

ARMY BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

IN THE CASE OF: [REDACTED]

BOARD DATE: 18 February 2025

DOCKET NUMBER: AR20240006297

APPLICANT REQUESTS:

- upgrade of his under other than honorable conditions (UOTHC) discharge to under honorable conditions (general) or honorable
- favorable change to his narrative reason for separation.
- 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)
- DD Form 293 (Application for the Review of Discharge)
- self-authored letter
- Veterans Affairs (VA) Form 21-4138 (Statement in Support of Claim)

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 was assaulted by three individuals which caused severe head trauma, while at training. He was not in his right frame of mind when he disobeyed an order from his supervisor. He was traumatized by the assault and should have been given a medical discharge. He suffers from flashbacks and has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He went on furlough and his supervisor told him not to bother coming back because he was pending discharge due to his juvenile record. He wanted to remain in the Army; however, he feared retaliation if he had returned.
3. On 10 April 1991, the applicant enlisted in the Regular Army, for 3 years. The highest grade he attained was E-1.
4. On 8 July 1991, the applicant was reported as absent without leave (AWOL) and remained absent until he returned to military control on 22 December 1992.

5. Court-martial charges were preferred against the applicant on 28 December 1992, for violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). His DD Form 458 (Charge Sheet) shows he was charged with one specification of going AWOL.
6. On 28 December 1992, the applicant consulted with legal counsel and was advised of the basis for the contemplated trial by court-martial; the maximum permissible punishment authorized under the UCMJ; the possible effects of a bad conduct discharge; and the procedures and rights that were available to him.
  - a. Subsequent to receiving legal counsel, the applicant voluntarily requested discharge under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200 (Personnel Separations – Enlisted Personnel), Chapter 10, for the good of the service. In his request for discharge, he acknowledged his understanding that by requesting discharge, he was admitting guilt to the charge against him, or of a lesser included offense that also authorized the imposition of a bad conduct or dishonorable discharge. He further acknowledged he understood that if his discharge request was approved, he could be deprived of many or all Army benefits, he could be ineligible for many or all benefits administered by the Veterans Administration, and he could be deprived of his rights and benefits as a Veteran under both Federal and State laws.
  - b. He declined to submit a statement in his own behalf.
7. On 8 February 1993, his commander recommended approval of the applicant's request for discharge.
8. By legal review on 23 February 1993, the applicant's Chapter 10, separation action was found to be legally sufficient for further processing.
9. Consistent with the chain of command's recommendations, the separation authority approved the applicant's request for discharge on 24 February 1993, and directed the issuance of an UOTHC discharge certificate.
10. The applicant was discharged on 22 March 1993. His DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) shows he was discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 10, for the good of the service – in lieu of trial by court-martial. He was discharged in the lowest enlisted grade and his service characterized as UOTHC. He was assigned separation code KFS and reentry code 3. He completed 5 months and 29 days of net active service this period with 534 days of lost time.
11. The applicant provides a VA Form 21-4138 made in connection with his claim for VA benefits. In his statement to the VA, he details the events which contributed to his service connected injuries.

12. The applicant was charged due to the commission of an offense punishable under the UCMJ with a punitive discharge. Subsequent to being charged, he consulted with counsel and requested discharge under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 10. Such discharges are voluntary requests for discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial.

13. In reaching its determination, the Board can consider the applicant's petition, arguments and assertions, and service record in accordance with the published equity, injustice, or clemency guidance.

**14. 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 something more favorable as well as a change to the narrative reason for separation. He contends he experienced an undiagnosed mental health condition, including PTSD, and sexual assault/harassment (MST) 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 10 April 1991.
- Court-martial charges were preferred against the applicant on 28 December 1992, for violations of the UCMJ. His DD Form 458 (Charge Sheet) shows he was charged with one specification of going AWOL from 8 July 1991 to 22 December 1992. He voluntarily requested discharge for the good of the service.
- The applicant was discharged on 22 March 1993 and completed 5 months and 29 days of net active service.

c. Review of Available Records: The Army Review Board Agency (ARBA) Behavioral Health Advisor reviewed the supporting documents contained in the applicant's file. The applicant asserts he was physically assaulted and experienced severe head trauma during AIT, and he indicated PTSD, "other mental health," and sexual assault/harassment as mitigating factors in his discharge. The application was void of 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. The applicant is ineligible for VA services.

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. There were no available records from his time in service or post-discharge to support this assertion.

(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. He provided an account of a physical assault that occurred while in AIT.

(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, and the application did not include any medical or mental health records. The applicant asserts a fully mitigating behavioral health experience, MST, but his narrative extensively discusses a physical attack/assault that resulted in a traumatic brain injury. Avoidant behavior, such as going AWOL, can be a natural sequela to mental health conditions associated with exposure to traumatic and stressful events. Yet, the presence of misconduct alone is not sufficient evidence of a mitigating mental health condition during active service.

g. However, the applicant contends he was experiencing a mental health condition or an experience that mitigates 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. 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 applicant was charged with an offense 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 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.

2. The applicant's request for a personal appearance hearing was carefully considered. In this case, 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.

**BOARD VOTE:**

Mbr 1    Mbr 2    Mbr 3

:	:	:	GRANT FULL RELIEF
:	:	:	GRANT PARTIAL RELIEF
:	:	:	GRANT FORMAL HEARING
:XX	:XX	:XX	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.

X //signed//

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. Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1556, requires the Secretary of the Army to ensure that an applicant seeking corrective action by 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.
3. 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.
  - a. Paragraph 2-9 states the ABCMR begins its consideration of each case with the presumption of administrative regularity. 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.
4. Army Regulation 635-5-1 (Separation Program Designator (SPD) Codes) provides the specific authorities (regulatory or directive), reasons for separating Soldiers from active duty, and the separation codes to be entered on the DD Form 214. At the time, this regulation prescribed the separation code "KFS" is the appropriate code to assign Soldiers separated under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 10, in lieu of trial by court-martial.
5. Army Regulation 635-200 (Personnel Separations – Enlisted Personnel) sets forth the basic authority for the separation of enlisted personnel. The version in effect at the time provided that:

a. An honorable discharge is a separation with honor and entitles the recipient to benefits provided by law. 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. A general discharge is a separation from the Army under honorable conditions. When authorized, it is issued to a Soldier whose military record is satisfactory but not sufficiently meritorious to warrant an honorable discharge.

c. Chapter 10 provided that a member who had committed an offense or offenses, for which the authorized punishment included a punitive discharge, could submit a request for discharge for the good of the service in lieu of trial by court-martial. The request could be submitted at any time after charges had been preferred and must have included the individual's admission of guilt. Although an honorable or general discharge was authorized, a UOTHC discharge was normally considered appropriate.

6. The Secretary of Defense directed the Service Discharge Review Boards (DRB) and Service Boards for Correction of Military/Navy Records (BCM/NR), on 3 September 2014, to carefully consider the revised 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. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness provided clarifying guidance to Service DRBs and Service BCM/NRs on 25 August 2017. The memorandum directed them to give liberal consideration to veterans petitioning for discharge relief when the application for relief is based in whole or in part on matters relating to mental health conditions, including PTSD, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault, or sexual harassment. Standards for review should rightly consider the unique nature of these cases and afford each veteran a reasonable opportunity for relief even if the mental health condition was not diagnosed until years later. 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.

8. On 25 July 2018, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued guidance to Military DRBs and 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 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.

//NOTHING FOLLOWS//