

NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION

To be cited only in accordance with Fed. R. App. P. 32.1

United States Court of Appeals

For the Seventh Circuit

Chicago, Illinois 60604

Argued September 30, 2025

Decided October 17, 2025

Before

MICHAEL Y. SCUDDER, *Circuit Judge*

AMY J. ST. EVE, *Circuit Judge*

NANCY L. MALDONADO, *Circuit Judge*

Nos. 24-2560 & 24-2561

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

ARTHUR RUNNELS,
Defendant-Appellant.

Appeals from the United
States District Court for
the Southern District of Illinois.

Nos. 3:05-cr-30184-DWD-1
3:23-cr-30136-DWD-1

David W. Dugan,
Judge.

ORDER

In 2023, federal authorities arrested Arthur Runnels for possessing and distributing cocaine and possessing a firearm as a felon. The arrest occurred while Runnels was on supervised release. In a consolidated hearing, the district court sentenced him to 90 months' imprisonment for those new offenses and to a consecutive term of 57 months for violating his supervised release conditions. On appeal, Runnels argues that the district court failed to adequately justify the 90-month sentence, which was above the advisory range of the Sentencing Guidelines, and, in his view, also substantively unreasonable. Seeing no error, we affirm.

I

In 2023, as part of a Drug Enforcement Agency investigation, federal authorities arrested Runnels while he was out of prison on supervised release. Officers found ammunition, a handgun, 746 grams of cocaine, and a digital scale with cocaine residue in the home he shared with his fiancée and their young child. A federal grand jury indicted Runnels with two counts of distributing cocaine, one count of possessing with intent to distribute cocaine, and one count of possessing a firearm as a felon. Runnels pleaded guilty to the charges.

A probation officer then prepared a Presentence Investigation Report. The PSR's analysis yielded a guidelines range of 57–71 months. Because the statutory minimum sentence of 60 months for his cocaine conviction was greater than the minimum of the applicable guidelines ranges, see 21 U.S.C. § 841(b)(1)(B)(ii), the PSR set Runnels's advisory guidelines range at 60–71 months.

At sentencing, the district court adopted the PSR, including its 60–71 month advisory guidelines range. After hearing the arguments of both sides and Runnels's own allocution, the district court turned to the sentencing factors, weighing Runnels's history and characteristics, the seriousness of the offense, deterrence, and respect for the law.

The district court concluded that the advisory range did not adequately account for Runnels's criminal history. The district court explained that Runnels's older convictions fell outside the guidelines calculation because they “aged out” while he was in prison and did not necessarily reflect rehabilitation. The district court sentenced Runnels to 57 months for violating the terms of his supervised release. The district court then sentenced Runnels to 90 months on each of the four criminal counts to run concurrently with each other and consecutively to the 57-month revocation sentence.

II

Runnels appeals both sentences, but his brief addresses only the 90-month sentence for his new convictions. So we focus our analysis only on that sentence.

We first review a district court's sentencing determination for procedural error, including any failure to calculate the guidelines range or failing to adequately explain the chosen sentence. Here, the district court correctly calculated the advisory guideline range, see *Gall v. United States*, 552 U.S. 38, 49–50 (2007), and Runnels does not argue to the contrary. He contends, instead, that the district court failed to explain its reasoning for imposing an above-guidelines sentence.

A district court may impose an above-guidelines sentence if the court considers the factors listed in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a). See *United States v. Snyder*, 635 F.3d 956, 961 (7th Cir. 2011). Here, the district court explained its application of the § 3553(a) factors, connecting four of them to Runnels’s criminal history, the seriousness of the offense, and other aggravating factors. Additionally, the court explained why the advisory range of 60–71 months did not adequately account for Runnels’s lack of rehabilitation, ultimately determining that a longer sentence was needed to deter future misconduct. The district court offered an adequate explanation for the chosen sentence, thereby committing no procedural error.

We review the substantive reasonableness of a sentence for abuse of discretion, considering whether the district judge imposed a sentence for logical reasons consistent with the § 3553(a) factors. See *United States v. Campbell*, 37 F.4th 1345, 1352 (7th Cir. 2022). The district court did so here. The factors the court considered, including Runnels’s repeated offenses, the seriousness of being a “career criminal,” and the circumstances surrounding his conviction—especially the fact that there was a toddler within the home where authorities found the cocaine and a gun—are logically connected to and consistent with the § 3553(a) factors.

The district court also explained that the advisory range did not adequately account for Runnels’s prior criminal convictions because, although some of them were old or were misdemeanors, discounting a large number of convictions underrepresented his actual criminal history. In its final analysis, the district court concluded that a within-guidelines sentence would not reflect the seriousness of the crime, adequately deter Runnels, or protect the public. See *United States v. Bridgewater*, 950 F.3d 928, 936–38 (7th Cir. 2020). The district court’s justifications were proportionate to the degree of variance from the guideline range, and therefore sufficient to support the reasonableness of the above-guidelines sentence. See *United States v. Wood*, 31 F.4th 593, 600 (7th Cir. 2022).

Runnels maintains that the court undervalued his potential for rehabilitation. Here, too, we disagree, as the district court has broad discretion to weigh both aggravating and mitigating factors. See *United States v. Cook*, 108 F.4th 574, 586 (7th Cir. 2024). His disagreement with how the district court balanced these factors does not make a sentence substantively unreasonable. See *United States v. Hatch*, 909 F.3d 872, 875 (7th Cir. 2018).

For these reasons, we AFFIRM.