

DATE: June 10, 2003

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In Re:

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SSN: -----

Applicant for Security Clearance

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ISCR Case No. 02-15082

## **APPEAL BOARD DECISION**

### **APPEARANCES**

#### **FOR GOVERNMENT**

Peregrine D. Russell-Hunter, Esq., Chief Department Counsel

#### **FOR APPLICANT**

*Pro Se*

Applicant has appealed the March 31, 2003 decision of Administrative Judge Robert Robinson Gales, in which the Judge concluded it is not clearly consistent with the national interest to grant or continue a security clearance for Applicant.

This Board has jurisdiction on appeal under Executive Order 10865 and Department of Defense Directive 5220.6 (Directive), dated January 2, 1992, as amended.

Applicant's appeal presents the following issue: whether the Board should recommend Applicant's case be considered further for a waiver under 10 U.S.C. §986. For the reasons that follow, the Board affirms the Administrative Judge's adverse decision and does not recommend this case be considered further for a waiver under 10 U.S.C. §986.

### **Procedural History**

The Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals issued to Applicant a Statement of Reasons (SOR) dated November 14, 2002. The SOR was based on Guideline J (Criminal Conduct).

Applicant submitted an answer to the SOR, in which he wanted a decision made in his case without a hearing. A File of Relevant Material (FORM) was prepared. A copy of the FORM was given to Applicant so that he could have an opportunity to respond to the FORM and submit additional information for consideration in his case. Applicant submitted several character letters for consideration in his case. The case was then assigned to the Administrative Judge for determination.

The Administrative Judge made findings of fact concerning Applicant's 1987 conviction for daytime housebreaking. The Judge concluded Applicant's 1987 conviction falls under 10 U.S.C. §986 and application of that statute precluded a favorable security clearance decision. The Judge "recommend[ed] further consideration of this case for a waiver of 10 U.S.C. §986."

The case is before the Board on Applicant's appeal from the Administrative Judge's adverse security clearance decision.

### **Scope of Review**

On appeal, the Board does not review a case *de novo*. Rather, the Board addresses the material issues raised by the parties to determine whether there is factual or legal error. There is no presumption of error below, and the appealing party must raise claims of error with specificity and identify how the Administrative Judge committed factual or legal error. *See Directive, Additional Procedural Guidance, Item E3.1.32. See also ISCR Case No. 00-0050 (July 23, 2001) at pp. 2-3 (discussing reasons why party must raise claims of error with specificity).*

When an Administrative Judge's factual findings are challenged, the Board must determine whether "[t]he Administrative Judge's findings of fact are supported by such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion in light of all the contrary evidence in the same record. In making this review, the Appeal Board shall give deference to the credibility determinations of the Administrative Judge." *Directive, Additional Procedural Guidance, Item E3.1.32.1.* The Board must consider not only whether there is record evidence supporting a Judge's findings, but also whether there is evidence that fairly detracts from the weight of the evidence supporting those findings. *See, e.g., ISCR Case No. 99-0205 (October 19, 2000) at p. 2.*

When a challenge to an Administrative Judge's rulings or conclusions raises a question of law, the Board's scope of review is plenary. *See DISCR Case No. 87-2107 (September 29, 1992) at pp. 4-5 (citing federal cases).*

### **Appeal Issue**

Applicant does not challenge the Administrative Judge's finding that he was convicted in 1987 for daytime housebreaking, and he does not challenge the Judge's conclusion that the 1987 conviction falls under 10 U.S.C. §986. However, Applicant cites some comments made in the Judge's decision, refers to the Judge's waiver recommendation, and asks that the Board recommend his case be further considered for a waiver under 10 U.S.C. §986.

Under 10 U.S.C. §986, the Department of Defense may not grant or renew a security clearance for a defense contractor official or employee that falls under any of four statutory categories [10 U.S.C. §986(c)(1) through (c)(4)]. Pursuant to 10 U.S.C. §986(d), the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of the military department concerned may authorize an exception to the statutory prohibition against granting or renewing a security clearance for cases covered by 10 U.S.C. §986(c)(1) or 10 U.S.C. §986(c)(4).

In a June 7, 2001 memorandum implementing the provisions of 10 U.S.C. §986, the Deputy Secretary of Defense indicated: "The decision as to whether a particular case involves a meritorious case that would justify pursuing a request for waiver shall be the province of the DoD Component concerned (i.e. all Components authorized to grant, deny or revoke access to classified information) beginning with the Director of the Component Central Adjudication Facility (CAF), the Component appellate authority or other appropriate senior Component official." For purposes of the June 7, 2001 memorandum, the Director, DOHA is the Director of the Component Central Adjudication Facility for industrial security clearance cases.

To implement the June 7, 2001 memorandum, the Director, DOHA issued an operating instruction (dated July 10, 2001) which indicates the following:

"Administrative Judges are responsible for initial resolution as to whether or not 10 U.S.C. 986 applies to the facts of the case." (Operating Instruction, paragraph 2.e.)

"In the event of an appeal raising an issue as to the applicability of 10 U.S.C. 986, the Appeal Board is responsible for final resolution of the issue." (Operating Instruction, paragraph 2.f.)

"In the event of a final determination that 10 U.S.C. 986 applies to the facts of a case, the Director is solely responsible for the discretionary decision as to whether to recommend to the Deputy General Counsel (Legal Counsel) that 10 U.S.C. 986 should be waived by the Secretary of Defense." (Operating Instruction, paragraph 2.g.)

"If an Administrative Judge issues a decision denying or revoking a clearance solely as a result of 10 U.S.C. 986, the Administrative Judge shall include without explanation either the statement 'I recommend further consideration of this case for a waiver of 10 U.S.C. 986' or 'I do not recommend further consideration of this case for a waiver of 10 U.S.C.

986." (Operating Instruction, paragraph 3.e.)

"If the Appeal Board issues a decision denying or revoking a clearance solely as a result of 10 U.S.C. 986, the Appeal Board shall include without explanation either the statement 'The Appeal Board recommends consideration of this case for a waiver of 10 U.S.C. 986' or 'The Appeal Board does not recommend consideration of this case for a waiver of 10 U.S.C. 986.'" (Operating Instruction, paragraph 3.f.)

"In any case in which the Administrative Judge, or the Appeal Board in the event of an appeal, recommends consideration of a waiver of 10 U.S.C. 986, the Director shall within his sole discretion determine whether or not to forward the case to the Deputy General Counsel (Legal Counsel) for further consideration of a possible waiver of 10 U.S.C. 986 by the Secretary of Defense together with such rationale as may be requested by the Deputy General Counsel (Legal Counsel)." (Operating Instruction, paragraph 3.g.)

Under paragraph 2.f. of the Operating Instruction, the Board is responsible for resolving any appeal as to the applicability of 10 U.S.C. §986. However, Applicant does not challenge the applicability of that statute to his case.

All that remains for the Board to do is address Applicant's request that it recommend further consideration of his case for a waiver under 10 U.S.C. §986(d). Such a request, however, places the Board in an unusual situation. The Operating Instruction does not authorize the Board to review an Administrative Judge's recommendation whether or not a waiver should be considered. Furthermore, under the Operating Instruction, the Board is not authorized to give reasons or an explanation for its decision to recommend or not recommend that a waiver be considered, but only state without explanation either: (1) "The Appeal Board recommends consideration of this case for a waiver of 10 U.S.C. 986" or (2) "The Appeal Board does not recommend consideration of this case for a waiver of 10 U.S.C. 986."

Since the Board is asked to make a recommendation in its own capacity, the Board is not bound by the recommendation made by the Administrative Judge below and must review the record evidence as a whole in order to fulfill its obligation to make a meaningful decision whether to recommend or not that a waiver under 10 U.S.C. §986(d) should be considered.

### **Conclusions**

The Administrative Judge properly concluded that Applicant's 1987 conviction falls under 10 U.S.C. §986. The Judge also properly concluded that application of 10 U.S.C. §986 precluded him from making a favorable security clearance decision in Applicant's case.

Under the Operating Instruction the Board cannot address the specific arguments asserted in Applicant's request that the Board recommend his case be considered for a waiver under 10 U.S.C. §986(d). This is because: (1) the Board does not have the authority to review the Administrative Judge's recommendation that Applicant's case be considered for a waiver under 10 U.S.C. §986(d); and (2) the Board is precluded from giving an explanation for its own recommendation concerning waiver. Accordingly, the Board will not discuss the specific arguments Applicant makes in support of his request that his case be considered for a waiver under 10 U.S.C. §986(d).

Recognizing the limits of its authority under the Operating Instruction, the Board has reviewed the record evidence as a whole and states the following: The Appeal Board does not recommend consideration of this case for a waiver of 10 U.S.C. §986.

Signed: Emilio Jaksetic

Emilio Jaksetic

Administrative Judge

Chairman, Appeal Board

Signed: Jeffrey D. Billett

Jeffrey D. Billett

Administrative Judge

Member, Appeal Board

Signed: Michael D. Hipple

Michael D. Hipple

Administrative Judge

Member, Appeal Board