

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS**

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Application for Correction of  
the Coast Guard Record of:

**BCMR Docket No. 2025-036**

[REDACTED]  
(formerly [REDACTED]  
SN (Former)

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**FINAL DECISION**

This proceeding was conducted by the Board for Correction of Military Records of the Coast Guard (hereinafter “Board” or “BCMR”) under the provisions of 10 U.S.C. § 1552 and 14 U.S.C. § 2507. The Chair docketed the application on January 23, 2025, and assigned the case to a staff attorney to prepare the decision pursuant to 33 C.F.R. § 52.61(c).

This final decision, dated July 31, 2025, is approved and signed by the three duly appointed members who were designated to serve as the Board in this case.

**APPLICANT’S REQUEST AND ALLEGATIONS**

The applicant, a former Coast Guard Seaman (SN/E-3), has requested that his DD Form 214 (Certificate of Discharge or Release from Active Duty) (hereinafter “DD 214”) and other discharge documents be corrected to reflect his current legal name.

In support of his application, the applicant submitted copies of his current driver’s license showing the first name in the case caption as his current name, an entry of judgment for a legal name change issued by a state court on September 18, 2024 which changed his name from the second name in the caption to the first name in the caption, and a copy of his DD 214 reflecting applicant’s discharge from active duty on July 25, 2015 in the second name in the case caption above.

The applicant requests that the name on his DD 214 be corrected to reflect his current legal name, and alleges that “[t]he name on my current DD214 is different than my legal name, therefore my service may be questioned.”

## **SUMMARY OF THE RECORD**

The applicant enlisted in the Coast Guard and began active-duty service on July 26, 2011. He served for four years and was honorably discharged on July 25, 2015. His name in Coast Guard records is consistently the one appearing second in the case caption.

The applicant had his name legally changed by order of a state court judge on September 18, 2024. That order and his current driver's license indicate that his legal name is the one appearing first in the caption.

## **VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD**

In memoranda dated May 6, 2025, a Judge Advocate (JA) of the Coast Guard recommended that the Board deny the applicant's requested relief in accordance with the recommendation of the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center (PSC). The Coast Guard argued that the applicant's legal name at the time of discharge was reflected accurately on his DD 214 and that a DD 214 is a "snapshot of a veteran's information at the time of separation from the service," so no error or injustice had been committed. The Coast Guard also stated that military records are generally not changed retroactively to reflect name changes after a member has departed the service.

## **APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO COAST GUARD'S VIEWS**

On May 12, 2025, the Chair sent the applicant a copy of the Coast Guard's views and invited him to respond within thirty days. As of the date of this Board hearing, no response has been received from the applicant.

## **APPLICABLE LAW AND POLICY**

Under the Coast Guard's current instruction for preparation and distribution of DD 214s, COMDTINST M1900.4E (April 2016), the "DD Form 214 provides an accurate and complete summation of active military personnel service. It is the authoritative source of personnel information for administrative purposes, and for making enlistment or reenlistment eligibility decisions." Previous versions of the instruction – M1900.4, M1900.4A, M1900.4B, M1900.4C, and M1900.4D – include the same or similar language.

Per the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center's related instruction, CGPSCINST 1900.1B (September 2018), "a DD-214 captures the current active duty period...."

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The Board makes the following findings and conclusions based on the applicant's

military record and submissions, the Coast Guard's submissions, and applicable law and policy:

1. The Board has jurisdiction concerning this matter pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1552. The applicant has exhausted available administrative remedies, as required by 33 C.F.R. § 52.13(b), because there is no other currently available forum or procedure provided by the Coast Guard for correcting the alleged error or injustice that the applicant has not already pursued. The application is timely, as it was filed within three years of the applicant's discovery of the alleged error or injustice, as required by 33 C.F.R. § 52.24(b).

2. When considering allegations of error and injustice, the Board begins its analysis by presuming that the disputed information in the applicant's military record is correct as it appears in the military record, and the applicant bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that the disputed information is erroneous or unjust.<sup>1</sup> Absent evidence to the contrary, the Board presumes that Coast Guard officials and other Government employees have carried out their duties "correctly, lawfully, and in good faith."<sup>2</sup>

3. The record shows that at the time of the applicant's enlistment, during service, and at discharge, the name listed second in the case caption was his legal name. There is no indication in the record that the applicant's current name was ever used before or during his Coast Guard service, which concluded with his honorable discharge in 2015. The applicant requested a legal name change in 2024 to reflect his current legal name, which appears as the first name in the case caption. This legal name change, occurring nine years after the conclusion of the applicant's military service, appears to be what prompted his application for relief.

4. Consistent with Coast Guard policy, the applicant's DD 214 was intended to capture data that was accurate at the time of the form's issuance. In similar cases, the Board has previously found that a DD 214 is "a record of a single period of enlistment, like a snapshot, and it is supposed to ... be accurate as of the date of discharge."<sup>3</sup> The Board acknowledges that this analysis does not apply universally, given that DD 214 corrections based on post-service events may be warranted in some limited circumstances (e.g., the addition of a newly-created medal or other award for which retroactive issuance is authorized). In this case, however, the reasoning underpinning the Board's prior decisions remains applicable. To state the analysis differently, the Board's authority extends only to the correction of records based on error or injustice.<sup>4</sup> When a DD 214 lists an applicant's

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<sup>1</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 52.24(b).

<sup>2</sup> *Arens v. United States*, 969 F.2d 1034, 1037 (Fed. Cir. 1992); *Sanders v. United States*, 594 F.2d 804, 813 (Ct. Cl. 1979).

<sup>3</sup> See BCMR Docket Nos. 2009-060, 2020-115, 2021-071, 2022-010, 2023-005.

<sup>4</sup> 10 U.S.C. § 1552(a)(1).

legal name at the time of separation accurately, and otherwise comports with applicable law and policy, the Board will generally not find an error.

5. This Board may also correct records upon a finding of injustice, even when no error exists. Injustice goes beyond mere inconvenience; it is the result of conduct that “shocks the sense of justice.”<sup>5</sup> In this case, the applicant asks for the record correction because “[t]he name on my current DD214 is different than my legal name, therefore my service may be questioned.” The applicant may experience some inconvenience when presenting his DD 214 to prove his veteran status, such as having to present additional documentation like the judgment entry that legally changed his name, a current photo identification, etc. This is not unlike any other applicant who experiences the relatively common occurrence of a name change following discharge from active duty. The applicant does not allege, and provides no evidence to support, that this inconvenience amounts to an injustice based on the specific facts of his situation.

6. To clarify our reasoning more generally, this Board frames its analysis of error and injustice around law and applicable Coast Guard issuances. The Board does not make service policy. We acknowledge that the DD 214 serves the important purpose of connecting veterans to the benefits their prior service entitles them to under law. Unlike other military service records, the DD 214 serves an “outward facing” purpose for veterans and non-DHS or DoD agencies. This may provide a strong policy justification to allow name changes on DD 214s for all or certain categories of veterans to facilitate their access to veteran’s benefits, employment rights, and other rights or protections. But it is not the BCMR’s role to create or implement such policy. We must ground our analysis of error on the specific facts of each case, controlling law, and applicable Coast Guard issuances. Without a finding of error, the burden is on the applicant to support a claim of injustice with substantial evidence that is specific and relevant to his or her request for relief.

7. The Board finds that the applicant’s DD 214 reflects what was his current, legal name at the time of his separation from the Coast Guard. The applicant does not allege or present evidence to support a finding that his DD 214 otherwise represents an injustice warranting relief. As a result, this application for correction of the DD 214 to reflect the applicant’s current legal name is denied.

**(ORDER AND SIGNATURES ON NEXT PAGE)**

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<sup>5</sup> See *Reale v. United States*, 208 Ct. Cl. 1010, 1011 (1976) (defining an injustice as “treatment by the military authorities that shocks the sense of justice, but is not technically illegal.”).

