

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED]

- a. **Application Date:** 21 September 2021
- b. **Date Received:** 27 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 general (under honorable conditions). The applicant requests, in effect, an upgrade to honorable and a narrative reason change.

b. **Applicant Contention(s)/Issue(s):** The applicant requests relief contending, in effect, the applicant's issue was depression, not drug use. The applicant has been diagnosed with persistent depressive disorder with generalized anxiety and the drug use was an isolated incident. The applicant states the applicant is currently working to complete a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling – Addiction Counseling Program at Walden University.

c. **Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 12 November 2025, and by a 3-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Dysthymic Disorder mitigating the applicant's one-time cocaine use, which the Board voted as the accepted basis for separation. 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. 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, Paragraph 14-12c(2) / JKK / RE-4 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

b. **Date of Discharge:** 21 November 2019

c. Separation Facts:

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

(2) **Basis for Separation:** The applicant was informed of the following reasons: NIF

(3) **Recommended Characterization:** NIF

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

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

(6) **Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 25 October 2019 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

- a. **Date / Period of Enlistment/Reenlistment Under Review:** 30 April 2018 / 5 years
- b. **Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 30 / Baccalaureate Degree / 99
- c. **Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 92F1O, Petroleum Supply Specialist / 1 year, 6 months, 22 days
- d. **Prior Service / Characterizations:** None
- e. **Overseas Service / Combat Service:** None
- f. **Awards and Decorations:** NDSM, ASR
- g. **Performance Ratings:** NA
- h. **Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:** NIF
- 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:** The applicant provides a letter from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 29 June 2021, which states, in pertinent part, the applicant was awarded an evaluation of persistent depressive disorder with generalized anxiety disorder (claimed as anxiety condition, sleep disturbances, PTSD, depression, stress disorder and psychotic depressive reaction), which is 70 percent disabling. The applicant also provides 20 pages of medical documents which reflects the applicant’s treatment for depression, dysthymia, generalized anxiety disorder, and hypersomnia.

(2) **AMHRR provided:** None

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: DD Form 293, Letters of Support (2), Memorandum, subject: Substance Use Disorder Clinical Care (SUDCC) Treatment, Discharge Orders, DD Form 214, Letter of Admission to Walden University, VA Summary of Benefits, VA Disabilities, Unofficial Transcript, VA Rehabilitation Plan (Incomplete), Medical Records (20 pages)

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The applicant is currently working to complete a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling – Addiction Counseling Program at Walden University.

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. 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.

c. 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.

d. 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.

e. 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.

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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

(2) Chapter 14 establishes policy and prescribes procedures for separating members for misconduct. Specific categories include minor disciplinary infractions, a pattern of misconduct, and commission of a serious offense, to include abuse of illegal drugs, convictions by civil authorities and desertion or being absent without leave. 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. Paragraph 14-12c (2) terms abuse of illegal drugs as serious misconduct. Paragraph 14-12c, states a Soldier is subject to

action per this section for commission of a serious military or civilian offense, if the specific circumstances of the offense warrant separation and a punitive discharge is, or would be, authorized for the same or a closely related offense under the Manual for Courts-Martial. Commanders will process for separation all Soldiers who are identified as illegal drug abusers, tested positive for illegal drugs a second time during their career, or involved in two serious incidents of alcohol-related misconduct within a 12-month period.

(3) 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, Misconduct (Drug Abuse).

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, in effect, an upgrade to honorable and a narrative reason change. The applicant's Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR), the issues, and documents submitted with the application were carefully reviewed.

b. The applicant requests a narrative reason change. The applicant's service AMHRR is void of the complete facts and circumstances concerning the events which led to his discharge from the Army. The applicant was separated under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2), with a general (under honorable conditions) discharge. The narrative reason specified by Army Regulations for a discharge under this chapter is "Misconduct (Drug Abuse)." AR 635-8, Separation Documents governs the preparation of the DD Form 214 and dictates the entry of the narrative reason for separation entered in block 28 will be as listed in table 2-2 or 2-3 of AR 635-5-1, Separation Program Designator (SPD) Codes. The regulation stipulates no deviation is authorized. There is no provision for any other reason to be entered under this regulation.

c. The applicant contends the applicant's issue was depression, not drug use. The applicant has been diagnosed with persistent depressive disorder with generalized anxiety and the drug use was an isolated incident. The applicant's AMHRR is void of a mental health diagnosis. The applicant provides a letter from VA, 29 June 2021, which states, in pertinent part, the applicant was awarded an evaluation of persistent depressive disorder with generalized anxiety disorder (claimed as anxiety condition, sleep disturbances, PTSD, depression, stress disorder and psychotic depressive reaction), which is 70 percent disabling. The applicant also provides 20 pages of medical documents which reflects the applicant's treatment for depression, dysthymia, generalized anxiety disorder, and hypersomnia.

d. The applicant states the applicant is currently working to complete a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling – Addiction Counseling Program at Walden University. The Army Discharge Review Board is authorized to consider post-service factors in the recharacterization of a discharge. No law or regulation provides for the upgrade of an unfavorable discharge based solely on the passage of time or good conduct in civilian life after leaving the service. The Board reviews each discharge on a case-by-case basis to determine if post-service accomplishments help demonstrate previous in-service misconduct was an aberration and not indicative of the member's overall character.

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: Alcohol Use Disorder, Cocaine Use, Adjustment Disorder with depressed mood, Alcohol Dependence, in remission, Dysthymic Disorder

(2) Did the condition exist, or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found the applicant had in-service BH and SUD treatment, and is 70% service connected for Dysthymic Disorder.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The applicant initially self-referred to BH and SUDCC secondary to a positive drug test for cocaine. Applicant actively engaged in treatment and successfully completed the SUDCC program. Applicant is 70% service connected for Dysthymic Disorder, which included anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms. Substance abuse is a common self-medicating strategy for avoiding uncomfortable emotions and memories related to trauma exposure, and substance use can be a natural sequela to mental health conditions associated with exposure to traumatic and stressful events. The applicant reported traumatic experiences from childhood. The board determined the basis of separation was related to the one-time cocaine positive UA. Given the applicant successfully completed the SUDCC program following a one-time incident and reported mental health symptoms in service, there is sufficient evidence for medical mitigation.

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **Yes.** The Board concurred with the opinion of the Board's Medical Advisor, a voting member. As a result, the ADRB applied liberal consideration and found that the applicant's Dysthymic Disorder outweighed the applicant's one-time cocaine use, which the Board voted as the accepted basis for separation.

b. Prior Decisions Cited: NA

c. Response to Contention(s): The applicant contends the applicant's issue was depression, not drug use. The applicant has been diagnosed with persistent depressive disorder with generalized anxiety and the drug use was an isolated incident. The Board determined that this contention was valid and voted to upgrade the characterization of service due to Dysthymic Disorder mitigating the applicant's one-time cocaine use, which the Board voted as the accepted basis for separation.

d. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Dysthymic Disorder mitigating the applicant's one-time cocaine use, which the Board voted as the accepted basis for separation. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), with a corresponding separation code of JKN.

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AR20210016320

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 Dysthymic Disorder mitigating the applicant's one-time cocaine use, which the Board voted as the accepted basis for separation. 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.

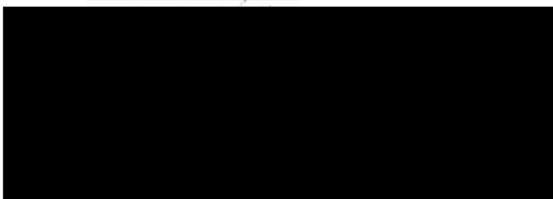
(4) The RE code will not change, as the mitigating condition is service limiting.

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

Authenticating Official:

12/10/2025



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