

**FILED**

February 24, 2006

Charles R. Fulbruge III  
Clerk

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

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No. 05-40828  
Conference Calendar

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

versus

MELVIN MOTA,

Defendant-Appellant.

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Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the Southern District of Texas  
USDC No. 7:05-CR-22-ALL  
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Before GARZA, DENNIS, and PRADO, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:\*

Melvin Mota appeals his conviction and sentence for being illegally present in this country following a deportation, in violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1326. Mota challenges the constitutionality of § 1326(b)'s treatment of prior felony and aggravated felony convictions as sentencing factors rather than elements of the offense that must be found by a jury in light of Apprendi v. New Jersey, 530 U.S. 466 (2000).

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\* Pursuant to 5TH CIR. R. 47.5, the court has determined that this opinion should not be published and is not precedent except under the limited circumstances set forth in 5TH CIR. R. 47.5.4.

Mota's constitutional challenge is foreclosed by Almendarez-Torres v. United States, 523 U.S. 224, 235 (1998). Although Mota contends that Almendarez-Torres was incorrectly decided and that a majority of the Supreme Court would overrule Almendarez-Torres in light of Apprendi, we have repeatedly rejected such arguments on the basis that Almendarez-Torres remains binding. See United States v. Garza-Lopez, 410 F.3d 268, 276 (5th Cir.), cert. denied, 126 S. Ct. 298 (2005). Mota properly concedes that his argument is foreclosed in light of Almendarez-Torres and circuit precedent, but he raises it here to preserve it for further review.

AFFIRMED.