

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED] r

- a. **Application Date:** 31 August 2021
- b. **Date Received:** 7 September 2021
- c. **Counsel:** None

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

a. **Applicant's Requests and Issues:** The current characterization of service for the period under review is general (under honorable conditions). The applicant requests an upgrade to honorable and a narrative reason change.

The applicant seeks relief, contending, in effect, the discharge characterization does not reflect the full context of circumstances during service. While serving, the applicant attended Special Forces selection and sustained a right knee injury, requiring surgery. Following the injury and return to the unit, the applicant began self-medicating to manage both physical pain and the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Since the discharge, the applicant has received treatment and a disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The applicant is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree, remains a productive member of society, and believes a discharge upgrade will support future opportunities upon graduation. The applicant requests the Board review all supporting documentation and grant an upgrade in recognition of honorable service and ongoing rehabilitation.

b. **Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 31 July 2025, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense. 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. The Board determined the reentry code is proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

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

(Board member names 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:** 14 April 2011

c. **Separation Facts:**

(1) **Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** 14 March 2011

(2) **Basis for Separation:** The applicant was informed of the following reasons: The applicant wrongfully used cocaine between on or about 12 and 15 February 2011.

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

(4) **Legal Consultation Date:** On 16 March 2011, the applicant waived legal counsel.

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

(6) **Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 1 April 2011 / General (Under Honorable Conditions).

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. **Date / Period of Enlistment:** 21 June 2007 / 5 years, 17 weeks

b. **Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 24 / High School Graduate / 109

c. **Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 13R10, Field Artillery Fire Finder Radar Operator / 3 years, 9 months, 24 days

d. **Prior Service / Characterizations:** None

e. **Overseas Service / Combat Service:** SWA / Iraq (10 June 2008 – 5 August 2009)

f. **Awards and Decorations:** ICM-2CS, ARCOM, AAM, NDSM, GWOTSM, ASR, OSR

g. **Performance Ratings:** NA

h. **Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:**

(1) Electronic Copy of Specimen Custody Document – Drug Testing, 24 February 2011, reflects the applicant tested positive for COC 1396 (cocaine) during an Inspection Random (IR) urinalysis testing conducted on 15 February 2011.

(2) Field Grade Record of Proceedings under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice, 7 March 2011, for wrongfully using cocaine (between 12 and 15 February 2011). The punishment consisted of a reduction to E-1 (suspended), forfeiture of \$733 pay per month for two months (suspended), and extra duty and restriction for 45 days.

i. **Lost Time / Mode of Return:** None

j. **Behavioral Health Condition(s):**

(1) **Applicant provided:** VA Rating Decision, 14 March 2013, reflects the VA granted the applicant 70 percent evaluation rating for PTSD.

(2) **AMHRR Listed:** Report of Mental Status Evaluation, 22 September 2010, reflects the applicant was psychiatrically cleared for any administrative actions deemed appropriate by the command. The applicant was diagnosed with adjustment disorder with mixed emotional features. The applicant was mentally responsible, had a clear-thinking process, and had the mental capacity to understand and participate in the proceedings. The applicant was screened for PTSD and mTBI neither was evident during the evaluation.

5. **APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:** Application for the Review of Discharge; VA Rating Decision; self-authored statement; Army Review Board's Agency letter.

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The applicant is pursuing a bachelor's degree and remaining a productive member of society.

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), 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.

d. 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.

(2) Paragraph 3-7a states 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.

(3) Paragraph 3-7b states 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.

(4) 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. 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.

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 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: 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.

8. SUMMARY OF FACT(S): 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 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 available evidence reflects the applicant's commander notified the applicant of the commander's intent to discharge the applicant from the Army for wrongfully using cocaine between on or about 12 and 15 February 2011. The commander recommended a general (under honorable conditions) character of service.

c. The applicant contends self-medicating to manage both physical pain and the symptoms of PTSD, and the VA rated the applicant 70 percent disability for PTSD. The applicant provided a VA rating decision document reflecting the applicant was granted 70 percent evaluation rating for PTSD supporting the applicant's contention. The record shows the applicant underwent a mental status evaluation (MSE) on 22 September 2010, which indicates the applicant was mentally responsible and was able to recognize right from wrong. The medical provider diagnosed the applicant with adjustment disorder with mixed emotional features. The separation authority considered the MSE.

d. The applicant contends the narrative reason for the discharge needs changed. The applicant was separated under the provisions of Chapter 14, paragraph 14-12c (2), AR 635-200 with a general (under honorable conditions) discharge. The narrative reason specified by Army Regulations for a discharge under this paragraph is "Misconduct (Drug Abuse)," and the separation code is "JKK." Army Regulation 635-8, Separation Processing and Documents, governs the preparation of the DD Form 214 and dictates the entry of the narrative reason for separation, entered in block 28 and separation code, entered in block 26 of the form, will be as listed in tables 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.

e. The applicant contends pursuing a bachelor's degree and remaining a productive member of society. 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 reviewed the applicant's DOD and VA health records, applicant's statement, and/or civilian provider documentation and found that the applicant has the following potentially-mitigating diagnoses/experiences: PTSD, Dysthymic Disorder, Adjustment Disorder.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board found that the applicant is service connected by the VA for PTSD which establishes that the PTSD existed during military service.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? The Board determined, based on the Board Medical Advisor's opine, that the applicant's behavioral health conditions mitigate the discharge. Given the nexus between PTSD and using substances for self-medication, the marijuana use that led to the separation is mitigated.

(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 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense..

b. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends self-medicating to manage both physical pain and the symptoms of PTSD, and the VA rated the applicant 70 percent disability for PTSD. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

(2) The applicant contends the narrative reason for the discharge should be changed. 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 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

(3) The applicant contends pursuing a bachelor's degree and remaining a productive member of society. 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 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense.

c. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense. 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. The Board determined the reentry code is proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

d. Rationale for Decision:

(1) The Board voted to change the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable because the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse offense. 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 not change, as the current code is consistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the regulation.

ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE

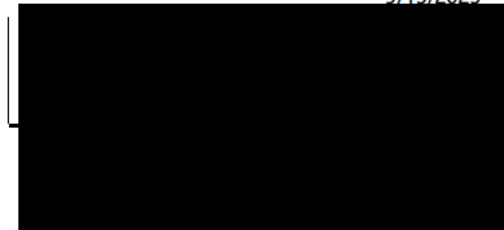
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10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:

- 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

Authenticating Official:

9/15/2025



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