



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



In the matter of:

Applicant for Security Clearance

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ISCR Case No. 24-01655

Appearances

For Government: Sakeena Farhath, Esq., Department Counsel
For Applicant: *Pro se*

07/11/2025

Decision

CEFOLA, Richard A., Administrative Judge:

Applicant did not mitigate the financial considerations security concerns. Eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

Statement of the Case

On September 27, 2024, the Department of Defense (DOD) issued a Statement of Reasons (SOR) to Applicant detailing security concerns under Guideline F (financial considerations). Applicant responded to the SOR on October 9, 2024, and requested a decision based on the written record in lieu of a hearing.

The Government's written case was submitted on February 27, 2025. A complete copy of the file of relevant material (FORM) was provided to Applicant, who was afforded an opportunity to file objections and submit material to refute, extenuate, or mitigate the security concerns. Applicant received the FORM on March 20, 2025. Applicant elected not to respond to the Government's FORM. The period for his response lapsed on May 4, 2025. The case was assigned to me on July 1, 2025. The Government exhibits included in the FORM are admitted in evidence without objection.

Findings of Fact

Applicant is a 47-year-old employee of a defense contractor. He has worked as a designer/engineering tech for his employer. He first received a security clearance in 2007, but it was withdrawn in April 2017 since the position he was occupying did not require one. He is a high school graduate who earned an associate degree in December 2001. Applicant, who separated from his wife in February 2023, has one adult child. (Item 3)

The SOR alleges seven delinquent debts totaling approximately \$23,000 consisting of charge-offs and one collection. The debts are established through Applicant's admissions, his interrogatory response and various credit reports. (Items 2-7)

Applicant first mentioned the cause of his financial problems and delinquent debts in his security clearance application. He went into further detail when he replied to the interrogatory the Government sent him in. He attributed his financial problems to his wife maxing out the accounts in the SOR when they separated. He has not paid them because he plans on disputing them when they file for divorce. Applicant stated that he has been saving to be able to negotiate with the creditors in the event the charges remain his after his divorce is finalized. (Items 3 and 4) He provided no documentation in his response to the SOR, and he did not respond to the FORM, so more recent information about his finances is not available.

Policies

This case is adjudicated under Executive Order (EO) 10865, *Safeguarding Classified Information within Industry* (February 20, 1960), as amended; DOD Directive 5220.6, *Defense Industrial Personnel Security Clearance Review Program* (January 2, 1992), as amended (Directive); and the adjudicative guidelines (AG), which became effective on June 8, 2017.

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

These guidelines are not inflexible rules of law. Instead, recognizing the complexities of human behavior, administrative judges apply the guidelines in conjunction with the factors listed in the adjudicative process. The administrative judge's overarching adjudicative goal is a fair, impartial, and commonsense decision. According to AG ¶ 2(c), the entire process is a conscientious scrutiny 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.”

Under Directive ¶ E3.1.14, the Government must present evidence to establish controverted facts alleged in the SOR. Under Directive ¶ E3.1.15, the 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.” The applicant has the ultimate burden of persuasion to obtain a favorable security decision.

A person who seeks access to classified information enters 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 access to classified information. Decisions include, by necessity, consideration of the possible risk the applicant may deliberately or inadvertently fail to safeguard classified information. Such decisions entail a certain degree of legally permissible extrapolation of potential, rather than actual, risk of compromise of classified information.

Section 7 of EO 10865 provides that adverse decisions shall be “in terms of the national interest and shall in no sense be a determination as to the loyalty of the applicant concerned.” See *also* EO 12968, Section 3.1(b) (listing multiple prerequisites for access to classified or sensitive information).

Analysis

Guideline F, Financial Considerations

The security concern for financial considerations is set out in AG ¶ 18:

Failure to live within one’s means, satisfy debts, and meet financial obligations may indicate poor self-control, lack of judgment, or unwillingness to abide by rules and regulations, all of which can raise questions about an individual’s reliability, trustworthiness, and ability to protect classified or sensitive information. Financial distress can also be caused or exacerbated by, and thus can be a possible indicator of, other issues of personnel security concern such as excessive gambling, mental health conditions, substance misuse, or alcohol abuse or dependence. An individual who is financially overextended is at greater risk of having to engage in illegal or otherwise questionable acts to generate funds.

The guideline notes several conditions that could raise security concerns under AG ¶ 19. The following are potentially applicable in this case:

- (a) inability to satisfy debts; and
- (c) a history of not meeting financial obligations.

Applicant has a history of financial problems, including multiple delinquent debts, which include charge-offs and an account in collections. AG ¶¶ 19(a) and 19(c) are applicable.

Conditions that could mitigate the financial considerations security concerns are provided under AG ¶ 20. The following are potentially applicable:

- (a) the behavior happened so long ago, was so infrequent, or occurred under such circumstances that it is unlikely to recur and does not cast doubt on the individual's current reliability, trustworthiness, or good judgment;
- (b) the conditions that resulted in the financial problem were largely beyond the person's control (e.g., loss of employment, a business downturn, unexpected medical emergency, a death, divorce or separation, clear victimization by predatory lending practices, or identity theft), and the individual acted responsibly under the circumstances;
- (c) the individual has received or is receiving financial counseling for the problem from a legitimate and credible source, such as a non-profit credit counseling service, and there are clear indications that the problem is being resolved or is under control; and
- (d) the individual initiated and is adhering to a good-faith effort to repay overdue creditors or otherwise resolve debts.

Applicant attributed his financial problems to his wife's maxing out his accounts when they separated in February 2023, more than two years ago. His wife's actions may have been beyond his control, but his actions since, or lack thereof, were within his control. AG ¶ 20(b) also requires that "the individual acted responsibly under the circumstances."

Applicant stated that he has been saving money to be able to negotiate with the creditors in the event the charges remain his after his divorce. He indicated that if the debts remain his upon his divorce he planned on negotiating and paying them. However, intentions to resolve financial problems in the future are not a substitute for a track record of debt repayment or other responsible approaches. See ISCR Case No. 11-14570 at 3 (App. Bd. Oct. 23, 2013).

There is insufficient evidence for a determination that Applicant's financial problems will be resolved within a reasonable period. I am unable to find that he acted responsibly under the circumstances or that he made a good-faith effort to pay his debts. His financial issues are recent and ongoing. They continue to cast doubt on his current reliability, trustworthiness, and good judgment. I find that financial considerations security concerns remain despite the presence of some mitigation.

Whole-Person Concept

Under the whole-person concept, the administrative judge must evaluate an applicant's eligibility for a security clearance 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.

Under AG ¶ 2(c), the ultimate determination of whether to grant eligibility for a security clearance must be an overall commonsense judgment based upon careful consideration of the 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. I have incorporated my comments under Guideline F in my whole-person analysis.

Overall, the record evidence leaves me with questions and doubts about Applicant's eligibility and suitability for a security clearance. I conclude Applicant did not mitigate the financial considerations security concerns.

Formal Findings

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

Paragraph 1, Guideline F:	Against Applicant
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Subparagraphs 1.a-1.g:	Against Applicant
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Conclusion

It is not clearly consistent with the national interest to continue Applicant's eligibility for a security clearance. Eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

R. A. Cefola
Administrative Judge