

1 IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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3 VICTOR A. RITA, :

4 Petitioner :

5 v. : No. 06-5754

6 UNITED STATES. :

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8 Washington, D.C.

9 February 20, 2007

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11 The above-entitled matter came on for oral
12 argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
13 at 10:18 a.m.

14 APPEARANCES:

15 THOMAS N. COCHRAN, ESQ., Assistant Federal Public
16 Defender, Greensboro, N.C.; on behalf of
17 Petitioner.

18 MICHAEL R. DREEBEN, ESQ., Deputy Solicitor General,
19 Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on behalf of
20 Respondent.

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1	C O N T E N T S	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	PAGE
3	THOMAS N. COCHRAN, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioner	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
6	MICHAEL R. DREEBEN, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of the Respondent	24
8	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF	
9	THOMAS N. COCHRAN, ESQ.	
10	On behalf of the Petitioner	50
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

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P R O C E E D I N G S

[10:18 a.m.]

CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument first this morning in case 06-5754, Rita versus United States.

Mr. Cochran.

ORAL ARGUMENT OF THOMAS N. COCHRAN

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER

MR. COCHRAN: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court:

Under the system described in Justice Breyer's opinion for the Court in Booker, judges would no longer be tied to the sentencing range indicated in the guidelines. That, of course, was a passage from this Court's recent decision in Cunningham versus California. Mr. Rita is asking the Court in this case to reiterate in strong enforceable terms that it meant what it said in Booker, that the guidelines are merely advisory provisions. The Government's assertion that the guidelines deserve a presumption of reasonableness is nothing more than an unfounded claim put forth to justify its efforts to try and thwart the Booker decision.

The ink wasn't given a chance to dry on the Booker decision before the Department of Justice issued

1 a memo to all of its Federal prosecutors directing that
2 they adhere to the guidelines and that they seek
3 sentences within the guidelines in all but extraordinary
4 cases.

5 The district court below in this case did
6 not treat the guidelines as advisory when it imposed a
7 33-month within guideline sentence. The district court
8 did not consider Mr. Rita's military record, the fact
9 that he had been a combat soldier in two wars.

10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How can you say that,
11 given that at the sentencing hearing, that military
12 record was brought out, his physical ailments were
13 brought out, his activity in law enforcement, all that
14 was brought out? And indeed, the judge was assisting
15 the defense attorney to make the case clearer when it
16 was presented.

17 MR. COCHRAN: In the district court,
18 Mr. Rita did put forward evidence of his military
19 record, his health concerns, he -- the district court
20 received that information. The district court did not
21 consider that information because there's nothing in the
22 record where the district judge weighed any of that
23 information to determine what -- what effect to give any
24 of it.

25 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, how do you, you don't

1 -- you have a summary judgment case all the time. I used
2 to get them, and the district court would hear all the
3 arguments and write down the word "denied." Does that
4 mean he didn't consider the arguments? I mean, that's a
5 very common thing. Here we have a district judge, he hears
6 all the arguments. The attorneys brought it out. It's
7 in the file. He reads the presentence report. It's all
8 there, and the judge says, on balance, I'm going to go
9 apply the guidelines. So how can we say he didn't
10 consider it?

11 MR. COCHRAN: Justice Breyer, the district
12 judge didn't say that we're going to weigh all of the
13 stuff that I've --

14 JUSTICE BREYER: No, he doesn't in a summary
15 judgment case either. I mean, I've had quite a few of
16 them, I used to, I think, where they just wrote denied.
17 That was the opinion.

18 MR. COCHRAN: Well, in the instance in a
19 summary judgment matter, we don't have 3553(c), that
20 requires the district court to state in open court in
21 front of the defendant the reasons for the imposition of
22 sentence.

23 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, he says the reasons
24 are these. I think that the guidelines sentence is a
25 reasonable sentence. Would that be sufficient?

1 MR. COCHRAN: It would not, Your Honor.

2 JUSTICE BREYER: Why not? What in the
3 statute or the law or the Constitution says that a
4 district judge, though it might be good form in a
5 difficult case to write more, but I've often written
6 opinions where I say, and the remaining arguments we
7 feel are not sufficient to change the result. That
8 means I don't think they're that great argument, and
9 I don't answer every single one.

10 MR. COCHRAN: With regard to the first
11 question Your Honor posed, it's not sufficient for the
12 district court to simply state conclusions, which is
13 what happened in this case, that --

14 JUSTICE BREYER: Where in the law does it
15 say that?

16 MR. COCHRAN: Well, in 3553(c), it requires
17 that the judge give the reasons for the imposition of
18 the particular sentence.

19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Where -- I'm looking at
20 that. It says shall consider. Am I missing something?

21 MR. COCHRAN: The preamble states --

22 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Can you give me your page
23 cite?

24 MR. COCHRAN: I'm sorry, Your Honor, on page
25 3a of Petitioner's brief in the appendix. It states,

1 "the court at the time of sentencing shall state in open
2 court the reasons for its imposition of the particular
3 sentence." And that's what we contend requires the
4 district court to explain the facts that the court is
5 relying on to impose the particular sentence in the
6 case.

7 JUSTICE BREYER: So it isn't sufficient, in
8 your view there, that the judge just says, the reason I
9 imposed this sentence is that's the guideline sentence,
10 and I think in this circumstance it's reasonable?

11 MR. COCHRAN: That's correct, Your Honor.
12 Because the guidelines don't take into account all the
13 myriad facts, and in this case, did not take into
14 account the military record, the employment record,
15 Mr. Rita's health concerns. The guidelines specifically
16 did not take those into account.

17 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I suppose I -- I think
18 these other factors that have been brought out, while
19 they're serious factors, I don't think they're enough to
20 warrant a different sentence. Suppose he adds those words?

21 MR. COCHRAN: Your Honor, I think the --

22 JUSTICE BREYER: What I'm worried about
23 basically is, I don't think in the law there's a special
24 category that requires a judge to give special reasons
25 in a guideline case. I think it's the same as any other

1 matter. Judges do normally give reasons. And I'd worry
2 a bit about creating a special situation where district
3 judges have to do something unusual.

4 MR. COCHRAN: I don't know that this is
5 unusual, Your Honor. I think the court has to explain
6 the rationale for imposing the sentence, and not only
7 does it have to do so in court, in front of the
8 defendant, so the defendant understands the sentence
9 that he is receiving --

10 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I get where you're
11 going. Can I say this in an opinion, would this satisfy
12 you? And of course, like any other matter, judges do
13 normally give reasons. They do normally reject
14 arguments with reasons, and it's the same here. Would
15 that satisfy you?

16 MR. COCHRAN: I think it would have to be
17 specific to the issues raised by the parties. And in
18 this case, at a minimum, the judge would have to address
19 the three issues that Mr. Rita put forward and discuss
20 those: His military record, his employment, his health
21 concerns. It would have to address any issues that the
22 Government would raise, and any issues that the district
23 judge was considering that maybe neither party had
24 raised to the court as well.

25 JUSTICE SCALIA: How do you reconcile the

1 language in the prologue of (c) which says, the court
2 shall state the reasons, with (c)(2), which says that if
3 the sentence is not of the kind or is outside the range
4 described in (a)(4) of the guidelines, the court shall
5 state the specific reason for the imposition of a
6 sentence different from the guidelines?

7 Now, this seems to set up some dichotomy
8 between giving reasons and giving the specific reason.
9 Where does that line fall in your estimation?

10 MR. COCHRAN: Well, I think foremost, Your
11 Honor, is that that provision came about prior to the
12 Booker decision when the guidelines were mandatory. And
13 what that addresses and what it was meant to address was
14 if the court were to depart, then it was -- it needed to
15 explain that departure in a greater reason to enable the
16 Sentencing Commission to take that information into
17 account in revising the guidelines.

18 That is still a purpose with the Sentencing
19 Commission, to revise the guidelines, and they can still
20 use that information. But it -- at the very least, we
21 need information from the sentencing judge about each of
22 the matters that he or she --

23 JUSTICE SCALIA: You haven't answered my
24 question. I mean, you explain why it's put in there,
25 but I want to know what is the difference between giving

1 the reasons and giving the specific reason.

2 MR. COCHRAN: The specific reason I think,
3 Your Honor, is so that the Sentencing Commission can
4 take that information into account in later revisions of
5 the guidelines. That was the purpose at the point that
6 statute was passed.

7 JUSTICE SOUTER: But are you saying now that
8 that distinction should be ignored?

9 MR. COCHRAN: I don't know, Your Honor, if
10 it's so much that it should be ignored inasmuch as the
11 district court needs to give as many reasons, or as
12 clear a reason for the imposition of the particular
13 sentence. That will help --

14 JUSTICE SOUTER: But it sounds to me as
15 though you want all the reasons to be specific. I mean,
16 I understand your argument. But if we accept that
17 argument, then the distinction between reason and
18 specific reason basically is going to be a matter of
19 history, and perhaps it should be.

20 MR. COCHRAN: It, it may, Your Honor. And,
21 and because that provision predated this Court's Booker
22 decision, it still holds relevance but not nearly the
23 relevance it had when the guidelines were mandatory.

24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So your position would
25 be, Mr. Cochran, that the obligation to be even-handed

1 would have to -- that the trial judge would also have to
2 go through -- now this defendant maintained his
3 innocence. He didn't express any remorse. He accused a
4 Government agent of perjury. All that, he would have to
5 take into account, just as specifically?

6 MR. COCHRAN: Your Honor, I think that the
7 court certainly could consider all of that; and -- and
8 if pressed by the Government would need to consider
9 that. But certainly at a minimum, the court needs to
10 --

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Isn't that what the
12 Government pressed at the sentencing hearing?

13 MR. COCHRAN: It did, Your Honor, and again
14 the district court never came out with any specifics
15 regarding any of those issues other than the conclusion
16 that it felt that the guideline range was not
17 inappropriate.

18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Suppose the district court
19 says I give these following -- I've considered these
20 following specific factors. But in my view, the
21 consistency and nationwide uniformity that the
22 guidelines strive to achieve is of great importance; and
23 for that reason, I'm following the guidelines?

24 MR. COCHRAN: I don't --

25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Is that an inappropriate

1 judgment for the district court to make?

2 MR. COCHRAN: I think it's inappropriate,
3 Your Honor, because while there should be uniformity in
4 an attempt to move in that direction, uniformity is not
5 the end all and be all. 3553(a) addresses
6 individualized sentencing of the defendant before the
7 court.

8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, it's not the end all.
9 Suppose the district judge says I think this is of great
10 importance. You don't think that the Booker opinion --
11 or do you think that the Booker opinion rejected
12 uniformity and consistency as an important factor?

13 MR. COCHRAN: I don't believe the Booker
14 decision rejected that, Your Honor. What I believe the
15 Booker opinion said was that for there to be advisory
16 guidelines, for there to be constitutional sentencing
17 practices, then uniformity is going to have to give way
18 to some extent. At least at the very beginning.

19 Once the district courts apply the 3553(a)
20 factors, and go through the statute, and consider the
21 guidelines, the district courts will then explain their
22 rationale; and then that rationale will be -- in our
23 opinion, will show where the shortcomings of the
24 guidelines are.

25 JUSTICE ALITO: Mr. Cochran, are you arguing

1 that the sentencing in this case violated the Sixth
2 Amendment?

3 MR. COCHRAN: Not as it was applied. It
4 came close in the sense that the district court was
5 laboring, in our opinion, under the belief that the
6 guidelines held some control.

7 JUSTICE ALITO: If it didn't violate the
8 Sixth Amendment, then your argument is based on the
9 Sentencing Reform Act?

10 MR. COCHRAN: Well, it came as close -- it
11 may have violated the Sixth Amendment. I don't know that
12 I can concede that. But to avoid any constitutional
13 issue, if we analyzed this under the statute, clearly the
14 district court didn't comply with the statute.

15 JUSTICE ALITO: You can't say whether it did
16 or did not violate the Sixth Amendment?

17 MR. COCHRAN: The district court held the
18 guidelines to a greater quantum than simply advisory.

19 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, was your client's
20 sentence enhanced by any fact that should have been
21 submitted to the jury?

22 MR. COCHRAN: Well, under -- under a pure
23 advisory system -- and I think Your Honor is addressing
24 the cross-reference in this matter -- in a purely
25 advisory system, the guidelines were calculated

1 correctly in Mr. Rita's case, because under a purely
2 advisory system, the district court could look at that
3 cross-reference, understand that it came about from
4 uncharged and unproven conduct, and disregard it.

5 But by not doing so in this case, and that
6 cross enhancement doubled his effective guideline range,
7 then this case may very well be unconstitutional because
8 of the extra weight that the court gave the guidelines.

9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Mr. Cochran, you do
10 contend, do you not, that if the guidelines had been
11 mandatory, there would have been a violation of the
12 Sixth Amendment?

13 MR. COCHRAN: No question, Your Honor.

14 JUSTICE STEVENS: Because of the, the
15 accessory after the fact point.

16 MR. COCHRAN: That's correct, Your Honor,
17 absolutely.

18 JUSTICE BREYER: Then the question
19 ultimately is, does it violate the Sixth Amendment to
20 say that we have a presumption that there -- a sentence
21 within the guidelines is a reasonable -- and if you're
22 an appellate court judge. And you think it does violate
23 the Sixth Amendment?

24 MR. COCHRAN: Our position is that the
25 presumption does violate the Constitution --

1 JUSTICE BREYER: Then I guess the argument
2 of the other side, which I would like you to address, is
3 that, in which there -- we didn't think it violated the
4 Sixth Amendment if the district judge simply applies
5 3553 -- uh, 3553(a). And of course, 3553(a) includes
6 all of these things that go into the guidelines; it make
7 a big point of that in 3553(a).

8 So why -- why couldn't you say, you know,
9 all these factors are taken into account by the
10 commission? They start with an effort to apply them
11 in typical cases. This is their judgment in typical
12 cases. So it is entitled to some kind of weight; and --
13 at least in a typical case.

14 MR. COCHRAN: Your Honor, the guidelines
15 should be consulted. No question --

16 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no, not consulting
17 them. What I'm trying to do is to how much weight can a
18 judge reading this give them without violating the Sixth
19 Amendment? All I'm trying to do here -- it's not whether
20 the guidelines are good, bad, or indifferent. Congress
21 wanted to apply them. We excised the mandatory to
22 comply with the Sixth Amendment. Now, what else do we
23 have to do to comply with the Sixth Amendment? Because
24 I would think unless we have to do something else, we
25 shouldn't do it, because Congress wanted it.

1 MR. COCHRAN: I would contend, Your Honor,
2 that the Court needs to very clearly explain that the
3 guidelines are, are a reference. They are --

4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The guidelines are
5 what?

6 MR. COCHRAN: Are a reference.

7 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Can you say it is an
8 initial benchmark?

9 MR. COCHRAN: I don't -- when we start
10 establishing benchmarks and presumptions, I think that's
11 where we, we --

12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So benchmarks are bad.
13 Presumption is bad. Great weight, that's bad?

14 MR. COCHRAN: That's bad, too, Your Honor.
15 I think it's just another thing to consider.

16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Does it matter what
17 judge did in other cases? I mean, if we look on the day
18 before he said, well, the guidelines say this, but I
19 think this case is different, so I'm going to depart,
20 and the day after he says I know what the guidelines
21 are, but I'm going to impose a higher sentence?

22 I mean, how do we know that he's -- when he
23 says I've looked at the guidelines and I think they're
24 appropriate, that he's considering himself bound by
25 something that he may or may not agree with, as opposed

1 to what he said? Which is, well, I cannot find that
2 they're inappropriate?

3 MR. COCHRAN: And what that tells me,
4 Mr. Chief Justice, is that, that the district court felt
5 that the guidelines had a center of gravity, that the
6 judge was bound -- in other words, shifted the burden to
7 the defendant to say, well, I -- unless you can show
8 that these are inappropriate, that it is a setting of a
9 benchmark, it's a drawing of a line, and we contend that
10 that is what the Sixth Amendment prohibits.

11 If the guidelines are advisory, if they are
12 but one of many factors to be considered, together with
13 all of the other factors in 3553(a), the court can use
14 that information, can use that reference. But once it
15 starts putting any greater weight on the guidelines --
16 and the statute doesn't admit to that.

17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How about the point that
18 Justice Breyer made that these other factors have been
19 taken into account by the Sentencing Commission because
20 Congress told them to consider those same factors?

21 MR. COCHRAN: Well, Your Honor, the
22 Sentencing Commission by its own admission has not taken
23 into account all of the factors. In the very first
24 guideline manual, 1987, the Sentencing Commission itself
25 said it could not take into account all of the facts

1 that play into human conduct.

2 JUSTICE BREYER: There are two separate
3 things there. The general aims of sentencing, the four
4 basic aims of sentencing, I believe the Commission
5 certainly took into account. A separate thing was the
6 rule that said you can depart only for a matter that has
7 not been fully considered by the guidelines.

8 And there the original version, I believe,
9 said that we've considered nothing thoroughly. Except
10 for certain specific matters that had been mentioned
11 like age, race, and were referred to statutorily. Now,
12 is that what you're thinking of? I mean, because if
13 that's what you're thinking of, I don't think it's
14 relevant to what your present point is.

15 MR. COCHRAN: I'm not, Your Honor. First of
16 all, I don't know and would contend that the initial
17 Sentencing Commission did not take into account all of
18 the four purposes of sentencing. They centered on crime
19 control --

20 JUSTICE BREYER: That's because when they
21 looked at all of the literature, as they explained it, the
22 rehabilitative purpose was not that it wasn't taken into
23 account, it's that there was basically a consensus among
24 experts that there isn't much you can do about it. That's
25 different from not taking into account.

1 MR. COCHRAN: The other point I think with
2 regard to that, Your Honor, is in looking at 3553(a).
3 That statute gives the district court the dual commands
4 of first considering all of those factors and then
5 imposing a sentence sufficient but not greater than
6 necessary. The statute does not give to the sentencing
7 commission that obligation.

8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Cochran, I have this
9 concern: If we accept your submission that the district
10 court should just consider the guidelines together with
11 everything else, give them no presumption of validity, or
12 anything else, just something to consider, that would
13 presumably eliminate any Sixth Amendment problem with
14 the district court's findings of fact.

15 But the district court's sentence is going
16 to go on appeal. And the appellate court in reviewing
17 it for reasonableness, let's assume in this case the
18 appellate -- the appellate court says oh, no, this
19 person had -- we find as a matter of fact, given the
20 record, military service, which we think should have
21 been taken into account. And, therefore, we set it
22 aside.

23 Now, the next case that comes up, which
24 doesn't have the element of military service, in all
25 other respects the same as your client's case, it comes

1 up to the court of appeals, and the court of appeals
2 would say, ah, we don't have that different fact here
3 and therefore we affirm the sentence.

4 Isn't -- in other words isn't the finding of
5 a fact necessary for the process of judicial review,
6 even if it is not made necessary for the purposes of the
7 district court's determination? He would not get that
8 sentence but for this fact.

9 MR. COCHRAN: That's correct, Your Honor.
10 And --

11 JUSTICE SCALIA: So you haven't shown us a
12 way out of the problem.

13 MR. COCHRAN: Well, in a purely advisory
14 system, the district court is bound by the statutory
15 minimum and maximum. And as this Court has said in
16 Cunningham, if the court is bound simply by that
17 statutory minimum and maximum, then the factual finding
18 as to where within that is up to the district court.

19 It's only when we establish thresholds as
20 the guidelines do, that we run into the constitutional
21 problem.

22 JUSTICE SCALIA: No, but even if you don't --
23 don't establish thresholds by reason of the guideline,
24 you are establishing thresholds upon judicial review,
25 guidelines or not.

1 If the -- if the appellate court says, oh,
2 given that there's this fact in this case, the sentence
3 below was reasonable, but in the next case, where that
4 fact does not exist, the court of appeals says, ah, the
5 sentence is unreasonable. In other words, that fact is
6 made a necessary condition for giving the higher
7 sentence.

8 So you haven't -- you haven't solved the
9 problem of the, of the apparent conflict between --
10 between Booker and the advisory guidelines.

11 MR. COCHRAN: Well, I think so long as the
12 district court can evaluate and consider and potentially
13 reject what the guidelines say, just as the court can
14 consider the effect of -- of the person's military
15 record, Mr. Rita was a combat veteran in two wars, which
16 is separate and apart from someone who may have been an
17 Army recruiter --

18 JUSTICE SCALIA: You're not focusing on my
19 point. I concede that the district court is free as a
20 bird -- free as a bird -- but you have appellate review.
21 And the appellate court in reviewing for reasonableness
22 is going to make a particular fact determinative of
23 whether this sentence can stand or not. Isn't that
24 right?

25 MR. COCHRAN: It is.

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: And that's going to be a
2 problem.

3 MR. COCHRAN: I think what the court would
4 have -- the appellate court would have to do is evaluate
5 all of that through the prism of 3553(a). Is the
6 sentence that was imposed the least sufficient sanction
7 that the court below could have imposed. And if not,
8 for whatever reasons, vacate it and return it back to
9 the district court.

10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, what if
11 there weren't guidelines at all, and the district court
12 said you know, maybe it's new, I want to see what other
13 judges have done; he presses a button on the computer,
14 give me what the sentences were looking at these facts,
15 and he finds out in the last 100 cases, this is what the
16 sentence was. And he says this seems to me no different
17 than those and that's the sentence I'm going to impose.
18 Is there any problem with that?

19 MR. COCHRAN: There is. And again, because
20 3553(a) is an individual weighing of the defendant --

21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Yes, well, he looks
22 at all the individual factors and he says they seem not
23 terribly different from these 100 other cases and the
24 range in those 100 other cases was, you know, 5 to 7
25 years, and so I'm going to give him 5 years.

1 MR. COCHRAN: If the district court
2 considers all those facts and considers what may have
3 been done and it is sufficient, but not greater than
4 necessary given those facts, then the court can do that.

5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How is that
6 different than the -- how is that different than looking
7 at the guidelines, which did that in a much more
8 comprehensive way, and saying, I don't see anything
9 different in this case from the normal guidelines case
10 and so I'm going to impose that sentence?

11 MR. COCHRAN: Well, the guidelines didn't
12 take everything into account, and the sentencing courts
13 were coming from 18 years of mandatory guidelines, of
14 being required to follow this book that necessarily
15 didn't incorporate all of the human factors in
16 sentencing. And they have held to that.

17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, it did incorporate
18 them in that district judges were free to depart from
19 the guidelines if indeed they found there was some one
20 of these human factors not considered by the guidelines
21 which existed in the particular case.

22 MR. COCHRAN: In theory, yes,
23 Justice Scalia. But in practice, no, because what
24 happened in the very cases as United States versus Foy
25 out of the Ninth Circuit, the defendant in that case

1 argued to the district court that he should have a
2 departure based upon lack of youthful guidance, and it was
3 a reasoned decision. It went to the Ninth Circuit. The
4 Ninth Circuit found it to be a reasoned decision; and
5 within the next amendment process of the Sentencing
6 Commission, it was eliminated as a departure basis with
7 no discussion at all.

8 So yes, there may have been departures, but
9 they were systematically removed, and in fact chapters
10 5(h) and 5(k) show that very clearly.

11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, if they were
12 systematically removed then all of these other human
13 factors that you're complaining about were considered by
14 the guideline commission and were simply rejected.

15 MR. COCHRAN: They weren't considered, Your
16 Honor, and in the history of those amendments that's
17 borne out.

18 And if the Court has no further questions,
19 I'd like to reserve some time.

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

21 Mr. Dreeben.

22 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL R. DREEBEN

23 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT

24 MR. DREEBEN: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,
25 and may it please the Court:

1 A court of appeals appropriately applies a
2 presumption of reasonableness in reviewing a sentence
3 imposed pursuant to the advisory guidelines system that
4 this Court announced in United States versus Booker.
5 The guidelines represent the integration of the multiple
6 purposes of sentencing reflected in section 3553(a) that
7 the district court is obligated to consider. The
8 commission also represents an expert body that has
9 considered the various parameters of sentencing and the
10 fact patterns that arise in the Federal system and has
11 made an effort over time to arrive at an appropriate --

12 JUSTICE STEVENS: Isn't it true, just to get
13 one thought on the table, that there are factors
14 that the guidelines don't -- did not consider, such as
15 military service?

16 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Stevens, the
17 commission considered that factor and then determined
18 that it was not generally appropriate to a sentence
19 outside the guidelines.

20 JUSTICE STEVENS: But isn't it true that
21 under the guidelines no weight is given to military
22 service?

23 MR. DREEBEN: The guidelines specifically do
24 not give weight to it. They permit a judge --

25 JUSTICE STEVENS: What should a judge do if

1 he thought some weight should be given to military
2 service?

3 MR. DREEBEN: Under Booker the judge should
4 do that. That is the difference between an advisory
5 guidelines system and a mandatory guidelines system.
6 The judge can give weight to factors that the Commission
7 decided should not have weight in the sentencing
8 process. That is the essence of what it means for the
9 guidelines --

10 JUSTICE SCALIA: And presumably can not give
11 weight to factors that the Commission decided should
12 have weight.

13 MR. DREEBEN: He could do that, too,
14 Justice Scalia.

15 JUSTICE BREYER: Are we back to the original
16 version, which I'll read what it says. It says: "With
17 a few specific exceptions -- race, sex, national origin,
18 creed, religion, and socioeconomic status -- with those
19 exceptions, the Commission does not intend to limit the
20 kinds of factors, whether or not mentioned anywhere else
21 in the guidelines, that could constitute grounds for
22 departure in an unusual case." That's what it said.
23 Apply the guidelines in the heartland. If it's not
24 the heartland, depart.

25 Now, what I wonder is are we not back under

1 your theory of it just to where we were when it started
2 out, before the Commission started ruling all these
3 things out and began to make all its -- the judge can
4 do that.

5 MR. DREEBEN: I think we're back,
6 Justice Breyer, to a further point even than the first
7 set of guidelines, because even under the first set of
8 guidelines, application of the guidelines was mandatory
9 unless the court found an aggravating or mitigating
10 circumstance that wasn't taken into account.

11 JUSTICE BREYER: But we said we took nothing
12 into account and therefore any circumstance that makes
13 the case unusual would be, in principle, a ground for an
14 exception.

15 MR. DREEBEN: I understand that,
16 Justice Breyer.

17 JUSTICE BREYER: You're saying more than
18 that is necessary.

19 MR. DREEBEN: I think that the
20 reconciliation of this Court's merits opinion in Booker
21 and its remedial opinion in Booker does dictate that the
22 judge has additional freedom to impose a sentence that's
23 different from what's described in the guidelines.

24 JUSTICE BREYER: He could do this: He could
25 set aside the guideline on the theory that the guideline

1 itself is unreasonable, that is it doesn't properly take
2 account of sentencing. But suppose he doesn't do that.
3 Then, if you take your view that there's a presumption
4 in its favor and if it is a normal case, not an
5 unusual case in any respect, how can he not apply the
6 guideline?

7 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Breyer, I think we
8 have to distinguish between what the job of the district
9 court is and what the job of the appellate court is; and
10 in this case, the Government is arguing for a
11 presumption of reasonableness on appeal. Once the
12 district judge has determined that the guidelines
13 sentence aligns with his own application of the section
14 3553(a) factors, our submission here is that a court of
15 appeals can generally presume that that is a reasonable
16 sentence. The defendant of course has the opportunity,
17 or the Government if the Government appealed, to
18 show that that presumption is overcome.

19 JUSTICE SOUTER: But unless there is a way
20 to calibrate the strength of the presumption, there's no
21 clear way to distinguish the presumption from the
22 mandate. The mandate is gone. You say yes, they
23 consider other things. But unless we can calibrate the
24 presumption in some way that says, you know, a mandate
25 was force 60 and a presumption is a force 40, something

1 like that, there's no way to tell the two apart in
2 practice.

3 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Souter, I'm not sure
4 that that would be true even if what we were talking
5 about was a direction to the district judge to presume
6 that he would impose a guidelines sentence. But that's
7 not what we're talking about. The district judge does
8 not operate and does not have to operate under the
9 position that we're arguing for with a presumption that
10 the judge will impose a guidelines sentence unless
11 persuaded otherwise. The judge's obligation is to --

12 JUSTICE SCALIA: He doesn't have to do it
13 unless he wants to be sure of being affirmed.

14 MR. DREEBEN: I would think that what the
15 judge wants to do is be sure that he's complied with his
16 statutory obligations.

17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, perhaps I
18 misunderstood Justice Souter's question, but I have this
19 concern, and I thought it was his concern as well. At
20 the appellate level, is the presumption something that
21 can only be overcome by a clear and convincing showing
22 or is it just an initial benchmark? We're playing with
23 standards and words here.

24 MR. DREEBEN: Well, we are.

25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And when we talk about

1 presumptions at the appellate level, that's actually a
2 little bit strange in any event. We usually talk about
3 presumptions as assisting us in finding a fact.

4 MR. DREEBEN: That's true, Justice Kennedy.
5 But I think what it reflects at the appellate level is
6 that the court of appeals enters the case with an
7 attitude that, our job is to decide whether what the
8 district judge did was reasonable. We can operate --

9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So we write that this is
10 an attitude thing?

11 MR. DREEBEN: Yes, I think that it's not so
12 different from the court of appeals saying we can enter
13 this case feeling pretty confident that we can affirm a
14 guidelines sentence unless the person who challenges
15 that shows us a good reason otherwise.

16 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, is your view -- on
17 your view, is the appellate court engaging in some kind
18 of de novo review or is the appellate court supposed to
19 engage in a review that it will disturb the sentence
20 only if it is shown to be unreasonable?

21 MR. DREEBEN: The latter, Justice Souter.
22 And I think that in that regard there is a range of
23 reasonable sentences that could be imposed based on a
24 given set of facts.

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, if you -- if

1 you have that, two criminals, criminal defendants, with
2 the same identical background and everything else, one
3 judge says, I think military service should be taken
4 into account, so I'm going to depart from the guidelines
5 by 3 years. The judge next door says, I don't think it
6 should be taken into account so I'm going to impose the
7 guideline sentence. Both cases are appealed. They're
8 consolidated for argument. What is the court of appeals
9 supposed to do? Uphold both of them?

10 MR. DREEBEN: The court of appeals can
11 uphold both of them if it concludes that the actual
12 sentence that's imposed is reasonable. And in the
13 second case that the Court is going to hear today the
14 Government argues for a proportionality principle that
15 should govern the review of sentencing.

16 JUSTICE SOUTER: What is reasonable is -- is
17 not merely a sort of number within a spectrum. It seems
18 to me that what is reasonable is a function in part of
19 the reasons that are given. And in the Chief Justice's
20 view, two diametrically opposed reasons are given in the
21 two different sentences. Does the, does the appellate
22 court in his example say, well, I think reasonable
23 people could go either way on that, so however it comes
24 out it's fine on appellate review? Isn't that what the
25 court would have to do in order to affirm both

1 sentences, other things being equal?

2 MR. DREEBEN: You're right, Justice Souter,
3 and I can't say that that would be the first choice of
4 the Congress that enacted the Sentencing Reform Act.

5 JUSTICE SOUTER: Isn't it clear that it
6 would have been the last choice of the Congress?

7 MR. DREEBEN: It is, and it's not the first
8 choice of the Government, either. But it strikes me
9 that it is something of an inevitability once this Court
10 has declared that mandatory guidelines are impermissible
11 under the Constitution if judicial factfinding --

12 JUSTICE ALITO: What does the Sixth
13 Amendment have to do with the selection of the
14 sentencing philosophy that is to be imposed? How can
15 there be a Sixth Amendment violation if either the
16 guidelines or our case law says military service is or
17 is not a relevant factor? I don't see how that has
18 anything to do with anything that you can get out of the
19 Sixth Amendment.

20 MR. DREEBEN: It probably does not,
21 Justice Alito. But what happened in the first part of
22 Booker is that the Court declared that the guidelines
23 are advisory and advice is advice that can be
24 accepted or rejected.

25 JUSTICE BREYER: I know, but Booker says

1 what we're trying to do is to come close to what
2 Congress wanted, but not violate the Sixth Amendment.

3 Now, what I think we're talking about now --
4 I think -- I mean, you sort of shed some -- you
5 clarified something very well for me, which is that in
6 this case we're talking about the situation where the
7 district judge applies a guidelines sentence, and then
8 what's the attitude of the court on appeal, and the
9 attitude is going to be, well, the Sentencing Commission
10 thinks it's okay, and the judge thinks it's okay, okay,
11 they have to -- better show me a pretty good reason to
12 think to the contrary. Fine.

13 But the interesting problem is the problem
14 of the next case which you're now talking about, is,
15 well, what happens if the district judge and when should
16 the district judge and how free should the district
17 judge feel he is to depart from the guidelines sentence
18 even if it's not an unusual case.

19 MR. DREEBEN: Let me try to address that and
20 try to address Justice Alito's point about the question
21 of how much sentencing philosophy can be decreed by the
22 Sentencing Commission or Congress before a Sixth
23 Amendment problem arises.

24 As I understand this Court's sequence of
25 opinions from Apprendi leading up to the most recent

1 decision in Cunningham, if the law establishes a level
2 of punishment that may be imposed based on the facts
3 found by the jury and says to the judge, judge, you may
4 not go above it unless you find a particular fact, that
5 fact is subject to the Sixth Amendment rule that the
6 Court has announced and must be found by a jury.

7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Or some fact, not
8 necessarily a particular fact.

9 MR. DREEBEN: Any fact at all, as a matter
10 of fact is what the Court has said, although I
11 understand that to mean facts pertaining to the offense
12 and the offender, not facts about the world such as the
13 prevalence of crime.

14 Now, what that leads me to conclude is that
15 in order to escape the bright line rule that's been
16 announced in this sequence of cases, including Booker
17 itself and most recently Cunningham, a judge must be
18 able to look at the set of facts that the jury found,
19 determine what level of punishment would be advised by,
20 say, a guidelines system, and not be bound to impose
21 that level of punishment if the judge feels that a
22 different level of punishment is appropriate.

23 If that is a correct understanding of what
24 this Court has held, it necessarily implies that a judge
25 does have a certain amount of freedom in an advisory

1 guidelines system to disagree with what the Sentencing
2 Commission has found, give the judge's reasons, and then
3 is subject to appellate review for the reasonableness of
4 that explanation and, the Government submits, subject to
5 a proportionality principle, so that the sentence that's
6 imposed outside the guidelines is a reasonable one and
7 not an arbitrary one.

8 Now, if I'm wrong about that and it is not
9 necessary for the court to have the legal freedom to be
10 able to disagree with what the Sentencing Commission
11 said, that would be very good from the Government's
12 perspective. But as I understand the complementary
13 rules that are established by Booker, what an advisory
14 guidelines system requires is that the guidelines be
15 treated as advice rather than mandate. So while the
16 guidelines have determined that military service is not
17 ordinarily relevant to the level of punishment, a judge
18 may determine in a particular case that he disagrees.

19 JUSTICE STEVENS: May I ask you, this is a
20 hypothetical: Supposing a judge thinks military service
21 is relevant, and he decides to impose a sentence a
22 little below the guidelines. But then he says, I
23 recognize that in this circuit there is a strong
24 interest in uniformity and the court of appeals has
25 adopted a rule where they will presume a within

1 guidelines sentence is reasonable and will affirm in
2 those cases. And I think with respect to the court of
3 appeals, I think I would be wise to impose the
4 guidelines sentence, so I will do so even though my own
5 judgment is that it should be slightly lower. What
6 should the court of appeals do with such a sentence?

7 MR. DREEBEN: I think the court of appeals
8 should correct the judge on a mistaken apprehension of
9 law, which is that the judge --

10 JUSTICE STEVENS: Should reverse the judge
11 then, within a -- a within guidelines sentence?

12 MR. DREEBEN: In the circumstance,
13 Justice Stevens, I think that you put your finger on two
14 different types of review. In the circumstance in which
15 a district judge operates with what I'll call legal
16 blinders on that prevent him from complying with --

17 JUSTICE STEVENS: No. He operates with
18 total candor. He's saying exactly what he feels like
19 saying.

20 MR. DREEBEN: I'm hoping that it's a
21 misunderstanding of what the court of appeals has said,
22 because the court of appeals should not have told the
23 judge you're obligated to impose a guideline sentence.

24 JUSTICE STEVENS: Well, they didn't say
25 you're obligated, but you can be pretty sure you'll be

1 affirmed if you do impose a within guidelines sentence.

2 MR. DREEBEN: Judges are still obligated to
3 comply with section 3553(a), which requires them to
4 exercise discretion. Now if a judge decides I might as
5 a personal matter if I were writing the guidelines write
6 them differently, and I might give great weight to
7 military service, but one of the things that I'm
8 required to do under section 3553(a) is to consider the
9 need to avoid unwarranted disparities between defendants
10 who have been convicted of similar criminal conduct and
11 have similar records. And therefore, I am going to
12 moderate my own personal preference and not impose a
13 significant outside-the-range sentence, in order to
14 ensure that I have fully have taken into account the
15 fact that we are in a Federal system with 674 Federal
16 district judges, and we cannot have all our own personal
17 guidelines systems.

18 Now if a judge does that, I don't think
19 there's anything wrong with that. I think that judge
20 has actually complied with --

21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What if the court of
22 appeals does that? What if the court of appeals says
23 we've got 10 district judges in this circuit, nine of
24 them do not take military service into account, one
25 does, and we think that's inequitable, doesn't serve the

1 interest in uniformity. And so even though that one
2 judge says in the exercise of my discretion I'm going to
3 depart, we're going to reverse that as unreasonable?

4 MR. DREEBEN: Mr. Chief Justice, I think
5 there's a difference between a sentence that varies from
6 what other judges would do and a sentence that is
7 unreasonable.

8 If the sentence that is different from what
9 other judges would do is not supported by a cogent and
10 coherent explanation, and it is unduly productive of
11 disparity because, say, it takes a guidelines range like
12 this one, of 33 months to 41 months, and the judge says
13 in my view military service means that this defendant
14 gets probation.

15 Or to take an example that's on the other
16 side, suppose that the judge says this defendant
17 actually didn't get any extra credit in his criminal
18 history for his prior crime, but he has been convicted
19 before of lying to the Government about his gun charges.
20 I'm now going to take him up to the statutory maximum or
21 near it and give him eight years. I think in those
22 circumstances a court of appeals can and should say,
23 hold on, this is a view that the district judge is
24 entitled to take on the merits. He's entitled to give
25 greater weight to that factor, whether it's aggravating

1 or mitigating, than what the guidelines did, but not to
2 this extent, or we're going to be left with a system in
3 which disuniformity is the main principle.

4 JUSTICE BREYER: It's not that complicated.
5 All that happens is the court of appeals says, look, in
6 the case of bank robberies we've discovered about 33
7 percent of the defendants in a typical case have been
8 in the Army. And therefore, we think that just ordinary
9 armed services is not a reason, ordinary armed --
10 services in the military is not a reason for a
11 diminished sentence. That's all, period. Or they can
12 say it the other way, the absence of a military service
13 is a reason for having the higher sentence, put it any
14 way you want. And by the way, district judge, if you
15 disagree with that, we're going to reverse you because
16 we think it's unreasonable. Okay. What about that?

17 MR. DREEBEN: That to me sounds identical to
18 the system that preexisted Booker's holding.

19 JUSTICE BREYER: It did. But is there
20 anything in the Sixth Amendment that forbids that?

21 MR. DREEBEN: This Court hasn't specifically
22 addressed --

23 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, what do you think?
24 Because I would think that if you're going to answer
25 that question yes, you are saying that not even the

1 court of appeals can try to assure a degree of fairness
2 among different defendants in respect to sentencing.

3 MR. DREEBEN: Well, Justice Breyer, I would
4 like to be able to answer the question yes and say that
5 courts of appeals can establish their own sub-legal
6 rules as --

7 JUSTICE BREYER: It's not sub-legal rules.
8 What it's called is precedent. What you do is you
9 decide a case and you decide this is unfair, and then
10 the thing that is a similar case comes along, is you
11 decide it the same way. And if a district judge doesn't
12 follow that, you reverse it.

13 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Breyer, if you do that,
14 what you have is each court of appeals functioning as a
15 Sentencing Commission.

16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Exactly. You've simply
17 substituted stare decisis and the necessity of the
18 district court following circuit law for the guidelines.
19 And --

20 JUSTICE BREYER: Exactly. I agree with that.

21 JUSTICE SCALIA: If the guidelines are
22 unconstitutional because they make facts automatically
23 determinative, I assume that would be unconstitutional
24 because it makes facts automatically determinative.

25 MR. DREEBEN: I assume too under the

1 rationale --

2 JUSTICE BREYER: Well then, in other words,
3 the Constitution of the United States prevents the
4 courts themselves from trying to assure that sentences
5 who are -- individuals who are in similar positions,
6 commit similar crimes, will be treated in similar ways.
7 That to me is possible, but of course I've been in
8 dissent in these cases. But it seems to me --

9 JUSTICE SCALIA: So long as the jury
10 determines the facts that make them similar.

11 JUSTICE BREYER: We're back --

12 JUSTICE SCALIA: The problem here is what
13 makes them similar.

14 MR. DREEBEN: I understand this dialogue.
15 And what we have --

16 (Laughter.)

17 I too have been with the dissenters in these
18 cases, and what I'm trying to argue for here is a set of
19 principles that appellate courts can apply and that
20 district courts can look to when sentencing, that will
21 come as close as is reasonably possible to achieving
22 Congress's aims in the Sentencing Reform Act without
23 crossing over the bright line rule that this Court has
24 announced --

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I don't know how

1 terribly different it is than the normal review for
2 abuse of discretion. I mean, you don't even need two
3 judges in my earlier question. Let's say you have the
4 same judge, and for three weeks every criminal defendant
5 who comes before him he says, I think if you have
6 military service, you should get a reduction. And then
7 all of a sudden he says, I see you have military
8 service, but I'm not going to give you a reduction. I
9 mean, is he bound by some abuse of discretion standard
10 to be a little bit consistent? And if that's the only
11 type of appellate review we're talking about, to ensure
12 some degree of consistency in how similar individuals
13 are treated in similar cases, I don't see that it raises
14 any concern.

15 MR. DREEBEN: Well, Mr. Chief Justice, I'm
16 not arguing for any proposition that I think would raise
17 concern. I do think that a general tenet of abuse of
18 discretion review is that the court of appeals can
19 affirm a result that it would not necessarily have
20 reached itself.

21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Dreeben, may I ask
22 you, please, to address a point that Mr. Cochran raised?
23 I think you were very helpful in saying this presumption
24 for the guidelines is how the court of appeals evaluates
25 a district court sentence, that there is no presumption

1 that binds the district judge.

2 But one of the main points that Mr. Cochran
3 made in his presentation was the district judge has to
4 give reasons. He -- this was just a summary paragraph
5 at the end of the sentencing hearing. He has to respond
6 to what defendant presented. He has to respond to what
7 the Government presented. There is an obligation
8 stemming from subpart (c) to give reasons, and that's
9 what he saw as the principal flaw in this sentence, that
10 the court of appeals reviewed. Reasons weren't given
11 for it.

12 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Ginsburg, I don't
13 think there was anything problematic with what this
14 district judge did. As Your Honor noted, this was a
15 sentence that was imposed after a lengthy sentencing
16 hearing in which the court engaged in a dialogue with
17 defense counsel about the three bases and the exclusive
18 bases on which defense counsel asked for a downward
19 departure. The judge, at least four times in this
20 transcript, brought up section 3553, recognizing that the
21 judge was well aware of his obligation to imply the
22 purposes of sentencing and the factors that were
23 presented to him. Now he did that and he made comments
24 along the way that indicate why he did not find physical
25 condition, military service, or asserted vulnerability

1 in prison to be reasons that would justify giving this
2 defendant a lower sentence.

3 And in his ultimate explanation, though it
4 is brief, he pointed to two of the section 3553 factors
5 explicitly. He pointed to the seriousness of the
6 offense and he pointed to the need for public
7 protection.

8 Now if you look at the legal obligations
9 that the judge had under section 3553(c) to explain
10 himself, the statute actually sets up a hierarchy of
11 three different levels of explanation. First, in any
12 case the judge is to state the reasons for the sentence.
13 Second, if the sentencing range is greater than 24
14 months, the judge is supposed to explain the particular
15 reason for giving a sentence at one end or another end
16 of the range. And finally, if the sentence is outside
17 the range, the judge is to give the specific reason for
18 a sentence outside the range. That statutory framework
19 makes it entirely plausible to say that if a judge
20 imposes a guideline sentence and explains, I see no
21 reason not to impose a guideline sentence, he has met
22 his burden of explanation without having to respond
23 literally and in sequence to each argument that the
24 defendant has made.

25 JUSTICE STEVENS: May I ask this question?

1 The district judge is reviewed under an abuse of
2 discretion standard, which I take it means there's a
3 presumption he got it right. Is that correct? There's
4 a presumption the district judge sentence is correct?

5 MR. DREEBEN: Well, Justice Stevens, our
6 position is more complicated than that, because within a
7 guidelines range if a sentence is imposed, the
8 Government --

9 JUSTICE STEVENS: Why shouldn't there be
10 also the same presumption when it is outside the
11 guidelines range?

12 MR. DREEBEN: Because sentences that are
13 outside the guidelines range are more likely to be the
14 cause of or a source of unwarranted disparity than a
15 sentence within the range. And that is why that if the
16 court of appeals is interested in fulfilling what Booker
17 said the role of the court of appeals is, which is to
18 iron out sentencing differences, there is more
19 reason for the --

20 JUSTICE STEVENS: Well, do you think the
21 interest in uniformity, in same sentences across the
22 board is stronger than the interest in getting the
23 correct sentence for the particular defendant who's in
24 court at the time?

25 MR. DREEBEN: Well, there isn't any one

1 correct sentence usually.

2 JUSTICE STEVENS: No, there isn't. But if
3 you say the district judge has broad discretion, which
4 he does, and the review is under abuse of discretion,
5 why should there not always be a presumption that the
6 district judge got it right?

7 MR. DREEBEN: Because there are more legal
8 elements that go into sentencing and sentencing review
9 than just those that you've named, Justice Stevens.
10 Section 3553(a) itself, which is the guidepost for
11 review, mandates that the district court consider the
12 guidelines, consider the policy --

13 JUSTICE STEVENS: Yes, but it's sort of like
14 findings of fact. They must take into consideration all
15 sorts of aspects of the case, and you have a strong
16 presumption that the findings of fact are accurate. Why
17 don't you have a strong presumption that the ultimate
18 judgment on the sentence is also accurate?

19 MR. DREEBEN: What happens when a sentence
20 is imposed outside the range is that there is a greater
21 risk of infringing the main purpose of the Sentencing
22 Reform Act, which was to avoid unwarranted disparities;
23 and in contrast to a sentence within the range which
24 does not merely run that risk to the same degree, a
25 sentence outside the range may well. It's different

1 from what the Sentencing Commission with its expertise
2 and its experience has recommended as the appropriate
3 sentence, given those facts.

4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, you're -- I mean,
5 this is a self-fulfilling prophecy. You're saying if
6 you don't comply with the guidelines, you're not going
7 to have uniformity. Well, I -- my goodness. Is that
8 consistent with the notion that the guidelines are
9 advisory?

10 MR. DREEBEN: I wouldn't put it as strongly
11 as that, Justice Scalia. What I would say is that the
12 further that a sentence diverges from the guidelines
13 range, the greater the possibility of unwarranted
14 disparity; and as a result of that, a court of appeals
15 should look more critically at the reasons that the
16 district court gave and ensure that the constellation of
17 reasons and facts that's presented is not so likely to
18 be a disproportionate sentence that --

19 JUSTICE SCALIA: But that's just
20 inconsistent with the notion which I think is correct,
21 that the district judge can simply disagree with the
22 basic -- basic reasons of the Commission, can simply
23 disagree with the fact that the Commission considers
24 white collar crime, for example, something that should
25 justify incarceration.

1 MR. DREEBEN: But Justice Scalia,
2 reasonableness review connotes that the court of appeals
3 will review the reasons that the district court gave for
4 that disagreement.

5 JUSTICE SOUTER: So doesn't your presumption
6 argument come down to an argument for a sufficiently
7 comprehensive statement of reasons, with a more
8 extensive statement required the further the court gets
9 from the guidelines? Isn't that what it boils down to?

10 MR. DREEBEN: It does for an out-of-range
11 sentence, Justice Souter. I think that for a sentence
12 within the range, the judge's statement that I have
13 considered the guidelines range and I think it's
14 appropriate does explain why that judge has given the
15 sentence that he's given. It's consistent with the
16 statute and it's consistent with the Constitution. Now
17 when --

18 JUSTICE SOUTER: Is there -- may I interrupt
19 you? Because your time is getting short.

20 Is there a difference between a presumption
21 of reasonableness to the guidelines on the one hand and
22 a rule that says the further you get from them, you can
23 get as far as you want to, but the further you get from
24 them, the more extensive your explanation has to be?

25 Is there a distinction between those two,

1 two rules?

2 MR. DREEBEN: There is a distinction between
3 them but I think they are complementary rules and in the
4 next case the Government will argue for a presumption
5 that is precisely what you have articulated,
6 Justice Souter. A greater and more extensive and more
7 persuasive explanation is needed the further that you go
8 from the guidelines range.

9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Or presumably the
10 further the facts suggest that you ought to depart from
11 the guidelines range? If you've got a submission here
12 18 compelling reasons, you shouldn't follow the
13 guidelines, and you get one sentence from the district
14 court saying -- you know -- I followed the guidelines,
15 presumably that would be the same as a significant
16 departure without further justification?

17 MR. DREEBEN: It wouldn't be identical but I
18 agree with you, Mr. Chief Justice, that a sentence
19 within the guidelines can be unreasonable if there is a
20 compelling case for a sentence outside the range because
21 the guidelines simply don't fit in that circumstance.

22 The Sentencing Commission itself recognized
23 that the guidelines were generalizations; they carved
24 out a heartland in the language of the sentencing
25 commission's first set of guidelines, and that there

1 will be circumstances that would justify different
2 sentences.

3 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is the system that you're
4 describing any different for mandatory guidelines that
5 are subject to departure when the district judge finds a
6 significant reason, which was what the mandatory
7 guidelines had?

8 MR. DREEBEN: Yes, Justice Scalia. It is
9 quite --

10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Wherein is it different?

11 MR. DREEBEN: It is different precisely on
12 the area that, that you yourself articulated. The judge
13 can disagree with the guidelines and determine that
14 on the basis of the facts that the jury
15 found, the judge would impose a different sentence, and
16 is then subject for reasonableness that conclusion
17 review and we submit based on a proportionality
18 principle.

19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr.
20 Dreeben. Mr. Cochran, you have three minutes remaining.

21 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF THOMAS N. COCHRAN

22 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER

23 MR. COCHRAN: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice.

24 I would like to return first to the across-
25 the-board reasonableness review that this Court

1 established in Booker. That in and of itself shows why
2 there cannot be a presumption of reasonableness on
3 appeal. Because you are holding the presumption to a
4 different standard at that point. It is not a
5 reasonableness across-the-board. You are putting the
6 burden on one of the parties, most likely the defendant,
7 to come forward and explain why the presumption should
8 be rebutted.

9 That flies in the face with the across-the
10 board-reasonableness this Court set forth in Booker.

11 The guidelines are fraught with disparity.
12 That is why they are advisory. That's why they can only
13 be advisory. And the district courts must be allowed to
14 look at them, to see them, to consider them, but
15 ultimately to impose a sentence outside them for valid
16 reasons.

17 In Mr. Rita's case, the court didn't. The
18 court felt the guidelines held some undue weight. It is
19 indicated in the record in two places, first and
20 foremost on page 49 of the joint appendix, where the
21 court at the beginning of the sentencing hearing states:
22 Other than the motion for downward departure that you
23 submitted, do you have any other objections; and what
24 I'm trying to do now is determine where your client fits
25 within the sentencing guidelines.

1 Clearly the judge was rooted in the
2 guidelines and that's why he gave a sentence of 33
3 months at the low end.

4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The, the judge also
5 pointed out that the jury made certain findings and he
6 thought he was bound by them; that is, the defendant
7 protested his innocence, and the jury had found him
8 guilty of false statements.

9 MR. COCHRAN: That's correct. That's --

10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The judge was bound by
11 those.

12 MR. COCHRAN: That's correct, Your Honor,
13 but interestingly the court found very dubious the
14 additional information regarding the cross-reference.
15 And on page 87 of the joint appendix, the court stated
16 it was not able to evaluate the seriousness of that
17 other investigation; and yet that was the
18 cross-reference that doubled his guidelines sentence.

19 We would ask the Court to rule in this case
20 that the presumption of reasonableness cannot be
21 accorded to the guidelines.

22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Cochran, you've
23 started out by saying there were two places in the
24 record that you thought showed the judge was bound by
25 the guidelines. 49, what was the other one?

1 MR. COCHRAN: Your Honor, the other one was
2 page 87.

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Of the one -- oh,
4 that point? Okay.

5 MR. COCHRAN: And that would be in the
6 second paragraph, Mr. Chief Justice, where the court
7 found it was unable to stray or found the guidelines
8 were inappropriate; and I suggest that that is a, a
9 giving of greater weight and too much so in this case.

10 Your Honor, Mr. Rita asks the Court to find
11 that a presumption cannot be accorded to the guidelines,
12 that his sentence was unreasonable in this case, and
13 that his case be returned for resentencing. Thank you.

14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
15 Mr. Cochran. The case is submitted.

16 (Whereupon, at 11:18 a.m., the above-entitled
17 case was submitted.)

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A				
able 34:18 35:10 40:4 52:16	adhere 4:2	amount 34:25	appropriate 16:24 25:11,18 34:22 47:2 48:14	33:8,9
above-entitled 1:11 53:16	admission 17:22	analyzed 13:13	arbitrarily 35:7	attorney 4:15
absence 39:12	admit 17:16	announced 25:4 34:6,16 41:24	area 50:12	attorneys 5:6
absolutely 14:17	adopted 35:25	answer 6:9 39:24 40:4	argue 41:18 49:4	automatically 40:22,24
abuse 42:2,9,17 45:1 46:4	advice 32:23,23 35:15	answered 9:23	argued 24:1	avoid 13:12 37:9 46:22
accept 10:16 19:9	advised 34:19	apart 21:16 29:1	argues 31:14	aware 43:21
accepted 32:24	advisory 3:19 4:6 12:15 13:18,23,25 14:2 17:11 20:13 21:10 25:3 26:4 32:23 34:25 35:13 47:9 51:12,13	apparent 21:9	arguing 12:25 28:10 29:9 42:16	a.m 1:13 3:2 53:16
accessory 14:15	affirm 20:3 30:13 31:25 36:1 42:19	appeal 19:16 28:11 33:8 51:3	argument 1:12 2:2,5,8 3:3,7 6:8 10:16,17 13:8 15:1 24:22 31:8 44:23 48:6,6 50:21	B
accorded 52:21 53:11	affirmed 29:13 37:1	appealed 28:17 31:7	arguments 5:3,4 5:6 6:6 8:14	back 22:8 26:15 26:25 27:5 41:11
account 7:12,14 7:16 9:17 10:4 11:5 15:9 17:19,23,25 18:5,17,23,25 19:21 23:12 27:10,12 28:2 31:4,6 37:14 37:24	age 18:11	appeals 20:1,1 21:4 25:1 28:15 30:6,12 31:8,10 35:24 36:3,6,7,21,22 37:22,22 38:22 39:5 40:1,5,14 42:18,24 43:10 45:16,17 47:14 48:2	arises 33:23	background 31:2
accurate 46:16 46:18	agent 11:4	APPEARAN... 1:14	armed 39:9,9	bad 15:20 16:12 16:13,13,14
accused 11:3	aggravating 27:9 38:25	appellate 14:22 19:16,18,18 21:1,20,21 22:4 28:9 29:20 30:1,5 30:17,18 31:21 31:24 35:3 41:19 42:11	Army 21:17 39:8	balance 5:8
achieve 11:22	agree 16:25 40:20 49:18	appellat 14:22 19:16,18,18 21:1,20,21 22:4 28:9 29:20 30:1,5 30:17,18 31:21 31:24 35:3 41:19 42:11	arrive 25:11	bank 39:6
achieving 41:21	ah 20:2 21:4	appendix 6:25 51:20 52:15	articulated 49:5 50:12	based 13:8 24:2 30:23 34:2 50:17
across-the 51:9	aims 18:3,4 41:22	application 27:8 28:13	aside 19:22 27:25	bases 43:17,18
across-the-bo... 51:5	aligns 28:13	applied 13:3	asked 43:18	basic 18:4 47:22 47:22
Act 13:9 32:4 41:22 46:22	Alito 12:25 13:7 13:15,19 32:12 32:21	applies 15:4 25:1 33:7	asking 3:16	basically 7:23 10:18 18:23
activity 4:13	Alito's 33:20	apply 5:9 12:19 15:10,21 26:23 28:5 41:19	asks 53:10	basis 24:6 50:14
actual 31:11	allowed 51:13	apprehension 36:8	aspects 46:15	began 27:3
additional 27:22 52:14	amendment 13:2,8,11,16 14:12,19,23 15:4,19,22,23 17:10 19:13 24:5 32:13,15 32:19 33:2,23 34:5 39:20	Apprendi 33:25	asserted 43:25	beginning 12:18 51:21
address 8:18,21 9:13 15:2 33:19,20 42:22	amendments 24:16		assertion 3:19	behalf 1:16,19 2:4,7,10 3:8 24:23 50:22
addressed 39:22			Assistant 1:15	belief 13:5
addresses 9:13 12:5			assisting 4:14 30:3	believe 12:13,14 18:4,8
addressing 13:23			assume 19:17 40:23,25	benchmark 16:8 17:9 29:22
adds 7:20			assure 40:1 41:4	benchmarks 16:10,12
			attempt 12:4	better 33:11
			attitude 30:7,10	big 15:7
				binds 43:1
				bird 21:20,20

<p>bit 8:2 30:2 42:10 blind 36:16 board 45:22 board-reason... 51:10 body 25:8 boils 48:9 book 23:14 Booker 3:12,18 3:23,25 9:12 10:21 12:10,11 12:13,15 21:10 25:4 26:3 27:20,21 32:22 32:25 34:16 35:13 45:16 51:1,10 Booker's 39:18 borne 24:17 bound 16:24 17:6 20:14,16 34:20 42:9 52:6,10,24 Breyer 4:25 5:11,14,23 6:2 6:14 7:7,17,22 8:10 14:18 15:1,16 17:18 18:2,20 26:15 27:6,11,16,17 27:24 28:7 32:25 39:4,19 39:23 40:3,7 40:13,20 41:2 41:11 Breyer's 3:12 brief 6:25 44:4 bright 34:15 41:23 broad 46:3 brought 4:12,13 4:14 5:6 7:18 43:20 burden 17:6 44:22 51:6 button 22:13</p>	<p>C</p>	<p>c 2:1 3:1 9:1,2 43:8 calculated 13:25 calibrate 28:20 28:23 California 3:16 call 36:15 called 40:8 candor 36:18 carved 49:23 case 3:4,17 4:5 4:15 5:1,15 6:5 6:13 7:6,13,25 8:18 13:1 14:1 14:5,7 15:13 16:19 19:17,23 19:25 21:2,3 23:9,9,21,25 26:22 27:13 28:4,5,10 30:6 30:13 31:13 32:16 33:6,14 33:18 35:18 39:6,7 40:9,10 44:12 46:15 49:4,20 51:17 52:19 53:9,12 53:13,15,17 cases 4:4 15:11 15:12 16:17 22:15,23,24 23:24 31:7 34:16 36:2 41:8,18 42:13 category 7:24 cause 45:14 center 17:5 centered 18:18 certain 18:10 34:25 52:5 certainly 11:7,9 18:5 challenges 30:14 chance 3:24 change 6:7 chapters 24:9</p>	<p>charges 38:19 Chief 3:3,9 16:4 16:16 17:4 22:10,21 23:5 24:20,24 30:25 31:19 37:21 38:4 41:25 42:15 49:9,18 50:19,23 52:22 53:3,6,14 choice 32:3,6,8 circuit 23:25 24:3,4 35:23 37:23 40:18 circumstance 7:10 27:10,12 36:12,14 49:21 circumstances 38:22 50:1 cite 6:23 claim 3:21 clarified 33:5 clear 10:12 28:21 29:21 32:5 clearer 4:15 clearly 13:13 16:2 24:10 52:1 client 51:24 client's 13:19 19:25 close 13:4,10 33:1 41:21 Cochran 1:15 2:3,9 3:6,7,9 4:17 5:11,18 6:1,10,16,21 6:24 7:11,21 8:4,16 9:10 10:2,9,20,25 11:6,13,24 12:2,13,25 13:3,10,17,22 14:9,13,16,24 15:14 16:1,6,9 16:14 17:3,21</p>	<p>18:15 19:1,8 20:9,13 21:11 21:25 22:3,19 23:1,11,22 24:15 42:22 43:2 50:20,21 50:23 52:9,12 52:22 53:1,5 53:15 cogent 38:9 coherent 38:10 collar 47:24 combat 4:9 21:15 come 33:1 41:21 48:6 51:7 comes 19:23,25 31:23 40:10 42:5 coming 23:13 commands 19:3 comments 43:23 commission 9:16,19 10:3 15:10 17:19,22 17:24 18:4,17 19:7 24:6,14 25:8,17 26:6 26:11,19 27:2 33:9,22 35:2 35:10 40:15 47:1,22,23 49:22 commission's 49:25 commit 41:6 common 5:5 compelling 49:12,20 complaining 24:13 complementary 35:12 49:3 complicated 39:4 45:6 complied 29:15 37:20</p>	<p>comply 13:14 15:22,23 37:3 47:6 complying 36:16 comprehensive 23:8 48:7 computer 22:13 concede 13:12 21:19 concern 19:9 29:19,19 42:14 42:17 concerns 4:19 7:15 8:21 conclude 34:14 concludes 31:11 conclusion 11:15 50:16 conclusions 6:12 condition 21:6 43:25 conduct 14:4 18:1 37:10 confident 30:13 conflict 21:9 Congress 15:20 15:25 17:20 32:4,6 33:2,22 Congress's 41:22 connotes 48:2 consensus 18:23 consider 4:8,21 5:4,10 6:20 11:7,8 12:20 16:15 17:20 19:10,12 21:12 21:14 25:7,14 28:23 37:8 46:11,12 51:14 consideration 46:14 considered 11:19 17:12 18:7,9 23:20 24:13,15 25:9</p>
---	-----------------	---	--	---	--

<p>25:17 48:13 considering 8:23 16:24 19:4 considers 23:2,2 47:23 consistency 11:21 12:12 42:12 consistent 42:10 47:8 48:15,16 consolidated 31:8 constellation 47:16 constitute 26:21 Constitution 6:3 14:25 32:11 41:3 48:16 constitutional 12:16 13:12 20:20 consulted 15:15 consulting 15:16 contend 7:3 14:10 16:1 17:9 18:16 contrary 33:12 contrast 46:23 control 13:6 18:19 convicted 37:10 38:18 convincing 29:21 correct 7:11 14:16 20:9 34:23 36:8 45:3,4,23 46:1 47:20 52:9,12 correctly 14:1 counsel 22:10 24:20 43:17,18 course 3:14 8:12 15:5 28:16 41:7 court 1:1,12</p>	<p>3:10,12,16 4:5 4:7,17,19,20 5:2,20,20 6:12 7:1,2,4,4 8:5,7 8:24 9:1,4,14 10:11 11:7,9 11:14,18 12:1 12:7 13:4,14 13:17 14:2,8 14:22 16:2 17:4,13 19:3 19:10,16,18 20:1,1,14,15 20:16,18 21:1 21:4,12,13,19 21:21 22:3,4,7 22:9,11 23:1,4 24:1,18,25 25:1,4,7 27:9 28:9,9,14 30:6 30:12,17,18 31:8,10,13,22 31:25 32:9,22 33:8 34:6,10 34:24 35:9,24 36:2,6,7,21,22 37:21,22 38:22 39:5,21 40:1 40:14,18 41:23 42:18,24,25 43:10,16 45:16 45:17,24 46:11 47:14,16 48:2 48:3,8 49:14 50:25 51:10,17 51:18,21 52:13 52:15,19 53:6 53:10 courts 12:19,21 23:12 40:5 41:4,19,20 51:13 court's 3:15 10:21 19:14,15 20:7 27:20 33:24 creating 8:2</p>	<p>credit 38:17 creed 26:18 crime 18:18 34:13 38:18 47:24 crimes 41:6 criminal 31:1 37:10 38:17 42:4 criminals 31:1 critically 47:15 cross 14:6 crossing 41:23 cross-reference 13:24 14:3 52:14,18 Cunningham 3:15 20:16 34:1,17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <hr/> <p>D 3:1 day 16:17,20 de 30:18 decide 30:7 40:9 40:9,11 decided 26:7,11 decides 35:21 37:4 decision 3:15,23 3:25 9:12 10:22 12:14 24:3,4 34:1 decisis 40:17 declared 32:10 32:22 decreed 33:21 defendant 5:21 8:8,8 11:2 12:6 17:7 22:20 23:25 28:16 38:13,16 42:4 43:6 44:2,24 45:23 51:6 52:6 defendants 31:1 37:9 39:7 40:2</p>	<p>Defender 1:16 defense 4:15 43:17,18 degree 40:1 42:12 46:24 denied 5:3,16 depart 9:14 16:19 18:6 23:18 26:24 31:4 33:17 38:3 49:10 Department 1:19 3:25 departure 9:15 24:2,6 26:22 43:19 49:16 50:5 51:22 departures 24:8 Deputy 1:18 described 3:11 9:4 27:23 describing 50:4 deserve 3:20 determination 20:7 determinative 21:22 40:23,24 determine 4:23 34:19 35:18 50:13 51:24 determined 25:17 28:12 35:16 determines 41:10 dialogue 41:14 43:16 diametrically 31:20 dichotomy 9:7 dictate 27:21 difference 9:25 26:4 38:5 48:20 differences 45:18 different 7:20</p>	<p>9:6 16:19 18:25 20:2 22:16,23 23:6 23:6,9 27:23 30:12 31:21 34:22 36:14 38:8 40:2 42:1 44:11 46:25 50:1,4,10,11 50:15 51:4 differently 37:6 difficult 6:5 diminished 39:11 directing 4:1 direction 12:4 29:5 disagree 35:1,10 39:15 47:21,23 50:13 disagreement 48:4 disagrees 35:18 discovered 39:6 discretion 37:4 38:2 42:2,9,18 45:2 46:3,4 discuss 8:19 discussion 24:7 disparities 37:9 46:22 disparity 38:11 45:14 47:14 51:11 disproportion... 47:18 disregard 14:4 dissent 41:8 dissenters 41:17 distinction 10:8 10:17 48:25 49:2 distinguish 28:8 28:21 district 4:5,7,17 4:19,20,22 5:2 5:5,11,20 6:4</p>
---	--	---	--	---

6:12 7:4 8:2,22 10:11 11:14,18 12:1,9,19,21 13:4,14,17 14:2 15:4 17:4 19:3,9,14,15 20:7,14,18 21:12,19 22:9 22:11 23:1,18 24:1 25:7 28:8 28:12 29:5,7 30:8 33:7,15 33:16,16 36:15 37:16,23 38:23 39:14 40:11,18 41:20 42:25 43:1,3,14 45:1 45:4 46:3,6,11 47:16,21 48:3 49:13 50:5 51:13 disturb 30:19 disuniformity 39:3 diverges 47:12 doing 14:5 door 31:5 doubled 14:6 52:18 downward 43:18 51:22 drawing 17:9 Dreeben 1:18 2:6 24:21,22 24:24 25:16,23 26:3,13 27:5 27:15,19 28:7 29:3,14,24 30:4,11,21 31:10 32:2,7 32:20 33:19 34:9 36:7,12 36:20 37:2 38:4 39:17,21 40:3,13,25 41:14 42:15,21 43:12 45:5,12	45:25 46:7,19 47:10 48:1,10 49:2,17 50:8 50:11,20 dry 3:24 dual 19:3 dubious 52:13 D.C 1:8,19 <hr/> E <hr/> E 2:1 3:1,1 earlier 42:3 effect 4:23 21:14 effective 14:6 effort 15:10 25:11 efforts 3:22 eight 38:21 either 5:15 31:23 32:8,15 element 19:24 elements 46:8 eliminate 19:13 eliminated 24:6 employment 7:14 8:20 enable 9:15 enacted 32:4 enforceable 3:17 enforcement 4:13 engage 30:19 engaged 43:16 engaging 30:17 enhanced 13:20 enhancement 14:6 ensure 37:14 42:11 47:16 enter 30:12 enters 30:6 entirely 44:19 entitled 15:12 38:24,24 equal 32:1 escape 34:15	ESQ 1:15,18 2:3 2:6,9 essence 26:8 establish 20:19 20:23 40:5 established 35:13 51:1 establishes 34:1 establishing 16:10 20:24 estimation 9:9 evaluate 21:12 22:4 52:16 evaluates 42:24 event 30:2 even-handed 10:25 evidence 4:18 exactly 36:18 40:16,20 example 31:22 38:15 47:24 exception 27:14 exceptions 26:17,19 excised 15:21 exclusive 43:17 exercise 37:4 38:2 exist 21:4 existed 23:21 experience 47:2 expert 25:8 expertise 47:1 experts 18:24 explain 7:4 8:5 9:15,24 12:21 16:2 44:9,14 48:14 51:7 explained 18:21 explains 44:20 explanation 35:4 38:10 44:3,11,22 48:24 49:7 explicitly 44:5 express 11:3	extensive 48:8 48:24 49:6 extent 12:18 39:2 extra 14:8 38:17 extraordinary 4:3 <hr/> F <hr/> face 51:9 fact 4:8 13:20 14:15 19:14,19 20:2,5,8 21:2,4 21:5,22 24:9 25:10 30:3 34:4,5,7,8,9,10 37:15 46:14,16 47:23 factfinding 32:11 factor 12:12 25:17 32:17 38:25 factors 7:18,19 11:20 12:20 15:9 17:12,13 17:18,20,23 19:4 22:22 23:15,20 24:13 25:13 26:6,11 26:20 28:14 43:22 44:4 facts 7:4,13 17:25 22:14 23:2,4 30:24 34:2,11,12,18 40:22,24 41:10 47:3,17 49:10 50:14 factual 20:17 fairness 40:1 fall 9:9 false 52:8 far 48:23 favor 28:4 February 1:9 Federal 1:15 4:1	25:10 37:15,15 feel 6:7 33:17 feeling 30:13 feels 34:21 36:18 felt 11:16 17:4 51:18 file 5:7 finally 44:16 find 17:1 19:19 34:4 43:24 53:10 finding 20:4,17 30:3 findings 19:14 46:14,16 52:5 finds 22:15 50:5 fine 31:24 33:12 finger 36:13 first 3:4 6:10 17:23 18:15 19:4 27:6,7 32:3,7,21 44:11 49:25 50:24 51:19 fit 49:21 fits 51:24 flaw 43:9 flies 51:9 focusing 21:18 follow 23:14 40:12 49:12 followed 49:14 following 11:19 11:20,23 40:18 forbids 39:20 force 28:25,25 foremost 9:10 51:20 form 6:4 forth 3:22 51:10 forward 4:18 8:19 51:7 found 23:19 24:4 27:9 34:3 34:6,18 35:2 50:15 52:7,13 53:7,7
--	---	--	--	--

four 18:3,18 43:19	23:4 25:21 26:1 30:24	1:16	49:21,23,25 50:4,7,13	20:9 24:16 43:14 52:12
Foy 23:24	31:19,20 43:10	ground 27:13	51:11,18,25	53:1,10
framework 44:18	47:3 48:14,15	grounds 26:21	52:2,18,21,25	hoping 36:20
fraught 51:11	gives 19:3	guess 15:1	53:7,11	human 18:1
free 21:19,20 23:18 33:16	giving 9:8,8,25 10:1 21:6 44:1 44:15 53:9	guidance 24:2	guidepost 46:10	23:15,20 24:12
freedom 27:22 34:25 35:9	go 5:8 11:2 12:20 15:6	guideline 4:7 7:9 7:25 11:16	guilty 52:8	hypothetical 35:20
front 5:21 8:7	19:16 31:23	14:6 17:24	gun 38:19	
fulfilling 45:16	34:4 46:8 49:7	20:23 24:14		
fully 18:7 37:14	going 5:8,12 8:11 10:18	27:25,25 28:6	H	I
function 31:18	12:17 16:19,21	31:7 36:23	hand 48:21	identical 31:2 39:17 49:17
functioning 40:14	19:15 21:22	44:20,21	happened 6:13 23:24 32:21	ignored 10:8,10
further 24:18 27:6 47:12	22:1,17,25	guidelines 3:14 3:18,20 4:2,3,6	happens 33:15 39:5 46:19	impermissible 32:10
48:8,22,23	23:10 31:4,6	5:9,24 7:12,15	health 4:19 7:15 8:20	implies 34:24
49:7,10,16	31:13 33:9	9:4,6,12,17,19	hear 3:3 5:2 31:13	imply 43:21
G	37:11 38:2,3	10:5,23 11:22	hearing 4:11 11:12 43:5,16	importance 11:22 12:10
G 3:1	38:20 39:2,15	11:23 12:16,21	hears 5:5	important 12:12
general 1:18 18:3 42:17	39:24 42:8	12:24 13:6,18	heartland 26:23 26:24 49:24	impose 7:5 16:21 22:17
generalizations 49:23	47:6	13:25 14:8,10	held 13:6,17 23:16 34:24	23:10 27:22
generally 25:18 28:15	good 6:4 15:20 30:15 33:11 35:11	14:21 15:6,14	51:18	29:6,10 31:6
getting 45:22 48:19	goodness 47:7	15:20 16:3,4	help 10:13	34:20 35:21
Ginsburg 4:10 10:24 11:11	govern 31:15	16:18,20,23	helpful 42:23	36:3,23 37:1
17:17 42:21	Government 8:22 11:4,8,12	17:5,11,15	hierarchy 44:10	37:12 44:21
43:12 52:4,10	28:10,17,17	18:7 19:10	higher 16:21 21:6 39:13	50:15 51:15
give 4:23 6:17 6:22 7:24 8:1	31:14 32:8	20:20,25 21:10	history 10:19 24:16 38:18	imposed 4:6 7:9 22:6,7 25:3
8:13 10:11	35:4 38:19	21:13 22:11	hold 38:23	30:23 31:12
11:19 12:17	43:7 45:8 49:4	23:7,9,11,13	holding 39:18 51:3	32:14 34:2
15:18 19:6,11	Government's 3:19 35:11	23:19,20 25:3	holds 10:22	35:6 43:15
22:14,25 25:24	gravity 17:5	25:5,14,19,21	Honor 6:1,11,24 7:11,21 8:5	45:7 46:20
26:6,10 35:2	great 6:8 11:22 12:9 16:13	26:21,23 27:7	9:11 10:3,9,20	imposes 44:20
37:6 38:21,24	37:6	27:8,8,23	11:6,13 12:3	imposing 8:6 19:5
42:8 43:4,8	greater 9:15 13:18 17:15	28:12 29:6,10	12:14 13:23	imposition 5:21 6:17 7:2 9:5
44:17	19:5 23:3	30:14 31:4	14:13,16 15:14	10:12
given 3:24 4:11 19:19 21:2	38:25 44:13	32:10,16,22	16:1,14 17:21	inappropriate 11:17,25 12:2
	46:20 47:13	33:7,17 34:20	18:15 19:2	17:2,8 53:8
	49:6 53:9	35:1,6,14,14		inasmuch 10:10
	Greensboro	36:4,11 37:1,5		incarceration 47:25
		37:17 38:11		includes 15:5
		39:1 40:18,21		
		42:24 45:7,11		
		45:13 46:12		
		47:6,8,12 48:9		
		48:13,21 49:8		
		49:11,13,14,19		

including 34:16	issues 8:17,19	34:6,18 41:9	Justice's 31:19	little 30:2 35:22
inconsistent 47:20	8:21,22 11:15	50:14 52:5,7	justification 49:16	42:10
incorporate 23:15,17	J	Justice 1:19 3:3	justify 3:22 44:1	long 21:11 41:9
indicate 43:24	job 28:8,9 30:7	3:9,12,25 4:10	47:25 50:1	longer 3:13
indicated 3:14	joint 51:20	4:25 5:11,14	K	look 14:2 16:17
51:19	52:15	5:23 6:2,14,19	Kennedy 6:19	34:18 39:5
indifferent 15:20	judge 4:14,22	6:22 7:7,17,22	6:22 11:18,25	41:20 44:8
individual 22:20	5:5,8,12 6:4,17	8:10,25 9:23	12:8 14:9 16:7	47:15 51:14
22:22	7:8,24 8:18,23	10:7,14,24	16:12 29:17,25	looked 16:23
individualized 12:6	9:21 11:1 12:9	11:11,18,25	30:4,9	18:21
individuals 41:5	14:22 15:4,18	12:8,25 13:7	kind 9:3 15:12	looking 6:19
42:12	16:17 17:6	13:15,19 14:9	30:17	19:2 22:14
inequitable 37:25	25:24,25 26:3	14:14,18 15:1	kinds 26:20	23:6
inevitability 32:9	26:6 27:3,22	15:16 16:4,7	know 8:4 9:25	looks 22:21
information 4:20,21,23	28:12 29:5,7	16:12,16 17:4	10:9 13:11	low 52:3
9:16,20,21	29:10,15 30:8	17:17,18 18:2	15:8 16:20,22	lower 36:5 44:2
10:4 17:14	31:3,5 33:7,10	18:20 19:8	18:16 22:12,24	lying 38:19
52:14	33:15,16,17	20:11,22 21:18	28:24 32:25	M
infringing 46:21	34:3,3,17,21	22:1,10,21	41:25 49:14	main 39:3 43:2
initial 16:8	34:24 35:17,20	23:5,17,23	L	46:21
18:16 29:22	36:8,9,10,15	24:11,20,24	laboring 13:5	maintained 11:2
ink 3:24	36:23 37:4,18	25:12,16,20,25	lack 24:2	mandate 28:22
innocence 11:3	37:19 38:2,12	26:10,14,15	language 9:1	28:22,24 35:15
52:7	38:16,23 39:14	27:6,11,16,17	49:24	mandates 46:11
instance 5:18	40:11 42:4	27:24 28:7,19	Laughter 41:16	mandatory 9:12
integration 25:5	43:1,3,14,19	29:3,12,17,18	law 4:13 6:3,14	10:23 14:11
intend 26:19	43:21 44:9,12	29:25 30:4,9	7:23 32:16	15:21 23:13
interest 35:24	44:14,17,19	30:16,21,25	34:1 36:9	26:5 27:8
38:1 45:21,22	45:1,4 46:3,6	31:16 32:2,5	40:18	32:10 50:4,6
interested 45:16	47:21 48:14	32:12,21,25	leading 33:25	manual 17:24
interesting 33:13	50:5,12,15	33:20 34:7	leads 34:14	matter 1:11 5:19
interestingly 52:13	52:1,4,10,24	35:19 36:10,13	left 39:2	8:1,12 10:18
interrupt 48:18	judges 3:12 8:1	36:17,24 37:21	legal 35:9 36:15	13:24 16:16
investigation 52:17	8:3,12 22:13	38:4 39:4,19	44:8 46:7	18:6 19:19
iron 45:18	23:18 37:2,16	39:23 40:3,7	lengthy 43:15	34:9 37:5
issue 13:13	37:23 38:6,9	40:13,16,20,21	let's 19:17 42:3	matters 9:22
issued 3:25	42:3	41:2,9,11,12	level 29:20 30:1	18:10
	judge's 29:11	41:25 42:15,21	30:5 34:1,19	maximum 20:15
	35:2 48:12	43:12 44:25	34:21,22 35:17	20:17 38:20
	judgment 5:1,15	45:5,9,20 46:2	levels 44:11	mean 5:4,4,15
	5:19 12:1	46:9,13 47:4	limit 26:19	9:24 10:15
	15:11 36:5	47:11,19 48:1	line 9:9 17:9	16:17,22 18:12
	46:18	48:5,11,18	34:15 41:23	33:4 34:11
	judicial 20:5,24	49:6,9,18 50:3	literally 44:23	42:2,9 47:4
	32:11	50:8,10,19,23	literature 18:21	means 6:8 26:8
	jury 13:21 34:3	52:4,10,22		38:13 45:2
		53:3,6,14		

<p>meant 3:18 9:13 memo 4:1 mentioned 18:10 26:20 merely 3:19 31:17 46:24 merits 27:20 38:24 met 44:21 MICHAEL 1:18 2:6 24:22 military 4:8,11 4:18 7:14 8:20 19:20,24 21:14 25:15,21 26:1 31:3 32:16 35:16,20 37:7 37:24 38:13 39:10,12 42:6 42:7 43:25 minimum 8:18 11:9 20:15,17 minutes 50:20 missing 6:20 mistaken 36:8 misunderstan... 36:21 misunderstood 29:18 mitigating 27:9 39:1 moderate 37:12 months 38:12,12 44:14 52:3 morning 3:4 motion 51:22 move 12:4 multiple 25:5 myriad 7:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <hr/> <p>N 1:15 2:1,1,3,9 3:1,7 50:21 named 46:9 national 26:17 nationwide 11:21</p>	<p>near 38:21 nearly 10:22 necessarily 23:14 34:8,24 42:19 necessary 19:6 20:5,6 21:6 23:4 27:18 35:9 necessity 40:17 need 9:21 11:8 37:9 42:2 44:6 needed 9:14 49:7 needs 10:11 11:9 16:2 neither 8:23 never 11:14 new 22:12 nine 37:23 Ninth 23:25 24:3,4 normal 23:9 28:4 42:1 normally 8:1,13 8:13 noted 43:14 notion 47:8,20 novo 30:18 number 31:17 N.C 1:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <hr/> <p>O 2:1 3:1 objections 51:23 obligated 25:7 36:23,25 37:2 obligation 10:25 19:7 29:11 43:7,21 obligations 29:16 44:8 offender 34:12 offense 34:11 44:6 oh 19:18 21:1 53:3</p>	<p>okay 33:10,10 33:10 39:16 53:4 once 12:19 17:14 28:11 32:9 open 5:20 7:1 operate 29:8,8 30:8 operates 36:15 36:17 opinion 3:12 5:17 8:11 12:10,11,15,23 13:5 27:20,21 opinions 6:6 33:25 opportunity 28:16 opposed 16:25 31:20 oral 1:11 2:2,5 3:7 24:22 order 31:25 34:15 37:13 ordinarily 35:17 ordinary 39:8,9 origin 26:17 original 18:8 26:15 ought 49:10 outside 9:3 25:19 35:6 44:16,18 45:10 45:13 46:20,25 49:20 51:15 outside-the-ra... 37:13 out-of-range 48:10 overcome 28:18 29:21</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <hr/> <p>P 3:1 page 2:2 6:22,24 51:20 52:15</p>	<p>53:2 paragraph 43:4 53:6 parameters 25:9 part 31:18 32:21 particular 6:18 7:2,5 10:12 21:22 23:21 34:4,8 35:18 44:14 45:23 parties 8:17 51:6 party 8:23 passage 3:15 passed 10:6 patterns 25:10 people 31:23 percent 39:7 period 39:11 perjury 11:4 permit 25:24 person 19:19 30:14 personal 37:5,12 37:16 person's 21:14 perspective 35:12 persuaded 29:11 persuasive 49:7 pertaining 34:11 Petitioner 1:4 1:17 2:4,10 3:8 50:22 Petitioner's 6:25 philosophy 32:14 33:21 physical 4:12 43:24 places 51:19 52:23 plausible 44:19 play 18:1 playing 29:22 please 3:10</p>	<p>24:25 42:22 point 10:5 14:15 15:7 17:17 18:14 19:1 21:19 27:6 33:20 42:22 51:4 53:4 pointed 44:4,5,6 52:5 points 43:2 policy 46:12 posed 6:11 position 10:24 14:24 29:9 45:6 positions 41:5 possibility 47:13 possible 41:7,21 potentially 21:12 practice 23:23 29:2 practices 12:17 preamble 6:21 precedent 40:8 precisely 49:5 50:11 predated 10:21 preexisted 39:18 preference 37:12 present 18:14 presentation 43:3 presented 4:16 43:6,7,23 47:17 presentence 5:7 pressed 11:8,12 presses 22:13 presumably 19:13 26:10 49:9,15 presume 28:15 29:5 35:25 presumption 3:20 14:20,25</p>
---	--	---	--	--

<p>16:13 19:11 25:2 28:3,11 28:18,20,21,24 28:25 29:9,20 42:23,25 45:3 45:4,10 46:5 46:16,17 48:5 48:20 49:4 51:2,3,7 52:20 53:11</p> <p>presumptions 16:10 30:1,3</p> <p>pretty 30:13 33:11 36:25</p> <p>prevalence 34:13</p> <p>prevent 36:16</p> <p>prevents 41:3</p> <p>principal 43:9</p> <p>principle 27:13 31:14 35:5 39:3 50:18</p> <p>principles 41:19</p> <p>prior 9:11 38:18</p> <p>prism 22:5</p> <p>prison 44:1</p> <p>probably 32:20</p> <p>probation 38:14</p> <p>problem 19:13 20:12,21 21:9 22:2,18 33:13 33:13,23 41:12</p> <p>problematic 43:13</p> <p>process 20:5 24:5 26:8</p> <p>productive 38:10</p> <p>prohibits 17:10</p> <p>prologue 9:1</p> <p>properly 28:1</p> <p>prophecy 47:5</p> <p>proportionality 31:14 35:5 50:17</p> <p>proposition 42:16</p>	<p>prosecutors 4:1</p> <p>protection 44:7</p> <p>protested 52:7</p> <p>provision 9:11 10:21</p> <p>provisions 3:19</p> <p>public 1:15 44:6</p> <p>punishment 34:2,19,21,22 35:17</p> <p>pure 13:22</p> <p>purely 13:24 14:1 20:13</p> <p>purpose 9:18 10:5 18:22 46:21</p> <p>purposes 18:18 20:6 25:6 43:22</p> <p>pursuant 25:3</p> <p>put 3:22 4:18 8:19 9:24 36:13 39:13 47:10</p> <p>putting 17:15 51:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <hr/> <p>quantum 13:18</p> <p>question 6:11 9:24 14:13,18 15:15 29:18 33:20 39:25 40:4 42:3 44:25</p> <p>questions 24:18</p> <p>quite 5:15 50:9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <hr/> <p>R 1:18 2:6 3:1 24:22</p> <p>race 18:11 26:17</p> <p>raise 8:22 42:16</p> <p>raised 8:17,24 42:22</p> <p>raises 42:13</p> <p>range 3:13 9:3 11:16 14:6</p>	<p>22:24 30:22 38:11 44:13,16 44:17,18 45:7 45:11,13,15 46:20,23,25 47:13 48:12,13 49:8,11,20</p> <p>rationale 8:6 12:22,22 41:1</p> <p>reached 42:20</p> <p>read 26:16</p> <p>reading 15:18</p> <p>reads 5:7</p> <p>reason 7:8 9:5,8 9:15 10:1,2,12 10:17,18 11:23 20:23 30:15 33:11 39:9,10 39:13 44:15,17 44:21 45:19 50:6</p> <p>reasonable 5:25 7:10 14:21 21:3 28:15 30:8,23 31:12 31:16,18,22 35:6 36:1</p> <p>reasonableness 3:21 19:17 21:21 25:2 28:11 35:3 48:2,21 50:16 50:25 51:2,5 52:20</p> <p>reasonably 41:21</p> <p>reasoned 24:3,4</p> <p>reasons 5:21,23 6:17 7:2,24 8:1 8:13,14 9:2,8 10:1,11,15 22:8 31:19,20 35:2 43:4,8,10 44:1,12 47:15 47:17,22 48:3 48:7 49:12 51:16</p>	<p>REBUTTAL 2:8 50:21</p> <p>rebutted 51:8</p> <p>received 4:20</p> <p>receiving 8:9</p> <p>recognize 35:23</p> <p>recognized 49:22</p> <p>recognizing 43:20</p> <p>recommended 47:2</p> <p>reconcile 8:25</p> <p>reconciliation 27:20</p> <p>record 4:8,12,19 4:22 7:14,14 8:20 19:20 21:15 51:19 52:24</p> <p>records 37:11</p> <p>recruiter 21:17</p> <p>reduction 42:6,8</p> <p>reference 16:3,6 17:14</p> <p>referred 18:11</p> <p>reflected 25:6</p> <p>reflects 30:5</p> <p>Reform 13:9 32:4 41:22 46:22</p> <p>regard 6:10 19:2 30:22</p> <p>regarding 11:15 52:14</p> <p>rehabilitative 18:22</p> <p>reiterate 3:17</p> <p>reject 8:13 21:13</p> <p>rejected 12:11 12:14 24:14 32:24</p> <p>relevance 10:22 10:23</p> <p>relevant 18:14 32:17 35:17,21</p>	<p>religion 26:18</p> <p>relying 7:5</p> <p>remaining 6:6 50:20</p> <p>remedial 27:21</p> <p>remorse 11:3</p> <p>removed 24:9 24:12</p> <p>report 5:7</p> <p>represent 25:5</p> <p>represents 25:8</p> <p>required 23:14 37:8 48:8</p> <p>requires 5:20 6:16 7:3,24 35:14 37:3</p> <p>resentencing 53:13</p> <p>reserve 24:19</p> <p>respect 28:5 36:2 40:2</p> <p>respects 19:25</p> <p>respond 43:5,6 44:22</p> <p>Respondent 1:20 2:7 24:23</p> <p>result 6:7 42:19 47:14</p> <p>return 22:8 50:24</p> <p>returned 53:13</p> <p>reverse 36:10 38:3 39:15 40:12</p> <p>review 20:5,24 21:20 30:18,19 31:15,24 35:3 36:14 42:1,11 42:18 46:4,8 46:11 48:2,3 50:17,25</p> <p>reviewed 43:10 45:1</p> <p>reviewing 19:16 21:21 25:2</p> <p>revise 9:19</p> <p>revising 9:17</p>
---	---	--	--	--

<p>revisions 10:4 right 21:24 32:2 45:3 46:6 risk 46:21,24 Rita 1:3 3:4,16 4:18 8:19 21:15 53:10 Rita's 4:8 7:15 14:1 51:17 robberies 39:6 ROBERTS 3:3 16:4,16 22:10 22:21 23:5 24:20 30:25 37:21 41:25 49:9 50:19 52:22 53:3,14 role 45:17 rooted 52:1 rule 18:6 34:5 34:15 35:25 41:23 48:22 52:19 rules 35:13 40:6 40:7 49:1,3 ruling 27:2 run 20:20 46:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <p>S 2:1 3:1 sanction 22:6 satisfy 8:11,15 saw 43:9 saying 10:7 23:8 27:17 30:12 36:18,19 39:25 42:23 47:5 49:14 52:23 says 5:8,23 6:3 6:20 7:8 9:1,2 11:19 12:9 16:20,23 19:18 21:1,4 22:16 22:22 26:16,16 28:24 31:3,5 32:16,25 34:3 35:22 37:22</p>	<p>38:2,12,16 39:5 42:5,7 48:22 Scalia 8:25 9:23 19:8 20:11,22 21:18 22:1 23:17,23 24:11 26:10,14 29:12 34:7 40:16,21 41:9,12 47:4 47:11,19 48:1 50:3,8,10 second 31:13 44:13 53:6 section 25:6 28:13 37:3,8 43:20 44:4,9 46:10 see 22:12 23:8 32:17 42:7,13 44:20 51:14 seek 4:2 selection 32:13 self-fulfilling 47:5 sense 13:4 sentence 4:7 5:22,24,25 6:18 7:3,5,9,9 7:20 8:6,8 9:3 9:6 10:13 13:20 14:20 16:21 19:5,15 20:3,8 21:2,5,7 21:23 22:6,16 22:17 23:10 25:2,18 27:22 28:13,16 29:6 29:10 30:14,19 31:7,12 33:7 33:17 35:5,21 36:1,4,6,11,23 37:1,13 38:5,6 38:8 39:11,13 42:25 43:9,15 44:2,12,15,16 44:18,20,21</p>	<p>45:4,7,15,23 46:1,18,19,23 46:25 47:3,12 47:18 48:11,11 48:15 49:13,18 49:20 50:15 51:15 52:2,18 53:12 sentences 4:3 22:14 30:23 31:21 32:1 41:4 45:12,21 50:2 sentencing 3:13 4:11 7:1 9:16 9:18,21 10:3 11:12 12:6,16 13:1,9 17:19 17:22,24 18:3 18:4,17,18 19:6 23:12,16 24:5 25:6,9 26:7 28:2 31:15 32:4,14 33:9,21,22 35:1,10 40:2 40:15 41:20,22 43:5,15,22 44:13 45:18 46:8,8,21 47:1 49:22,24 51:21 51:25 separate 18:2,5 21:16 sequence 33:24 34:16 44:23 serious 7:19 seriousness 44:5 52:16 serve 37:25 service 19:20,24 25:15,22 26:2 31:3 32:16 35:16,20 37:7 37:24 38:13 39:12 42:6,8 43:25</p>	<p>services 39:9,10 set 9:7 19:21 27:7,7,25 30:24 34:18 41:18 49:25 51:10 sets 44:10 setting 17:8 sex 26:17 shed 33:4 shifted 17:6 short 48:19 shortcomings 12:23 show 12:23 17:7 24:10 28:18 33:11 showed 52:24 showing 29:21 shown 20:11 30:20 shows 30:15 51:1 side 15:2 38:16 significant 37:13 49:15 50:6 similar 37:10,11 40:10 41:5,6,6 41:10,13 42:12 42:13 simply 6:12 13:18 15:4 20:16 24:14 40:16 47:21,22 49:21 single 6:9 situation 8:2 33:6 Sixth 13:1,8,11 13:16 14:12,19 14:23 15:4,18 15:22,23 17:10 19:13 32:12,15 32:19 33:2,22 34:5 39:20 slightly 36:5</p>	<p>socioeconomic 26:18 soldier 4:9 Solicitor 1:18 solved 21:8 sorry 6:24 sort 31:17 33:4 46:13 sorts 46:15 sounds 10:14 39:17 source 45:14 Souter 10:7,14 28:19 29:3 30:16,21 31:16 32:2,5 48:5,11 48:18 49:6 Souter's 29:18 special 7:23,24 8:2 specific 8:17 9:5 9:8 10:1,2,15 10:18 11:20 18:10 26:17 44:17 specifically 7:15 11:5 25:23 39:21 specifics 11:14 spectrum 31:17 stand 21:23 standard 42:9 45:2 51:4 standards 29:23 stare 40:17 start 15:10 16:9 started 27:1,2 52:23 starts 17:15 state 5:20 6:12 7:1 9:2,5 44:12 stated 52:15 statement 48:7,8 48:12 statements 52:8 states 1:1,6,12 3:5 6:21,25</p>
--	--	--	---	---

<p>23:24 25:4 41:3 51:21 status 26:18 statute 6:3 10:6 12:20 13:13,14 17:16 19:3,6 44:10 48:16 statutorily 18:11 statutory 20:14 20:17 29:16 38:20 44:18 stemming 43:8 Stevens 14:14 25:12,16,20,25 35:19 36:10,13 36:17,24 44:25 45:5,9,20 46:2 46:9,13 strange 30:2 stray 53:7 strength 28:20 strikes 32:8 strive 11:22 strong 3:17 35:23 46:15,17 stronger 45:22 strongly 47:10 stuff 5:13 subject 34:5 35:3,4 50:5,16 submission 19:9 28:14 49:11 submit 50:17 submits 35:4 submitted 13:21 51:23 53:15,17 subpart 43:8 substituted 40:17 sub-legal 40:5,7 sudden 42:7 sufficient 5:25 6:7,11 7:7 19:5 22:6 23:3 sufficiently 48:6 suggest 49:10</p>	<p>53:8 summary 5:1,14 5:19 43:4 supported 38:9 suppose 7:17,20 11:18 12:9 28:2 38:16 supposed 30:18 31:9 44:14 Supposing 35:20 Supreme 1:1,12 sure 29:3,13,15 36:25 system 3:11 13:23,25 14:2 20:14 25:3,10 26:5,5 34:20 35:1,14 37:15 39:2,18 50:3 systematically 24:9,12 systems 37:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <hr/> <p>T 2:1,1 table 25:13 take 7:12,13,16 9:16 10:4 11:5 17:25 18:17 23:12 28:1,3 37:24 38:15,20 38:24 45:2 46:14 taken 15:9 17:19 17:22 18:22 19:21 27:10 31:3,6 37:14 takes 38:11 talk 29:25 30:2 talking 29:4,7 33:3,6,14 42:11 tell 29:1 tells 17:3 tenet 42:17 terms 3:17</p>	<p>terribly 22:23 42:1 Thank 24:20,24 50:19,23 53:13 53:14 theory 23:22 27:1,25 the-board 50:25 thing 5:5 16:15 18:5 30:10 40:10 things 15:6 18:3 27:3 28:23 32:1 37:7 think 5:16,24 6:8 7:10,17,19 7:21,23,25 8:5 8:16 9:10 10:2 11:6 12:2,9,10 12:11 13:23 14:22 15:3,24 16:10,15,19,23 18:13 19:1,20 21:11 22:3 27:5,19 28:7 29:14 30:5,11 30:22 31:3,5 31:22 33:3,4 33:12 36:2,3,7 36:13 37:18,19 37:25 38:4,21 39:8,16,23,24 42:5,16,17,23 43:13 45:20 47:20 48:11,13 49:3 thinking 18:12 18:13 thinks 33:10,10 35:20 THOMAS 1:15 2:3,9 3:7 50:21 thoroughly 18:9 thought 25:13 26:1 29:19 52:6,24 three 8:19 42:4</p>	<p>43:17 44:11 50:20 thresholds 20:19,23,24 thwart 3:22 tied 3:13 time 5:1 7:1 24:19 25:11 45:24 48:19 times 43:19 today 31:13 told 17:20 36:22 total 36:18 transcript 43:20 treat 4:6 treated 35:15 41:6 42:13 trial 11:1 true 25:12,20 29:4 30:4 try 3:22 33:19 33:20 40:1 trying 15:17,19 33:1 41:4,18 51:24 two 4:9 18:2 21:15 29:1 31:1,20,21 36:13 42:2 44:4 48:25 49:1 51:19 52:23 type 42:11 types 36:14 typical 15:11,11 15:13 39:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">U</p> <hr/> <p>uh 15:5 ultimate 44:3 46:17 ultimately 14:19 51:15 unable 53:7 uncharged 14:4 unconstitutio... 14:7 40:22,23</p>	<p>understand 10:16 14:3 27:15 33:24 34:11 35:12 41:14 understanding 34:23 understands 8:8 undue 51:18 unduly 38:10 unfair 40:9 unfounded 3:21 uniformity 11:21 12:3,4 12:12,17 35:24 38:1 45:21 47:7 United 1:1,6,12 3:4 23:24 25:4 41:3 unproven 14:4 unreasonable 21:5 28:1 30:20 38:3,7 39:16 49:19 53:12 unusual 8:3,5 26:22 27:13 28:5 33:18 unwarranted 37:9 45:14 46:22 47:13 uphold 31:9,11 use 9:20 17:13 17:14 usually 30:2 46:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <hr/> <p>v 1:5 vacate 22:8 valid 51:15 validity 19:11 varies 38:5 various 25:9 version 18:8 26:16</p>
---	--	--	---	--

<p>versus 3:4,16 23:24 25:4 veteran 21:15 VICTOR 1:3 view 7:8 11:20 28:3 30:16,17 31:20 38:13,23 violate 13:7,16 14:19,22,25 33:2 violated 13:1,11 15:3 violating 15:18 violation 14:11 32:15 vulnerability 43:25</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <p>want 9:25 10:15 22:12 39:14 48:23 wanted 15:21,25 33:2 wants 29:13,15 warrant 7:20 wars 4:9 21:15 Washington 1:8 1:19 wasn't 3:24 18:22 27:10 way 12:17 20:12 23:8 28:19,21 28:24 29:1 31:23 39:12,14 39:14 40:11 43:24 ways 41:6 weeks 42:4 weigh 5:12 weighed 4:22 weighing 22:20 weight 14:8 15:12,17 16:13 17:15 25:21,24 26:1,6,7,11,12 37:6 38:25</p>	<p>51:18 53:9 went 24:3 weren't 22:11 24:15 43:10 We'll 3:3 we're 5:12 27:5 29:7,9,22 33:1 33:3,6 38:3 39:2,15 41:11 42:11 we've 18:9 37:23 39:6 white 47:24 wise 36:3 wonder 26:25 word 5:3 words 7:20 17:6 20:4 21:5 29:23 41:2 world 34:12 worried 7:22 worry 8:1 wouldn't 47:10 49:17 write 5:3 6:5 30:9 37:5 writing 37:5 written 6:5 wrong 35:8 37:19 wrote 5:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p>x 1:2,7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <p>years 22:25,25 23:13 31:5 38:21 youthful 24:2</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">0</p> <p>06-5754 1:5 3:4</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>10 37:23 10:18 1:13 3:2 100 22:15,23,24</p>	<p>11:18 53:16 18 23:13 49:12 1987 17:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>2 9:2 20 1:9 2007 1:9 24 2:7 44:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>3 2:4 31:5 3a 6:25 33 38:12 39:6 52:2 33-month 4:7 3553 15:5 43:20 44:4 3553(a) 12:5,19 15:5,5,7 17:13 19:2 22:5,20 25:6 28:14 37:3,8 46:10 3553(c) 5:19 6:16 44:9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>4 9:4 40 28:25 41 38:12 49 51:20 52:25</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>5 22:24,25 5(h) 24:10 5(k) 24:10 50 2:10</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>60 28:25 674 37:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>7 22:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p>87 52:15 53:2</p>		
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