

DATE: April 6, 2004

In Re:

SSN: -----

Applicant for Security Clearance

ISCR Case No. 02-33607

DECISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

MARTIN H. MOGUL

APPEARANCES

FOR GOVERNMENT

Erin C. Hogan, Department Counsel

FOR APPLICANT

Pro Se

SYNOPSIS

This twenty five year old Applicant has used marijuana more than 500 times, including after he completed a Security Clearance Application (SCA). In his October 2003 response to the Statement of Reasons (SOR) and in a March 2002 signed, sworn declaration, Applicant stated that he would only discontinue his use of marijuana in the future if he was granted a security clearance. The application of 10 U.S.C. § 986 disqualifies him from eligibility. Mitigation has not been shown. Clearance is denied.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On September 25, 2003, the Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals (DOHA), under Executive Order 10865, *Safeguarding Classified Information Within Industry*, dated February 20, 1960, as amended and modified, and Department of Defense Directive 5220.6, *Defense Industrial Personnel Security Clearance Review Program* (Directive), dated January 2, 1992, as amended and modified, issued an SOR to Applicant. The SOR detailed reasons under Guideline H (Drug Involvement) and Guideline E (Personal Conduct) why DOHA could not make the preliminary affirmative finding under the Directive that it is clearly consistent with the national interest to grant or continue a security clearance for Applicant, and recommended referral to an Administrative Judge to conduct proceedings and determine whether clearance should be granted or denied.

In a signed and sworn statement, dated October 7, 2003, Applicant responded to the SOR allegations. He requested that his case be decided on the written record in lieu of a hearing. On October 24, 2003, Department Counsel prepared the Department's written case. A complete copy of the file of relevant material (FORM) was provided to Applicant, and he was given the opportunity to file objections and submit material in refutation, extenuation, or mitigation. Applicant filed no response to the FORM . The case was assigned to me on January 15, 2004.

Department Counsel offered five documentary exhibits (Exhibits 1-5). Applicant has offered no documentary evidence into the record.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Government opposes Applicant's request for a security clearance, based upon the allegations set forth in the SOR. The SOR contains five allegations, 1.a. through 1.e., under Guideline H (Drug Involvement) and one allegation, 2.a., under Guideline E (Personal Conduct).

After a complete and thorough review of the evidence in the record, including Applicant's Answer to the SOR and the admitted documents, and upon due consideration of that evidence, I make the following findings of fact:

Applicant is 24 years old. He is employed by a defense contractor, and he seeks a DoD security clearance in connection with his employment in the defense sector.

Paragraph 1 (Guideline H - Drug Involvement)

The Government alleges in this paragraph that Applicant is ineligible for clearance because he abuses illegal substances. Applicant estimated that from his first usage of marijuana in 1995 until March 2002, he used marijuana approximately 500 times (Exhibit 5). He has never indicated that he stopped using marijuana. In the signed, sworn statement he made to a DSS agent on March 7, 2002, Applicant stated, "If given a security clearance I will discontinue my use of all illegal substances including marijuana." He also said in his October 7, 2003 response to the SOR, "Therefore, if given a security clearance I will cease using marijuana." Based on these statements, I conclude that he has continued using marijuana after his October 2003 response to the SOR, and he plans to continue to use marijuana in the future (Exhibits 3 and 5).

Applicant has purchased marijuana from friends, and he has sold it to friends, but he denies it was for profit (Exhibit 5).

Applicant used a substance that he was told was Psilocybin mushrooms at least three times from approximately 1997 to 2001, and he also used a substance that he was told was LSD at least one time. Applicant contends that these substances were identified to him, but he was never certain about their authenticity (Exhibit 5).

Paragraph 2 (Guideline E - Personal Conduct)

The Government alleges in this paragraph that Applicant is ineligible for clearance because he furnished untruthful information to the Government. Applicant completed a signed, sworn Security Clearance Application (SCA) on January 29, 2002. Question #27 asks, Question 27 of the SCA asked if, in the previous seven years, Applicant had use illegal drugs, including marijuana, etc. Applicant answered "yes" and responded that between October 1995 and January 2002 he had used marijuana 500 times. Applicant did not list his usage of Psilocybin mushrooms or LSD (Exhibit 4).

POLICIES

Security clearance decisions are not made in a vacuum. Accordingly, the Department of Defense, in Enclosure 2 of the 1992 Directive, has set forth policy factors which must be given "binding" consideration in making security clearance determinations. These factors should be followed in every case according to the pertinent guideline. However, the factors are neither automatically determinative of the decision in any case, nor can they supersede the Administrative Judge's reliance on his own common sense, as well as his knowledge of the law, human nature and the ways of the world, in making a reasoned decision.

Because each security clearance case presents its own unique facts and circumstances, it cannot be assumed that these factors exhaust the realm of human experience, or apply equally in every case. Based upon a consideration of the evidence as a whole, I find the following adjudicative guidelines most pertinent to an evaluation of the facts of this case:

Guideline H (Drug Involvement)

The Concern: Improper or illegal involvement with drugs, raises questions regarding an individual's willingness or ability to protect classified information. Drug abuse or dependence may impair social or occupational functioning, increasing the risk of an unauthorized disclosure of classified information.

Drugs are defined as mood and behavior altering substances, and include:

(E2.A8.1.1.2.1.) 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 (E2.A8.1.1.2.2.) 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.

On June 7, 2001, the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued a Memorandum, *Implementation of Restrictions on the Granting or Renewal of Security Clearances as Mandated by the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001*. The memorandum provides policy guidance for the implementation of Section 1071 of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, which amended Title 10, United States Code, to add a new section (10 U.S.C. § 986) that precludes the initial granting or renewal of a security clearance by the Department of Defense under specific circumstances. The situation described above involves one of those specific circumstances.

Guideline E (Personal Conduct)

E2.A5.1.1. *The Concern:* Conduct involving questionable judgment, untrustworthiness, unreliability, lack of candor, dishonesty, or unwillingness to comply with rules and regulations could indicate that the person may not properly safeguard classified information. The following will normally result in an unfavorable clearance action or administrative termination of further processing for clearance eligibility:

E2.A5.1.3.2. The falsification was an isolated incident, was not recent, and the individual has subsequently provided correct information voluntarily.

In addition, as set forth in Enclosure 2 of the Directive at pages 16-17, "In evaluating the relevance of an individual's conduct, the [Administrative Judge] should consider the following factors [General Factors]:

- a. The nature, extent and seriousness of the conduct
- b. The circumstances surrounding the conduct, to include knowledgeable participation
- c. The frequency and recency of the conduct
- d. The individual's age and maturity at the time of the conduct
- e. The voluntariness of participation
- f. The presence or absence of rehabilitation and other pertinent behavior changes
- g. The motivation for the conduct
- h. The potential for pressure, coercion, exploitation or duress
- i. The likelihood of continuation or recurrence.

The eligibility guidelines established in the DoD Directive identify personal characteristics and conduct which are reasonably related to the ultimate question of whether it is "clearly consistent with the national interest" to grant an Applicant's request for access to classified information. In the defense industry, the security of classified industrial secrets is entrusted to civilian workers who must be counted upon to safeguard such sensitive information twenty-four hours a day. The Government is therefore appropriately concerned where available information indicates that an Applicant for clearance may be involved in acts of alcohol abuse and conduct that demonstrates poor judgement, untrustworthiness or unreliability on the Applicant's part.

The DoD Directive states, "Each adjudication is to be an overall common sense determination based upon consideration and assessment of all available information, both favorable and unfavorable, with particular emphasis placed on the seriousness, recency, frequency, and motivation for the individual's conduct; the extent to which conduct was negligent, willful, voluntary, or undertaken with the knowledge of the circumstances or consequences involved; and, to the extent that it can be estimated, the probability that conduct will or will not continue in the future." The Administrative Judge can only draw those inferences or conclusions that have a reasonable and logical basis in the evidence of record. The Judge cannot draw inferences or conclusions based on evidence which is speculative or conjectural in nature. Finally, as emphasized by President Eisenhower in Executive Order 10865, "Any determination under this order...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."

CONCLUSIONS

Upon consideration of all the facts in evidence, and after application of all appropriate legal precepts, factors, and conditions, including those described briefly above, I conclude the following with respect to the allegation set forth in the SOR:

It is the Government's responsibility to present substantial evidence to support the finding of a nexus, or rational connection, between Applicant's conduct and the continued holding of a security clearance. If such a case has been established, the burden then shifts to the Applicant to go forward with evidence in rebuttal, explanation or mitigation which is sufficient to overcome or outweigh the Government's case. Applicant bears the ultimate burden of persuasion in proving that it is clearly consistent with the national interest to grant him or her a security clearance.

In this case, the Government has met its initial burden of proving by substantial evidence that Applicant has used illegal drugs for many years under (Guideline H). Applicant, on the other hand, has not introduced persuasive evidence in rebuttal, explanation or mitigation which is sufficient to overcome the Government's case against her.

Paragraph 1 (Guideline H - Drug Involvement) With respect to Guideline H, the Government has established its case. Applicant's improper and illegal drug abuse, including the purchase, possession, and use of marijuana, is of concern, especially in light of his desire to have access to the nation's secrets. Applicant's overall conduct pertaining to his illegal substance abuse clearly falls within Drug Involvement Disqualifying Condition (DC) E2.A8.1.2.1. (any drug abuse), and DC E2.A8.1.2.2. (illegal drug possession, including cultivation, processing, manufacture, purchase, sale, or distribution).

Applicant's stated intention to continue using marijuana in the future until he receives a security clearance clearly falls within DC E2.A8.1.2.5. (Failure to successfully complete a drug treatment program prescribed by a credentialed medical professional. Recent drug involvement, especially following the granting of a security clearance, or an expressed intent not to discontinue use, will almost invariably result in an unfavorable determination). I do not find that any mitigating Condition (MC) applies to guideline H.

Finally, under the circumstances herein, Applicant's lengthy period of illegal substance abuse plus his indication as recently as October 2003, that he will continue to use marijuana at least until he receives a security clearance, brings his conduct within the scope of provision 2 of 10 U.S.C. § 986 in that he is an unlawful user of a controlled substance. The application of 10 U.S.C. § 986 disqualifies him from eligibility. Accordingly, Paragraph 1 of the SOR is concluded against Applicant.

Paragraph 2 (Guideline E - Personal Conduct) With respect to Guideline E, the evidence establishes that Applicant provided less than complete information to the Government in response to question, #27, on the SCA that he executed in January 2002. However, I do not conclude that Applicant did knowingly provide untruthful information. Based on the admitted evidence, I conclude that Applicant did not list his possible usage of Psilocybin mushrooms on three occasions and LSD on one occasion because he was not certain that he had, in fact, ingested these substances. Applicant appears not to have minimized his marijuana usage when he estimated using marijuana 500 times. I conclude that when Applicant answered the SCA, he did not know whether he had actually used these other substances. I resolve Guideline E for Applicant.

In reviewing the DCs under Guideline E, I conclude that no DC applies because Applicant believed that the information that he provided in his SCA was correct. Paragraph 2 is concluded for Applicant.

On balance, it is concluded that Applicant has failed to overcome the Government's information opposing his request for a security clearance.

FORMAL FINDINGS

Formal findings For or Against the Applicant on the allegations in the SOR, as required by Paragraph 25 of Enclosure 3 of the Directive, are:

Paragraph 1: AGAINST THE APPLICANT.

Subparagraph 1.a.: Against the Applicant.

Subparagraph 1.b.: Against the Applicant.

Subparagraph 1.c.: Against the Applicant.

Subparagraph 1.d.: Against the Applicant.

Subparagraph 1.e.: Against the Applicant.

Paragraph 2: FOR THE APPLICANT.

Subparagraph 2.a.: For the Applicant.

DECISION

In light of all the circumstances presented by the record in this case, it is not clearly consistent with the national interest to grant or continue a security clearance for the Applicant.

Martin H. Mogul

Administrative Judge