

**April 24, 2003**

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

Charles R. Fulbruge III  
Clerk

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No. 02-41406  
Conference Calendar

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

versus

JUAN GERARDO SALAZAR-PALACIOS,

Defendant-Appellant.

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Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the Southern District of Texas  
USDC No. L-02-CR-579-ALL  
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Before DAVIS, BARKSDALE, and STEWART, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:\*

Juan Gerardo Salazar-Palacios appeals the sentence imposed following his guilty plea conviction of being found in the United States after deportation/removal in violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1326. Salazar-Palacios contends that 8 U.S.C. § 1326(a) and 8 U.S.C. § 1326(b) are unconstitutional. He argues that the prior conviction that resulted in his increased sentence is an element of a separate offense under 8 U.S.C. § 1326(b) that should have

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 R. 47.5, the court has determined that this opinion should not be published and is not precedent except under the limited circumstances set forth in 5TH CIR.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

been alleged in his indictment. Salazar-Palacios maintains that he pleaded guilty to an indictment which charged only simple reentry under 8 U.S.C. § 1326(a). He argues that his sentence exceeds the two-year maximum term of imprisonment which may be imposed for that offense.

In Almendarez-Torres v. United States, 523 U.S. 224, 235 (1998), the Supreme Court held that the enhanced penalties in 8 U.S.C. § 1326(b) are sentencing provisions, not elements of separate offenses. The Court further held that the sentencing provisions do not violate the Due Process Clause. Id. at 239-47. Salazar-Palacios acknowledges that his arguments are foreclosed by Almendarez-Torres, but asserts that the decision has been cast into doubt by Apprendi v. New Jersey, 530 U.S. 466, 490 (2000). He seeks to preserve his arguments for further review.

Apprendi did not overrule Almendarez-Torres. See Apprendi, 530 U.S. at 489-90; United States v. Dabeit, 231 F.3d 979, 984 (5th Cir. 2000). This court must follow Almendarez-Torres "unless and until the Supreme Court itself determines to overrule it." Dabeit, 231 F.3d at 984 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). The judgment of the district court is AFFIRMED.