

June 20, 2006

Charles R. Fulbruge III
Clerk

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 05-41155
Conference Calendar

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

versus

JUAN CARLOS FRANCO-VILLAGRAN,

Defendant-Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Southern District of Texas
USDC No. 1:05-CR-293-ALL

Before STEWART, DENNIS, and OWEN, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:*

Juan Carlos Franco-Villagran (Franco) appeals his sentence for illegal reentry in violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1326(a) and (b). Franco 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). The Government argues that the waiver provision in Franco's plea agreement precludes his attack on the constitutionality of

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 R. 47.5, the court has determined that this opinion should not be published and is not precedent except under the limited circumstances set forth in 5TH CIR.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

§ 1326(b) and that, as a result of the waiver, Franco lacks standing to challenge the constitutionality of § 1326(b). We assume, arguendo only, that the waiver does not bar the instant appeal.

Franco's constitutional challenge is foreclosed by Almendarez-Torres v. United States, 523 U.S. 224, 235 (1998). Although Franco 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). Franco 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.