

Foreign Influences Can Foil Security Clearance

Q:

Two years ago I got married. My wife immigrated to the United States from a Middle East nation as a teenager. Most of her family remains in the Middle East and we visit them occasionally. I've been in the Navy for almost a decade, and now it is trying to pull my security clearance because of foreign influence concerns. Short of divorce, how can I prevent this revocation?

A:

You shouldn't have to go to such extremes to keep your security clearance. However, when relationships with foreigners raise security concerns, you may have to prove your loyalties to the United States and show why friends and family abroad do not put you at greater risk of foreign influence or conflicts of interest.

Given the United States' precarious relationship with many Middle East nations, it is not surprising that the military is giving you a hard time over your security clearance. These days, even ties to people in allied nations, such as Pakistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan, can send up red flags during security clearance reinvestigations, which happen every five, 10 or 15 years, depending on the level of clearance. They fear that a foreign individual, group or government could pressure you into aiding them in a way that could hurt U.S. interests. That, or perhaps your loyalties are divided and you'll be willing to share sensitive information with foreign contacts.

The statement of reasons you received notifying you about the potential revocation is like a black-and-white snap shot. It's your job, or that of the attorney representing you, to help the case's adjudicator see the gray. In some cases, this might mean showing how a spouse's family who lives abroad do not work for a foreign government or are removed from the country's military and political affairs. If your visits to your spouse's family are casual and infrequent, a judge might find there is no genuine threat to national security.

Crucial to keeping your security clearance is your loyalty and trustworthiness. The government usually wants to see that in the past you've demonstrated your ability to side with the U.S. Your longstanding service in the Navy could provide an adjudicator with such assurance, especially if you served honorably in dangerous environments.

Security clearance is the key to many good jobs in the Navy, and it is a shame that we live in a world where familial relations can threaten a seaman's livelihood. Seamen who have received an SOR due to foreign influence, financial or other concerns should immediately contact a security clearance attorney who can represent them before the Department of the Navy Central Adjudication Facility.

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. The information in this column is not intended as legal advice.