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3 May 2011

DISPOSITION MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: (U) Unaccredited Degree: Special Skills Officer

CASE: 2011-10164-IG

ISSUES UNDER INVESTIGATION:

1. ~~(C)~~ Based on a 2008 United States Secret Service investigation that identified an Agency contractor as possessing a degree from a known diploma mill, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated a proactive investigation on 5 August 2008 into Agency Staff claiming degrees from non-accredited institutions. OIG matched a list of known, unaccredited institutions against Agency BIO information to identify any individuals who had provided degree evidence to Human Resources (HR).^{1,2}

(b)(6) [redacted] a Special Skills Officer, holds a bachelor's degree from (b)(1)
 (b)(7)(c) [redacted] and self-reported (b)(3) CIAAct
 having a fraudulent degree to OIG when he became aware of this (b)(3) NatSecAct
 investigation. [redacted] a known, unaccredited institution, is not affiliated with (b)(6)
 the accredited [redacted] (b)(7)(c)

¹ (U//~~FOUO~~) The term unaccredited refers to the recognition and acceptability of a degree for use in federal employment as recognized by the Office of Personnel Management. Unaccredited degrees cannot be used to meet the qualifications for federal positions that require a degree. The complete definitions of accreditation are included in the Appendix.

² (U//~~FOUO~~) The Agency biographical profile (Agency BIO) is the mechanism for tracking information on individuals who officially declare their education to the Agency by providing proof of attendance. The Agency BIO is made available to hiring managers and used directly in staffing decisions. Only staff employees and former employees were covered by this review because there is no central database on contractor educational records.



(b)(3) NatSecAct

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(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

2. (X) OIG reviewed the claims made by [redacted] regarding his degree and the associated education to determine if there were false statements or improper use of an unaccredited degree, and if there was an improper reimbursement for the degree by the Agency.

INVESTIGATIVE EFFORTS:

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

3. (X) OIG reviewed [redacted] security file for any degree claims (b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

4. (X) OIG reviewed [redacted] Official Personnel Folder and only Agency BIO. (b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

5. (X) OIG interviewed [redacted] on 31 March 2009, regarding his unaccredited degree.

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

6. (X) OIG reviewed Agency regulations and relevant laws related to the allegations. (b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

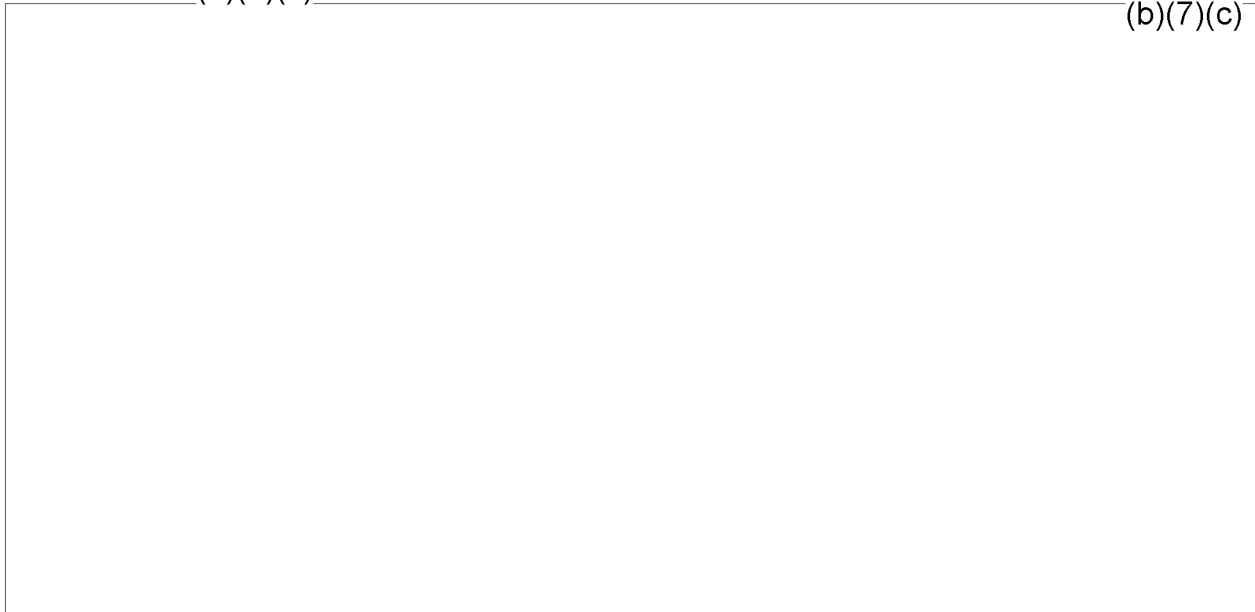
RESULTS:

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

7. (X) [redacted] is a [redacted] currently serving as a Special Skills Officer (b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[redacted] has been an Agency (b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct employee since [redacted] holds a bachelor's degree from [redacted] (b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(6) [redacted] granted [redacted] (b)(6)
(b)(7)(c) [redacted] (b)(7)(c) (b)(6)
(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(c) (b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)



(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

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[Redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

10. (U) Former students identified by [Redacted] were informed by DOJ that they had been defrauded and that their [Redacted] degrees were not valid. The students were informed in a letter, [Redacted] that stated in part:

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[Redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

11. (U) [Redacted] advertised its degrees in mainstream publications. Students would receive extensive credit for transferred courses as well as extensive "life experience" credit. Students would register for a small number of classes and were asked to purchase and read textbooks for the classes. Students would then submit a paper based on the class topic for grading. For classes taken at the university, students would pay an enrollment fee for each class, and then a separate grading fee for each paper submitted. Since there were no faculty behind the classes, student submissions varied greatly in quality. There was no valid check of the academic work performed.

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[Redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

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(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

13. (C) During a 31 March 2009 interview, [redacted] told OIG that he received his degree prior to his entrance on duty [redacted]. At the time he received his degree, he was an employee of [redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[redacted] did not pay for his degree but provided an annual stipend once he obtained the degree. [redacted] explained during interview with OIG that, prior to his enrollment, he did not conduct in-depth research into [redacted] accreditation because it was advertised

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

and endorsed by the [redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

14. (C) During his interview with OIG, [redacted] stated that he [redacted] recruiter, about [redacted] lack of accreditation when he was initially recruited and prior to his formal employment application.

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[redacted] also stated that he informed an HR officer when contacted about his employment application. During his interview with OIG, [redacted] stated that

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[redacted] informed the HR recruiter that [redacted] had been shut down so he was not able to provide official transcripts. [redacted] was interviewed and related

that [redacted] was "honest [and] upfront" about having a degree from [redacted] and what work [redacted] performed to obtain the degree during [redacted]

recruitment interview approximately one to one-and-a-half-years prior to [redacted] entrance on duty.

(b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(c)

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)

15. (C) [redacted] completed and signed an Supplemental Personal History Statement (SPHS)/Form 444 on [redacted]. He reported that he

(b)(7)(c)

attended [redacted] and that he received his bachelor of science degree in [redacted]. In an updated SPHS form, dated [redacted]

[redacted] reported the same information. [redacted] also provided a copy of his [redacted] transcript during his security processing showing that he was granted 60 credits as transfer credits or by evaluation.

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

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(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

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(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

During an Office of Security background investigation interview on

(b)(1) [redacted] advised the security investigator that he
(b)(3) CIAAct [redacted] assessed a degree from [redacted]
(b)(3) NatSecAct [redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c) 16. (C) [redacted] stated that sometime in [redacted] he received a

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

letter stating that [redacted] was investigating [redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[redacted] said that he completed paperwork provided by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and eventually received a check that reimbursed him for a percentage of the money he paid to [redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[redacted] contended that he believed his degree is legitimate but from a school that no longer exists.

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

17. (C) A review of the position description for a specialized skills officer at a full performance level shows that the educational requirements for his position is a bachelor's degree or equivalent experience.

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[redacted] recruiter [redacted] confirmed in an interview with OIG that [redacted] met the requirements [redacted]

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

DISPOSITION:

(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)
(b)(7)(c)

18. (U) [redacted] was widely recognized as a fraudulent institution. Though it had "classes" and "coursework," the efforts of students were not evaluated by actual faculty. [redacted]

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

19. (C) [redacted] received his [redacted] "degree" prior to his employment with the Agency and did not receive any US Government reimbursement.

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

[redacted] Agency recruiter was aware that [redacted] degree was granted by an unaccredited institution when he entered on duty, and there is no evidence

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct

that [redacted] profited from his degree. [redacted] has not presented his "degree" to the Agency as part of his Agency BIO nor presented it as part of any application for internal positions.

(b)(1) (b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct (b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct (b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(c)

(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

³ (U) The letters were generated by DOJ, and the funds were actually part of a civil forfeiture.

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(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

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20. ~~(C)~~ There is no evidence of criminal or regulatory violation on the part of Based on the currently available information, no disciplinary action or further investigation is recommended.

(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

Special Agent

(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

Supervisory Special Agent

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