



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

SEP 03 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS

SUBJECT: Supplemental Guidance to Military Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records Considering Discharge Upgrade Requests by Veterans Claiming Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Recent attention has been focused upon the petitions of Vietnam veterans to Military Department Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NR) for the purposes of upgrading their discharges based on claims of previously unrecognized Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In these cases, PTSD was not recognized as a diagnosis at the time of service and, in many cases, diagnoses were not made until decades after service was completed. To help ensure consistency across the Services, this memorandum provides supplemental policy guidance for BCMR/NRs on these applications.

BCM/NRs will fully and carefully consider every petition based on PTSD brought by each veteran. This includes a comprehensive review of all materials and evidence provided by the petitioner. Quite often, however, the records of Service members who served before PTSD was recognized, including those who served in the Vietnam theater, do not contain substantive information concerning medical conditions in either Service treatment records or personnel records. It has therefore been extremely difficult to document conditions that form a basis for mitigation in punitive, administrative, or other legal actions or to establish a nexus between PTSD and the misconduct underlying the Service member's discharge with a characterization of service of under other than honorable conditions.

BCM/NRs are not courts, nor are they investigative agencies. To assist the BCM/NRs in the review of records and to ensure fidelity of the review protocol in these cases, the supplemental policy guidance which details medical considerations, mitigating factors, and procedures for review is provided (Attachment). This guidance is not intended to interfere with or impede the Boards' statutory independence to correct errors or remove injustices through the correction of military records.

This policy guidance, which is intended to ease the application process for veterans who are seeking redress and assist the Boards in reaching fair and consistent results in these difficult cases, shall be accompanied by a public messaging campaign by the Services throughout 2014 and 2015 that is targeted toward veterans groups and leverages existing relationships with the Department of Veterans Affairs.



OSD009883-14

Military Department Secretaries shall direct immediate implementation of this guidance and report on compliance with this guidance within 45 days.

Thank you.



Attachment:

As stated

cc:

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
General Counsel of the Department of Defense
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs
Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs