

ARMY BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

IN THE CASE OF: [REDACTED]

BOARD DATE: 1 April 2025

DOCKET NUMBER: AR20240007038

APPLICANT REQUESTS: in effect, an upgrade of his under other than honorable conditions discharge.

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 in effect, he is requesting an upgrade of his under other than honorable conditions discharge. He completed his first enlistment honorably and would like a fair chance.
3. A review of the applicant's service record shows:
  - a. He enlisted in the Regular Army on 25 January 1996.
  - b. On 22 April 2004, court-martial charges were preferred on the applicant for two specifications of absenting himself without authority from his organization:
    - 11 August 1999 to 27 September 1999 (48 days)
    - 4 October 1999 to 19 April 2004 (1660 days – 4 years, 6 months, 16 days)
  - c. On 22 April 2004, 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. The applicant's rank was listed as Specilaist (SPC)/E-4. He acknowledged:
    - 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 27 April 2004, 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 reduced to the lowest enlisted grade.

e. On 5 May 2004, 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 3 year 6 months and 15 days of active service with 1708 days of lost time. It also shows in Block 18, "Continuous Honorable Active Service from 25 January 1996 through 13 January 1999.

4. There is no evidence the applicant has applied to the Army Discharge Review Board for review of his discharge within that board's 15-year statute of limitations.

5. 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 in lieu of trial by court-martial. 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.

6. 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.

BOARD DISCUSSION:

After reviewing the application and all supporting documents, to include the DoD guidance on liberal consideration when reviewing discharge upgrade requests, the Board determined relief was not warranted. The applicant's contentions, the military record, and regulatory guidance were carefully considered. Based upon the lengthy period of AWOL leading to the applicant's separation and the lack of any mitigation or clemency evidence submitted by the applicant, the Board concluded there was insufficient evidence of an error or injustice warranting a change to the applicant's characterization of service.

BOARD VOTE:

Mbr 1      Mbr 2      Mbr 3

|      |      |      |                      |
|------|------|------|----------------------|
| :    | :    | :    | GRANT FULL RELIEF    |
| :    | :    | :    | GRANT PARTIAL RELIEF |
| :    | :    | :    | GRANT FORMAL HEARING |
| :XXX | :XXX | :XXX | 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.

//SIGNED//

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 635-5 (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 in lieu of trial by court-martial. An Under Other than Honorable Discharge Certificate normally is appropriate for a member who is discharged for the good of the service.

5. 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.

//NOTHING FOLLOWS//