



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

Docket No: 11254-24
Ref: Signature Date

From: Chairman, Board for Correction of Naval Records
To: Secretary of the Navy

Subj: REVIEW OF NAVAL RECORD OF [REDACTED]
XXX XX [REDACTED] USMCR

Ref: (a) 10 U.S.C. § 1552
(b) MCO 1900.16, Separation and Retirement Manual (Short Title: MARCORSEPMAN), 15 February 2019
(c) USD (P&R) Memo, "Guidance to Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military / Naval Records Regarding Equity, Injustice, or Clemency Determinations," 25 July 2018

Encl: (1) DD Form 149
(2) SECDEF Memo, subj: Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of Defense Service Members, 24 August 2021
(3) ALNAV 062/21, subj: 2021-2022 Department of the Navy Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, dtg 302126Z AUG 21
(4) MARADMIN 462/21, subj: Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination of Marine Corps Active and Reserve Components, dtg 011400Z SEP 21
(5) MARADMIN 533/21, subj: Supplemental Guidance to Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination of Marine Corps Active and Reserve Components, dtg 061806Z OCT 21
(6) MARADMIN 612/21, subj: Supplemental Guidance (2) to Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination of Marine Corps Active and Reserve Components, dtg 222100Z OCT 21
(7) NAVMC 118(11) dated 4 December 2021
(8) [REDACTED], 1900 LEGO Memo, subj: Notification of Separation Proceedings (No Board Case), 5 January 2022
(9) NAVMC 118(11) dated 7 January 2022
(10) NAVMC 118(11) dated 7 January 2022
(11) CO, [REDACTED], 1900 [REDACTED] Memo, subj: Recommendation for Administrative Discharge of [Petitioner], 1 March 2022
(12) CO, [REDACTED] 1900 Memo, subj: Recommendation for Administrative Discharge of [Petitioner], 2 March 2022
(13) Command Legal [REDACTED], 1900 SJA/css Memo, subj: Recommendation for Administrative Discharge of [Petitioner], 18 March 2022
(14) CG, [REDACTED] 1900 Memo, subj: Recommendation for Administrative Discharge of [Petitioner], 25 March 2022
(15) SECDEF Memo, subj: Rescission of August 24, 2021 and November 30, 2021 Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Requirements for Members of the Armed

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Forces, 10 January 2023

- (16) MARADMIN 025/23, subj: Rescission of COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement, dtg 181130Z JAN 23
- (17) ALNAV 009/23, subj: Rescission of COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement for Members of the Armed Forces, dtg 201839Z JAN 23
- (18) MARADMIN 109/23, subj: Update to Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement of Marine Corps Active and Reserve Components, dtg 272000Z FEB 23
- (19) ASN (M&RA) Memo, subj: Correction of Naval Records for Former Members of the Department of the Navy Following Rescission of the August 24, 2021, and November 30, 2021, Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Requirements for Former Members of the Armed Forces, 6 Sep 23

1. Pursuant to the provisions of reference (a), Subject, hereinafter referred to as Petitioner, filed enclosure (1) with the Board for Correction of Naval Records, hereinafter referred to as the Board, requesting medical discharge and medical compensation, to include back pay.

2. The Board, consisting of [REDACTED] reviewed Petitioner's allegations of error and injustice on 13 February 2025, and pursuant to its regulations, determined the corrective action indicated below should be taken on the available evidence of record. Documentary material considered by the Board consisted of the enclosures, relevant portions of Petitioner's naval records, and applicable statutes, regulations, and policies.

3. Having reviewed all of the evidence of record pertaining to Petitioner's allegations of error or injustice, the Board found as follows:

a. Before applying to this Board, Petitioner exhausted all administrative remedies available under existing law and regulations within the Department of the Navy (DON).

b. By memorandum dated 24 August 2021, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) mandated that all members of the Armed Forces under Department of Defense authority be fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus with a vaccine receiving full licensure from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).¹ Accordingly, he directed the Service Secretaries to immediately begin full vaccination of all Service members of their respective services. See enclosure (2).

c. On 30 August 2021, the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) implemented the SECDEF's directive referenced in paragraph 3b above in ALNAV 062/21, ordering all DON active duty Service Members who were not already vaccinated or exempted to be fully vaccinated within 90 days, and all Reserve Component Service Members to be fully vaccinated within 120 days with an FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccination. In issuing this directive, SECNAV made the following statement:

¹ A Service member was considered to be fully vaccinated two weeks after completing the second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine, or two weeks after receiving a single dose of a one-dose vaccine.

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The order to obtain full vaccination is a lawful order, and failure to comply is punishable as a violation of a lawful order under Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice, and may result in punitive or adverse administrative action or both. The Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps have authority to exercise the full range of administrative and disciplinary actions to hold non-exempt Service Members appropriately accountable. This may include, but is not limited to, removal of qualification for advancement, promotions, reenlistment, or continuation, consistent with existing regulations, or otherwise considering vaccination status in personnel actions as appropriate.

See enclosure (3).

d. On 1 September 2021, the Marine Corps published MARADMIN 462/21 to implement the COVID-19 vaccination mandates referenced in paragraphs 3b and 3c above. Specifically, MARADMIN 462/21 directed all Marine Corps Active and Reserve Component Service Members to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, unless medically or administratively exempt. All non-exempt Active Component Marines were to achieve full vaccination no later than 28 November 2021,² while all non-exempt Reserve Component Marines were to achieve full vaccination no later than 28 December 2021.³ MARADMIN 462/21 further specified that this mandate “constitutes a lawful general order and any violations of these provisions is punishable as a violation of Article 92 of [the UCMJ].” It further provided that initial disposition authority for cases arising from refusal of this order is withheld to the general court-martial convening authority level, “except that administrative counseling pursuant to paragraph 6105 of [reference (b)] may be used at the special court-martial convening authority level.” See enclosure (4).

e. On 7 October 2021, the Marine Corps published MARADMIN 533/21 to supplement the guidance of MARADMIN 462/21 referenced in paragraph 3d above. This message specified that “[i]n order to meet Commandant-directed deadlines as stated in [MARADMIN 462/21], all Active Component Service Members must receive their first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech/COMIRNATY vaccine no later than 24 October 2021 and all Reserve Component Service Members must receive their first dose no later than 24 November 2021.” It further specified that all Active Component Marines must receive their second dose no later than 14 November 2021, while all Reserve Component Marines must receive their second dose no later than 14 December 2021. The message also provided guidance for recording vaccine refusals in the Medical Readiness Reporting System and advised that adverse administrative or judicial proceedings may be initiated in accordance with the authorities delineated in MARADMIN 462/21 when a Marine has refused to take the vaccine, and that “[t]here is no requirement to delay action until the deadlines established in [MARADMIN 462/21].” See enclosure (5).

f. On 23 October 2021, the Marine Corps published MARADMIN 612/21 to further supplement the guidance of MARADMIN 462/21 referenced in paragraph 3d above. This message provided guidance that “Marines refusing the COVID-19 vaccination, absent an approved administrative or medical exemption, religious accommodation, or pending appeal shall be processed for administrative separation.” It further clarified that, in most cases, Marines

² This date was 90 days from issuance of ALNAV 062/21 (see paragraph 3c above).

³ This date was 120 days from issuance of ALNAV 062/21 (see paragraph 3c above).

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will be ordered to begin the vaccination process before the deadlines established in MARADMIN 462/21, and that a Marine is considered to have “refused the vaccine” when they do not have an approved administrative or medical exemption, religious accommodation, or pending appeal, and they (1) received and willfully disobeyed a lawful order from a superior commissioned officer to be vaccinated against COVID-19; or (2) they are not or will not be fully vaccinated by the deadline established in MARADMIN 462/21. Finally, this message established restrictions upon the assignments available to, ability to reenlist or execute assignment for, authority to promote, and separation benefits available to Marines who have refused the vaccine, and authorized the temporary reassignment of such unvaccinated Marines based upon operational readiness or mission requirements. See enclosure (6).

g. On 4 December 2021, Petitioner was administratively counseled in writing after refusing to receive the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination as ordered on 16 October 2021 and 4 December 2021, noting that his refusal constituted a violation of Article 90 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). He was informed that failure to take corrective action may result in judicial or adverse administrative action. Petitioner elected not to submit a statement in rebuttal to the administrative counseling. See enclosure (7).

h. On 5 January 2022, Commanding Officer (CO) [REDACTED] notified Petitioner of his intention to recommend [REDACTED] discharge Petitioner with a general (under honorable conditions) characterization of service by reason of misconduct. See enclosure (8).

i. On 7 January 2022, Petitioner was administratively counseled in writing after refusing to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination mandate, noting his violation constituted a violation of Article 92 of the UCMJ. Again, Petitioner declined to submit a rebuttal statement. On the same date, Petitioner signed an Administrative Remarks (Page 11) entry acknowledging he was eligible but not recommended for promotion to the next grade due to his pending administrative separation. See enclosures (9) and (10).

j. By memorandum dated 1 March 2022, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] separate you from the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves (USMCR) with an honorable characterization of service by reason of misconduct. On 2 March 2022, [REDACTED], favorably endorsed the recommendation. See enclosures (11) and (12).

k. By memorandum dated 18 March 2022, the Command Legal Advisor found the administrative separation proceedings to be sufficient in law and fact and recommended a general (under honorable conditions) characterization. See enclosure (13).

l. On 25 March 2022, [REDACTED], directed Petitioner’s administrative discharge from the USMCR, by reason of misconduct, with a general (under honorable conditions) characterization of service and assignment of a RE-3P reentry code. On 25 March 2022, Petitioner was discharged. See enclosure (14).

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m. On 23 December 2022, the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 was enacted. Section 525 of the FY 2023 NDAA directed the SECDEF to rescind the vaccination mandate referenced in paragraph 3b above. See enclosure (15).

n. By memorandum dated 10 January 2023, the SECDEF rescinded the vaccine mandate referenced in paragraph 3b above in accordance with the FY 2023 NDAA. He also directed the military departments to update the records of individuals currently serving in the Armed Forces who sought an accommodation to the vaccine mandate on religious, administrative, or medical grounds “to remove any adverse actions solely associated with denials of such requests, including letters of reprimand.” No such directive was included for those Service Members who did not seek an accommodation to the vaccine mandate on religious, administrative, or medical grounds. See enclosure (15).

o. On 18 January 2023, the Marine Corps published MARADMIN 025/23, rescinding MARADMINs 462/21, 533/21, 612/12, and other MARADMINs related to the former vaccination mandate, and directing the immediate suspension of any new adverse administrative actions associated with refusal of the COVID-19 vaccine. See enclosure (16).

p. On 20 January 2023, the SECNAV published ALNAV 009/23, cancelling ALNAV 062/21. See enclosure (17).

q. On 28 February 2023, the Marine Corps published MARADMIN 109/23 to provide further guidance regarding the rescission of the former vaccine mandate. Amongst the guidance provided was that the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC M&RA) would “direct an audit to search for adverse information in the [official military personnel files (OMPF)] of all currently serving members *who requested religious accommodations to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate (emphasis added)*,” and that such adverse matters would be removed as necessary in accordance with the SECDEF’s guidance referenced in paragraph 3k above. MARADMIN 109/23 also provided that “Marines who submitted requests for a medical or administrative exemption may submit written requests to the DC M&RA, through their chain of command, requesting removal of adverse material from their OMPF,” and that “[s]eparated Marines may petition the [Board] to request removal of adverse matters.” No provisions were discussed, however, for adverse matters pertaining to refusal of the COVID-19 vaccine mandate in the records of currently serving Marines who did not request a religious accommodation or an exemption for medical or administrative reasons. See enclosure (18).

r. On 6 September 2023, the ASN (M&RA) issued supplemental policy guidance to the Board to “help facilitate consistency” when considering applications for corrections of records of former members of the DoN who were involuntarily separated for refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Specifically, the ASN (M&RA) provided guidance stating the Board should generally grant a discharge upgrade request from a former Service member when:

- The member was involuntarily separated;
- The entry within the naval record would prevent the member from rejoining the military without a waiver should the member desire to do so; and
- The following three conditions are met:

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- (1) The involuntary separation was based solely on a refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccination;
- (2) The Service member formally sought an exemption or accommodation on administrative, religious, or medical grounds in accordance with service regulation or policies prior to or contemporaneous with the official initiation of the action; and
- (3) There are no aggravating factors in the member's record, such as misconduct.

Specifically, the ASN (M&RA) stated the Board should normally grant requests to recharacterize the discharge to an Honorable service characterization, change the narrative reason for separation (i.e., to "Secretarial Authority"), and change the reenry code to an immediately-eligible-to-reenter category, when these criteria were satisfied. With regard to members who were discharged for failing to abide by the vaccination mandate but who did not formally seek an accommodation or exemption from the COVID-19 vaccination requirement on administrative, religious, or medical grounds, the ASN (M&RA) stated that "failure to comply with lawful military requirements in contrary to good order and discipline and undermines military readiness." He further stated that, while the Board is independent and has latitude in determining what constitutes an error or injustice, "broad, retroactive correction of records for applicants who received administrative action, including involuntary separation, as a result of a refusal to comply with the requirement to receive the COVID-19 vaccination are generally not warranted. Accordingly, despite the change in policy, remedies such as correcting a record to reflect continued service with no discharge would normally not be appropriate." See enclosure (19).

s. Petitioner did not provide any contentions, evidence, or statement in support of his requested relief⁴. See enclosure (1).

CONCLUSION:

Upon careful review and consideration of all of the evidence of record, the Board determined that equitable relief is warranted in the interests of justice.

The Board first considered Petitioner's request for "medical discharge and medical compensation. Also back pay." Noting Petitioner did not provide a response in block 15 of the DD Form 149 nor any evidence or supporting documentation, even after prompting by the Examiner, the Board determined there is insufficient evidence of an error or injustice warranting Petitioner's requested relief.

However, noting the presence of adverse material related to the COVID-19 vaccination mandate in Petitioner's official military personnel file, the Board determined a review of the adverse material was warranted, in the interests of justice, despite Petitioner's lack of requesting the relief.

⁴ On 22 November 2024, the assigned Examiner reached out to Petitioner via the email provided on the DD Form 149 requesting additional information. Petitioner did not respond.

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The Board found no error in the issuance of the Administrative Remarks (Page 11) entries or Petitioner's separation by reason of misconduct. The COVID-19 vaccination mandate was a lawful order, so the refusal to comply constituted a violation of Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Per reference (b), administrative counseling is an appropriate disposition for such misconduct. Further, the Board noted the counseling statement was issued by a special court-martial convening authority, as required by MARADMIN 462/21. Additionally, noting the factual basis for the separation was commission of a serious offense, the Board found no error in Petitioner's administrative separation due to violation of Article 92 because failure to obey a lawful general order carries a potential punishment of a dishonorable discharge according to the Manual for Courts-Martial, so it was a serious offense upon which Petitioner's discharge could be properly based.

Despite finding no error in the issuance of the adverse matters and Petitioner's administrative separation, the Board found that equitable relief is warranted in the interests of justice. Reference (c) provides that the Board must consider "changes in policy, whereby a Service member under the same circumstances today would reasonably be expected to receive a more favorable outcome than the applicant received" in determining whether to grant relief on the basis of an injustice.⁵ It also directs the Board to consider uniformity and unfair disparities in punishment as a basis for relief. Given the change in the law, a Marine Corps service member would not receive the same type of adverse information in his record for refusing to take the COVID-19 vaccine today that Petitioner received in 2021 and 2022. Additionally, the Board found a disparity in treatment for Petitioner relative to other service members who also refused the vaccine mandate but sought an accommodation or exemption. The latter category of individuals can expect any adverse information resulting from their refusal of the COVID-19 vaccine to be removed from their record, regardless of the validity of their accommodation or exemption request. The Board found this disparity in treatment was worthy of favorable consideration. Finally, and most importantly, the Board found no evidence of any misconduct in Petitioner's record other than that related to his refusal to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination mandate. Accordingly, the Board believed the interests of justice warranted granting Petitioner a "clean slate" by removing the adverse Page 11 entries and changing his discharge reason, authority, and code to reflect "secretarial authority."

RECOMMENDATION:

In view of the above, the Board recommends the following corrective action be taken on Petitioner's naval record in the interests of justice.

That the Administrative Remarks (Page 11) entries dated 4 December 2021 and 7 January 2022 be removed from Petitioner's naval record.

That all documents pertaining to or referencing Petitioner's administrative separation process be removed from Petitioner's naval record.

⁵ Although reference (c) applies primarily in the context of discharge upgrade cases, it specifically states that its guidance "applies to any other corrections ... which may be warranted on equity or relief from injustice grounds."

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That Petitioner's naval record be corrected to reflect his Marine Reserve service ending 25 March 2022 was characterized as Honorable; narrative reason for his separation was Secretarial Authority; separation authority was MARCORSEPMAN 6214; separation code was JFF1; and reenlistment/reentry code was RE-1A.

That Petitioner's naval record be scrubbed for any other material or entries referencing his refusal to abide by the former COVID-19 vaccination mandate, and that any such materials or entries be removed. This includes, but is not limited to, all information systems or database entries that may reference or indicate Petitioner's refusal to abide by the vaccination mandate.

4. It is certified that a quorum was present at the Board's review and deliberations, and that the foregoing is a true and complete record of the Board's proceedings in the above entitled matter.

5. Pursuant to the delegation of authority set out in Section 6(e) of the revised Procedures of the Board for Correction of Naval Records (32 Code of Federal Regulation, Section 723.6(e)) and having assured compliance with its provisions, it is hereby announced that the foregoing corrective action, taken under the authority of reference (a), has been approved by the Board on behalf of the Secretary of the Navy.

3/12/2025

