

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED]

a. **Application Date:** 5 May 2021

b. **Date Received:** 5 May 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, a narrative reason change, and changes to both the separation and reentry codes.

b. **Applicant Contention(s)/Issue(s):** The applicant contends their original DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) and separation were invalid because they were based on a determination later found by the VA to contain a Clear and Unmistakable Error, which established the applicant's in-service substance use and related misconduct were manifestations of a service-connected medical conditions rather than misconduct. Accordingly, the applicant requests correlation of their records to reflect an honorable characterization of their records to reflect an honorable characterization of service, a medical separation or retirement, and issuance of a corrected DD Form 214 consistent with the corrected findings.

c. **Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 28 January 2026, and by a 3-0 vote, the Board granted the request upon finding the separation was inequitable. The Board carefully considered the applicant's request, supporting documents, evidence in the records, a medical review, and published Department of Defense guidance for liberal consideration of discharge upgrade requests. The Board concurred with the conclusion of the medical advising official that the applicant's medical diagnosis (MDD) mitigates the basis of separation (wrongful use of cocaine) and warrants a change to the character and narrative reason for separation. Based on a preponderance of evidence, the Board determined that the reason for the applicant's separation was inequitable. The Board voted to retain the reentry code based on the medical diagnosis. Please see **Board Discussion and Determination** section for more detail regarding the Board's decision. Board member names are 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:** 27 February 2012

c. **Separation Facts:**

(1) **Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** 7 December 2011

(2) **Basis for Separation:** On or about 20 June 2011, the applicant tested positive for cocaine use.

(3) **Recommended Characterization:** Retained and receive a rehabilitative transfer / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

(4) Legal Consultation Date: 8 December 2011 / The applicant elected counsel and declined to provide a statement on their behalf.

(5) Administrative Separation Board: NA

(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization: 6 January 2011 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. Date / Period of Enlistment Under Review: 22 November 2010 / 3 years

b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score: 26 / High School Diploma / 90

c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service: E-2 / Shower and Laundry Specialist / 1 year, 3 months, 6 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: The Enlisted Record Brief provides the applicant was flagged (Suspend Favorable Personnel Actions (FLAG)) on 23 August 2011, for field-initiated involuntary separation (BA).

(1) On 11 July 2011, the Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) Coordinator, informed the command of the applicant's positive urinalysis for wrongful use of cocaine and provided the required actions such as to refer the Soldier to the Substance Use Disorder Clinical Care (SUDCC) for an evaluation/assessment within five duty days, initiating a FLAG, such as notifying local CID (Criminal Investigation Division), and to comply with administrative guidance under AR 635-200.

(2) A Record of Proceedings Under Article 15, UCMJ, 9 August 2011, provides the applicant received nonjudicial punishment (NJP) for wrongful cocaine use between 17 and 20 June 2011. As a result, they were reduced to private (E-1); and received extra duty for 45 days.

(3) A Report of Medical Examination, 26 October 2011, provides the applicant was medically qualified for separation, with a pending appointment and no recommendations listed. A Report of Mental Status Evaluation, 7 November 2011, provides the applicant was psychiatrically cleared for separation with a diagnosis of "occupational problem" and no recommendations were identified.

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: The commander's report, 8 December 2011, provides under paragraph 1.s: the commander stated the applicant acknowledged their misconduct and, through appropriate channels, sought assistance. The applicant completed a 20-day inpatient rehabilitation program on 30 August 2011 and subsequently produced two negative company urinalyses and four negative Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) tests. The applicant has improved their physical fitness score by 16 points and volunteered for multiple missions, demonstrating increased motivation, accountability, and rehabilitation. The applicant also reestablished a stable family support system and accepted responsibility for their actions, supporting the request for their chapter to be suspended for 180 days to allow continued service and recovery.

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: ACTS Online Application

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: None was provided with 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.

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.

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.

(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 (2008 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 schedule II-controlled substance) states in the subparagraph, the maximum punishment consists of dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for 5 years.

j. Title 38, U.S. Code, Sections 1110 and 1131, permits the VA to award compensation for a medical condition which was incurred in or aggravated by active military service. The VA, however, is not required by law to determine medical unfitness for further military service. The VA, in accordance with its own policies and regulations, awards compensation solely on the basis that a medical condition exists and that said medical condition reduces or impairs the social or industrial adaptability of the individual concerned. Consequently, due to the two concepts involved, an individual's medical condition, although not considered, medically unfitting for military service at the time of processing for separation, discharge, or retirement, may be sufficient to qualify the individual for VA benefits based on an evaluation by the agency.

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, a narrative reason change, and changes to both the separation and reentry codes. The applicant's Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR), the issues, and documents submitted with the application were carefully reviewed.

(1) An authenticated DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) reflects 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. In August 2011, the applicant received NJP for wrongful cocaine use and as a result, was reduced to private. They served 1 year, 3 months, and 6 days of a 3-year contractual obligation.

(a) The applicant contends their original DD Form 214 and separation were invalid because they were based on a determination later found by the VA to contain a Clear and Unmistakable Error, which established the applicant's in-service substance use and related misconduct were manifestations of a service-connected medical conditions rather than misconduct. Accordingly, the applicant requests correlation of their records to reflect an honorable characterization of their records to reflect an honorable characterization of service, a medical separation or retirement, and issuance of a corrected DD Form 214 consistent with the corrected findings.

(b) They were found medically qualified for separation and psychiatrically cleared for administrative proceedings. There were no diagnoses or recommendations identified on either report. The commander's report identified the applicant accepted responsibility for their misconduct and revealed the applicant completed a 20-day inpatient rehabilitation program, produced multiple negative urinalyses through their unit and ASAP, improved their physical fitness, and demonstrated renewed motivation and family stability. These rehabilitative efforts supported the command's request to suspend separation for 180 days to allow continued service and recovery.

b. 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.

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: Major Depressive DO (MDD-70%SC).

(2) Did the condition exist, or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found VA service connection for MDD establishes nexus with active service

(3) Does the condition or experience excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that the applicant has a mitigating BH condition, MDD. As there is an association between MDD and self-medication with illicit substances, there is a nexus between his diagnosis of MDD and his wrongful use of cocaine.

(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 condition or experience did outweigh the basis of separation.

b. Prior Decisions Cited: N/A

c. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends their original DD Form 214 and separation were invalid because they were based on a determination later found by the VA to contain a Clear and Unmistakable Error, which established the applicant's in-service substance use and related misconduct were manifestations of a service-connected medical conditions rather than misconduct. Accordingly, the applicant requests correlation of their records to reflect an honorable characterization of their records to reflect an honorable characterization of service, a medical separation or retirement, and issuance of a corrected DD Form 214 consistent with the

corrected findings. 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 medical diagnosis (MDD) mitigating the misconduct.

d. The Board determined in a records review conducted on 28 January 2026, and by a 3-0 vote, the Board granted the request upon finding the separation was inequitable. The Board carefully considered the applicant's request, supporting documents, evidence in the records, a medical review, and published Department of Defense guidance for liberal consideration of discharge upgrade requests. The Board concurred with the conclusion of the medical advising official that the applicant's medical diagnosis (MDD) mitigates the basis of separation wrongful use of cocaine and warrants a change to the character and narrative reason for separation. Based on a preponderance of evidence, the Board determined that the reason for the applicant's separation was inequitable. The Board voted to retain the reentry code based on the medical diagnosis.

e. Rationale for Decision:

(1) Published Department of Defense guidance indicates the guidance is not intended to interfere or impede on the Board's statutory independence. The Board determines the relative weight of the action that was the basis for the discharge and whether it supports relief or not. In reaching its determination, the Board considers the application, available records and any supporting documents included with the application.

(2) The Board voted to change the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable because the applicant's Major Depressive DO (MDD-70%SC) mitigated the applicant's misconduct of marijuana abuse and AWOL. Thus, the prior characterization is no longer appropriate.

(3) 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.

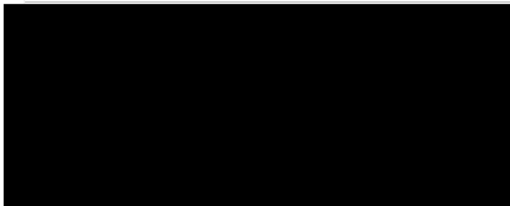
(4) The RE code will change, as the current code is inconsistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the regulation.

ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE**AR20210010671****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: No Change
- e. Change Authority to: AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a

**a.
Authenticating Official:**

3/2/2026

**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