

**1. Applicant's Name:** [REDACTED]**a. Application Date:** 10 November 2020**b. Date Received:** 16 November 2020**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.

**b.** The applicant seeks relief contending, in effect, the applicant's discharge is improper because the applicant received a general discharge, however other soldiers in the same unit received an honorable discharge for failing the APFT too. The applicant is trying to change their discharge to honorable to receive benefits to continue their education. The applicant received a VA Certificate of Eligibility on 23 April 2020 and was able to use it for the college they were attending. A veteran told the applicant about housing benefits that they should be receiving. However, after talking to a VA representative, the applicant was informed that they would be losing their current benefits.

**c. Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 7 June 2024, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's length and the circumstances surrounding the discharge - discharge was severe for the failed APFT. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14- 12a. The Board determined the narrative reason for separation and reentry code are proper and equitable and voted not to change them.

**3. DISCHARGE DETAILS:**

**a. Reason / Authority / Codes / Characterization:** Physical Standards / AR 635-200, Chapter 13-2E / JFT / RE-3 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

**b. Date of Discharge:** 28 April 2020

**c. Separation Facts:**

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

**(2) Basis for Separation:** The applicant was informed of the following reasons: The applicant failed two consecutive Army physical fitness tests (APFT).

**(3) Recommended Characterization:** NIF

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

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

**(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 3 February 2020 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

**4. SERVICE DETAILS:**

- a. **Date / Period of Enlistment:** 26 June 2017 / 3 years, 1 month, and 25 days
- b. **Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 18 / High School Graduate / 96
- c. **Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-3 / 91B10, Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic / 2 years, 10 months, and 3 days
- d. **Prior Service / Characterizations:** None
- e. **Overseas Service / Combat Service:** None
- f. **Awards and Decorations:** NDSM, GWOTSM, ASR
- g. **Performance Ratings:** NA
- h. **Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:**
  - (1) DA Form 268 (Report to Suspend Favorable Personnel Actions (Flag)), 3 September 2019, shows the applicant was flagged for APFT Failure (JA) on 3 September 2019.
  - (2) The commander's report, 17 January 2020, shows the commander initiated action to separate the applicant for failing two consecutive record APFTs.
  - (3) Orders 055-0002, 24 February 2020, shows the applicant was to be reassigned to the U.S. Army Transition Point and discharged on 10 March 2020 from the Regular Army.
  - (4) Orders 058-0002, 27 February 2020, shows Orders 055-0002, 24 February 2020, were amended to show a discharge date of 28 April 2020.
  - (5) The applicant's Enlisted Record Brief, 29 April 2020, shows the applicant was flagged for involuntary separation/field initiated (BA), effective 26 July 2019, and for the weight control program (KA), effective 11 November 2018; and was ineligible for reenlistment due to pending separation (9V). The Assignment Eligibility Availability (AEA) code shows AEA code "L" which has no assignment restrictions.
- i. **Lost Time / Mode of Return:** None
- j. **Behavioral Health Condition(s):**
  - (1) **Applicant provided:** None
  - (2) **AMHRR Listed:** None

*The ARBA's medical advisor reviewed DoD and VA medical records.*

**5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:** DD Form 293; DD Form 214; and VA Certificate of Eligibility.

**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)** 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.

**(2)** 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.

**(3)** Chapter 13 contains the policy and outlines the procedures for separating individuals for unsatisfactory performance, and provides, in pertinent part, commanders will separate a member under this Chapter when, in the commander's judgment, the member will not develop sufficiently to participate satisfactorily in further training and/or become a satisfactory Soldier.

**(4)** Paragraph 13-2c (previously paragraph 13-2e) states in pertinent part, separation proceedings will be initiated for Soldiers without medical limitations that have two consecutive failures of the APFT. The reason for discharge will be shown as physical standards.

**(5)** Paragraph 13-8 stipulates the service of Soldiers separated because of unsatisfactory performance will be characterized as honorable or under honorable conditions as warranted by their military records.

**(6)** 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 (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, in effect at the time, Chapter 13-2e, Physical standards.

**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:

(1) RE-1 Applies to: Person completing his or her term of active service who is considered qualified to reenter the U.S. Army. Eligibility: Qualified for enlistment if all other criteria are met.

(2) RE-3 Applies to: Person who is not considered fully qualified for reentry or continuous service at time of separation, but disqualification is waiverable. Eligibility: Ineligible unless a waiver is granted.

(3) 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.

a. The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable. The applicant's AMHRR, the issues, and documents submitted with the application were carefully reviewed.

b. The applicant's AMHRR includes partial facts and circumstances concerning the events which led to the discharge from the Army. The commander's report, 17 January 2020, shows the commander initiated action to separate the applicant for failing two consecutive record APFTs. The applicant's AMHRR contains a properly constituted DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty), which was authenticated by the applicant's electronic signature. The applicant's DD Form 214 shows the applicant served 2 years, 10 months, and 3 days. The applicant was discharged on 28 April 2020 under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 13, paragraph 13-2e, by reason of physical standards with a characterization of service of general (under honorable conditions).

c. The applicant contends, in effect, the applicant's discharge is improper because the applicant received a general discharge, however other soldiers in the same unit received an honorable discharge for failing the APFT too. The DODI 1332.28 provides each case must be decided on the individual merits, and a case-by-case basis, considering the unique facts and circumstances of the case. Additionally, when an applicant cites a prior decision of the ADRB, another agency, or a court, the applicant shall describe the specific principles and facts contained in the prior decision and explain the relevance of the cited matter to the applicant's case. The Board is an independent body, not bound by prior decisions in its review of subsequent cases because no two cases present the same issues

d. The applicant contends, in effect, an upgrade of the discharge would allow VA education benefits. Eligibility for veteran's benefits 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.

e. Published Department of Defense guidance indicates that the guidance is not intended to interfere or impede on the Board's statutory independence. The Board will determine the relative weight of the action that led to the discharge and whether it supports relief or not. In reaching its determination, the Board shall consider the applicant's petition, available records and/or submitted documents in support of the petition.

**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? **No.** The Board's Medical Advisor, a voting member, reviewed DoD and VA medical records and found no mitigating BH diagnoses on the applicant. The applicant provided no documents or testimony of a condition or experience, that, when applying liberal consideration, could have excused, or mitigated a discharge.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **N/A**

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **N/A**

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **N/A**

b. Prior Decisions Cited:

c. Response to Contentions:

(1) The applicant contends, in effect, the applicant's discharge is improper because the applicant received a general discharge, however other soldiers in the same unit received an honorable discharge for failing the APFT too.

The Board considered this contention non-persuasive during its deliberations.

(2) The applicant contends, in effect, an upgrade of the discharge would allow VA education benefits.

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.

d. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's length and the circumstances surrounding the discharge - discharge was severe for the failed APFT. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14- 12a. The Board determined the narrative reason for separation and reentry code are proper and equitable and voted not to change them.

e. Rationale for Decision:

(1) The Board carefully considered the applicant's request, supporting documents, evidence in the records, and published Department of Defense guidance for liberal consideration of discharge upgrade requests. The Board considered the applicant's statement, record of service, the frequency and nature of misconduct, and the reason for separation. The Board found sufficient evidence of in-service mitigating factors (Length). The Board concluded that the discharge was severe for the failed APFT. Based on a preponderance of evidence, the Board determined that the character of service the applicant received upon separation was inequitable and warranted an upgrade.

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(2) The Board voted not to change the applicant's reason for discharge or accompanying SPD code under the same pretexts, and 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: Yes
- b. Change Characterization to: Honorable
- c. Change Reason / SPD code to: No change
- d. Change RE Code to: No change
- e. Change Authority to: No change

**Authenticating Official:**

1/14/2025

**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