

**ARMY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD CASE REPORT AND DIRECTIVE**  
**AR20220006360**

**1. Applicant's Name:** [REDACTED]

- a. Application Date:** 10 March 2022
- b. Date Received:** 28 March 2022
- 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 and a change of the narrative reason for separation and separation code.

**(2)** The applicant seeks relief contending during their combat deployment to Afghanistan as an infantryman they witnessed and experienced physical and mental trauma, due to the pace of combat and training, they were not treated while in service. Once they returned stateside, the combination of undiagnosed/untreated physical pain, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety caused them to self-medicate with alcohol and drugs as a way to escape the physical and mental pain there were in. This eventually caught up to them during a urinalysis which was positive and resulted in their discharge.

**(3)** The first few years post discharge, due to the lack of treatment, they continued with drug and alcohol abuse to self-medicate. They hit rock bottom and had to change. They received help from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and have improved their life. They are proud of their combat deployment in service to the country and they would like for their discharge to be upgraded to honorable to reflect their service and sacrifice to their country and how they have turned their life around.

**(4) Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 13 August 2025, and by a 5-0 vote. The Board approved the applicant's request after determining that the separation was both procedurally improper and substantively inequitable. In reaching this conclusion, the Board considered the applicant's length of service, combat experience, and overall performance. As a result, the Board voted to grant relief by upgrading the characterization of service to Honorable and revising the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), with an associated separation code of JKN. The Board further concluded that the existing reentry code was appropriate and equitable, and therefore elected not to modify it.

*Please see section 9 of this document for more detail regarding the Board 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:** 7 September 2011
- c. Separation Facts:**

**(1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** 31 August 2011

**(2) Basis for Separation:** on or about 10 August 2010, negligently fell asleep while on guard duty and between on or about 1 June 2011 and 6 June 2011, wrongfully used cocaine.

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

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

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

**(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 1 September 2011

**4. SERVICE DETAILS:**

**a. Date / Period of Enlistment:** 4 February 2009 / 3 years, 16 weeks

**b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 19 / HS Graduate / 96

**c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-3 / 11B1O, Infantryman / 2 years, 7 months, 4 days

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

**e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** SWA / Afghanistan (12 May 2010 – 9 April 2011)

**f. Awards and Decorations:** ACM-CS, PH, VUA, NDSM, GWTSM, ASR, OSR, NATOMDL, CIB, Driver and Mechanic Badge w/Driver-Wheeled vehicle clasp

**g. Performance Ratings:** NA

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

**(1)** A DA Form 2627 (Record of Proceedings under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)) dated 2 September 2010 reflects the applicant received nonjudicial punishment, in that they, knew of their duties, at or near Forward Operating Base Wilson, Afghanistan, on or about 10 August 2010, were derelict in the performance of those duties in that they negligently fell asleep during guard duty, in violation of Article 92 (Failure to Obey Order, Regulation), UCMJ. Their punishment consisted of a reduction in rank/grade from private first class/E-3 to private two/E-2, forfeiture of \$378.00 pay for one month and extra duty for 14 days. The applicant elected not to appeal.

**(2)** A DA Form 2627 (Record of Proceedings under Article 15, UCMJ) dated 18 July 2011 reflects the applicant received nonjudicial punishment in that they, did, at or near Fort Campbell, KY, between on or about 1 June 2011 and 6 June 2011, wrongfully used cocaine, in violation of Article 112a, UCMJ. Their punishment consisted of a reduction in rank/grade private two/E-2 to private/E-1, forfeiture of \$822.00 pay for 2 months, and extra duty and restriction for 45 days. The applicant elected not to appeal.

**(3)** A DA Form 3822 (Report of Mental Status Evaluation) dated 26 July 2011, reflects the applicant has no Axis I (Psychiatric Conditions) diagnosis and screened negative for PTSD and mild TBI. The behavioral health provider stated a Mental Status Examination was

completed and was within normal limits. There was no past psychiatric history noted. The applicant is psychiatrically cleared for paragraph 14-12c consideration.

**(4)** A DD Form 2808 (Report of Medical Evaluation) dated 16 August 2011 reflects the examining physician marked "Normal" for all items examined, except for item 37 (Identifying Body Marks, Scars, Tattoos); the applicant is qualified for service with no physical profile; and lists no diagnoses.

**(5)** A memorandum, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), subject: Separation under Army Regulation 635-200, Paragraph 14-12c(2), Misconduct-Abuse of Illegal Drugs, dated 31 August 2011, reflects the applicant received notification from their company commander of initiating actions to separate them for Misconduct-Abuse of Illegal Drugs. The reasons for the proposed action is described above in paragraph 3c(2). The company commander recommended the applicant receive a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service. On the same day, the applicant acknowledged receipt of the notice and of the rights available to them.

**(6)** In the applicant's memorandum, subject: Separation under Army Regulation 635-200, Paragraph 14-12c(2), Misconduct – Abuse of Illegal Drugs, undated, reflects the applicant completed their Election of Rights, acknowledging that they have been afforded the opportunity to consult with appointed military counsel. They voluntarily declined the opportunity. They acknowledged that they may expect to encounter substantial prejudice in civilian life if a General (Under Honorable Conditions) discharge is issued to them. They elected not to submit statements in their own behalf.

**(7)** A memorandum, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), subject: Commander's Report – Proposed Separation under Army Regulation 635-200, Paragraph 14-12c(2), Misconduct – Abuse of Illegal Drugs, dated 1 September 2011, reflects the applicant's company commander recommends the applicant be separated from the U.S. Army prior to expiration of their term of service. The company commander states they do not consider it feasible or appropriate to accomplish other disposition as rehabilitative attempts are not practical and will not produce a quality Soldier for continued service in the U.S. Army.

**(8)** A memorandum, Headquarters, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), subject: Separation under Army Regulation 635-200, Paragraph 14-12c(2), Misconduct – Abuse of Illegal Drugs, dated 31 August 2011, reflects the applicant's battalion commander recommends the applicant be separated from the U.S. Army prior to expiration of their term of service. The commander recommends the applicant's service be characterized as General (Under Honorable Conditions).

**(9)** An Administrative Separation Recommendations document dated 31 August 2011 through 1 September 2011 reflects the applicant's chain of command recommendation to separate them with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) discharge.

- the company first sergeant states the applicant used illegal substance and has been brief several times that it is not only illegal but also immoral, applicant knew better, I cannot trust the applicant anymore after this incident, separate immediately
- the company commander states the applicant was a warrior during the deployment, their actions violate standards and values we cherish, I recommend separate as soon as possible

- the battalion command sergeant major states the applicant is a drain on the unit and other Soldiers, separate as soon as possible
  - the battalion commander states actions are not conducive to military service, recommend separating immediately
    - the brigade command sergeant major stated they concur with entire chain of command

**(10)** A memorandum, Headquarters, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), subject: Separation under Army Regulation 635-200, Paragraph 14-12c(2), Misconduct – Abuse of Illegal Drugs, dated 1 September 2011, reflects the separation authority reviewed the separation packet of the applicant and after careful consideration of all matters, directed they be separated from the U.S. Army prior to the expiration of their current term of service. The separation authority directed the applicant's service be characterized as General (Under Honorable Conditions).

**(11)** A DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) reflects the applicant was discharged on 7 September 2011, with 2 years, 7 months, and 4 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) – 21 July 2011
- item 18 (Remarks) – 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)

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

**j. Behavioral Health Condition(s):** None

**(1) Applicant provided:** VA Rating Decisions reflecting an evaluation for PTSD as 50-percent disabling and TBI as 10-percent disabling.

**(2) AMHRR Listed:** None

**5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:**

- DD Form 293 (Application for the Review of Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States)
- Excerpts of document of their Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR)
- VA Decision Letters and Rating Decisions
- Multiple Department of Defense (DoD) Policy Guidance Memoranda
- excerpt Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1553 (Review of Discharge or Dismissal)
- District Court – Stipulation and Agreement of Settlement
- two 3rd Party Statements

**6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** None submitted with the application.

**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 PTSD, 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 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) effective 17 December 2009, 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. The regulation provided the authority and general provisions governing the separation of Soldiers before expiration of term of service or fulfillment of active duty obligation to meet the needs of the Army and its Soldiers.

**(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 waivable and nonwaivable 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 waivable. Eligibility: Ineligible unless a waiver is granted.

**(3) 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 600-85 (Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)) governs the program and identifies Army policy on alcohol and other drug abuse, and responsibilities. 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 and the standards of performance, discipline, and readiness necessary to accomplish the Army's mission. 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.

**h.** Manual for Courts-Martial, United States (2008 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 Article 112a (Wrongful Use, Possession, etc., of Controlled Substances).

**i.** Title 38, U.S. Code, Sections 1110 and 1131, permits the VA to award compensation for a medical condition which was incurred in or aggravated by active military service. The VA, however, is not required by law to determine medical unfitness for further military service. The VA, in accordance with its own policies and regulations, awards compensation solely on the basis that a medical condition exists and that said medical condition reduces or impairs the social or industrial adaptability of the individual concerned. Consequently, due to the two concepts involved, an individual's medical condition, although not considered medically unfitting for military service at the time of processing for separation, discharge, or retirement, may be sufficient to qualify the individual for VA benefits based on an evaluation by the agency.

**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 reflects the applicant received nonjudicial punishment for wrongful use of cocaine and was involuntarily discharged from the U.S. Army. Their DD Form 214 provides they were discharged with a character of service of general (under honorable conditions) for misconduct (drug abuse). They did not complete their first full term of service of 3 years and 16 weeks.
- 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; to include abuse of illegal drugs; 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.** The applicant's AMHRR does not contain evidence of diagnoses of PTSD, TBI or other mental health issues. The applicant provided a VA Rating Decision reflecting an evaluation for PTSD as 50-percent disabling and TBI as 10-percent disabling.
- e.** 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/or civilian provider documentation and found that the applicant has the following potentially mitigating diagnoses/experiences: PTSD (70%SC), Residuals of TBI (0%SC), Anxiety DO NOS. [Note-Post-Concussional]
  - (2)** Did the condition exist, or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found Anxiety DO was diagnosed during military VA service connection for PTSD and mild TBI establishes nexus with military service.
  - (3)** Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor determined that the medical condition or experience is the basis of separation with Medical condition or experience: Army: None. VA: Anxiety DO NOS, PTSD (70%SC), 0% SC for Residuals of TBI, Post-Concussional Syndrome. 4j-VA rating: 50% for PTSD and 10% for TBI.

**(4)** Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that the applicant has two mitigating BH conditions, PTSD and TBI. [Note-diagnosis of MDD was made post-service and is not service connected.] As there is an association between PTSD, TBI, self-medication with illicit drugs and abnormal/poor sleep, there is a nexus between these conditions, his wrongful use of cocaine and his incident of falling asleep while on guard duty.

**b.** Prior Decisions Cited: **(N/A)**

**c.** Response to Contention(s):

**(1)** The applicant contends during their combat deployment to Afghanistan as an infantryman they witnessed and experienced physical and mental trauma, due to the pace of combat and training, there were not treated while in service. Upon review, the Board found this contention credible and voted to upgrade the applicant's characterization of service. The diagnosis of Anxiety Disorder during military service was a key factor in this determination. Furthermore, the Department of Veterans Affairs' service connection for PTSD and mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) establishes a clear nexus between the applicant's mental health conditions and their military service.

**(2)** The applicant contends once they returned stateside, the combination of undiagnosed/untreated physical pain, TBI, PTSD, depression and anxiety caused them to self-medicate with alcohol and drugs as a way to escape the physical and mental pain there were in. This eventually caught up to them during a urinalysis which was positive and resulted in their discharge. The Board reviewed this claim and concluded that the applicant's records, along with supporting documentation, provide sufficient evidence that the applicant lacked adequate access to behavioral health resources during their service.

**(3)** The applicant contends the first few years post discharge, due to the lack of treatment, they continued with drug and alcohol abuse to self-medicate. They hit rock bottom and had to change. They received help from the VA and have improved their life. Based on the weight of the evidence, the Board determined that the applicant's discharge status was unjust and warranted an upgrade to more accurately reflect the nature of their service.

**(4)** The applicant contends they are proud of their combat deployment in service to the country and they would like for their discharge to be upgraded to honorable to reflect their service and sacrifice to their country and how they have turned their life around. The Board voted to upgrade the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable, noting that the misconduct—specifically drug and alcohol abuse—was documented in medical records and used as the basis for separation. However, due to the absence of the complete separation packet, the full context surrounding the discharge remains unknown. As a result, the previous characterization was deemed inappropriate.

**d.** The Board found sufficient evidence of in-service mitigating factors; including the applicant's length of service, combat experience, and overall performance, and concurred with the medical advising official's assessment that the applicant's diagnoses of PTSD and TBI mitigated the misconduct that led to separation, specifically drug abuse and falling asleep on duty. Given the established link between PTSD, TBI, self-medication with illicit substances, and sleep disturbances, the Board recognized a clear nexus between these conditions and the applicant's wrongful use of cocaine as well as the incident of sleeping while on guard duty. Based on the preponderance of evidence, the Board concluded that the applicant's discharge characterization was inequitable and warranted an upgrade. Final Vote 5-0. HD/JKN/NC (RE4).

**e. Rationale for Decision:**

**(1)** The Board voted to upgrade the applicant's characterization of service. The Board carefully weighed the applicant's overall length and quality of service including combat duty and the circumstances surrounding the discharge. Importantly, the Department of Veterans Affairs granted service connection for PTSD and mild traumatic brain injury (TBI), which led the Board to determine that the original narrative reason for separation is now inequitable. Although the discharge was procedurally and substantively proper at the time, and the applicant was afforded full administrative due process, the new evidence warrants a change in characterization.

**(2)** The Board voted to change the applicant's reason for discharge or accompanying SPD code to JKN.

**(3)** The RE code will not change, as the current code is consistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the regulation.

**10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:**

- a. Issue a New DD-214: Yes**
- b. Change Characterization to: Honorable Discharge**
- c. Change Reason / SPD code to: JKN**
- d. Change RE Code to: No Change**
- e. Change Authority to: AR 635-200**

**Authenticating Official:**

8/25/2025

