1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	x
3	UNITED STATES, :
4	Petitioner :
5	v. : No. 07-455
6	AHMED RESSAM. :
7	x
8	Washington, D.C.
9	Tuesday, March 25, 2008
10	
11	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
13	at 11:25 a.m.
14	APPEARANCES:
15	GEN. MICHAEL B. MUKASEY, ESQ., Attorney General,
16	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on behalf or
17	the Petitioner.
18	THOMAS W. HILLIER, II, ESQ., Federal Public Defender,
19	Seattle, Wash.; on behalf of the Respondent.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:25 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
4	next in Case 07-455, United States versus Ressam.
5	General Mukasey.
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF GEN. MICHAEL B. MUKASEY
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
8	GENERAL MUKASEY: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
9	it please the Court:
10	The question in this case is whether a panel
11	of the Ninth Circuit was correct when it added the words
12	"in relation to," and thereby added an element to
13	section 844 of Title 18, and we think for at least four
14	reasons, the answer to that question is no.
15	First, and principally, those words are not
16	in the statute that Congress wrote, and this Court has
17	said many times that courts should not add words or
18	elements to criminal statutes.
19	Second, Congress knows how to include a
20	relational element when it wants to, and in fact, did
21	that in section 924(c) after which section 844 is
22	otherwise patterned. And that shows that when Congress
23	chose to leave "in relation to" out of section 844 it
24	did that intentionally.
25	Third, when section 844 was amended in 1988,

- 1 one court of appeals, the only court of appeals to rule
- 2 directly on the question of whether there was a
- 3 relationship between the carrying of explosives in the
- 4 commission of a felony, had held that there was no
- 5 relational element. Congress was on notice of that
- 6 fact --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Your argument relies
- 8 on the notion that the word "during" in the statute is
- 9 solely temporal. In other words, it just refers to the
- 10 time?
- 11 GENERAL MUKASEY: Correct.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So -- that's not
- 13 always the case. If I say, you know, I hung lights
- 14 during the holiday season, you wouldn't think that I
- 15 hung a chandelier, right? There'd be not simply a
- 16 temporal connection, but also a relation.
- 17 GENERAL MUKASEY: In that instance, that
- 18 would be correct. On the other hand, when Congress in
- 19 -- in 924(c) said "during and in relation to," it meant
- 20 something more than a temporal relationship. It did not
- 21 say the same thing in 844, and it failed to say the same
- thing in 844(f) or the amended 924(c).
- JUSTICE SCALIA: General, could -- could
- 24 Congress pass a law that said if you wear a wristwatch
- 25 during the commission of any crime, you get another 10

- 1 years?
- 2 GENERAL MUKASEY: A statute like that would
- 3 be entirely unreasonable. It was not entirely
- 4 unreasonable for Congress to have said if you carry an
- 5 explosive during the commission of a felony, you've
- 6 added something enormously volatile.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Surely it depends on what
- 8 the felony is. If the felony is the filing of a
- 9 dishonest tax return and -- and you have a can of
- 10 gasoline with you when you mail the letter, it seems to
- 11 me quite as absurd as saying wearing a wristwatch in the
- 12 course of a felony. That's what troubles me about this.
- I'm -- I'm tempted to -- I think everybody
- is tempted to distort the "during" to -- to mean
- 15 something else, simply because the consequences of
- 16 performing a completely lawful act wearing a wristwatch,
- 17 carrying explosives -- given the broad definition of
- 18 explosives, I guess it would include having -- having
- 19 some cartridges, explosive cartridges?
- 20 GENERAL MUKASEY: It would. But the
- 21 temptation --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: That's perfectly lawful,
- 23 and you get another 10 years for it just because you're
- 24 -- you're mailing a letter to the IRS at the same time.
- 25 GENERAL MUKASEY: It is perfectly lawful.

- 1 Congress was aware that Title 18, not to mention all the
- 2 other titles, are chockablock with felonies. There are
- 3 thousands of them out there. But nonetheless, it wanted
- 4 to make sure that the mainstream that it was concerned
- 5 with, which is nicely illustrated by the facts of this
- 6 case, were taken care of; and so it passed a very broad
- 7 statute. We concede that it was a very broad statute.
- 8 "Any felony" couldn't be broader.
- 9 But that was Congress's choice. And if
- 10 Congress chooses to amend the statute, respectfully, it
- 11 ought to be Congress that amends it.
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: General Mukasey, is there
- 13 any indication why this prosecutor chose to hook the
- 14 carrying an explosive onto a false-statement charge,
- 15 instead of some charges with which it would have been
- 16 more logically linked, like the one -- the first one,
- 17 conspiracy to commit an act of terror -- terrorism?
- 18 GENERAL MUKASEY: There is. At the time the
- 19 case was brought, there was evidence to charge the first
- 20 count, conspiracy to commit a terrorist act. There were
- 21 some evidentiary problems; a great deal of the evidence
- 22 to support that count did not, in fact, come until
- 23 almost literally the eve of trial. A lot of it came
- 24 from overseas.
- 25 The count to which the -- the 844 -- the

- 1 crime to which 844 was, in fact, passed, the making of a
- 2 false statement, was, to use a colloquialism, a
- 3 lead-pipe cinch. He had clearly made a false statement.
- 4 He had clearly carried an explosive while doing it.
- 5 That prosecutor's decision, in fact, was a
- 6 very responsible one, because what was shown when they
- 7 opened his trunk was that this was a very dangerous
- 8 person; and they wanted to bring a charge on which they
- 9 were sure to convict him, so that his carrying of the
- 10 explosive would get him ten years in addition to that
- 11 charge.
- 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I guess what's troubling
- 13 me, Mr. Attorney General, is that it -- it does seem to
- 14 me fair enough to make that charge in this case; but
- 15 then we -- but then we have the tremendous number of
- 16 cases where the prosecutor is going to be in the
- 17 position in a plea-bargain context, say, to threaten to
- 18 charge this offense with a heavy mandatory minimum.
- 19 My understanding is that district judges do
- 20 not and cannot be involved in plea bargain negotiations;
- 21 they can look at a plea before it is entered.
- What can you tell us about the safeguards
- 23 that might exist in the system generally against --
- 24 against overcharging, against charging for something
- 25 where the result is close to absurd, as in some of these

- 1 hypotheticals about the income tax return and the
- 2 qasoline and so forth?
- GENERAL MUKASEY: The safeguard -- the
- 4 safeguard that is in the system, in part, involves the
- 5 history of the system. Rosenberg was decided, I
- 6 believe, in 1986. That's 22 years ago. There's been
- 7 no, as far as I know, recorded outbreak of this sort of
- 8 thing any place, in the Third Circuit or any place else.
- 9 And it seems to me that a defendant would be able to
- 10 challenge that kind of threat, that kind of application,
- 11 or at least make it known.
- We haven't received any notification that
- 13 that's -- that that's going on, although there have been
- 14 charges of -- under 844(h), relating to ammunition. But
- 15 that's scarcely -- that's scarcely a marginal case.
- 16 The hypothetical of the fellow with the --
- 17 with the firecracker in his back pocket who is
- 18 simultaneously in possession of a \$20 counterfeit
- 19 bill has no --
- JUSTICE BREYER: General, that is -- my
- 21 question would be the converse. Suppose I agreed with
- 22 you to this point hypothetically that, of course,
- 23 there's a relationship here. In this case, there's a
- 24 relationship. He wouldn't have lied if he -- if he
- 25 hadn't had the explosives. Suppose I accept that.

- Now, if I interpret the statute that way --
- 2 there has to be a relationship, but including that --
- 3 then what are the other cases you want to prosecute?
- In the other briefs they list every funny or
- 5 comical or absurd example they can find; and so I don't
- 6 believe you want to prosecute those, but tell me if you
- 7 do. And if there are some other ones, what are they?
- 8 GENERAL MUKASEY: We don't, but,
- 9 respectfully, "relationship" doesn't mean in a statute
- 10 what "relationship" means in conversation. It means
- 11 facilitation under a knife. It means that --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: Fine. So suppose, in other
- 13 words, if we -- if, hypothetically, I were to say, well,
- 14 here there's a relationship; after all, it is a
- 15 necessary condition for the lying that he was carrying
- 16 explosives; and it is foreseeable that he would lie on
- 17 his passport, because he was carrying explosives
- 18 illegally. So that's all you need.
- 19 In other words, if that were the decision,
- 20 you would say fine, that's the end of it.
- 21 GENERAL MUKASEY: It was -- his carrying of
- 22 explosives did not facilitate his lying in this case.
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, it didn't facilitate
- 24 it, but it caused it.
- 25 GENERAL MUKASEY: Maybe it caused it, and

- 1 maybe it didn't.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Well, if it didn't -- all
- 3 right. Would you be satisfied with a result that says,
- 4 look, if this carrying of explosives is related to the
- 5 felony in the sense that it is a necessary condition and
- 6 foreseeable that a person would do such a thing, that's
- 7 sufficient?
- 8 GENERAL MUKASEY: No, Your Honor, we would
- 9 not. Because there are cases in which it may become
- 10 necessary to prosecute somebody -- for example, where we
- 11 have a situation in which we can charge another crime,
- 12 but the charge of that crime would involve disclosure of
- 13 classified information; it would disclose methods and
- 14 sources -- we believe that it was Congress's choice to
- 15 leave to the judgment of prosecutors the decision of
- 16 what crimes the charge in conjunction with possession of
- 17 explosives, and we think that's where the authority
- 18 should remain.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Why is there in the
- 20 statutes a difference between possession of explosives
- 21 in this circumstance and possession of firearms?
- 22 GENERAL MUKASEY: Possession of explosives
- 23 inherently involves volatility. You asked for a policy
- 24 explanation. Possession of explosives inherently
- 25 involves a degree of volatility. Explosives cause

- 1 indiscriminate and potentially vast harm.
- 2 Firearms, for all the harm they cause, cause
- 3 discriminate harm. And there's every reason for
- 4 Congress to have treated explosives differently from the
- 5 way it treated firearms.
- 6 JUSTICE SOUTER: Was -- was the further
- 7 explanation that what they were doing in amending the
- 8 firearms statute was tailoring it more precisely to the
- 9 possible felony by a police officer situation, and they
- 10 simply did not face that possibility in the explosives
- 11 statute?
- 12 GENERAL MUKASEY: I think the history of the
- amendments to 924(c) reflects that.
- 14 JUSTICE SOUTER: Yes.
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So it's a difference in
- 16 two respects. One is 924(c) has the "in relationship"
- 17 requirement, and it also has a shorter term. It's only
- 18 -- in one it is five years, and the other is ten years.
- 19 Is that right?
- 20 GENERAL MUKASEY: Yes, that's correct,
- 21 Justice Ginsburg; and that underlines, I think, the
- dangerousness, or Congress's perception of the
- 23 dangerousness, and the volatility of explosives. And
- 24 certainly --
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is there any ---

- 1 GENERAL MUKASEY: -- this case bears that
- 2 out.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is there any policy
- 4 limitation within the department not to charge under
- 5 this provision unless there is a relationship between
- 6 the underlying felony and the use of -- the carrying of
- 7 explosives?
- 8 GENERAL MUKASEY: There is no policy
- 9 limitation that I'm aware of.
- 10 JUSTICE STEVENS: And you do have policy
- 11 guidelines with money laundering.
- 12 GENERAL MUKASEY: We do.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: And I suppose if you
- 14 thought there was a problem, you could promulgate them
- 15 out of your department.
- 16 GENERAL MUKASEY: I think I'd be ideally
- 17 suited to do that.
- 18 (Laughter.)
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The ten years,
- though, is mandatory, correct?
- 21 GENERAL MUKASEY: The ten years is
- 22 mandatory.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So if a prosecutor
- 24 asks for it and there is an underlying felony and there
- 25 is an explosive, that's an additional ten years, no

- 1 matter what.
- 2 GENERAL MUKASEY: That's an additional ten
- 3 years, no matter what.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So if you get -- the
- 5 underlying felony is of the sort Justice Scalia was
- 6 talking about, and let's say the person gets probation
- 7 on that because, you know, it is the first offense, no
- 8 harm, he still gets ten years.
- 9 GENERAL MUKASEY: He still gets ten years.
- 10 It is possible, again, to imagine many, many marginal
- 11 situations; but I think Congress was willing to
- 12 contemplate that because it wanted to make sure that it
- 13 swept in the cases that had to be swept in.
- 14 And to add a relational element would leave
- 15 us unprotected against the cases that Congress wanted to
- 16 include, and protected only against the marginal ones.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but how many
- 18 cases are there likely to be -- this isn't one of them
- 19 -- where you have no "in relation to" connection
- 20 whatsoever?
- 21 GENERAL MUKASEY: How many cases as a matter
- 22 of common sense?
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Or any historical
- 24 record that you're familiar with.
- 25 GENERAL MUKASEY: No historical record that

- 1 I'm familiar with, but I don't have complete knowledge
- 2 of the historical record.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I mean, in this
- 4 case, as you point out, there was, of course, a
- 5 connection. And I would have thought in most cases
- 6 where the prosecutor is interested in charging --
- 7 because, as you have indicated, this case is -- there
- 8 would be an actual connection. Now, you may have, as
- 9 you suggest, problems with proof or -- or evidence; but,
- 10 as a practical matter, I'm just wondering how often the
- 11 question we're concerned about arises.
- 12 GENERAL MUKASEY: I don't think -- I'm not
- aware of any other situation in which it has arisen.
- 14 But I don't -- I think Congress didn't wanted to rule
- out anything when it wrote "any felony."
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: This isn't a very good
- 17 case. If you wanted to bring a really absurd case, you
- 18 could have picked a better one than this, because there
- 19 really is something of a connection.
- 20 GENERAL MUKASEY: I think -- I think the
- 21 lessons we learned, particularly about the history, is
- 22 that we don't want to bring absurd cases, and -- and we
- 23 don't.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But I mean the
- 25 interesting thing is that you're -- the cases where this

- 1 is going to arise is not where you're really worried
- 2 about the explosives; it's going to -- because in that
- 3 case, presumably there is going to be a relation, and
- 4 you can use it as you used it in this case.
- 5 The cases where this is going to be
- 6 problematic is when you are really interested in the
- 7 underlying felony.
- 8 GENERAL MUKASEY: That --
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You know, the guy
- 10 who's driving in his car and calls his broker and is
- 11 guilty of insider trading and has some firecrackers in
- 12 the trunk, you're not worried about the firecrackers,
- 13 but you want to crack down on the insider trading.
- 14 GENERAL MUKASEY: That has to do more with
- 15 the breadth of the definition of "explosives" than it
- 16 has to do with the question of a relationship, because
- 17 we may very well be concerned with the person who is
- 18 committing what sounds like an innocuous felony but
- 19 carrying a load of explosives in his trunk. So
- 20 weaving in a relational requirement isn't going to solve
- 21 the problem that's posed in what I think is Your Honor's
- 22 hypothetical, which is the fact that firecrackers are as
- 23 much explosives as bombs under the "explosives"
- 24 definition contained in the statute.
- 25 If there are no further questions, I'd like,

- 1 Mr. Chief Justice, to reserve the remainder of my time
- 2 for rebuttal.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 4 Mr. Attorney General.
- 5 Mr. Hillier.
- ORAL ARGUMENT OF THOMAS W. HILLIER, II
- 7 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- 8 MR. HILLIER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 9 please the Court:
- 10 General Mukasey put his finger on the point
- 11 here when he said we wanted to charge a lead-pipe cinch
- 12 case. But in doing so, what we now have is what was a
- 13 terrorism prosecution and a choice to link the
- 14 underlying felony -- or to link the carrying explosives
- 15 charges exclusively to count 5 of the indictment, which
- 16 charged a false statement, an argument which requests
- 17 that this Court apply this statute to all sorts of
- 18 situations theoretically that might even involve
- 19 explosives that were lawfully carried during a
- 20 completely unrelated felony. And I would disagree that
- 21 that's what Congress thought, that's what Congress
- 22 thought when it was creating this statute.
- The words -- in applying this Court's
- 24 statutory construction regime, what we do first of all,
- 25 of course, is look to the words of the text to see if it

- 1 means what the government suggests it does in this case.
- 2 And as, Chief Justice Roberts, you have already
- 3 indicated, the word "during" has meanings beyond just
- 4 that in 401 used here. But also other words in the text
- 5 have significance to describing what the meaning of this
- 6 particular statute is, and important among those are the
- 7 terms "in which," which is found in the concluding
- 8 sentence of the statute. And, of course, that's -- the
- 9 companion word, the largest word in this particular
- 10 statute, "explosives," and its very broad definition
- 11 under 844(j).
- 12 Taking first the term "in which," which is
- 13 at the conclusion of 844(h) -- and I'll quote. And what
- 14 it says is that the penalty that's going to attach to
- 15 this prosecution shall run consecutively to, quote, "the
- 16 felony in which the explosive was used or carried."
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: You're saying it should
- 18 have said "during which"?
- MR. HILLIER: Well, I --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: "During the commission of
- 21 which the explosive was used or carried"?
- MR. HILLIER: I just think that the words --
- 23 the words that were used, Your Honor, establish the
- 24 notion of a relationship between the felony and the
- 25 explosive. The word "in" is, as this Court indicated in

- 1 Dunn v. Commodity Futures Trading Commission, 519 U.S.
- 2 465, is synonymous with the words "in regard to" or
- 3 "with respect to."
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but just --
- 5 just as "during" has more than temporal -- can have more
- 6 than temporal significance, I think "in" can have
- 7 temporal significance.
- 8 MR. HILLIER: It does, Your Honor.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We write "in the
- 10 holiday season."
- 11 MR. HILLIER: That's very true. And it
- 12 fact, it has a, quote, "locational" sort of significance
- 13 also. But as noted in Dunn, its primary definition, its
- 14 first definition, is this relational one. And, while it
- 15 might have --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I assume -- I
- 17 haven't looked at the dictionary -- but "during's" first
- 18 relationship -- first definition, I suspect, is
- 19 temporal.
- 20 MR. HILLIER: It's temporal. That's
- 21 correct.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Could you give an example of
- where it's not temporal, an example of use of "during"
- 24 that is not temporal?
- MR. HILLIER: I think the example posed by

- 1 the Chief Justice to General Mukasey is an example of
- 2 that, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE ALITO: But hanging up lights
- 4 "during" the -- the holiday season doesn't -- that's not
- 5 a temporal relationship?
- 6 MR. HILLIER: It's a -- it is a temporal
- 7 relationship, but it's a relationship between the act
- 8 that's occurring also, that's the underlying act.
- 9 But to get to the point of the -- Chief
- 10 Justice Robert's question, the fact that the word may
- 11 have more than one meaning, particularly in this case,
- 12 does not exclude the fact that the meaning of "in which"
- includes a relationship. And the most naturally
- 14 suggested reading of these words in this case, "in
- 15 which and "explosives" together, is that there is a
- 16 relationship, but there is --
- 17 JUSTICE SOUTER: Mr. Hillier, I -- you know,
- 18 I will accept maybe more than just for the sake of
- 19 argument that if you stick to the text alone you've got
- 20 an argument here for some uncertainty, for some
- 21 ambiguity.
- The trouble that I have with your argument
- is that we're here to consider not only text but
- 24 statutory history, And the statutory history seems to me
- 25 pretty tough for you to get over. The statute was

- 1 amended. The word "unlawfully" was dropped from it, and
- 2 there was no amendment made, with respect to its
- 3 cognates, to conform it to the cognate section on
- 4 carrying a gun that specified "in relation to." And it
- 5 seems to me that the most reasonable inference to draw
- 6 from that statutory history is that when Congress
- 7 amended and technically re-enacted the statute, when it
- 8 dropped "unlawfully," that it did not want "during" to
- 9 be read, as it was in the handgun statute, "in relation
- 10 to."
- 11 And I -- that's seems to me the tough point
- 12 of the argument. What is your response to that?
- MR. HILLIER: Yes, Your Honor. Two points:
- 14 First, the idea -- the idea of in pari materia, which
- 15 would suggest that what's happening in 924(c) ought to
- 16 be occurring in 844 is -- has not the force that it
- 17 would if we were talking about amendments to and
- 18 constructions of the same statute, but rather what we
- 19 have here are two statutes that are being interpreted by
- 20 two legislators at different times to achieve different
- 21 objects. And there's no reason to believe that the --
- 22 well, the force of that --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: The different object -- I
- 24 mean, the trouble with the different object argument is,
- 25 as the Attorney General said, there was an evident

- 1 concern in amending the handgun statute not to sweep in
- 2 the rogue police officer who happens to have a gun on
- 3 him when he does something that in fact is unlawful.
- 4 MR. HILLIER: Right.
- 5 JUSTICE SOUTER: The negative inference from
- 6 that is that there was an intent in the cognate
- 7 explosives statute to sweep in people, whether in fact
- 8 it was in relation to or not in relation to.
- 9 MR. HILLIER: Your Honor, I think that --
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Including the policeman who
- 11 had cartridges in his gun, presumably, right?
- MR. HILLIER: Well, Your Honor, I think
- 13 the -- when you're looking at what happened to 844, when
- 14 "unlawfully" was taken out the words "in which" were
- 15 added, which I think indicates that Congress had an
- 16 appreciation of the relationship that's involved in that
- 17 statute. While the legislative history doesn't say why
- 18 "unlawfully" was taken out, it seems reasonable to
- 19 believe that what they were trying to do was conform the
- 20 statute to the purpose of -- its purpose. And its
- 21 purpose did include, when you look at the "explosives"
- 22 definition, the use of lawful explosives to further
- 23 crimes.
- So if somebody has a can of gasoline and
- 25 they want to use that to threaten somebody and create a

- 1 Federal crime or to accomplish a Federal crime, before
- 2 that amendment occurred that -- that would have been a
- 3 lawful possession of the explosives, so 844(h)(2) would
- 4 not apply.
- 5 JUSTICE SOUTER: Okay, fair enough so far as
- 6 the argument goes. But that still leaves Congress
- 7 taking the -- sort of making it as difficult as possible
- 8 for you to take the position that you're taking, rather
- 9 than as easy as possible.
- 10 Why didn't it put in "in relation to"?
- 11 MR. HILLIER: Well, the -- I think we go to
- 12 yet another statutory construction tool, or at least
- 13 observation by this Court that said the Congress can use
- 14 different words in different statutes to accomplish the
- 15 same thing.
- 16 JUSTICE SOUTER: It can do it, but why would
- 17 it have done so? You've the -- you've got the gun
- 18 example sitting there. And why would it not have done
- 19 so if, in fact -- so obvious a thing to do if that's
- 20 what -- if it intended to come out your way?
- 21 MR. HILLIER: Well, Your Honor, we don't
- 22 know it didn't do that because the legislative history
- 23 doesn't inform us. But to draw an analogy from your
- 24 question with respect to changes done in these two exact
- 25 statutes, as you read from the government's reply brief,

- 1 it is trying to establish through the words "during the
- 2 commission of "the fact that it is the defendant that
- 3 committed that crime, in other words it was he that did
- 4 so. And we don't take any issue with that; in fact, it
- 5 makes complete sense.
- 6 But it's interesting to note that 924(c) in
- 7 1971 was amended to put these -- to substitute the words
- 8 "for which he may be prosecuted" instead of "which may
- 9 be prosecuted." So one might ask why didn't they put
- 10 the word "he" into 844 at the same time if there was any
- 11 question about who the perpetrator of the crime was.
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And maybe they said --
- maybe because they're trying to draft legislation
- 14 without using pronouns.
- 15 (Laughter.)
- 16 MR. HILLIER: Touché, Your Honor. Yes.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: I take it that one of the
- 18 reasons you make your argument is so that if you prevail
- 19 and you go back to trial, you would argue that this is
- 20 not in relation to? Is that correct?
- 21 MR. HILLIER: Your Honor, perhaps I didn't
- 22 understand your question. If you could rephrase it.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: If you prevail in this
- 24 case and we say "in relation to" is part of the statute
- 25 --

- 1 MR. HILLIER: Yes.
- 2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- and then you go back to
- 3 the trial court, I assume you will argue to the jury
- 4 that the government can't show that it's in relation to.
- 5 MR. HILLIER: Well, Your Honor, if you agree
- 6 that there's a -- if you agree with the Ninth Circuit in
- 7 this case, then the case is over.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's right.
- 9 MR. HILLIER: The government --
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: Why should we agree with
- 11 that?
- 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But it seems to me that in
- 13 a prosecution, in this prosecution, it might be somewhat
- 14 difficult to establish in relation to.
- 15 MR. HILLIER: It would be difficult --
- 16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And that would be -- even
- 17 assuming the jury was properly instructed, et cetera, et
- 18 cetera.
- 19 MR. HILLIER: Right. Right. It's as poison
- 20 here. They don't have a relationship. The explosives
- 21 were not used to --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: All right, but doesn't
- 23 that show the necessity for the very interpretation the
- 24 attorney general has argued for here? It is just too
- 25 difficult to establish and very dangerous?

- 1 MR. HILLIER: Your Honor, if we can look at
- 2 the facts of this case, I would respectfully disagree.
- 3 What was done here was a charging decision which made
- 4 that task impossible. The government could have simply
- 5 charged this count with count 1, and we wouldn't be here
- 6 today because surely the explosives were carried for the
- 7 purpose of accomplishing the act of terrorism that was
- 8 charged count 1.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, if there's an "in
- 10 relationship requirement, why would it be necessary for
- 11 the explosives to facilitate the false statement? Why
- 12 wouldn't it be sufficient if the false statement
- 13 facilitated the unlawful use of the explosives?
- MR. HILLIER: We have a reverse sort of
- 15 relationship.
- 16 Your Honor, two answers to that: First, it
- 17 would be at odds with the structure of the statute. If
- 18 you look at the whole of 844(h), you see in (h)(1), the
- 19 crime of using an explosive to -- an explosive to commit
- 20 an underlying felony. And that is that sort of direct
- 21 relationship that is carried forward in the language of
- 22 (h)(2).
- But, secondly, that language -- that sort of
- 24 relationship has been interpreted by this Court in Smith
- 25 as acknowledged by the government in its briefing to

- 1 mean the relationship that we're talking about.
- JUSTICE BREYER: That's exactly what's
- 3 bothering me. The issue in this case doesn't seem to me
- 4 to be these weird hypotheticals. Of course it requires
- 5 a relationship, in my mind.
- 6 But I don't see why the relationship
- 7 couldn't be exactly the one Justice Alito was talking
- 8 about. I mean, imagine a person has a packed car filled
- 9 with explosives. He's going to blow something up. A
- 10 policemen comes up; he shoots the policeman. The reason
- 11 he shot the policeman was because he had his car packed
- 12 with explosives.
- 13 And if this -- if this provision -- I mean,
- 14 I can't understand why this provision wouldn't be aimed
- 15 directly at that kind of thing.
- 16 MR. HILLIER: Your Honor, I can't say too
- 17 much more than what I have. When you look at the
- 18 statute --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Suppose I don't
- 20 agree with you about that --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: You could say it is not a
- 22 question on which we grant certiorari.
- MR. HILLIER: Well, that's --
- 24 (Laughter.)
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: That may be, but I don't

- 1 know -- but you could say that. You could say that.
- 2 But the problem is I have to answer the question -- I
- 3 have to reach an answer that I believe should be
- 4 sensible.
- 5 MR. HILLIER: Yes, sir.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: So what should I do --
- 7 MR. HILLIER: Well, Your Honor --
- 8 JUSTICE BREYER: -- if I think that shooting
- 9 the policeman because he's going to catch the criminal
- 10 filled with explosives is within this statute? And
- 11 similarly, lying to a customs officer so he won't catch
- 12 me when my car is filled with explosives is within the
- 13 statute?
- 14 Suppose I believe that, but I also think the
- 15 statute is not meant to govern those odd hypotheticals
- 16 that you come up with? There has to be a relationship,
- 17 but the one I described falls within the word
- 18 "relationship."
- 19 Now what do I do?
- MR. HILLIER: Well, Your Honor, the
- 21 relationship -- if you look at the structure of the
- 22 statute, surely (h)(1) does not describe that sort of
- 23 relationship; (h)(2) is the next statute or the next
- 24 subsection of that statute, and its purpose is simply to
- 25 capture the same criminal objective here, that is to

- 1 say, the marriage of explosives and a felony.
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: I understand that argument.
- 3 But suppose I don't accept the argument? Then what do I
- 4 do in this case? That's what I'm asking.
- 5 MR. HILLIER: I would ask the Court -- well,
- 6 I would think the Court would draw some -- an answer
- 7 from Smith which did describe a relationship contrary to
- 8 the way Your Honor is doing with respect to this case
- 9 that goes back to -- goes -- wasn't instructed that way;
- 10 and so it can't be -- this case still has to go back.
- 11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: You think on this
- 12 evidence, on this record, that a jury, if it were
- 13 instructed to -- that it had to find "in relation to"
- 14 could return a conviction of guilty including the "in
- 15 relation to"?
- 16 MR. HILLIER: If this case had been
- 17 instructed correctly?
- 18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: If this case had been
- 19 instructed according to your theory of the statute and
- 20 on this record and on this evidence, could a jury find
- 21 your client guilty?
- MR. HILLIER: No, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's exactly why the
- 24 attorney general says he needs it.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, you got it anyway.

1	MR. HILLIER: Beg your pardon, Your Honor?
2	JUSTICE SCALIA: Could I ask you about the
3	"in which," the "in which" thing? It has just occurred
4	to me that "in which" is in a very sloppy clause anyway,
5	because it says "shall run concurrently with any other
6	term of imprisonment, including that imposed for the
7	felony in which the explosive was used or carried."
8	What about the fire? It omits fire entirely
9	in which fire or the explosive. Fire or the
10	explosive was used or the explosive was carried. It's a
11	pretty sloppy job down at the end of (h), isn't it?
12	So I wouldn't put a whole lot of weight on
13	the "in which" given that the rest of it is so sloppy.
14	MR. HILLIER: Well, Your Honor, the "in
15	which" the point obviously was that it strengthens
16	and informs the relationship here to be more than the
17	coincidental or temporal one the government
18	JUSTICE SCALIA: If you are being very
19	precise, but whoever wrote that was, obviously, not
20	being very precise because he left out "fire" entirely.
21	MR. HILLIER: I suppose that goes to the
22	idea that we shouldn't draw a lot of information from
23	the amendments that were occurring on 924 when they
24	weren't even looking at this statute and considering it
25	and its consequences to the changes in 844 or having

- 1 effect in 844.
- 2 Your Honor, I would just simply conclude by
- 3 indicating that the terms, which I think we agree,
- 4 naturally suggest that there must be a relationship, and
- 5 the breadth of the term "explosives" includes a lot of
- 6 lawful items that can be carried, if they were carried
- 7 in a felony, must be related to that felony if you're
- 8 going to have 844's effect and its purpose, because when
- 9 you look at the purpose of the act and the way that they
- 10 constructed it so carefully and thoughtfully in terms of
- 11 the crimes that were -- or the -- the use of explosives,
- 12 it applies only to that portion of the statute that
- 13 involves illegal use of criminal -- of explosives. And
- 14 the combination of all of these elements certainly gives
- 15 force to our argument and tends to rub -- tends to do
- 16 the opposite to the government.
- 17 At the end of the day, if there's anything
- 18 to be said for the government's argument, then there is
- 19 an ambiguity, and it should be construed in favor of the
- 20 defendant.
- 21 And I -- just a concluding point to answer
- Justice Kennedy's questions, the government could have
- 23 avoided all of this by simply charging this case, as it
- 24 should have, by linking count 9 with count 1, where the
- 25 proof problem wouldn't have been a -- the only

- 1 difference in the proof would have been -- there would
- 2 have been no difference in the proof. The only
- 3 difference in the case would have been they would have
- 4 admitted a different instruction.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Your friend
- 6 indicated that this issue doesn't come up very often as
- 7 a practical matter. Do you disagree with that?
- 8 MR. HILLIER: Well, Your Honor -- no, I
- 9 don't disagree with that, and I'm not sure why that is.
- 10 But I think it's been alluded to by the Court already in
- 11 its questioning. It could be that prosecutors simply
- 12 recognized this to be a good plea bargaining chip and
- 13 maybe the other prosecutors understand that there's a
- 14 relationship required.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 16 Mr. Attorney General, you have 14 minutes
- 17 remaining.
- 18 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF GEN. MICHAEL B. MUKASEY
- 19 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
- 20 GENERAL MUKASEY: I just wanted to make two
- 21 brief points on rebuttal. First, Justice Breyer's
- 22 question and position appears to read in a relational
- 23 element that's also not in this statute. And our view
- 24 is that that is something that should be done, if
- 25 anybody, by Congress.

- 1 And secondly, that the Respondent's
- 2 reference to gasoline as an explosive I think is a bit
- 3 of -- is a bit of a reach. I don't think gasoline is
- 4 generally regarded as an explosive unless it is prepared
- 5 and processed and presented in a certain way with -- in
- 6 ways that are not present simply by carrying a can of
- 7 gasoline to help a -- to help out a friend who's run out
- 8 of gas.
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: And maybe gunpowder doesn't
- 10 include the little bit that's in a cartridge either.
- 11 You think it does?
- 12 GENERAL MUKASEY: I think it does.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, could I ask
- 14 you, do you have an answer to your friend's point about
- 15 the "in which" language?
- 16 GENERAL MUKASEY: The "in which" simply
- 17 includes both, number one, the use -- the actual use
- 18 and, number two, the carrying.
- I agree that it's not a model of elegant
- 20 construction, but "in which" does include the two, both
- 21 the actual use and the mere carrying.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I understood his
- 23 point to be that it's surprising that they refer to use
- 24 of the explosives or carrying of the explosives with
- 25 reference to the underlying felony, "in which" the --

suggests that the explosive was used or carried with

1

2	respect to the underlying felony.
3	And I understood your position to be that it
4	doesn't have to be.
5	GENERAL MUKASEY: No, I think it suggests
6	simply that the underlying felony was, in fact,
7	committed.
8	JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, it was going to be
9	it was going to be inaccurate as to one or the other of
10	one or two. If you said "during," that would be that
11	would be inaccurate as to one.
12	And "in" is accurate as to one but
13	inaccurate as to two. I guess they should have said "in
14	or during" or "in which."
15	They should have added "fire," too, right?
16	(Laughter.)
17	GENERAL MUKASEY: If there are no further
18	questions
19	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
20	Mr. Attorney General.
21	Thank you, counsel. The case is submitted.
22	(Whereupon, at 12:01 p.m., the case in the
23	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
24	
25	

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