

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

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No. 02-50688  
Conference Calendar

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

versus

FERNANDO ALVAREZ-BENITEZ,

Defendant-Appellant.

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Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the Western District of Texas  
USDC No. EP-01-CR-2209-ALL  
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December 12, 2002

Before JOLLY, JONES, and CLEMENT, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:\*

Fernando Alvarez-Benitez appeals the sentence imposed following his guilty plea conviction of being found in the United States after removal in violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1326. Alvarez-Benitez complains that his sentence was improperly enhanced pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1326(b)(2) based on his prior removal following an aggravated felony conviction. Alvarez-Benitez argues that the sentencing provision is unconstitutional because it permitted the sentencing judge to find, under a preponderance of the evidence standard, a fact which increased the statutory

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 R. 47.5, the court has determined that this opinion should not be published and is not precedent except under the limited circumstances set forth in 5TH CIR.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

maximum sentence to which he otherwise would have been exposed. Alvarez-Benitez thus contends that his sentence is invalid and argues that it should not exceed the two-year maximum term of imprisonment prescribed in 8 U.S.C. § 1326(a).

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. Alvarez-Benitez acknowledges that his argument is 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 argument 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.

The Government has moved for a summary affirmance in lieu of filing an appellee's brief. In its motion, the Government asks that an appellee's brief not be required. The motion is GRANTED.

AFFIRMED; MOTION GRANTED.