

August 20, 2003

Charles R. Fulbruge III  
Clerk

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

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No. 02-31081  
Conference Calendar

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

versus

PIERO ANGELO MORALES,

Defendant-Appellant.

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Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the Eastern District of Louisiana  
USDC No. 02-CR-139-3-A  
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Before JONES, WIENER, and BENAVIDES, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:\*

Piero Angelo Morales pleaded guilty, pursuant to a written plea agreement, to one count of distribution of cocaine and ecstasy. The district court sentenced him to 115 months in prison and a five-year term of supervised release. Morales now appeals the district court's judgment. Morales argues that he was denied the effective assistance of counsel in litigating his involuntariness claim during sentencing.

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 R. 47.5, the court has determined that this opinion should not be published and is not precedent except under the limited circumstances set forth in 5TH CIR.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

As a general rule, this court declines to review claims of ineffective assistance of counsel on direct appeal, although we may do so in exceptional cases. See United States v. Higdon, 832 F.2d 312, 314 (5th Cir. 1987); United States v. Gibson, 55 F.3d 173, 179 (5th Cir. 1995); see also Massaro v. United States, 123 S. Ct. 1690 (2003). This is not the exceptional case. Accordingly, we decline to review Morales' ineffective-assistance claim in this direct appeal. The judgment of the district court is AFFIRMED.