

- 1. Applicant's Name:** [REDACTED]
  - a. Application Date:** 20 October 2023
  - b. Date Received:** 30 October 2023
  - 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 under other than honorable conditions. The applicant requests an upgrade of their U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) characterization of service.

(2) The applicant seeks relief stating their separation from military service was due to financial hardship that was partly caused by their USAR unit, issues with leadership, and a lapse in personal judgment. For those reasons, they believe their discharge to be unjust. They wish to use the technical skills they have acquired in college and the private sector to serve their country again. They have passed the test and qualified medically but are unable to serve with their current discharge characterization. They have included both a personal statement and a statement regarding their separation that elaborates further.
  - b. Board Type and Decision:** In a records review conducted on 13 September 2024, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined that the characterization of service was too harsh based on the applicant's length and quality of service, and as a result it is inequitable. Accordingly, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade to the characterization of service to Honorable.
- 3. DISCHARGE DETAILS:**
  - a. Reason / Authority / Codes / Characterization:** NIF / Army Regulation 135-178 / Under Other Than Honorable Conditions
  - b. Date of Discharge:** 25 July 2015
  - c. Separation Facts:** The applicant's Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR) is void of their case files for approved separation.
- 4. SERVICE DETAILS:**
  - a. Date / Period of Reenlistment:** NIF (USAR)
  - b. Age at Reenlistment / Education / GT Score:** NIF / HS Graduate / NIF
  - c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-4 / 63B10, Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic / 9 years, 2 months, 29 days (USAR)
  - d. Prior Service / Characterizations:** None
  - e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** None

**f. Awards and Decorations:** NDSM, ASR, ARCAM

**g. Performance Ratings:** None

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

**(1)** A DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) reflects the applicant was released from active duty training on 14 September 2007, after completing their initial active duty training and assigned to their USAR unit. Item 24 (Character of Service) is shown as Uncharacterized.

**(2)** The partial picture of a USAR discharge order reflects the applicant was discharged from the USAR with an effective date of 25 July 2015, with the type of discharge as Under Other Than Honorable Conditions.

**(3)** A DA Form 5016 (Chronological Statement of Retirement Points) dated 15 January 2024, reflects –

- from 27 April 2014 – 26 April 2015, the applicant has 4 Inactive Duty Points (equivalent to 2 days of unit drills)
- from 27 April 2015 – 25 July 2015, the applicant has 0 Inactive Duty Points (equivalent to 0 days of unit drills)

**i. Lost Time / Mode of Return:** NIF

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

**5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:**

- DD Form 149 (Application for Correction of Military Record under the Provisions of Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1552), with personal statement
- partial picture of Discharge Order
- three 3rd Party Statements
- Bachelor of Science Diploma
- Email, U.S. Army Human Resources Command

**6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** None submitted with 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, 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 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 (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 [Kurtz 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) 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, DoD Directive 1332.41, and DoD Instruction 1332.28.

**d.** Army Regulation 135-178 (Enlisted Administrative Separations) set policies, standards, and procedures to ensure the readiness and competency of the U.S. Army while providing for the orderly administrative separation of ARNG of the United States and USAR enlisted Soldiers for a variety of reasons.

**(1)** An honorable characterization 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. When a Soldier is discharged before expiration of the service obligation for a reason for which an honorable characterization is discretionary, the following considerations apply, to include –

**(a)** An honorable characterization may be awarded when disqualifying entries in the Soldier's military record are outweighed by subsequent honorable and faithful service over a greater period of time during the current term of service.

**(b)** It is a pattern of behavior and not an isolated instance which should be considered the governing factor in determining the character of service.

**(c)** Unless otherwise ineligible, a Soldier may receive an honorable characterization of service if he or she has, during his or her current enlistment, or any extension thereof, received a personal decoration.

**(2)** A General discharge is if a Soldier's service has been honest and faithful, it is appropriate to characterize that service as under honorable conditions. Characterization of service as general (under honorable conditions) is warranted when significant negative aspect of the Soldier's conduct or performance of duty outweighs positive aspects of the Soldier's military record.

**(3)** A Under Other Than Honorable Conditions Discharge, service may, but is not required to be characterized as under other than honorable conditions only when discharge is for misconduct, fraudulent entry, homosexual conduct, unsatisfactory participation, or security reasons. The Adjutant General will direct reduction in grade to private/E-1 when the Soldier is discharged under other than honorable conditions.

**e.** Army Regulation 135-180 (Retirement for Non-Regular Service) dated 1 August 1987, implemented statutory authorities governing the granting of retired pay to Soldiers and former Reserve components Soldiers. Paragraph 2-10 (Computation of Service) stated one point for each authorized participation in drills or periods of instruction which conform to the requirements prescribed by the Secretary of the Army.

**f.** Army Regulation 635-200 (Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations) prescribes policies and standards to ensure the readiness and competency of the force while providing for the orderly administrative separation of Soldiers for a variety of reasons. It prescribes the policies, procedures, authority for separation of Soldiers, and the general provisions governing the separation of Soldiers before Expiration Term of Service or fulfillment of active duty obligation to meet the needs of the Army and its Soldiers. Chapter 15 (Secretarial Plenary Authority) 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.

**g.** Army Regulation 635-8 (Separation Processing and Documents) prescribes the transition processing function of the military personnel system. It provides principles of support, standards of service, policies, tasks, rules, and steps governing required actions in the field to support processing personnel for separation and preparation of separation documents.

a. Paragraph 5-1 (When to Prepare the DD Form 214) states that a DD Form 214 will be prepared for Reserve Component Soldiers completing active duty that results in the award of a Military Occupational Specialty, even when the active duty period was less than 90 days (for example, completion of the advanced individual training component of ARNGUS Alternate Training Program or USAR Split Training Program).

b. Paragraph 5-6x(1) states: when a Reserve Component Soldier successfully completes initial active duty training the character of service is Honorable unless directed otherwise by the separation approval authority."

**8. SUMMARY OF FACT(S):**

a. The Army Discharge Review Board considers applications for upgrade as instructed by DOD Instruction 1332.28.

b. A review of the available evidence provides an administrative irregularity in the proper retention of records, specifically the AMHRR is void of the case files for approved separation from the USAR and their discharge order from the USAR. Notwithstanding the absence of records, their partial discharge order from the USAR provides the applicant was discharged with a character of service of under other than honorable conditions under the provisions of Army Regulation 135-178. They completed 9 years, 2 months, and 22 days of USAR service; however, their reenlistment documents are not in evidence for review to determine their reenlistment obligation.

c. 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? **No.** The Board's Medical Advisor, reviewed DoD and VA medical records and found the applicant had no mitigating behavioral health diagnoses. The applicant provided no documents or testimony of an in-service condition or experience, that, when applying liberal consideration, could have excused or mitigated a discharge.

(2) Did the condition exist, or experience occur during military service? **N/A**

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **N/A**

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **N/A**

b. Response to Contention(s):

(1) The applicant contends their separation from military service was due to financial hardship that was partly caused by their USAR unit, issues with leadership, and a lapse in personal judgment. For those reasons, they believe their discharge to be unjust. The Board

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considered this contention during proceedings, but ultimately did not address the contention due to an upgrade being granted based on the applicant's length and quality of service.

(2) The applicant contends they wish to use the technical skills they have acquired in college and the private sector to serve their country again. They have passed the test and qualified medically but are unable to serve with their current discharge characterization. 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 length and quality of service.

(3) The applicant contends they have included both a personal statement and a statement regarding their separation that elaborates further. 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 length and quality of service.

c. The Board determined that the characterization of service was too harsh based on the applicant's length and quality of service, and as a result it is inequitable. Accordingly, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade to the characterization of service to Honorable.

d. Rationale for Decision:

(1) The Board voted to grant relief by upgrading the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable. There were no behavioral health diagnoses which mitigated the misconduct to warrant relief, it was found that the discharge has served its purpose. Thus, making the current reason for discharge improper.

(2) As there were no Reasons/SPD Codes/RE-codes listed on the applicant's discharge paperwork, due to being in the Army Reserve, no upgrade actions are required for these items.

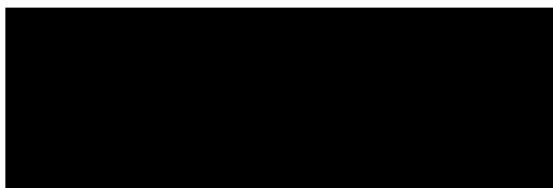
(3) As there is no RE-code listed on the applicant's discharge paperwork, due to being in the Army Reserve, no upgrade actions are required for this item.

**10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:**

- a. Issue a New Separation Order:** Yes
- b. Change Characterization to:** Honorable
- c. Change Authority to:** AR 135-178

**Authenticating Official:**

7/9/2025



**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

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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