

No. 17-6276

IN THE
Supreme Court of the United States

JULIAN MAURICE MIDDLETON JR.,

Petitioner,

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Respondent.

**On Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the
United States Court of Appeals
for the Eleventh Circuit**

SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF

Donna Lee Elm
Federal Defender

Conrad Kahn, Counsel of Record
Research and Writing Attorney
Federal Defender's Office
201 South Orange Avenue, Suite 300
Orlando, Florida 32801
Telephone: (407) 648-6338
Facsimile: (407) 648-6765
E-mail: Conrad_Kahn@fd.org

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SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF

Petitioner Julian Maurice Middleton Jr., pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 15.8, brings to this Court’s attention *United States v. Walton*, 881 F.3d 768 (9th Cir. 2018), a new decision from the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that was published after Mr. Middleton filed his petition for a writ of certiorari.¹ In *Walton*, the Ninth Circuit held that a conviction for Alabama first-degree robbery is not a “violent felony” under the ACCA’s elements clause. *Walton* is significant for several reasons.

Alabama first-degree robbery is an aggravated (armed) version of Alabama third-degree robbery. Like Florida robbery, Alabama third-degree robbery requires a taking of property by “force” sufficient to overcome a victim’s resistance. Notably, *Walton* clarified that Alabama courts interpret the “overcoming resistance” element in their robbery statute just as Florida courts interpret the “overcoming resistance” element in Florida’s robbery statute—that is, requiring only a minimal, non-violent degree of force. 881 F.3d at 773–74 (citing *Jackson v. State*, 969 So. 2d 930 (Ala. Crim. App. 2007), *Wright v. State*, 487 So. 2d 962, 964 (Ala. Crim. App. 1985), and *Wright v. State*, 432 So. 2d 510, 512 (Ala. Crim. App. 1983)) (noting that Alabama courts have affirmed robbery convictions where the “force” used was non-violent under *Curtis Johnson*, such as where the defendant merely tugged a purse and yanked it off the victim’s arm, pushed a cashier out of the way to take money from a cash register, or shoved the victim into a corner to effect an escape).

The Eleventh Circuit has recognized that the elements of Florida and Alabama robbery are “essentially the same.” *United States v. Gilbert*, ___ F. App’x ___, 2017 WL 6728518 at *5–*6 (11th Cir. Dec. 29, 2017). Under both statutes, “the degree of force required – force sufficient to

¹ A copy of the decision is attached to this supplemental brief.

overcome the victim’s resistance – is defined in a similar way.” *Id.* Therefore, the Eleventh Circuit held it is “arguable” that the “same reasoning” applied in *United States v. Fritts*, 841 F.3d 937 (11th Cir. 2016), and *United States v. Lockley*, 632 F.3d 1238 (11th Cir. 2011), applies to Alabama robbery. Indeed, district courts within the Eleventh Circuit have consistently held that since Alabama robbery “is substantially similar to the Florida robbery statute,” *Fritts* and *Lockley* compel the conclusion that Alabama robbery satisfies the elements clause. *See Senter v. United States*, 2018 WL 705526 at *2–*3 (N.D. Ala. 2018); *Boykin v. United States*, 2018 WL 705523 (N.D. Ala. 2018); *Childs v. United States*, 2017 WL 4538923 (N.D. Ala. 2017); *Dunn v. United States*, 2017 WL 4472714 (N.D. Ala. 2017); *United States v. Rice*, 2017 WL 1247402 (N.D. Ala. 2017); *United States v. Freeman*, 2016 WL 4394172 (S.D. Ala. 2016).

Given that the Eleventh Circuit treats these analogous robbery offenses as categorically violent, and the Ninth Circuit does not, *Walton* confirms that resolution of the circuit conflict as to whether Florida robbery is a “violent felony” has broad legal importance and undermines the government’s claim that this issue “is unlikely to recur with great frequency *in the Ninth Circuit*, which sits on the other side of the country.” BIO at 16 (emphasis added).

With *Walton*, the Ninth Circuit has now considered three ACCA-robbery cases addressing whether the degree of force necessary to overcome a victim’s resistance is categorically “violent force” as defined in *Curtis Johnson v. United States*, 559 U.S. 133 (2010). First, the Ninth Circuit issued *United States v. Geozos*, 870 F.3d 890 (9th Cir. 2017), holding that Florida robbery was not a “violent felony” since Florida decisional law confirms overcoming resistance does not require “violent force.” Then, the Ninth Circuit decided *United States v. Jones*, 877 F.3d 884, 888–89 (9th Cir. 2017), similarly holding that Arizona robbery does not qualify as a “violent felony” since Arizona courts interpret their “overcoming resistance” element to require only minimal, non-

violent force.² Now, the Ninth Circuit has decided *Walton*. In *Walton*, the Ninth Circuit held that Alabama robbery does not categorically qualify as a “violent felony.” Although *Walton* did not specifically mention *Geozos*, its reasoning is consistent with *Geozos*.³

In fact, in *Walton*, the Ninth Circuit went beyond *Geozos*, clarifying that “[t]he mere potential for some trivial pain or slight injury will not suffice” for the ACCA elements clause, since “‘violent’ force must be substantial and strong.” 881 F.3d at 773 (citing *Curtis Johnson* and *United States v. Castleman*, 134 S. Ct. 1405 (2014)). Notably, in coming to its decision, the Ninth Circuit adopted the same arguments articulated by Mr. Middleton in his Reply to the BIO at 8–11 regarding why the decision below is wrong. Under *Walton*, the “mere potential for some trivial pain or slight injury,” such as that which existed in both *Hayes v. State*, 780 So. 2d 918 (Fla. 1st DCA 2011), and *Sanders v. State*, 769 So. 2d 506 (Fla. 5th DCA 2000), is not enough to satisfy *Curtis Johnson*’s definition of “violent force.”

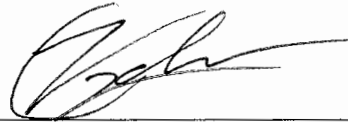
² As explained in Mr. Middleton’s Reply to the BIO, *Jones* relied on the Ninth Circuit’s then-recent decision in *United States v. Molinar*, 876 F.3d 953 (9th Cir. 2017), which held that Arizona robbery is not a “crime of violence” under the sentencing guidelines’ identically-worded elements clause. Reply to the BIO at 3 n.2. The Ninth Circuit recently amended the panel decision in *Molinar*, but reaffirmed that Arizona robbery does not require “violent force” as defined by *Curtis Johnson*. *United States v. Molinar*, ___ F.3d ___, 2017 WL 7362022 (9th Cir. Feb. 5, 2018).

³ The *Walton* court also found *United States v. Lee*, 701 F. App’x 697 (10th Cir. 2017), particularly relevant to its analysis. In *Lee*, the Tenth Circuit held that Florida resisting with violence does not qualify as a “violent felony” since it can be committed by simply “wiggling and struggling” and “scuffling.” 701 F. App’x at 701. The Ninth Circuit noted that the “shoving” addressed in Alabama decisional law was “no more violent than these minor scuffles.” Therefore, the Ninth Circuit concluded that the “force” required by Alabama robbery was “not sufficiently violent to render that crime a violent felony under the ACCA.” *Walton*, 881 F.3d at 774.

For the reasons explained herein as well as those in Mr. Middleton's Petition and Reply to the BIO, Florida robbery is not a "violent felony" under the ACCA. Accordingly, Mr. Middleton respectfully requests that this Court grant his petition.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Lee Elm
Federal Defender



Conrad Kahn
Research and Writing Attorney
Federal Defender's Office
201 South Orange Avenue, Suite 300
Orlando, Florida 32801
Telephone: (407) 648-6338
Facsimile: (407) 648-6765
E-mail: Conrad_Kahn@fd.org
Counsel of Record for Petitioner

881 F.3d 768

United States Court of Appeals,
Ninth Circuit.

UNITED STATES of America, Plaintiff–Appellee,

v.

Donnie Lee WALTON, Defendant–Appellant.

No. 15-50358

Argued and Submitted January
8, 2018, Pasadena, California

Filed February 1, 2018

Synopsis

Background: Defendant pled guilty in the United States District Court for the Central District of California, No. 2:14-cr-00537-SVW-1, Stephen V. Wilson, J., to being felon in possession of firearm and ammunition, and he appealed.

Holdings: The Court of Appeals, Rakoff, Senior District Judge, sitting by designation, held that:

[1] defendant's conviction for Alabama armed robbery was not “violent felony” under Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) force clause, and

[2] defendant's prior conviction for second-degree robbery under California law did not qualify as “violent felony” under ACCA.

Vacated and remanded.

West Headnotes (9)

[1] **Criminal Law**

⚡ Review De Novo

Court of Appeals generally reviews de novo whether state conviction qualifies under Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) definition of “violent felony.” 18 U.S.C.A. § 924(e)(1).

Cases that cite this headnote

[2] **Criminal Law**

⚡ Habitual and second offenders

Defendant did not waive or forfeit claim that his prior convictions did not constitute “violent felonies” under Armed Career Criminal Act (ACCA) as result of his failure to raise claims advanced in his opening brief before district court, where defendant argued before district court that he did not have required number of violent felonies necessary for enhancement under ACCA, and government argued in its brief before sentencing court that his prior convictions were all violent felonies under ACCA. 18 U.S.C.A. § 924(e)(1).

1 Cases that cite this headnote

[3] **Criminal Law**

⚡ Presentation of questions in general

Court of Appeals is not limited to plain error review when it is presented with question that is purely one of law and where opposing party will suffer no prejudice as result of failure to raise issue in trial court.

Cases that cite this headnote

[4] **Sentencing and Punishment**

⚡ Violent or Nonviolent Character of Offense

To determine whether defendant's conviction under state criminal statute qualifies as “violent felony” under Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) force clause, court may not look to underlying facts of defendant's actual conviction, but instead must employ categorical approach, looking only to fact of conviction and prior offense's statutory definition to determine whether state statute under which defendant was convicted criminalizes only conduct that is “violent felony” under ACCA. 18 U.S.C.A. § 924(e)(2)(B).

Cases that cite this headnote

[5] **Sentencing and Punishment**

↔ Violent or Nonviolent Character of Offense

Even the least egregious conduct that statute of conviction covers must qualify as “violent felony” for defendant's conviction under that statute to count toward Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) mandatory sentence. 18 U.S.C.A. § 924(e)(2)(B).

Cases that cite this headnote

[6] **Courts**

↔ Intermediate appellate court

Sentencing and Punishment

↔ Violent or Nonviolent Character of Offense

In determining whether defendant's state conviction qualifies as “violent felony” under Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) force clause, if state's highest court has not ruled on level of force required to support conviction, sentencing court is bound by reasoned intermediate court rulings. 18 U.S.C.A. § 924(e)(2)(B).

Cases that cite this headnote

[7] **Sentencing and Punishment**

↔ Violent or Nonviolent Character of Offense

To determine whether defendant's conviction under state criminal statute qualifies as “violent felony” under Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) force clause, if statute is divisible—that is, if it lists alternative sets of elements, in essence several different crimes—court must apply modified categorical approach, under which it consults limited class of documents, such as indictments and jury instructions, to determine which alternative formed basis of defendant's prior conviction, and then apply categorical approach to subdivision under

which defendant was convicted. 18 U.S.C.A. § 924(e)(2)(B).

Cases that cite this headnote

[8] **Sentencing and Punishment**

↔ Particular offenses

Force required to support conviction for third-degree robbery in Alabama was not sufficiently violent to render that crime “violent felony” under Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) force clause, and thus defendant's conviction for Alabama armed robbery could not support sentencing enhancement under ACCA. 18 U.S.C.A. § 924(e)(2)(B)(ii); Ala. Code § 13A-8-43(a).

Cases that cite this headnote

[9] **Sentencing and Punishment**

↔ Particular offenses

Defendant's prior conviction for second-degree robbery under California law did not qualify as “violent felony” under Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) force clause. 18 U.S.C.A. § 924(e)(2)(B)(ii); Cal. Penal Code § 211.

Cases that cite this headnote

***770** Appeal from the United States District Court for the Central District of California, Stephen V. Wilson, District Judge, Presiding, D.C. No. 2:14-cr-00537-SVW-1

Attorneys and Law Firms

Jonathan D. Libby (argued), Deputy Federal Public Defender; Hilary L. Potashner, Federal Public Defender; Office of the Federal Public Defender, Los Angeles, California; for Defendant–Appellant.

L. Ashley Aull (argued), Chief; Michael Anthony Brown, Assistant United States Attorney; Sandra R. Brown, Acting United States Attorney; Criminal Appeals Section, United States Attorney's Office, Los Angeles, California; for Plaintiff–Appellee.

Before: Milan D. Smith, Jr. and Michelle T. Friedland,
Circuit Judges, and Jed S. Rakoff,* Senior District Judge.

Opinion

OPINION

RAKOFF, Senior District Judge:

Defendant–Appellant Donnie Lee Walton challenges the district court’s imposition of a sentencing enhancement under the Armed Career Criminal Act (“ACCA”), 18 U.S.C. § 924(e)(1). ACCA imposes a mandatory minimum sentence of fifteen years of imprisonment on a person who both violates Section 922(g) and has three previous convictions for either a “serious drug offense,” or a “violent felony,” or some combination of the two. *Id.*

When Walton pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(g), he had previously been convicted of (1) assault with a deadly weapon, in violation of California Penal Code § 245(a)(1); (2) second-degree robbery, in violation of California Penal Code § 211; (3) first-degree robbery in violation of Alabama Criminal Code § 13A-8-41; and (4) attempted murder, in violation of Alabama Criminal Code §§ 13A-4-2 and 13A-6-2. The sentencing court found that all four of these convictions were for violent felonies under ACCA.

Walton argues on appeal that the district court erred as to each of these previous convictions. We hold that neither first-degree robbery under Alabama law nor second-degree robbery under California law is a violent felony under ACCA. Since at least two of his four prior non-drug convictions did not qualify as violent felonies, Walton should not have been subject to ACCA’s mandatory sentencing provision. It is therefore unnecessary to decide whether Walton’s attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon convictions are violent felonies. We reverse and remand.

I.

[1] [2] [3] This court generally reviews *de novo* whether a state conviction qualifies *771 under ACCA’s definition of “violent felony.” *United States v. Dixon*,

805 F.3d 1193, 1195 (9th Cir. 2015). The Government nevertheless argues for plain error review because Walton failed to raise the claims advanced in his opening brief before the district court. This is incorrect. Walton argued below that he did not have the required number of violent felonies necessary for enhancement under ACCA, and while he did not make the precise arguments that he makes on this appeal, “it is claims that are deemed waived or forfeited, not arguments.” *United States v. Pallaes–Galan*, 359 F.3d 1088, 1095 (9th Cir. 2004). Moreover, we are not limited to plain error review when, as here, “we are presented with a question that is purely one of law and where the opposing party will suffer no prejudice as a result of the failure to raise the issue in the trial court.” *United States v. Evans–Martinez*, 611 F.3d 635, 642 (9th Cir. 2010) (quoting *United States v. Saavedra–Velazquez*, 578 F.3d 1103, 1106 (9th Cir. 2009)). The Government expressly argued in its brief before the sentencing court that Walton’s prior convictions were all violent felonies under ACCA, and its arguments on this purely legal question have been squarely presented at length before this court. We therefore review *de novo* whether Walton’s prior convictions qualify as violent felonies under ACCA.

II.

ACCA defines a “violent felony” as any crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year that: “(i) has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person of another; or (ii) is burglary, arson, or extortion, involves use of explosives[,] or [(iii)] otherwise involves conduct that presents a serious potential risk of physical injury to another.” 18 U.S.C. § 924(e)(2)(B). These three clauses are known as the “force clause,” the “enumerated clause,” and the “residual clause,” respectively. The Government does not argue that Walton’s convictions qualify under the enumerated clause, and the Supreme Court has held that the residual clause is unconstitutionally vague. *Johnson v. United States*, — U.S. —, 135 S.Ct. 2551, 2563, 192 L.Ed.2d 569 (2015) (“*Johnson II*”). Thus only the force clause is at issue.

[4] [5] [6] Counterintuitive though it may seem, to determine whether a defendant’s conviction under a state criminal statute qualifies as a violent felony under the force clause, we do not look to the underlying facts of the defendant’s actual conviction. *See Mathis v. United States*, — U.S. —, 136 S.Ct. 2243, 2251,

195 L.Ed.2d 604 (2016). Rather, established Supreme Court precedent requires that we employ a so-called “categorical” approach, looking “only to the fact of conviction and the statutory definition of the prior offense” to determine whether the state statute under which the defendant was convicted criminalizes only conduct that is a violent felony under ACCA. *Taylor v. United States*, 495 U.S. 575, 602, 110 S.Ct. 2143, 109 L.Ed.2d 607 (1990); *see also United States v. Grisel*, 488 F.3d 844, 847 (9th Cir. 2007) (en banc). Under this approach, “even the least egregious conduct the statute covers must qualify” as a violent felony for a defendant’s conviction under that statute to count toward ACCA’s mandatory sentence. *United States v. Lopez–Solis*, 447 F.3d 1201, 1206 (9th Cir. 2006).¹ “State cases *772 that examine the outer contours of the conduct criminalized by the state statute are particularly important because ‘we must presume that the conviction rested upon nothing more than the least of the acts criminalized’ ” by that statute. *United States v. Strickland*, 860 F.3d 1224, 1226–27 (9th Cir. 2017) (alterations omitted) (quoting *Moncrieffe v. Holder*, 569 U.S. 184, 190–91, 133 S.Ct. 1678, 185 L.Ed.2d 727 (2013)). If a state’s highest court has not ruled on the level of force required to support a conviction, we are bound by reasoned intermediate court rulings. *See Poublon v. C.H. Robinson Co.*, 846 F.3d 1251, 1266 (9th Cir. 2017) (citing *West v. Am. Tel. & Tel. Co.*, 311 U.S. 223, 236, 61 S.Ct. 179, 85 L.Ed. 139 (1940)).

[7] If a statute is “divisible”—that is, if it “lists alternative sets of elements, in essence several different crimes”—we apply the “modified categorical approach,” under which we “consult a limited class of documents, such as indictments and jury instructions, to determine which alternative formed the basis of the defendant’s prior conviction,” and then apply the categorical approach to the subdivision under which the defendant was convicted. *United States v. Werle*, 815 F.3d 614, 619 (9th Cir. 2016) (quoting *Descamps v. United States*, 570 U.S. 254, 257, 133 S.Ct. 2276, 186 L.Ed.2d 438 (2013)). If the government fails to produce those documents, courts determine whether the “least of [the] acts” described in the statute can serve as a predicate offense. *Johnson v. United States (“Johnson I”)*, 559 U.S. 133, 137, 130 S.Ct. 1265, 176 L.Ed.2d 1 (2010).

A.

We turn first to evaluating whether Walton’s conviction for first-degree robbery under Alabama law qualifies as a violent felony under ACCA. A person commits first-degree robbery in Alabama if he commits third-degree robbery and “[i]s armed with a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument” or “[c]auses serious physical injury to another.” Ala. Code § 13A-8-41(a). In turn, a person commits third-degree robbery in Alabama if, “in the course of committing a theft,” she either

- (1) [u]ses force against the person of the owner or any person present with intent to overcome his physical resistance or physical power of resistance; or
- (2) [t]hreatens the imminent use of force against the person of the owner or any person present with intent to compel acquiescence to the taking of or escaping with the property.

Ala. Code § 13A-8-43(a). An actual taking of property is not required. *Ex parte Verzone*, 868 So.2d 399, 402 (Ala. 2003).

The Government does not contend that first-degree robbery’s aggravating factors independently render it a violent felony under ACCA, and for good reason. Third-degree robbery becomes first-degree if the perpetrator merely “[i]s armed with a deadly weapon.” Ala. Code § 13A-8-41(a). The defendant need not ever use or threaten to use that weapon. *See, e.g., *773 Saffold v. State*, 951 So.2d 777, 778–81 (Ala. Crim. App. 2006) (affirming conviction of first-degree robbery where police discovered defendant had a gun hidden in his trench coat but it was never mentioned or seen during the robbery). Merely possessing a gun, even in the course of a robbery, does not involve the use, attempted use, or threatened use of force. *See United States v. Molinar*, 876 F.3d 953, 957 (9th Cir. 2017); *United States v. Parnell*, 818 F.3d 974, 980 (9th Cir. 2016) (“The mere fact an individual is armed, however, does not mean he or she has used the weapon, or threatened to use it, in any way.”). First-degree robbery, then, is only a violent felony under ACCA’s force clause if third-degree robbery is. This question in turn depends on whether the force required for third-degree robbery under Alabama law is sufficient to qualify as a violent crime under ACCA.

In *Johnson I*, the United States Supreme Court clarified that the “physical force” required under ACCA’s force clause must be “violent force” or “force capable of causing physical pain or injury to another person.” *Johnson I*, 559 U.S. at 140, 130 S.Ct. 1265. The mere potential for some trivial pain or slight injury will not suffice. Rather, “violent” force must be “substantial” and “strong.” *Id.* In support of this holding, the Court in *Johnson I* favorably quoted the definition of “violent felony” from Black’s Law Dictionary: “a crime characterized by extreme physical force, such as murder, forcible rape, and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.” *Id.* at 140–41, 130 S.Ct. 1265 (alteration omitted).

Thereafter, the Supreme Court, in *United States v. Castleman*, —U.S. —, 134 S.Ct. 1405, 188 L.Ed.2d 426 (2014), further explained the need for substantial force for a conviction to qualify as a violent felony under ACCA’s force clause. *See id.* at 1411–12. In that case, the Court distinguished “[m]inor uses of force” that suffice for a “misdemeanor crime of domestic violence,” such as squeezing an arm hard enough to leave a bruise, from the “substantial degree of force” required for violent felonies under ACCA. *Id.* As the Court noted, minor uses of force are insufficient both because they are not “violent” in the generic sense and because it would be anomalous “to apply the Armed Career Criminal Act to ‘crimes which, though dangerous, are not typically committed by those whom one normally labels armed career criminals.’” *Id.* at 1412 (quoting *Begay v. United States*, 553 U.S. 137, 146, 128 S.Ct. 1581, 170 L.Ed.2d 490 (2008), *abrogated on other grounds by Johnson II*, 135 S.Ct. at 2563).

Alabama courts have affirmed robbery convictions under the “use of force prong” where the “force” used was not violent under *Johnson I*. For example, the victim in *Jackson v. State*, 969 So.2d 930 (Ala. Crim. App. 2007) testified that “the appellant rushed toward her, tugged her purse a couple of times, yanked her purse off of her arm, and ran away.” *Id.* at 931. The Court of Criminal Appeals held this “clearly supported a conviction” of third-degree robbery. *Id.* at 933. Similarly, the Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed another conviction where the only force used was a push that the victim testified was “just enough to knock me off balance. You know, get me out of the way.” *Wright v. State*, 487 So.2d 962, 964 (Ala. Crim. App. 1985). When asked, “How far over did he knock you?” the victim replied, “Just over the counter. I caught myself on the counter.” *Id.* at 965. The Alabama

court held that this was sufficient evidence of force to satisfy Alabama’s third-degree robbery statute. *Id.* And in another case, the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed a conviction for second-degree robbery—which, like first-degree robbery, also requires the commission *774 of third-degree robbery—finding in relevant part that the crime “constituted robbery in the third degree” based on the victim’s testimony that “the defendant pushed or shoved him ‘back into a corner’ to effect an immediate escape.” *Wright v. State*, 432 So.2d 510, 512 (Ala. Crim. App. 1983).

We have previously held that several other crimes are not violent felonies under the force clauses of ACCA and the Sentencing Guidelines because they can be committed by using minimal levels of force. For example, in *Molinar*, we held that Arizona armed robbery was not a crime of violence under the force clause of the Sentencing Guidelines in light of an Arizona Supreme Court case holding that, although snatching an article from a person’s hand is insufficient, “ ‘if the article is so attached to the person or clothes as to create resistance however slight,’ the offense becomes robbery.” *Molinar*, 876 F.3d at 957 (quoting *Lear v. State*, 39 Ariz. 313, 6 P.2d 426, 427 (1931)); *see also United States v. Jones*, 877 F.3d 884, 887–88 (9th Cir. 2017) (applying *Molinar* to Arizona armed robbery under ACCA).

Several other circuits have also held that robbery statutes that can be violated by such minor uses of force are not violent under ACCA or similar statutes. *See, e.g., United States v. Bell*, 840 F.3d 963, 966 (8th Cir. 2016) (Missouri robbery not a violent crime because it had been committed by a defendant who “bumped” the victim’s shoulder and “yanked” her purse away); *United States v. Winston*, 850 F.3d 677, 685 (4th Cir. 2017) (Virginia robbery not a violent felony because a conviction was affirmed when “the victim was carrying her purse tucked under her arm when the defendant approached the victim from behind, tapped her on the shoulder, and jerked her around by pulling her shoulder, took her purse, and ran” (quoting *Jones v. Commonwealth*, 26 Va.App. 736, 496 S.E.2d 668, 669 (1998))). This is plainly analogous to the minor force found sufficient under the Alabama robbery statute in the *Jackson* case.

[8] We have also held that resisting arrest under Arizona law is not a crime of violence under the Sentencing Guidelines because the Arizona Court of Appeals has

affirmed the conviction of a defendant who, while trying to keep from being handcuffed, “kicked the officers trying to control her,” causing a “minor scuffle.” *United States v. Flores-Cordero*, 723 F.3d 1085, 1087–88 (9th Cir. 2013) (quoting *State v. Lee*, 217 Ariz. 514, 176 P.3d 712, 713 (Ariz. Ct. App. 2008)), as amended (Oct. 3, 2013); see also *United States v. Lee*, 701 Fed.Appx. 697, 701 (10th Cir. 2017) (Florida resisting arrest offense not a violent felony where it had been violated by “wiggling and struggling” and “scuffling” (quoting *State v. Green*, 400 So.2d 1322, 1323–24 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 1981))). Shoves that merely cause others to briefly lose their balance or step backward, as in the two *Wright* cases from Alabama cited above, are no more violent than these minor scuffles. The force required to support a conviction for third-degree robbery in Alabama is therefore not sufficiently violent to render that crime a violent felony under ACCA.² Because the Government has not argued that the statute is divisible, any such argument is waived. See *Parnell*, 818 F.3d at 981 (declining to conduct a modified *775 categorical analysis because “the government [did] not argue [that the defendant’s] conviction [fell] under § 924(e)(2)(B)(ii) or that the modified categorical approach applie[d]”). Accordingly, we conclude that Walton’s conviction for Alabama armed robbery cannot support an enhancement under ACCA.

B.

Turning to Walton’s conviction for second-degree robbery under California law, California’s robbery statute prohibits “the felonious taking of personal property in the possession of another, from his person or immediate presence, and against his will, accomplished by means of force or fear.” Cal. Penal Code § 211. At the time of Walton’s sentencing, we had held that California robbery was a violent felony under ACCA’s residual clause. See *United States v. Prince*, 772 F.3d 1173, 1176–77 (9th Cir. 2014). However, after the Supreme Court struck down the residual clause in *Johnson II*, we revisited that decision and held that California robbery is not a violent felony under ACCA’s force clause because it can be committed where force is only negligently used and because the statute is

indivisible. See *Dixon*, 805 F.3d at 1197–98. The *Dixon* court relied on *People v. Anderson*, in which the California Supreme Court affirmed the conviction of a man who, while stealing a car, accidentally ran over its owner as he sped away. 51 Cal.4th 989, 125 Cal.Rptr.3d 408, 252 P.3d 968, 972 (2011) (“It was robbery even if, as he claims, he did not intend to strike [the owner], but did so accidentally.”).

[9] *Dixon* is dispositive as far as Walton’s conviction for second-degree robbery under California law is concerned. Indeed, the Government offers no counter-argument to *Dixon*’s application here beyond simply citing to two cases that predate *Johnson I* and so applied the incorrect analysis and that, moreover, involved different statutes. See *Nieves-Medrano v. Holder*, 590 F.3d 1057 (9th Cir. 2010); *United States v. David H.*, 29 F.3d 489 (9th Cir. 1994). We therefore hold that Walton’s conviction for second-degree robbery under California law, like his conviction for first-degree robbery under Alabama law, does not qualify as a “violent felony” under ACCA’s force clause.

III.

Because two of Walton’s four prior convictions are not violent felonies under ACCA’s force clause, Walton should not have been subject to ACCA’s fifteen-year mandatory minimum sentence, which requires at least three previous convictions of violent felonies. 18 U.S.C. § 924(e)(1). Accordingly, Walton’s sentence must be vacated, and we need not reach his arguments regarding his convictions for attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon.

The sentence is hereby **VACATED** and the case is remanded to the district court for resentencing.

All Citations

881 F.3d 768, 18 Cal. Daily Op. Serv. 1204, 2018 Daily Journal D.A.R. 1128

Footnotes

* The Honorable Jed S. Rakoff, Senior United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York, sitting by designation.

- 1 *Lopez-Solis* dealt with interpretation of a sentencing enhancement under § 2L1.2(b)(3)(E) of the United States Sentencing Guidelines. *Id.* at 1203. The commentary to that provision defines a “crime of violence” as any crime “that has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person of another.” U.S. Sentencing Guidelines Manual § 2L1.2, cmt. n.2 (U.S. Sentencing Comm’n 2014). Similarly, both 18 U.S.C. § 16(a) and the career offender sentencing guideline, U.S.S.G. § 4B1.2(a)(1), define a “crime of violence” to include any offense that “has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force” against the person of another. Cases interpreting these similar provisions are relevant to interpretation of ACCA’s force clause. *See United States v. Molinar*, 876 F.3d 953, 956 n.3 (9th Cir. 2017) (“[T]he force clauses in the ACCA and the Guidelines remain identical.”); *see also United States v. Benally*, 843 F.3d 350, 354 (9th Cir. 2016) (“[B]ecause the wording of [18 U.S.C. § 924(c)(3) and 18 U.S.C. § 16] is virtually identical, we interpret their plain language in the same manner.” (footnote omitted)).
- 2 Although several district courts in the Eleventh Circuit have held that Alabama robbery is a crime of violence under ACCA or similar statutes, none of these opinions actually engaged in the analysis required under *Johnson I*. *See United States v. Freeman*, No. 11-0303-WS, 2016 WL 4394172, at *2 (S.D. Ala. Aug. 15, 2016) (summarily holding that second-degree robbery “qualifies as a violent felony under the ACCA’s elements clause because it has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person of another” and citing pre-*Johnson I* precedent); *United States v. Dees*, No. 05-0225-WS-B, 2014 WL 2885481, *2 (S.D. Ala. June 25, 2014) (same); *Lever v. United States*, No. 2:13-CR-119-VEH, 2016 WL 4070147, at *4 (N.D. Ala. July 29, 2016) (addressing only the argument that the residual clause in the Sentencing Guidelines is not void for vagueness). In one case, the court even looked to the specific facts of the underlying conviction rather than employing the required categorical approach. *United States v. Giles*, No. 3:06CR442/LAC/EMT, 2016 WL 4392843, at *2 (N.D. Fla. July 29, 2016), *report and recommendation adopted*, No. 3:06CR442/LAC/EMT, 2016 WL 4385852 (N.D. Fla. Aug. 11, 2016) (“The PSR reflects that the robberies took place with a handgun and a pistol.” (citations omitted)). These cases are therefore not persuasive.