

**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, serving honorably until the time they went absent without leave (AWOL). The applicant made a mistake and paid for it with their career. The applicant is trying to find a job and be a productive member of society. The applicant has not used illicit drugs or abused alcohol and is focused on making themselves a better person. The applicant was a 19D Cavalry Scout in the Army and attained the rank of sergeant. The applicant served in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The applicant suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) upon returning home from Iraq. Going AWOL was an isolated incident in seven years of good service. The applicant has learned from their mistake.

**b. Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 3 December 2024, 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 AWOL and illegal substance abuse offenses. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed to 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, and the reentry code to RE-3.

*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:** In Lieu of Trial by Court-Martial / AR 635-200, Chapter 10 / KFS / RE-4 / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

**b. Date of Discharge:** 27 January 2012**c. Separation Facts:**

**(1) Date and Charges Preferred (DD Form 458, Charge Sheet):** On 4 January 2012, the applicant was charged with:

Charge I: Violating Article 86, UCMJ, for being absent without leave from 30 August 2011 to 15 December 2011.

Charge II: Violating Article 92, UCMJ, for between 30 May 2011 and 15 August 2011, on divers occasions, violate a lawful general order by wrongfully using Spice, a synthetic cannabinoid.

**(2) Legal Consultation Date:** 9 January 2012

**(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:** Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

**(5) Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 13 January 2012 / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

**4. SERVICE DETAILS:**

**a. Date / Period of Enlistment:** 8 October 2009 / 3 years

**b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 24 / GED / 113

**c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-5 / 19D20, Calvary Scout / 7 years, 10 months, 24 days

**d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** RA, 18 November 2003 – 2 June 2005 / HD  
RA, 3 June 2005 – 15 July 2008 / HD  
RA, 16 July 2008 – 17 December 2008 / HD  
RA, 18 December 2008 – 7 October 2009 / HD

**e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** Korea, SWA / Iraq (20 March 2007 – 16 May 2008)

**f. Awards and Decorations:** ARCOM-2, AAM-3, AGCM-2, NDSM, GWOTSM, KDSM, ICM-CS, ASR, OSR-2

**g. Performance Ratings:** 11 September 2008 – 10 September 2009 / Among the Best  
1 October 2009 – 30 September 2010 / Marginal

**h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:** Two Developmental Counseling Forms, 4 and 23 August 2011, for having unsanitary living conditions in on post quarters; possessing an illegal substance; disobeying a commissioned officer; and possessing prohibited substance / alcohol while enrolled in the Army Substance Abuse Program.

Two Personnel Action forms, reflect the applicant's duty status changed as follows:

From Present for Duty (PDY) to Absent Without Leave (AWOL), effective 30 August 2011;  
and

From AWOL to Dropped From Rolls (DFR), effective 29 September 2011.

Report of Return of Absentee, 16 December 2011, reflects the applicant's absence began on 30 August 2011 and the applicant surrendered to military authorities on 15 December 2011.

**i. Lost Time / Mode of Return:** 3 months, 23 days (AWOL, 30 August 2011 – 21 December 2011) / Surrendered to Military Authorities

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

**(1) Applicant provided:** None

**(2) AMHRR Listed: None**

*The ARBA's medical advisor reviewed DoD and VA medical records and not solely those documents listed in 4j(1) and (2) above.*

**5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:** Application for Correction of Military Record; Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty; and Application for the Review of Discharge.

**6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** The applicant has not used illicit drugs or abused alcohol and is focused on becoming a better person.

**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 3-5c, provides the reasons for separation, including the specific circumstances that form the basis for the separation, will be considered on the issue of characterization. As a general matter, characterization will be based upon a pattern of behavior other than an isolated incident. There are circumstances, however, in which the conduct or performance of duty reflected by a single incident provides the basis for characterization.

**(3)** 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.

**(4)** 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.

**(5)** 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.

**(6)** 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.

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

(8) 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.)

(9) 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 suffering from PTSD. The applicant did not submit any evidence, other than the applicant's statement, to support the contention the discharge resulted from any medical condition. The applicant's AMHRR includes no documentation of PTSD diagnosis. The record is void of a mental status evaluation.

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.

The applicant contends the event which led to the discharge from the Army was an isolated incident. Army Regulation 635-200, paragraph 3-5, in pertinent part, stipulates there are circumstances in which the conduct or performance of duty reflected by a single incident provides the basis for a characterization.

The applicant contends not using illicit drugs or abusing alcohol and is focusing on becoming a better person. 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.

The applicant contends an upgrade of the discharge will allow the applicant to obtain better employment. The Board does not grant relief to gain employment or enhance employment opportunities.

#### **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 Chronic, Reaction to Chronic Stress.

**(2)** Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board found the applicant has an in-service diagnosis of PTSD.

**(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. As there is a nexus between PTSD and avoidant behavior and PTSD, and the use of substances to self-medicate, the applicant's AWOL and wrongful use of spice 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 applicant's AWOL and illegal substance abuse offenses.

**b.** Response to Contention(s):

**(1)** The applicant contends suffering from PTSD. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighed the applicant's AWOL and illegal substance abuse offenses.

**(2)** 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 outweighing the applicant's AWOL and illegal substance abuse offenses.

(3) The applicant contends the event which led to the discharge from the Army was an isolated incident. 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 outweighing the applicant's AWOL and illegal substance abuse offenses.

(4) The applicant contends not using illicit drugs or abusing alcohol and is focusing on becoming a better person. 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 outweighing the applicant's AWOL and illegal substance abuse offenses.

(5) The applicant contends an upgrade of the discharge will allow the applicant to obtain better employment. The Board considered this contention but does not grant relief to gain employment or enhance employment opportunities.

c. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's AWOL and illegal substance abuse offenses. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed to 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, and the reentry code to RE-3.

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 change to RE-3.

**ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE**

**AR20210000574**

**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: RE-3
- e. Change Authority to: AR 635-200

**Authenticating Official:**

12/10/2024



**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  
UOTHHC – Under Other Than  
Honorable Conditions  
VA – Department of Veterans  
Affairs