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17 August 2011

DISPOSITION MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: (U) Unaccredited Degree: Telecommunications Information Systems Officer

CASE: 2010-10166-IG

ISSUES UNDER INVESTIGATION:

1. ~~(S)~~ 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 unaccredited institutions against Agency BIO information to identify any individuals who had provided degree evidence to Human Resources.^{1,2} One of the individuals identified, [redacted], claimed a bachelor's degree from [redacted] an unaccredited institution, on his Agency BIO.

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

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

2. ~~(C)~~ 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)
(b)(1)
(b)(3) CIAAct
(b)(3) NatSecAct
(b)(6)
(b)(7)(c)

3. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG reviewed [redacted] security file for any degree claims.

4. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG reviewed [redacted] Official Personnel Folder (OPF) and online Agency BIO.

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

5. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG interviewed [redacted] on 9 October 2008 regarding his unaccredited degree.

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

6. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG obtained and reviewed [redacted] internal job applications and resumes for positions that he held at the Agency as well as his Performance Appraisal Reports.

7. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG reviewed Agency regulations and relevant laws related to the allegations.

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

RESULTS:

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

8. ~~(C)~~ [redacted] holds a bachelor of science "degree" in [redacted] with a minor in [redacted] from [redacted] that he received [redacted]

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

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

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



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

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

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10. (U) [redacted] provides bachelor's, master's, and doctoral "degrees" through "life experience."

[Large redacted area]

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

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

13. (U) [redacted] claims accreditation by [redacted]

[redacted] Both

of these are accreditation mills, and neither is approved by the US Department of Education (DoE). [redacted] was never accredited by the US DoE.⁴

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

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

14. (S) In a 9 October 2008 sworn statement to OIG, [redacted] stated that [redacted] or so after receiving a diploma from [redacted] during a transfer between assignments, he provided an HR Officer with documents showing completion of his bachelor's degree. He said that the documents were then inserted into his personnel file. He stated that he went into his Agency BIO profile and added his "degree" from [redacted] because he wanted recognition.

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

⁴ (U//~~FOUO~~) According to Title 20 U.S.C. § 1099b (*Recognition of accrediting agency or association*), the Secretary of Education is responsible for recognizing accrediting bodies, which in turn recognize institutions.

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

(b)(6) 15. (e) In a PAR for the rating period of [redacted] through (b)(1)
 (b)(7)(c) [redacted], the rating official reported that [redacted] recently (b)(3) CIAAct
 (b)(6) completed his bachelor of science degree [redacted] from [redacted] (b)(3) NatSecAct
 (b)(7)(c) [redacted] (b)(6)
 (b)(7)(c) [redacted] (b)(7)(c)

(b)(6) 16. (e) On 9 October 2008, [redacted] told OIG that he believed (b)(1)
 (b)(7)(c) [redacted] was a good option to assess his prior course credits, [redacted] (b)(3) CIAAct
 (b)(6) experience, and work experience, especially because he was moving su (b)(3) NatSecAct
 (b)(7)(c) frequently. He said he believed [redacted] claimed to be accredited. He (b)(6)
 (b)(6) acknowledged that he would have had to do more work to obtain a degree (b)(7)(c)
 (b)(7)(c) from a more traditional university. He added that he "tested" [redacted] (b)(6)
 (b)(6) prior to enrollment to assess its legitimacy by submitting false information (b)(7)(c)
 (b)(7)(c) to review [redacted] response. [redacted] was unable to provide any (b)(1)
 (b)(6) substantiation for this assertion or why he would need to "test" the (b)(3) CIAAct
 (b)(1) legitimacy of [redacted] (b)(3) NatSecAct
 (b)(3) CIAAct [redacted] (b)(6)
 (b)(3) NatSecAct [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
 (b)(6) [redacted] (b)(6)

(b)(7)(c) 17. (e) [redacted] stated that after he received his "degree" from (b)(7)(c)
 (b)(6) [redacted] his instinct at the time was that [redacted] was not accredited, but he (b)(6)
 (b)(7)(c) indicated its Web site did not cite whether or not it was accredited. As a (b)(7)(c)
 (b)(6) result of the interview with OIG, he said he became aware that [redacted] (b)(6)
 (b)(7)(c) was not an accredited university and not something that he can present as (b)(7)(c)
 a legitimate degree.

(b)(6) 18. (e) During his interview with OIG, [redacted] stated that his (b)(6)
 (b)(7)(c) "degree" from [redacted] was not a credential he used or ever needed to use.
 A records review confirmed that [redacted] submitted his completion (b)(1)
 evidence to HR and included the degree completion in his [redacted] PAR (b)(3) CIAAct
 (b)(1) (b)(3) NatSecAct
 (b)(3) CIAAct (b)(6)
 (b)(3) NatSecAct (b)(7)(c) (b)(6)
 (b)(6) (b)(7)(c)
 (b)(7)(c)

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DISPOSITION:

19. (U//~~FOUO~~)

[Redacted]

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

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

reported that he had a degree on his PAR, and it was present on his Agency BIO between [Redacted] and the present, where it would have been used in consideration for obtaining [Redacted] positions. Based on the currently available information, no disciplinary action or further investigation is recommended. OIG will notify HR and request [Redacted] degree information be removed from his Agency BIO.

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

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

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

[Redacted]

Special Agent

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

[Redacted]

Supervisory Special Agent

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