



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



In the matter of:)	
)	
)	ISCR Case No. 23-01537
)	
)	
Applicant for Security Clearance)	

Appearances

For Government: Jenny Bayer, Esquire, Department Counsel
For Applicant: *Pro se*

08/15/2024

Decision

CEFOLA, Richard A., Administrative Judge:

On September 13, 2022, Applicant submitted his Electronic Questionnaire for Investigations Processing (e-QIP). On November 16, 2023, the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency Consolidated Adjudication Services (DCSA CAS) 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) soon thereafter (Item 2), and requested a decision on the record without a hearing. Department Counsel submitted the Government’s written case on February 28, 2024. A complete copy of the file of relevant material (FORM) was sent to Applicant, including documents identified as Items 1 through 5. 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 March 5,

2024, and did not respond. Items 1 through 5 are admitted into evidence. The case was assigned to me on June 24, 2024.

Findings of Fact

In his Answer to the SOR Applicant admitted the factual allegations in Paragraph 1 of the SOR, with explanations He also provided additional information to support his request for eligibility for a security clearance.

Applicant is 46 years old, married, and has no children. He has a master's degree and works for a defense contractor. (e-QIP at pages 5, 9, 17 and 20.)

Guideline H: Drug Involvement and Substance Misuse

1.a. Applicant admits that he used marijuana over a period of more than 23 years from April 1999 until May of 2022. He used the drug recreationally, in social settings, a couple of times a month. (Item 5 at page 1.) This would calculate (24 times a year over a period of 23 years) to be over 500 times. (see *also* Answer, and Item 3 at page 32.)

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. One condition is established:

(a) any substance misuse (see above definition).

Appellant smoked marijuana hundreds of times over a period of over two decades. Therefore, significant concerns under AG ¶ 25 (a) are established.

The guideline at AG ¶ 26 contains four conditions that could mitigate security concerns under this guideline. 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.

Applicant's marijuana recreational use is recent, as he admittedly used the drug until about two years ago. He has not submitted a signed statement to refrain from future usage, nor has he submitted any statements from those who know Applicant, and who can attest to his current recreational habits. If he continues to refrain from using marijuana and signs a statement of intent against future usage, he may become eligible for a security clearance in the future. However, at present Drug Involvement and Substance Misuse is found against Applicant.

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. 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.

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
Subparagraph 1.a:	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.

Richard A. Cefola
Administrative Judge