

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

Application for Correction of
the Coast Guard Record of:

BCMR Docket No. 2024-206


SN (Former)

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 September 12, 2024, 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 August 13, 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”) be corrected to reflect his correct level of education. In particular, he appears to be asking that Block 30 of his DD 214 which shows his highest civilian education level as “High School 01 Year” to be corrected to reflect that he was a high school graduate.

In support of his application, the applicant submitted a copy of his state high school diploma, issued on July 14, 1970.

SUMMARY OF THE RECORD

The applicant prepared a Coast Guard Application for Enlistment on December 4, 1968, in which indicated he attended Fitch Junior High School from 1964-1967, but did not graduate.

The applicant enlisted in the Coast Guard and began active-duty service on January 27, 1969.

The applicant signed an Enlisted Classification Record, dated April 30, 1969, which indicated he had attended high school from September 1965 – January 1967, but did not indicate he received a high school diploma.

Applicant served for one year, two months and twenty days, and was honorably discharged on April 16, 1970.

The applicant submitted a State High School Diploma with a date of July 14, 1970.

VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD

In memoranda dated April 9, 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 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. They argued that because the applicant apparently received his high school diploma after his discharge from the Coast Guard, the DD 214 was therefore correct when issued and no correction was warranted.

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.¹ Absent evidence to the contrary, the Board presumes that Coast Guard officials and other employees have carried out their duties "correctly, lawfully, and in good faith."²

3. An application to the Board must be filed within three years after the applicant discovers the alleged error or injustice. The applicant received his discharge on April 16, 1970, and apparently received his state high school diploma on July 14, 1970. He did not make application to the Board until November 13, 2020. The applicant does not assert an alternate later date when the alleged error or injustice was discovered. As a result, this application is untimely.

4. The Board may excuse the untimeliness of an application if it is in the interest of justice to do so. In *Allen v. Card*, 799 F. Supp. 158 (D.D.C. 1992), the court stated that the Board should not deny an application for untimeliness without "analyz[ing] both the reasons for the delay and the potential merits of the claim based on a cursory review"⁴ to determine whether the interest of justice supports a waiver of the statute of limitations. The court noted that "the longer the delay has been and the weaker the reasons are for the delay, the more compelling the merits would need to be to justify a full review."⁵

5. The Board first turns to the reasons for delay. The applicant provides no explanation as to why it took him fifty years to discover this alleged error and request correction from this Board. Without any such explanation for such a lengthy delay, this

¹ 33 C.F.R. § 52.24(b).

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

factor militates against the applicant.

6. The Board next turns to the potential merits of the claim. The record is unclear as to exactly how much high school the applicant had completed prior to joining the Coast Guard. However, both his Enlistment Application and Enlisted Classification Record clearly show that he had not completed his high school education prior to his enlistment. The diploma he provided was dated three months after his discharge. While the record is insufficient to determine if the description of his civilian education as “High School 01 Year” is factually accurate, such a finding by the Board is unnecessary. The applicant only asks for his DD 214 to be corrected to show that he was a high school graduate, and the record is clear that he did not become a high school graduate until after his discharge.

7. 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.”³ 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.⁴ When a DD 214 reflects accurate information at the time of discharge and otherwise comports with applicable law and policy, the Board will generally not find an error.

8. This Board may also correct records upon finding injustice, even without error. Injustice goes beyond mere inconvenience; it is the result of conduct that “shocks the sense of justice.”⁵ The applicant does not allege, and provides no evidence to support, that this alleged error amounts to an injustice based on the specific facts of his situation.

9. The Board finds that the applicant’s DD 214 correctly reflects his civilian education level 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, it is not in the interest of justice to excuse the applicant’s untimeliness. His application is denied.

(ORDER AND SIGNATURES ON NEXT PAGE)

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

⁴ 10 U.S.C. § 1552(a)(1).

⁵ 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.”).

ORDER

The application of former [REDACTED] to correct his DD 214 to reflect his high school diploma is denied.

August 13, 2025

