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IDENTIFICATION FORM

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SUBJECTS : SECURITY CLEARANCE RECOMMENDATION

WERBELL, MITCHELL LIVINGSTON, III - AKA: ALEX WILSON,
ERIC WILSON, ERIC STRAFF

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64954 Date: 09-22-2022

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Security Policy)

4 AUG 1970

FROM: Screening Board, Panel No. 2

SUBJECT: WERBELL, Mitchell Livingston, III CASE NO: OSD 69-59
AKA: Alex Wilson, Eric Wilson,
Eric Straff

1. (FOUO) Applicant has been employed by Sionics, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, since August 1967, as a Vice President and Director of Research and Development of Exotic Weaponery.
2. (FOUO) Extant clearance of Applicant as set forth by the file: None. Requested: Secret. Submitted pursuant to Criterion N, DoD Directive 5220.6, dated December 7, 1966. Type of Investigation: Expanded National Agency Check completed by Air Force on December 30, 1968; FBI check completed on May 13, 1968, reflects Applicant was arrested on March 1, 1967 for conspiracy to violate the U.S. Neutrality Act.
3. ~~(S)~~ All members of the Panel have read and evaluated the contents of the case file attached hereto. Pertinent information in the file regarding Applicant includes the following:
 - a. (FOUO) Applicant, a 52 year old married male born March 8, 1918 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, presently lives in Powder Springs, Georgia. His Personnel Security Questionnaire (PSQ) reflects honorable service in the U.S. Army from July 21, 1942 to December 30, 1952.
 - b. (FOUO) Applicant was arrested on March 1, 1967, at Atlanta, Georgia, on a Federal Warrant issued by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, on a charge of conspiring with six other persons to violate the U.S. Neutrality Act. Although investigative report indicates the charges were dismissed on March 23, 1968, a newspaper article in file and Applicant's statement on addendum sheet to DD Form 48 convince us that the charges were, in fact, dismissed in 1967, soon after Applicant's indictment and immediately after he voluntarily appeared in answer to a Federal Warrant on March 1, 1967.

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c. (FOUO) Mr. Stanley Schacter, Assistant Customs Agent in Charge, Miami, Florida, advised on April 28, 1969 that Applicant came into the conspiracy to export arms and men to aid the overthrow of the Haitian government during the early part of 1966. Applicant had previously been to the Dominican Republic during the upheaval there and had come into contact with a freelance photographer and writer named Andrew St. George, who subsequently introduced Applicant to one of the ringleaders of the conspiracy--Rolando Masferrer. This meeting allegedly took place at Applicant's home in Powder Springs, Georgia. He identified the two main leaders in the conspiracy as Masferrer and Father Jean Baptiste Georges. Applicant was allegedly recruited for the purpose of securing a boat to be used in the shipment of men and equipment to the Dominican Republic and eventually to Haiti, and also to secure a base in the Dominican Republic adjacent to Haiti. He said Applicant became actively involved in these tasks and managed to secure a boat, the "Poor Richard" in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and sent an emissary to the Dominican Republic in an effort to secure a base. He stated the U.S. Marshall eventually put a lien on the vessel after it was taken to Key Largo, Florida. The lien was allegedly for default of payment. He advised that to the best of his knowledge, Applicant participated in meetings concerning the conspiracy in Florida, and at his home in Georgia. According to Schacter, Applicant probably had nothing to do with the purchasing of arms for the conspiracy and had nothing to do with the training exercises which were held in South Dade County, Florida, and possibly in New Jersey. He stated the conspiracy was broken on January 2, 1967 when seventy (70) of the individuals involved were arrested. He advised Applicant was not one of those arrested on January 2, 1967, but was arrested later on a warrant. He further advised that indictments were drawn up only on the leaders of the conspiracy, including Applicant. He stated all the individuals indicted were convicted with the exception of Applicant, who had charges against him dismissed. He stated he had no idea why the charges were dismissed as the U.S. Attorney did not inform him of the reasons. He did not know if Applicant was on the payroll of another U.S. government agency either before or during the conspiracy.

d. ~~(C)~~ An FBI informant in July 1966, advised that a Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) team reportedly filmed phase one of a documentary in Coral Gables, Florida in about June 1966 involving the collection and shipment of arms from the United States destined for Haitian rebel forces, outside the United States. Applicant, as Alex Wilson, reportedly met the team and served as guide. Phase two which never materialized reportedly was to be the bombing of Duvalier's

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palace at Port-au-Prince and signal the start of the revolution. According to hearsay information, Alex Wilson (Applicant) had described himself as a former associate of CIA and prior thereto as associated with OSS. Alex Wilson (Applicant), moreover, it was stated was well known in Santo Domingo and is held in high respect there. No decision had been made by CBS headquarters, New York, to show, or not to show, the completed documentary.

e. (FOUO) The U.S. Attorney, Miami, Florida advised on May 8, 1969, that the dismissal of charges against Applicant on March 23, 1967 was on "legal grounds," but that he was unable to furnish any further information or explanation of details due to the fact that the co-defendants are in process of appealing their convictions.

f. ~~(S)~~ A page proof copy of the transcript of testimony of Applicant and witnesses appearing before the Special Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, House of Representatives conducted in July, September and November 1969 and February and April 1970, entitled "Project Nassau," Serial No. 91, concerning the involvement of CBS in an invasion conspiracy reflects that:

(1) Applicant was indicted along with six others as a co-conspirator to violate the neutrality statutes, Title 18, United States Code, Section 960, and the Munitions Control Act, which is 22 U.S.C. 1934. Applicant was later dropped from the suit for reasons not indicated in the hearing or the file.

(2) The main function of Applicant in the operation was to obtain a base in the Dominican Republic from which an invasion could be launched into Haiti/Cuba. To this end, Applicant was to go to the Dominican Republic ahead of time and obtain this base. Applicant did not go there personally but sent a friend of his, Adolos Cobos, to attempt to make the arrangements for the base. Because of the political climate in the Dominican Republic at the time, arrangements for a base were unsuccessful.

(3) Applicant was the principal in leasing a 68 foot schooner, the "Poor Richard" at Fort Lauderdale, Florida which reportedly was to be used to transport arms and ammunition in the invasion effort. The schooner was first brought to Miami and later taken to Ocean Reef where it was subsequently impounded by the U.S. Marshall's Office because of a lien on the vessel.

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(4) Applicant has his own personal boat brought from Powder Springs, Georgia, where he lived, to Miami, and then to Ocean Reef, to augment the Poor Richard as a "camera boat and life boat" if needed. Prior to transporting his boat to Florida the boat was used in the filming of loading of weapons aboard at Powder Springs, Georgia. This, however, was a staged activity for the benefit of CBS and the weapons were not involved in the invasion effort but returned to their owners after the filming.

(5) CBS letter dated August 11, 1969 to the Committee advised that there was no written agreement of employment between Applicant and CBS, however, some monies for "expenses" were paid Applicant by CBS. Testimony of sources indicated that Applicant implied sanction of a U.S. Government agency for the invasion and a daily contact with the "Company" (CIA). There is no probative evidence to indicate that Applicant ever stated he was a CIA representative at that time but he did indicate previous affiliation with CIA. Moreover, Applicant reportedly stated to CBS representatives that he had a base in the Dominican Republic from which CIA operated boats, some going from there to Cuba and allegedly showed pictures of some of the boats.

(6) Sometime in September or possibly October 1966, Applicant with others met with Eugene Maximillian, the Haitian consul in Miami to discuss the impending invasion of Haiti. Applicant had a recording device concealed on his person and the conversations were recorded, whereby they discussed with Maximillian, the possibilities of overthrowing President (Papa Doc) Duvalier and if he might cooperate, establishing him in some choice post later on. They also reportedly offered to abort the invasion if Papa Doc would come up with \$200,000.00. At a later date, they tried to blackmail Maximillian by telling him they had this tape which they would make available to Papa Doc if he didn't come across.

g. (FOUO) On June 16, 1970 Mr. James P. Morris, Criminal Section, Internal Security Division, Department of Justice, advised that the charges against Applicant were dismissed for technical reasons which had nothing to do with guilt or innocence. Mr. Morris declined to make any further statements concerning the dismissal or the charges.

h. ~~(S)~~ On January 25, 1966, Mr. Robert H. Fleming, Chief of the Washington News Bureau, American Broadcasting Company, furnished

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the following information to the FBI. John Casserly, their correspondent in the Dominican Republic had been approached by Applicant saying he had a plan to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba. Applicant had told Casserly that he had been in Cuba on recent occasions "as a private citizen" but that he would not enter that country in execution of his plan. He would direct the assassination from some point outside Cuba. Andrew St. George, freelance photographer and journalist, would enter Cuba to film the assassination. St. George was interviewed by the FBI and verified this story. On February 10, 1966, Applicant was interviewed by the FBI and stated he had no such plan himself but claimed that he had limited knowledge of such a plan that had been formulated by Ricardo Zaragusa, who died in New York City in December 1965. Zaragusa's death put an end to the plan according to Applicant.

i. ~~(S)~~ In interviews with FBI agents on January 29, and 30, 1968, a source of unknown reliability advised that he was introduced to the reported leader of the Second National Front of Escranbray (SNFE), an anti-Castro Cuban revolutionary organization with headquarters in Miami. The source reported that during his conversations with the individual he heard that SNFE collects money from Cuban exiles on the premise that the organization will take some type of military action against the Castro government in Cuba and that Applicant was named as being in charge of making arrangements to obtain necessary arms and ammunition.

j. ~~(S)~~ An investigative report shows that a pistol found in the car of a suspect apprehended in Miami, Florida, belonged to Applicant. Applicant admitted that he purchased the pistol in Florida for his own use and that he signed the gun registration certificate Alex Wilson and Alex J. Wilson. He claimed he has been known to many of his friends and Central Intelligence Agency officials by the name of Alex Wilson. He stated that when he was purchasing the pistol there were Cubans in the shop. Since the name of Werbell was well known to many Cubans and to avoid them hearing the Werbell name and bothering him, he gave the name of Alex Wilson. Applicant claimed that he left the pistol at a friend's house and later told the individual who was apprehended that he could borrow it for use to protect his home which had been robbed earlier and to pick it up at the house of the friend. No action against Applicant was indicated.

k. ~~(S)~~ FBI report indicates that on February 20, 1967, Applicant advised FBI that he was informed of a plan to assassinate an unidentified middle-east ruler or member of his family living or

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visiting in the U.S. Investigation indicated that Ibu Saud, half-brother of King Faisal Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, at that time attending the University of Redlands, Redlands, California and living in Redlands, may have been the intended victim of this reported conspiracy which was never actually substantiated.

1. (FOUO) An investigation requested by Commander, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida was initiated on July 7, 1969 to determine circumstances surrounding importation of 3 boxes of captured enemy weapons by a Lt. Colonel Paul Arnold Marriott, USAF. Two boxes containing a total of 21 weapons, 5 noise suppressors and related equipment which was marked for Marriott, was seized at Eglin AFB. The Deputy Commander, AFATL, advised his agency was queried by ARPA, a DoD agency, about a box of weapons sent through ARPA channels. The investigation showed further that Marriott had sent 12 weapons to Eglin AFB from SEA while he was on TDY in Vietnam in November 1968. Eleven of these weapons were subsequently shipped from Eglin AFB to Sionics, Atlanta, Georgia, at Marriott's request. The information of record shows that Applicant is the Vice President and Director of R&D for Sionics. The firm holds Federal Firearms license which expires March 31, 1970 as a manufacturer of firearms other than destructive devices; a license which expires May 18, 1970 as an importer of firearms other than destructive devices; a special occupational tax stamp as a Class I Manufacturer (Firearms), and a Class I Importer (Firearms) both issued for period beginning July 1, 1969. According to Sionics, they were a registered importer under the Munitions and Control Act, registered importer with the U.S. State Department. The investigation shows that Applicant visited Vietnam in September 1968 and remained until June 1969 and that he visited Thailand between January and June 1969 for the purpose of demonstrating "Sound Suppressors" manufactured by Sionics. The visit reportedly was authorized by the State Department, Munitions Control, Washington, D.C. Applicant was also reportedly authorized to take and send weapons and sound suppressors for demonstrations, however, he had nothing in writing from the State Department. In the course of his travels in Vietnam, Applicant acquired 12 captured enemy weapons between September and November 1968, reportedly given him by General Dong of the South Vietnamese Army and other authorized sources. Apparently no application for importation of the firearms into the U.S. was made. Lt. Colonel Marriott while on TDY in Vietnam was assigned to assist Applicant. Reportedly, Marriott at that time, indicated to Applicant that he wanted some weapons for the Air Force museum and Applicant advised Marriott he wanted some weapons for research purposes. Before Marriott returned to Eglin AFB it was agreed that captured weapons would be sent to Marriott for displaying in the museum

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and Applicant hoped, at that time, that arrangements could be made to transfer any of the weapons not used by the museum to Sionics for research purposes. During the next few months two additional cases of weapons were authorized for shipment and shipped through Air Force channels, to Lt.Colonel Marriott at Eglin AFB. The record shows that Lt.Colonel Marriott on or about April 11, 1969 shipped from Eglin AFB five firearms to Sionics which were obtained in Vietnam and sent to the U.S. along with 15 other items which Sionics had sent to Vietnam earlier. Sionics had not applied or received authorization to import these firearms. The record also shows that two additional boxes of firearms were authorized to be shipped to Eglin AFB from Vietnam during June 1969, at the request of Applicant for museum purposes. All weapons were taken into custody by the Air Force.

✓ m. ~~(C)~~ Information from OSI, Republic of Vietnam revealed that on April 29, 1969, Colonel William M. Fagan, Commander, Detachment 6, 7th Air Force (DAFSC), Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, advised that Werbell, who is Vice President of Sionics, Inc., Powder Springs, Georgia, arrived in RVN to demonstrate Noise and Flash Suppressor Assemblies for the M-16 rifle as well as other firearms equipment. Fagan arranged to provide Werbell with a MACV Identification and Privilege Card, which Werbell received with an equivalent grade of GS-16 noted thereon. Werbell did demonstrate his equipment to various military agencies in RVN, after which Fagan understood he was to return to the U.S. Fagan was unable to locate Werbell for some time, but eventually learned he had travelled to Korea and Thailand demonstrating his equipment. This travel was not part of the agreement, and as a result, Fagan began to make inquiries. He contacted various individuals in the U.S. and Thailand and discovered that Werbell arrived in RVN in an unofficial status, with no security clearance. He further learned Werbell had been using his MACV card, with the mention of a few alleged friendships with U.S. Senators and Generals, including Air Force Chief of Staff, General McConnell, to meet high ranking individuals of the Thailand and Korean governments. Fagan also advised Werbell is alleged to have stated he worked for the CIA in various assignments and told Colonel John V. Patterson, Deputy Director, OSD/ARPA, Thailand, that he was in that country to confer with American Embassy officials on a classified task. With no official sponsorship or endorsements, Werbell has been extremely active demonstrating his company's products and conferring with several ranking officials of the Thailand Supreme Command. He has influenced Air Chief Marshall Dawee, Chief of Staff, Thailand Supreme Command, to request technical assistance from the U.S. Army in setting up a sniper school, using Sionics equipment. Colonel Fagan's primary interest in this matter

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✓ was that of locating Werbell and confiscating the MACV Identification Card. He located Werbell in Bangkok on May 8, 1969, and recovered the MACV ID Card. Colonel Fagan and Colonel Patterson believed that Werbell was acting opportunistically, and believed his agency name dropping is a perfected technique to insure assistance.

n. (FOUO) The majority of sources interviewed in the course of this Air Force investigation expressed reservations with respect to Applicant's business ethics and that of Sionics, Inc. They characterized Applicant as unscrupulous, a wheeler-dealer, a name dropper, and a high pressure promotion man. As an example, in about July 1968 Applicant demonstrated a pistol silencer and flash supressor by shooting in a hotel room in Washington, D.C.

o. (FOUO) A report in the file furnished by the Internal Revenue Service, Southeast Region, Assistant Commissioner (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms), dated October 7, 1969, stated Sionics is in the business of developing and manufacturing silencers for sale to United States Military Units and United States Allies. Although there are apparent violations of Title XX of The Gun Control Act of 1968, it appears from talking to Mr. Werbell that on the part of Sionics, they were unintentional. Mr. Werbell stated that prior to the passing of the Gun Control Act of 1968, the procedure used in exporting and importing the firearms was the acceptable method with the State Department.

✓ p. ~~(C)~~ CIA advised that Applicant has never worked or been associated with the CIA although the CIA is aware of his tendency to pose as a CIA or former CIA agent. Applicant was a member of the OSS for a short period in 1945. In January 1969, Time Magazine contained an article on Applicant as stating that if he ever becomes involved in any serious difficulty, CIA or DIA would help him out. CIA complained to the Munitions Board regarding this statement. The Board indicated they would attempt to take some action against Applicant but this was not done. Applicant is characterized in CIA's files as "an unscrupulous con-man, and a wheeler-dealer" who constantly imposes upon those around him.

q. (FOUO) An item in the Evening Star, Washington, D.C., under the date of February 14, 1970, reports that an Air Force announcement said Lt. Colonel Marriott's activities concerning his being suspected of helping to smuggle captured Viet Cong weapons into the United States from Vietnam "were found clear of any illegal or unauthorized acts on his part and no disciplinary or administrative actions have been or will be taken."

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r. (FOUO) A local agency credit check revealed the following:

(1) Credit Bureau of Atlanta, Inc., listed on June 6, 1968, the following accounts that had been listed with them for collection against Applicant:

(a) March 12, 1956, Bandas Bazar. No company by this name could be found in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; \$54.80.

(b) May 26, 1958, Bishops Office Equipment, Orlando, Florida, \$100.00. Bishop Company records fail to reveal this debt.

(c) July 14, 1962, Dr. Wm. L. Eubanks; \$18.00. This account paid in full on July 25, 1965.

(d) Holiday Inn, Atlanta, Georgia; \$75.69. Credit Bureau says no payments made and account considered open and unsatisfactory. No check made with company records.

(e) Monaco, Inc.; \$28.11. Credit Bureau says open and unsatisfactory. No check made with company records.

(2) Two tax liens have been imposed against Applicant as follows:

(a) Income tax for [JFK Law 11(a)] Lien filed December 8, 1954.

(b) Withholding tax for [JFK Law 11(a)] [JFK Law 11(a)]

Both liens have expired without renewal. No further action contemplated.

✓ s. (FOUO) On July 9, 1968, Harold E. Watson, Major General, USAF, Retired, a representative of Sionics, Inc., was interviewed concerning Applicant. He advised that he had met Applicant about 5 years ago when he (source) was connected with General Electric Company (GE) in connection with GE interest in mass-produced housing in the Dominican Republic. Watson indicated he had no direct knowledge that Applicant was involved in anti-Castro activities but only through hearsay. Applicant was described by Watson as an avid gun fancier

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and most qualified in the technical aspects of firearms. Applicant apparently has interested the Army (Ft. Benning) in his ideas in the field of noise reduction (silencers) on weapons and in this connection set up the firm Sionics in Atlanta, Georgia. Watson indicated he considered Applicant completely honest, trustworthy and loyal and unreservedly recommended him for a position of trust.

t. (FOUO) Three references have been interviewed. The first knew Applicant from 1950-1953 when they were in the advertising business together. He has had occasional to frequent contact with Applicant from 1953 to date. He spoke highly of Applicant and would recommend him. The second person had known Applicant since 1951. He was one of Applicant's employees in 1956 when Applicant's advertising agency went bankrupt. He spoke highly of Applicant and would recommend him. The third has known Applicant since 1955 when he became attorney for Sionics, Inc. He describes Applicant as an adventurer and frustrated inventor but felt that Applicant was loyal, honest, trustworthy and he would recommend him.

u. (FOUO) A neighborhood check of Applicant reveals no adverse information. One friend and neighbor since 1962 was interviewed and described Applicant as honest, trustworthy, extremely capable, and loyal, and he would recommend him. He knew of Applicant's arrest on the violation of the U.S. Neutrality Act charge. The Chief of Police at Powder Springs, Georgia, and a local grocer were interviewed and said they had known Applicant since 1949, and considered him loyal, trustworthy, capable and of good character, and they would recommend him. Several years ago, they said, Applicant had had financial reverses but that Applicant seems to have done quite well in paying off his debts during the past two years.

4. Rationale:(FOUO)

The Board has carefully considered and evaluated Applicant's reported involvements in various activities of a questionable and possibly criminal nature. The major issues of this case revolve around: (1) Applicant's involvement/arrest for violation of the U.S. Neutrality Act; (2) his reported activities or association with the SNFE; (3) his involvement in alleged smuggling/illegal importation of weapons from Vietnam; and (4) his past financial difficulties.

The record establishes that between June and November 1966, Applicant actively participated in a conspiracy to violate the U.S. Neutrality Act. He was indicted with six other co-conspirators.

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Although the six other co-conspirators were convicted the charges against Applicant were dismissed "on a legal technicality" with no further details provided. According to information of record, Applicant reportedly has also been engaged in shipping arms and ammunition to revolutionary groups in the Caribbean area and affiliated with such groups. The file also shows that he purchased a pistol in Florida signing the gun registration certificate as Alex Wilson and the pistol was subsequently found in the possession of a "friend" who was apprehended by the police. In addition, in 1969 Applicant was involved in an Air Force investigation of alleged smuggling of weapons from Vietnam. He apparently violated the Gun Control Act of 1968 at this time, but no action was taken since the violation "appeared unintentional." The Air Force officer with whom Applicant was involved in the alleged smuggling was found clear of any illegal or unauthorized acts and no disciplinary or administrative actions were taken against the officer.

The information of record establishes a history of activities of a very suspicious nature on the part of Applicant. These activities of questionable legality, while yet apparently not transcending the lawful limits, strongly suggest less than ethical business practices over an extended period of time. There is no information to show that any of these activities were in behalf of a U.S. Government agency.

The file indicates Applicant used a perfected technique of "name dropping," flagrantly imposed on those around him, and employed subterfuge to assure cooperation and assistance in his questionable promotional schemes. His modus operandi causes the Board to have serious reservations as to his integrity and trustworthiness. There is no information in the file which would show, with reasonable certainty, that his pattern of questionable conduct is at end. On the contrary, because of the pattern of his activities over an extended period of time it appears more reasonable to conclude that he will continue in his involvements in questionable undertakings. This, in turn, could cause action contrary to the national interest. In short, the very nature and extent of Applicant's past activities as shown in the record leads us to believe that he is an opportunist. His demonstrated lack of integrity, ethics, and trustworthiness strongly suggests that on his own motion or at the instance of others, colored or motivated by self interests, Applicant might easily be influenced to engage in activities inimical to the national interest.

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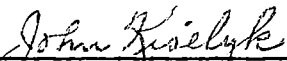
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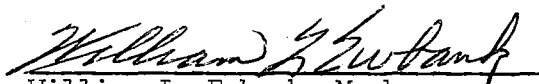
It appears that Applicant's financial problems of the past have been resolved and the tax liens against him satisfied. This, in and of itself, due to lack of recency, appears to have little, if any, security import at this time. The recurrence of future financial problems and possible effect therefrom is unpredictable and any comments thereon would be purely speculative.

In view of all the information of record and on an overall common sense basis, mindful of the various circumstances shown, the Board considers Applicant's conduct over the years of such gravity and significance as to render him unworthy of a security clearance at this time.

5. (FOUO) Upon the basis of the information available to it, the Screening Board finds:

- a. A determination in Applicant's favor is not warranted.
 - b. Further investigation, personal interview, or written interrogatory is not required.
 - c. A Statement of Reasons, attached hereto, should be issued.
6. (FOUO) There is no evidence in the record that Applicant currently has a security clearance at any level.


John Kiselyk, Chairman


William L. Ewbank, Member


Darrel G. Costello, Member

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