

1. Applicant's Name:

- a. **Application Date:** 9 February 2021
- b. **Date Received:** 11 February 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 honorable. The applicant requests a separation program designator (SPD) code change.

The applicant seeks relief contending, in effect, the applicant was involuntarily separated and rushed through the separation process under duress with untreated mental and physical issues.

b. **Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 24 July 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.

3. DISCHARGE DETAILS:

a. **Reason / Authority / Codes / Characterization:** Physical Standards / AR 635-200 / Chapter 13-2E / JFT / RE-3 / Honorable

b. **Date of Discharge:** 25 November 2019

c. Separation Facts:

(1) **Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** 9 September 2019

(2) **Basis for Separation:** The applicant was informed of the following reasons: The applicant failed two Army Physical Fitness Tests within a 90-day period.

(3) **Recommended Characterization:** Honorable

(4) **Legal Consultation Date:** 18 September 2019

(5) **Administrative Separation Board:** The applicant waived consideration of the case by an administrative separation board contingent upon receiving an honorable characterization of service.

(6) **Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 8 October 2019

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. **Date / Period of Enlistment:** 17 January 2018 / 4 years

b. **Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 27 / GED / 100

c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service: E-5 / 88M20 Motor Transport Operator / 11 years, 5 months, 9 days

d. Prior Service / Characterizations: RA, 17 June 2008 – 16 January 2018 / HD

e. Overseas Service / Combat Service: SWA / Afghanistan (15 January 2012 – 27 December 2012), Iraq (3 September 2009- 28 July 2010)

f. Awards and Decorations: ARCOM-4, AAM-4, MUC, AGCM-3, NDSM, GWOTSM, ACM-CS-2, ICM-CS, ASR, OSR-5, NATO MDL

g. Performance Ratings: 25 April 2017 – 24 April 2018 / Qualified
25 April 2018 – 24 April 2019 / Qualified

h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record: The applicant was counseled on 6 May 2019 and 18 July 2019, due to failure of the Army Physical Fitness Test.

i. Lost Time / Mode of Return: None

j. Behavioral Health Condition(s):

(1) Applicant provided: The applicant provides a letter from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), 9 February 2021, reflects the applicant has a combined service-connected evaluation of 80-percent. The nature of the applicant's disabilities is not listed.

(2) AMHRR Listed: Mental Status Evaluation (MSE), 6 August 2019, reflects the applicant could understand and participate in administrative proceedings and appreciate the difference between right and wrong. The MSE reflects the applicant did not have a behavioral health condition which would cause the applicant to fail medical retention standards. The applicant was diagnosed with other problems related to employment [per treating provider].

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: DD Form 293, Letter from VA, DD Form 214, personal statement with timeline of events, letters of support, Developmental Counseling Forms, NCOERs, Memorandum, 3 May 2019, Individual Sick Slip, Physical Profile Records, medical documents, separation file (90 total pages)

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), dated 25 September 2019, 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 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 13-2e states in pertinent part, that separation proceedings will be initiated for Soldiers without medical limitations that have two consecutive failures of the Army Physical Fitness Test. The reason for discharge will be shown as physical standards. The service of Soldiers separated because of unsatisfactory performance for failure to meet physical standards will be characterized as honorable or general (under honorable conditions).

(5) Chapter 15 provides explicitly for separation under the prerogative of the Secretary of the Army. Secretarial plenary separation authority is exercised sparingly and seldom delegated. Ordinarily, it is used when no other provision of this regulation applies, and early separation is clearly in the Army's best interest. Separations under this paragraph are effective only if approved in writing by the Secretary of the Army or the Secretary's approved designee as announced in updated memoranda. Secretarial separation authority is normally exercised on a case-by-case basis.

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 "JFT" as the appropriate code to assign enlisted Soldiers who are discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 13-2e, Physical Standards.

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 SPD code change. The applicant's Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR), the issues, and documents submitted with the application were carefully reviewed.

The applicant was separated under the provisions of Chapter 13-2E, AR 635-200 with an honorable discharge. The narrative reason specified by Army Regulations for a discharge under this paragraph is "Physical Standards," and the separation code is "JFT." Army Regulation 635-8, Separation 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 applicant contends the applicant was involuntarily separated and rushed through the separation process under duress with untreated mental and physical issues. The applicant's AMHRR is void of a mental health diagnosis. The AMHRR shows the applicant underwent a MSE on 6 August 2019, which reflects the applicant could understand and participate in administrative proceedings and appreciate the difference between right and wrong. The MSE reflects the applicant did not have a behavioral health condition which would cause the applicant to fail medical retention standards. The applicant was diagnosed with other problems related to employment [per treating provider].

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 diagnosis: PTSD

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** Post-service connected for PTSD. While there are no indications of symptoms in-service, the trauma did; deployment.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **No.** The Board's Medical Advisor determined that the medical condition does not mitigate the basis for separation. The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that while trauma can lead to avoidant behaviors to include attempts to be discharged from service, documentation does not suggest trauma was the driving force in APFT failures. The applicant's statements also note that while he was not himself post-deployment, he was attempting to pass the APFT and be retained supporting trauma avoidance did not drive the discharge. Although liberal consideration was applied, the basis is not mitigated.

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **No.** Based on liberally considering all the evidence before the Board, the ADRB determined that the condition or experience did not outweigh the basis of separation.

b. Prior Decisions Cited: None

c. Response to Contention(s): The applicant contends the applicant was involuntarily separated and rushed through the separation process under duress with untreated mental and physical issues.

The Board considered this contention, however the Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that while trauma can lead to avoidant behaviors to include attempts to be discharged from service, documentation does not suggest trauma was the driving force in APFT failures.

d. 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.

e. Rationale for Decision:

(1) The Board voted not to change the applicant's characterization of service because, despite applying liberal consideration of all the evidence before the Board, the applicant's BH diagnoses did not excuse or mitigate the APFT failures. 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. The Board considered the applicant's statement, record of service, the frequency and nature of misconduct, and the reason for separation. Based on a preponderance of evidence, the Board

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determined that the reason for the applicant's separation and the character of service the applicant received upon separation were proper and equitable.

(2) The Board voted not to change the applicant's reason for discharge or accompanying SPD code under the same reasons, as the reason the applicant was discharged was both proper and equitable.

(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 / Separation Order:** No
- b. **Change Characterization to:** No Change
- c. **Change Reason / SPD Code to:** No Change
- d. **Change RE Code to:** No Change
- e. **Change Authority to:** No Change

Authenticating Official:

8/5/2024

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