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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)  
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., MS 2090  
Washington, DC 20529-2090



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

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Date: **MAR 19 2012** Office: WASHINGTON, D.C.

FILE:

IN RE: Respondent:

APPLICATION: Cancellation of Certificate of Naturalization under Section 342 of the Immigration and Nationality Act; 8 U.S.C. § 1453.

ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT:



INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All of the documents related to this matter have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Please be advised that any further inquiry that you might have concerning your case must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied by us in reaching our decision, or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. The specific requirements for filing such a request can be found at 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. All motions must be submitted to the office that originally decided your case by filing a Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$630. Please be aware that 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i) requires that any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen.

Thank you,

Perry Rhew  
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

**DISCUSSION:** The respondent's certificate of naturalization was cancelled by the District Director, Washington, D.C., and the director's decision is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

On September 21, 2011, the district director issued a decision cancelling the respondent's certificate of naturalization. The district director's decision was based on a finding that the respondent's naturalization was unlawfully obtained from Robert Schofield, a former U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) employee. In 2006 Mr. Schofield pled guilty to, and in 2007 was convicted of, among other crimes, unlawfully procuring naturalization by providing certificates of naturalization to individuals who were not entitled to U.S. citizenship.<sup>1</sup> In his plea, Mr. Schofield identified the respondent as one of nearly 200 individuals to whom he illegally issued certificates of naturalization.

On appeal, the respondent, through counsel, maintains that she did not illegally procure her certificate of naturalization. *See* Appeal Brief. The respondent claims that she had no knowledge of Mr. Schofield's misconduct and that she obtained her naturalization certificate only after a procedure that appeared legitimate to her. *Id.* The respondent maintains that she relied upon the actions of a USCIS employee acting in his apparent official capacity, and that USCIS should therefore be estopped from cancelling her certificate of naturalization. *Id.*

Section 342 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1453, provides, in relevant part, that:

The [Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security] is authorized to cancel any certificate of citizenship . . . if it shall appear to [her] satisfaction that such document or record was illegally or fraudulently obtained from, or was created through illegality or by fraud practiced upon, [her] or the Commissioner or a Deputy Commissioner; but the person for or to whom such document or record has been issued or made shall be given at such person's last-known place of address written notice of the intention to cancel such document or record with the reasons therefore and shall be given at least sixty days in which to show cause why such document or record should not be canceled. The cancellation under this section of any document purporting to show the citizenship status of the person to whom it was issued shall affect only the document and not the citizenship status of the person in whose name the document was issued.

The regulations at 8 C.F.R. § 342 outline the process for cancellation of a certificate of naturalization under the Act. The district director properly notified the respondent of her intent to cancel the certificate of naturalization and afforded her an opportunity to respond as required by the Act and the regulations.

The evidence in the record establishes that the respondent never applied for naturalization, but rather appears to have submitted an application and fee directly to Mr. Schofield upon his request. The respondent obtained certificate of naturalization number [REDACTED] the subject of these cancellation proceedings.

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<sup>1</sup> *United States v. Schofield*, No. 06 CR 00427 (E.D. Va. Apr. 20, 2007).

USCIS has no record of the applicant's naturalization application ever being properly filed, received or adjudicated. Although the respondent obtained a certificate of naturalization numbered [REDACTED] that certificate does not correspond to her alien registration number in USCIS records. The evidence in the record establishes that the respondent's certificate of naturalization was obtained through the unlawful acts of Mr. Schofield.

On appeal, the respondent does not dispute that her naturalization certificate was obtained from Mr. Schofield, but rather argues that only Mr. Schofield engaged in fraudulent, unlawful conduct. Regardless of the respondent's culpability or lack thereof, the evidence of record clearly establishes that the respondent's certificate of naturalization was obtained through fraud and despite the respondent's ineligibility for naturalization. The certificate of naturalization was unlawfully procured by Mr. Schofield, and not provided to the respondent after the completion of a lawful naturalization process.

On appeal, counsel claims the respondent relied on Mr. Schofield's affirmative misconduct and USCIS should be estopped from cancelling her naturalization certificate. The cases cited by counsel do not support her claim, however, as they concerned prior affirmative misconduct of consular and immigration officials leading to deportation and removal proceedings.<sup>2</sup> The cases are inapplicable to these administrative cancellation proceedings regarding the unlawful procurement of the respondent's naturalization certificate.

The burden of proof in cancellation proceedings is on the government, and cancellation of a certificate of naturalization is authorized "if it shall appear to [the] satisfaction" of the Secretary of the Department Homeland Security" that the certificate was illegally or fraudulently obtained. The district director has met her burden of proof and shown that the respondent's certificate of naturalization was illegally obtained and properly cancelled. The respondent's appeal will therefore be dismissed.

**ORDER:** The appeal is dismissed.

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<sup>2</sup> Counsel cites *Akbarin v. INS*, 669 F.2d 839 (1<sup>st</sup> Cir. 1982) and *Corniel-Rodriguez v. INS*, 532 F.2d 301 (2d Cir. 1976).