

**United States Department of Energy
Office of Hearings and Appeals**

In the Matter of: Personnel Security Hearing)
 Filing Date: December 31, 2025)
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Case No.: PSH-26-0034

Issued: June 12, 2026

Administrative Judge Decision

Phillip Harmonick, Administrative Judge:

This Decision concerns the eligibility of XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (the Individual) to hold an access authorization under the United States Department of Energy’s (DOE) regulations, set forth at 10 C.F.R. Part 710, “Procedures for Determining Eligibility for Access to Classified Matter and Special Nuclear Material or Eligibility to Hold a Sensitive Position.”¹ As discussed below, after carefully considering the record before me in light of the relevant regulations and the *National Security Adjudicative Guidelines for Determining Eligibility for Access to Classified Information or Eligibility to Hold a Sensitive Position* (June 8, 2017) (Adjudicative Guidelines), I conclude that the Individual’s access authorization should not be restored.

I. BACKGROUND

The Individual began working for DOE in 2021 and was subsequently granted access authorization. Transcript of Hearing, OHA Case No. PSH-26-0034 (Tr.) at 131–32. On July 23, 2025, the local security office (LSO) received a personnel security information report (PSIR) indicating that the Individual had displayed “bizar[re] behavior” calling her mental health into question. Exhibit (Ex.) 5 at 21–22.²

In September 2025, the Individual underwent a psychological evaluation with a DOE-contracted psychologist (DOE Psychologist). Ex. 9 at 40. The DOE Psychologist subsequently issued a report of the evaluation (Report) in which he opined that the Individual met the criteria for a diagnosis of Delusional Disorder, Persecutory type, under the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental*

¹ The regulations define access authorization as “an administrative determination that an individual is eligible for access to classified matter or is eligible for access to, or control over, special nuclear material.” 10 C.F.R. § 710.5(a). This Decision will refer to such authorization as access authorization or security clearance.

² The exhibits submitted by the LSO were Bates numbered in the upper right corner of each page. This Decision will refer to the Bates numbering when citing to exhibits submitted by the LSO.

Health Disorders – Fifth Edition – Text Revision (DSM-5-TR). *Id.* at 53. He further opined that this condition impaired “cognitive functioning, insight, and judgment.” *Id.*

The LSO issued the Individual a Notification Letter advising her that it possessed reliable information that created substantial doubt regarding her eligibility for access authorization. Ex. 1 at 6–8. In a Summary of Security Concerns (SSC) attached to the letter, the LSO explained that the derogatory information raised security concerns under Guideline I of the Adjudicative Guidelines. *Id.* at 5.

The Individual exercised her right to request an administrative review hearing pursuant to 10 C.F.R. Part 710. Ex. 2. The Director of the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) appointed me as the Administrative Judge, and I conducted an administrative hearing. The LSO submitted thirteen exhibits (Ex. 1–13) and the Individual submitted fourteen exhibits (Ex. A–M-2).³ The Individual testified on her own behalf and offered the testimony of a former supervisor (Former Supervisor), a contractor employee previously under her oversight (Contractor Employee), a second contractor employee (Second Contractor Employee), and a coworker. Tr. at 3, 14, 40, 60, 78, 96. The LSO offered the testimony of the DOE Psychologist. Tr. at 4, 138.

II. THE NOTIFICATION LETTER AND THE ASSOCIATED SECURITY CONCERNS

The LSO cited Guideline I (Psychological Conditions) of the Adjudicative Guidelines as the basis for its substantial doubt regarding the Individual’s eligibility for access authorization. Ex. 1 at 5. “Certain emotional, mental, and personality conditions can impair judgment, reliability, or trustworthiness. A formal diagnosis of a disorder is not required for there to be a concern under this guideline.” Adjudicative Guidelines at ¶ 27. The SSC cited the DOE Psychologist’s opinion that the Individual met the criteria for a diagnosis of Delusional Disorder, Persecutory type, under the *DSM-5-TR*, and that this condition could impair her judgment, stability, reliability, or trustworthiness. Ex. 1 at 5. The LSO’s citation to the opinion of the DOE Psychologist that the Individual has a mental health condition that could impair her judgment, stability, reliability, or trustworthiness justifies its invocation of Guideline I. Adjudicative Guidelines at ¶ 22(b).

III. REGULATORY STANDARDS

A DOE administrative review proceeding under Part 710 requires me, as the Administrative Judge, to issue a Decision that reflects my comprehensive, common-sense judgment, made after consideration of all of the relevant evidence, favorable and unfavorable, as to whether the granting or continuation of a person’s access authorization will not endanger the common defense and security and is clearly consistent with the national interest. 10 C.F.R. § 710.7(a). The regulatory standard implies that there is a presumption against granting or restoring a security clearance. *See Dep’t of Navy v. Egan*, 484 U.S. 518, 531 (1988) (“clearly consistent with the national interest” standard for granting security clearances indicates “that security determinations should err, if they

³ The Individual’s Ex. A–M were submitted in a single PDF and will be cited to based on the applicable exhibit label and pagination within that PDF. Subsequent to having submitted the aforementioned exhibits, the Individual submitted a “supplement” to Exhibit M as a separate document. Tr. at 9. I indicated that I would refer to the Ex. M included in the first PDF as “Ex. M-1” and the Ex. M submitted as a standalone PDF as “Ex. M-2.” *Id.* at 10.

must, on the side of denials”); *Dorfmont v. Brown*, 913 F.2d 1399, 1403 (9th Cir. 1990) (strong presumption against the issuance of a security clearance).

An individual must come forward at the hearing with evidence to convince the DOE that granting or restoring access authorization “will not endanger the common defense and security and will be clearly consistent with the national interest.” 10 C.F.R. § 710.27(d). An individual is afforded a full opportunity to present evidence supporting his or her eligibility for an access authorization. The Part 710 regulations are drafted so as to permit the introduction of a very broad range of evidence at personnel security hearings. Even appropriate hearsay evidence may be admitted. *Id.* § 710.26(h). Hence, an individual is afforded the utmost latitude in the presentation of evidence to mitigate the security concerns at issue.

IV. FINDINGS OF FACT

A. Individual’s Reporting of Workplace Incidents

The Individual first perceived what she believed to be drone activity at a DOE site in January 2024. Tr. at 111. The Individual believed that she was required to report this observation and photographed with her personal cell phone what she believed to be a drone. *Id.* at 112; *see also* Ex. B at 53 (reflecting an excerpt from a DOE manual directing employees to record and report unmanned aerial systems if they observe them). On January 25, 2024, the Individual contacted a DOE employee with responsibilities related to security at a DOE site to notify her that she had taken pictures on her personal cell phone, which she perceived might have presented a security concern that should be self-reported. Ex. 8 at 34–35. Another DOE employee met with the Individual regarding the photographs she had taken and determined that they did not depict sensitive information. *Id.* at 34. During her conversation with the second DOE employee, the Individual disclosed her belief that a man was “seeking information about her” *Id.* DOE personnel with responsibility for intelligence matters conducted an assessment. *Id.* at 32. The personnel who conducted the assessment concluded that the Individual was “open and honest” and that “the individual she interacted with [was] not [] attempting to collect sensitive government information.” *Id.*

The Individual made a number of disclosures of unusual events to personnel at the DOE site at which she works in June and July 2025. In June 2025, the Individual reported hearing popping sounds in the walls of her office and smelling an odor of “burnt light ballasts and chlorine.” Ex. 6 at 25. She also complained of having experienced skin irritation, headaches, watery eyes, and hoarseness after having noticed the odor. Tr. at 19, 108. At the hearing, numerous witnesses testified that they smelled the odor as well. *Id.* at 18 (Former Supervisor testifying that the Individual’s office “smelled like an electrical type odor”); 63, 71 (Second Contractor Employee indicating that the smell “was in between electrical and plastic” and that he experienced dry eyes after spending a brief period of time in the Individual’s office); 85–86 (coworker testifying to noticing the smell and, once, “a little bit of haziness” in the Individual’s office).

The Individual later reported continuing to smell the odor after being moved to a different office and also reported perceiving the odor in her personal vehicle and home. Ex. 6 at 25; *see also* Tr. at 109 (Individual testifying to having experienced similar physical effects in her vehicle); Ex. D

(reflecting the Individual's theories related to the substances that may have caused the odors and the results of laboratory testing the Individual obtained). The Individual told the Former Supervisor that she believed that she "might have been targeted" as a result of disclosing alleged misuse of funds by a DOE contractor and cited to additional concerns related to being followed and having her vehicle tampered with. Tr. at 21–23, 27, 121–22; *see also id.* at 26 (Former Supervisor testifying that he perceived that the Individual might have been experiencing delusions and that he accordingly "had her report it" to security), 45 (Contractor Employee testifying that the Individual told him she suspected "she was being targeted"), 65–68 (Second Contractor Employee testifying that the Individual told him that she believed she was being followed and targeted as a result of bringing forward concerns related to the actions of a DOE contractor). In July 2025, a DOE team measured for "high energy microwave frequencies" at the DOE site in connection with a report by the Individual. Ex. 7 at 29; Tr. at 117–19 (testifying that she suspected that work on a fire suppression system might have been related to surveillance or exposing her to an electromagnetic field). The DOE team found "[n]o unusual signals or anomalies." Ex. 7 at 29.

On July 19, 2025, the Individual contacted law enforcement "to report a chain of events" she believed were possibly connected. Ex. 6 at 24. The Individual was interviewed by a law enforcement officer and, in addition to disclosing the aforementioned chemical odors, reported having observed "strange stains" in her vehicle, damage to the rear hatch of her vehicle, having seen a "suspicious vehicle" near her residence, and having sighted "'drone' activity [] in her work area." *Id.* at 25–26. A report summarizing a review of the matter by law enforcement concluded that the stains in the Individual's vehicle were attributable to a leaking moonroof and there were no signs of tampering with or forced entry into the hatch of the vehicle. *Id.* Regarding the chemical odor, a law enforcement officer spoke to a fire department representative who had investigated the Individual's June 2025 report and observed no popping sounds or chemical odors at that time. *Id.* at 25. Regarding the Individual's other claims, the report noted that a photo of the suspicious vehicle was insufficiently clear to read the tags of the vehicle and that "no known recent reports of drone or UAV [unidentified aerial vehicle] sightings have been investigated. To be determined." *Id.* at 26. The Individual told a law enforcement officer that she believed that these events might be related to a report that she had filed with the Office of Inspector General. *Id.* On July 23, 2025, the PSIR was sent to the LSO indicating that the Individual's behavior raised doubts as to her stability, judgment, reliability, and mental health. Ex. 5.

B. Evaluation by the DOE Psychologist

The Individual met with the DOE Psychologist for a psychological evaluation on August 22, 2025. Ex. 9 at 40. To conduct the evaluation, the DOE Psychologist conducted a clinical interview of the Individual, administered the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-3rd Edition (MMPI-3), and reviewed documentation contained in the Individual's personnel security file. *Id.*

The Individual told the DOE Psychologist that she had been diagnosed with several medical conditions, including tuberculosis in 2024. *Id.* at 42–43. The Individual was prescribed Isoniazid, an antibiotic, to treat the tuberculosis. *Id.* at 51. The Individual took Isoniazid from April 2024 to August 2024 when she was weaned off the drug due to adverse side effects. *Id.* at 43, 45, 50; *see also* Tr. at 105–06 (Individual describing physical symptoms she experienced due to the medication and expressing uncertainty as to whether it might have influenced her perception of

events she observed), 114 (Individual testifying that she “was at the height of the Isoniazid treatment” when she first communicated with the Former Supervisor about seeing drones). The Individual told the DOE Psychologist that she was unsure whether her perception of the things she reported to DOE was influenced by the medication she was prescribed. Ex. 9 at 43.

During the clinical interview, the Individual told the DOE Psychologist that she had experienced an adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine that led her to conduct research. *Id.* at 44. Through that research, the Individual believed that she had uncovered evidence of U.S. government funding for pandemic research in China “in the 2003 timeframe” which she believed to be “inappropriate research and studies that people wouldn’t want [her] to say anything about.” *Id.* The Individual theorized that “there was a connection between [her] research on COVID and people following [her].” *Id.*

The Individual reported to the DOE Psychologist that she had seen unexplained drones at the DOE site and her home and was being followed by unknown persons. *Id.* at 44–45. The Individual showed the DOE Psychologist two videos she had recorded on her phone of what she purported to be the drones, which the DOE Psychologist characterized as depicting “a small blinking light” in the night sky and “a small light in the air.” *Id.* at 45; *see also* Tr. at 55 (Contractor Employee testifying that the Individual had shown him a video of the purported drones but that he did not see any drones in the video). Regarding being followed, the Individual cited observing numerous vehicles with license plates from the state in which the DOE site is located while visiting friends in another region of the country and observing persons in vehicles start their vehicles as she exited the building at which she worked which she took to mean that they were “waiting for [her].” Ex. 9 at 44–45.

The results of the MMPI-3 administered by the DOE Psychologist following the clinical interview showed clinically significant elevations on numerous scales, including Somatic Complaints, Ideas of Persecution, Dysfunctional Negative Emotions, Neurological Complaints, Malaise, Anxiety-Related Experiences, Activation, Social Avoidance, and Psychoticism. *Id.* at 46–47, 61–62, 64. The DOE Psychologist indicated that these elevations collectively suggested that the Individual’s physical ailments had a psychological component, she was prone to suspecting others of intending to harm her, she experienced “unusual thought processes and perceptual phenomena,” she “engage[d] in unrealistic thinking,” and she possibly demonstrated “impaired reality testing.” *Id.* at 46–47.

The DOE Psychologist ultimately concluded that the Individual met the diagnostic criteria for Delusional Disorder under the *DSM-5-TR*, which are as follows:

- A. The presence of one or more delusions with a duration of 1 month or longer.
- B. Criterion A for schizophrenia has never been met;
- C. Apart from the impact of the delusion(s) or its ramifications, functioning is not markedly impaired, and behavior is not obviously bizarre or odd.

- D. If manic or major depressive episodes have occurred, these have been brief relative to the duration of the delusional periods.
- E. The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance or another medical condition and is not better explained by another mental disorder, such as body dysmorphic disorder or obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Id. at 54. The DOE Psychologist determined that the Individual's conspiratorial beliefs and reports constituted delusions that had persisted for over one month and that the delusional beliefs were not attributable to another source. *Id.* at 50. In evaluating whether Criterion E was met, the DOE Psychologist consulted with a medical doctor (MD) who indicated that, based on his review of relevant literature, Isoniazid-induced psychosis was rare and the significant majority of those who experienced Isoniazid-induced psychosis recovered within three months of discontinuing the medication. *Id.* at 56–57. The MD opined that it was unlikely that Isoniazid-induced psychosis would have persisted one year after the Individual discontinued the medication, particularly considering that the Individual did not report any other symptoms attributable to Isoniazid use as of the date of the psychological evaluation. *Id.* In light of the MD's opinion, the DOE Psychologist concluded that the Individual's delusions were not attributable to Isoniazid use.⁴ *Id.* at 52.

The DOE Psychologist further opined that the Individual's Delusional Disorder met the *DSM-5-TR* specifier of Persecutory type, which is applicable "when the central theme of the delusion involves the individual's belief [that] he or she is being conspired against, cheated, spied on, followed, poisoned, drugged, maliciously maligned, harassed, or obstructed in the pursuit of long-term goals." *Id.* at 54.

On September 4, 2025, the DOE Psychologist issued the Report. *Id.* at 53. Therein, he opined that, because Delusional Disorder is "a psychotic disorder that impairs cognitive functioning, insight, and judgment, the condition impaired the Individual's judgment, stability, reliability, or trustworthiness. *Id.* The DOE Psychologist indicated that the Individual might benefit from consulting with a psychiatrist for potential medication management and a licensed mental health professional for psychotherapy. *Id.* at 52.

C. Individual's Recent Activity and Updated Opinion of the DOE Psychologist

The Individual testified that she did not agree with the DOE Psychologist's diagnosis of Delusional Disorder. Tr. at 97. The Individual sought counseling with a licensed professional counselor "for about four or five sessions" related to anxiety but discontinued the counseling because she felt that the privacy terms, which she perceived as allowing the counselor to use her information for things to which she did not consent, were "quite egregious" and not "in accordance with [her] rights." *Id.* at 97, 133–34. According to the Individual, she would not be opposed to receiving psychological treatment if she "had what [she] believed was a firm diagnosis that [she] could stand behind that had all the facts put out first," but that she did not believe that the DOE Psychologist's diagnosis constituted such a diagnosis because it "did not follow APA [American Psychological Association] standards [or] consider the other [] explanations" for her experiences or rule out alternative

⁴ The DOE Psychologist also considered and rejected or found inadequately supported other potential explanations for the Individual's delusional beliefs. Ex. 9 at 52.

psychological conditions. *Id.* at 124–25; *see also* Ex. E (referencing “perceived violations” by the DOE Psychologist of “APA ethical principles and code of conduct”); Tr. at 135 (Individual testifying that she had pursued alternative treatments, such as acupuncture, and was “scared of medication”).

The Individual testified that she continued to suspect she had been targeted by nefarious forces, citing as potential reasons her research into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, disclosing fraud and misconduct by a DOE contractor, and disclosing legal violations by another DOE contractor. *Id.* at 98–102; *see also* Ex. I (summarizing the Individual’s research). However, the Individual characterized these as theories and denied that she definitively believed that any of them explained her experiences or that they constituted “firm fixed belief[s]” as the DOE Psychologist had concluded. Tr. at 98, 127–28.

The DOE Psychologist testified that his diagnosis and recommendations for treatment were unchanged after observing the hearing testimony and that he did not believe that the Individual’s condition was under control or in remission. *Id.* at 139, 159–60. With respect to the Individual’s concerns related to whether he had comported with APA standards in conducting the psychological evaluation, the DOE Psychologist asserted that he had met the standards within the context of his engagement with DOE and noted that his contract with DOE allowed him to see the Individual once and did not allow him “to investigate and to call up anybody other than previous providers of mental health services” as part of the evaluation. *Id.* at 147, 163. As to whether the Individual’s psychosis was attributable to her use of Isoniazid, the DOE Psychologist opined that even if it was it would “still lead[] to the potential of being treated with medication by a psychiatrist.” *Id.* at 158–59. The DOE Psychologist opined that the Individual’s condition was chronic and that her prognosis was poor because she was resistant to treatment. *Id.* at 159–60.

V. ANALYSIS

Conditions that could mitigate security concerns under Guideline I include:

- (a) The identified condition is readily controllable with treatment, and the individual has demonstrated ongoing and consistent compliance with the treatment plan;
- (b) The individual has voluntarily entered a counseling or treatment program for a condition that is amendable to treatment, and the individual is currently receiving counseling or treatment with a favorable prognosis by a duly qualified mental health professional;
- (c) Recent opinion by a duly qualified mental health professional employed by, or acceptable to and approved by, the U.S. Government that an individual’s previous condition is under control or in remission, and has a low probability of recurrence or exacerbation;
- (d) The past psychological/psychiatric condition was temporary, the situation has been resolved, and the individual no longer shows indications of emotional instability;

- (e) There is no indication of a current problem.

Adjudicative Guidelines at ¶ 29.

Before addressing the mitigating conditions, I will first consider several arguments by the Individual that the DOE Psychologist's diagnosis should be rejected and that I should conclude that his opinion does not present security concerns. First, she argued that the DOE Psychologist did not follow APA standards and therefore that the diagnosis should be rejected. It is not apparent that the APA standards constitute rigid rules for how a forensic evaluation must be conducted in connection with adjudication of eligibility for a DOE security clearance. To the extent that the Individual is pointing out that a single forensic evaluation provides only a limited snapshot of information from which to draw diagnostic inferences, she is correct. However, the fact that the DOE Psychologist's opinion was based on limited information does not mean that it failed to raise a security concern; the Report clearly acknowledged the limitations of the forensic evaluation process and drew reasonable conclusions from the information available. The Individual had the opportunity to bring forward a contrary opinion from another expert but elected not to do so. For the aforementioned reasons, I reject the Individual's claim that the methodology of the evaluation was insufficient to allow the DOE Psychologist to provide a diagnostic impression or that APA best practices bind how a DOE-contracted psychologist conducts forensic psychological evaluations.

The Individual also argued that she did not meet the first diagnostic criterion for Delusional Disorder because the delusions specified by the DOE Psychologist were not fixed and the DOE Psychologist had insufficiently established that her beliefs were not true. As to the first argument, it is apparent that the Individual did hold firm, fixed beliefs. Despite her claims that she was merely considering theories to explain her observations and did not firmly believe anything about them, the Individual has consistently articulated the same theories for years and testified that she will not seek treatment until investigations disprove the reality of her beliefs. Maintaining the same "theories" for years and refusing to take actions recommended by a psychological practitioner because of those beliefs is sufficient for me to concur with the DOE Psychologist's opinion that the Individual's beliefs are firm and fixed. As to the reality of the Individual's beliefs, she has established that an unusual odor existed in her office. Beyond that, the Individual's beliefs are too conspiratorial to be creditable. I note as well that one of the Individual's own witnesses, to whom she showed her video of the purported drones, denied seeing them in the video. I see nothing in the record that would cause me to question the reasonableness of the DOE Psychologist's opinion, and accordingly I reject the arguments by the Individual that the DOE Psychologist's opinion does not present security concerns.

Turning to the mitigating conditions, the Individual has expressed resistance to treatment, rooted partly in paranoia likely attributable to her condition, and has not complied with the DOE Psychologist's recommendations. Accordingly, as the Individual has neither entered into treatment nor complied with a treatment plan, the first two mitigating conditions are inapplicable to the facts of this case. *Id.* at ¶ 29(a)–(b).

The DOE Psychologist opined at the hearing that the Individual's condition was not under control or in remission and that she had a poor prognosis for managing it going forward. Accordingly, the third mitigating condition is inapplicable. *Id.* at ¶ 29(c).

The DOE Psychologist opined that Delusional Disorder is a chronic condition, not a temporary one. Moreover, the Individual continues to display emotional instability which presents a current problem. Thus, the fourth and fifth mitigating conditions are inapplicable. *Id.* at ¶ 29(d)–(e).

For the aforementioned reasons, I find that none of the mitigating conditions under Guideline I are applicable to the facts of this case. Accordingly, the Individual has not resolved the security concerns asserted by the LSO.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the above analysis, I found that there was sufficient derogatory information in the possession of DOE to raise security concerns under Guideline I of the Adjudicative Guidelines. After considering all relevant information, favorable and unfavorable, in a comprehensive, common-sense manner, including weighing all testimony and other evidence presented at the hearing, I find that the Individual has not brought forth sufficient evidence to resolve the security concerns asserted by the LSO. Accordingly, I have determined that the Individual's access authorization should not be restored. This Decision may be appealed in accordance with the procedures set forth at 10 C.F.R. § 710.28.

Phillip Harmonick
Administrative Judge
Office of Hearings and Appeals