

**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, the discharge was inequitable because it was based on an isolated incident following 69 months of excellent service. With a history of severe back pain, cervical neck problems, PTSD, and other medical concerns, the applicant was unable to find a feasible approach to cope with the pain. Physical therapy was hit or miss, and there was still pain. The applicant was far too young to have surgery. Soldiers were handed Percocet and other medicines as if they were candy. Weed assisted the applicant in avoiding the additive medicines. The injuries were caused by a combat tour in Afghanistan, which limited the professional options for a career. The applicant desires to use the GI Bill to pursue a BS in Engineering.

b. **Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 1 February 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 illegal substance abuse. 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:** Misconduct (Drug Abuse) / AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2) / JKK / RE-4 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

b. **Date of Discharge:** 28 July 2014

**c. Separation Facts:**

(1) **Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** 19 June 2014

(2) **Basis for Separation:** The applicant was informed of the following reasons: The applicant used marijuana between 25 March and 23 April 2014.

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

(4) **Legal Consultation Date:** On 19 June 2014, the applicant waived legal counsel.

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

**(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 1 July 2014 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

**4. SERVICE DETAILS:**

**a. Date / Period of Enlistment:** 16 June 2010 / 4 years, 16 weeks

**b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 18 / High School Graduate / 115

**c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 11B10, Infantryman / 4 years, 1 month, 13 days

**d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** None

**e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** SWA / Afghanistan (17 March 2011 – 16 March 2012)

**f. Awards and Decorations:** ACM-2CS, ARCOM, AGCM, NDSM, GWOTSM, ASR, OSR, NATOMDL, CIB

**g. Performance Ratings:** NA

**h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:** Developmental Counseling Form for being flagged because of testing positive for THC during a unit random drug test on 23 April 2014 (sic).

Electronic Copy of DD Form 2624, 12 May 2014, reflects the applicant tested positive for THC 26 (marijuana), during an Inspection Unit (IU) urinalysis testing, conducted on 30 April 2014.

FG Article 15, 3 June 2014, for wrongfully using marijuana (between 25 March and 23 April 2014) (sic). The punishment consisted of a reduction to E-1; forfeiture of \$765 pay per month for two months; and extra duty and restriction for 45 days.

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

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

**(1) Applicant provided:** Report of Mental Status Evaluation (pages 1 and 3 of 3 pages), 11 June 2014, 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 AXIS I diagnoses were PTSD and Cannabis abuse. Based on the medical records and an interview, the applicant met the criteria for PTSD; however, there was no indication the symptoms were functionally impairing.

Report of Medical History as described at paragraph 4j(2).

**(2) AMHRR Listed:** Report of Medical History, 1 March 2014, the applicant noted behavioral health issues and the examining medical physician noted in the comments section: PTSD diagnosis.

Report of Medical Assessment, 26 March 2014, the applicant noted behavioral health issues and the examining medical physician noted in the comments section: PTSD, anxiety, tinnitus, herniated disks, and neck and finger pain.

MSE as described in previous paragraph 4j(1). Page 2 reflects the applicant had been screened for PTSD and mTBI with positive results and was referred for a comprehensive Traumatic Brain Injury evaluation.

**5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:** DD Form 293; DD Form 214; ARCOM certificate; Extraordinaire certificate; Drivers Badge Orders; 11 certificates of training; Individual Training diploma; four training course certificates; Report of Mental Status Evaluation; DA Form 2697; DA Form 2808 (page 2 of 3); Medical Record Consent Form; and Enlisted Record Brief.

**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 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(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 non-waiverable separations. Table 3-1 defines reentry eligibility (RE) codes: RE-4 Applies to: Person separated from last period of service with a non-waiverable 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 contends the event which led to the discharge from the Army was an isolated incident. Army Regulation 635-200, paragraph 3-5, 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 having an excellent service, including a combat tour.

The applicant contends the history of having severe back pain, cervical neck problems, PTSD, and other medical concerns, the applicant was unable to find a feasible approach to cope with the pain. The applicant's AMHRR contains documentation which supports a diagnosis of in-service PTSD. The record shows the applicant underwent a mental status evaluation (MSE) on 11 June 2014, which indicates the applicant was mentally responsible and was able to recognize right from wrong. The MSE was considered by the separation authority.

The applicant contends an upgrade would allow educational benefits through the GI Bill to pursue a degree in Engineering. Eligibility for veterans' benefits to include educational benefits under the Post-9/11 or Montgomery GI Bill does not fall within the purview of the Army Discharge Review Board. Accordingly, the applicant should contact a local office of the Department of Veterans Affairs for further assistance.

#### **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's Medical Advisor, a voting member, 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: Adjustment Disorder, Anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

(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 an Adjustment Disorder, Anxiety, and PTSD. The VA has also service connected the applicant's PTSD.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that the applicant's PTSD mitigates the applicant's offenses. Given the nexus between PTSD and self-medicating with substances, the marijuana use that led to the applicant's 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 outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse.

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

(1) The applicant contends the history of having severe back pain, cervical neck problems, PTSD, and other medical concerns, the applicant was unable to find a feasible approach to cope with the pain. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse.

(2) 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 outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse.

(3) The applicant contends having an excellent 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 outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse.

(4) The applicant contends an upgrade would allow educational benefits through the GI Bill to pursue a degree in Engineering. The Board considered this contention and determined that eligibility for Veteran's benefits, to include educational benefits under the Post-9/11 or Montgomery GI Bill, healthcare or VA loans, do not fall within the purview of the Army Discharge Review Board. Accordingly, the applicant should contact a local office of the Department of Veterans Affairs for further assistance.

**c.** The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse. 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 illegal substance abuse. Thus, the prior characterization is no longer appropriate.

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(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 based on the applicant's behavioral health conditions requiring review prior to any reentry into military service.

**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:**

4/2/2024



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  
UOTHC – Under Other Than  
Honorable Conditions  
VA – Department of Veterans  
Affairs