

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED]**a. Application Date:** 7 December 2021**b. Date Received:** 14 March 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 under other than honorable conditions. The applicant requests an upgrade to general (under honorable conditions).

b. Applicant Contention(s)/Issue(s): The applicant requests relief contending, in effect, going absent without leave (AWOL) because the applicant was suffering from undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which began when the applicant deployed to Iraq during their initial enlistment. During this period, the applicant had no disciplinary issues and received an award for good conduct. After the deployment to Iraq, everything slowly started to fall apart, ruining the applicant's chances for a long Army career. During the second enlistment period, the applicant continued to suffer from PTSD, which led to the applicant going AWOL. The applicant further details the contentions in a self-authored statement submitted with the application.

c. Board Type and Decision: In a records review conducted on 26 January 2026, and by a 3-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable because the applicant's diagnosed Adjustment Disorder and combat-related PTSD outweighed the misconduct related to the AWOL incidents. 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 **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 (AWOL) / AR 635-200 / JKD / RE-3 / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

b. Date of Discharge: 17 November 2021**c. Separation Facts:**

(1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate: 27 July 2021

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

(a) On or about 27 April 2021, without authority, the applicant was absent from their organization to wit: C Company, 1-21 Infantry Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, located at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and did remain so absent until on or about 30 April 2021.

(b) On or about 22 May 2021, without authority, the applicant was absent from their place of duty at which you were required to be, to wit: Sky Harbor International Airport located at Phoenix, Arizona, on government funded travel from Fort Sill, Oklahoma to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and did remain so absent until on or about 15 June 2021.

(3) **Recommended Characterization:** Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

(4) **Legal Consultation Date:** 30 July 2021

(5) **Administrative Separation Board:**

(a) On 30 July 2021, the applicant unconditionally waived consideration of the case before an administrative separation board. On the same date, the applicant conditionally waived consideration of the case before an administrative separation board, contingent upon receiving a characterization of service no less favorable than general (under honorable conditions) discharge.

(b) On 5 and 11 August 2021, respectively, the immediate commander and intermediate commander recommended disapproval of the conditional waiver.

(c) On 7 September 2021, the applicant forwarded a second request, conditionally waiving consideration of the case before an administrative separation board, contingent upon receiving a characterization of service no less favorable than general (under honorable conditions) discharge.

(d) On 1 October 2021, the separation authority disapproved the request for a conditional waiver and referred the case to administrative separation board.

(e) On 5 October 2021, the applicant unconditionally waived consideration of the case before an administrative separation board.

(f) On 21 October 2021, the separation authority approved the unconditional waiver.

(6) **Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** 21 October 2021 / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. **Date / Period of Reenlistment Under Review:** 28 February 2020 / 5 years

b. **Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 23 / GED / 106

c. **Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 11B1O, Infantryman / 4 years, 5 months, 1 day

d. **Prior Service / Characterizations:** RA, 22 May 2017 – 27 February 2020 / HD

e. **Overseas Service / Combat Service:** Hawaii, SWA / Iraq (8 May 2018 – 1 February 2019)

f. **Awards and Decorations:** AAM, AGCM, NDSM, GWOTSM, ASR, OSR, IRCM-CS

g. **Performance Ratings:** NA

h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:

(1) Four Personnel Action forms indicate the applicant's duty status changed as follows:

- From Dropped From Rolls (DFR) to Returned to Military Control (RMC), effective 30 April 2021
- From Present for Duty (PDY) to Absent Without Leave (AWOL), effective 23 May 2021
- From AWOL to DFR, effective 24 May 2021
- From DFR to PDY / RMC, effective 15 June 2021

(2) Two Reports of Return of Absentee, 30 April 2021 and 9 June 2021, reflect the applicant:

- on 27 April 2021 went AWOL and was apprehended by civil authorities on 30 April 2021
- on 23 May 2021 went AWOL and surrendered on 15 June 2021

(3) Field Grade Record of Proceedings under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice, 15 July 2021, indicates the applicant was absent from their organization on two occasions, between 27 and 30 April 2021 and between 22 May 2021 and 15 June 2021. The imposed punishment included a reduction to E-1, forfeiture of \$892 pay per month for two months, along with 45 days of extra duty and restriction, and an oral reprimand. The applicant provided a personal statement in rebuttal to the Article 15, indicating the applicant went AWOL because of the toxic leadership, which include hazing.

i. Lost Time / Mode of Return: 26 days:

- AWOL, 27 April 2021 – 29 April 2021 / Apprehended by Civil Authorities
- AWOL, 23 May 2021 – 14 June 2021 / Surrendered to Military Authorities

j. Behavioral Health Condition(s): The following documents have been provided to the ARBA Medical Advisor, if applicable. See **"Board Discussion and Determination"** for Medical Advisor Details.

(1) **Applicant provided:** None

(2) **AMHRR Listed:** None

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: Application for the Review of Discharge; self-authored statement.

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

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 waiverable and nonwaiverable 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.

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 3-7a 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.

(b) 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.

(c) Paragraph 3-7c states an under other-than-honorable-conditions discharge is an administrative separation from the Service under conditions other than honorable and it may be issued for misconduct, fraudulent entry, security reasons, or in lieu of trial by court martial based on certain circumstances or patterns of behavior or acts or omissions that constitute a significant departure from the conduct expected of Soldiers in the Army.

(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 14-3 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.

(b) Paragraph 14-12c(1) allows for an absentee returned to military control from a status of absent without leave or desertion to be separated for commission of a serious offense

(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 "JKD" as the appropriate code to assign enlisted Soldiers who are discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14, paragraph 12c(1), misconduct (AWOL).

8. SUMMARY OF FACT(S): Standard of Review. 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 general (under honorable conditions). The applicant's Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR), the issues, and documents submitted with the application were carefully reviewed.

b. The applicant's immediate commander initiated separation proceedings because the applicant went AWOL on two occasions for a total of 26 days. The commander chain of command recommended a under other than honorable conditions. The applicant submitted two conditional waivers contingent upon receiving a general (under honorable conditions) character of service; however, the separation authority disapproved the conditional waiver and referred the case to an administrative separation board. The applicant submitted an unconditional waiver, which was approved by the separation authority. The separation authority approved the recommendation for separation with an under other than honorable conditions character of service.

c. The applicant contends:

(1) The applicant was suffering from mental health issues caused by undiagnosed combat-related PTSD, which affected behavior and led to the discharge. The applicant did not submit evidence other than their statement to support the contention the discharge resulted from any medical condition. The applicant's AMHRR includes no documentation of a PTSD diagnosis. The ARBA sent a letter to the applicant at the address in the application on

13 October 2022, requesting documentation to support a PTSD diagnosis but received no response from the applicant.

(2) The applicant experienced toxic leadership. The applicant's AMHRR reflects the applicant mentioned a toxic leadership in rebuttal to Article 15 proceedings. The AMHRR does not indicate or provide evidence of arbitrary or capricious actions by the command.

(3) The applicant provided 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.

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: Adjustment Disorder and PTSD.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found that the applicant was diagnosed in service with an Adjustment Disorder and is service connected by the VA for combat-related PTSD which establishes that the PTSD existed during military service.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that there is evidence of BH conditions that mitigate the basis of separation. The applicant was diagnosed in service with an Adjustment Disorder and is 70% service connected by the VA for combat-related PTSD. Given the nexus between PTSD and avoidance, the AWOLs that led to the separation are mitigated.

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **Yes.** After applying liberal consideration to the evidence, including the Board Medical Advisor's opinion, the Board determined that the applicant's diagnosed Adjustment Disorder and combat-related PTSD outweighed the misconduct related to the AWOL incidents.

b. Prior Decisions Cited: None

c. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends suffering from mental health issues caused by undiagnosed combat-related PTSD, which affected behavior and led to the discharge. The Board considered this contention and noted that the documented in-service Adjustment Disorder and VA-rated combat-related PTSD provided a medically supported explanation for the applicant's AWOL behavior, warranting mitigation.

(2) The applicant contends experiencing toxic leadership. The Board considered this contention and found no evidence supporting the applicant's claims of toxic leadership; however, relief was still granted based on the medical mitigation related to PTSD.

(3) The applicant contends good service, including a combat tour. The Board considered this contention and found that the applicant's length and quality of service, including a combat deployment, supported upgrading the characterization when weighed alongside the medical mitigation.

d. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on medical and behavioral health mitigation for the basis of separation. Additionally, the applicant's length and quality of service, along with combat experience, warranted relief in the form of an upgrade to Honorable with a change to JKN, with no change to the RE code.

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 upgrade the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable because, after applying liberal consideration to all the evidence before it, including the confirmed diagnoses of Adjustment Disorder and combat-related PTSD, the applicant's behavioral health conditions were found to mitigate the AWOL incidents that formed the basis for separation.

(3) The Board voted to change the applicant's reason for discharge Minor Misconduct with accompanying SPD code of JKN, under the same pretexts.

(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

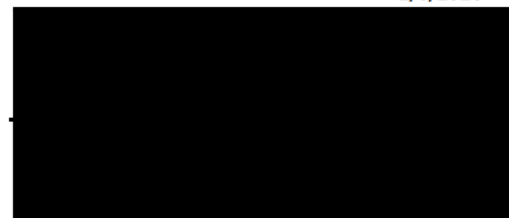
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10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:

- 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: AR 635-200, paragraph 14- 12a

Authenticating Official:

2/6/2026



Legend:

AWOL – Absent Without Leave
AMHRR – Army Military Human
Resource Record
BCD – Bad Conduct Discharge
BH – Behavioral Health
CG – Company Grade Article 15
CID – Criminal Investigation
Division
ELS – Entry Level Status
FG – Field Grade Article 15
FTR – Failure to Report

GD – General Discharge
HS – High School
HD – Honorable Discharge
IADT – Initial Active-Duty
Training
MP – Military Police
MST – Military Sexual Trauma
N/A – Not applicable
NCO – Noncommissioned Officer
NIF – Not in File
NOS – Not Otherwise Specified

OAD – Ordered to Active Duty
OBH (I) – Other Behavioral
Health (Issues)
OMPF – Official Military
Personnel File
PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress
Disorder
RE – Re-entry
SCM – Summary Court Martial
SPCM – Special Court Martial

SPD – Separation Program
Designator
TBI – Traumatic Brain Injury
UNC – Uncharacterized
Discharge
UOTHHC – Under Other Than
Honorable Conditions
VA – Department of Veterans
Affairs