

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 under other than honorable conditions. The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable.

The applicant seeks relief contending, in effect, their service-connected conditions impacted their conduct and the command did not adequately consider them during separation. The applicant asserts experiencing significant mental health challenges, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety, after returning from deployment as an infantryman during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The applicant states mental health struggles led to behaviors inconsistent with their prior service record. The applicant contends they served honorably for three years and seven months, earning 16 medals and advancing in rank quickly. The applicant contends they have since received multiple hospitalizations through the VA for treatment.

b. Board Type and Decision: In a records review conducted on 8 April 2025, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's offenses of illegal substance abuse and AWOL. 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. Accordingly, the narrative reason for separation changed 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 **Board Discussion and Determination** section for more details regarding the Board's decision. Board member names are available upon request.*

3. DISCHARGE DETAILS:

a. Reason / Authority / Codes / Characterization: In Lieu of Trial by Court-Martial / AR 635-200, Chapter 10 / KFS / RE-4 / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

b. Date of Discharge: 26 August 2005**c. Separation Facts:**

(1) Date and Charges Preferred (DD Form 458, Charge Sheet): On 13 June 2013, the applicant was charged with:

Charge I: Violating Article 86:

Specification 1: The applicant did, on or about 23 November 2004, without authority, absent themselves from their unit and did remain so absent until on or about 8 December 2004.

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Specification 2: The applicant did, on or about 9 December 2004, without authority, absent themselves from their unit and did remain so absent until on or about 30 March 2005.

Charge II: Violating Article 112a: The applicant between on or about 14 September 2004 and 14 October 2004, wrongfully use marijuana.

(2) Legal Consultation Date: 1 August 2005

(3) Basis for Separation: Pursuant to the applicant's request for discharge under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 10, in lieu of trial by court-martial.

(4) Recommended Characterization: NIF

(5) Separation Decision Date / Characterization: 17 August 2005 / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. Date / Period of Enlistment: 12 March 2002 / 4 years / The applicant's DD form 214 reflects an enlistment date of 13 March 2002 in conflict with the date of 12 March 2002 reflected on the enlistment contract.

b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score: 21 / High School Graduate / 105

c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service: E-4 / 11B10, Infantryman / 3 years, 1 month, 8 days

d. Prior Service / Characterizations: None

e. Overseas Service / Combat Service: Germany, SWA / Iraq-Kuwait (29 April 2003 – 3 July 2004)

f. Awards and Decorations: AAM-3, ICM, ARCOM, GWOTSM, NDSM, ASR, OSR, OSB-2, CIB

g. Performance Ratings: NA

h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record: Five Personnel Action forms, reflect the applicant's duty status changed as follows:

From Present for Duty (PDY) to Absent Without Leave (AWOL), effective 24 November 2004;

From AWOL to In Custody (Military Police) effective 4 December 2004;

From In Custody (Military Police) to Admitted to Civilian Hospital, effective 4 December 2004;

From Admitted to Civilian Hospital to Absent Without Leave (AWOL), effective 8 December 2004

From Absent Without Leave (AWOL) to Dropped from Roll (DFR), effective 24 December 2004.

Deserter/ Absentee Wanted by the Armed Forces, 2 February 2005, reflects, the applicant was reported as AWOL from 25 November 2004 to 2 February 2005.

Report of Return of Absentee, 23 March 2005, reflects the applicant surrendered to military control on 4 December 2004

i. Lost Time / Mode of Return: 4 months, 6 days (AWOL, 23 November 2004 – 7 December 2004; 9 December 2004 – 29 March 2005) / Surrendered to Military Authorities

j. Behavioral Health Condition(s):

(1) Applicant provided: VA Medical Record Progress Note Discharge, 22 October 2007, reflects the applicant was diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

(2) AMHRR Listed: Personnel Action form, 9 December 2004, reflects the applicant requested to be placed in the hospital for “mental problems”.

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; VA Medical Record Progress Note Discharge; Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The applicant sought help through the VA for mental health conditions.

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) Paragraph 3-7c states Under Other Than Honorable Conditions discharge is an administrative separation from the Service under conditions other than honorable and it may be issued for misconduct, fraudulent entry, security reasons, or in lieu of trial by court martial based on certain circumstances or patterns of behavior or acts or omissions that constitute a significant departure from the conduct expected of Soldiers in the Army.

(5) Chapter 10 provides, in pertinent part, that a member who has committed an offense or offenses for which the authorized punishment includes a punitive discharge may submit a request for a discharge for the good of the Service in lieu of trial by court-martial. The request may be submitted at any time after charges have been preferred and must include the individual's admission of guilt.

(6) Paragraph 10-6 stipulates medical and mental examinations are not required but may be requested by the Soldier under AR 40-501, chapter 8.

(7) Paragraph 10-8a stipulates a discharge under other than honorable conditions normally is appropriate for a Soldier who is discharged in lieu of trial by court-martial. However, the separation authority may direct a general discharge if such is merited by the Soldier's overall record during the current enlistment. (See chap 3, sec II.)

(8) Paragraph 10b stipulates Soldiers who have completed entry-level status, characterization of service as honorable is not authorized unless the Soldier's record is otherwise so meritorious that any other characterization clearly would be improper.

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 "KFS" as the appropriate code to assign enlisted Soldiers who are discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 10, In Lieu of Trial by Court-Martial.

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-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 evidence in the applicant's Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR) confirms the applicant was charged with the commission of an offense punishable under the UCMJ with a punitive discharge. The applicant, in consultation with legal counsel, voluntarily requested, in writing, a discharge under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 10, in lieu of trial by court-martial. In this request, the applicant admitted guilt to the offense, or a lesser included offense, and indicated an understanding an under other than honorable conditions discharge could be received, and the discharge would have a significant effect on eligibility for veterans' benefits. The under other than honorable conditions discharge received by the applicant was normal and appropriate under the regulatory guidance.

The applicant contends their service-connected conditions impacted their conduct and were not adequately considered during separation. The applicant asserts experiencing significant mental health challenges, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety, after returning from deployment as an infantryman during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The applicant states mental health struggles led to behaviors inconsistent with their prior service record. The applicant contends they have since received multiple hospitalizations through the VA for treatment. The applicant submits a VA Medical Record Progress note to support the contention. The applicant's AMHRR includes no documentation of PTSD diagnosis. The AMHRR is void of a mental status evaluation (MSE). A Personnel Action form, 9 December 2004, reflects the applicant's request to be placed in the hospital for mental problems.

The applicant contends serving honorably for three years and seven months, earning 16 medals and quickly advancing in rank. 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 and Psychosis NOS.

(2) Did the condition exist, or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found the applicant was diagnosed by the VA with PTSD related to his deployment to Iraq.

(3) Does the condition or experience excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board determined, based on the BMA'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, and PTSD and avoidant behavior, the applicant's offenses of illegal substance abuse and AWOL are 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 outweighed the separating offenses of illegal substance abuse and AWOL.

b. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends their service-connected conditions impacted their conduct and were not adequately considered during separation. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighed the separating offenses of illegal substance abuse and AWOL.

(2) The applicant contends serving honorably for three years and seven months, earning 16 medals and quickly advancing in rank. The Board considered this contention during proceedings, but ultimately did not address the contention in detail due to an upgrade being granted based on the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the offenses of illegal substance abuse and AWOL.

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c. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's offenses of illegal substance abuse and AWOL. 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. Accordingly, the narrative reason for separation changed to Misconduct (Minor Infractions) with a corresponding separation code of JKN. The Board determined the reenry 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 outweighed the applicant's misconduct of illegal substance abuse and AWOL. 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.

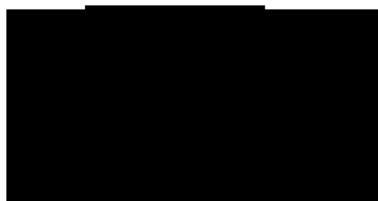
(3) The RE code will not change due to the BH diagnoses. The current code is consistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the regulation.

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:

4/9/2025



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

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