

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, the discharge was inequitable because their decision to use marijuana was a way to self-medicate to avoid debilitating dreams and flashbacks, and avoid the stress of returning to war for the third time was made during a time of extreme stress. Under normal circumstances, the applicant would never made this decision. The applicant was told they would be deploying again and they the only way out short of killing their self, they used marijuana as a way out to both medicate from the dreams and as a way of not returning. The applicant knew they would be drug tested before leaving and tested positive for a small amount of THC. The applicant loved the Army and regrets every day the decision they made while still in the Army. The applicant had a promising career in the Army, now there is shame. The applicant has found out by attending doctor and counseling visits, they suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder.

b. Board Type and Decision: In a records review conducted on 22 July 2025, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), with a corresponding separation code of JKN. The Board determined the reentry code is 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 / AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c / JKQ / RE-3 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

b. Date of Discharge: 6 August 2004**c. Separation Facts:**

(1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate: 29 June 2004

(2) Basis for Separation: The applicant was informed of the following reasons: For commission of a serious offense. The applicant wrongfully used marijuana.

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

(4) Legal Consultation Date: 30 June 2004

(5) Administrative Separation Board: NA

(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization: 20 July 2004 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. Date / Period of Enlistment: 20 March 2001 / 4 years

b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score: 20 / High School Graduate / 102

c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service: E-4 / 11B10, Infantryman / 3 years, 4 months, 17 days

d. Prior Service / Characterizations: None

e. Overseas Service / Combat Service: SWA / Afghanistan (24 June 2001 – 13 December 2002); Iraq (5 August 2003 – 10 April 2004)

f. Awards and Decorations: ARCOM, NDSM, GWOTEM, GWOTSM, ASR, CIB

g. Performance Ratings: NA

h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record: Electronic Copy of Specimen Custody Document – Drug Testing, 27 May 2004, reflects the applicant tested positive for THC 43 (marijuana) during an Inspection Unit (IU) urinalysis testing conducted on 20 May 2004.

FG Record of Proceedings under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice, 4 June 2004, for wrongfully using marijuana (between on or about 20 April 2004 and 20 May 2004). The punishment consisted of a reduction to E-1, forfeiture of \$596 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: Salem Clinic, P.C. Letter, 15 March 2007, reflects the applicant was a new patient reestablishing their care with the clinic. The applicant had not been to the clinic since February 2001 and their chief complaint was anxiety issues. The applicant was also diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder and was prescribed medication.

Salem Clinic, P.C. Letter, 16 April 2007, reflects the applicant was seen and their chief complaint was follow-up anxiety and PTSD.

VA Rating Decision Letter, 24 March 2010, reflects the applicant was granted 70 percent disability for posttraumatic stress disorder with secondary major depressive disorder and alcohol dependence. The applicant was also granted entitlement to individual unemployability (IU) because VA PTSD examination on 13 January 2010, explicitly found the applicant was

unemployable due to PTSD linked to combat service, with particular difficulty with aggression, anxiety, and motivation in a work setting.

(2) AMHRR Listed: Report of Mental Status Evaluation (MSE), 24 June 2004, reflects the applicant was cleared for any administrative actions deemed appropriate by the command. The applicant could understand and participate in administrative proceedings; could appreciate the difference between right and wrong; and met medical retention requirements. The applicant was diagnosed with Axis I: Cannabis Abuse and Adult Antisocial Behavior.

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

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: Application for the Review of Discharge; self-authored statement; third-party letter; two VA Decision Letters; two VA Rating Decisions; VA appointment list; medication list; two Salem Clinic, P.C. Letters; DA Form 2-1; Orders 203-0271; Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The applicant attended drug rehabilitation for 21 days and has been prescribed medication to stabilize their moods.

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 prescribes a Soldier is subject to action per this section for commission of a serious military or civilian offense, if the specific circumstances of the offense warrant separation and a punitive discharge is, or would be, authorized for the same or a closely related offense under the Manual for Courts-Martial.

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 "JKQ" as the appropriate code to assign enlisted Soldiers who are discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14, paragraph 12c, misconduct (serious offense).

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-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.

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

The applicant contends the discharge was inequitable because their decision to use marijuana was a way to self-medicate to avoid debilitating dreams and flashbacks and avoid the stress of returning to war for the third time was made during a time of extreme stress. Under normal circumstances, the applicant would never made this decision. The applicant was told they would be deploying again and they the only way out short of killing their self, they used marijuana as a way out to both medicate from the dreams and as a way of not returning. Through medical appointments and counseling visits, they later learned they suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder. The applicant provided Salem Clinic, P.C. Letter, 15 March 2007, which reflects the applicant was a new patient reestablishing their care with the clinic. The applicant had not been to the clinic since February 2001 and their chief complaint was anxiety issues. The applicant was also diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder and was prescribed medication. Salem Clinic, P.C. Letter, 16 April 2007, reflects the applicant was seen and their chief complaint was follow-up anxiety and PTSD. A VA Rating Decision Letter, 24 March 2010, reflects the applicant was granted 70 percent disability for posttraumatic stress disorder with secondary major depressive disorder and alcohol dependence. The applicant was also granted entitlement to individual unemployability (IU) because VA PTSD examination on 13 January 2010, explicitly found the applicant was unemployable due to PTSD linked to combat service, with particular difficulty with aggression, anxiety, and motivation in a work setting. A third-party letter from their parent, describes the applicant's change in behavior after returning from combat and supported the applicant's contention. The AMHRR shows the applicant underwent a mental status evaluation (MSE) on 24 June 2004, which reflects the applicant was cleared for any

administrative actions deemed appropriate by the command. The applicant could understand and participate in administrative proceedings; could appreciate the difference between right and wrong; and met medical retention requirements. The applicant was diagnosed with Axis I: Cannabis Abuse and Adult Antisocial Behavior. The separation authority considered the MSE.

The applicant attended drug rehabilitation for 21 days and has been prescribed medication to stabilize their moods. The Army Discharge Review Board is authorized to consider post-service factors in the recharacterization of a discharge. No law or regulation provides for the upgrade of an unfavorable discharge based solely on the passage of time or good conduct in civilian life after leaving the service. The Board reviews each discharge on a case-by-case basis to determine if post-service accomplishments help demonstrate previous in-service misconduct was an aberration and not indicative of the member's overall character.

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, MDD.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board found the applicant is 100 percent SC 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. Given the nexus between PTSD and the use of substances to self-medicate, the wrongful use of marijuana 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 and Major Depressive Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

b. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends that the discharge was inequitable because their decision to use marijuana was a means of self-medication during a period of extreme stress. They were trying to cope with debilitating dreams, flashbacks, and the looming pressure of returning to war for a third time. Under normal circumstances, the applicant asserts they would never have made this decision. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

(2) The applicant contends good service, including two combat tours. 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 and Major Depressive Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

(3) The applicant attended drug rehabilitation for 21 days and has been prescribed medication to stabilize their moods. The Board considered this contention during proceedings,

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but ultimately did not address the contention due to an upgrade being granted based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

c. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), with a corresponding separation code of JKN. The Board determined the reentry code is proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

d. Rationale for Decision:

(1) The Board voted to change the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable because the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense. Thus, the prior characterization is no longer appropriate.

(2) The Board voted to change the reason for discharge to Misconduct (Minor Infractions) under the same pretexts, thus the reason for discharge is no longer appropriate. The SPD code associated with the new reason for discharge is JKN.

(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: Honorable
- c. Change Reason / SPD Code to: Misconduct (Minor Infractions)/JKN
- d. Change RE Code to: No Change
- e. Change Authority to: AR 635-200

Authenticating Official:

7/29/2025

Legend:

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

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SPD – Separation Program
Designator
TBI – Traumatic Brain Injury

UNC – Uncharacterized
Discharge

UOTHC – Under Other Than
Honorable Conditions

VA – Department of Veterans
Affairs