

**ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE**  
**AR20210009204**

**1. Applicant's Name:** [REDACTED]

- a. Application Date:** 15 March 2021
- b. Date Received:** 18 March 2021
- c. Counsel:** None

**2. REQUEST, ISSUES, BOARD TYPE, AND DECISION:**

- a. Applicant Requests:** The current characterization of service for the period under review is general (under honorable conditions). The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable.
- b. Applicant Contention(s)/Issue(s):** The applicant seeks relief contending, the access to attend college to obtain their Bachelors and Masters degrees. They would also like to provide college access for their child.
- c. Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 18 July 2025, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's length and quality of service, to include combat service, and the circumstances surrounding the discharge (IPV and PTSD diagnosis). 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, Chapter 15, and the narrative reason for separation to Secretarial Authority, with a corresponding separation code to JFF. The Board voted to change the RE Code to RE-3.

**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:** 5 May 2020
- c. Separation Facts:**
  - (1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** 5 December 2019
  - (2) Basis for Separation:** On or between 29 June – 29 July 2019, the applicant wrongfully used marijuana (scheduled I controlled substance).
  - (3) Recommended Characterization:** General (Under Honorable Conditions)
  - (4) Legal Consultation Date:** 7 December 2019
  - (5) Administrative Separation Board:** NA
  - (6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 14 August 2017 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

**4. SERVICE DETAILS:**

- a. Date / Period of Enlistment/Reenlistment Under Review:** 14 August 2017 / 3 years, 21 weeks

- b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 24 / High School Diploma / 92
- c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 92G10 Culinary Specialist / 2 years, 8 months, 22 days
- d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** None
- e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** Korea / None / 11 months, 29 days
- f. Awards and Decorations:** NDSM, GWOTSM, KDSM, ASR, OSR
- g. Performance Ratings:** NA
- h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:** The Enlisted Record Brief the applicant was flagged (Suspend Favorable Personnel Actions (FLAG)) on 27 August 2019, for adverse action (AA), drug abuse adverse action (UA), and field-initiated involuntary separation (BA). On 25 September 2019, the applicant received nonjudicial punishment (NJP) for wrongful use of marijuana on or between 29 June – 29 July 2019. Their punishment imposed a reduction to PFC; forfeiture of \$1,052 pay (suspended for six months); and extra duty for 45 days.
- i. Lost Time / Mode of Return:** None
- j. Behavioral Health Condition(s):** The following documents have been provided to the ARBA Medical Advisor, if applicable. See **“Board Discussion and Determination”** for Medical Advisor Details.
  - (1) Applicant provided:** None
  - (2) AMHRR provided:** A Command Referral for a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Evaluation, dated 7 January 2020, indicates the command referred the applicant for a positive urinalysis (cocaine) and was seen on 12 June [2019] for a DUI. Due to the applicant self-identifying as not having a problem, they were not enrolled in SUDCC, although completed Prime for Life. A Report of Mental Status Evaluation, dated 12 February 2020, provides no diagnoses or recommendations, however, the BH provider noted the applicant's recent hospitalization for suicidal ideations and was therefore at an elevated risk level. The applicant did not meet criteria for a BH disorder, screened negatively for PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), TBI (traumatic brain injury), and Sexual Assault. They were cleared to participate in administrative proceedings.

**5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:** Application for Correction of Military Record; Recovery Ranch Discharge Summary and Medical Records

**6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** None provided with this application.

**7. STATUTORY, REGULATORY AND POLICY REFERENCE(S):** 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.

**a.** Office, Secretary of Defense memorandum (Supplemental Guidance to Military Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records Considering Discharge Upgrade Requests by Veterans Claiming Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), 3 September 2014, directed the Service Discharge Review Boards (DRBs) and Service Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NRs) to carefully consider the revised PTSD criteria, detailed medical considerations and mitigating factors when taking action on applications from former service members administratively discharged UOTHC and who have been diagnosed with PTSD by a competent mental health professional representing a civilian healthcare provider in order to determine if it would be appropriate to upgrade the characterization of the applicant's service.

**b.** Office, Under Secretary of Defense memorandum (Clarifying Guidance to Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records Considering Requests by Veterans for Modification of their Discharge Due to Mental Health Conditions, Sexual Assault, or Sexual Harassment), 25 August 2017 issued clarifying guidance for the Secretary of Defense Directive to DRBs and BCM/NRs when considering requests by Veterans for modification of their discharges due in whole or in part to mental health conditions, including PTSD; Traumatic Brain Injury; sexual assault; or sexual harassment. Boards are to give liberal consideration to Veterans petitioning for discharge relief when the application for relief is based in whole or in part to those conditions or experiences. The guidance further describes evidence sources and criteria and requires Boards to consider the conditions or experiences presented in evidence as potential mitigation for misconduct that led to the discharge.

**c.** Office, Under Secretary of Defense memorandum (Guidance to Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records Regarding Equity, Injustice, or Clemency Determinations), 25 July 2018 issued guidance to Military DRBs and BCM/NRs regarding equity, injustice, or clemency determinations. Clemency generally refers to relief specifically granted from a criminal sentence. However, the guidance applies to more than clemency from a sentencing in a court-martial; it also applies to other corrections, including changes in a discharge, which may be warranted based on equity or relief from injustice.

**(1)** This guidance does not mandate relief but rather provides standards and principles to guide Boards in application of their equitable relief authority. In determining whether to grant relief on the basis of equity, injustice, or clemency grounds, DRBs shall consider the prospect for rehabilitation, external evidence, sworn testimony, policy changes, relative severity of misconduct, mental and behavioral health conditions, official governmental acknowledgement that a relevant error or injustice was committed, and uniformity of punishment.

**(2)** Changes to the narrative reason for discharge and/or an upgraded character of service granted solely on equity, injustice, or clemency grounds normally should not result in separation pay, retroactive promotions, and payment of past medical expenses or similar benefits that might have been received if the original discharge had been for the revised reason or had the upgraded service characterization.

**d.** 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.

**e.** Army Regulation 600-85 (Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)) provided a comprehensive alcohol and drug abuse prevention and control policies, procedures, and responsibilities for Soldiers for ASAP services. The ASAP is a command program that emphasizes readiness and personal responsibility. The ultimate decision regarding separation or retention of abusers is the responsibility of the Soldier's chain of command. Abuse of alcohol or the use of illicit drugs by military personnel is inconsistent with Army values and the standards of performance, discipline, and readiness necessary to accomplish the Army's mission. All Soldiers who are identified as drug abusers, without exception, will be referred to the ASAP counseling center for screening; be considered for disciplinary action under the UCMJ, as appropriate; and be processed for administrative separation in accordance with Army Regulation 635-200.

**(1)** Unit commanders must intervene early and refer all Soldiers suspected or identified as alcohol and/or drug abusers to the ASAP. The unit commander should recommend enrollment based on the Soldier's potential for continued military service in terms of professional skills, behavior, and potential for advancement. ASAP participation is mandatory for all Soldiers who are command referred. Failure to attend a mandatory counseling session may constitute a violation of Article 86 (Absence Without Leave) of the UCMJ.

**(2)** Alcohol and/or other drug abusers, and in some cases dependent alcohol users, may be enrolled in the ASAP when such enrollment is clinically recommended. Soldiers who fail to participate adequately in, or to respond successfully to, rehabilitation will be processed for administrative separation and not be provided another opportunity for rehabilitation except under the most extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the Clinical Director in consultation with the unit commander.

**(3)** Alcohol and/or other drug abusers, and in some cases dependent alcohol users, may be enrolled in the ASAP when such enrollment is clinically recommended. Soldiers who fail to participate adequately in, or to respond successfully to, rehabilitation will be processed for administrative separation and not be provided another opportunity for rehabilitation except under the most extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the Clinical Director in consultation with the unit commander.

**(4)** All Soldiers who are identified as drug abusers, without exception, will be referred to the ASAP counseling center for screening; be considered for disciplinary action under the UCMJ, as appropriate; and be processed for administrative separation in accordance with Army Regulation 635-200.

**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 waivable and nonwaivable 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 waivable. Eligibility: Ineligible unless a waiver is granted.

**(3) RE-4** Applies to: Person separated from last period of service with a nonwaivable 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.

**g.** 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. It states:

**(a)** 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.

**(b)** 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.

**(c)** An under other-than-honorable-conditions discharge is an administrative separation from the Service under conditions other than honorable and it may be issued for misconduct, fraudulent entry, security reasons, or in lieu of trial by court martial based on certain circumstances or patterns of behavior or acts or omissions that constitute a significant departure from the conduct expected of Soldiers in the Army.

**(d)** A Bad Conduct discharge will only be given to a Soldier pursuant to an approved sentence of general or special court-martial. Enlisted service members and officers with less than six years of service are eligible for a Bad Conduct Discharge. Behaviors such as drug abuse, assault, theft, insubordination, and other actions that violate military law may be punished with a BCD.

**(e)** A Dishonorable discharge is the most severe type of discharge and will be given to a Soldier pursuant only to an approved sentence of general or special court-martial. The appellate review must be completed and affirmed sentence ordered duly executed. Behaviors such as fraud, desertion, treason, espionage, sexual Assault, and murder and other actions may be punished with a dishonorable discharge.

**(f)** An uncharacterized separation will be described as entry-level with service uncharacterized if processing is initiated while a Soldier is in entry-level status. Unless the DCS, G-1, on a case-by-case basis, determines that characterization of service as honorable is clearly warranted by the presence of unusual circumstances involving personal conduct and performance of duty. This characterization is authorized when the Soldier is separated by reason of selected changes in service obligation, convenience of the Government, and Secretarial plenary authority. A Soldier is in an entry-level status (ELS) if the Soldier has not completed more than 180 days of creditable continuous active duty prior to the initiation of

separation action.

**(2)** Chapter 14 (Separation for Misconduct) established policy and prescribed procedures for separating members for misconduct. Action will be taken to separate a member for misconduct when it is clearly established that rehabilitation is impractical or unlikely to succeed. 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. A pattern of misconduct consisting of one of the following – discreditable involvement with civil or military authorities, or discreditable conduct and conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline including conduct violating the accepted standards of personal conduct found in the UCMJ, Army regulations, the civil law, and time-honored customs and traditions of the Army. 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.

**(3)** 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. If Secretarial Authority is granted, it will normally correct the record to show the following:

- Separation Authority: Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 15
- Separation Code: JFF
- Reenlistment Code: RE1
- Narrative Reason for Separation: Secretarial Plenary Authority
- Character of Service: Honorable

**h.** 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 14-12c (2), misconduct (drug abuse).

**i.** Manual for Courts-Martial (2019 Edition), United States, states military law consists of the statutes governing the military establishment and regulations issued thereunder, the constitutional powers of the President and regulations issued thereunder, and the inherent authority of military commanders. Military law includes jurisdiction exercised by courts-martial and the jurisdiction exercised by commanders with respect to nonjudicial punishment. The purpose of military law is to promote justice, to assist in maintaining good orders and discipline in the Armed Forces. Article 112a (wrongful use of a schedule I controlled substance) states in the subparagraph, the maximum punishment consists of dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for two years.

**8. SUMMARY OF FACT(S):** Standard of Review. 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.** A DD Form 214 provides the applicant was discharged under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2) for misconduct (drug abuse) with a general (under honorable conditions) characterization of service. The applicant was separated for DUI (May 2019) for being over the legal limit and later received a GOMOR filed locally; and for wrongful use of cocaine (November 2019).

  - (1)** The applicant is contending, the discharge was unjust and rushed to separation without a valid reason and they desire to continue their military career. They provided character letters from former leadership highlighting their work ethic and accomplishments, including earned medals; however, the applicant felt the command failed to consider the evidence prior to making a decision.
  - (2)** The attorney for the applicant's separation proceedings, provides the applicant unknowingly consumed coca tea on two occasions back-to-back. A subsequent UA revealed the applicant tested positive for a 166 ng/ml of benzoylecgonine. Coca tea, a legal stimulant in many countries, can yield positive results up to 38 hours after ingestion. The tea packaging listed no illicit ingredients or warnings and therefore, they consumed it in good faith with no intent to violate regulations. The applicant served honorably for over two years with strong performance and discipline. The evidence supports the positive result stemmed from unintentional ingestion and was not wrongful under Article 112a, UCMJ.
- c.** Chapter 14 establishes policy and prescribes procedures for separation members for misconduct. Specific categories include minor disciplinary infractions, a pattern of misconduct, commission of a serious offense and convictions by civil authorities. Action will be taken to separate a member for misconduct when it is clearly established that rehabilitation is impracticable or is unlikely to succeed. 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.
- d.** 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? **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: PTSD, victim of IPV
  - (2)** Did the condition exist, or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** PTSD, victim of IPV.

**(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? Yes.**  
The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that given the trauma occurred before the substance use and nexus between trauma and substance use, the basis is mitigated.

**(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? Yes.** Based on liberally considering all the evidence before the Board, the ADRB determined that the trauma outweighed the basis of separation.

**b. Prior Decisions Cited:** NA – Applies to Personal Appearances only.

**c. Response to Contentions:** The applicant is contending, the desire to continue military service and believed the discharge was unjust and rushed for no reason. The applicant provided character letters from former leadership highlighting their work ethic and accomplishments, including medals; however, felt the command failed to review the evidence prior to making a decision on the applicant's separation.

The Board determined that this contention was valid and voted to upgrade the characterization of service due to the applicant's PTSD, victim of IPV.

**d. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's length and quality of service, to include combat service, and the circumstances surrounding the discharge (IPV and PTSD diagnosis). 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, Chapter 15, and the narrative reason for separation to Secretarial Authority, with a corresponding separation code to JFF. The Board voted to change the RE Code to RE-3.**

**e. Rationale for Decision:**

**(1) The Board voted to change the applicant's characterization of service to honorable based on the applicant's PTSD, victim of IPV which mitigates the applicant's wrongful use of marijuana. Thus, the prior characterization is no longer appropriate.**

**(2) The Board voted to change the reason to Secretarial Authority under the same rationale, thus the reason for discharge is no longer appropriate. The SPD code associated with the new reason for discharge is JFF.**

**(3) The Board voted to change the RE code to RE-3.**

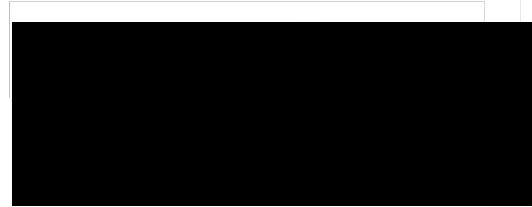
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**10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:**

- a. Issue a New DD-214:** Yes
- b. Change Characterization to:** Honorable Discharge
- c. Change Reason / SPD code to:** Secretarial Authority/JFF
- d. Change RE Code to:** RE-3
- e. Change Authority to:** Separation Authority to AR 635-200, Chapter 15

**Authenticating Official:**

7/31/2025



**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  
FTR – Failure to Report

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