



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



In the matter of:

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) ISCR Case No. 18-01126
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Applicant for Security Clearance

Appearances

For Government: Andrew H. Henderson, Esq., Department Counsel

For Applicant: *Pro se*

10/15/2018

Decision

LYNCH, Noreen A., Administrative Judge:

On May 11, 2018, the Department of Defense (DOD) issued Applicant a Statement of Reasons (SOR) listing security concerns arising under Guideline F (Financial Considerations). The action was taken under Executive Order (EO) 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 June 2017.

Applicant timely answered the SOR and requested an administrative determination. Department Counsel submitted a File of Relevant Material (FORM) dated June 22, 2018.¹ Applicant received the FORM on July 13, 2019. He did not submit an additional response to the FORM. The case was assigned to me on October 11, 2018. Based on a review of the case file, submissions, and exhibits, eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

¹The Government submitted five items for the record.

Findings of Fact

In his answer to the SOR, Applicant admitted all allegations in the SOR (1.a-1.o) under Guideline F, without explanation.

Applicant is 53 years old. He obtained his high school diploma in 1984. He never married, but has two children from a significant relationship. He has worked for his current employer since 2017. He reports no military service. Applicant has not held a security clearance. He completed his security clearance application (SCA) in 2018. (Item 2)

The SOR alleges that Applicant has 15 delinquent consumer debts, which total about \$103,000. (Items 3, 4, and 5) The delinquent accounts are either charged off or in collection. He disclosed the delinquent debts in his 2018 security clearance application. (Item 2)

During his November 2017 investigative interview, Applicant explained that he was unemployed from April 2016 to April 2017 recovering from injuries. (Item 3) He supported himself with disability benefits. He told the investigator that he had no information or documentation concerning the accounts that are delinquent. He is trying to resolve his debts and is in the process of building his savings to start payment plans. He stated that the debt was an isolated event and he has no intention to incur delinquent debts in the future. (Item 3)

Applicant volunteered during that interview that some of these delinquent accounts are from 2011. He stated that the accounts became delinquent in 2014 as a result of financial hardship due to medical bills, funeral bills, home improvement, and automobile repairs. (Item 3) In his SCA, Applicant disclosed that he had many credit card bills to pay, but his earnings did not allow for him to pay the bills. (Item 2) He further explained that he would look for a financial advisor to help him consolidate his debt so that he could pay on an affordable monthly basis.

Applicant did not submit any documentation to support any mitigation for the SOR debts. He did not submit a response to the FORM. There is no information in the record as to how Applicant developed the debts or a nexus between the unemployment and the substantial delinquencies. Some debts predate the unemployment. He offered no real plan as to how he would address the delinquent debts. Applicant did not meet his burden of proof in this case to mitigate the security concerns under the financial considerations guideline.

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(a), 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 national security eligibility will be resolved in favor of the 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 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

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.

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

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 to live within one's means, satisfy debts, and meet financial obligations may indicate poor self-control, lack of judgement, or unwillingness to abide by rules and regulations, all of which can raise questions about an individuals' reliability, trustworthiness, and ability to protect classified or sensitive information. Financial distress can also be caused or exacerbated by, and thus be a possible indicator of, other issues of personnel security concerns such as excessive gambling, mental health conditions, substance misuse, or alcohol abuse or dependence. An individual who is financially overextended is at a greater risk of having to engage in illegal or otherwise questionable acts to generate funds. Affluence that cannot be explained by known sources of income is also a security concern insofar as it may result from criminal activity, including espionage.

The Government provided credible evidence that Applicant has 15 delinquent consumer debts which total about \$103,00. Consequently, Financial Considerations Disqualifying Conditions (FC DC) AG ¶ 19(a), (b), and (c), and apply. With such conditions raised, it is left to Applicant to overcome the case against him and mitigate security concerns.

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. Applicant provided no information that would allow this MC. There is no explanation from Applicant concerning the delinquent debt. None of the mitigating conditions apply in this case.

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(d):

⁷ *Id.*

(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 53 years old. He has worked for his current employer since 2017. He did not provide sufficient evidence as to how he acquired the delinquent debts or how he will address them. A promise to pay in the future is not sufficient mitigation.

He has not met his burden of proof in this case. I have doubts about his judgment and reliability. Any doubts must be resolved in favor of the Government. Applicant failed to meet his burden in this case. He did not mitigate the security concerns under the financial considerations guideline.

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.o:	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

