



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



In the matter of:)	
)	
)	ISCR Case No. 14-02476
)	
)	
Applicant for Security Clearance)	

Appearances

For Government: John Bayard Glendon, Esq., Department Counsel
For Applicant: *Pro se*

04/30/2015

Decision

LYNCH, Noreen A., Administrative Judge:

On July 11, 2014, the Department of Defense (DOD) issued a Statement of Reasons (SOR) listing security concerns arising under Guideline F (Financial Considerations). The action was taken under Executive Order 10865, *Safeguarding Classified Information within Industry* (February 20, 1960), as amended; Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5220.6, *Defense Industrial Personnel Security Clearance Review Program* (January 2, 1992), as amended (Directive); and the adjudicative guidelines (AG), implemented in September 2006.

Applicant timely answered the SOR and requested a review based on the written record in lieu of a hearing. The case was assigned to me on April 27, 2015. Department Counsel submitted a File of Relevant Material (FORM), dated February 25, 2015¹. Applicant received the FORM on March 12, 2015. Applicant timely submitted a response and documentation to the FORM. Based on a review of the case file, eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

¹The Government submitted four items for the record.

Findings of Fact

In his answer to the SOR, Applicant admitted all but two of the SOR allegations under Guideline F.

Applicant is 41 years old. He graduated from high school in 1992. He obtained a technical degree in 1994. Applicant is married and has two children. He has been employed with his current employer since 2011. (Item 3) This is Applicant's first request for a security clearance.

The SOR alleges nine delinquent debts, including a judgment, medical accounts and a past-due mortgage totaling about \$26,277. (Item 1)

Applicant admits that he made some financial decisions that do not make him proud, but he states that he did not want to make them and had a reason for doing so. He explained that he fell behind on so many bills because he lost his job in 2011 when the company merged with another company. He had been with the company for about 12 years. He was unemployed for about six months. The unemployment he received was not sufficient to pay his mortgage and his bills. His wife is not able to work due to health issues. (Item 2)

Applicant stated that he had paid the 2012 judgment in the amount of \$1,999. He does not understand why it is still listed on his credit report. He did not have any documentation to support his assertion for SOR allegation 1.a.

Applicant stated that he paid the medical accounts listed in SOR 1.b, 1.c, and 1.h in March 2015. He is waiting for a letter from the creditor to show that the account was paid. Applicant stated that 1.d is a duplicate of 1.c and that the issues are resolved.

As to the SOR allegation 1.e for a past-due mortgage account in the amount of \$15,906, Applicant notes that he was in a program which makes homes affordable. For a trial period, he paid less than the original mortgage. He states that he is still working with the company. Applicant asserts that he is currently in good standing with his loan. He did not provide any documentation, and his current credit report reflects that he is past-due in the amount of \$16,255. (Item 4)

Applicant stated that SOR 1.g and 1. I are for parking tickets from about 2000 or 2002 but he did not know about them. He intends to make arrangements to pay them.

Applicant denied the account in 1.f. He stated that he was contacted years ago and told by the company that it was not his account. He will try to contact the company again to have it removed from his credit report. (Response to FORM)

Policies

When evaluating an applicant's suitability for a security clearance, an administrative judge must consider the adjudicative guidelines (AG). In addition to brief introductory explanations for each guideline, the adjudicative guidelines list potentially disqualifying conditions and mitigating conditions. These guidelines are not inflexible rules of law. Instead, recognizing the complexities of human behavior, they are applied in conjunction with the factors listed in the adjudicative process. An administrative judge's overarching adjudicative goal is a fair, impartial, and commonsense decision. Under AG ¶ 2(c), this process is a conscientious scrutiny of a number of variables known as the "whole-person concept." An 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 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.

The U.S. Government must present evidence to establish controverted facts alleged in the SOR. An applicant is responsible for presenting "witnesses and other evidence to rebut, explain, extenuate, or mitigate facts admitted by applicant or proven by Department Counsel. . . ." ² The burden of proof is something less than a preponderance of evidence. ³ The ultimate burden of persuasion is on the applicant. ⁴

A person seeking access to classified information enters into a fiduciary relationship with the Government based on 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 protect 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 Executive Order 10865 provides that 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." ⁵ "The clearly consistent standard indicates that security clearance

² See also ISCR Case No. 94-1075 at 3-4 (App. Bd. Aug. 10, 1995).

³ *Department of the Navy v. Egan*, 484 U.S. 518, 531 (1988).

⁴ ISCR Case No. 93-1390 at 7-8 (App. Bd. Jan. 27, 1995).

⁵ See also EO 12968, Section 3.1(b) (listing multiple prerequisites for access to classified or sensitive information), and EO 10865 § 7.

determinations should err, if they must, on the side of denials.”⁶ Any reasonable doubt about whether an applicant should be allowed access to sensitive information must be resolved in favor of protecting such information.⁷ The decision to deny an individual a security clearance does not necessarily reflect badly on an applicant’s character. It is merely an indication that the applicant has not met the strict guidelines the President and the Secretary of Defense established for issuing a clearance.

Analysis

Guideline F, Financial Considerations

The security concern for Financial Considerations is set out in AG ¶ 18:

Failure or an inability 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 information.” It also states that “an individual who is financially overextended is at risk of having to engage in illegal acts to generate funds.

Applicant admitted that he had delinquent debts. His 2015 credit report confirms the debts. Consequently, Financial Considerations Disqualifying Conditions (FC DC) AG ¶ 19(a) (inability or unwillingness to satisfy debts), and FC DC AG ¶ 19(c) (a history of not meeting financial obligations) apply. With such conditions raised, it is left to Applicant to overcome the case against him and mitigate security concerns.

The nature, frequency, and relative recency of Applicant’s financial difficulties make it difficult to conclude that it occurred “so long ago.” Applicant still has unresolved debts. Consequently, Financial Considerations Mitigating Condition (FC MC) AG ¶ 20(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) does not apply.

Financial Considerations Mitigating Condition (FC MC) AG ¶ 20(b) (the conditions that resulted in the behavior were largely beyond the person’s control (e.g., loss of employment, a business downturn, unexpected medical emergency, or a death, divorce or separation) and the individual acted responsibly under the circumstances) does not apply. Applicant has given reasons for his delinquent debts. His unemployment and his wife’s inability to work were beyond his control. However, he presented no evidence that he has acted responsibly. He has been working since 2011. He states that some delinquent accounts are paid, but he did not provide any corroborating evidence. He has not acted responsibly.

⁶ ISCR Case No. 93-1390 at 7-8 (App. Bd. Jan. 27, 1995).

⁷ *Id.*

FC MC AG ¶ 20(d), (the individual initiated a good-faith effort to repay overdue creditors or otherwise resolve debts) has some application. Applicant maintains that he paid or will pay accounts, but this assertion is not supported by documentary evidence. FC MC AG ¶ 20(c) (the person has received or is receiving counseling for the problem and/or there are clear indications that the problem is being resolved, or is under control) does not apply.

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 an applicant's conduct and all the circumstances. 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.

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. As noted above, the ultimate burden of persuasion is on the applicant seeking a security clearance.

I considered the potentially disqualifying and mitigating conditions in light of all the facts and circumstances surrounding this case, as well as the whole-person factors. Applicant is a young man who has worked for a number of years. He has a wife and two children. The record does not provide any details about his duty performance.

Applicant has not provided information concerning payment of his delinquent debts. He described a program for his past-due mortgage account but did not provide any documentation.

Applicant did not persuade me that he refuted or mitigated the Government's case concerning the financial considerations security concerns. Any doubts must be resolved in the Government's favor. For all these reasons, clearance is denied.

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

Subparagraphs 1.a-1.i:

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 a security clearance. Clearance is denied.

NOREEN A. LYNCH.
Administrative Judge