

**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, undiagnosed PTSD and depression stemming from their military service significantly impacted their behavior and decisions, leading to their discharge. They assert experiencing harassment and discrimination during their time in the Marine Corps due to their heritage contributed to the development of PTSD. They assert their PTSD worsened while serving in the Army due to their prior service in the Marines. The applicant states receiving harassment and mistreatment because they were formally in the Marine Corps, ultimately causing them to fall into depression and feel unwelcome in their unit. The applicant asserts their struggles culminated in a failed urinalysis and an Article 15 hearing, where their battalion commander gave them another chance based on supportive testimony from NCOs. However, they contend the mistreatment continued, with excessive PT, ridicule, and eventually suicidal ideation leading to a referral to the post psychiatrist. They acknowledge their mistakes but assert depression and PTSD impaired their judgment and ability to seek proper support, such as consulting a chaplain or other resources. The applicant emphasizes their post-service accomplishments, including their role as a counselor for the Department of Veterans Affairs in an inpatient psychiatric unit, where they work to assist fellow veterans. They assert they have significantly changed and seek to reconcile their past by upgrading their discharge to honorable, not for personal gain but to clear the dark cloud over their head and make amends for their service.

**b. Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 10 April 2025, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, 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 **Board Discussion and Determination** section 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:** 3 April 2000

**c. Separation Facts:**

**(1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** 16 February 2000

**(2) Basis for Separation:** The applicant was informed of the following reasons: The applicant wrongfully used marijuana between about 31 July 1999 and 30 August 1999.

**(3) Recommended Characterization:** Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

**(4) Legal Consultation Date:** 1 March 2000

**(5) Administrative Separation Board:** On 1 March 2000, the applicant unconditionally waived consideration of the case before an administrative separation board.

**(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 10 March 2000 / Under Other Than Honorable Condition

**4. SERVICE DETAILS:**

**a. Date / Period of Enlistment:** 20 August 1998 / 3 years

**b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 23 / High School Graduate / NIF

**c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-3 / 19D10, Calvary Scout / 5 years, 7 weeks, 14 days

**d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** USMC, 8 December 1993 – 7 December 1997 / HD

**e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** None

**f. Awards and Decorations:** MCGCM, NDSM, SWABS, ASR, SSDR

**g. Performance Ratings:** NA

**h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:** FG Article 15, 15 October 1999, for wrongfully using marijuana (between 31 July 1999 and 30 August 1999). The punishment consisted of a reduction to E-1, forfeiture of \$479, and extra duty and restriction for 45 days.

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

**j. Behavioral Health Condition(s):**

**(1) Applicant provided:** None

**(2) AMHRR Listed:** None

*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; two Certificates of Release or Discharge from Active Duty; third-party letter; VA Statement in Support of Claim.

**6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Serving as a counselor for the Department of Veterans Affairs in an inpatient psychiatric unit, where they work to assist fellow veterans.

**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's AMHRR reflects the applicant received an Article 15 for the wrongful use of marijuana between about 31 July 1999 and 30 August 1999 resulting in reduction in rank. The applicant's current characterization of service is general (under honorable conditions).

The applicant contends undiagnosed PTSD and depression stemming from their military service significantly impacted their behavior and decisions, leading to their discharge. They assert experiencing harassment and discrimination during their time in the Marine Corps due to their heritage contributed to the development of PTSD. They assert their PTSD worsened while serving in the Army due to their prior service in the Marines. The applicant states receiving harassment and mistreatment in the Army because they were formally in the Marine Corps. The applicant provided a third-party letter from their friend from the Marine Corps, which described the applicant's experience while serving in the Marines. The applicant contends the mistreatment continued, with excessive PT, ridicule, and eventual suicidal ideation leading to a referral to the post psychiatrist. They acknowledge their mistakes but assert depression and PTSD impaired their judgment and ability to seek proper support, such as consulting a chaplain or other resources. The letter explains the applicant's abuse while in the Marines, which supported the applicant's contention. The applicant's AMHRR includes no documentation of PTSD diagnosis.

The applicant contends the narrative reason for the discharge needs changed. The applicant was separated under the provisions of Chapter 14, paragraph 14-12c, AR 635-200 with a general (under honorable conditions) discharge. The narrative reason specified by Army Regulations for a discharge under this paragraph is "Misconduct (Serious Offense)," and the separation code is "JKQ." Army Regulation 635-8 (Separation Processing and Documents) governs the preparation of the DD Form 214 and dictates the entry of the narrative reason for separation, entered in block 28 and separation code, entered in block 26 of the form, will be as listed in tables 2-2 or 2-3 of AR 635-5-1 (Separation Program Designator (SPD) Codes). The regulation stipulates no deviation is authorized. There is no provision for entry of any other reason under this regulation.

The applicant emphasizes their post-service accomplishments, including their role as a counselor for the Department of Veterans Affairs in an inpatient psychiatric unit, where they work to assist fellow veterans. They assert they have significantly changed and seek to reconcile their past by upgrading their discharge to honorable, not for personal gain but to clear the dark cloud over their head and make amends for their service. 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, TBI, Major Depressive Disorder.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found that the applicant is service connected by the VA for PTSD, TBI, and Major Depressive Disorder. Service connection establishes that the conditions existed during military service.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually 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, TBI, Major Depressive Disorder and self-medicating with substances, the marijuana use that led to the 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 Major Depressive Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse.

b. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends undiagnosed PTSD and depression stemming from their military service significantly impacted their behavior and decisions, leading to their discharge. The applicant contends the mistreatment continued, with excessive PT, ridicule, and eventual suicidal ideation leading to a referral to the post psychiatrist. The Board liberally considered this contention and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Major Depressive Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse. Therefore, a discharge upgrade is warranted.

(2) The applicant contends the narrative reason for the discharge needs changed. 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 Major Depressive Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

(3) The applicant emphasizes their post-service accomplishments, including their role as a counselor for the Department of Veterans Affairs in an inpatient psychiatric unit, where they work to assist fellow veterans. 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 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, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Major Depressive Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the

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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, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Major Depressive Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse. 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:**

5/16/2025

**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