

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

In the
United States Court of Appeals
For the Eleventh Circuit

No. 25-13911
Non-Argument Calendar

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

versus

CHRISTOPHER RASHAWN LEWIS,

Defendant-Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Southern District of Alabama
D.C. Docket No. 2:18-cr-00206-TFM-N-1

Before ROSENBAUM, GRANT, and LUCK, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:

Christopher Rashawn Lewis, a felon on supervised release after serving his prison sentence, violated his supervised-release terms by testing positive for drugs and by breaking his girlfriend's

nose. The district court revoked Lewis's supervised release and sentenced him to twenty-four months' imprisonment. Lewis appeals the sentence, arguing it was substantively unreasonable. After careful review, we affirm.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Lewis pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of a firearm as a convicted felon. 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1). He was sentenced to forty-six months' imprisonment and three years' supervised release. About four months before the end of Lewis's supervised release, the district court learned that Lewis had tested positive for using marijuana, methamphetamine, and amphetamine, and admitted to using marijuana and ecstasy. The district court didn't revoke Lewis's supervised release for that violation.

Less than two weeks before the end of his supervised-release term, Lewis's girlfriend left several voicemails with his probation officer stating that Lewis hit her in the face and broke her nose. Montgomery police contacted Lewis's girlfriend at her home. She explained she'd had her vehicle towed home after it was involved in a car accident. When the vehicle arrived, she'd given her number to the tow truck driver so he could text her the receipt for the tow. When she walked inside, Lewis "got upset" because she'd given the tow truck driver her phone number. He asked her, "what have I told you about playing with me[?]" and struck her in the face, breaking her nose. He drove her to the emergency room to get treatment for her "heavy nose bleeding" and "significant swelling." By the time the police arrived at his girlfriend's house, Lewis had

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left. Four days later, he reported to the United States Probation Office and admitted to hitting his girlfriend in the face. He also again tested positive for, and admitted to using, marijuana.

The probation office sought a warrant to arrest Lewis and recommended the district court revoke his supervised release. It explained that Lewis had violated the conditions of his supervision by (1) committing “another federal, state, or local crime”—the assault of his girlfriend—and (2) possessing and using “any controlled substance”—the marijuana. Lewis was arrested, waived his right to a hearing on the charges, and admitted to both violations.

For violations of supervised release, the guidelines give sentencing ranges based on the grade of the violation and the defendant’s criminal-history category at the time he was originally sentenced. *See* United States Sentencing Guidelines § 7C1.5 (Nov. 2025). Lewis’s assault on his girlfriend was conduct constituting a crime of violence punishable by more than one year’s imprisonment, making it a grade A violation. *See* Ala. Code § 13A-6-131; U.S.S.G. § 7C1.1(a)(1). Because Lewis had a category-four criminal history, his guideline range was twenty-four to thirty months’ imprisonment. *See* U.S.S.G. § 7C1.5. But because his original firearm-possession offense was a class C felony, 18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g)(1), 924(a)(8), 3559(a)(3), the supervised-release statute capped his sentence at twenty-four months—the low end of the guideline range, *see id.* § 3583(e)(3). So, the guidelines prescribed only one sentence: twenty-four months’ imprisonment.

The district court held a sentencing hearing. Lewis requested that the district court allow him to continue on supervised release, with the added conditions that he “attend mental health counseling, drug abuse counseling, and . . . anger management classes.” Lewis asked the district court to place him in a halfway house after his supervised-release term expired—rather than sentencing him to prison—so that he could continue working. Lewis explained that he’d “not been doing very well emotionally” because several of his immediate family members had recently died. He told the district court that he’d apologized to his girlfriend, that she was “willing to continue to work with him,” and that they’d spoken every day since the assault had occurred. And Lewis informed the district court that he had been working to support his family—remodeling homes as part of his cousin’s construction business and working part-time at Walmart.

The government observed that “it’s obviously quite serious if you hit someone in the face hard enough to break her nose” and told the district court that “incarceration [wa]s warranted and necessary” for Lewis. It recommended a prison sentence of twelve months and a day.

The district court revoked Lewis’s supervised release and sentenced him to twenty-four months’ imprisonment. The district court explained that “all the conditions of supervision” were “important,” but that it placed “particular importance and emphasis” on “violations which put other people at risk of harm, particularly

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innocent taxpaying, law-abiding people and the property of others.” The district court observed that Lewis himself “could have been killed” in the altercation with his girlfriend, or “[s]he could have been killed.” And the district court explained that “domestic violence calls” were among “[t]he biggest killers of law enforcement officers every year,” so “when someone under supervision g[ot] involved in a serious domestic violence situation,” the district court “ha[d] to take that seriously.”

STANDARD OF REVIEW

We review for abuse of discretion the substantive reasonableness of a district court’s sentence. *United States v. Trailer*, 827 F.3d 933, 935 (11th Cir. 2016). “The party challenging the sentence bears the burden of showing that it is unreasonable.” *Id.* at 936.

DISCUSSION

Lewis contends that his sentence is substantively unreasonable. It is not.

If a defendant violates a condition of his supervised release, then the district court may revoke the supervised release and impose a prison sentence equal to or less than the duration authorized for the underlying offense. 18 U.S.C. § 3583(e)(3). To determine whether a prison sentence is appropriate, the district court must consider some—but not all—of the sentencing factors in 18 U.S.C. section 3553(a). Specifically, the district court must weigh (1) “the nature and circumstances of the offense” and the defendant’s “history and characteristics”; (2) the need for the sentence to “afford

adequate deterrence,” “protect the public,” and provide the defendant “training, medical care, or other correctional treatment”; (3) the sentencing guidelines; (4) the United States Sentencing Commission’s policy statements; (5) “the need to avoid unwarranted sentence disparities”; and (6) the need for restitution.¹ *Id.* § 3583(e); *id.* § 3553(a)(1), (a)(2)(B)–(D), (a)(4)–(7).

The district court abuses its sentencing discretion if it “(1) fails to afford consideration to relevant factors that were due significant weight, (2) gives significant weight to an improper or irrelevant factor, or (3) commits a clear error of judgment in considering the proper factors.” *United States v. Irey*, 612 F.3d 1160, 1189 (11th Cir. 2010) (en banc). Our review is deferential. We “ordinarily expect a sentence within the guideline[] range to be reasonable.” *United States v. Foster*, 878 F.3d 1297, 1309 (11th Cir. 2018) (citation modified). We’ll reverse only if we’re “left with the definite and firm conviction that the district court committed a clear error of judgment” in weighing the relevant sentencing considerations. *United States v. Pugh*, 515 F.3d 1179, 1191 (11th Cir. 2008).

No clear error of judgment occurred here. The district court appropriately considered the relevant sentencing factors to arrive

¹ Section 3583 does not list, and the district court must not consider, “the need for the sentence imposed . . . to reflect the seriousness of the offense, to promote respect for the law, and to provide just punishment for the offense” or “the kinds of sentences available.” See 18 U.S.C. § 3583(e); *id.* § 3553(a)(2)(A), (a)(3); *Esteras v. United States*, 606 U.S. 185, 197 (2025) (“Text, structure, and precedent all point in the same direction: . . . district courts cannot consider [section] 3553(a)(2)(A) when deciding whether to revoke supervised release.”).

at a reasonable sentence. Because the twenty-four-month prison term was a guideline sentence, we “expect [it] to be reasonable.” *See Foster*, 878 F.3d at 1309. And our review of the sentence confirms that expectation.

The district court emphasized the importance of deterring domestic violence and protecting the public, noting the inherent danger domestic violence poses both to the public and to law enforcement. *See Esteras v. United States*, 606 U.S. 185, 200 (2025) (explaining that “[a] court may consider the nature and circumstances of the offense as relevant for . . . deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation”); 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(2)(B)–(C). Lewis’s assault on his girlfriend was a serious violation and breach of trust. Even had he not been on supervised release, the assault would have been punishable by significant prison time under Alabama law. *See Ala. Code* § 13A-6-131. He left his girlfriend with a bloody, swollen, and broken nose. And especially given the circumstances of the encounter, with Lewis threatening his girlfriend by reminding her of what he’d told her “about playing with [him],” the district court wasn’t wrong to suggest that the confrontation could have escalated and Lewis or his girlfriend “could have been killed.”

Furthermore, the district court had already given Lewis a second chance by overlooking his earlier violations of his supervised-release conditions when he possessed and used controlled substances, including marijuana and methamphetamine. When Lewis again violated his supervised-release conditions by using

drugs, it was reasonable for the district court to conclude that incarceration was required to deter future violations.

In addition to deterrence and public protection, the district court “considered the Chapter [Seven] provisions,” which contain the Sentencing Commission’s policy statements and guidelines for revocation of supervised release, and deemed the guidelines “appropriate” for Lewis. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(4)–(5). Considering the seriousness of Lewis’s offense, his criminal history at sentencing, and his previous unpunished violations of his conditions, *United States v. King*, 57 F.4th 1334, 1338 (11th Cir. 2023) (“Whether the applicable [section] 3553(a) factors justify a variance is a discretionary call.”), the district court did not abuse its discretion by imposing a guideline sentence.

Lewis offers four arguments in response. First, he contends that the district court did not give “meaningful weight” to his mitigation evidence. He points to the circumstances he raised in the district court—that he accepted responsibility, that the assault was an isolated incident at a stressful time in his life, and that his girlfriend hadn’t advocated for a prison sentence. Because the district court “impos[ed] the harshest possible sentence” and didn’t discuss his mitigation, he says, it must have “treated the maximum sentence as the default outcome rather than the most severe option reserved for the most aggravated cases.”

The problem for Lewis is that his case was an aggravated violation of supervised-release conditions. His assault of his girlfriend wasn’t only a breach of his supervised-release conditions. It

was “conduct constituting” a felony, and thus a grade A supervised-release violation—the highest grade recognized by the guidelines. And his criminal history category—four out of a possible six—was another aggravating factor. Put together, these two facts resulted in a guideline range that was almost entirely above the statutory maximum sentence.

And the district court didn’t just defer to the default. At the beginning of the hearing, the district court invited Lewis to share “anything [he] want[ed] [it] to consider” before sentencing him. It listened while Lewis presented the mitigating circumstances in his case. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(1). The fact that it didn’t choose to discuss Lewis’s mitigating evidence on the record “does not indicate that [it] erroneously ignored or failed to consider the evidence.” *United States v. Butler*, 39 F.4th 1349, 1356 (11th Cir. 2022) (citation modified). In the end, the district court simply concluded that the mitigating evidence didn’t outweigh the need to protect the public and deter future instances of domestic violence. We “will not second guess the weight (or lack thereof) that the judge accorded to a given [section 3553(a)] factor . . . as long as the sentence ultimately imposed is reasonable in light of all the circumstances presented.” *United States v. Snipes*, 611 F.3d 855, 872 (11th Cir. 2010) (citation modified). And as we explained, giving Lewis a guideline sentence wasn’t unreasonable.

Second, Lewis argues that his sentence didn’t “reflect the purposes of supervised release” because it was too punitive. As Lewis points out, district courts may consider only the forward-

looking purposes of sentencing—deterrence, protection of the public, and rehabilitation—and not the backward-looking purpose—retribution. He faults the district court for rejecting his proposal of a halfway house, which he says would have offered him a better chance of rehabilitation. But rehabilitation was not the only sentencing objective that the district court’s sentence had to advance. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(2)(B)–(C); *Esteras*, 606 U.S. at 200. Lewis had repeatedly possessed and used controlled substances and had assaulted his girlfriend, causing her serious physical harm—all while under federal supervision. It was not unreasonable for the district court to conclude that a stint in a halfway house wouldn’t sufficiently protect the public or deter Lewis from future violations.

Third, Lewis asserts that “the government itself requested a far lower term of imprisonment” than the district court imposed, and the “unexplained divergence” demonstrates that the sentence is unreasonable. But, as Lewis acknowledges, the district court “was not obligated to follow the government’s request.” *See* Fed. R. Crim. P. 11(c)(1)(B). *Smith v. United States*, 670 F.2d 145, 147 (11th Cir. 1982) (“Sentencing recommendations by the prosecution are just that, recommendations, which may be considered by, but cannot be made binding on, the [district] judge.”). By that token, the fact that the government proposed a lesser sentence does not show that the district court’s choice was substantively unreasonable.

Fourth and finally, Lewis maintains that the district court explained its sentence not by “grounding its decision in the specific facts” of Lewis’s case, but by “invoking generalized concerns about domestic violence, hypothetical future harm, and an unrelated anecdotal example.” But Lewis is wrong. The district court explicitly referenced the facts of Lewis’s case, explaining that it “d[idn’t] know what possessed [him] to hit [his] girlfriend” but it was the kind of “violent behavior” that could have escalated into Lewis or his girlfriend being killed. To the extent that the district court discussed the danger that domestic violence posed in general, it was appropriate for it to do so in assessing the need for “adequate deterrence” and “to protect the public.” 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(2); *see Irey*, 612 F.3d at 1210–11 (evaluating the needs for deterrence and public protection in a child pornographer’s sentence by considering the seriousness of child pornography crimes in general).

AFFIRMED.