

1. Applicant's Name:

- 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 period under review is under other than honorable conditions. The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable or general (under honorable conditions).

The applicant seeks relief contending, in effect, having a pre-discharge diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but their unit refused to send them to the VA for treatment. Due to the commands misbelief the applicant had PTSD; the applicant's commanding officer treated their condition as misconduct. The commander's decision to discharge the applicant was influenced by the misbeliefs.

b. **Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 7 November 2024, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board denied the request upon finding the separation was both proper and equitable.

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:** NIF / AR 135-178 / NIF / NIF / NIF / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

b. **Date of Discharge:** 21 November 2012

c. **Separation Facts:** The applicant's Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR) is void of the case separation file.

(1) **Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** NIF

(2) **Basis for Separation:** NIF

(3) **Recommended Characterization:** NIF

(4) **Legal Consultation Date:** NIF

(5) **Administrative Separation Board:** NIF

(6) **Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** NIF

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. **Date / Period of Enlistment:** 14 April 2008 / 8 years

- b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 18 / some college / NIF
- c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-2 / 38B10, Civil Affairs Specialist / 4 years, 7 months, 7 days
- d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** USAR, 8 August 1989 – 21 November 2012 / UOTH
(Concurrent Service)
IADT, 15 May 2008 – 23 October 2008 / HD
(Concurrent Service)
- e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** None
- f. Awards and Decorations:** ASR
- g. Performance Ratings:** NA
- h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:** Orders 12-318-00022, 13 November 2012, reflect the applicant was discharged from the United States Army Reserve on 21 November 2012.
- i. Lost Time / Mode of Return:** None
- j. Behavioral Health Condition(s):**

(1) Applicant provided: Medical document from the St. Mary's Healthcare Comprehensive Mental Health and Alcoholism Services, 10 July 2012, reflects a diagnosis of Axis I: 296.90 Mood Disorder NOS; 309.81 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; 304.80 Polysubstance Dependence; Axis II: 301.7 Antisocial Personality Disorder.

(2) AMHRR Listed: None

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: Application for the Review of Discharge; St. Mary's Healthcare Comprehensive Mental Health and Alcoholism Services document; Orders 12-318-00022.

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 135-178 (Enlisted Administrative Separations), sets forth the policies, standards, and procedures to ensure the readiness and competency of the U.S. Army while providing for the orderly administrative separation of Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) enlisted Soldiers for a variety of reasons. The separation policies throughout the different Chapters in this regulation promote the readiness of the Army by providing an orderly means to judge the suitability of persons to serve on the basis of their conduct and their ability to meet required standards of duty performance and discipline. Specific categories

include minor disciplinary infractions, a pattern of misconduct, and commission of a serious offense, to include abuse of illegal drugs, and convictions by civil authorities.

(1) Paragraph 2-7, prescribes possible characterizations of service include an honorable, general (under honorable conditions), under other than honorable conditions, or uncharacterized if the Soldier is in entry-level status. However, the permissible range of characterization varies based on the reason for separation.

(2) Paragraph 2-8, prescribes the characterization is based upon the quality of the Soldier's service, including the reason for separation, and determined in accordance with standards of acceptable personal conduct and performance of duty as found in the UCMJ, Army regulations, and the time-honored customs and traditions of the Army. The reasons for separation, including the specific circumstances that form the basis for the discharge are considered on the issue of characterization.

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) is void of the specific facts and circumstances concerning the events which led to the discharge from the Army Reserve. The applicant's AMHRR does include a properly constituted discharge order: Orders 18-122-00034, 2 May 2018. The orders indicate the applicant was discharged under the provisions of AR 135-178, with a characterization of service of under other than honorable conditions.

The applicant contends having a pre-discharge diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but the unit refused to send them to the VA for treatment. Due to the commander's misbelief the applicant had PTSD; the applicant's commanding officer treated their condition as misconduct. The applicant provided a medical document from the St. Mary's Healthcare Comprehensive Mental Health and Alcoholism Services, 10 July 2012, reflecting a diagnosis of Axis I: 296.90 Mood Disorder NOS; 309.81 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; 304.80 Polysubstance Dependence; Axis II: 301.7 Antisocial Personality Disorder. The applicant's AMHRR does not include any indication or evidence of arbitrary or capricious actions by the command. The AMHRR is void of the case separation file.

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: Mood Disorder NOS, PTSD.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board found evidence that the applicant was diagnosed with Mood Disorder NOS and PTSD during military service.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **No.** The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that there is evidence that the applicant was diagnosed with Mood Disorder NOS and PTSD during military service which

are potentially mitigating BH conditions. However, the basis of separation is not contained in the service record and the Board could not identify the reason or basis of separation either. Since the basis of separation is unknown, the Board cannot determine if the applicant's BH conditions contributed to the discharge.

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **No.** After applying liberal consideration to the evidence, including the Board Medical Advisor opine, the Board determined that, while the applicant was diagnosed with PTSD and Mood Disorder while in service, it was not possible to determine if these conditions contributed to, or outweighed the discharge and basis of separation. Without knowing the facts and circumstances relating to the applicant's discharge, the Board is unable to determine if the applicant's PTSD and Mood Disorder outweighs the applicant's discharge.

b. Response to Contention(s): The applicant contends having a pre-discharge diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but their unit refused to send them to the VA for treatment. The applicant contends that the applicant's commanding officer treated the applicant's PTSD as misconduct. The Board liberally considered this contention but determined that, while the applicant's PTSD and Mood Disorder could outweigh the applicant's discharge, the Board was unable to determine whether the applicant's PTSD and Mood Disorder actually outweighed the applicant's discharge without the Board Medical Advisor determination on medical mitigation. Without knowing the facts and circumstances relating to the applicant's discharge, the Board is unable to determine if the applicant's PTSD and Mood Disorder outweighs the applicant's discharge. Additionally, the Board found insufficient evidence in the applicant's AMHRR or applicant-provided evidence that the applicant experienced unfair treatment from the applicant's command.

c. The Board determined that the discharge is, at this time, proper and equitable, in light of the current evidence of record. However, the applicant may request a personal appearance hearing to address the issues before the Board. The applicant is responsible for satisfying the burden of proof and providing documents or other evidence sufficient to support the applicant's contention(s) that the discharge was improper or inequitable.

d. Rationale for Decision: The Board voted not to change the applicant's characterization of service because, despite applying liberal consideration to all the evidence before the Board, the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Mood Disorder did not outweigh the applicant's discharge due to being unable to determine the facts and circumstances leading to the discharge. The Board also considered the applicant's contention of unfair treatment by command but found that the totality of the applicant's record does not warrant a discharge upgrade. The applicant did not present any issues of impropriety for the Board's consideration. The discharge was consistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the regulation, was within the discretion of the separation authority, and the applicant was provided full administrative due process. Therefore, the applicant's Under Other Than Honorable Conditions discharge was proper and equitable as the applicant's conduct fell below that level of satisfactory service warranting a General discharge or meritorious service warranted for an upgrade to Honorable discharge.

ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE

AR20210000604

10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:

- a. Issue a New Separation Order: No
- b. Change Characterization to: No Change
- c. Change Authority to: No Change

Authenticating Official:

11/13/2024

X

Presiding Officer, COL, U.S. ARMY

Army Discharge Review Board

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