

April 21, 2004

Charles R. Fulbruge III
Clerk

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 03-41123
Conference Calendar

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

versus

TIRSO PEREZ-OCANAS,

Defendant-Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Southern District of Texas
USDC No. M-03-CR-342-1

Before JOLLY, JONES, and SMITH, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:*

Tirso Perez-Ocanas 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. Perez-Ocanas argues that 8 U.S.C. § 1326(b) is unconstitutional on its face and as applied to him. He thus contends that his sentence should not exceed the maximum term of imprisonment prescribed in 8 U.S.C. § 1326(a).

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 R. 47.5, the court has determined that this opinion should not be published and is not precedent except under the limited circumstances set forth in 5TH CIR.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

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. Perez-Ocanas 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.