



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEFENSE OFFICE OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS



In the matter of:)
)
-----) ISCR Case No. 14-00914
)
Applicant for Security Clearance)

Appearances

For Government: Stephanie C. Hess, Esquire, Department Counsel

For Applicant: *Pro se*

January 7, 2015

DECISION

ROSS, Wilford H., Administrative Judge:

Applicant submitted his Electronic Questionnaire for Investigation Processing (e-QIP) on November 7, 2013. (Item 4.) On June 13, 2014, the Department of Defense issued a Statement of Reasons (SOR) detailing the security concerns under Guideline H (Drug Involvement) concerning Applicant. The action was taken under Executive Order (EO) 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 (AG) effective within the Department of Defense for SORs issued after September 1, 2006.

Applicant answered the SOR in writing on June 30, 2014, and requested a decision by an administrative judge without a hearing. (Item 3.) Department Counsel submitted the Government's written case (FORM) to Applicant on October 2, 2014. The FORM contained four documents. Applicant acknowledged receipt of the FORM on October 14, 2014. He was given 30 days from receipt of the FORM to submit any additional documentation. Applicant did not submit any additional information. Based

upon a review of the pleadings and exhibits, eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

Findings of Fact

Applicant is 29, married, and has a master's degree. He is employed by a defense contractor and seeks to obtain a security clearance in connection with his employment. (Government Exhibit 1 at Section 13A.) Applicant admitted all the allegations of the SOR, with explanations. Applicant's admissions are incorporated into the following findings of fact.

Paragraph 1 (Guideline H, Drug Involvement)

The Government alleges in this paragraph that Applicant is ineligible for clearance because he used illegal drugs.

Applicant admits that he used marijuana between April 2005, and his last use in August 2013. He states it was, "Recreational marijuana use only. Not used for any medical condition. Occasional use began during college. Special occasions [sic], camping/canoeing trips, etc. Not habitual."

Furthermore:

I ended use of this drug/controlled substance in August 2013. I have no intention to use this drug/controlled substance in the future. Once notified that I may be required to obtain a security clearance, I immediately discontinued use and proactively removed myself from situations where use was most likely to occur. I am an extremely responsible individual and would never jeopardize or take the public trust for granted. (Item 4 at Section 23.)

In his Answer to the SOR Applicant reiterates that his last use of marijuana was August 2013. He goes on to state, "If my demonstrated actions taken to date fail to mitigate the Government's concern, I would be more than happy to sign a statement of intent with revocation of clearance for any future violation." (Item 3.) Applicant did not submit such a statement. In addition, the record is bereft of any definitive statement of how much marijuana Applicant used.

Applicant also provided no evidence concerning the quality of his professional performance, the level of responsibility his duties entail, or his track record with respect to handling sensitive information and observation of security procedures. He submitted no character references or other evidence tending to establish good judgment, trustworthiness, or reliability. I was unable to evaluate his credibility, demeanor, or character in person since he elected to have his case decided without a hearing.

Policies

Security clearance decisions are not made in a vacuum. 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 as appropriate 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, these guidelines are applied in conjunction with the factors listed in AG ¶ 2(a) describing 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. In addition, the administrative judge may also rely on his or her own common sense, as well as knowledge of the law, human nature, and the ways of the world, in making a reasoned decision.

The protection of the national security is the paramount consideration. AG ¶ 2(b) requires that, "Any doubt concerning personnel being considered for access to classified information will be resolved in favor of 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. Likewise, I have avoided drawing inferences grounded on mere speculation or conjecture.

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, and has the ultimate burden of persuasion as to obtaining a favorable clearance 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. Security clearance decisions include, by necessity, consideration of the possible risk that 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 information.

Finally, as emphasized in Section 7 of Executive Order 10865, "Any 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* EO 12968, Section 3.1(b) (listing multiple prerequisites for access to classified or sensitive information).

Analysis

Paragraph 1 (Guideline H - Drug Involvement)

The security concern relating to the guideline for Drug Involvement is set out in AG ¶ 24:

Use of an illegal drug or misuse of a prescription drug can raise questions about an individual's reliability and trustworthiness, both because it may impair judgment and because it raises questions about a person's ability or willingness to comply with laws, rules, and regulations. Drugs are defined as mood and behavior altering substances, and include: (1) Drugs, materials, and other chemical compounds identified and listed in the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, as amended (e.g., marijuana or cannabis, depressants, narcotics, stimulants, and hallucinogens), and (2) inhalants and other similar substances; Drug abuse is the illegal use of a drug or use of a legal drug in a manner that deviates from approved medical direction.

I have considered the disqualifying conditions under AG ¶ 25 and especially considered the following:

(a) any drug abuse.

Applicant admits using marijuana from 2005 through August 2013.

I have studied all of the mitigating conditions under AG ¶ 26 and especially considered the following:

(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) a demonstrated intent not to abuse any drugs in the future, such as: (1) disassociation from drug-using associates and contacts; (2) changing or avoiding the environment where drugs were used; (3) an appropriate period of abstinence; (4) a signed statement of intent with automatic revocation of clearance for any violation.

Applicant offered insufficient evidence that would support mitigation under AG ¶¶ 26 (a) or (b). Applicant's drug use ended approximately fourteen months before the record closed. Applicant stated that he did not intend to use any drugs in the future.

However, he elected not to submit a signed statement of intent. In addition, there is a distinct lack of mitigating evidence in this case. In fact, based on the record, it is impossible for me to say how much marijuana Applicant used. Based on the available record, it is simply too soon to find that he has mitigated security concerns arising from his pattern and history of drug abuse. Paragraph 1 is found against Applicant.

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 applicant's conduct and all the relevant circumstances. 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. The administrative judge should consider the nine adjudicative process factors listed at AG ¶ 2(a):

(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.

I considered the potentially disqualifying and mitigating conditions in light of all the facts and circumstances surrounding this case. Under AG ¶ 2(a)(3), Applicant's conduct is recent. Based on the state of the record, or lack thereof, I cannot find that there have been permanent behavioral changes under AG ¶ 2(a)(6). Accordingly, at the present time, I find that there is the potential for pressure, coercion, exploitation, or duress (AG ¶ 2(a)(8)), and that there is an unacceptable likelihood of recurrence (AG ¶ 2(a)(9)).

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 has not mitigated the security concerns arising from his drug use.

On balance, it is concluded that Applicant has not successfully overcome the Government's case opposing his request for a DoD security clearance. Accordingly, the evidence supports a finding against Applicant as to the factual and conclusionary allegations expressed in Paragraphs 1 of the Government's Statement of Reasons.

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 eligibility for a security clearance. Eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

WILFORD H. ROSS
Administrative Judge