

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT

United States v. Harbert

No. 17-6246, United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit (June 14, 2019)

SUMMARY

The Tenth Circuit held that an Oklahoma first-degree robbery conviction qualifies as a "violent felony" under the Armed Career Criminal Act's (ACCA) elements clause, applying **Stokeling v. United States**, 139 S. Ct. 544 (2019). The court concluded that the force required to overcome a victim's resistance—even if minimal—constitutes "violent force" capable of causing physical pain or injury. The decision affirmed the district court's ACCA-enhanced sentence and rejected the defendant's argument that the degree of force was immaterial. This unpublished opinion is persuasive but not binding precedent.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam; Jerome A. Holmes; Robert E. Bacharach; Carolyn B. McHugh
JURISDICTION	Federal
DECIDED	June 14, 2019
DOCKET	17-6246
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal from district court's determination that Oklahoma first-degree robbery conviction qualifies as a violent felony under ACCA.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of whether a prior conviction qualifies as a violent felony under ACCA.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished
PARTIES	Harold Lee Harbert v. United States of America

TOPICS

- criminal procedure
- sentencing
- statutory interpretation
- standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

- Criminal Law
- Federal Sentencing

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether an Oklahoma first-degree robbery conviction is a 'violent felony' under ACCA's elements clause.

HOLDINGS

1. Oklahoma first-degree robbery qualifies as a violent felony under ACCA because it requires the use of force sufficient to overcome a victim's resistance, which constitutes 'violent force' as defined in *Johnson v. United States* and *Stokeling v. United States*.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"'[P]hysical force,' or 'force capable of causing physical pain or injury' includes the amount of force necessary to overcome a victim's resistance." (at 3)

"physical force under ACCA 'means violent force—that is, force capable of causing physical pain or injury to another person.'" (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Harold Lee Harbert pleaded guilty to one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1). The probation department recommended an enhanced sentence under ACCA because Harbert had three prior convictions: two for possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance and one for Oklahoma first-degree robbery in 1995. The district court overruled Harbert's objection that the robbery conviction was not a violent felony and sentenced him to 188 months' imprisonment.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Harold Lee Harbert pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. The district court sentenced him as an armed career criminal under ACCA based on three prior convictions, including an Oklahoma first-degree robbery conviction. Harbert appealed, challenging the classification of the robbery conviction as a violent felony.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- *United States v. Ridens*, 792 F.3d 1270 (10th Cir. 2015)
- *United States v. Harris*, 844 F.3d 1260 (10th Cir. 2017), cert. denied, 138 S. Ct. 1438 (2018)
- *Moncrieffe v. Holder*, 569 U.S. 184 (2013)
- *Johnson v. United States*, 559 U.S. 133 (2010)
- *Stokeling v. United States*, 139 S. Ct. 544 (2019)

OPINION

United States v. Harbert

PER CURIAM.

FILED

United States Court of Appeals UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS Tenth Circuit
FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT June 14, 2019

Elisabeth A. Shumaker Clerk of Court

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff - Appellee, v. No. 17-6246

(D.C. No. 5:17-CR-00101-R-1)

HAROLD LEE HARBERT, (W.D. Okla.)

Defendant - Appellant. _____

ORDER AND JUDGMENT*

Before HOLMES, BACHARACH, and McHUGH,
Circuit Judges. _____ Harold Lee Harbert pleaded guilty to one
count of being a felon in possession of a firearm in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1). Mr.
Harbert’s plea agreement contained a waiver of appellate rights, with an exception to appeal from
a judicial determination that he is subject to the terms of the Armed Career Criminal Act, 18
U.S.C. § 924(e) (ACCA). Relying on that exception, Mr. Harbert appeals from the district court’s
determination that his Oklahoma first-degree robbery conviction * After examining the briefs and
appellate record, this panel has determined unanimously that oral argument would not materially
assist in the determination of this appeal. See Fed. R. App. P. 34(a)(2); 10th Cir. R. 34.1(G). The
case is therefore ordered submitted without oral argument. This order and judgment is not binding
precedent, except under the doctrines of law of the case, res judicata, and collateral estoppel. It
may be cited, however, for its persuasive value consistent with Fed. R. App. P. 32.1 and 10th Cir.
R. 32.1. qualifies as a “violent felony” under ACCA. Exercising jurisdiction under 18 U.S.C. §
3742(a) and 28 U.S.C. § 1291, we affirm.

BACKGROUND

Following the entry of his guilty plea, the probation department prepared a presentence report in
which it recommended that Mr. Harbert be sentenced as an armed career criminal under ACCA
because he had three previous convictions that required an enhanced sentence—two Oklahoma
convictions for possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance and one conviction for
Oklahoma first-degree robbery in 1995. See § 924(e)(1) (“In the case of a person who violates
section 922(g) . . . and has three previous convictions . . . for a violent felony or a serious drug
offense, . . . such person shall be . . . imprisoned not less than fifteen years”).¹ The district court
overruled Mr. Harbert’s objection that the 1995 Oklahoma robbery conviction was not a “violent
felony,” and sentenced him to 188 months’ imprisonment, followed by a five-year term of
supervised release. This appeal followed.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

“We review de novo whether a defendant’s prior conviction qualifies as a violent felony under the ACCA.” *United States v. Ridens*, 792 F.3d 1270, 1272 (10th Cir. 2015) (internal quotation marks omitted). 1 There is no dispute that Mr. Harbert’s two Oklahoma convictions for possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance are “serious drug offense[s]” that are properly considered as predicate convictions in determining whether Mr. Harbert should be sentenced under ACCA. See 18 U.S.C. § 924(e)(1). 2

ANALYSIS

The issue on appeal is whether Mr. Harbert’s Oklahoma first-degree robbery conviction is a “violent felony” under ACCA’s elements clause. See § 924(e)(2)(B)(i) (A violent felony is “any crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year” that “has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person of another.”). We apply the categorical approach, “[t]o determine if a prior conviction qualifies as a violent felony under the ACCA.” *United States v. Harris*, 844 F.3d 1260, 1263 (10th Cir. 2017), cert. denied, 138 S.Ct. 1438 (2018). Under the categorical approach, “a state offense is a categorical match with a generic federal offense only if a conviction of the state offense necessarily involved facts equating to the generic federal offense.” *Moncrieffe v. Holder*, 569 U.S. 184, 190 (2013) (brackets, ellipses, and internal quotation marks omitted). In other words, to qualify as a “violent felony” under ACCA, Oklahoma’s 1995 first-degree robbery statute must have as an element, the “use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person of another.” § 924(e)(2)(B)(i). In turn, physical force under ACCA “means violent force—that is, force capable of causing physical pain or injury to another person.” *Johnson v. United States*, 559 U.S. 133, 140 (2010).

According to Mr. Harbert, Oklahoma’s 1995 first-degree robbery statute did not have as an element the “violent force” required under *Johnson* to qualify as a “violent felony.” Specifically, Mr. Harbert argues that “[t]he only force that was 3 necessary to commit Oklahoma first-degree robbery in 1995 was force sufficient to overcome the victim’s resistance to the taking. So long as the force overcame the victim’s resistance, the degree of force was ‘immaterial.’” *Aplt. Opening Br.* at 1 (emphasis added). We agree with the government that Mr. Harbert’s argument is foreclosed by the Supreme Court’s recent decision in *Stokeling v. United States*, --- U.S. ---, 139 S. Ct. 544 (2019). “[P]hysical force,’ or ‘force capable of causing physical pain or injury’ includes the amount of force necessary to overcome a victim’s resistance.” *Id.* at 555 (citation omitted). Therefore, “[c]onstruing the language of the elements clause in light of the history of ACCA and our opinion in *Johnson* . . . , we conclude that the elements clause encompasses robbery offenses that require the criminal to overcome the victim’s resistance.” *Id.* at 550.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Harbert’s sentence is affirmed. We grant Mr. Harbert’s motion to submit the case on the briefs. Entered for the Court Carolyn B. McHugh Circuit Judge 4

