

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED]**a. Application Date:** 7 October 2020**b. Date Received:** 16 November 2020**c. Counsel:** None**2. REQUEST, ISSUES, BOARD TYPE, AND DECISION:****a. Applicant's Requests and Issues:**

(1) The current characterization of service for the period under review is general (under honorable conditions). The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable.

(2) The applicant requests relief stating having their character of service upgraded will allow them to further pursue their education as a professional student. Since their discharge from the U.S. Army they have completed their master's degree and is on schedule to graduate with their second master's degree in June 2021. They plan to use their Post 911 GI Bill to complete their Doctor of Philosophy in Emergency Management. They have essentially dedicated their life to the field of emergency management and wish to be a subject matter expert in the field. Having their character of service upgraded would go a long way in assisting them in their goal.

b. Board Type and Decision: In a records review conducted on 19 July 2024, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Traumatic Brain Injury and Mood Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed to the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), with a corresponding separation code of JKN, and the reentry code to RE-3.

Please see Section 9 of this document for more detail regarding the Board's decision.

3. DISCHARGE DETAILS:

a. Reason / Authority / Codes / Characterization: Misconduct (Drug Abuse) / Army Regulations 635-200, Paragraph 14-12c(2) / JKK / RE-4 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

b. Date of Discharge: 28 May 2016**c. Separation Facts:**

(1) **Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** 18 April 2016

(2) **Basis for Separation:** between on or about 21 January 2016 to on or about 19 February 2016, wrongfully used marijuana.

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

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

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

(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization: 2 May 2016 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

- a. Date / Period of Enlistment:** 21 January 2014 / 4 years, 21 weeks
- b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 24 / Baccalaureate Degree / 100
- c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 42A10, Human Resources Specialist / 2 years, 4 months, 8 days
- d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** None
- e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** None
- f. Awards and Decorations:** AAM, NDSM, GWTSM, ASR
- g. Performance Ratings:** NA
- h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:**

(1) A memorandum, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, subject: Separation under Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14-12c(2), Misconduct-Abuse of Illegal Drugs [Applicant], dated 18 April 2016, reflects the applicant's notification of initiating actions to separate them for Misconduct-Abuse of Illegal Drugs. The reason for the proposed actions is between on or about 21 January 2016 to on or about 19 February 2016, wrongfully used marijuana. The company commander recommended the applicant's service be characterized as general (under honorable conditions). The applicant's acknowledgement of receipt of separation notice and legal consultation is not in evidence for review.

(2) A memorandum, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, subject: Commander's Report – Proposed Separation under Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14-12c(2), Misconduct-Abuse of Illegal Drugs, [Applicant], dated 20 April 2016, reflects the applicant's company commander recommended the applicant be separated from the Army prior to the expiration of their current term of service. The company commander states they do not consider it feasible or appropriate to accomplish other disposition as Soldiers are briefed regularly on the consequences of illicit drug use. The applicant took the risk of violating Army policy and must face the consequences of their actions. The separation is in the best interest of the U.S. Army and of the Soldier.

(3) A memorandum, Headquarters, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, subject: Separation under Army Regulation 635-200, Paragraph 14-12c(2), Misconduct-Abuse of Illegal Drugs, [Applicant], dated 2 May 2016, the separation authority reviewed the separation packet of the applicant and after careful consideration of all matters, directed the applicant be separated from the Army prior to the expiration of their current term of service. The separation authority directed their service be characterized as General (Under Honorable Conditions) and states after reviewing the rehabilitative transfer requirements, they determined the requirements do not apply to this action.

(4) A DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) reflects the applicant was discharged on 28 May 2016, with 2 years, 4 months, and 8 days of net active service this period. The DD Form 214 show in –

- item 4a (Grade, Rate or Rank) – Private Two
- item 4b (Pay Grade) – E-2
- item 12i (Effective Date of Pay Grade) – 3 March 2016
- item 18 (Remarks) – in part, MEMBER HAS NOT COMPLETED FIRST FULL TERM OF SERVICE
- item 24 (Character of Service) – General (Under Honorable Conditions)
- item 26 (Separation Code) – JKK
- item 27 (Reentry Code) - 4
- item 28 (Narrative Reason for Separation) – Misconduct (Drug Abuse)

(5) An Enlisted Record Brief, dated 30 May 2016, reflects the applicant enlisted in the U.S Army at the rank/grade of specialist/E-4 on 21 January 2014 and reduced to private two/E-2 on 3 March 2016. The Enlisted Record Brief reflects the applicant's suspension of favorable personnel actions for Drug Abuse Adverse Action on 11 February 2016 and for Involuntary Separation on 4 April 2016.

i. Lost Time / Mode of Return: NA

j. Behavioral Health Condition(s): None

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:

- DD Form 293 (Application for the Review of Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States)
- Florida Division of Emergency Management Transcript
- two 3rd Party Statements
- Master of Science Diploma, Criminal Justice, specialization in Critical Incident Management
- Federal Emergency Management Agency Certificate Achievement

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Florida Division of Emergency Management courses
- Master of Science Diploma, Criminal Justice, specialization in Critical Incident Management
- Federal Emergency Management Agency Certificate Achievement, completion of the Emergency Management Institute's Professional Development Series, a commitment to Standards of Excellence in Emergency Management

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

a. Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1553, (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, Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 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 (DoD) 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; Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1553; and DoD Directive 1332.41 and DoD Instruction 1332.28.

d. Army Regulation 635-200 (Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations), 6 September 2011, set policies, standards, and procedures to ensure the readiness and competency of the force while providing for the orderly administrative separation of Soldiers for a variety of reasons. Readiness is promoted by maintaining high standards of conduct and performance.

(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) A Under Other Than Honorable Conditions Discharge is an administrative separation from the Service under conditions other than honorable. It may be issued for misconduct, fraudulent entry, security reasons, or in lieu of trial by court-martial.

(4) 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. Paragraph 14-12c(2) (Abuse of Illegal Drugs is Serious Misconduct), stated, however; 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. 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.

(5) Chapter 15 (Secretarial Plenary Authority), currently in effect, 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 "JKK" as the appropriate code to assign enlisted Soldiers who are discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14, paragraph 12c(2), misconduct (drug abuse).

f. Army Regulation 601-210 (Regular Army and Reserve Components Enlistment Program) governs eligibility criteria, policies, and procedures for enlistment and processing of persons into the Regular Army, the U.S. Army Reserve, and Army National Guard for enlistment per DoD Instructions 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 600-85 (Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)) dated 28 December 2012, provided a comprehensive alcohol and drug abuse prevention and control policies, procedures, and responsibilities for Soldiers of all components. 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, the Warrior Ethos, and the standards of performance, discipline, and readiness necessary to accomplish the Army's mission.

(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.

(2) 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.

(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 Soldier who test positive for illicit drugs for the first time will be evaluated for dependency, disciplined, as appropriate, and processed for separation within 30 calendar days of the company commander receiving notification of the positive result from the ASAP. Retention should be reserved for Soldiers that show clear potential for both excellent future service in the Army and for remaining free from substance abuse. Soldiers diagnosed as drug dependent will be offered rehabilitation prior to separation.

h. Manual for Courts-Martial, United States (2012 Edition) stated, 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 order and discipline in the Armed Forces. Appendix 12 (Maximum Punishment Chart) Manual for Courts-Martial shows

the maximum punishments include punitive discharge for violating the following Article 112a (Wrongful Use, Possession, etc., of Controlled Substances).

8. SUMMARY OF FACT(S):

a. The Army Discharge Review Board considers applications for upgrade as instructed by Department of Defense Instruction 1332.28.

b. A review of the available evidence provides an administrative irregularity in the proper retention of records, specifically the applicant's Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR) case files for approved separation only contains the Notification of Separation, Commander's Report, and the separation authority memorandum. The AMHRR does not reflect the applicant's adverse documents leading to their discharge for misconduct (drug abuse). The applicant's DD Form 214 indicates their discharge under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14, paragraph 14-12c(2), by reason of Misconduct (Drug Abuse), with a characterization of service of general (under honorable conditions). The applicant completed 2 years, 4 months, and 8 days of net active service. The applicant did not complete their first full term of service.

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: Unspecified Mood Disorder; Mild TBI.

(2) Did the condition exist, or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found both diagnoses (Unspecified Mood DO, mTBI) were made during military service.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that the applicant has two mitigating conditions, mild TBI and Unspecified Mood Disorder. As there is an association between TBI, Unspecified Mood Disorder and self-medication with illicit drugs, there is a nexus

between applicant's TBI, Unspecified Mood Disorder and the wrongful use of marijuana.

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **Yes.** After applying liberal consideration to the evidence, including the Board Medical Advisor opine, the Board determined that the applicant's Traumatic Brain Injury and Mood Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse.

c. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends having their character of service upgraded will allow them to further pursue their education as a professional student. They plan to use their Post 911 GI Bill to complete their Doctor of Philosophy in Emergency Management. The Board considered this contention during proceedings but ultimately did not address it after determined that an upgrade is warranted based on medical mitigation.

(2) The applicant contends since their discharge from the U.S. Army they have completed their master's degree and on schedule to graduate with their second master's degree in June 2021. They have essentially dedicated their life to the field of emergency management and wish to be a subject matter expert in the field. The Board considered this contention during proceedings but ultimately did not address it after determined that an upgrade is warranted based on medical mitigation.

d. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Traumatic Brain Injury and Mood Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed to the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), with a corresponding separation code of JKN, and the reentry code to RE-3.

e. Rationale for Decision:

(1) The Board voted to change the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable because the applicant's Traumatic Brain Injury and Mood Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse. Thus, the prior characterization is no longer appropriate.

(2) The Board voted to change the reason for discharge to Misconduct (Minor Infractions) under the same pretexts, thus the reason for discharge is no longer appropriate. The SPD code associated with the new reason for discharge is JKN.

(3) The RE code will change to RE-3.

ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE

AR20210011054

10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:

- a. Issue a New DD-214: Yes
- b. Change Characterization to: Honorable
- c. Change Reason / SPD Code to: Misconduct (Minor Infractions)/JKN
- d. Change RE Code to: RE-3
- e. Change Authority to: AR 635-200

Authenticating Official:

4/15/2025



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