

**1. Applicant's Name:** [REDACTED]**a. Application Date:** 30 October 2023**b. Date Received:** 13 November 2023**c. Counsel:** [REDACTED]**2. REQUEST, ISSUES, BOARD TYPE, AND DECISION:**

**a. Applicant's Requests and Issues:** The current characterization of service for the period under review is General (Under Honorable Conditions). The applicant requests an upgrade to Honorable, a change to their narrative reason, and both the separation and reentry codes changed.

**b. Board Type and Decision:** In a telephonic personal appearance conducted on 19 August 2024, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Military Sexual Trauma outweighing the applicant's AWOL offense. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed to the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), with a corresponding separation code of JKN. The Board determined the reentry code is proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

*Please see Section 10 of this document for more detail regarding the Board's decision.*

*(Board member names available upon request)*

**3. DISCHARGE DETAILS:**

**a. Reason / Authority / Codes / Characterization:** Misconduct (Serious Offense) / AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12C / JKQ / RE-4 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

**b. Date of Discharge:** 23 March 2023

**c. Separation Facts:**

(1) **Date of Notification of Intent to Separate:** NIF

(2) **Basis for Separation:** NIF

(3) **Recommended Characterization:** NIF

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

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

(6) **Separation Decision Date / Characterization:** NIF

**4. SERVICE DETAILS:**

**a. Date / Period of Enlistment:** 21 March 2022 / 3 years, 27 weeks

**b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score:** 19 / High School Diploma / 102

**c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service:** E-2 (PV2) / None / 3 months, 19 days

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

**e. Overseas Service / Combat Service:** None

**f. Awards and Decorations:** None

**g. Performance Ratings:** NA

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

(1) On 21 March 2022, the applicant enlisted in the Regular Army for 3 years and 27 weeks as a PFC (E-3). The Enlisted Record Brief provides on 11 October 2022, they were flagged, Suspend Favorable Personnel Actions (FLAG), for a commander's investigation.

(2) Effective 5 December 2022, the applicant was demoted to PV2 (E-2) under the provisions of AR 600-8-19, for an unspecified misconduct. As a result, on 10 March 2023, their permanent change of station (PCS) orders to Fort Moore, GA, were revoked.

(3) Notwithstanding the missing separation package, on 20 March 2023, their separation orders were issued. A DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) reflects the applicant was discharged accordingly, on 23 March 2023, with 1 year, 1 month, and 9 days of total service. The applicant was unable to electronically sign and has not completed their first full term of service.

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

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

(1) **Applicant provided:** None

(2) **AMHRR Listed:** None

**5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE:** Application for the Review of Discharge

**6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** None submitted with this 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.** Multiple Department of Defense Policy Guidance Memoranda published between 2014 and 2018. The documents are commonly referred to by the signatory authorities' last names (2014 Secretary of Defense Guidance [Hagel memo], 2016 Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness [Carson memo], 2017 Official Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness [Kurta memo], and 2018 Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness [Wilkie memo].

**(1)** Individually and collectively, these documents provide further clarification to the Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records when considering requests by Veterans for modification of their discharge due to mental health conditions, including PTSD; TBI; sexual assault; or sexual harassment. Liberal consideration will be given to Veterans petitioning for discharge relief when the application for relief is based in whole or in part on matters relating to mental health conditions, including PTSD; TBI; sexual assault; or sexual harassment. Special consideration will be given to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) determinations that document a mental health condition, including PTSD; TBI; or sexual assault/harassment potentially contributed to the circumstances resulting in a less than honorable discharge characterization. Special consideration will also be given in cases where a civilian provider confers diagnoses of a mental health condition, including PTSD; TBI; or sexual assault/harassment if the case records contain narratives supporting symptomatology at the time of service or when any other evidence which may reasonably indicate that a mental health condition, including PTSD; TBI; or sexual assault/harassment existed at the time of discharge might have mitigated the misconduct that caused a discharge of lesser characterization.

**(2)** Conditions documented in the service record that can reasonably be determined to have existed at the time of discharge will be considered to have existed at the time of discharge. In cases in which a mental health condition, including PTSD; TBI; or sexual assault/harassment may be reasonably determined to have existed at the time of discharge, those conditions will be considered potential mitigating factors in the misconduct that caused the characterization of service in question. All Boards will exercise caution in weighing evidence of mitigation in cases in which serious misconduct precipitated a discharge with a less than Honorable characterization of service. Potentially mitigating evidence of the existence of undiagnosed combat related PTSD, PTSD-related conditions due to TBI or sexual assault/harassment as causative factors in the misconduct resulting in discharge will be carefully weighed against the severity of the misconduct. PTSD is not a likely cause of premeditated misconduct. Caution shall be exercised in weighing evidence of mitigation in all cases of misconduct by carefully considering the likely causal relationship of symptoms to the misconduct.

**c.** Army Regulation 15-180 (Army Discharge Review Board), dated 25 September 2019, sets forth the policies and procedures under which the Army Discharge Review Board is authorized to review the character, reason, and authority of any

Servicemember discharged from active military service within 15 years of the Servicemember's date of discharge. Additionally, it prescribes actions and composition of the Army Discharge Review Board under Public Law 95-126; Section 1553, Title 10 United States Code; and Department of Defense Directive 1332.41 and Instruction 1332.28.

**d.** Army Regulation 635-200 (Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations), 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. Readiness is promoted by maintaining high standards of conduct and performance.

**(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)** 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.

**(4)** Chapter 14 establishes policy and prescribes procedures for separating members for misconduct. Specific categories include minor disciplinary infractions, a pattern of misconduct, and commission of a serious offense, to include abuse of illegal drugs, convictions by civil authorities and desertion or being absent without leave. Action will be taken to separate a member for misconduct when it is clearly established that rehabilitation is impractical or unlikely to succeed. 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. A Soldier is subject to action per this section for commission of a serious military or civilian offense, if the specific circumstances of the offense warrant separation and a punitive discharge is, or would be, authorized for the same or a closely related offense under the Manual for Courts-Martial.

**(5)** 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.

**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 "JKQ" as the appropriate code to assign enlisted Soldiers who are

discharged under the provisions of Army Regulation 635-200, Chapter 14-12C, Misconduct (Serious Offense).

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:

(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 waiverable. Eligibility: Ineligible unless a waiver is granted.

(3) RE-4 Applies to: Person separated from last period of service with a nonwaiverable disqualification. This includes anyone with a DA imposed bar to reenlistment in effect at time of separation or separated for any reason (except length of service retirement) with 18 or more years active Federal service. Eligibility: Ineligible for enlistment.

**8. SUMMARY OF FACT(S):** The Army Discharge Review Board considers applications for upgrade as instructed by Department of Defense Instruction 1332.28.

a. The applicant requests an upgrade to Honorable, a change to their narrative reason, and both the separation and reentry codes changed. A review of the records provides there was administrative irregularity in the proper retention of the official military records, specifically, the separation package, and their medical/mental separation examinations. Based on this, the specific facts and circumstances surrounding their separation, are unknown.

b. The available evidence provides the applicant enlisted in the RA as a PFC and was in IADT when they were flagged for commander's investigation, which resulted in a reduction to PV2 for the unspecified misconduct. They served on active duty for 1 year and 3 days and was separated under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c, Misconduct (Serious Offense), and received a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service.

(1) The record is void a mental status evaluation and/or medical examination prior to their separation.

(2) They served 1 year and 3 days of their 3 year-27 week contractual obligation.

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 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. 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. DOCUMENTS / TESTIMONY PRESENTED DURING PERSONAL APPEARANCE:** In addition to the evidence in the record, the Board carefully considered the additional document(s) and testimony presented by the applicant at the personal appearance hearing.

a. **The applicant submitted the following additional document(s):** N/A

b. **The applicant presented the following additional contention(s):** Applicant, character witness(es), and counsel provided oral arguments in support of the contentions they provided in their written submissions and in support of their documentary evidence

c. **Counsel / Witness(es) / Observer(s):** [REDACTED]

**10. 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: The applicant reported pre-enlistment diagnosis of Tourette's. Post-service, the applicant reported MST to a family care provider.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The applicant reported pre-enlistment diagnosis of Tourette's. Post-service, the applicant reported MST to a family care provider.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that given the nexus between trauma, in this case MST, and avoidance, the basis for separation is mitigated.

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **Yes.** After applying liberal consideration to the evidence, including the Board Medical Advisor opine, the Board determined that the applicant's Military Sexual Trauma outweighed the applicant's AWOL offense.

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

(1) The applicant contends being sexually assaulted while in the military, which affected the applicant's conduct. The Board liberally considered this contention and determined that the applicant's Military Sexual Trauma outweighed the applicant's AWOL offense. Therefore, a discharge upgrade is warranted.

(2) The applicant contends not receiving support from the chain of command after coming forward regarding the sexual assault. 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 Military Sexual Trauma outweighing the applicant's AWOL offense.

(3) The applicant contends good service. 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 Military Sexual Trauma outweighing the applicant's AWOL offense.

c. The Board determined the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's Military Sexual Trauma outweighing the applicant's AWOL offense. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable and changed to the separation authority to AR 635-200, paragraph 14-12a, the narrative reason for separation to Misconduct (Minor Infractions), with a corresponding separation code of JKN. The Board determined the reentry code is proper and equitable and voted not to change it.

**d. Rationale for Decision:**

(1) The Board voted to change the applicant's characterization of service to Honorable because the applicant's Military Sexual Trauma outweighed the applicant's AWOL offense. Thus, the prior characterization is no longer appropriate.

(2) The Board voted to change the reason for discharge to Secretarial Authority under the same pretexts, thus the reason for discharge is no longer appropriate. The SPD code associated with the new reason for discharge is JFF.

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

**11. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:**

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

**Authenticating Official:**

11/19/2024



**Legend:**

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

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

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

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