

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED]

a. **Application Date:** 24 February 2022

b. **Date Received:** 28 February 2022

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 separation code change and a narrative reason change.

b. **Applicant Contention(s)/Issue(s):** The applicant requests relief contending, in effect, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues. The applicant manages chronic mental health symptoms through acupuncture, massage, and meditation. Professional and volunteer endeavors include travel and work in Costa Rica, service with a nonprofit organization in Guatemala to construct rural schools, and formation of an independent business. A clean criminal record remains intact, and random drug tests during employment and at the Veterans Affairs facility yielded negative results. Completion of an associate's degree occurred in 2017, licensure as an adjuster followed in 2018, and plans exist to pursue a bachelor's degree. The applicant contends the wrongdoing reflects profound shame and embarrassment. The applicant contends the discharge constitutes inequitable treatment since a single unrecalable drug use episode resulting from alcohol consumption prompted excessively punitive measures despite direct linkage between misconduct and efforts to cope with combat-related PTSD symptoms. Current military policies afford heightened understanding for servicemembers suffering from PTSD through enhanced screening tools and recognition of the nexus between mental health issues and substance abuse. The applicant's official records document no prior misconduct before deployment to Iraq and include awards for exemplary service, including the Good Conduct Award honoring three years of distinguished performance. Records also document unsuccessful efforts to secure PTSD treatment. The applicant requests a medical discharge.

c. **Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 25 November 2025, and by a 3-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's PTSD outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade to the characterization of service to Honorable and directed the issue of a new DD Form 214 changing the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), and the separation code to JKN. The Board determined the RE Code was proper and equitable and voted not to change it. 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:** 17 August 2007

c. **Separation Facts:**

(1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate: 27 June 2007

(2) Basis for Separation: The unit commander notified the applicant, under AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c, Commission of a Serious Offense, of the following reasons: The applicant received a Field Grade Article 15 on 1 May 2007, for the wrongful use of cocaine.

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

(4) Legal Consultation Date: 6 June 2007

(5) Administrative Separation Board: NA

(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization: On 24 July 2007, the separation authority approved the applicant's separation under AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c, for committing a serious offense. / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. Date / Period of Enlistment: 19 August 2003 / 4 years

b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score: 20 / High School Letter / 109

c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service: E-4 / 25Q1O, Multichannel Transmission Systems Operator-Maintainer / 3 years, 11 months, 29 days

d. Prior Service / Characterizations: None

e. Overseas Service / Combat Service: The applicant states deploying to Iraq for a year between 2004 and 2005 but there is no evidence in the record or IPERMS. There is an AAM for Combat duty in Iraq.

f. Awards and Decorations: AAM, NDSM, GWOTSM, ASR

g. Performance Ratings: NA

h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:

(1) Electronic Copy of Specimen Custody Document – Drug Testing, 16 April 2007, indicates the applicant tested positive for cocaine 124 (COC) during an Inspection Random (IR) urinalysis testing conducted on 10 April 2007.

(2) FG Record of Proceedings under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice, 12 May 2007, indicates the applicant was found to have wrongfully used cocaine between 4 and 10 April 2007. The imposed punishment included a reduction to E-2, forfeiture of \$729 pay per month for two months, along with 45 days of extra duty and restriction.

(3) Developmental Counseling Forms document instances of the applicant for wrongful use of a controlled substance.

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:

(a) Report of Mental Status Evaluation (MSE), 26 April 2007, reflects the applicant was cleared for any administrative actions deemed appropriate by the command. The applicant could understand and participate in administrative proceedings; could appreciate the difference between right and wrong; and met medical retention requirements. The applicant had been screened for PTSD and mTBI. The conditions were either not present or did not meet AR 40-501 criteria for a medical evaluation board. The command was advised to consider the influence of these conditions. The evaluation included a diagnosis: Adjustment disorder, disturbance of emotions and conduct, Alcohol dependence.

(b) Report of Medical History, 2 May 2007, the examining medical physician noted in the comments section: Depression.

(c) Progress notes, printed on 30 August 2021, reflect a diagnosis of Axis I: Dysthymic disorder; Chronic Adjustment disorder; R/O PTSD Chronic.

(d) Department of Veterans Affairs Problem List, 22 February 2022, reflect a diagnosis of Chronic post-traumatic stress disorder; Anxiety, Depressive disorder NOS and Insomnia.

(2) AMHRR Listed: MSE and Report of Medical History as described in previous paragraph 4j(1).

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: Application for the Review of Discharge; self-authored letter; separation file; medical records and three peer reviewed articles.

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The applicant found employment, completed an associate degree and sought treatment for mental health.

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), 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 waiverable and non-waiverable 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 waiverable. Eligibility: Ineligible unless a waiver is granted.
- 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 (Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations), 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.

(a) Paragraph 3-5c, provides the reasons for separation, including the specific circumstances that form the basis for the separation, will be considered on the issue of characterization. As a general matter, characterization will be based upon a pattern of behavior other than an isolated incident. There are circumstances, however, in which the conduct or performance of duty reflected by a single incident provides the basis for characterization.

(b) 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.

(c) 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.

(d) Paragraph 3-9 states a separation will be described as entry-level with service uncharacterized if processing is initiated while a Soldier is in entry-level status.

(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) Paragraph 14-2c, prescribes Commanders will not take action prescribed in this chapter instead of disciplinary action solely to spare an individual who may have committed serious misconduct from the harsher penalties that may be imposed under the UCMJ.

(b) Paragraph 14-3, prescribes 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.

(c) 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 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, 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 an upgrade to honorable, a separation code change 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 was notified of the intent to discharge them from the U.S. Army for the wrongful use of cocaine.

c. The applicant contends the Army should change the narrative reason and SPD code for the discharge. Based on the applicant's AMHRR, someone in the discharge process erroneously recorded "Misconduct (Drug Abuse)" as the Narrative Reason for Separation on the applicant's DD Form 214, block 28. The discharge packet confirms the separation authority approved the discharge under AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12c. Army regulations specify that Soldiers discharged under these provisions should receive "Commission of a Serious offense" as the Narrative Reason for Separation. The SPD code specified by Army Regulations for a discharge under Chapter 14, paragraph 14-12c is "JKQ."

d. The applicant contends suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues. The applicant contends the discharge should have been based on medical reasons. The applicant provided a Report of Mental Status Evaluation (MSE), 26 April 2007,

reflecting Adjustment disorder, disturbance of emotions and conduct, Alcohol dependence. A Report of Medical History, 2 May 2007, the examining medical physician noted in the comments section: Depression. Progress notes, printed on 30 August 2021, reflecting a diagnosis of Axis I: Dysthymic disorder; Chronic Adjustment disorder; R/O PTSD Chronic. Also, a Department of Veterans Affairs Problem List, 22 February 2022, reflecting a diagnosis of Chronic post-traumatic stress disorder; Anxiety, Depressive disorder NOS and Insomnia. The AMHRR includes a MSE and Report of Medical History as described in previous paragraph 4j(1). The separation authority considered all medical documents. The requested change to the DD Form 214 to reflect a medical reason falls outside this board's purview. The applicant may submit a request to the Army Board for Correction of Military Records (ABCMR) using the enclosed DD Form 149 or obtain the form through a Veterans' Service Organization.

e. The applicant contends the event leading to discharge from the Army was an isolated incident. Army Regulation 635-200, paragraph 3-5, state certain circumstances allow a single act of conduct or duty performance to serve as the basis for service characterization.

f. The applicant contends good service, including a combat tour. The Board evaluated the applicant's service accomplishments and overall quality of service in accordance with DODI 1332.28.

g. The applicant contends obtaining employment completed an associate degree and sought treatment for mental health. The Army Discharge Review Board has the authority to consider post-service factors when reviewing discharge recharacterization requests. However, no law or regulation permits upgrading an unfavorable discharge solely due to time passed or good conduct in civilian life. The Board evaluates each case individually to determine whether post-service achievements indicate previous in-service misconduct was an anomaly rather than a reflection of the applicant'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: PTSD, various Adjustment Disorders subsumed by PTSD.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found the applicant is 100 percent Service Connected (SC) for PTSD.

(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 BH conditions that mitigates their misconduct as outlined in the BoS. They are 100 percent SC for PTSD and were diagnosed in-service with various Adjustment Disorders which are subsumed by PTSD. Given the nexus between PTSD and the use of substances to self-medicate, the applicant's misconduct characterized by the wrongful use of cocaine is mitigated by the SC BH condition and upgrade based on medical mitigation is supported.

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 PTSD outweighed the Drug Abuse offense.

b. Prior Decisions Cited: None

c. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues and the event leading to discharge from the Army was an isolated incident. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that it was valid due to the applicant's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighing the applicant's Drug offense. Therefore, a discharge upgrade is warranted.

(2) The applicant contends good service, including a combat tour. The Board recognizes and appreciates the applicant's willingness to serve and considered this contention during board proceedings along with the totality of the applicant's service record.

(3) The applicant contends obtaining employment completed an associate degree and sought treatment for mental health. 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.

d. The Board determined: The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's PTSD outweighed the applicant's illegal substance abuse. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade to the characterization of service to Honorable and directed the issue of a new DD Form 214 changing the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), and the separation code to JKN. The Board determined the RE Code was proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

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 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder outweighed the applicant's misconduct of cocaine abuse. 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 current code is consistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the regulation.

ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE**AR20220005682****10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:**

- a. Issue a New DD-214 / Separation Order: 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: No Change

Authenticating Official:

12/3/2025

**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