

United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

No. 22-10464
Summary Calendar

United States Court of Appeals
Fifth Circuit

FILED

February 15, 2023

Lyle W. Cayce
Clerk

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff—Appellee,

versus

VICTOR ALFREDO BERMUDEZ,

Defendant—Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Northern District of Texas
USDC No. 3:20-CR-440-2

Before BARKSDALE, ELROD, AND HAYNES, *Circuit Judges.*

PER CURIAM: *

Victor Alfredo Bermudez appeals the above-Guidelines 30-months' sentence imposed following his guilty-plea conviction for conspiracy to possess unregistered firearms, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371, and possession of unregistered firearms, in violation of 26 U.S.C. §§ 5841, 5861(d). He contends the sentence is both procedurally and substantively unreasonable.

* This opinion is not designated for publication. *See* 5TH CIR. R. 47.5.

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Bermudez maintains his sentence was procedurally unreasonable because the district court failed to sufficiently explain its reasons supporting the upward variance. The parties dispute whether Bermudez preserved this challenge. Because he objected to the “substance of the sentence, but not the manner in which it was explained”, he failed to preserve this issue. *United States v. Mondragon-Santiago*, 564 F.3d 357, 361 (5th Cir. 2009).

Because he did not preserve the procedural-unreasonableness issue in district court, review is only for plain error. *E.g.*, *United States v. Broussard*, 669 F.3d 537, 546 (5th Cir. 2012). Under that standard, Bermudez must show a forfeited plain error (clear-or-obvious error, rather than one subject to reasonable dispute) that affected his substantial rights. *Puckett v. United States*, 556 U.S. 129, 135 (2009). If he makes that showing, we have the discretion to correct the reversible plain error, but generally should do so only if it “seriously affect[s] the fairness, integrity or public reputation of judicial proceedings”. *Id.*

The court thoroughly considered Bermudez’ mitigating arguments, as referenced both in its Statement of Reasons and its granting the six-month sentencing credit he requested. The court explained, however, that a variance was necessary to address: the seriousness of his offense conduct; the Sentencing Guidelines’ failure to account for the true nature of the offense; the need to provide adequate deterrence given the prior leniency Bermudez had received; and the need to provide just punishment and protect the public. *E.g.*, *United States v. Sanchez*, 667 F.3d 555, 568 (5th Cir. 2012) (upholding district court’s explanation for sentence as adequate where record showed it considered positions of counsel and defendant’s sentencing memorandum setting forth mitigating arguments).

Inasmuch as Bermudez maintains the court should have separately or specifically addressed his mitigating arguments when imposing the upward

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variance, he fails to demonstrate the requisite clear-or-obvious procedural error. *E.g.*, *United States v. Becerril-Pena*, 714 F.3d 347, 351–52 (5th Cir. 2013) (holding district court did not commit procedural error by failing to specifically address defendant’s mitigating arguments). Even assuming the court’s explanation was clear-or-obvious procedural error, Bermudez does not contend, much less demonstrate a reasonable probability, that a more detailed explanation would have resulted in a lesser sentence; therefore, he fails to make the requisite showing that his substantial rights were affected. *E.g.*, *Mondragon-Santiago*, 564 F.3d at 364–65.

As for his substantive-reasonableness challenge, although post-*Booker*, the Guidelines are advisory only, the district court must avoid significant procedural error, such as improperly calculating the Guidelines sentencing range. *Gall v. United States*, 552 U.S. 38, 46, 51 (2007). If, as in this instance, no such procedural error exists, a properly preserved objection to an ultimate sentence, as in this instance, is reviewed for substantive reasonableness under an abuse-of-discretion standard. *Id.* at 51; *United States v. Delgado-Martinez*, 564 F.3d 750, 751–53 (5th Cir. 2009). In that respect, for issues preserved in district court, its application of the Guidelines is reviewed *de novo*; its factual findings, only for clear error. *E.g.*, *United States v. Cisneros-Gutierrez*, 517 F.3d 751, 764 (5th Cir. 2008).

Bermudez’ challenge to the substantive reasonableness of his sentence fails. As noted *supra*, the district court considered the Guidelines range and Bermudez’ mitigation assertions but concluded: the Guidelines range did not reflect the true nature of the offense conduct; and an above-Guidelines sentence was warranted to reflect the seriousness of the offense, to afford adequate deterrence, and to provide public protection. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(1), (a)(2)(A)–(C). We defer to that determination. *E.g.*, *Gall*, 552 U.S. at 51 (“The fact that the appellate court might reasonably have concluded that a different sentence was appropriate is insufficient to justify

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reversal of the district court.”). Along that line, and regarding his assertions that the district court failed to give significant weight to his history and characteristics, our court will not reweigh the § 3553 sentencing factors. *E.g.*, *United States v. Heard*, 709 F.3d 413, 435 (5th Cir. 2013) (declining to reweigh § 3553(a) sentencing factors on substantive-reasonableness review).

AFFIRMED.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS DALLAS DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

VICTOR ALFREDO BERMUDEZ§ **JUDGMENT IN A CRIMINAL CASE**

§

§

§ Case Number: **3:20-CR-00440-N(2)**§ USM Number: **07452-509**§ **Erin Elizabeth Hendricks**

§ Defendant's Attorney

THE DEFENDANT:

<input type="checkbox"/>	pleaded guilty to count(s)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	pleaded guilty to count(s) before a U.S. Magistrate Judge, which was accepted by the court.	Counts 1,2, and 4 of the Indictment filed September 22, 2020.
<input type="checkbox"/>	pleaded nolo contendere to count(s) which was accepted by the court	
<input type="checkbox"/>	was found guilty on count(s) after a plea of not guilty	

The defendant is adjudicated guilty of these offenses:

Title & Section / Nature of Offense**Offense Ended****Count**

18 U.S.C § 371 (26 U.S.C. §§ 5841 and 5861(d)) Conspiracy to Possess Unregistered Firearms
 26 U.S.C. §§ 5841 and 5861(d); 18 U.S.C. § 2 Possession of an Unregistered Firearm; Aiding and Abetting
 26 U.S.C. §§ 5845 and 5861(d); 18 U.S.C. § 2 Possession of an Unregistered Firearm; Aiding and Abetting

09/03/2020

1

07/20/2020

2

08/18/2020

4

The defendant is sentenced as provided in pages 2 through 7 of this judgment. The sentence is imposed pursuant to the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984.

- ☐ The defendant has been found not guilty on count(s)
☐ Count(s) ☐ is ☐ are dismissed on the motion of the United States

It is ordered that the defendant must notify the United States attorney for this district within 30 days of any change of name, residence, or mailing address until all fines, restitution, costs, and special assessments imposed by this judgment are fully paid. If ordered to pay restitution, the defendant must notify the court and United States attorney of material changes in economic circumstances.

APRIL 25, 2022

Date of Imposition of Judgment



Signature of Judge

DAVID C. GODBEY, UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Name and Title of Judge

APRIL 29, 2022

Date

DEFENDANT: VICTOR ALFREDO BERMUDEZ
CASE NUMBER: 3:20-CR-00440-N(2)

IMPRISONMENT

Pursuant to the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984, but taking the Guidelines as advisory pursuant to United States v. Booker, and considering the factors set forth in 18 U.S.C. Section 3553(a), the defendant is hereby committed to the custody of the United States Bureau of Prisons to be imprisoned for a total term of:

30 months as to count 1, 2 and 4 to run concurrently for a total of 30 months in custody.

☒ The court makes the following recommendations to the Bureau of Prisons:
That the defendant be designated to a facility in the Northern District of Texas, if possible.

☒ The defendant is remanded to the custody of the United States Marshal.

☐ The defendant shall surrender to the United States Marshal for this district:

☐ at ☐ a.m. ☐ p.m. on

☐ as notified by the United States Marshal.

☐ The defendant shall surrender for service of sentence at the institution designated by the Bureau of Prisons:

☐ before 2 p.m. on

☐ as notified by the United States Marshal.

☐ as notified by the Probation or Pretrial Services Office.

RETURN

I have executed this judgment as follows:

Defendant delivered on _____ to

at _____, with a certified copy of this judgment.

UNITED STATES MARSHAL

By

DEPUTY UNITED STATES MARSHAL

DEFENDANT: VICTOR ALFREDO BERMUDEZ
CASE NUMBER: 3:20-CR-00440-N(2)

SUPERVISED RELEASE

Upon release from imprisonment, the defendant shall be on supervised release for a term of: **Three (3) years as to Counts 1,2 and 4 to run concurrently.**

MANDATORY CONDITIONS

1. You must not commit another federal, state or local crime.
2. You must not unlawfully possess a controlled substance.
3. You must refrain from any unlawful use of a controlled substance. You must submit to one drug test within 15 days of release from imprisonment and at least two periodic drug tests thereafter, as determined by the court.
 - ☒ The above drug testing condition is suspended, based on the court's determination that you pose a low risk of future substance abuse. *(check if applicable)*
4. ☐ You must make restitution in accordance with 18 U.S.C. §§ 3663 and 3663A or any other statute authorizing a sentence of restitution. *(check if applicable)*
5. ☒ You must cooperate in the collection of DNA as directed by the probation officer. *(check if applicable)*
6. ☐ You must comply with the requirements of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (34 U.S.C. § 20901, et seq.) as directed by the probation officer, the Bureau of Prisons, or any state sex offender registration agency in which you reside, work, are a student, or were convicted of a qualifying offense. *(check if applicable)*
7. ☐ You must participate in an approved program for domestic violence. *(check if applicable)*

You must comply with the standard conditions that have been adopted by this court as well as with any additional conditions on the attached page.

DEFENDANT: VICTOR ALFREDO BERMUDEZ
CASE NUMBER: 3:20-CR-00440-N(2)

STANDARD CONDITIONS OF SUPERVISION

As part of your supervised release, you must comply with the following standard conditions of supervision. These conditions are imposed because they establish the basic expectations for your behavior while on supervision and identify the minimum tools needed by probation officers to keep informed, report to the court about, and bring about improvements in your conduct and condition.

1. You must report to the probation office in the federal judicial district where you are authorized to reside within 72 hours of your release from imprisonment, unless the probation officer instructs you to report to a different probation office or within a different time frame.
2. After initially reporting to the probation office, you will receive instructions from the court or the probation officer about how and when you must report to the probation officer, and you must report to the probation officer as instructed.
3. You must not knowingly leave the federal judicial district where you are authorized to reside without first getting permission from the court or the probation officer.
4. You must answer truthfully the questions asked by your probation officer.
5. You must live at a place approved by the probation officer. If you plan to change where you live or anything about your living arrangements (such as the people you live with), you must notify the probation officer at least 10 days before the change. If notifying the probation officer in advance is not possible due to unanticipated circumstances, you must notify the probation officer within 72 hours of becoming aware of a change or expected change.
6. You must allow the probation officer to visit you at any time at your home or elsewhere, and you must permit the probation officer to take any items prohibited by the conditions of your supervision that he or she observes in plain view.
7. You must work full time (at least 30 hours per week) at a lawful type of employment, unless the probation officer excuses you from doing so. If you do not have full-time employment you must try to find full-time employment, unless the probation officer excuses you from doing so. If you plan to change where you work or anything about your work (such as your position or your job responsibilities), you must notify the probation officer at least 10 days before the change. If notifying the probation officer at least 10 days in advance is not possible due to unanticipated circumstances, you must notify the probation officer within 72 hours of becoming aware of a change or expected change.
8. You must not communicate or interact with someone you know is engaged in criminal activity. If you know someone has been convicted of a felony, you must not knowingly communicate or interact with that person without first getting the permission of the probation officer.
9. If you are arrested or questioned by a law enforcement officer, you must notify the probation officer within 72 hours.
10. You must not own, possess, or have access to a firearm, ammunition, destructive device, or dangerous weapon (i.e., anything that was designed, or was modified for, the specific purpose of causing bodily injury or death to another person such as nunchakus or tasers).
11. You must not act or make any agreement with a law enforcement agency to act as a confidential human source or informant without first getting the permission of the court.
12. If the probation officer determines that you pose a risk to another person (including an organization), the probation officer may require you to notify the person about the risk and you must comply with that instruction. The probation officer may contact the person and confirm that you have notified the person about the risk.
13. You must follow the instructions of the probation officer related to the conditions of supervision.

U.S. Probation Office Use Only

A U.S. probation officer has instructed me on the conditions specified by the court and has provided me with a written copy of this judgment containing these conditions. I understand additional information regarding these conditions is available at www.txnp.uscourts.gov.

Defendant's Signature _____

Date _____

DEFENDANT: VICTOR ALFREDO BERMUDEZ
CASE NUMBER: 3:20-CR-00440-N(2)

SPECIAL CONDITIONS OF SUPERVISION

Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3583(d), as a condition of supervised release upon the completion of the sentence of imprisonment, the defendant shall be surrendered by the Federal Bureau of Prisons to a duly authorized immigration official for deportation in accordance with the established procedures provided by the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101 et seq. As a condition of supervised release, if ordered deported, the defendant shall remain outside the United States.

DEFENDANT: VICTOR ALFREDO BERMUDEZ
 CASE NUMBER: 3:20-CR-00440-N(2)

CRIMINAL MONETARY PENALTIES

The defendant must pay the total criminal monetary penalties under the Schedule of Payments page.

	<u>Assessment</u>	<u>Restitution</u>	<u>Fine</u>	<u>AVAA Assessment*</u>	<u>JVTA Assessment**</u>
TOTALS	\$300.00	\$.00	\$.00	\$.00	\$.00

- ☐ The determination of restitution is deferred until *An Amended Judgment in a Criminal Case (AO245C)* will be entered after such determination.
- ☐ The defendant must make restitution (including community restitution) to the following payees in the amount listed below.

If the defendant makes a partial payment, each payee shall receive an approximately proportioned payment. However, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3664(i), all nonfederal victims must be paid before the United States is paid.

- ☐ Restitution amount ordered pursuant to plea agreement \$
- ☐ The defendant must pay interest on restitution and a fine of more than \$2,500, unless the restitution or fine is paid in full before the fifteenth day after the date of the judgment, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3612(f). All of the payment options on the Schedule of Payments page may be subject to penalties for delinquency and default, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3612(g).
- ☐ The court determined that the defendant does not have the ability to pay interest and it is ordered that:
- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> the interest requirement is waived for the | <input type="checkbox"/> fine | <input type="checkbox"/> restitution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the interest requirement for the | <input type="checkbox"/> fine | <input type="checkbox"/> restitution is modified as follows: |

* Amy, Vicky, and Andy Child Pornography Victim Assistance Act of 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-299.

** Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-22

*** Findings for the total amount of losses are required under Chapters 109A, 110, 110A, and 113A of Title 18 for offenses committed on or after September 13, 1994, but before April 23, 1996.

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SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

Having assessed the defendant's ability to pay, payment of the total criminal monetary penalties is due as follows:

- A** ☐ Lump sum payments of \$ _____ due immediately, balance due
☐ not later than _____, or
☐ in accordance ☐ C, ☐ D, ☐ E, or ☐ F below; or
- B** ☐ Payment to begin immediately (may be combined with ☐ C, ☐ D, or ☐ F below); or
- C** ☐ Payment in equal _____ (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly) installments of \$ _____ over a period of _____ (e.g., months or years), to commence _____ (e.g., 30 or 60 days) after the date of this judgment; or
- D** ☐ Payment in equal 20 (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly) installments of \$ _____ over a period of _____ (e.g., months or years), to commence _____ (e.g., 30 or 60 days) after release from imprisonment to a term of supervision; or
- E** ☐ Payment during the term of supervised release will commence within _____ (e.g., 30 or 60 days) after release from imprisonment. The court will set the payment plan based on an assessment of the defendant's ability to pay at that time; or
- F** ☒ Special instructions regarding the payment of criminal monetary penalties:
It is ordered that the Defendant shall pay to the United States a special assessment of \$300.00 for Counts 1, 2 and 4 , which shall be due immediately. Said special assessment shall be paid to the Clerk, U.S. District Court.

Unless the court has expressly ordered otherwise, if this judgment imposes imprisonment, payment of criminal monetary penalties is due during imprisonment. All criminal monetary penalties, except those payments made through the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Inmate Financial Responsibility Program, are made to the clerk of the court.

The defendant shall receive credit for all payments previously made toward any criminal monetary penalties imposed.

- ☐ Joint and Several
See above for Defendant and Co-Defendant Names and Case Numbers (including defendant number), Total Amount, Joint and Several Amount, and corresponding payee, if appropriate.
- ☐ The defendant shall pay the cost of prosecution.
- ☐ The defendant shall pay the following court cost(s):
- ☐ The defendant shall forfeit the defendant's interest in the following property to the United States:

Payments shall be applied in the following order: (1) assessment, (2) restitution principal, (3) restitution interest, (4) AVAA assessment, (5) fine principal, (6) fine interest, (7) community restitution, (8) JVTa assessment, (9) penalties, and (10) costs, including cost of prosecution and court costs.