

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED]

a. **Application Date:** 15 September 2021

b. **Date Received:** 15 September 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 under other than honorable conditions. The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable.

b. **Applicant Contention(s)/Issue(s):** The applicant requests relief, contending in effect, the applicant served honorably in the Army Reserve from 2015 through 2020 and was involuntarily separated due to missed drills caused by unavoidable family-care obligations, multiple relocations tied to a spouse's active-duty service, and COVID-19 shutdowns. The applicant reports a unit transfer occurred without notice, travel to the gaining unit was not feasible, and efforts to secure a local unit or transfer to the IRR were unsuccessful. The applicant asserts the resulting other than honorable discharge does not reflect the applicant's service record and requests reconsideration, supported by email correspondence with the commander and unit personnel.

c. **Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 20 February 2026, and by 2-1 vote, the Board found the discharge inequitable based on the applicant's service and family circumstances and therefore upgraded the characterization to Honorable. 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:** NIF / AR 135-178 / NIF / NIF / NIF / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

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

c. **Separation Facts:** The applicant's Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR) is void of the case separation file.

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

(2) **Basis for Separation:** NIF

(3) **Recommended Characterization:** NIF

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

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

(6) **Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** NIF

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

- a. Date / Period of Enlistment Under Review:** 31 July 2015 / 8 years
- b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 22 / High School Graduate / 89
- c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 92F10, Petroleum Supply Specialist / 5 years, 3 days
- d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** IADT, 5 January 2016 – 2 June 2016 / HD
(Concurrent Service)
- e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** None
- f. Awards and Decorations:** None
- g. Performance Ratings:** NA
- h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:**

(1) Orders 20-234-00023 provided by the applicant, 21 August 2020, indicate the applicant was discharged from the U.S. Army Reserves on 3 August 2020. The applicant was reduced from E-4 to E-1 with an effective date of 3 August 2020.

- 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 Listed:** None

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: Online Application for Correction of Military Record; email thread; spouse orders; separation orders; Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: None

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 135-178 (Enlisted Administrative Separations), prescribes the policies, standards, and procedures to ensure the readiness and competency of the U.S. Army while providing for the orderly administrative separation of Army National Guard of the United States (ARNGUS) and U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) enlisted Soldiers for a variety of reasons. Readiness is promoted by maintaining high standards of conduct and performance. Specific

categories include minor disciplinary infractions, a pattern of misconduct, and commission of a serious offense, to include abuse of illegal drugs, and convictions by civil authorities.

(1) Chapter 2 provides general guidance, which applies when referenced under the reasons for separation in this regulation. Further guidance is set forth under the specific reasons for separation in chapters 4 through 15.

(2) Paragraph 2-7, prescribes possible characterizations of service include an honorable, general (under honorable conditions), under other than honorable conditions, or uncharacterized if the Soldier is in entry-level status. However, the permissible range of characterization varies based on the reason for separation.

(3) Paragraph 2-8, prescribes the characterization is based upon the quality of the Soldier's service, including the reason for separation, and determined in accordance with standards of acceptable personal conduct and performance of duty as found in the UCMJ, Army regulations, and the time-honored customs and traditions of the Army. The reasons for separation, including the specific circumstances that form the basis for the discharge are considered on the issue of characterization.

(a) Paragraph 2-9a prescribes an honorable characterization 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) Paragraph 2-9b, prescribes, if a Soldier's service has been honest and faithful, it is appropriate to characterize that service as general (under honorable conditions). Characterization of service as general (under honorable conditions) is warranted when significant negative aspects of the Soldier's conduct or performance of duty outweigh positive aspects of the Soldier's military record.

(c) Paragraph 2-9c, prescribes the service may be characterized as under other than honorable conditions only when discharge is for misconduct, fraudulent entry, unsatisfactory participation, or security reasons, and under other circumstances.

(4) Chapter 13, 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 memorandums. Secretarial separation authority is normally exercised on a case-by-case basis.

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 Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR), the issues, and documents submitted with the application were carefully reviewed.

b. The applicant's Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR) is void of the specific facts and circumstances concerning the events leading to the discharge from the Army Reserve. The applicant provided a properly constituted discharge order: Orders 20-234-00023, 21

August 2020. The orders indicate the applicant's discharge was under AR 135-178 provisions, with a characterization of service of under other than honorable conditions.

c. The applicant contends being involuntarily separated due to missed drills caused by unavoidable family-care obligations, multiple relocations tied to a spouse's active-duty service, and COVID-19 shutdowns. The applicant provided an email thread with the command explaining the inability to find a unit due to COVID-19. The applicant also provided their spouse orders supporting the contention.

d. The applicant contends the resulting other than honorable discharge does not reflect the applicant's service record. The Board evaluated the applicant's service accomplishments and overall quality of service in accordance with DODI 1332.28.

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 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: None

c. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends being involuntarily separated due to missed drills caused by unavoidable family-care obligations, multiple relocations tied to a spouse's active-duty service, and COVID-19 shutdowns. The Board considered this contention and determined that the applicant's unique family circumstances and demonstrated efforts to manage required participation supported a finding that the original basis for separation was inequitable. The Board concluded that these factors, combined with the applicant's overall service, warranted relief.

(2) The applicant contends the resulting other than honorable discharge does not reflect the applicant's service record. The Board considered this contention and found that the applicant's length of service and personal circumstances showed a level of performance more consistent with an Honorable characterization. The Board agreed that the original discharge no longer accurately represented the applicant's service and granted an upgrade.

d. The Board determined the applicant's discharge was inequitable using the basis of separation as unsatisfactory participation. The Board voted to upgrade due to the applicant's length, unique family matters, and purpose achieved by the discharge. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade to the characterization of service to Honorable.

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.

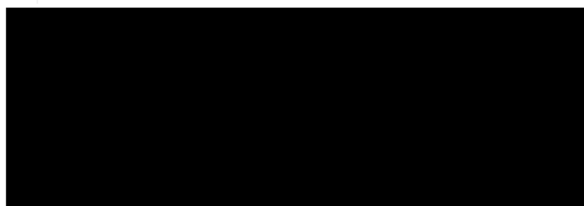
(2) The Board voted to change the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable because the applicant's family circumstances, and relocation challenges made the original basis for separation inequitable. The Board determined that the applicant's overall service and the purpose already achieved by the discharge supported granting the upgrade.

10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:

- a. Issue a New Separation Order: Yes**
- b. Change Characterization to: Honorable**
- c. Change Authority to: AR 135-178**

Authenticating Official:

3/5/2026



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