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THE DEPUTY CLERK: Counsel, please state your appearance for the record.

MR. RAVI: Good morning, your Honor. Sagar Ravi for the United States.

THE COURT: Good morning, Mr. Ravi.

MR. ERKAN: Good morning, again. Your Honor, my name is Attorney Murat Erkan for defendant.

THE COURT: Good morning, Mr. Erkan. And good morning to you, Mr. Zorilla.

THE DEFENDANT: Good morning, sir.

THE COURT: And I'll note for the record that Mr. Zorrilla is assisted today by a court-certified Spanish translator.

Mr. Zorrilla, if at any point you can't hear or understand, will you please raise your hand and get my attention.

Will you agree to do that?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE COURT: Very good.

Good morning as well to the members of the public who are here.

I take it, Mr. Erkan, these are friends and family members of your client?

MR. ERKAN: That is correct, your Honor.

THE COURT: Very good. You may all be seated.

MR. ERKAN: Thank you, your Honor.

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THE COURT: We are here today to impose sentence in the case of United States v. Juan Arturo Zorrilla.

On June 28 of this year, Mr. Zorrilla pled guilty to Count One which charges him with participating in a conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 400 grams and more of fentanyl.

In preparation for today's proceeding, I've reviewed the plea agreement and the transcript of the plea proceedings.

I've also reviewed the presentence report which is dated

September 17, including its recommendation and addendum.

I've also received and reviewed the following additional submissions:

First, the defense's sentencing submission dated October 24; second, the government's sentencing submission dated October 29.

Have the parties received each of these submissions?

MR. RAVI: Yes, your Honor.

MR. ERKAN: Yes, your Honor.

THE COURT: Has anything else been submitted?

MR. RAVI: No, your Honor.

MR. ERKAN: Your Honor, there was simply also the agreement regarding forfeiture of money.

THE COURT: Yes. Quite right. Thank you very much.

I should have mentioned that, that I've received this morning a consent preliminary order of forfeiture, and I'm signing it right now.

Other than that, I take it there is nothing else that has been received?

MR. ERKAN: No, your Honor.

THE COURT: I'm signing that. We'll get to that in a little bit.

Mr. Erkan, have you reviewed the presentence report?

MR. ERKAN: Yes, your Honor.

THE COURT: Have you discussed it with your client?

MR. ERKAN: I have, your Honor.

THE COURT: Mr. Zorrilla, have you read the

presentence report?

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THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE COURT: It's been translated to you?

17 THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.

18 | THE COURT: Have you discussed it with your counsel?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE COURT: Have you had the opportunity to go over with Mr. Erkan any errors in the report or anything else that should be taken up with the Court?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.

THE COURT: Mr. Ravi, have you reviewed the

25 presentence report?

1 MR. RAVI: Yes, your Honor.

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THE COURT: All right. Putting aside for just a moment the sentencing guidelines, does anyone have any objections to the report regarding its factual accuracy?

MR. RAVI: No, your Honor.

MR. ERKAN: No, your Honor.

THE COURT: Then hearing no objections, I will adopt the factual recitations set forth in the presentence report.

The presentence report will be made a part of the record in this matter.

It will be placed under seal. In the event an appeal is taken, counsel on appeal may have access to the sealed report without further application to this Court.

Thank you again for filing your sentencing submissions.

Now I'm going to turn to the sentencing guidelines.

The Court is no longer required to follow the sentencing guidelines, but I am required to consider the applicable guidelines in imposing sentence.

To do so, it's necessary that the Court accurately calculate the guidelines sentencing range. In this case, there was a plea agreement in which the parties stipulated to a particular calculation of the sentencing guidelines.

Counsel, am I correct that the calculation in the presentence report is in accord with your agreement?

MR. RAVI: Yes, your Honor.

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MR. ERKAN: Yes, your Honor.

THE COURT: Then based on the parties' agreement and the absence of objection and my independent evaluation of how the guidelines apply here, I accept the guideline calculation in the presentence report. I find that the offense level is 25, the criminal history category is I, and the guideline range is between 57 and 71 months' imprisonment.

The next subject I need to cover is departures which is to say within the sentencing guideline framework. In the plea agreement, both parties agreed that neither an upward nor a downward departure, again, within the guidelines framework, was merited.

Having reviewed the presentence report and the parties' submissions, I share that conclusion. I find that no departure is available as a matter of law. Of course, that does not preclude any party from seeking a variance, and I note that the defense seeks one here.

Does the government wish to be heard with respect to sentence?

MR. RAVI: Yes, your Honor. The government is seeking a guideline sentence here which is driven, in large part, by the seriousness of the offense and the need for general deterrence and, to a lesser degree, the need for specific deterrence as laid out in the government's submission.

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I just want to emphasize a few things to your Honor. The first is that the drug here is extremely dangerous. Fentanyl has been ravaging communities, as I'm sure the Court is aware, and is one of the most dangerous drugs out there right now. This defendant was involved in distributing large quantities of it.

Importantly, this wasn't, as in some drug cases I know the Court has seen, a one-time transaction that the government has produced evidence of. This is a defendant who was involved in multiple transactions over the course of two months which, by the way, is half the amount of time he has been in the United States before he was arrested.

So the majority, or at least half the majority of the time, half of the time he was here, he was engaged in fentanyl distribution.

THE COURT: Is there any evidence how he came to get involved? In other words, you have an undercover who catches him in the act.

As of that point, did you have any understanding of how he came to be here?

There is something in the sentencing record that said

I think his wife said he had the money. So it wasn't a matter

of economic need.

Did he come here to deal drugs?

MR. RAVI: We don't have any evidence that he came

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here with the intention of dealing drugs. But the evidence does suggest that sort of within two months of him being here, he was heavily involved in this.

Again, that's only the evidence that the government has been able to identify. Within two months, he was here.

And he was involved in distributing this fentanyl.

THE COURT: The defense submission suggests that he couldn't get a job. So he turned to the black market, the illegal market, in order to augment his income.

MR. RAVI: I hear that argument, your Honor.

THE COURT: It doesn't make it good. But I'm just trying to understand the roots of how this came to be.

MR. RAVI: I don't know exactly the roots, your Honor. The argument defense counsel makes I think is a flawed one. There are multiple opportunities available for off-the-books employment, should the defendant seek to do so. Here he chose to engage in --

THE COURT: No question. I'm merely trying to smoke out whether there is any reason to think he had been involved in the drug trade before getting here as opposed to making that decision once here on account of a lack of money.

MR. RAVI: And the government does not have any evidence suggesting he came here to deal in narcotics. But certainly once he got here, he was engaged in narcotics. And even though he may not have been able to get other employment,

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I'm trying to figure out why on the record exactly he was not able to get a work permit.

THE COURT: He was here on a tourist visa I think it said?

MR. RAVI: Yes.

THE COURT: So if you're here on a tourist visa, what are you doing working anyway? I'm not sure how germane all this is, but I was a little confused by that.

If he's here as a tourist, isn't he apt to leave soon as opposed to getting employment?

MR. RAVI: I agree, your Honor. So clearly there was some sort of a misrepresentation as to at least what he was doing or why he came here.

THE COURT: There is something confusing.

Defense counsel, when it becomes your turn, be prepared to address that.

MR. RAVI: Either way, certainly there are many people in this country who are not able to work legally, but they're able to find jobs off the books. Many of those do not involve illegal drugs or drugs as dangerous as fentanyl.

Yet this defendant chose to do so. As opposed to seeking other off-the-books employment, although technically illegal, it is not the kind of serious criminal conduct that folks who otherwise can't get employment might have done. So the defendant made a choice to engage in this, and he did it on

1 | multiple occasions.

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THE COURT: How many? Three or four different sales in the springtime?

MR. RAVI: Yes, your Honor. Those are only the ones we're aware of through undercover purchases. The image of this case that the Court should be left with is when the defendant was arrested, he was found at a table where he was covered with 2,000 fentanyl pills. This is the same apartment where he lived with his girlfriend and fiance, as well as her two children.

Not only was this out in the open and obviously a big part of what he was doing in that apartment, there was also a pill press there which again suggests his familiarity with how to make pills and the distribution of those pills.

So I think those are important facts for the Court to consider in fashioning an appropriate sentence.

THE COURT: May I ask you: I think the probation department says he's going to get deported anyway. So there is no need for an ensuing supervised release term.

Do you agree with that?

MR. RAVI: I'm not sure I agree with that, your Honor. I don't think anyone can predict with certainty what's going to happen with the defendant.

I know there is a detainer that's been put in place. I've certainly seen situations where the defendant -- they

can't get a travel document to deport the defendant. They can't get other things in place to deport someone.

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And, therefore, due to the limitations on how long they can hold someone, they may be granted bail or otherwise. I think in such a circumstance, supervised release should be put in place.

THE COURT: Just to cover that eventuality.

MR. RAVI: Yes. Obviously if he's deported, he's not going to be supervised in any event.

For those reasons, your Honor, particularly for the need to send a message that dealing with fentanyl, distributing fentanyl is an extremely dangerous drug -- folks out there who are considering that conduct should know that they will face serious consequences.

For all those reasons, your Honor, the government seeks a guideline sentence.

THE COURT: One moment. Thank you.

Mr. Erkan, do you wish to be heard?

MR. ERKAN: I do, your Honor. Thank you, your Honor.

Just to address the question that the Court asked in speaking with the United States attorney regarding my client's circumstances of his arrival in this country, there are different obviously mechanisms to arrive here.

An individual who wishes to reside in this country can, under certain circumstances, obtain lawful permanent

resident status through family relationships, sufficient evidence of support, and things of that nature.

My client was not able to, at the time he arrived in this country, obtain resident status. What he did was he obtained a visa. What he then did --

THE COURT: It's a tourist visa?

MR. ERKAN: A tourist visa.

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THE COURT: How long did it empower him to stay here?

MR. ERKAN: Six months, your Honor, after which he was required to leave the country. And then he would be permitted, under that same visa, to reenter the country for a period of ten years in total with no resident status — in other words, he would not be permitted to live here — and no permission to work at all.

I think to be as clear as possible, what his hope was was that upon his arrival in this country, marrying with his wife, Ms. Reyna, that he would file for an adjustment of status which is routinely granted for individuals who arrive on a nonimmigrant visa.

THE COURT: What country is she a citizen of?

MR. ERKAN: The United States of America.

THE COURT: I see. What will happen after she is deported? Will she stay here?

MR. ERKAN: She will remain here with her two
United States citizen children, your Honor, who are here in

1 court.

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So to sum up the answer to the Court's question, my client entered the country lawfully. His intention was to seek an immigrant visa while he was present here in the United States in the form of a green card but was unable to do so.

THE COURT: So help me with the motive here. In other words, there is something in the sentencing submissions that suggested that his fiance says, in effect, there was no economic need to do this. There was money. This is not a desperation situation.

Why get involved in the fentanyl trade?

MR. ERKAN: Sure, your Honor. The comments of my client's wife I think are more along the lines of why didn't he ask for help. Why didn't he agree to show himself as vulnerable, in a tough spot, and ask everybody to help him.

The reality is when my client came to the United States, he came as a boy and was starting his life as a man.

THE COURT: I'm sorry. How old was he when he came to the United States?

MR. ERKAN: Twenty-seven years old.

THE COURT: When you say he came as a boy, are you referring to some earlier visit?

MR. ERKAN: No, your Honor. Not speaking as in a

little sense. He had not yet become an adult with all of its trappings in the sense of being married, in the sense of having children.

So he was with his folks in the Dominican Republic, and then he met Ms. Reyna when she traveled to the Dominican Republic. The two became acquainted. They fell in love. He then came to the United States with the hopes of marrying her and staying here.

I think the court is also aware, from a prior relationship which had ended several months before, the defendant was expecting to become a first-time father. And he indeed did become a first-time father to a United States citizen child who was born 14 days before he was arrested in this case.

I want to be careful about the line I'm walking here, your Honor. Mr. Zorrilla doesn't seek to excuse what he did. He knows he's here to be punished because he made a mistake. What I simply wish to do is explain the circumstances under which he found himself now standing before you for sentencing.

And those circumstances included, in his view, his responsibility now as a man to be a man and to support the child that he brought into this world and to bring money to the table in order to help support his family.

His wife is a speech pathologist. She has two children that depend on him. He has his own child that he's

bringing into this world. He felt a human need to contribute, to be of value, to elevate those in his life.

And he chose so poorly, your Honor, in what it is that he did. When he came to this country, I don't think he understood that he would not be able to find legitimate employment.

When I say "legitimate," on the books, paying taxes, doing-things-by-the-book employment when he came here because he couldn't get a work permit.

So other opportunities might have existed. That's clear. He chose the wrong opportunity. And for that, he must be published. So he recognizes all of that.

He didn't come here to break the law, your Honor. He came here to start his family. He had a child that was going to be living here. He has a wife that was a citizen here who was residing right here in the Bronx and two children that he wanted to become the father figure for. That was the impetus for the mistake that requires his sentencing in this case.

Your Honor, in considering Mr. Ravi's sentencing submission and his argument before the Court, I recognize the theme that is articulated in support of his position.

It is a theme that I have heard hundreds of times. I myself articulated it when I was a prosecutor, now appearing on this side in a defense practice, the need for sending a message and for deterring others for committing the same offense.

Your Honor, in paragraph C of the government's sentencing memoranda, the government references that over the last 15 years, more than half a million people in this country have died from drug overdoses.

This is a terrible fact. My client is one of the thousands of individuals who have become caught in that terrible death machine. It's been going on for more than 15 years, your Honor, obviously.

It is consisting of people who have died. There is nothing positive to be said about it. It is an industry that is encompassed by pain at every aspect of it.

It is motivated by people who are in pain and looking for a solution to their pain. It is enabled by people that are experiencing their own pain and then suffering the consequences in the pain of their mistakes.

The solution that the government has employed for the past 15 years is the same solution the government proposes here today — to send a message, to incarcerate, to lock up the people who are accused of and committing these particular offenses.

I ask the Court what has been accomplished in the last 15 years sending that same message. I ask the Court has anything been accomplished at all. I recognize and I understand that the government wishes to solve this problem. We all do.

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What I would ask the Court to consider is that the solution that we propose is not working. It is not working, your Honor. As the government points out in its own memorandum in that same paragraph: "Opioid overdose deaths are increasing at an alarming rate and are ravaging communities throughout the United States."

This is in reference to the most recent iteration of illegal opioids which comes in the form of fentanyl. It is the same language that we are hearing describing different varieties of drugs that people are addicted to and using.

And people are dying. The problem is getting worse. It is not getting better. We have deciding to solve it by just locking people up. And now what we have before the Court, your Honor, is a young man who is a minority who was convicted of a nonviolent offense who is going to add to a prison population which is already bursting at the seams with black and minority individuals.

And I ask the Court to consider, when we are resolving this terrible crisis in this fashion, what are we getting as a result.

If the question is are we deterring the others who might be similarly situated, who might be similarly tempted to make Mr. Zorrilla's mistakes, are we deterring them with the outcome of this case.

I respectfully submit to the Court that my client is

the ultimate cautionary tale when it comes to the terrible cost that a person must pay if they choose to violate the laws as related to the narcotics laws in this country.

He is that cautionary tale today, irrespective of serving any more time in jail at all. And I want to outline sort of all of the reasons why, if I could.

As I pointed out, your Honor, my client was 27 years of age when he committed this offense. He had no record of any kind. He came from a humble background. He came from an intact family. He had that advantage, your Honor. His father worked as a farmhand. His mother, who is here today, was a homemaker.

As a child, my client grew up with good dreams, dreams of contributing and making the world a better place. He wanted to be in the military. He wanted to serve his country.

He wanted to protect people who were maybe less able to protect themselves. You can see that from some of the sentencing submissions. That was important to him. He worked for that dream, and he realized it, your Honor.

He came to this country with the best of intentions. He came here in order to be a present father for his child that would be born a few months after his arrival. He came here to be a present husband and provider for his wife and the two children that were already part of this family, the two children that were already willing to accept him as a father.

He became a member of the local church. He tried to do everything right. His life was just beginning. And as I pointed out, he came here to work. And he made a mistake.

And it was incredibly stupid. And it was incredibly harmful, not just in terms of what direct harm was caused by being in the supply chain of a poison that's killing people in this country, but in terms of the absolute destruction that has been caused to his life.

If one can imagine -- I try to imagine, myself being a father for the first time of a two-year-old, what that would be like, to be with my child for 14 days after that child's birth and then never again outside of a prison setting, your Honor, to miss every milestone that that child has -- the first time the child crawled, the first time the child walked, the first words the child stated, the first smile, the first laugh. All of that he robbed himself of by committing the mistake he committed in this case.

He went to prison two months after marrying the love of his life, his beautiful wife, Jennifer Reyna. He went to prison two months after being called Daddy for the first time by his adopted children who are present in court.

He found himself in prison facing a ten-year mandatory minimum penalty for this mistake, for this very first mistake that he made in an otherwise exemplary life.

Staring down the barrel of that uncertainty,

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your Honor, this is the way that he began navigating this case. He is housed in the MDC Brooklyn facility, your Honor, a truly terrible place.

He has experienced the difficulties that have received some nationwide and perhaps international notoriety as to what was occurring in that facility. He experienced all of that.

At the end of all of this, your Honor, for the \$12,000 in profit that he made when he committed this foolish mistake, the amount that the government has proposed and the defendant agrees fairly represents what he earned during his brief stint in this terrible industry, these are the prices that he's paid, including the ultimate penalty of lifetime banishment from this country pursuant to the laws of the United States.

As the Court is aware, my client is a noncitizen. He faces the most severe penalty permitted under immigration law. The penalty is associated with an aggravated felony conviction.

Those penalties include mandatory deportation for life. So if my client lived to be 100 years old, he would still not be allowed back in this country. He can never become a citizen. He will never be allowed back in once he is deported.

Everything that he lived up to this point to accomplish and to build is forever separated from him. It is gone. His life here — his children that are 7 and 11 years old I believe now who are here in the courtroom; his wife, his

young wife; his child -- he will never be allowed to be in the country that is their home.

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So when we question has he been punished enough, has a message been sent — to the extent that anybody listens to that message at all, to the extent that anybody can chasten from the message that this Court might impart, the defendant is the ultimate cautionary tale for the terrible cost of this mistake.

We don't know how society will be better by incarcerating the defendant. We can only speculate. I submit humbly to the Court that there is nothing to be gained by even one more day in jail.

THE COURT: Your sentencing submission recommends a 30-month sentence.

MR. ERKAN: It does, your Honor.

THE COURT: How do I square that with what you just said to me?

MR. ERKAN: What I attempted to put together in my sentencing submission, your Honor, was a sentence that I considered to be at least reasonable for me to propose. I didn't want to be unreasonable by suggesting anything less than that.

THE COURT: I was just trying to square it.

MR. ERKAN: Of course, your Honor. I wanted to be mindful and respectful of the fact that the Court must consider the sentencing guidelines, must consider the principles that

the government raised in its memo and in its articulated comments to the Court.

THE COURT: Understood.

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MR. ERKAN: I simply speak somewhat rhetorically on the point of what is to be gained further. Perhaps we'll find out as the years go on, your Honor. Perhaps we'll find out.

With respect to what we do know has happened is that in this case I've outlined for you the consequences that my client has borne. He has done everything in his power since his arrest to mitigate the harm of his conduct.

As I've indicated, he's agreed to sign a forfeiture of the estimated proceeds of his illegal activity. He understands that if he ever finds himself of means, he's obligated to pay that money to the Court.

He immediately -- or as quickly as possible and as permitted by his attorney I should say -- after due diligence and review of the discovery in this case and completion of the negotiations, accepted responsibility. That was his intention from the beginning, to accept responsibility for his offense.

While he was incarcerated, your Honor, my client did
the very best he could to make the best use of his time
possible. He informed me that he sought admission to and
participated in the program that I described as Alternatives to
Drug Dealing. He has a certificate amongst the submissions I
provided to the Court which describes his successful completion

of that program.

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I was happy to hear that he did that, your Honor.

That's the first time any of my clients have told me that a program like this existed and that they were able to benefit from it.

I think it's great. I think it's great, and it's exactly like people like him need to do to learn the true thrust of the mistakes that they're making and to learn about the importance of making better choices.

There are choices that don't include the crime that he committed, and he needed to understand that. He sought to improve himself with that knowledge. He participated in the program. He found it to be valuable.

He hopes to utilize the lessons he learned in that program, as well as the lessons he learned through this process, to not just reject the wrong path but to help others to do that as well, your Honor. This is important to him. And he finds himself in a position where he feels able to impart that message, a message that was sorely lacking in his life.

While he was in the facility, your Honor, he worked as a volunteer orderly. I think within my submissions there is a letter from the Bureau of Prisons documenting his employment there. I think that it points out that he was exemplary --

THE COURT: Outstanding.

MR. ERKAN: I think it points out that he didn't just

go in and punch in and punch out with respect to his job. He really applied himself, your Honor. He tried to help others, and he tried to do a good job, and he tried to take pride in what he was doing. He understands the value of hard work and what one can accomplish with it.

What I can also share with the Court, which I also include in my remarks, your Honor, is what we can glean from those who know my client in terms of what he has learned from this experience and the real impact his offense will have on him and those around him for the remainder of their lives.

Your Honor, his wife -- your Honor can see that she acknowledges that he -- my client is the first -- in their private conversations, the first to admit that he made the worst mistake ever in his life. He cries, your Honor, during their visits and talks about how regretful he is.

This is not somebody that is at the last minute putting a venire on what he did for the Court for purposes of leniency. This is a man who, in the most private moments of his life, is seeking forgiveness for the mistakes that he's made.

So the question is is the man deterred. I think the answer is yes. And I think that theme is repeated throughout some of these letters, the sentiment of how he expresses his regret for the crime that he committed, his deep sense of embarrassment. In his own personal letter, he describes that,

1 your Honor.

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His in-laws -- can one imagine. This young man just gets married, and look what he brings to the family, this shame that he brings to the family, your Honor. And still they accept him. Still they understand him.

They understand that he's a human being and he made mistakes, and they have forgiven him. They acknowledge that he apologizes through his tears and expresses how regretful he is.

I think about what an exemplary young man this is, to think about beyond the mistake for which he is being sentenced by the Court, I ask the Court to consider, among the materials submitted, a letter from his elementary teacher.

I don't know how hard I would have to look to get a letter like that. I don't know that I would, your Honor. But this gentleman's elementary teacher points out that she has stayed in touch with him. He's an honest, hardworking, respectful young man. She's never lost ties or communication with him because great people always remember.

We have his mother here whose heart is broken into pieces. We have two children who thought that their family was finally put back together. They welcome the defendant as their father.

We have his background as some would describe him as a hero with respect to his military experience. We have a letter from his eight-year-old niece, your Honor, describing her

feelings of hopelessness without him.

I don't know that I need to say much more, your Honor. What I can say is we don't know how the world will be better by further incarcerating my client. What we do know is that if anybody wants to hear what happened to him, that is a powerful lesson, which are the consequences that he has borne for this offense.

When we ask ourselves has the defendant been chastened and deterred, I think there are pages and pages of letters expressing the theme of remorse and acceptance of responsibility that speak clearer than any words that an attorney can state regarding his acceptance of responsibility.

Will he reoffend after the shame that he has caused, after everything he has lost. This is a man who doesn't want to look backwards. He wants to look forwards. He has a plan when he goes back to his country. He wants to be like his sister. He wants to go to school. He wants to become a lawyer and earn an honest living.

Your Honor, my client is an individual who is chastened and punished. And I simply request that the Court consider the information which I've been able to provide.

The mother and his family have put together and expressed what a beautiful human being he is, a man who is deserving of the judgment of this Court, the punishment of this Court, but also the compassion of this Court.

And I ask the Court to sentence my client to the least amount of time that the Court considers to be sufficient but not greater than necessary to achieve the goals of sentencing. Thank you.

THE COURT: All right. Thank you, Mr. Erkan. I should just take a moment and commend you on what is truly an outstanding and very thoughtful and complete sentencing submission.

MR. ERKAN: Thank you, your Honor.

THE COURT: Mr. Zorrilla, do you wish to make a statement?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.

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THE COURT: By all means. Go ahead.

THE DEFENDANT: Good morning, your Honor.

THE COURT: Good morning.

THE DEFENDANT: May God bless you, and may God bless everyone who is present on this beautiful day here.

Your Honor, your Honor, I feel great pain in my soul. I feel very sorry for the pain that I caused my family as a result of my wrongful conduct. I have the desire to have them be in a better financial and social situation. I'm talking to you right now feeling great pain in my soul. I am expressing my remorse and how sorry I am for what I have done.

I apologize, first of all, to God and then to my family who are here present, and then to you, the American

society as a result of my illegal conduct and my negative decision. I have no one else to blame but myself for having made the wrong decision.

The remorse I feel as a result of the mistake I made is something that I cannot stop thinking about every day. I thank God that my thinking is different now so that I can live a healthier, more positive life.

My family -- my father, my mother, my sisters, my wife -- they are in a very sad situation, and they feel a lot of pain as a result of the mistake that I made. I want to confess to you that I feel very ashamed towards them. And that is why I want to apologize to them again.

Your Honor, the time that I spent in prison has given me the space and the time that I needed to reflect on the bad step I took in my life. I do not feel pride in this process because it has been very sad and very bitter for me and my family.

But I confess that I have done very positive things that are going to be good for me in my life. The first one is to look more on God because without him, our lives have no meaning.

And the other one is to value more my family who have shown me through and pure love during this process. I thank them for their support and for never having turned their back on me.

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Your Honor, I would like for you to, before sentencing me, to be as lenient as possible towards me because I have a beautiful family waiting for me. I would like to restate that this process has been very difficult for me because my only daughter has just been born.

Unfortunately, I believe that I have missed one of the most beautiful stages in her life which is for a father to enjoy their child when they're born. It is my hope that, thanks to God and to you, I will be able to make up for that time I lost with my family.

Your Honor, I would like to share with you this thought that I had as I was coming to court. Not everything bad that happens to us in life is the result of deserving it.

Sometimes it's important for bad things and for stumbling moments in our life to occur so that we can grow from them. What is bad is not making a mistake. What is bad is not to learn from the mistakes.

And I do recognize that I made a terrible mistake.

But thanks to God, I have learned my lesson. And I promise to you that I will never again go through a process like this or a similar one.

Your Honor, when I made the decision to come to this country and live with my wife looking for a better life, it was never my thought to come to commit crimes in this country.

It came about suddenly as a result of going through a

difficult financial situation. And I recognize that that was not the right decision. I wish I had thought about it better and not have made that decision because I will be regretful for the rest of my life.

I find myself in one of the worst moments of my life, and I am truly sorry, and I ask for an opportunity. I want to thank you for listening to me. May God bless you.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Zorrilla.

I'm going to take a few moments and collect my thoughts.

MR. ERKAN: Thank you, your Honor.

(Pause)

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THE COURT: Is there any reason why sentence should not now be imposed?

MR. RAVI: No, your Honor.

MR. ERKAN: No, your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. As I have stated and as the lawyers have agreed, the guideline range that applies to this case is between 57 and 71 months' imprisonment.

Under the Supreme Court's decision in the Booker case and the cases that have followed it, the guideline range is only one factor that a court must consider in deciding the appropriate sentence. The Court must also consider the other factors set forth in the sentencing statute, Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 3553(a).

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And these factors include: The nature and circumstances of the offense and the history and characteristics of the defendant; 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; the need for the sentence imposed to afford adequate deterrence to criminal conduct; the need for the sentence imposed to protect the public from further crimes of the defendant; and the need for the sentence imposed to provide the defendant with needed educational or vocational training, medical care, or other correctional treatment in the most effective manner.

The Court is also required to impose a sentence sufficient but not greater than necessary to comply with all of the purposes that I've just summarized. Here, I find that the sentence I'm about to pronounce is sufficient but not greater than necessary to satisfy the purposes of sentencing that I described.

Mr. Zorrilla, I've given a lot of thought and attention to the appropriate sentence in your particular case in light of the Section 3553(a) factors and the appropriate purposes of sentencing as they apply to you, as the statute requires me to do so.

These are my thoughts, and I will try to be fairly orief. The first set of factors I need to consider involves

the seriousness of your offense, the need for the sentence to promote respect for the law, and the need for the sentence to reflect just punishment. In other words, the sentence needs to fit the crime.

Those factors weigh heavily on me here because your crime was a serious one. You participated in a scheme with others to sell pills that contained fentanyl. The scheme was confirmed by a series of purchases made essentially by an undercover officer from you.

And you participated in multiple such transactions spanning May through July of this past year. One of them involved 100 pills. One, 220 pills. Another one was another 100 pills. There was another one that I think was 850 pills.

At the end of all that, your apartment was searched, the apartment that you lived in. And you were basically caught in the act at the table there with the fruits of the drug scheme. You were found at a table with at least 2,000 pills. Nearby was a pill press that was used essentially to take powder and to press it in uniform pill shapes.

So the fact of all those pills there and the pill press indicated that you had every intention to keep on going with this drug distribution process, had you not essentially been apprehended in the act.

This is quite serious for obvious reasons. We are in the middle, as the government rightly pointed out in its

excellent sentencing submission, of a heroin and, in particular, a fentanyl epidemic here that's rampant in this country.

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There are a flood of fentanyl cases in this district and in districts across the country. Fentanyl is a particularly powerful drug. As everyone has pointed out, it has taken guite a number of lives.

Drug use in general but fentanyl in particular -- its use destroys families. It destroys communities. It destroys lives. It promotes addiction. It promotes the use of other drugs. It correlates with violence.

The lawyers have agreed that you are accountable here for between 400 grams and 1.2 kilograms of fentanyl which is not a small amount. It's lost to history what became of the ultimate users of that amount of drugs — whether they died, whether they became homeless or hopeless or their lives spun out of control or somehow, against all odds, it didn't set them back.

It's lost to history what became of any specific individual. But it is certainly safe to say in the aggregate that you did those people no good and, in all likelihood, real harm.

So the first factor here is the biggest one really, which is the gravity of your crime. Under Section 3553(a), I also need to consider the factor of general deterrence.

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And that refers to the need for the sentence that I impose here to send a message to other people that is sufficient to deter them from committing similar such crimes. That factor exists here precisely because this is such a common offense these days. But I think, as Mr. Erkan points out, it doesn't really tell me how long a sentence to impose.

Even a short sentence can have a significant deterrent effect on somebody considering whether or not to commit a crime. And your narrative, what happened to you here, is indeed a cautionary tale.

With or without a long sentence, the separation you're going to experience from your loved ones, in particular, if anyone knew about that, would be very much discouraged from following in your footsteps.

Under Section 3553(a), I need to consider as well the interest in what's called specific deterrence. And that refers to the need for the sentence I impose in this case to get a message across to the particular defendant before me, meaning you, that is sufficient to discourage you from committing a future crime.

I don't assess that interest as particularly profound here really for a few reasons. To begin with, you have no criminal record. I see many cases in which defendants with substantial criminal records who have been prosecuted, convicted, who have spent time in jail turn around after

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they're released from jail and commit a crime and then wind up before me.

In those cases, I'm often forced to conclude that a higher sentence or a substantial sentence is needed to get their attention because somehow or other, those prior brushes with the criminal justice system didn't get their attention and didn't serve as a wake-up call.

In your case, because this is your first offense, that concern doesn't apply as much. It's much more realistic for me to think that this whole bracing experience will be a wake-up call for you, regardless of the length of time after this you've served in jail.

It's also the case, as your counsel, Mr. Erkan, has pointed out, that you have suffered in other ways from this experience. So I have a fair degree of hope that you're not going to commit a crime like this again.

I will also note that this crime was committed in the United States. You are going to be deported at the end of your prison term here. There is no reason to think that you were involved in activity like this in your home country of the Dominican Republic. So the environment that may have been part of why you committed this crime is not one that you're likely to be part of again.

I do have to say that I'm troubled by the fact that you began committing this crime just two months after you

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arrived in this country. You turned to it awfully quickly after apparently failing to get other work. It's not even as clear that you needed the money. Your wife had a solidly paying full-time job.

I am concerned that your turning to this crime as quickly as you did suggests something of a lack of a moral compass on your part. That does give me some concern.

But all in, I don't think a particularly long sentence is needed here to achieve specific deterrence. The main factor pointing towards a longer sentence is the nature of the crime itself.

Finally, under Section 3553(a), I have to consider the interest in the protection of the public. And the issue there is will the public benefit by having you in a place where you can't commit another crime, which is to say federal prison.

There is some degree of a concern there. Again, you committed this crime awfully quickly after failing to get a job in the United States. But I am reasonably persuaded that you have learned your lesson. So I don't think the public has a great deal to fear from you being at liberty. In other words, that factor is present. It's just not as big a deal as the first factor.

So far, I've considered factors that in many cases tend to favor a longer sentence, and a number of them do for you. There are, however, a number of factors that point in the

other direction, that favor you in the sentencing equation. I want to cover them with you now.

To begin with, you accepted responsibility. You did that by pleading guilty, and you did it by pleading guilty relatively quickly in the process. That's important to me.

Under the sentencing guidelines, the fact of the defendant's guilty plea results in a lower recommended sentence, and I want you to know that it was a smart decision you made to plead guilty. Had you not done that, the sentence I would have imposed would have been higher, as would the sentencing guideline range.

The statement that you made to me today also struck me as very authentic and very contrite. You've told me that you learned from your mistakes. You've told me that you've tried to grow from them. You've told me about the shame that you feel towards a number of people, including your family. All of that struck me as very real.

It also impresses me that you've made productive use of your time in the MDC in terms of the certificates you've earned and in terms of the work you've done. All of that suggests an attempt to accept responsibility and put this incident behind you. And your letter to me I thought reflected true and real contrition as well, and I read it with great care.

Under Section 3553(a), I also am required to consider

a defendant's history and his character and his characteristics. At this point, I'm putting aside the offense and focusing on the other parts of your life. And there are a number of very impressive things I learned about you from what I read.

I learned that you went to military school in your home country and that you served honorably in the military.

You graduated as a second lieutenant. You served your country proudly for seven years. Good for you. I'm proud of you for doing that, and you should rightly feel proud of yourself.

I learned that you have a substantial honorable work ethic, including working alongside your father on a farm in your home country. I've learned that you have very substantial family support and a family that believes in you as reflected in the people who are here today.

And in that respect, I benefited from reading each of the detailed letters that I read about you, again, in what I found to be a very effective and thoughtful sentencing submission by Mr. Erkan.

I'm just going to read aloud an excerpt or two. The first letter that I read is from your wife Jennifer. Is she here?

Thank you very much for the beautiful letter you wrote me.

She writes, among other things, that you "have always

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been there for me and my family, willing to lend a hand with everything from fixing a lightbulb to doing home work with our children."

She said you are the first to admit that you made the worst mistake in your life. She says that you cry all the time in your visits. She tells me that you tell her how regretful you are.

She says you are a responsible young man, willing to help others in need with a kind heart. She describes you as a great husband and an amazing father figure to her children.

She says that your children look up to you as a role model.

I also read the letter from your wife's children who are here today.

Thank you for the beautiful letter you two wrote me.

I can see that took a lot of time and thought. I'm proud of
you for writing that letter. You're both beautiful writers
too. So thank you for writing.

They write: "Daddy Arturito is so nice to us. He always made sure dinner was ready when he picked us up from school while mommy worked to pay the bills." They described how happy they were when you got married and what a happy family you were and how happy you make their mother.

Those are beautiful thoughts, and thank you for writing that letter.

I read the letter from your in-laws. They wrote that

you are an amiable character in the family. They describe you as having an amazing heart and always being very kind and being very apologetic and regretful.

I have read all the other letters.

The other people who are here -- did you write letters as well?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

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THE COURT: Thank you very much, all of you, for writing to me today. I don't have the time to read aloud excerpts from all the letters, but please know that they all registered with me, and they painted a very common portrait.

Mr. Zorrilla, on the day that a person is sentenced, it's appropriate that they be viewed in light of the totality of their life's contributions, the good as well as the bad. And I will do that today. These letters are impressive testimonials, and they stand strongly in your favor.

The probation department here has recommended a below-guideline sentence of 24 months' imprisonment. The probation department notes this is your first offense; that you've otherwise displayed a law-abiding lifestyle; that there is no indication of anything like violence on your part ever; that you had productive and honorable military service; that you had the support of family; and that you again accepted responsibility by pleading guilty quickly, which saved the government and the Court resources.

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Like the probation department, I am persuaded that a substantially below-guideline sentence is the just and warranted sentence here. Essentially, for all of those reasons and among other things, I am persuaded that there is a coherent narrative here as to why you are extremely unlikely to commit such an offense again.

It was a terrible decision you made, but it was also apparently a decision that was a product that you found yourself in, in a new country unable to get a job.

For better or worse, you're going to be back in a country in which you have no record of committing such a crime and where it appears you have alternative work opportunities available to you.

That affects my assessment of a number of the sentencing factors here, including the need to protect the public and including the need for specific deterrence.

I'm also mindful that this is a case in which the guidelines are really affected overwhelmingly by drug quantity. You appear to have been a very small player in whatever drug operation you stumbled into here.

I don't see any reason to think that you're going to generate a drug-dealing opportunity again. The fact that you're a first offender, in other words, matters a lot to me here.

After giving the matter a lot of thought, I am

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therefore going to impose a sentence here that is in line with the one recommended by the probation department.

I have considered whether a lesser sentence would accomplish the 3553(a) factors. With regret, I don't think it can. The crime was sufficiently serious that in the end, a sentence below what I'm going to impose I think would undervalue or disserve the interest of my sentence reflecting the seriousness of your crime.

I'm now going to formally state the sentence I intend to impose. The attorneys will have a final opportunity to make legal objections after the sentence is finally imposed.

Mr. Zorrilla, will you please rise.

After assessing the particular facts of this case and the factors under Section 3553(a), including the sentencing guidelines, it is the judgment of the Court that you are to serve a sentence of 24 months' imprisonment in the custody of the Bureau of Prisons to be followed by a period of three years' supervised release.

I'm going to impose the supervised release term purely to cover the eventuality that you're not promptly deported, but I'm doing that essentially for the reason that Mr. Ravi gave, just in case.

It is my expectation that you will in fact be deported and there will not be a need for you to serve supervised release. But just in case, the standard conditions of

supervised release shall apply.

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In addition, you shall be subject to the following mandatory conditions: You shall not commit another federal, state, or local crime.

You shall not illegally possess a controlled substance.

You shall not possess a firearm or destructive device.

And you shall cooperate in the collection of DNA as directed by the probation department.

You must also meet the following special conditions which are the ones set out in the presentence report at pages 19 to 20. I'm going to reproduce them in full.

But in brief, you are required to obey the immigration laws.

And you are required to submit your person, residence, etc., to a search by the probation officer on the premise that they have a reasonable basis to believe you may be violating a term of supervised release.

I'm doing that, frankly, for your own good and for the good of society. You may be tempted, if you're on supervised release, to commit another crime. I want you to know that the probation department has its eyes on you.

So if you're ever tempted to make a mistake again, you'll know that they can, to the greatest extent possible, to see what you are doing. And if that stays your hand and leads

you not to commit another crime, it will be all to the good to you and to the rest of us.

I have the legal authority to impose a fine. I'm not going to do so. I'm persuaded that you don't have the ability to pay one.

I've signed the forfeiture order which I find well warranted. I am required to impose a mandatory special assessment of \$100 which shall be due immediately. Restitution is not an issue in this case.

Does either counsel know of any legal reason why this sentence shall not be imposed as stated?

MR. RAVI: No, your Honor.

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MR. ERKAN: No, your Honor.

THE COURT: The sentence as stated is imposed.

Are there any open counts, Mr. Ravi?

MR. RAVI: There are not.

THE COURT: Mr. Zorrilla, to the extent you haven't given up your right to appeal your conviction and your sentence through your plea agreement and the plea agreement you've entered into with the government, you have the right to appeal those things, your conviction and your sentence.

If you're unable to pay for the costs of an appeal, you may apply for leave to appeal in forma pauperis. The notice of appeal must be filed within 14 days of the judgment of conviction.

Defense counsel, how long has your client been in custody?

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MR. ERKAN: I don't have the exact day count, your Honor. I apologize. He's been in custody for 15 months.

THE COURT: Do you want me to make a recommendation to the Bureau of Prisons as to where he should serve the balance of his term?

MR. ERKAN: Please, your Honor. I would request that the Court recommend that he be placed as close as possible to Bronx, New York.

THE COURT: I'll be happy to do that.

Mr. Smallman tells me that the defendant began in custody in July of 2018. So, indeed, 15 plus months.

By the way, I think I misspoke earlier when I said that the drug sales in this case were in 2019. I recognize that they were in 2018.

MR. ERKAN: Yes, your Honor.

THE COURT: I'll make a recommendation that he be assigned to a facility as close as possible to the Bronx, New York.

Is there anything further from the government?

MR. RAVI: Nothing further.

THE COURT: Anything further from the defense?

MR. ERKAN: Thank you, your Honor. Nothing further.

THE COURT: Mr. Zorrilla, I wish you the very, very

best. I regret that you made this mistake and that it will cause all the tumult it is causing to your family. There is a lot to admire about you, and I hope that you will be guided by those better angels as you move forward in your life.

To your family, thank you for being here today, and thank you for participating in the way that you did. We stand adjourned.

(Adjourned)