

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED]**a. Application Date:** 26 April 2021**b. Date Received:** 26 April 2021**c. Counsel:** None**2. REQUEST, ISSUES, BOARD TYPE, AND DECISION:**

a. Applicant's Requests and Issues: The current characterization of service for the period under review is general (under honorable conditions). The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable.

The applicant seeks relief contending, in effect, suffering from PTSD while on active duty. The applicant contends they currently have a service-connected percentage of 100 percent for PTSD and 40 percent for TBI. These conditions acted as contributing factors in the self-medicating which led to inappropriate drug use. The applicant contends good service to include a combat deployment. The applicant desires a narrative reason change.

b. Board Type and Decision: In a records review conducted on 24 July 2025, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board, based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Depression outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense, determined the narrative reason for the applicant's separation is now inequitable. Therefore, the Board directed the issue of a new DD Form 214 changing the separation authority to AR 635-200, Chapter 15, and the narrative reason for separation to Secretarial Authority, with a corresponding separation code to JFF. The Board determined the RE code was proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

Please see Section 9 of this document for more detail regarding the Board's decision.

(Board member names available upon request)

3. DISCHARGE DETAILS:

a. Reason / Authority / Codes / Characterization: Misconduct (Drug Abuse) / AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2) / JKK / RE-4 / Honorable

b. Date of Discharge: 28 December 2009

c. Separation Facts:

(1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate: 18 December 2009

(2) Basis for Separation: The applicant was informed of the following reasons under the provisions of AR 635-200 paragraph 14-12c: The applicant tested positive for cocaine on a drug test taken on 19 October 2009.

(3) Recommended Characterization: General (Under Honorable Conditions)

(4) Legal Consultation Date: On 18 December 2009, the applicant waived legal counsel.

(5) Administrative Separation Board: NA

(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization: On 28 December 2009, the separation authority approved the applicant's separation under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c, Commission of a Serious Offense. / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

- a. Date / Period of Enlistment:** 12 July 2007 / 3 years, 16 weeks
- b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 18 / High School Graduate / 109
- c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 11B1O, Infantryman / 2 years, 5 months, 17 days
- d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** None
- e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** SWA / Iraq (13 June 2008 – 28 May 2009)
- f. Awards and Decorations:** ARCOM, PH, NDSM, GWTSM, ICM-CS, ASR, OSR, CIB
- g. Performance Ratings:** NA
- h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:** Electronic Copy of Specimen Custody Document – Drug Testing, 28 October 2009, reflects the applicant tested positive for COC (cocaine) during a urinalysis testing conducted on 19 October 2009.

Developmental Counseling Form, 1 November 2009, for failing the urinalysis.

Record of Proceedings under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice, 16 November 2009, for wrongfully using cocaine (between 16 and 19 November 2009). The punishment consisted of a reduction to E-1, forfeiture of \$699 pay per month for two months, and extra duty and restriction for 45 days.

- i. Lost Time / Mode of Return:** None

j. Behavioral Health Condition(s):

(1) Applicant provided: Copy of VA service connected disability awarded, 29 December 2009; 100 percent for PTSD and 40 percent for TBI.

(2) AMHRR Listed: Mental Status Evaluation, 18 November 2009, reflects the applicant had an anxious and depressed mood with fair memory. The evaluation concluded with a diagnosis of depression R/O PTSD, Cocaine abuse / dependence and deferred. The applicant was found to have full responsibility of their behavior, had the ability to distinguish right from wrong, and possessed sufficient mental capacity to participate in the evaluation. Chapter 14 not cleared by Psychology. The evaluator recommended postponing any administrative processes to allow the applicant to participate in a trial of psychological and psychiatric treatment and assessment of need for medical disposition. The applicant was found to be a moderate risk and recommendation for increased monitoring was annotated by the evaluating Psychologist.

The ARBA's medical advisor reviewed DoD and VA medical records, including documents listed in 4j(1) and (2) above.

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: VA service-connected disability; Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty; Personal Statement; USDVA Letter; Application for Correction of Military Record.

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: None submitted with the application.

7. STATUTORY, REGULATORY AND POLICY REFERENCE(S):

a. Section 1553, Title 10, United States Code (Review of Discharge or Dismissal) provides for the creation, composition, and scope of review conducted by a Discharge Review Board(s) within established governing standards. As amended by Sections 521 and 525 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, 10 USC 1553 provides specific guidance to the Military Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records and Discharge Review Boards when considering discharge upgrade requests by Veterans claiming Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), sexual trauma, intimate partner violence (IPV), or spousal abuse, as a basis for discharge review. The amended guidance provides that Boards will include, as a voting board member, a physician trained in mental health disorders, a clinical psychologist, or a psychiatrist when the discharge upgrade claim asserts a mental health condition, including PTSD, TBI, sexual trauma, IPV, or spousal abuse, as a basis for the discharge. Further, the guidance provides that Military Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records and Discharge Review Boards will develop and provide specialized training specific to sexual trauma, IPV, spousal abuse, as well as the various responses of individuals to trauma.

b. Multiple Department of Defense Policy Guidance Memoranda published between 2014 and 2018. The documents are commonly referred to by the signatory authorities' last names (2014 Secretary of Defense Guidance [Hagel memo], 2016 Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness [Carson memo], 2017 Official Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness [Kurta memo], and 2018 Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness [Wilkie memo].

(1) Individually and collectively, these documents provide further clarification to the Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records when considering requests by Veterans for modification of their discharge due to mental health conditions, including PTSD; TBI; sexual assault; or sexual harassment. Liberal consideration will be given 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; TBI; sexual assault; or sexual harassment. Special consideration will be given to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) determinations that document a mental health condition, including PTSD; TBI; or sexual assault/harassment potentially contributed to the circumstances resulting in a less than honorable discharge characterization. Special consideration will also be given in cases where a civilian provider confers diagnoses of a mental health condition, including PTSD; TBI; or sexual assault/harassment if the case records contain narratives supporting symptomatology at the time of service or when any other evidence which may reasonably indicate that a mental health condition, including PTSD; TBI; or sexual assault/harassment existed at the time of discharge might have mitigated the misconduct that caused a discharge of lesser characterization.

(2) Conditions documented in the service record that can reasonably be determined to have existed at the time of discharge will be considered to have existed at the time of discharge. In cases in which a mental health condition, including PTSD; TBI; or sexual assault/harassment may be reasonably determined to have existed at the time of discharge, those conditions will be considered potential mitigating factors in the misconduct that caused the characterization of service in question. All Boards will exercise caution in weighing evidence of mitigation in cases

in which serious misconduct precipitated a discharge with a less than Honorable characterization of service. Potentially mitigating evidence of the existence of undiagnosed combat related PTSD, PTSD-related conditions due to TBI or sexual assault/harassment as causative factors in the misconduct resulting in discharge will be carefully weighed against the severity of the misconduct. PTSD is not a likely cause of premeditated misconduct. Caution shall be exercised in weighing evidence of mitigation in all cases of misconduct by carefully considering the likely causal relationship of symptoms to the misconduct.

c. Army Regulation 15-180 (Army Discharge Review Board), sets forth the policies and procedures under which the Army Discharge Review Board is authorized to review the character, reason, and authority of any Servicemember discharged from active military service within 15 years of the Servicemember's date of discharge. Additionally, it prescribes actions and composition of the Army Discharge Review Board under Public Law 95-126; Section 1553, Title 10 United States Code; and Department of Defense Directive 1332.41 and Instruction 1332.28.

d. Army Regulation 635-200 (Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations), provides the basic authority for the separation of enlisted personnel.

(1) Chapter 3, Section II provides the authorized types of characterization of service or description of separation.

(2) Paragraph 3-7a states an Honorable discharge is a separation with honor and 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.

(3) Paragraph 3-7b states a General discharge is a separation from the Army under honorable conditions and is issued to a Soldier whose military record is satisfactory but not sufficiently meritorious to warrant an honorable discharge.

(4) Chapter 14 establishes policy and prescribes procedures for separating members for misconduct. Specific categories include minor disciplinary infractions, a pattern of misconduct, and commission of a serious offense, to include abuse of illegal drugs, convictions by civil authorities and desertion or being absent without leave. Action will be taken to separate a member for misconduct when it is clearly established that rehabilitation is impractical or unlikely to succeed.

(5) Paragraph 14-3 prescribes a discharge under other than honorable conditions is normally appropriate for a Soldier discharged under this chapter. However, the separation authority may direct a general discharge if such is merited by the Soldier's overall record.

(6) Paragraph 14-12c(2) terms abuse of illegal drugs as serious misconduct. It continues; however, by recognizing relevant facts may mitigate the nature of the offense. Therefore, a single drug abuse offense may be combined with one or more minor disciplinary infractions or incidents of other misconduct and processed for separation under paragraph 14-12a or 14-12b as appropriate.

e. 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 SPD codes to be entered on the DD Form 214. It identifies the SPD code of "JKK" as the appropriate code to assign enlisted Soldiers who are discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14, misconduct (drug abuse).

f. Army Regulation 601-210, (Regular Army and Reserve Components Enlistment Program), governs eligibility criteria, policies, and procedures for enlistment and processing of persons into the Regular Army, the U.S. Army Reserve, and Army National Guard for enlistment per DODI 1304.26. It also prescribes the appointment, reassignment, management, and mobilization of Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets under the Simultaneous Membership Program. Chapter 4 provides the criteria and procedures for waiverable and nonwaiverable separations. Table 3-1, defines reentry eligibility (RE) codes:

RE-1 Applies to: Person completing his or her term of active service who is considered qualified to reenter the U.S. Army. Eligibility: Qualified for enlistment if all other criteria are met.

RE-3 Applies to: Person who is not considered fully qualified for reentry or continuous service at time of separation, but disqualification is waiverable. Eligibility: Ineligible unless a waiver is granted.

RE-4 Applies to: Person separated from last period of service with a nonwaiverable disqualification. This includes anyone with a DA imposed bar to reenlistment in effect at time of separation or separated for any reason (except length of service retirement) with 18 or more years active Federal service. Eligibility: Ineligible for enlistment.

8. SUMMARY OF FACT(S): The Army Discharge Review Board considers applications for upgrade as instructed by Department of Defense Instruction 1332.28.

The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable. The applicant's Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR), the issues, and documents submitted with the application were carefully reviewed.

The applicant contends suffering from PTSD while on active duty and is currently rated 100 percent service-connected for PTSD and 40 percent for TBI. These conditions acted as contributing factors in the self-medicating which led to inappropriate drug use. The applicant's AMHRR reflects a diagnosis of Anxiety, Depression, and Cocaine dependency from the MSE conducted before the administrative discharge. The separation authority considered the MSE.

The applicant contends good service, including a combat tour. The Board considered the applicant's service accomplishments and the quality of service according to the DODI 1332.28.

9. BOARD DISCUSSION AND DETERMINATION:

a. As directed by the 2017 memo signed by A.M. Kurta, the board considered the following factors:

(1) Did the applicant have a condition or experience that may excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board reviewed the applicant's DOD and VA health records, applicant's statement, and/or civilian provider documentation and found that the applicant has the following potentially-mitigating diagnoses/experiences: PTSD, TBI, Depression.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found that the applicant was diagnosed in service with PTSD, TBI, and Depression and is service connected by the VA for PTSD.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board determined, based on the Board Medical Advisor's opine, that the applicant's behavioral health conditions mitigate the discharge. The applicant was diagnosed in service with

PTSD, TBI, and Depression and is service connected by the VA for PTSD. Given the nexus between PTSD, TBI, Depression, and using substances for self-medication, the positive test for cocaine that led to the applicant's separation is mitigated.

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **Yes.** After applying liberal consideration to the evidence, including the Board Medical Advisor opine, the Board determined that the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Depression outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

b. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends suffering from PTSD while on active duty. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Depression outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

(2) The applicant contends a narrative reason change is warranted. The Board considered this contention during proceedings, but ultimately did not address the contention due to an upgrade being granted based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Depression outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

(3) The applicant contends good service, including a combat tour. The Board considered this contention during proceedings, but ultimately did not address the contention due to an upgrade being granted based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Depression outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

c. The Board, based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Depression outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense, determined the narrative reason for the applicant's separation is now inequitable. Therefore, the Board directed the issue of a new DD Form 214 changing the separation authority to AR 635-200, Chapter 15, and the narrative reason for separation to Secretarial Authority, with a corresponding separation code to JFF. The Board determined the RE code was proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

d. Rationale for Decision:

(1) The Board voted not to change the applicant's characterization of service as the applicant already holds an honorable characterization and further relief is not available.

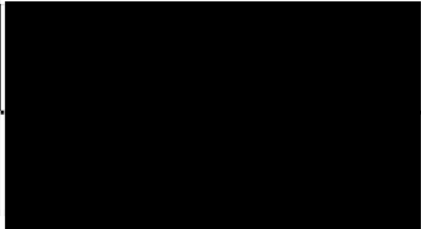
(2) The Board voted to change the reason for discharge to Secretarial Authority based on medical mitigation of the applicant's misconduct, thus the reason for discharge is no longer appropriate. The SPD code associated with the new reason for discharge is JFF.

(3) The RE code will not change, as the current code is consistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the regulation.

10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:

- a. Issue a New DD-214: Yes
- b. Change Characterization to: No Change
- c. Change Reason / SPD Code to: Secretarial Authority / JFF
- d. Change RE Code to: No Change
- e. Change Authority to: AR 635-200

Authenticating Official:

7/25/2025	
	

AWOL – Absent Without Leave
 AMHRR – Army Military Human
 Resource Record
 BCD – Bad Conduct Discharge
 BH – Behavioral Health
 CG – Company Grade Article 15
 CID – Criminal Investigation
 Division
 ELS – Entry Level Status
 FG – Field Grade Article 15

GD – General Discharge
 HS – High School
 HD – Honorable Discharge
 IADT – Initial Active Duty Training
 MP – Military Police
 MST – Military Sexual Trauma
 N/A – Not applicable
 NCO – Noncommissioned Officer
 NIF – Not in File
 NOS – Not Otherwise Specified

OAD – Ordered to Active Duty
 OBH (I) – Other Behavioral
 Health (Issues)
 OMPF – Official Military
 Personnel File
 PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress
 Disorder
 RE – Re-entry
 SCM – Summary Court Martial
 SPCM – Special Court Martial

SPD – Separation Program
 Designator
 TBI – Traumatic Brain Injury
 UNC – Uncharacterized
 Discharge
 UOTHC – Under Other Than
 Honorable Conditions
 VA – Department of Veterans
 Affairs