

IN THE CASE OF: [REDACTED]

BOARD DATE: 31 October 2024

DOCKET NUMBER: AR20240004196

APPLICANT REQUESTS:

- an upgrade of his characterization of service from under other than honorable conditions to general, under honorable conditions
- personal appearance before the Board via video/telephone

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

DD Form 149 (Application for Correction of Military Record)

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 applicant states he made an error in judgement when his wife left him and took their daughter while he was serving at Fort Bragg. There is no excuse for what he did other than the fear of losing his wife and not being with his daughter. He regrets the decision that he made to go absent without leave (AWOL), in an effort to save his marriage, although they did end up staying together another 17 years and having four more beautiful children. He is requesting this as a correction for an immature response to a very stressful situation. He has never been convicted of a crime, has a spotless driving record and he has always tried to live his life with honor and integrity. Other than a young adult making a poor decision based on feelings of loss, he has always tried to live on the right side of the law.
3. A review of the applicant's service record shows:
 - a. He enlisted in the Regular Army on 15 August 1985. The highest grade he held was private first class (PFC)/E-3.
 - b. On 4 August 1986, he accepted nonjudicial punishment (NJP) under the provisions of Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) for on or about 17 July

1986, without authority, failing to go at the time prescribed to his appointed place of duty, to wit: unit formation. His punishment included reduction to private/E-2, forfeiture of \$167.00, and 14 days of extra duty.

c. DA Forms 4187 (Personnel Action), shows his duty status changed on the following dates:

- Present for Duty (PDY) to AWOL – 21 October 1986
- AWOL to Dropped from Rolls (DFR) – 20 November 1986
- DFR to Attached/PDY – 15 January 1987

d. A Medical Examination for Separation Statement of Option dated 29 January 1987, which shows the applicant did not desire a separation medical examination.

e. Court-martial charges were preferred against the applicant on 2 February 1987. His DD Form 458 (Charge Sheet) shows he was charged with being AWOL from on or about 21 October 1986 to on or about 15 January 1987.

f. On 3 February 1987, after consulting with legal counsel, the applicant voluntarily requested discharge for the good of the service in lieu of trial by court-martial, under Army Regulation (AR) 635-200 (Personnel Separations - Enlisted Personnel), chapter 10 and acknowledged the following:

(1) He made the request of his own free will and was not coerced by any person.

(2) His understanding that by requesting discharge, he was admitting guilt to the charges against him or of a lesser included offense that also authorized the imposition of a bad conduct or dishonorable discharge.

(3) He understood that if his discharge request was approved, he may be discharged under conditions other than honorable and furnished an under other than honorable discharge certificate.

(4) He could be deprived of many or all Army benefits and he could be ineligible for many or all benefits administered by the Veteran's Administration.

(5) He could be deprived of his rights and benefits as a veteran under both Federal and State law and encounter substantial prejudice in civilian life because of an under other than honorable discharge.

(6) He understood that he must apply to the Army Discharge Review Board (ADRB) or the ABCMR if he wished review of his discharge and realized the act of consideration by either Board does not imply that his discharge will be upgraded.

(7) He elected not to submit a statement in his own behalf.

g. On 5 February 1987, the immediate commander and intermediate commander recommended approval of the request for discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial, with characterization of service under other than honorable conditions.

h. The separation authority approved the recommended discharge on 10 February 1987, directed the applicant be reduced to the lowest enlisted grade of private (PVT)/E-1, and be issued an under other than honorable conditions discharge.

i. The applicant was discharged on 13 March 1987. His DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) shows he was discharged under the provisions of AR 635-200, chapter 10, in the lowest enlisted grade, and his service was characterized as under other than honorable conditions (Separation Code KFS, Reenlistment Codes 3/3B/3C). He completed 1 year, 4 months, and 5 days of net active service during the covered period and had lost time from 21 October 1986 to 14 January 1987.

4. There is no indication the applicant applied to the ADRB for review of his discharge processing within the Board's 15-year statute of limitations.

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. The pertinent Army regulation in effect at the time provided discharges under the provision of Army Regulation 635-200, chapter 10, where voluntary requests from the Soldier to be discharged in lieu of a trial by court-martial.

BOARD DISCUSSION:

1. The Board determined the evidence of record was sufficient to render a fair and equitable decision. As a result, a personal appearance hearing is not necessary to serve the interest of equity and justice in this case.

2. After reviewing the application, all supporting documents, and the evidence found within the military record, the Board found that relief was not warranted. The Board carefully considered the applicant's request, supporting documents, evidence in the records, and published DoD guidance for liberal consideration of discharge upgrade requests. The applicant was charged with commission of an offense (AWOL) punishable under the UCMJ with a punitive discharge. After being charged, she consulted with counsel and requested discharge under the provisions of AR 635-200,

Chapter 10. Such discharges are voluntary requests for discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial and carry an under other than honorable conditions discharge. The Board found no error or injustice in his separation processing. Also, the applicant provided insufficient evidence of a persuasive nature of post-service achievements or letters of reference in support of a clemency determination. Therefore, based on a preponderance of available evidence, the Board determined that the character 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

██████████ 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.

10/31/2024

X ██████████

CHAIRPERSON
██████████

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 635-200, in effect at the time, set forth the basic authority for the separation of enlisted personnel.
 - a. Chapter 10 provided that a Soldier who 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. The discharge request may be submitted after court-martial charges are preferred against the Soldier, or, where required, after referral, until final action by the court-martial convening authority. Commanders will ensure that a Soldier is not coerced into submitting a request for discharge for the good of the service. The Soldier will be given a reasonable time to consult with consulting counsel and to consider the wisdom of submitting such a request for discharge. After receiving counseling, the Soldier may elect to submit a request for discharge for the good of the service. The Soldier will sign a written request, certifying that they were counseled, understood their rights, may receive a discharge under other than honorable conditions, and understood the adverse nature of such a discharge and the possible consequences. A discharge under other than honorable conditions was normally appropriate for a Soldier who is discharged for the good of the service. However, the separation authority was authorized to direct a general discharge certificate if such was merited by the Soldier's overall record during their current enlistment. For Soldiers who had completed entry level status, characterization of service as honorable was not authorized unless the Soldier's record was otherwise so meritorious that any other characterization clearly would be improper.
 - b. An honorable discharge is a separation with honor. The honorable characterization is appropriate when the quality of the Soldier'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.
 - c. A general discharge is a separation from the Army under honorable conditions. When authorized, it is used for a Soldier whose military record is satisfactory but not sufficiently meritorious to warrant an honorable discharge.

d. A discharge under other than honorable conditions is an administrative separation from the service under conditions other than honorable. It may be issued for misconduct or for the good of the service.

3. 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 regarding equity, injustice, or clemency determinations.

Clemency generally refers to relief specifically granted from a criminal sentence. Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records may grant clemency regardless of the court-martial forum. However, the guidance applies to more than clemency from a sentencing in a court-martial; it also applies to any other corrections, including changes in a discharge, which may be warranted on equity or relief from injustice. This guidance does not mandate relief but provides standards and principles to guide Boards in application of their equitable relief authority.

a. In determining whether to grant relief on the basis of equity, injustice, or clemency grounds, Boards 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.

4. 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//