

1. Applicant's Name: [REDACTED]**a. Application Date:** 27 September 2023**b. Date Received:** 21 December 2023**c. Counsel:** None**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 and their name changed.

b. The applicant seeks relief contending, they have been diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is a Purple Heart recipient, and has received their Combat Action Badge for combat in Afghanistan. Additionally, they are requesting to change their name on their DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty).

c. Board Type and Decision: In a records review conducted on 15 October 2025, and by a 5-0 vote, the Board determined that the discharge is inequitable based on the applicant's PTSD and Adjustment Disorder, which outweighed the offenses related to marijuana use. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable. The Board determined both the narrative reason for separation and the RE code were proper and equitable, and therefore no changes were warranted.

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 (Drug Abuse) / AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2) / JKK / RE-4 / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

b. Date of Discharge: 22 April 2010

c. Separation Facts:

(1) Date of Notification of Intent to Separate: 15 February 2010

(2) Basis for Separation: On or between 25 October – 23 November 2009, they wrongfully used marijuana, while deployed in Afghanistan.

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

(4) Legal Consultation Date: On 15 February 2010, the applicant waived their right to counsel.

(5) Administrative Separation Board: NA

(6) Separation Decision Date / Characterization: Unreadable / General (Under Honorable Conditions)

4. SERVICE DETAILS:

a. Date / Period of Enlistment: 20 August 2007 / 3 years, 18 weeks

b. Age at Enlistment / Education / GT Score: 18 / High School Diploma

c. Highest Grade Achieved / MOS / Total Service: E-3 (PFC) / 19D10 B9 Calvary Scout / 2 years, 8 months, 3 days

d. Prior Service / Characterizations: None

e. Overseas Service / Combat Service: SWA / Afghanistan (4 April 2010 – 21 May 2009) / 10 months, 14 days

f. Awards and Decorations:

- Afghanistan Campaign Medal w/Campaign Star
- Purple Heart
- National Defense Service Medal
- Global War on Terrorism Service Ribbon
- NATO Medal
- Combat Action Badge

g. Performance Ratings: NA

h. Disciplinary Action(s) / Evidentiary Record:

(1) On 20 August 2007, they enlisted in the Regular Army for 3 years and 18 weeks as a private second class, PV2 (E-2). The Enlisted Record Brief provides on 1 November 2009, the applicant promoted to private first class, PFC (E-3) and served in Afghanistan for over 10 months from May 2009 – April 2010. On 11 and 14 February 2010, they were flagged, Suspend Favorable Personnel Actions (FLAG), for adverse action (AA) and field-initiated involuntary separation (BA).

(2) On 11 December 2009, although not in the record, the commander's report notes: the applicant received nonjudicial punishment (NJP) in violation of Article 112a, UCMJ (wrongful use of schedule I controlled substance) for wrongful use of marijuana. Punishment imposed a reduction to private, PVT (E-1); forfeitures of \$673.00 pay per month for two months; and extra duty and restriction for 45 days; 20 days of the extra duty and restriction were suspended, to be automatically remitted if not vacated before 10 June 20[10].

(3) On 14 February 2010, they received NJP in violation of Article 112a, UCMJ (wrongful use of schedule I controlled substance) for having wrongfully used marijuana on or between 24 October – 23 November 2009, while deployed in Afghanistan. Their punishment imposed a reduction to PVT (E-1); forfeitures of \$724.00 pay per month for two months; and extra duty for 45 days. The applicant did not appeal.

(4) On 15 February 2010, the company commander notified the applicant of their intent to initiate separation proceedings under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2), Misconduct (Drug Abuse), for having wrongfully used marijuana on or between 24 October – 23 November 2009, while deployed in Afghanistan. They recommended a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service, in which the battalion commander concurred

with, and recommended to waive further rehabilitation efforts. The applicant acknowledged receipt of their separation notice, elected to waive their right to consult with legal, and declined to submit a statement on their behalf.

(5) On 13 and 27-28 February 2010, they completed their separation examinations at the FOB (Forward Operating Base) Bostick Aid Station, which did not provide any diagnoses or recommendations, and the applicant was medically qualified and psychiatrically cleared for separation.

(6) Although the date is illegible, the separation authority approved the discharge, with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service. On 13 April 2010, their separation orders were issued. A DD Form 214 reflects that the applicant was discharged accordingly on 22 April 2010, with 2 years, 8 months, and 16 days of total service. The applicant was not available to sign and had not completed their first term of service.

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

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

(1) **Applicant provided:** A Review PTSD Disability Benefits Questionnaire, dated 20 December 2021, indicated the applicant was a Purple Heart recipient and earned a Combat Action Badge. They were diagnosed with PTSD and Antisocial Personality Disorder on 14 September 2016 and the most recent rating decision, dated 14 October 2016 awarded them 100% rating for PTSD (TBI with 0% rating).

(2) **AMHRR Listed:** None

5. APPLICANT-PROVIDED EVIDENCE: Application for the Review of Discharge; Review PTSD Disability Benefits Questionnaire

6. POST SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: They are under the care of the VA.

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) Chapter 3 provides 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.

(a) 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.

(b) 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 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.

(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.

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 14-12c (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 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.

g. Army Regulation 600-85 (Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)) provided a comprehensive alcohol and drug abuse prevention and control policies, procedures, and responsibilities for Soldiers for ASAP services. 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. All Soldiers who are identified as drug abusers, without exception, will be referred to the ASAP counseling center for screening; be considered for disciplinary action under the UCMJ, as appropriate; and be processed for administrative separation in accordance with Army Regulation 635-200.

(1) 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. ASAP participation is mandatory for all Soldiers who are command referred. Failure to attend a mandatory counseling session may constitute a violation of Article 86 (Absence Without Leave) of the UCMJ.

(2) Alcohol and/or other drug abusers, and in some cases dependent alcohol users, may be enrolled in the ASAP when such enrollment is clinically recommended. Soldiers who fail to participate adequately in, or to respond successfully to, rehabilitation will be processed for administrative separation and not be provided another opportunity for rehabilitation except under the most extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the Clinical Director in consultation with the unit commander.

(3) Alcohol and/or other drug abusers, and in some cases dependent alcohol users, may be enrolled in the ASAP when such enrollment is clinically recommended. Soldiers who fail to participate adequately in, or to respond successfully to, rehabilitation will be processed for administrative separation and not be provided another opportunity for rehabilitation except under the most extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the Clinical Director in consultation with the unit commander.

(4) All Soldiers who are identified as drug abusers, without exception, will be referred to the ASAP counseling center for screening; be considered for disciplinary action under the UCMJ, as appropriate; and be processed for administrative separation in accordance with Army Regulation 635-200.

h. Manual for Courts-Martial (2008 Edition), United States, states 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 orders and discipline in the Armed Forces. Article 112a (wrongful use of a schedule I controlled substance) states in the subparagraph, the maximum punishment consists of a bad conduct discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for five years.

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): 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 and their name changed. The applicant's Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR), the issues, and documents submitted with the application were carefully reviewed.

(1) The available evidence provides the applicant enlisted in the RA, promoted to PFC, deployed to Afghanistan for over 10 months, and served 2 years, 5 months, and 21 days prior to misconduct which led to their discharge. While stationed in Afghanistan, the applicant received NJP for wrongful use of marijuana and consequently, was reduced to PVT, adjudged forfeitures, and was placed on restriction. Separation proceedings were initiated under the provisions of AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2), Misconduct (Drug Abuse), with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service. The applicant waived their right to legal and declined to submit a statement on their behalf.

(2) The applicant completed separation examinations and was medically qualified and psychiatrically cleared for separation. They served 2 years, 8 months, and 3 days of their 3 year-18 week contractual obligation. They have since been awarded 100% service-connected rating for PTSD.

b. 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.

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? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor, a voting member, reviewed the applicant's DOD and VA health records, applicant's statement, and/or civilian provider documentation and found

that the applicant has the following potentially mitigating diagnoses/experiences: PTSD and Adjustment Disorder.

(2) Did the condition exist or experience occur during military service? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor found in-service diagnoses of Cannabis Abuse, Alcohol Abuse, and Adjustment Disorder, and the applicant has a 100% VA service connection for PTSD.

(3) Does the condition or experience actually excuse or mitigate the discharge? **Yes.** The Board's Medical Advisor applied liberal consideration and opined that the applicant has a BH condition that potentially mitigates their misconduct as outlined in the Basis for Separation (BoS). The applicant was diagnosed in service with Adjustment Disorder and Cannabis Abuse and is 100% service connected by the VA for PTSD. The applicant's marijuana use preceded their deployment, and documentation showed a period of abstinence while engaged in ASAP. They experienced a deployment related trauma on 7 Oct 2009, and their second positive marijuana test occurred after this experience and while deployed to Afghanistan. Substance abuse can be a common self-medicating strategy for dealing with difficult emotions associated with trauma exposure, and substance use can be a natural sequela to conditions such as PTSD. Given the applicant's childhood history of trauma exposure, marijuana use as a coping mechanism, deployment-related trauma, and PTSD diagnosis, there is a nexus between their mental health condition and misconduct related to marijuana use.

(4) Does the condition or experience outweigh the discharge? **Yes.** Based on liberally considering all the evidence before the Board, the ADRB determined that the condition outweighed the basis of separation. The applicant's PTSD and Adjustment Disorder, along with their substance abuse as a coping mechanism for trauma, were mitigating factors. The Board found a connection between their mental health condition and marijuana use, particularly following a traumatic incident on 7 October 2009, which warranted an upgrade to the applicant's characterization of service.

b. Prior Decisions Cited: None

c. Response to Contention(s): The applicant seeks relief, contending, they have been diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), are a Purple Heart recipient, and have received their Combat Action Badge for combat in Afghanistan. Additionally, they are requesting to change their name on their DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty). The Board considered this contention. The applicant's diagnosis of PTSD, receipt of the Purple Heart, and Combat Action Badge for service in Afghanistan are significant factors that contributed to the Board's decision to grant an upgrade to Honorable. However, the request to change the name on the DD Form 214 does not fall within the purview of the ADRB.

d. The Board determined, after careful consideration, that there was sufficient evidence of in-service mitigating factors (Length, Combat) and concurred with the conclusion of the medical advising official that the applicant's PTSD does mitigate the applicant's basis for separation. Substance abuse can be a common self-medicating strategy for dealing with difficult emotions associated with trauma exposure, and substance use can be a natural sequela to conditions such as PTSD. Given the applicant's childhood history of trauma exposure, marijuana use as a coping mechanism, deployment-related trauma, and PTSD diagnosis, there is a nexus between his mental health condition and his misconduct related to marijuana use. Based on a preponderance of evidence, the Board determined that the character of service the applicant received upon separation was inequitable and warranted an upgrade. Therefore, the Board voted to grant relief in the form of an upgrade of the characterization of service to Honorable. The Board determined both the narrative reason for separation and the RE code were proper and equitable, and therefore, no changes were warranted.

e. Rationale for Decision:

(1) 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 VA-confirmed diagnosis of PTSD and Adjustment Disorder, the applicant's behavioral health conditions were found to mitigate the offenses related to marijuana use.

(2) The Board vote not to change the applicant's reason for discharge or accompanying SPD code, which is Misconduct (Drug Abuse) under AR 635-200, Chapter 14-12c (2), as the basis for the discharge was determined to be both proper and equitable given the applicant's drug use.

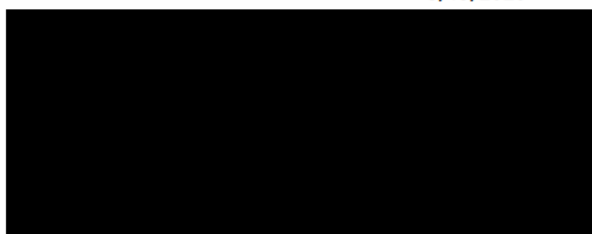
(3) The RE code will not change, as the current code is consistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the regulation.

10. BOARD ACTION DIRECTED:

- a. Issue a New DD-214 / Separation Order: Yes**
- b. Change Characterization to: Honorable**
- c. Change Reason / SPD code to: No Change**
- d. Change RE Code to: No Change**
- e. Change Authority to: No Change**

Authenticating Official:

3/19/2026



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