
NO. _____

In The
Supreme Court of the United States

KEANAN DEQUEZ BOND,
a/k/a Sticks,

Petitioner,

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Respondent.

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI
FROM THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

APPENDIX

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PUBLISHED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

No. 21-7066

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff – Appellee,

v.

KEANAN DEQUEZ BOND, a/k/a Sticks,

Defendant – Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, at Greenville. Louise W. Flanagan, District Judge. (4:16-cr-00030-FL-2)

Argued: October 25, 2022

Decided: January 3, 2023

Amended: January 4, 2023

Before WILKINSON and DIAZ, Circuit Judges, and MOTZ, Senior Circuit Judge.

Affirmed by published opinion. Judge Diaz wrote the opinion, in which Judge Wilkinson and Senior Judge Motz joined.

ARGUED: Jorgelina E. Araneda, ARANEDA LAW FIRM, Raleigh, North Carolina, for Appellant. Kristine L. Fritz, OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, Raleigh, North Carolina, for Appellee. **ON BRIEF:** G. Norman Acker, III, Acting United States Attorney, David A. Bragdon, Assistant United States Attorney, OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, Raleigh, North Carolina, for Appellee.

DIAZ, Circuit Judge:

Keanan Dequez Bond, facing at least 1,054 months in prison for a string of armed robberies, reached a plea agreement and instead was sentenced to 384 months. Soon after, Congress passed the First Step Act, changing the calculations of relevant mandatory minimums. *See* First Step Act of 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-391, § 403, 132 Stat. 5194, 5221–22. Had Bond been sentenced after the Act became law, his minimum sentence would have been 168 months, less than half of his current sentence. Yet the district court denied Bond’s motion for compassionate release in part because it “decline[d] to disturb the parties’ carefully negotiated [plea] agreement.” J.A. 162. Bond appeals, arguing the district court improperly considered the plea deal.

Because the district court acted well within its discretion in denying Bond’s motion for compassionate release, we affirm.

I.

In 2015, Bond and an accomplice robbed several stores in North Carolina. They pointed guns at clerks and customers, including at a mother and her child. They also led police on a high-speed chase, at first managing to evade capture, but were eventually arrested.

A grand jury charged Bond on nine counts, including for Hobbs Act robbery. If convicted on all, Bond’s advisory Guidelines range would have been 1,054 to 1,071 months in prison. Instead, Bond pleaded guilty to two counts of brandishing a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 924(c)(1)(A)(ii) (2012)

(amended 2018). The district court imposed the statutory mandatory minimum sentence: 84 months of imprisonment on the first § 924(c) offense and 300 months on the second, given it “stacked” with the first.¹

Bond appealed, arguing that Hobbs Act robbery isn’t a crime of violence under § 924(c)(3). While his appeal was pending, Congress passed the First Step Act. Section 403 of the Act abrogated the Supreme Court’s interpretation of § 924(c) convictions, stating that enhanced minimums can only apply “after a prior conviction under [§ 924(c)] has become final.” § 403(a), 132 Stat. at 5222. If Bond were sentenced after passage of the First Step Act, he would have faced a minimum sentence of 168 months, rather than 384. Bond added this argument to his appeal.

We affirmed Bond’s convictions and sentence. We’d held before that “Hobbs Act robbery constitutes a crime of violence under the force clause of Section 924(c),” *United States v. Mathis*, 932 F.3d 242, 266 (4th Cir. 2019), dispensing with Bond’s first claim. *United States v. Bond*, 799 F. App’x 209, 210 (4th Cir. 2020). As for Bond’s First Step Act claim, Congress expressly limited the retroactivity provision, and we held “that § 403 of the First Step Act does not apply retroactively to cases pending on direct appeal when it was enacted.” *Id.*

¹ 18 U.S.C. § 924(c) imposes a five- to ten-year mandatory minimum prison sentence for the first offense and a 25-year mandatory minimum for a subsequent conviction. Previously, courts treated the second of two § 924(c) convictions in the same case as a “subsequent” conviction, which “stacked” on the 25-year mandatory minimum. *See Deal v. United States*, 508 U.S. 129, 132–33 (1993). Congress ended this practice with the passage of the First Step Act.

Bond then moved in the district court to reduce his sentence under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i). The district court denied his motion. The court agreed with Bond that the discrepancy between his stacked minimum sentence and a First Step Act minimum sentence constituted an extraordinary and compelling reason for compassionate release. J.A. 161 (citing *United States v. McCoy*, 981 F.3d 271, 285–86 (4th Cir. 2020)). But it held that the § 3553(a) factors weighed against reducing Bond’s sentence.

The district court considered the plea agreement and the counts dismissed, noting that Bond’s ultimate sentence was a significant reduction against the 1,000-plus months in prison he faced. *Id.* The court refused to “disregard the dismissed counts and the benefits that [Bond] received from the plea agreement,” noting that Bond got “the exact sentence bargained for.” *Id.*

The district court also determined that the “nature of these robberies . . . reflects the need for a serious sentence in this case,” citing the violent use of guns, restraint of victims, and traumatic experiences of the mother and child. *Id.* at 162. While the court acknowledged Bond was doing well in prison, it found those positives did “not justify a sentence reduction when weighed against the offense conduct, the conduct underlying the dismissed counts, the benefits conferred by the plea agreement, and the remaining factors set forth [in the opinion].” *Id.* at 162–63.

“Having fully considered defendant’s arguments, together with the full record of this case in light of the § 3553(a) factors,” the district court concluded that “the current sentence remain[ed] necessary to reflect the seriousness of the offense conduct, protect the public from further crimes of defendant, provide specific and general deterrence, and to

account for the significant benefits conferred on both parties by the plea agreement in this case.” *Id.* at 163.

This appeal followed.

II.

In general, a district court “may not modify a term of imprisonment once it has been imposed.” 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c). But a district court may reduce a sentence through a motion for compassionate release. *Id.* § 3582(c)(1)(A). If the defendant has administratively exhausted a claim for release, the district court analyzes the motion in two steps.

First, the court determines whether the defendant is eligible for a sentence reduction. A defendant is eligible if the court finds “extraordinary and compelling reasons warrant such a reduction.” *Id.* § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i); *see also United States v. Kibble*, 992 F.3d 326, 330 (4th Cir. 2021). Following our case law, the district court found that Bond’s “excessive sentence relative to the mandatory minimum applicable today constitutes extraordinary and compelling reasons for release.” J.A. 161 (citing *McCoy*, 981 F.3d at 285–86). Neither side challenges this conclusion.

Second, the court considers “the factors set forth in section 3553(a) to the extent that they are applicable.” 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A); *see also Kibble*, 992 F.3d at 331. Bond argues that consideration of plea agreements falls outside those factors. He also claims the court’s denial of compassionate release was unreasonable given Congress’s intent in passing the First Step Act. We disagree with both contentions.

A.

Bond's primary attack is that a district court can't consider a plea bargain when weighing the § 3553(a) factors. Although § 3553(a) doesn't explicitly mention plea agreements, district courts "enjoy[] broad discretion" when considering the factors in a compassionate-release motion. *Kibble*, 992 F.3d at 330.

We've held that "a particular fact need not be mentioned specifically in Section 3553(a) to be considered in the district court's sentencing calculus; many case-specific facts fit under the broad umbrella of the Section 3553(a) factors." *United States v. Jackson*, 952 F.3d 492, 500 (4th Cir. 2020). And Bond identifies no authority forbidding courts from weighing plea agreements.² *Cf. id.* at 499 ("Jackson identifies no authority forbidding a court from taking banked time into account [in analyzing the Section 3553(a) factors], and we are aware of none.").

Although there may be several factors that encompass plea agreements, we note one example. Section 3553(a)(2)(A) states a court must consider the need for the sentence "to reflect the seriousness of the offense, to promote respect for the law, and to provide just

² In fact, other courts have considered plea agreements when weighing compassionate release. *See, e.g., United States v. Ranieri*, 468 F. Supp. 3d 566, 568 (W.D.N.Y. 2020) (considering the "significant and often violent criminal conduct" recited in the plea when denying a compassionate release motion); *United States v. Dean*, 494 F. Supp. 3d 252, 256 (W.D.N.Y. 2020) ("[R]educing Defendant's sentence would thwart the mandatory minimum statutory incarceration called for by the statutes of conviction, that Defendant agreed to as part of his plea agreement."); *United States v. Kemp*, No. 3:07-CR-151-CRS, 2020 WL 7061851, at *3 (W.D. Ky. Dec. 2, 2020) (noting the plea agreement "allowed [the defendant] to avoid . . . a mandatory life sentence" when denying compassionate release). Though these cases concerned compassionate release due to COVID-19, the logic is fitting here.

punishment for the offense.” 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(2)(A). In its order denying compassionate release, the district court balanced the benefit of the plea agreement against the stacked minimum sentence for all charged counts, concluding the sentence remained a fair punishment for Bond’s conduct.

The district court stated that, without the dropped counts, Bond faced a Guidelines range of “1,054 to 1,071 months’ imprisonment.” J.A. 161. And it noted that “[Bond] now seeks a sentence reduction of an additional 216 months on top of the 670 months he avoided by entering into the plea agreement with the government.” *Id.*

The district court declined to grant such relief, suggesting that modifying the sentence would “disturb the parties’ carefully negotiated agreement.” *Id.* at 162. The court also explained that Bond “received the exact sentence bargained for in the plea agreement,” implying that the court should respect the terms absent compelling circumstances. *Id.* at 161.

We agree with the district court that (1) considering the plea agreement in this context reflected a “respect for the law” and (2) reducing Bond’s sentence so far below the initial Guidelines range wouldn’t be “just punishment” for Bond’s crimes. *Cf. Jackson*, 952 F.3d at 501 (finding a district court fairly considered “banked time” under public protection and deterrence factors of § 3553(a)). The district court did not err in refusing to modify Bond’s sentence.

B.

Bond complains that denying him compassionate release is at odds with Congress’s intent in passing the First Step Act. But he ignores Congress’s full purpose. Bond is correct

that the Act “was the result of years of Congressional debate on how to reduce the size of the federal prison population.” Appellant Br. at 5. But that doesn’t mean Congress sanctioned sentence reductions for all.

Case in point: Congress didn’t make the First Step Act retroactive. Pub. L. No. 115-391, 132 Stat. 5194, 5222; *see also United States v. Jordan*, 952 F.3d 160, 171–72 (4th Cir. 2020). So Congress didn’t grant Bond a sentence reduction as a matter of right. *See McCoy*, 981 F.3d at 287 (“[N]ot *all* defendants convicted under § 924(c) should receive new sentences, but [] the courts should be empowered to relieve *some* defendants of those sentences on a case-by-case basis.” (cleaned up)). Indeed, we already ruled on the issue in his first appeal. *See Bond*, 799 F. App’x at 210. And compassionate release is permissive, not mandatory.

Bond counters that Congress determined that stacking led to overly punitive minimum sentences. Perhaps, but timing matters. Bond’s original stacked sentence was properly calculated when imposed. And in any event, the district court’s task in weighing compassionate release “was not to assess the correctness of the original sentence it imposed. Rather, its task was to determine whether the § 3553(a) factors counseled against a sentence reduction in light of the new, extraordinary circumstances identified.” *Kibble*, 992 F.3d at 334 (Gregory, C.J., concurring).

The district court considered the relevant factors and concluded that the original sentence remained appropriate. Especially given our highly deferential standard of review, the district court was well within its purview to deny Bond’s motion.

AFFIRMED

NO. 4:16-CR-30-FL-2

ORDER

BACKGROUND

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along with Godard stole \$1,446.67 from the Family Dollar.

On January 23, 2015, defendant and Godard robbed a Dollar General in Jamesville, North Carolina. They entered the store wearing masks and armed with handguns, pointed their weapons at the store clerk, and forced her at gunpoint to the office at the back of the store. Another clerk was present in the office when defendant and Godard entered with the clerk. Defendant and Godard then ordered both clerks to sit on the floor. One of the robbers then grabbed a clerk by her hair and ordered her to open the safe located at the front of the store. During this exchange, four customers entered the store, and defendants took them to the office and ordered them at gunpoint to sit on the floor with their heads down. Defendants stole the customers' cell phones, a purse, money from the register drawer, and two cartons of cigarettes. They relinquished the cell phones, purse, and one of the cartons of cigarettes, however, prior to leaving the store. In sum, defendants stole \$855 in cash and one carton of cigarettes valued at \$30 from the Jamesville Dollar General.

As part of the plea agreement, defendant agreed to pay restitution to the victims of two additional robberies which were charged in the superseding indictment but dismissed pursuant to the plea agreement. On February 23, 2015, defendant and Godard entered the Washington Coin and Pawn in Washington, North Carolina, wearing masks and armed with handguns. They ordered two employees to lie on the floor, and then forced them to crawl to the back of the store. A third employee who attempted to hide in the bathroom also was forced to the floor at gunpoint. Defendant and Godard bound the victims' hands and feet with duct tape and proceeded to rob the store of \$7,798 in cash, coins valued at \$15,640.50, 27 firearms, and jewelry.

Finally, on April 9, 2015, defendant and his co-defendant Tremaine Anderson

(“Anderson”) entered a Dollar General Store in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, by pushing aside an employee who was attempting to exit the building after the store had closed. One of the defendants grabbed her arm, held her at gunpoint, and ordered her to produce the cash from the safe and cash register. Defendant and Anderson encountered another store clerk and held her at gunpoint while they completed the robbery. They stole \$675 from one of the cash registers and the safe, and an undetermined amount of currency from a second cash register.

The court held defendant’s sentencing hearing on May 23, 2018. The court imposed a custodial sentence that at the time was the statutory mandatory minimum: 84 months’ imprisonment on count three, and 300 months’ imprisonment on count five, for an aggregate custodial sentence of 384 months. The court commented that “[t]he pain and scarring that you’ve inflicted, that will go to the grave with [the victims], is immense. They’re not many cases I preside over where I can look and see what I see here in terms of just the widespread damage that you cause[d] to people and their families. So[,] a 32-year sentence is appropriate.” (DE 175 at 19). The court further observed that, if defendant had been convicted of all charges related to these four robberies – which included two additional § 924(c) charges, four counts of substantive Hobbs Act robbery, and one count of conspiracy to commit Hobbs Act robbery – defendant’s advisory Guidelines range would have been 1,054 to 1,071 months, and thus the plea agreement “knocks off 670 months.” (Id. at 9).

Defendant filed the instant pro se motion for compassionate release on October 21, 2020, arguing that changes in sentencing law establish his sentence far exceeds the statutory mandatory minimum under current law, and that this circumstance justifies a sentence reduction to the current mandatory minimum of 168 months’ imprisonment. The court appointed counsel to represent

defendant that same day. On December 15, 2020, defendant's appointed counsel filed memorandum in support of the motion. The government responded in opposition on February 27, 2021, and defendant replied on March 4, 2021.

COURT'S DISCUSSION

With limited exceptions, the court may not modify a sentence once it has been imposed. 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c). One exception is the doctrine of compassionate release, which permits sentence reductions in extraordinary and compelling circumstances. As amended by the First Step Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) now permits a defendant to file motion for compassionate release in the sentencing court "after the defendant has fully exhausted all administrative rights to appeal a failure of the Bureau of Prisons to bring a motion on the defendant's behalf or the lapse of 30 days from the receipt of such a request by the warden of the defendant's facility, whichever is earlier." First Step Act of 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-391, § 603, 132 Stat. 5194, 5239.

The court may reduce a defendant's term of imprisonment if it "first [finds] that 'extraordinary and compelling reasons warrant[] [a sentence reduction], then consider[s] the [factors set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)], and ultimately determine[s] that the requested reduction is consistent with any 'applicable policy statement issued by the Sentencing Commission.'" 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A); United States v. Kibble, 992 F.3d 326, 330 (4th Cir. 2021); see also United States v. McCoy, 981 F.3d 271, 275-76 (4th Cir. 2020); United States v. Jones, 980 F.3d 1098, 1101 (6th Cir. 2020).¹ The court has "broad discretion" to deny a motion for compassionate

¹ The Sentencing Commission has not adopted a policy statement applicable to motions for compassionate release filed by defendants in the sentencing court. Kibble, 992 F.3d at 330; McCoy, 981 F.3d at 281-83. Accordingly, the district court is not required to consider whether the reduction is consistent with U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13, the policy statement applicable to motions for compassionate release filed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. See Kibble, 992 F.3d at 330-31.

release if it determines the § 3553(a) factors do not support a sentence reduction, even if the defendant establishes extraordinary and compelling reasons for release. See Kibble, 992 F.3d at 330-31; McCoy, 981 F.3d at 275; see also United States v. Chambliss, 948 F.3d 691, 693-94 (5th Cir. 2020).

Section 3553(a) requires that the court consider the following factors when imposing a sentence:

- (1) the nature and circumstances of the offense and the history and characteristics of the defendant;
- (2) the need for the sentence imposed--
 - (A) to reflect the seriousness of the offense, to promote respect for the law, and to provide just punishment for the offense;
 - (B) to afford adequate deterrence to criminal conduct;
 - (C) to protect the public from further crimes of the defendant; and
 - (D) to provide the defendant with needed educational or vocational training, medical care, or other correctional treatment in the most effective manner; [and]
-
- (6) the need to avoid unwarranted sentence disparities among defendants with similar records who have been found guilty of similar conduct.

18 U.S.C. § 3553(a). In the context of compassionate release motions, the court should “reconsider[] the § 3553(a) factors in view of the extraordinary and compelling circumstances present” in the case. Kibble, 992 F.3d at 332.

Here, defendant moves for compassionate release based on his alleged excessive sentence. Although his sentence was lawful when imposed, approximately six months after sentencing Congress amended § 924(c) as follows: “under the [amended version of § 924(c)], if an individual is convicted of two § 924(c) offenses in the same proceeding . . . the mandatory minimum sentence for the second offense drops from 300 months to [84 months if the firearm was brandished]. United States v. Jordan, 952 F.3d 160, 165 (4th Cir. 2020) (citing First Step Act § 403(a), 132 Stat. at 5221–22). Defendant argues that where the court imposed the mandatory

minimum sentence applicable on the date of his sentencing (384 months), if resentenced today he would have been sentenced to 168 months' imprisonment for his two § 924(c) convictions.

Defendant's excessive sentence relative to the mandatory minimum applicable today constitutes extraordinary and compelling reasons for release. See McCoy, 981 F.3d at 285–86. The court, however, will not reduce the sentence at this time where the § 3553(a) factors weigh against such a reduction. As set forth above, defendant negotiated a favorable plea agreement in which he avoided prosecution on two additional § 924(c) counts, four counts of substantive Hobbs Act robbery, and a conspiracy count. If defendant had been convicted of all these offenses, his Guidelines range would have been a staggering 1,054 to 1,071 months' imprisonment. (PSR (DE 141) ¶ 70).² Defendant avoided such a sentence by agreeing to plead guilty to two of the § 924(c) charges in exchange for the government agreeing to dismiss the remaining counts. Defendant effectively requests that the court disregard the dismissed counts and the benefits that he received from the plea agreement, and resentence him as if the two counts to which he pleaded guilty (and the favorable changes in sentencing law applicable thereto) are the only relevant facts of this case

Defendant received the exact sentence bargained for in the plea agreement. Cf. United States v. Blick, 408 F.3d 162, 173 (4th Cir. 2005) (upholding appeal waiver in a plea agreement where “[a]lthough the law changed after [the defendant pleaded] guilty, his expectations (as reflected in the plea agreement) did not” and the defendant was “sentenced precisely in the manner he anticipated”). Defendant now seeks a sentence reduction of an additional 216 months on top of the 670 months he avoided by entering into the plea agreement with the government. Under

² Defendant has not contested his involvement in the robberies underlying the dismissed counts of the superseding indictment, and he agreed to pay restitution for them. (Plea Agreement (DE 121) ¶ 2(b)).

the particular circumstances of this case, the court declines to disturb the parties' carefully negotiated agreement.

Furthermore, the nature of these robberies, recounted above, reflects the need for a serious sentence in this case. These were not minor Hobbs Act robberies. Defendant bound some of the victims, effectively kidnapped them at gunpoint until the robberies were complete, and purposefully robbed one victim with foreknowledge that her child was in the vehicle.³ The conduct associated with the dismissed counts is similarly violent and egregious. (See PSR (DE 141) ¶¶ 26, 28). As the court explained at sentencing, “[t]he pain and scarring that you’ve inflicted, that will go to the grave with [the victims], is immense. They’re not many cases I preside over where I can look and see what I see here in terms of just the widespread damage that you cause[d] to people and their families. So[,] a 32-year sentence is appropriate.” (DE 175 at 19).

In the instant pro se motion, defendant states, “[n]othing in the facts of this case or in defendant’s history indicates that he would be a danger if released or otherwise militates against the sentence reduction requested here.” (DE 193 at 13). He further repeats his assertion at sentencing that no victim was physically harmed during these robberies. (Id. at 13–14). Contrary to these assertions, defendant’s conduct reflects a significant risk to his community, which he does not appear to appreciate.

Defendant reports he has performed admirably while incarcerated, including by maintaining clear conduct and taking courses. The court further recognizes that defendant was

³ The court observes that defendant admitted, under oath, that he was personally responsible for the robbery of the vehicle outside the Family Dollar. (Arraignment Tr. (DE 176) at 25; see also Sent’g Tr. (DE 175) at 4–5 (indicating investigate materials revealed defendant was responsible for this robbery)).

22 years old when he committed the offenses, has served approximately five years' imprisonment, has strong family support, and has no significant criminal history. While the court commends defendant for pursuing education and rehabilitation opportunities while incarcerated and has considered such efforts as well as defendant's remaining arguments, these factors do not justify a sentence reduction when weighed against the offense conduct, the conduct underlying the dismissed counts, the benefits conferred by the plea agreement, and the remaining factors set forth above.


Finally, with respect to defendant's incarceration record, the court observes that defendant has served only a small fraction of his current sentence. In McCoy, the defendants had served significant portions of their § 924(c) sentences, and consistently demonstrated rehabilitation throughout lengthy periods of incarceration. See 981 F.3d at 286 (affirming district court's grant of compassionate release where defendants had served between 17 and 25 years on their stacked § 924(c) convictions). The limited incarceration record available here, while commendable, is not sufficient to justify the substantial reduction defendant requests by the instant motion.

Having fully considered defendant's arguments, together with the full record of this case in light of the § 3553(a) factors, the court finds the current sentence remains necessary to reflect the seriousness of the offense conduct, protect the public from further crimes of defendant, provide specific and general deterrence, and to account for the significant benefits conferred on both parties by the plea agreement in this case.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, defendant's motion for compassionate release (DE 193) is DENIED.

SO ORDERED, this the 9th day of July, 2021.


LOUISE W. FLANAGAN
United States District Judge

FILED: January 31, 2023

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

No. 21-7066
(4:16-cr-00030-FL-2)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Plaintiff - Appellee

v.

KEANAN DEQUEZ BOND, a/k/a Sticks

Defendant - Appellant

O R D E R

The court denies the petition for rehearing and rehearing en banc. No judge requested a poll under [Fed. R. App. P. 35](#) on the petition for rehearing en banc.

Entered at the direction of the panel: Judge Wilkinson, Judge Diaz, and Senior Judge Motz.

For the Court

/s/ Patricia S. Connor, Clerk