

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 honorable. The applicant requests a narrative reason change.

The applicant seeks relief contending, in effect, having trouble returning to their regular life after deploying to Afghanistan. The applicant claims it was extremely difficult to cope with the stress of being in war and losing one of their closest friends. The applicant started drinking too much and became unprofessional. The applicant claims they never sought help for their problems. The applicant's inability to sleep and nightmares led them to decide to use drugs. According to the applicant, this was a horrible decision and an isolated incident. The applicant claims they have changed their life and is employed by a hospital, which mandates drug testing.

b. Board Type and Decision: In a records review conducted on 7 November 2024, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board, based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Anxiety Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense, determined the narrative reason for the applicant's separation is now inequitable. Therefore, the Board directed the issue of a new DD Form 214 changing the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), and the separation code to JKN, and the reentry code to RE-3. The Board determined the characterization of service was 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 (Drug Abuse) / AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2) / JKK / RE-4 / Honorable

b. Date of Discharge: 7 June 2012

c. Separation Facts:

(1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate: 14 May 2012

(2) Basis for Separation: The applicant was informed of the following reasons: The applicant wrongfully used cocaine between on or about 22 February and on or about 27 February 2012.

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

(4) Legal Consultation Date: In an undated memorandum, the applicant waived legal counsel.

(5) Administrative Separation Board: NA

(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization: 18 May 2012 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. Date / Period of Enlistment: 11 March 2009 / 4 years, 17 weeks

b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score: 18 / GED / 103

c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service: E-4 / 11B1P, 2B Infantryman / 3 years, 2 months, 27 days

d. Prior Service / Characterizations: None

e. Overseas Service / Combat Service: SWA / Afghanistan (5 June 2010 – 31 May 2011)

f. Awards and Decorations: ARCOM, VUA, NDSM, GWOTSM, ASR, OSR, NATOMDL, CIB / The applicant's AMHRR reflects award of the ACM-CS, however, the award is not reflected on the applicant's DD Form 214.

g. Performance Ratings: NA

h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record: Electronic Copy of DD Form 2624, 9 March 2012, reflects the applicant tested positive for COC (cocaine) 283, during an Inspection Random (IR) urinalysis testing, conducted on 27 February 2012.

FG Article 15, 26 March 2012, for wrongfully using cocaine (between 22 and 27 February 2012). The punishment consisted of a reduction to E-1; forfeiture of \$745 pay per month for two months; and extra duty and restriction for 45 days.

Two Developmental Counseling Forms, for debt and positive urinalysis.

i. Lost Time / Mode of Return: None

j. Behavioral Health Condition(s):

(1) Applicant provided: None

(2) AMHRR Listed: Report of Mental Status Evaluation, 13 April 2012, 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 had been screened for PTSD and mTBI. The conditions were either not present or did not meet AR 40-501 criteria for a medical evaluation board. The evaluation included a diagnosis of Alcohol Abuse, Anxiety Disorder NOS. The applicant is encouraged to seek individual counseling through the VA or other resources upon transition out of the Army.

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 the Review of Discharge and three letters of support.

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The applicant is employed by a hospital, which mandates drug testing.

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) 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(2) terms abuse of illegal drugs as serious misconduct. It continues; however, by recognizing relevant facts may mitigate the nature of the offense. Therefore, a single drug abuse offense may be combined with one or more minor disciplinary infractions or incidents of other misconduct and processed for separation under paragraph 14-12a or 14-12b as appropriate.

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 "JKK" as the appropriate code to assign enlisted Soldiers who are discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14, misconduct (drug abuse).

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 applicant contends the narrative reason for the discharge needs to be changed. The applicant was separated under the provisions of Chapter 14, paragraph 14-12c(2), AR 635-200 with a honorable discharge. The narrative reason specified by Army Regulations for a discharge under this paragraph is "Misconduct (Drug Abuse)," and the separation code is "JKK." Army Regulation 635-8 (Separation Processing and Documents), governs 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 any other reason to be entered under this regulation.

The applicant contends they never received help for their problems. The applicant's inability to sleep and nightmares led them to decide to use drugs. The applicant did not submit any evidence, other than the applicant's statement, to support the contention. There is no evidence in the AMHRR the applicant ever sought assistance before committing the misconduct, which led to the separation action under review.

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 good service, including a combat tour. The third-party statements provided with the application reflect the applicant's professionalism led them to being an exceptional leader. During combat the applicant displayed exceptional poise. The Board considered the applicant's service accomplishments and the quality of service according to the DODI 1332.28.

The applicant contends obtaining employment. 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 AMHRR includes a Report of Mental Status Evaluation, 13 April 2012, reflecting 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 had been screened for PTSD and mTBI. The conditions were either not present or did not meet AR 40-501 criteria for a medical evaluation board. The evaluation included a diagnosis of Alcohol Abuse, Anxiety Disorder NOS. The applicant is encouraged to seek individual counseling through the VA or other resources upon transition out of the Army.

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: Anxiety Disorder NOS, PTSD.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found that the applicant was diagnosed in service with Anxiety Disorder NOS and is service connected by the VA for PTSD. Service connection establishes that the PTSD also 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, Anxiety Disorder, and self-medicating with substances, the cocaine 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 and Anxiety Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse.

b. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends they never received help for their problems. The applicant's inability to sleep and nightmares led them to decide to use drugs. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Anxiety Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse.

(2) The applicant contends the narrative reason for the discharge needs to be 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 and Anxiety Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

(3) 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 and Anxiety Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE**AR20210000645**

(4) The applicant contends obtaining employment. 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 Anxiety Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

c. The Board, based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Anxiety Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense, determined the narrative reason for the applicant's separation is now inequitable. Therefore, the Board directed the issue of a new DD Form 214 changing the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), and the separation code to JKN, and the reentry code to RE-3. The Board determined the characterization of service was proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

d. Rationale for Decision:

(1) The Board voted not to change the applicant's characterization of service as the applicant already holds an honorable characterization and further relief is not available.

(2) The Board voted to change the reason for discharge to Misconduct (Minor Infractions) based on medical mitigation of the applicant's illegal substance abuse, 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.

10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:

- a. Issue a New DD-214: Yes
- b. Change Characterization to: No Change
- 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:

11/12/2024

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