



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEFENSE OFFICE OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS



In the matter of:)
)
-----) ISCR Case No. 08-09511
SSN: -----)
)
Applicant for Security Clearance)

Appearances

For Government: Ray T. Blank, Jr., Esq., Department Counsel

For Applicant: *Pro se*

December 28, 2009

DECISION

ROSS, Wilford H., Administrative Judge:

Applicant submitted his Electronic Questionnaire for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) on March 3, 2008 (Item 4). On July 15, 2009, the Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals (DOHA) issued Applicant a Statement of Reasons (SOR) detailing the security concerns 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 Directive 5220.6, *Defense Industrial Personnel Security Clearance Review Program* (January 2, 1992), as amended (Directive); and the revised adjudicative guidelines (AG) promulgated by the President on December 29, 2005, and effective within the Department of Defense for SORs issued after September 1, 2006.

Applicant submitted an Answer to the SOR on August 5, 2009, and requested that a decision be made without a hearing. Department Counsel submitted a File of Relevant Material (FORM) to the Applicant on September 18, 2009. The Applicant received the FORM on September 25, 2009, and was given 30 days to submit any additional information. Applicant did not submit any additional information. The case

was assigned to me on December 4, 2009. Based upon a review of the written record, eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

Findings of Fact

Applicant is 29 and single. He served in the Marine Corps from 1998 until 2003. (Item 10.) He is employed by a defense contractor and seeks to obtain a security clearance in connection with his employment.

Guideline F, Financial Considerations

The Government alleges that Applicant is ineligible for clearance because he is financially overextended and therefore at risk of having to engage in illegal acts to generate funds. Applicant admits all of the subparagraphs in the SOR. Those admissions are hereby deemed findings of fact. Applicant submits, "The majority of these [debts] span from the time I exited the Marine Corps in 2003 until my start at my present job in 2006." He further submits that his plan is to pay his debts as his budget permits. (Item 2 at 1.) Applicant's responses to the nine allegations in the SOR follow.

1.a. Applicant admits that he is indebted to a medical creditor in the amount of \$335 since September 2005. In an answer to Interrogatories, Applicant states, "Was from incident where I was shot. [State] Victims Assistance covered expense." (Item 6 at 6.) He submitted no additional information to support this statement. The most recent credit report in the record, dated July 13, 2009, shows this debt as due and owing. (Item 9 at 1.) I find that this is Applicant's debt, that he has made no recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

1.b. Applicant admits that he owes a collection agency \$4,708 for a delinquent debt originally owed to a financial institution. Applicant has made no recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

1.c. Applicant admits that he is indebted to a finance agency in the amount of \$4,033 for a repossessed automobile. Applicant has previously stated that he paid off this account. (Item 5 at 3.) He also has stated that he had no knowledge of this account. (Item 6 at 3.) The most recent credit report in the record, dated July 13, 2009, shows this debt as due and owing. (Item 9 at 2.) I find that this is Applicant's debt, that he has made no recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

1.d. Applicant admits that he is indebted to a financial institution in the amount of \$9,775 for a repossessed automobile. Applicant has made no recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

1.e. Applicant admits that he is indebted to a collection agency for a delinquent debt in the amount of \$263 originally owed to a cable company. Applicant has made no

recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

1.f. Applicant admits that he is indebted to a collection agency for a delinquent debt in the amount of \$1,177 originally owed to a military member relief society. Applicant has made no recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

1.g. Applicant admits that he is indebted to a collection agency in the amount of \$143 for a delinquent debt originally owed to a financial institution. Applicant had previously stated that he had no knowledge of this account. (Item 6 at 4.) A credit report dated April 3, 2008, shows this debt to be due and owing. (Item 7 at 4.) I find that this is Applicant's debt, that he has made no recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

1.h. Applicant admits that he is indebted to a collection agency for a delinquent debt in the amount of \$392 owed to a telephone company. Applicant had previously stated that he had no knowledge of this account. (Item 6 at 4.) A credit report dated April 3, 2008, shows this debt to be due and owing. (Item 7 at 4.) I find that this is Applicant's debt, that he has made no recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

1.i. Applicant admits that he is indebted to a bank for a delinquent debt in the amount of \$6,176 since June 2001. Applicant had previously stated that his mother opened this account without his knowledge. (Item 5 at 3.) A credit report dated April 3, 2008, shows this debt to be due and owing and a joint contractual liability. (Item 7 at 4.) Based on the totality of the evidence, I find that this is Applicant's debt, that he has made no recent payments on this debt, and there is no evidence that he is going to make payments on this debt.

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 revised adjudicative guidelines (AG). 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 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 own common sense, as well as his 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 “[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. 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 applicant or proven by Department Counsel. . . .” The applicant has the ultimate burden of persuasion as to obtaining 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. 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 . . . 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

Guideline F, Financial Considerations

The security concern relating to the guideline for Financial Considerations is set out in AG ¶ 18:

Failure or 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. An individual who is financially overextended is at risk of having to engage in illegal acts to generate funds.

The guideline notes several conditions that could raise security concerns. Under AG ¶ 19(a), an “inability or unwillingness to satisfy debts” is potentially disqualifying. Similarly under AG ¶ 19(c), “a history of not meeting financial obligations” may raise security concerns. Applicant, by his own admission, and supported by the documentary evidence, has over \$26,000 in past-due debts, all of which have been due and owing for several years. The evidence is sufficient to raise these potentially disqualifying conditions.

The guideline also includes examples of conditions that could mitigate security concerns arising from financial difficulties. Under AG ¶ 20(a), the disqualifying condition may be mitigated where “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.” Applicant’s financial difficulties arose recently, primarily between about 2003 and 2006. In addition, Applicant has submitted nothing to show that he has paid any of his creditors, or has a plan to pay his creditors. It is Applicant’s burden to submit evidence showing that his financial situation has improved. He has not done so. This mitigating condition is not applicable to this case.

AG ¶ 20(b) states that the disqualifying conditions may be mitigated where “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, or a death, divorce or separation), and the individual acted responsibly under the circumstances.” Applicant submits that he had to leave the Armed Forces before he wished to do so because of a medical condition, and then suffered several years of underemployment. He also states, without documentary support, that he suffered two deaths in his family and had to financially support family members. There is little to no evidence, however, that Applicant acted responsibly since he became employed in the defense industry in 2006. This mitigating condition is also not applicable to this case.

Applicant has not initiated a good-faith effort to pay off his creditors. There is no record of his making any payments. Accordingly, AG ¶ 20(d) is not applicable. Finally, given the fact that he is \$26,000 in debt, I cannot find that “there are clear indications that the problem is being resolved or is under control,” as required by AG ¶ 20(c).

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 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. Applicant is under financial strain, and has been so for several years. His debt situation is not yet under control. Under AG ¶ 2(a)(3), the Applicant's conduct is recent. Based on the state of the record, 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 a high 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 financial situation at this time.

On balance, I conclude that Applicant has not successfully overcome the Government's case opposing his request for a DoD security clearance. Accordingly, the evidence supports a denial of his request for a security clearance.

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

WILFORD H. ROSS
Administrative Judge