

ARMY BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

IN THE CASE OF: [REDACTED]

BOARD DATE: 16 September 2025

DOCKET NUMBER: AR20250005557

APPLICANT REQUESTS: correction of his service record due to Executive Order 14184 (Reinstating Service Members Discharged Under the Military's COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate) to, in effect:

- Revoke and remove Directorate of Human Resources U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, Orders 152-0027, 1 June 2022, from his Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR)
- Revoke and remove Directorate of Human Resources U. S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, Orders 161-0001, 10 June 2022, from his AMHRR
- Void and remove from his AMHRR, his DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) for the period ending 25 June 2022
- Reinstatement in the Army
- Show constructive service credit without a break in service
- Restore all entitlements to include but not limited to backpay, allowances, and benefits he is otherwise qualified for
- Remove any and all derogatory and disciplinary documents related to him refusing to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 from his AMHRR
- Restore his time in grade (TIG), and his date of rank (DOR) for the rank of specialist (SPC)/E-4 accordingly
- Restore any and all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, including Post 9/11 GI Bill, and VA home loan benefits

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

- DD Forms 149 (Application for Correction of Military Record)
- Self-authored letter
- Marriage Certificate, 22 June 2019
- Notification of Separation under Army Regulation 635-200 (Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations), Chapter 14-12c
- Leave and Earnings Statement (LES), for the period 1 May 2022, through 31 May 2022
- Orders 152-0027, 1 June 2022

- Orders 161-0001, 10 June 2022 (amending Orders 152-0027, 1 June 2022)
- DD Form 214, for the period ending 25 June 2022
- Readiness Documentation, 13 March 2025
- COVID-19 Reinstatement Certification, 27 August 2025

FACTS:

1. The applicant states, in effect, he is requesting correction of his service record due to Executive Order 14184.

a. He refused to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and requested a religious accommodation exemption, which was ultimately denied, and eventually led to his discharge, about two and a half years prior to his original expiration of term of service (ETS). His favorable actions were suspended, thus hindering his chances for promotion, and his immediate removal for Air Assault school, with only two days away from graduation. He received an under honorable conditions (general) characterization of service, rendering him ineligible for VA benefits, such as education and the possibility of home loan. Although his narrative reason of separation was due to " Misconduct (Serious Offense), prior to his refusal of the COVID-19 vaccine, he did not have any history of misconduct or any disciplinary issues.

b. He was not afforded enough time to out process, manage his affairs and prepare his family for a move from Hawaii to North Carolina. While stationed in Hawaii, his monthly entitlements included basic allowance for housing (BAH) for the rank of SPC, of \$2,823, base pay of \$2,393, basic allowance for subsistence (BAS) of \$406.98, and cost of living allowance (COLA) of \$343.07. He now serves as a Sheriff's Deputy, which allows him to continue his service. His discharge was unfair, as the COVID-19 vaccine was experimental, but he is eager for an opportunity to serve his country again.

2. In regard to the applicant's request for restoration of any and all VA benefits, including Post 9/11 GI Bill, and the VA home loan, the ABCMR does not reinstate VA benefits. In appropriate cases, it directs or recommends correction of military records to remove an error or injustice. The applicant's request should be addressed through VA and will not be discussed further in these proceedings. Should the applicant become eligible for VA benefits in the future, he and/or counsel, may subsequently resubmit an application to the ABCMR for consideration of such benefits.

3. The applicant provides and the service record shows:

- On 27 July 2020, he enlisted in the Regular Army
- On 24 August 2021, the Secretary of Defense mandated that all service members receive the COVID-19 vaccine

- In an undated memorandum, he was notified that separation action was initiated against him for refusing to become fully vaccinated, under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-8, chapter 14-12c; this document is not in the applicant's AMHRR
- On 1 June 2022, he was issued separation Orders 152-0027, which show a separation date of 25 June 2022; these orders were later amended pursuant to Orders 161-0001, 10 June 2022, which show he was now authorized concurrent travel for his spouse
- His DD Form 214 shows that on 25 June 2022, he was discharged with a general characterization of service due to misconduct (serious offense); he completed 1 year, 10 months, and 29 days of active federal service
- On 10 January 2023, the Secretary of Defense rescinded the COVID-19 vaccine mandate
- On 26 July 2023, had the applicant not been separated, we would have been eligible for the award of the Army Good Conduct Medal
- On 27 August 2025, he was issued a reinstatement certification, which shows he is physically and medically eligible to reenlist in the U.S. Army

3. The applicant does not provide, and the service record does not show the following documents:

- A request for a religious accommodation for an exemption to the COVID-19 vaccine
- Medical documents, or counselings that provide the applicant's refusal to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19
- Letters of reprimand
- Any other derogatory information in reference to the applicant's refusal to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19

4. The service record does not show an administrative separation packet.

BOARD DISCUSSION:

After reviewing the application and all supporting documents, the Board determined relief was warranted. The applicant's contentions, the military record, and regulatory guidance were carefully considered. Based upon the available documents showing the applicant's previous military service ended solely based upon failing to take the COVID-19 vaccine and the change in policy related to that issue, the Board concluded there was an injustice warranting changing the applicant's military.

BOARD VOTE:

<u>Mbr 1</u>	<u>Mbr 2</u>	<u>Mbr 3</u>	
XX	XX	XX	GRANT FULL RELIEF
:	:	:	GRANT PARTIAL RELIEF
:	:	:	GRANT FORMAL HEARING
:	:	:	DENY APPLICATION

BOARD DETERMINATION/RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Board determined the evidence presented is sufficient to warrant a recommendation for relief. As a result, the Board recommends that all Department of the Army records of the individual concerned be corrected by:

- Remove any and all derogatory and disciplinary documents related to him refusing to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 from his AMHRR
- Award the Army Good Conduct Medal for the period of 27 July 2020 to 26 July 2023

2. Relief Contingent on Reinstatement Agreement. Should the applicant agree to reinstatement terms and conditions for revocation of discharge and return to active duty in the Regular Army, the Board further recommends the following corrective actions:

- Revoke and remove Directorate of Human Resources U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, Orders 152-0027, 1 June 2022, from his Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR)
- Revoke and remove Directorate of Human Resources U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, Orders 161-0001, 10 June 2022, from his AMHRR
- Void and remove from his AMHRR, his DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) for the period ending 25 June 2022
- Reinstatement in the Army
- Show constructive service credit without a break in service
- Restore all entitlements to include but not limited to backpay, allowances, and benefits he is otherwise qualified for
- Restore his time in grade (TIG), and his date of rank (DOR) for the rank of specialist (SPC)/E-4 accordingly

- Restore any and all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, including Post 9/11 GI Bill, and VA home loan benefits

3. Alternative Relief if Reinstatement Not Accepted. In the alternative, should the applicant not agree to reinstatement in the Regular Army, the Board recommends the following corrective actions:

- the applicant's DD Form 214 for the period ending 25 June 2022 be corrected as follows:
 - Item 12b (Separation Date This Period): 2025 01 24
 - Item 12c (Net Active Service This Period): 04 05 29
 - Item 13 (Decorations, Medals, Badges, Citations and Campaign Ribbons Awarded or Authorized): to add the Army Good Conduct Medal
 - Item 24 (Character of Service): Honorable
 - Item 26 (Separation Code): MBK
 - Item 27 (Reentry Code): 1
 - Item 28 (Narrative Reason for Separation): Completion of Required Service
- show service in the Regular Army from 26 June 2022 to 24 January 2025 pay, allowances, benefits, and entitlements due the applicant for the period
- 26 June 2022 to 24 January 2025 based on the aforementioned correction

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. Army Regulation 15-185 (Army Board for Correction of Military Records (ABCMR)) states the Army, by law, may pay claims for amounts due to applicants as a result of correction of military records. The ABCMR will furnish the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) copies of decisions potentially affecting monetary entitlement or benefits. The DFAS will treat such decisions as claims for payment by or on behalf of the applicant and settle claims on the basis of the corrected military record. The applicant's acceptance of a settlement fully satisfies the claim concerned.
2. Army Regulation 637-1 (Army Compensation and Entitlements Policy) provides Department of the Army (DA) policies for entitlements and collections of pay and allowances for active-duty Soldiers. It is used in conjunction with the Department of Defense (DoD) Financial Management Regulation (FMR), Volume 7A. For the purpose of this regulation, active duty is defined in accordance with Title 37, United States Code (37 USC). The term "active duty" means full-time duty in the active service of a uniformed service and includes full-time training duty, annual training duty, full-time National Guard duty, and attendance, while in the active service, at a school designated as a service school by law or by the Secretary of the Army (SECARMY).
3. Title 10 (Armed Forces), United States Code (USC), section 1552 (c)(1) states, the Secretary concerned may pay, from applicable current appropriations, a claim for the loss of pay, allowances, compensation, emoluments, or other pecuniary benefits, or for the repayment of a fine or forfeiture, if, as a result of correcting a record under this section, the amount is found to be due the claimant on account of his or another's service in the Army.
4. Army Regulation 635-8 (Separation Processing and Documents) prescribes the transition processing function of the military personnel system. It provides principles of support, standards of service, policies, tasks, rules, and steps governing required actions in the field to support processing personnel for separation and preparation of separation documents. When a DD Form 214 has been prepared and distributed, and subsequently determined that it was prepared in error, the responsible transition center will void the DD Form 214 by memorandum. Distribute this memorandum to all addressees that received the erroneously prepared DD Form 214, advising them of the error and requesting the voided DD Form 214 be destroyed and removed from the Soldier's Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR).
5. On 24 August 2021, the Secretary of Defense mandated that all service members receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The Secretary of Defense later rescinded the mandate on January 10, 2023. It states, "the vaccine mandate was an unfair, overbroad, and completely unnecessary burden on our service members. Further, the military unjustly discharged those who refused the vaccine, regardless of the years of service given to

our Nation, after failing to grant many of them an exemption that they should have received. Federal Government redress of any wrongful dismissals is overdue”.

6. On 27 January 2025, President Donald J. Trump signed Executive Order (EO) 14184, “Reinstating Service Members Discharged Under the Military's COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate.”

7. On 6 February 2025 the Secretary of Defense issued Memorandum, "Providing Remedies for Service Members and Veterans Negatively Impacted by the Department's Defunct Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Mandate Based Executive Order."

8. On 1 April 2025 the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense issued a Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments, “Updated Guidance on Correction of Military Records for Service Members Involuntarily Separated for Refusal to Comply with Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Requirements.” It provides:

a. As directed by the Secretary of Defense, the Department of Defense shall take all actions necessary to make reinstatement available to all members of the military (Active and Reserve Components) who were discharged solely for refusal to receive the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccine and who request to be reinstated. The Secretaries of the Military Departments will process reinstatements for individuals either involuntarily discharged or those who voluntary left the service or allowed their service to lapse, rather than be vaccinated under the vaccine mandate, consistent with this guidance.

b. In cases where the Service member was involuntarily separated, the Secretaries of the Military Departments will contact such Service members and make available to them reinstatement via the Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NRs) process. The BCM/NRs should exercise their broad discretion to order all appropriate retroactive corrections of the Service member's record as described in the guidance.

c. The BCM/NRs will give COVID-19 reinstatement cases priority consideration, subject to existing statutorily specified priority consideration for post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma.

d. The BCM/NRs, using the attached guidance in the memorandum, will assess each case to determine if an error or injustice exists within the former Service member's record and order all appropriate records corrections, which may include but is not limited to reinstatement with no break in service, restoration of the member's previous grade or rank, and credit for lost service time due to separation.

9. On 7 May 2025 the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense issued a Memorandum for Secretaries of Military Departments, “Supplemental Guidance to the Military

Department Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records Considering Requests from Service Members Adversely Impacted by Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Requirements.” It provides:

a. On January 27, 2025, the President issued reference (a), concerning the Department of Defense's since-rescinded coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination mandate, which was unlawful as implemented, and "an unfair, overbroad, and completely unnecessary burden" on Service members. The Secretary of Defense has taken decisive action to execute the President's guidance to correct this injustice:

(1) All former Service members discharged solely for refusing to receive the COVID-19 vaccine may pursue reinstatement in the military, and be considered for eligibility to receive backpay; and

(2) Former Service members who attest that they voluntarily left the military or allowed their service to lapse according to appropriate procedures due to the military's previous COVID-19 vaccination mandate may pursue a return to military service.

b. In addition, some Service members were separated with less than a fully honorable discharge characterization for their refusal to take a COVID-19 vaccine, depriving them of veterans' benefits. Other Service members, who remained in service and requested religious, administrative, or medical accommodations related to the COVID-19 vaccine requirement, may still have adverse information in their records connected to those requests.

c. To remedy these harms, on April 23, 2025, the Secretary of Defense directed the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to issue additional guidance to the Military Department Review Boards concerning the review of requests from Service members and former Service members adversely impacted by the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The following is directed:

(1) The Secretaries of Military Departments will, through their Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records, continue to apply guidance, which was issued to facilitate the reinstatement or return of eligible individuals who wish to continue their military service.

(2) Carefully consider claims by individuals who filed formal requests for administrative or medical accommodation, including requests for religious accommodation, related to the Department's previous COVID-19 vaccine mandate, yet continued to serve. Adverse actions in a Service member's records solely associated with their refusal to take a COVID-19 vaccination or seek an exemption from that COVID-19 vaccine mandate should be removed.

d. This guidance is not intended to interfere with or impede the BCM/NRs' statutory independence, nor does it limit the Boards from considering additional claims related to harms caused by the Department's previous COVID-19 vaccine mandate and providing appropriate remedies.

e. Discharge Upgrade Requests:

(1) Service members who were involuntarily separated solely for refusing to be vaccinated, did not receive the same treatment across the Department. While some Service members were assigned "honorable" discharge characterizations, others received "general (under honorable conditions)" characterization and as a result, lost access to important educational benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Montgomery GI Bill, and potentially other veterans benefits.

(2) To correct this injustice and enhance uniformity across the Military services, the Review Boards should generally grant a discharge upgrade request from a former Service member when:

- The former Service member was involuntarily separated
- The separation was based solely on a refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccine; and
- There are no aggravating factors in the Service member's record, such as misconduct

(3) Review Boards should normally grant requests to upgrade the characterization of service to "honorable," change the narrative reason for enlisted separation (i.e., to "Secretarial Authority"), and change the reentry code to an immediately-eligible-to-reenter code under these specific circumstances. Officer records should be changed to have similar effect.

(4) If an applicant's military records reflect multiple reasons for involuntary separation (i.e., when separation was not solely due to the fact that the former Service member refused to receive the COVID-19 vaccine), the Review Boards should apply existing policies that require the former Service member to establish evidence of an error, impropriety, inequity, or injustice in their discharge in order to warrant relief.

f. Removal of Adverse Actions and Information Solely Associated with COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate:

(1) The Department's COVID-19 vaccine mandate also caused harms that were not reflected on separation documents. For instance, some Service members received administrative letters of reprimand, negative or inconsistent evaluations, or withholding

of opportunities for Reserve Component personnel to perform inactive duty training for pay to achieve a “good year” for participation and retirement purposes.

(2) While previous guidance required the Secretaries of the Military Departments to update Service member personnel records to remove adverse actions solely associated with denials of requests for exemption from the COVID-19 vaccine mandate on religious, administrative, or medical grounds, this relief should not have been limited to Service members who formally filed an exemption request. The inadequacy of the consideration afforded to those who submitted accommodation requests undermined the faith of many Service members, and they should not be penalized for deciding not to request an exemption that had little or no likelihood of success.

(3) To ensure that present and former Service members are not penalized for pursuing religious and other exemptions to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate in good faith, the BCM/NRs will carefully consider applications by individuals who request correction of records containing adverse information or reflecting adverse action solely associated with a request for exemption from the COVID-19 vaccination mandate, or with appeals of denials of such requests. Additionally, any present or former Service member who attests that they would have filed a request for exemption from the COVID-19 vaccine mandate were it not for the Department’s very high rate of disapproval of such requests shall be evaluated as if they had requested, and been denied, such an exemption.

(4) If adverse information associated solely with a request for exemption from the COVID-19 vaccination mandate is found within an applicant’s official military personnel file, the BCM/NR should, as appropriate, exercise its broad discretion to assess the potential impact on the Service member’s career and correct impacted personnel records appropriately.

g. Other Harms or Injustices Suffered by Service Members Not Specifically Addressed in this Guidance:

(1) Present and former Service members may have suffered other harms from the COVID-19 vaccine mandate that are not specifically addressed in this guidance. Adverse action may include the overt withholding of favorable personnel actions, including such actions as removing individuals from approved lists to attend training or professional military education, to assume leadership positions, or to conduct a permanent change of station transfer on schedule.

(2) Many Service members may have been denied these opportunities while waiting for the adjudication of their administrative or medical exemption requests. Even more concerning, some have reported that they were pressured to voluntarily separate

from the military due to their COVID-19 vaccine status, even while awaiting adjudication of their exemptions.

(3) The BCMR/NRs should exercise broad discretion in providing appropriate corrections to the records of Service members and former Service members who suffered harms resulting from the Department's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

10. Army Regulation 600-37 (Unfavorable Information), sets forth policies and procedures to ensure the best interests of both the Army and Soldiers are served by authorizing unfavorable information to be placed in, transferred within, or removed from an individual's AMHRR.

a. Paragraph 1-1 states, in relevant part, that the intent of Army Regulation 600-37 is to ensure that unfavorable information that is unsubstantiated, irrelevant, untimely, or incomplete is not filed in individual official personnel files; and, to ensure that the best interests of both the Army and the Soldiers are served by authorizing unfavorable information to be placed in and, when appropriate, removed from official personnel files.

b. Paragraph 1-4 stipulates that the objectives of Army Regulation 600-37 are to apply fair and just standards to all Soldiers; protect the rights of individual Soldiers and, at the same time, permit the Army to consider all available relevant information when choosing Soldiers for positions of leadership, trust, and responsibility; to prevent adverse personnel action based on unsubstantiated derogatory information or mistaken identity; to provide a means of correcting injustices if they occur; and, to ensure that Soldiers of poor moral character are not continued in Service or advanced to positions of leadership, trust, and responsibility.

11. Army Regulation 600-8-104 (Army Military Human Resource Records Management), in effect at the time, prescribes Army policy for the creation, utilization, administration, maintenance, and disposition of the AMHRR. The AMHRR includes, but is not limited to the OMPF, finance-related documents, and non-service related documents deemed necessary to store by the Army. Paragraph 3-6 (Authority for Filing or Removing Documents in the AMHRR Folders) provides that once a document is properly filed in the AMHRR, the document will not be removed from the record unless directed by the ABCMR or another authorized agency.

12. Army Regulation 600-8-10 (Leaves and Passes) prescribes the policies and mandated operating tasks for the leave and pass function of the Military Personnel System. It provides a single-source operating document to the field, and as such, is binding on all communities involved in granting leaves and passes. It applies to the Regular Army, the Army National Guard/Army National Guard of the United States, and the U.S. Army Re-serve, unless otherwise stated.

a. Transition leave (formerly called terminal leave) is a chargeable leave granted together with transition from the Service, including retirement. The unit commander or designee is the approval authority for transition leave requests.

b. The leave and pass program is designed to allow Soldiers to use their authorized leave to the maximum extent possible.

c. Soldiers who do not take leave, may lose leave at the end of the fiscal year (FY). Also, Soldiers who maintain a 60-day leave balance, and wait late in the FY to take leave, will be informed that they risk loss of leave over 60 days if the operational situation requires their presence. Accrued leave that exceeds 60 days at the end of the fiscal year is lost except as authorized.

13. Army Regulation 600-8-22 (Military Awards), in effect at the time, prescribes Department of the Army (DA) policy, criteria, and administrative instructions concerning individual and unit military awards.

a. The Army Good Conduct Medal was established on 28 June 1941 and was amended on 10 April 1953. It is awarded for exemplary behavior, efficiency, and fidelity in active Federal military service. It is awarded on a selective basis to each Soldier who distinguishes himself or herself from among his or her fellow Soldiers by exemplary conduct, efficiency, and fidelity throughout a specified period of continuous enlisted active Federal military service, as outlined in this chapter. There is no right or entitlement to the medal until the immediate commander has approved the award and the award has been announced in permanent orders (PO).

b. Qualifying periods of service. Any one of the following periods of continuous enlisted active Federal military service qualifies for award of the Army Good Conduct Medal:

- Each 3 years completed on or after 27 August 1940
- For first award only, 1 year served entirely during the period 7 December 1941 to 2 March 1946
- For first award only, upon termination of service on or after 27 June 1950, of less than 3 years but more than 1 year. Subsequent awards must be for a completion of 3 years of continuous enlisted active Federal military service
- For first award only, upon termination of service, on or after 27 June 1950, of less than 1 year when final separation was by reason of physical disability incurred in line of duty
- For first award only, for those individuals who died before completing 1 year of active Federal military service or if the death occurred in the line of duty

//NOTHING FOLLOWS//