U.S. Code, section 1552(b), provides that applications for correction of military records must be filed within 3 years after discovery of the alleged error or injustice. This provision of law also allows the ABCMR to excuse an applicant's failure to timely file within the 3-year statute of limitations if the ABCMR determines it would be in the interest of justice to do so.
2. Army Regulation 635-5 (Separation Documents, in effect at the time, states the DD Form 214 is a summary of the Soldier's most recent period of continuous active duty. It provides a brief, clear-cut record of all current active, prior active, and prior inactive duty service at the time of release from active duty, retirement, or discharge.

The information entered thereon reflects the conditions as they existed at the time of separation.

3. Army Regulation 635-200 (Personnel Separations – Enlisted Personnel), in effect at the time, sets forth the basic authority for the separation of enlisted personnel.

a. Paragraph 3-7a (Honorable Discharge) states an honorable discharge is a separation with honor. The honorable characterization is appropriate when the quality of the member's service generally has met, the standards of acceptable conduct and performance of duty for Army personnel, or is otherwise so meritorious that any other characterization would be clearly inappropriate.

b. Paragraph 3-7b (General Discharge) states a general discharge is a separation from the Army under honorable conditions. When authorized, it is issued to a member whose military record is satisfactory but not sufficiently meritorious to warrant an honorable discharge.

c. Chapter 10 of this regulation states an individual who has committed an offense or offenses, the punishment for any of which includes a bad conduct discharge or dishonorable discharge, may submit a request for discharge for the good of the service. An Under Other than Honorable Discharge Certificate normally is appropriate for a member who is discharged for the good of the service.

d. Paragraph 10-6. Medical and mental examination provides that a medical examination is not required but may be requested by the Soldier under AR 40-501, chapter 8.

4. On 25 July 2018, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued guidance to Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NRs) regarding equity, injustice, or clemency determinations. Clemency generally refers to relief specifically granted from a criminal sentence. BCM/NRs may grant clemency regardless of the type of court-martial. However, the guidance applies to more than clemency from a sentencing in a court-martial; it also applies to other corrections, including changes in a discharge, which may be warranted based on equity or relief from injustice.

a. This guidance does not mandate relief, but rather provides standards and principles to guide Boards in application of their equitable relief authority. In determining whether to grant relief based on equity, injustice, or clemency grounds, BCM/NRs shall consider the prospect for rehabilitation, external evidence, sworn testimony, policy changes, relative severity of misconduct, mental and behavioral health conditions, official governmental acknowledgement that a relevant error or injustice was committed, and uniformity of punishment.

b. Changes to the narrative reason for discharge and/or an upgraded character of service granted solely on equity, injustice, or clemency grounds normally should not result in separation pay, retroactive promotions, and payment of past medical expenses or similar benefits that might have been received if the original discharge had been for the revised reason or had the upgraded service characterization.

5. Section 1556 of Title 10, United States Code, requires the Secretary of the Army to ensure that an applicant seeking corrective action by the Army Review Boards Agency (ARBA) be provided with a copy of any correspondence and communications (including summaries of verbal communications) to or from the Agency with anyone outside the Agency that directly pertains to or has material effect on the applicant's case, except as authorized by statute. ARBA medical advisory opinions and reviews are authored by ARBA civilian and military medical and behavioral health professionals and are therefore internal agency work product. Accordingly, ARBA does not routinely provide copies of ARBA Medical Office recommendations, opinions (including advisory opinions), and reviews to Army Board for Correction of Military Records applicants (and/or their counsel) prior to adjudication.

6. On 3 September 2014, the Secretary of Defense directed the Service Discharge Review Boards (DRBs) and Service Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NRs) to carefully consider the revised post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) criteria, detailed medical considerations and mitigating factors when taking action on applications from former service members administratively discharged under other than honorable conditions and who have been diagnosed with PTSD by a competent mental health professional representing a civilian healthcare provider in order to determine if it would be appropriate to upgrade the characterization of the applicant's service.

7. On 25 August 2017, the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued clarifying guidance for the Secretary of Defense Directive to DRBs and BCM/NRs when considering requests by Veterans for modification of their discharges due in whole or in part to: mental health conditions, including PTSD, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault, or sexual harassment. Boards are to give liberal consideration to Veterans petitioning for discharge relief when the application for relief is based, in whole or in part, on those conditions or experiences. The guidance further describes evidence sources and criteria and requires boards to consider the conditions or experiences presented in evidence as potential mitigation for misconduct that led to the discharge.

8. On 25 July 2018, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued guidance to Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NRs) regarding equity, injustice, or clemency determinations. Clemency generally refers to relief specifically granted from a criminal sentence. BCM/NRs may grant clemency regardless of the type of court-martial.

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b. Changes to the narrative reason for discharge and/or an upgraded character of service granted solely on equity, injustice, or clemency grounds normally should not result in separation pay, retroactive promotions, and payment of past medical expenses or similar benefits that might have been received if the original discharge had been for the revised reason or had the upgraded service characterization.

9. Army Regulation 15-185 (ABCMR) prescribes the policies and procedures for correction of military records by the Secretary of the Army, acting through the ABCMR. The ABCMR begins its consideration of each case with the presumption of administrative regularity, which is that what the Army did was correct.

a. The ABCMR is not an investigative body and decides cases based on the evidence that is presented in the military records provided and the independent evidence submitted with the application. The applicant has the burden of proving an error or injustice by a preponderance of the evidence.

b. The ABCMR may, in its discretion, hold a hearing or request additional evidence or opinions. Additionally, it states in paragraph 2-11 that applicants do not have a right to a hearing before the ABCMR. The Director or the ABCMR may grant a formal hearing whenever justice requires.

//NOTHING FOLLOWS//