



**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DEFENSE OFFICE OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS**



|                                  |   |                        |
|----------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| In the matter of:                | ) |                        |
|                                  | ) |                        |
|                                  | ) | ISCR Case No. 22-01794 |
|                                  | ) |                        |
|                                  | ) |                        |
| Applicant for Security Clearance | ) |                        |

**Appearances**

For Government: William H. Miller, Esquire, Department Counsel  
For Applicant: *Pro se*

June 20, 2023

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**Decision**  
\_\_\_\_\_

CEFOLA, Richard A., Administrative Judge:

On April 4, 2022, Applicant submitted his Electronic Questionnaire for Investigations Processing (e-QIP). On October 5, 2022, the Department of Defense Consolidated Adjudications Facility (DODCAF) issued Applicant a Statement of Reasons (SOR) detailing security concerns under Guideline H (Drug Involvement and Substance Misuse). The action was taken under Executive Order 10865, *Safeguarding Classified Information within Industry* (February 20, 1960), as amended; Department of Defense Directive 5220.6, *Defense Industrial Personnel Security Clearance Review Program* (January 2, 1992), as amended (Directive); and the Adjudicative Guidelines, effective on June 8, 2017.

Applicant answered the SOR (Answer) on November 7, 2022 (Item 2), and requested a decision on the record without a hearing. Department Counsel submitted the Government’s written case on December 16, 2022. A complete copy of the file of relevant material (FORM) was sent to Applicant, including documents identified as Items 1 through 4. He was given an opportunity to file objections and submit material to refute, extenuate, or mitigate the Government’s evidence. He received the FORM on

January 4, 2023, and did not respond. Items 1 through 4 are admitted into evidence. The case was assigned to me on April 3, 2023.

### **Findings of Fact**

In his Answer to the SOR Applicant admitted the factual allegations of the SOR, with explanations. He also provided additional information to support his request for eligibility for a security clearance.

Applicant is 26 years old, unmarried, and has no children. He has a Master's degree. (Item 3 at pages 5, 13~14 and 23.)

### **Guideline H: Drug Involvement and Substance Misuse**

1.a. Applicant admits that he used marijuana from about January of 2015 to about March of 2020, a period of about five years. He avers that "in years after 2017 [Applicant's usage] was extremely sparse." He also pledges to "never use marijuana again." (Answer at page 3.)

1.b. Applicant admits that he "used cocaine six times" from about April of 2017 to about January of 2022. He also pledges "to never . . . use cocaine for the rest of . . . [his] life." (Answer at page 3.)

1.c. Applicant admits that he used and cultivated psilocybin mushrooms from about February of 2019 to about August of 2020. He pledges "to never use psilocybin mushrooms again." (Answer at page 3.)

1.d. Applicant admits that he used ecstasy "9 times" from about January 2020 to about March of 2022. He pledges "to never use ecstasy again." (Answer at page 4.)

1.e. Applicant admits that he used ketamine once in March of 2020. He avers that "this single use pairs up with the use of ecstasy." Applicant also pledges to "never use ketamine again." (Answer at page 4.)

### **Policies**

When evaluating an applicant's suitability for national security eligibility, the administrative judge must consider the adjudicative guidelines. In addition to brief introductory explanations for each guideline, the adjudicative guidelines (AG) list potentially disqualifying conditions and mitigating conditions, which are to be used in evaluating an applicant's national security eligibility.

These guidelines are not inflexible rules of law. Instead, recognizing the complexities of human behavior, these guidelines are applied in conjunction with the factors listed in AG ¶ 2 describing the adjudicative process. The administrative judge's overarching adjudicative goal is a fair, impartial, and commonsense decision. The entire

process is a conscientious scrutiny of applicable guidelines in the context of a number of variables known as the whole-person concept. The administrative judge must consider all available, reliable information about the person, past and present, favorable and unfavorable, in making a decision.

The protection of the national security is the paramount consideration. AG ¶ 2(b) requires that “[a]ny doubt concerning personnel being considered for national security eligibility will be resolved in favor of the national security.” In reaching this decision, I have drawn only those conclusions that are reasonable, logical, and based on the evidence contained in the record. I have not drawn inferences based on mere speculation or conjecture.

Directive ¶ E3.1.14, requires the Government to present evidence to establish controverted facts alleged in the SOR. Under Directive ¶ E3.1.15, an “applicant is responsible for presenting witnesses and other evidence to rebut, explain, extenuate, or mitigate facts admitted by the applicant or proven by Department Counsel, and has the ultimate burden of persuasion as to obtaining a favorable clearance decision.”

A person applying for national security eligibility seeks to enter into a fiduciary relationship with the Government predicated upon trust and confidence. This relationship transcends normal duty hours and endures throughout off-duty hours. The Government reposes a high degree of trust and confidence in individuals to whom it grants national security eligibility. Decisions include, by necessity, consideration of the possible risk the applicant may deliberately or inadvertently fail to protect or safeguard classified information. Such decisions entail a certain degree of legally permissible extrapolation as to potential, rather than actual, risk of compromise of classified or sensitive information. Finally, as emphasized in Section 7 of Executive Order 10865, “[a]ny determination under this order adverse to an applicant shall be a determination in terms of the national interest and shall in no sense be a determination as to the loyalty of the applicant concerned.” See *also* Executive Order 12968, Section 3.1(b) (listing multiple prerequisites for access to classified or sensitive information.)

## **Analysis**

### **Guideline H: Drug Involvement and Substance Misuse**

The security concern relating to the guideline for Drug Involvement and Substance Misuse is set forth at AG ¶ 24:

The illegal use of controlled substances, to include the misuse of prescription and non-prescription drugs, and the use of other substances that cause physical or mental impairment or are used in a manner inconsistent with their intended purpose can raise questions about an individual's reliability and trustworthiness, both because such behavior may lead to physical or psychological impairment and because it raises questions about a person's ability or willingness to comply with laws, rules,

and regulations. *Controlled substance* means any "controlled substance" as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802. *Substance misuse* is the generic term adopted in this guideline to describe any of the behaviors listed above.

The guideline at AG ¶ 25 contains seven conditions that could raise a security concern and may be disqualifying. Two conditions are established:

- (a) any substance misuse (see above definition); and
- (c) illegal possession of a controlled substance, including cultivation, processing, manufacture, purchase, sale, or distribution; or possession of drug paraphernalia.

Appellant used marijuana, cocaine, psilocybin mushrooms, ecstasy, and ketamine, with varying frequency from about 2015 to 2022, a period of about seven years. He also cultivated psilocybin mushrooms. Therefore, AG ¶ 25 (a) and (c) are established.

The guideline at AG ¶ 26 contains four conditions that could mitigate security concerns. Two conditions may be applicable:

- (a) the behavior happened so long ago, was so infrequent, or happened under such circumstances that it is unlikely to recur or does not cast doubt on the individual's current reliability, trustworthiness, or good judgment; and
- (b) the individual acknowledges his or her drug involvement and substance misuse, provides evidence of actions taken to overcome this problem, and has established a pattern of abstinence, including, but not limited to:
  - (1) disassociation from drug-using associates and contacts;
  - (2) changing or avoiding the environment where drugs were used; and
  - (3) providing a signed statement of intent to abstain from all drug involvement and substance misuse, acknowledging that any future involvement or misuse is grounds for revocation of national security eligibility.

None of these apply. Applicant's drug abuse ceased only seven months prior to the issuance of the SOR, and only a month prior to him executing his e-QIP. It is too soon to say that Applicant drug involvement and substance misuse will not reoccur.

## **Whole-Person Concept**

Under the whole-person concept, the administrative judge must evaluate an applicant's national security eligibility by considering the totality of the applicant's conduct and all relevant circumstances. The administrative judge should consider the nine adjudicative process factors listed at AG ¶ 2(d):

(1) the nature, extent, and seriousness of the conduct; (2) the circumstances surrounding the conduct, to include knowledgeable participation; (3) the frequency and recency of the conduct; (4) the individual's age and maturity at the time of the conduct; (5) the extent to which participation is voluntary; (6) the presence or absence of rehabilitation and other permanent behavioral changes; (7) the motivation for the conduct; (8) the potential for pressure, coercion, exploitation, or duress; and (9) the likelihood of continuation or recurrence.

According to AG ¶ 2(c), the ultimate determination of whether to grant national security eligibility must be an overall commonsense judgment based upon careful consideration of the applicable guidelines and the whole-person concept. I considered the potentially disqualifying and mitigating conditions in light of all the facts and circumstances surrounding this case. Applicant is well thought of in the workplace and in his community. (Answer at pages 7 and 8.) However, it is too soon to say that Applicant's drug abuse will not reoccur. Overall, the record evidence leaves me with questions and doubts as to Applicant's eligibility and suitability for a security clearance. For all these reasons, I conclude Applicant failed to mitigate the security concerns arising from his drug involvement and substance abuse. However, this should not dissuade Applicant from applying for a security clearance in the future, following a longer period of abstinence.

## **Formal Findings**

Formal findings for or against Applicant on the allegations set forth in the SOR, as required by ¶ E3.1.25 of Enclosure 3 of the Directive, are:

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Paragraph 1, Guideline H: | AGAINST APPLICANT |
| Subparagraphs 1.a~1.e:    | Against Applicant |

## **Conclusion**

In light of all of the circumstances presented by the record in this case, it is not clearly consistent with the national interest to grant Applicant national security eligibility for a security clearance. Eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

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Richard A. Cefola  
Administrative Judge