

UNPUBLISHED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

No. 24-4405

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff - Appellee,

v.

LITEEF HUGHES,

Defendant - Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia, at Beckley. Frank W. Volk, Chief District Judge. (5:22-cr-00105-1)

Submitted: February 20, 2025

Decided: February 25, 2025

Before AGEE, HARRIS, and RUSHING, Circuit Judges.

Affirmed in part and dismissed in part by unpublished per curiam opinion.

ON BRIEF: Wesley P. Page, Federal Public Defender, Clint Carte, Assistant Federal Public Defender, Jonathan D. Byrne, OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER, Charleston, West Virginia, for Appellant. Timothy Doyle Boggess, Assistant United States Attorney, OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, Beckley, West Virginia, for Appellee.

Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Lifteef Hughes pled guilty to distribution of cocaine base, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1). The district court sentenced Hughes below the advisory Sentencing Guidelines range to 96 months of imprisonment followed by a three-year term of supervised release. On appeal, Hughes' attorney has filed a brief pursuant to *Anders v. California*, 386 U.S. 738 (1967), stating that there are no meritorious grounds for appeal but questioning the reasonableness of Hughes' sentence. Hughes was informed of his right to file a pro se supplemental brief, but he has not done so. The Government has moved to dismiss the appeal pursuant to the appellate waiver included in Hughes' plea agreement. We affirm in part and grant the Government's motion and dismiss in part.

Hughes's waiver of appellate rights does not prevent our review of the validity of the plea itself. *See United States v. McCoy*, 895 F.3d 358, 364 (4th Cir. 2018). We therefore deny, in part, the Government's motion to dismiss and review the adequacy of the Fed. R. Crim. P. 11 plea colloquy for plain error. *See United States v. Williams*, 811 F.3d 621, 622 (4th Cir. 2016) (stating standard of review); *see also Henderson v. United States*, 568 U.S. 266, 272 (2013) (describing plain error standard). Before accepting a guilty plea, the district court must conduct a plea colloquy in which it informs the defendant of, and determines that the defendant understands, the rights he is relinquishing by pleading guilty, the nature of the charge to which he is pleading, and the applicable maximum and mandatory minimum penalties he faces. Fed. R. Crim. P. 11(b)(1); *United States v. DeFusco*, 949 F.2d 114, 116 (4th Cir. 1991). The district court also must ensure that the plea was voluntary and not the result of threats, force, or promises not contained in the plea

agreement, Fed. R. Crim. P. 11(b)(2), and “that there is a factual basis for the plea,” Fed. R. Crim. P. 11(b)(3). Here, the district court conducted a thorough and complete Rule 11 hearing. We therefore conclude that Hughes entered his plea knowingly and voluntarily, and that a factual basis supported the plea.

With respect to Hughes’s waiver of his appellate rights, “[w]e review an appellate waiver de novo to determine whether the waiver is enforceable” and “will enforce the waiver if it is valid and if the issue being appealed falls within the scope of the waiver.” *United States v. Boutcher*, 998 F.3d 603, 608 (4th Cir. 2021) (internal quotation marks omitted). An appellate waiver is valid if the defendant enters it “knowingly and intelligently, a determination that we make by considering the totality of the circumstances.” *Id.* “Generally though, if a district court questions a defendant regarding the waiver of appellate rights during the Rule 11 colloquy and the record indicates that the defendant understood the full significance of the waiver, the waiver is valid.” *McCoy*, 895 F.3d at 362 (internal quotation marks omitted).

Our review of the record confirms that, with limited exceptions not applicable here, Hughes knowingly and intelligently waived his right to appeal his conviction and sentence. We therefore conclude that the waiver is valid and enforceable and that the sentencing issue counsel raises in the *Anders* brief falls squarely within the scope of the waiver.

In accordance with *Anders*, we have reviewed the entire record in this case and have found no potentially meritorious grounds for appeal that are outside the scope of the appellate waiver. We therefore grant in part the Government’s motion to dismiss in part and dismiss the appeal as to all issues covered by the appellate waiver. We affirm the

remainder of the judgment. This court requires that counsel inform Hughes, in writing, of the right to petition the Supreme Court of the United States for further review. If Hughes requests that a petition be filed, but counsel believes that such a petition would be frivolous, then counsel may move in this court for leave to withdraw from representation. Counsel's motion must state that a copy thereof was served on Hughes. We dispense with oral argument because the facts and legal contentions are adequately presented in the materials before this court and argument would not aid the decisional process.

*AFFIRMED IN PART,
DISMISSED IN PART*