



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF NAVAL RECORDS
701 S. COURTHOUSE ROAD, SUITE 1001
ARLINGTON, VA 22204-2490

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Docket No. 5718-23
Ref: Signature Date



Dear Petitioner:

This is in reference to your application for correction of your naval record pursuant to Section 1552 of Title 10, United States Code. After careful and conscientious consideration of relevant portions of your naval record and your application, the Board for Correction of Naval Records (Board) found the evidence submitted insufficient to establish the existence of probable material error or injustice. Consequently, your application has been denied.

Although you did not file your application in a timely manner, the statute of limitations was waived in accordance with the 25 August 2017 guidance from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (Kurta Memo). A three-member panel of the Board, sitting in executive session, considered your application on 12 February 2024. The names and votes of the panel members will be furnished upon request. Your allegations of error and injustice were reviewed in accordance with administrative regulations and procedures applicable to the proceedings of this Board. Documentary material considered by the Board consisted of your application together with all material submitted in support thereof, relevant portions of your service record, and applicable statutes, regulations, and policies, to include the Kurta Memo, the 3 September 2014 guidance from the Secretary of Defense regarding discharge upgrade requests by Veterans claiming post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)/mental health condition (MHC) (Hagel Memo), and the 25 July 2018 guidance from the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness regarding equity, injustice, or clemency determinations (Wilkie Memo). The Board also considered an advisory opinion (AO) from a qualified mental health professional. Although you were provided an opportunity to respond to the AO, you chose not to do so.

You enlisted in the United States Navy and commenced a period of service on 12 August 1981. On your enlistment application, you acknowledged a preservice arrest for unarmed robbery. On 12 May 1982, you received non-judicial punishment (NJP) for violation of Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) Article 92, for failure to obey an order by wrongfully possessing marijuana. You were formally counseled that continued misconduct could result in administrative or judicial processing. On 26 May 1983, you received your second NJP for violating UCMJ Article 86, for a one-day period of unauthorized absence (UA), and Article 134, for the wrongful use and possession of marijuana. You were again formally counseled that continued misconduct could result in administrative or judicial processing. You did not appeal either of these NJPs.

On 25 April 1984, you began another period of absence without leave from your unit, and you remained absent until you returned to military control on 17 July 1984. On 22 January 1985, you were found guilty at Special Court-Martial (SPCM) of violating Article 86, for the above 84-day period of UA, and Article 123, for seven specifications of uttering checks without sufficient funds. You were sentenced to 120 days of confinement, reduction in rank to E-1, and a Bad Conduct Discharge (BCD). You were subsequently placed on appellate leave while your case was reviewed by the Navy and Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals (NMCCA). The NMCCA found no error in law or fact and you were discharged from the Navy, on 16 September 1985, with a BCD and assigned an RE-4 reentry code.

The Board carefully considered all potentially mitigating and/or extenuating factors to determine whether the interests of justice warrant relief in your case in accordance with the Kurta, Hagel, and Wilkie Memos. These included, but were not limited to: (a) your desire to upgrade your characterization of service, (b) your contention that you were suffering from undiagnosed mental health symptoms during your time in service, (c) the impact that your mental health had on your conduct, and (d) your sustained sobriety. For purposes of clemency and equity consideration, the Board noted that you did not provide documentation related to your post-service accomplishments or character letters.

In your request for relief, you contend that you incurred mental health concerns during the last portion of your enlistment contract, and that although you asked for help from your chain of command, you did not receive any treatment or support. Specifically, you assert that you became “highly addicted” to cocaine during “the height of the crack epidemic.” As part of the Board review process, the BCNR Physician Advisor who is a licensed clinical psychologist (Ph.D.), reviewed your contentions and the available records and issued an AO dated 2 January 2024. The Ph.D. noted in pertinent part:

There is no evidence that the Petitioner was diagnosed with a mental health condition or suffered from substance abuse dependence while in service. He did not submit any medical evidence in support of his claim. His personal statement is not sufficiently detailed to establish clinical symptoms or provide a nexus with his misconduct. Additional records (e.g., post-service mental health records describing the Petitioner’s diagnosis, symptoms, and their specific link to his misconduct) would aid in rendering an alternate opinion.

The Ph.D. concluded, “it is my considered clinical opinion there is insufficient evidence of a mental health condition that may be attributed to military service. There is insufficient evidence that his misconduct could be attributed to a mental health condition.”

After thorough review, the Board concluded the potentially mitigating factors were insufficient to warrant relief. In accordance with the Kurta, Hagel, and Wilkie Memos, the Board gave liberal and special consideration to your record of service, and your contentions about undiagnosed mental health issues and the possible adverse impact on your service. Specifically, the Board felt that your misconduct, as evidenced by your SPCM conviction and NJPs, outweighed these mitigating factors. The Board considered the seriousness of your misconduct and the fact that it involved repeated drug offenses, an extended period of UA, and uttering worthless checks. Further, the Board also considered the likely negative impact your conduct

had on the good order and discipline of your command. The Board determined that illegal substance abuse is contrary to the Navy core values and policy, renders such Sailor unfit for duty, and poses an unnecessary risk to the safety of fellow shipmates. Additionally, unexpectedly absenting yourself from your command placed an undue burden on your chain of command and peers, and negatively affected mission accomplishment.

In making this determination, the Board concurred with the AO that there was insufficient evidence that you suffered from any type of mental health condition while on active duty, or that any such mental health condition was related to or mitigated the misconduct that formed the basis of your discharge. There was nothing in your official service records that indicated you sought mental health treatment, or that you raised such symptoms or concerns during your numerous disciplinary events. Further, you did not provide any post-service medical evidence of mental health treatment. As a result, the Board concluded that your misconduct was not due to mental health-related symptoms. The Board determined the record clearly reflected that your active duty misconduct was intentional and willful and demonstrated you were unfit for further service. The Board also determined that the evidence of record did not demonstrate that you were not mentally responsible for your conduct or that you should otherwise not be held accountable for your actions. The Board concluded that your conduct constituted a significant departure from that expected of a Sailor and continues to warrant a BCD as adjudged at SPCM. Therefore, even in light of the Kurta, Hagel, and Wilkie Memos and reviewing the record liberally and holistically, the Board did not find evidence of an error or injustice that warrants granting you the relief you requested or granting relief as a matter of clemency or equity. Accordingly, given the totality of the circumstances, the Board determined that your request does not merit relief.

You are entitled to have the Board reconsider its decision upon submission of new matters, which will require you to complete and submit a new DD Form 149. New matters are those not previously presented to or considered by the Board. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that a presumption of regularity attaches to all official records. Consequently, when applying for a correction of an official naval record, the burden is on the applicant to demonstrate the existence of probable material error or injustice.

Sincerely,

2/26/2024

