

United States Court of Appeals
For the Eighth Circuit

No. 25-2213

United States of America,

Plaintiff - Appellee,

v.

William Arthur Parrott,

Defendant - Appellant.

Appeal from United States District Court
for the District of Nebraska - Lincoln

Submitted: May 14, 2026
Filed: August 27, 2026

Before COLLOTON, Chief Judge, SHEPHERD and KOBES, Circuit Judges.

COLLTON, Chief Judge.

William Parrott was convicted of a drug conspiracy offense involving methamphetamine. *See* 21 U.S.C. § 846. He appeals and argues that the district court* made thirteen errors related to his trial and sentencing. We affirm.

I.

A grand jury charged Parrott with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine mixture and marijuana. *See* 21 U.S.C. § 846. At trial, three witnesses implicated Parrott in a conspiracy to distribute drugs. Doctrya West testified that she began purchasing methamphetamine from Parrott at his residence in late 2021. Her purchases became more frequent, and she bought up to an ounce of methamphetamine several times per week. Amy Henner testified that she sold methamphetamine from Parrott's residence and once left drugs for Parrott in exchange. Steven Watson testified that he met Parrott in July 2022, when Watson started driving his father to Parrott's residence to pick up methamphetamine. Watson testified that by the end of July 2022, he started buying his own methamphetamine from Parrott. Text messages between Watson and Parrott corroborated that Watson acquired drugs from Parrott. Watson also testified that he drove Parrott to pick up methamphetamine from Parrott's source of supply, Victor Gonzales.

A jury found Parrott guilty of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine. At sentencing, the district court determined that Parrott was responsible for trafficking 11,118.87 grams of methamphetamine, applied a two-level increase because Parrott possessed a firearm,

*The Honorable Susan M. Bazis, United States District Judge for the District of Nebraska.

and applied a two-level increase because Parrott maintained a premises for the purpose of distributing drugs. The district court calculated an advisory guidelines range of 360 months to life imprisonment. The court varied downward from the range and imposed a 300-month sentence.

II.

Parrott first challenges the district court's denial, without a hearing, of his pretrial motion to exclude the expert testimony of William Koepke of the Lincoln Police Department. Before trial, the government disclosed that it planned to offer testimony from Detective Sergeant Koepke about drug distribution, consumption, and pricing in the United States. The government disclosed that Koepke would rely on his training and experience as a twenty-three year veteran on the Lincoln-Lancaster County Drug Task Force and his thirty-two years in law enforcement. Koepke also planned to offer opinions regarding evidence seized from Watson, evidence seized from the residence of Gonzales, the alleged source of Parrott's drug supply, and references in text messages that indicated drug use or distribution. Parrott argued that Koepke did not qualify as an expert to testify on the proposed topics.

Under Federal Rule of Evidence 702, expert testimony is admissible if “the expert’s scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge will help the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue.” Fed. R. Evid. 702(a). Before admitting testimony based on scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge, a district court must ensure that the expert’s testimony “both rests on a reliable foundation and is relevant to the task at hand.” *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharms., Inc.*, 509 U.S. 579, 597 (1993). “A district court may permit law enforcement officers to give expert testimony concerning the *modus operandi* of drug dealers, because most jurors are not familiar with the trade.” *United States v. Schwarck*, 719 F.3d 921, 923 (8th Cir. 2013). But a district court must balance the probative value of such testimony against potential unfair prejudice. *See* Fed. R.

Evid. 403. We review the district court’s decision to allow expert testimony for abuse of discretion. *United States v. Coleman*, 584 F.3d 1121, 1126 (8th Cir. 2009).

When ruling on Parrott’s motions in limine, the district court explained that it had reviewed the government’s disclosure for Detective Koepke, and the court was satisfied with Koepke’s education, training, skill, and experience. The government’s disclosure included a detailed explanation of Koepke’s training and experience in investigating drug offenses. “There is no requirement that the District Court always hold a *Daubert* hearing prior to qualifying an expert witness under Federal Rule of Evidence 702.” *United States v. Evans*, 272 F.3d 1069, 1094 (8th Cir. 2001). On this record, the district court did not abuse its discretion by admitting the testimony without a preliminary hearing. *See United States v. Aungie*, 4 F.4th 638, 645 (8th Cir. 2021).

Nor did the district court abuse its discretion when it overruled Parrott’s objections to Detective Koepke’s testimony. At trial, Koepke testified about his specialized knowledge, training, and experience as a drug investigator. Koepke applied his knowledge to explain the significance of evidence that would not be familiar to the average juror with no exposure to the drug trafficking business. Koepke also applied his knowledge and experience to testify about the meaning of specific drug-related terms used in text messages. This testimony was properly admitted, and it was not unfairly prejudicial. *See United States v. Agena*, 138 F.4th 1063, 1069-70 (8th Cir. 2025).

III.

Parrott next argues that the district court erred when it denied his pretrial motions to exclude evidence related to the investigation of Parrott’s three alleged co-conspirators: Victor Gonzales, his wife Miyuki, and Robert Walkingbull. The court ruled that if the government could show that the three subjects were Parrott’s

co-conspirators, then the evidence would be relevant and not unfairly prejudicial. We review the district court's denial of a motion in limine for abuse of discretion. *United States v. Blamah*, 143 F.4th 1010, 1016 (8th Cir. 2025).

At trial, the government presented evidence that Gonzales, Walkingbull, and Parrott were co-conspirators. Watson testified that on one occasion, Walkingbull and Gonzales arrived at Parrott's residence shortly after Parrott said he was expecting a drug delivery. Watson also testified that Parrott told him that Victor Gonzales was his drug dealer. Watson further testified that starting in August 2022, Watson drove Parrott to Gonzales's residence at least a couple times each week so that Parrott could pick up multiple pounds of drugs.

Parrott contends that because Watson was arrested on September 26, 2022, there is no evidence connecting Parrott to Gonzales, Miyuki, or Walkingbull after that date. Thus, Parrott argues that the district court should have excluded evidence from the search of Gonzales's vehicle on November 16, the search of Gonzales's residence on November 16, and the search of a bedroom shared by Gonzales and wife Miyuki at Miyuki's residence on November 17.

Other circumstantial evidence, however, supported a finding that Parrott remained in a conspiracy with Gonzales and Walkingbull after Watson's arrest. Evidence from a Global Positioning System tracker showed that Gonzales's car was located near Parrott's residence on approximately twelve occasions between October 3 and November 16. A police officer also testified that on November 4, he tracked Gonzales's vehicle from the area of Parrott's residence to a storage unit facility. The officer testified that he saw Gonzales, Parrott, and another person conversing at the facility. The officer stated that Parrott and Gonzales then left together in Gonzales's vehicle. Because the government provided sufficient evidence showing that Parrott, Gonzales, and Walkingbull were co-conspirators, the district court did not err when it permitted the admission of evidence relating to Gonzales and Walkingbull.

IV.

Parrott next argues that the district court abused its discretion when it prohibited Parrott from using a 2004 conviction for attempted burglary to impeach Steven Watson. The district court ruled that the conviction could not be used because it was more than ten years old and it was not a crime of dishonesty. If ten years have passed since a witness's conviction or release from confinement, then evidence of the conviction is admissible only if its probative value substantially outweighs the prejudicial effect. Fed. R. Evid. 609(b). We review the district court's ruling for abuse of discretion. *United States v. Stoltz*, 683 F.3d 934, 938 (8th Cir. 2012).

Parrott contends that he should have been permitted to use the 2004 conviction to impeach Watson's credibility. Watson was an important witness for the government, and he made inconsistent statements to law enforcement about his drug source, so his credibility was relevant. But Parrott impeached Watson's credibility on several other grounds. Even without the 2004 conviction for attempted burglary, Watson admitted that he had sustained twelve convictions for crimes involving dishonesty and two convictions for felony drug offenses. Parrott was able to show potential bias by eliciting that Watson had a cooperation agreement with the government that provided for a potential reduction in sentence. Parrott also attacked Watson's credibility by showing that he identified two other people as his drug source before eventually identifying Parrott for investigators. In light of this substantial impeachment evidence, the district court reasonably concluded that the probative value of the 2004 conviction did not *substantially* outweigh its prejudicial effect as required for admissibility under Rule 609(b). There was no abuse of discretion.

V.

Parrott argues that the district court erroneously admitted hearsay statements under Federal Rule of Evidence 801(d)(2)(E). Parrott contends that the following

statements are hearsay: (1) Watson testified that in July 2022, his father, Steven Kent Watson, stated that he was going to Parrott's residence to pick up methamphetamine; and (2) Watson testified that his father recounted taking Parrott to Gonzales's residence on another occasion to pick up methamphetamine.

The government responds that these statements were admissible as statements made by a co-conspirator during and in furtherance of a conspiracy. *See* Fed. R. Evid. 801(d)(2)(E). This court in *United States v. Bell*, 573 F.2d 1040 (8th Cir. 1978), established a procedure for determining the admissibility of co-conspirator statements. *Id.* at 1044. *Bell* provides that a district court may conditionally admit a statement subject to the defendant's objection, on the understanding that the government must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the statement was made by a co-conspirator during and in furtherance of the conspiracy. *Id.* At the conclusion of all the evidence, the court should make an explicit determination regarding the admissibility of the statement and fashion an appropriate remedy if the statement is later deemed inadmissible. *Id.*

When Parrott objected to Watson's first hearsay statement, the district court did not follow the procedure outlined in *Bell*. Instead, the district court overruled Parrott's hearsay objection without explanation. But when Parrott objected to Watson's statement that his father said Parrott was picking up drugs from Gonzales, the district court called both counsel to sidebar and stated that the testimony would be admitted provisionally, subject to a *Bell* ruling at the end of trial. At the end of trial, the district court found that "the declaration of Steven Watson was made during the course of the conspiracy or in furtherance of the conspiracy."

The record supports a finding that Watson's father was involved in a conspiracy with Parrott, and that he made the disputed statement during and in furtherance of the conspiracy. (That the court misspoke and said "or" rather than "and" is a harmless error.) Watson testified to a course of conduct during which he

took his father to Parrott's home, where Watson's father went into Parrott's bedroom and returned with methamphetamine that he showed to Watson. Watson further testified that starting in July 2022, he went into the bedroom with Parrott and his father, and that he saw Parrott weigh drugs and hand them to his father. The district court did not clearly err or abuse its discretion by admitting the testimony under Rule 801(d)(2)(E). *See United States v. Kitchen*, 149 F.4th 1019, 1025 (8th Cir. 2025). Although the court did not strictly follow the *Bell* procedure with respect to the first challenged statement about Watson's father going to pick up methamphetamine from Parrott, the *Bell* procedure is flexible. *See United States v. Legato*, 682 F.2d 180, 183 (8th Cir. 1982). This statement was also admissible under Rule 801(d)(2)(E) in light of all the evidence, and there was no reversible error in admitting the statement.

Parrott also challenges Watson's testimony that during a conversation at Parrott's residence, Parrott said that they were waiting for his drug source to arrive. This statement is not hearsay because Watson recounted an admission by Parrott. *See Fed. R. Evid. 801(d)(2)(A)*. The district court did not err in admitting this testimony.

VI.

Parrott next challenges the district court's admission of testimony regarding a firearms transaction. At trial, Watson testified that he saw a man named Gerald Proctor sell a .22 revolver to Watson's friend Kyle Kerkemeyer. Watson then testified that he saw the same revolver in Parrott's bedroom when Proctor was present.

Parrott contends the testimony lacked foundation because the government could not prove that the gun from the Proctor-Kerkemeyer transaction was the same gun in Parrott's room. But Watson's testimony established that he had personal knowledge from observations that it was the same revolver. *See Fed. R. Evid. 602*. Watson testified that he saw Proctor with a .22 revolver and later saw Proctor and

Parrott with the same revolver. The district court did not abuse its discretion when it overruled the objection to lack of foundation.

Parrott also argues the testimony regarding the gun transaction was irrelevant because it did not prove any of the elements of the conspiracy charge against Parrott. Evidence that Parrott constructively possessed the firearm in his bedroom, and circumstances suggesting that he acquired it from Proctor, were relevant to the charged offense. Due to the connection between drug trafficking and guns as a tool of the trade, the district court did not abuse its discretion when it determined that the testimony was relevant to the conspiracy charge. *See United States v. Milsap*, 115 F.4th 861, 873 (8th Cir. 2024).

Even if the district court erred by admitting this testimony, Watson’s discussion of the Proctor-Kerkemeyer transaction was harmless error. Other testimony from Watson and West established that Parrott possessed firearms during the conspiracy. We are confident that the addition of evidence about one more firearm in his bedroom did not substantially influence the verdict. *See Kotteakos*, 328 U.S. at 764-65.

VII.

Parrott next raises two challenges related to trial Exhibits 12 and 13. These exhibits, also referred to as Cellebrite reports, contained text messages extracted from Watson’s phone. The messages were between Watson and a party identified in Watson’s phone as “Bill,” whom Watson identified as Parrott.

Parrott first contends the district court erred by admitting the exhibits because they were not authenticated. The party authenticating an exhibit must show a rational basis for the party’s claim that the exhibit is what it is asserted to be. *United States v. Needham*, 852 F.3d 830, 836 (8th Cir. 2017); *see* Fed. R. Evid. 901(a).

The court did not abuse its discretion when it determined that the testimony of two law enforcement officers was sufficient to establish that the exhibits accurately represented text messages from Watson's phone. Officer Wiarda testified that as part of the investigation, he requested that a member of the police department's electronic evidence unit download the electronic evidence from Watson's phone. That witness, Donahue, testified that in 2022 he used Cellebrite to extract data from Watson's phone, and that he provided a copy of the download to Wiarda. Wiarda testified that Exhibits 12 and 13 were excerpts of the Cellebrite data report that he received from Donahue. The testimony from Wiarda and Donahue was sufficient to establish a rational basis to believe that Exhibits 12 and 13 were text messages downloaded from Watson's phone.

Parrott also argues that the government improperly used Exhibits 12 and 13 before they were received into evidence. The government first attempted to introduce Exhibits 12 and 13 during the direct testimony of Watson. For Exhibit 12, Watson stated that the list of names and contact numbers were people listed as contacts on his phone. For Exhibit 13, Watson reviewed the text conversations contained in the exhibit and testified that the messages were conversations with Parrott. Parrott objected to both exhibits based on foundation, and the district court sustained the objections. The district court found that there was not sufficient foundation for the exhibits to be entered into evidence, but there was sufficient foundation for the government to ask Watson about the content of the text messages. The district court stated that the exhibits could be received into evidence later if the government laid proper foundation from a law enforcement officer who downloaded the messages from Watson's phone.

After the district court's ruling, the government asked Watson to read text messages from Exhibit 13 and explain the meaning of the messages. Parrott argues that the district court abused its discretion by allowing Watson to read messages from Exhibit 13 during his testimony because "[t]here was no evidence to demonstrate that

Watson had personal knowledge of the text messages in Exhibit 13.” But when Watson was handed Exhibit 13, he testified that the exhibit contained messages that he sent to Parrott and messages that he received from Parrott. Although the court allowed Watson to read from the exhibit before it was received into evidence, there was no reversible error because the exhibit was later authenticated and properly admitted.

VIII.

At trial, Officer Barksdale testified about a GPS tracker placed on Victor Gonzales’s vehicle. Parrott first argues that the district court erred when it overruled his objection to Barksdale’s testimony based on lack of foundation. Parrott says there was “no evidence that Barksdale was trained to use a GPS tracker, no evidence as to whether the tracker was functioning properly during the relevant time period, and no evidence that Barksdale ever verified that the tracker was functioning properly between October 3, 2022 and November 16, 2022.”

Barksdale did not testify that he was trained to use the GPS tracker, but he did present testimony showing that the tracker was functioning properly and accurately. Barksdale explained that when the GPS tracker showed that Gonzales’s vehicle was at a storage unit facility, Barksdale drove to that facility and witnessed Gonzales’s vehicle at that location. This corroborating testimony was sufficient to justify a conclusion that the tracker was functioning and was reliable.

Parrott argues summarily that Barksdale’s testimony constituted hearsay and, for the first time on appeal, that its admission violated the Confrontation Clause. Barksdale explained that he generated “stop reports” using the GPS tracker to show any location where Gonzales’s vehicle had stopped for more than two minutes. He then testified that the GPS records showed that Gonzales’s vehicle was close to 28th

and Potter Street, the address of Parrott's residence, approximately twelve times between October 3 and November 16, 2022.

We conclude that Barksdale's description of machine-generated results did not constitute hearsay where the results were not developed or manipulated with human input. *See United States v. Juhic*, 954 F.3d 1084, 1089 (8th Cir. 2020); *United States v. Castillo*, 158 F.4th 257, 276 (1st Cir. 2025). Nor did the GPS results qualify as testimonial evidence that created a plain error under the Confrontation Clause. *United States v. Hill*, 63 F.4th 335, 359 (5th Cir. 2023).

IX.

Parrott next argues that his trial was “an image of unfairness” due to the cumulative effect of the district court's trial errors. “We will not overturn a conviction based upon the cumulative effect of trial errors unless there is substantial prejudice to the defendant.” *United States v. Jewell*, 614 F.3d 911, 929 (8th Cir. 2010). As discussed, we conclude that there were no trial errors to accumulate, and any error on the closest issues was harmless. This contention is without merit.

X.

Parrott also argues that the district court erred when it denied his motion for judgment of acquittal. We will reverse only if the evidence viewed in the light most favorable to the verdict is insufficient to allow a reasonable jury to find the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. *United States v. May*, 131 F.4th 633, 643 (8th Cir. 2025). Here, the government was required to prove that there existed a conspiracy to distribute illegal drugs, that Parrott knew of the conspiracy, and that he intentionally joined the conspiracy. *United States v. Radermacher*, 92 F.4th 743, 746 (8th Cir. 2024) (per curiam). The testimony of West, Henner, and Watson, if

believed, was sufficient for a reasonable jury to conclude that the government met its burden.

XI.

Parrott raises four sentencing issues. On claims of procedural error, we review the district court's factual findings for clear error and its legal conclusions *de novo*. *United States v. Foard*, 108 F.4th 729, 736 (8th Cir. 2024).

Parrott first challenges the district court's finding on drug quantity. The court found that Parrott was responsible for 11,118.87 grams of methamphetamine. The district court's calculation was based on the testimony of three trial witnesses: West, Henner, and Watson. Parrott argues that the witnesses did not provide precise drug quantities and offered only approximated amounts without certainty or records supporting their estimates.

"[E]vidence of specific drug quantities is not required," *United States v. Yellow Horse*, 774 F.3d 493, 495 (8th Cir. 2014), and "[t]he court may make a specific numeric determination of quantity based on imprecise evidence, so long as the record reflects a basis for the court's decision." *United States v. Roach*, 164 F.3d 403, 413-14 (8th Cir. 1998) (internal citations omitted). The district court permissibly credited the testimony of the three witnesses and relied on their testimony to make an estimate of drug quantity. The court's calculation was supported by testimony at trial and was within the range that the testimony suggested, so there was no clear error.

Parrott next argues that the district court erred in applying a two-level increase for possessing a firearm in connection with the drug conspiracy. The guidelines call for a two-level increase "[i]f a dangerous weapon (including a firearm) was possessed." USSG § 2D1.1(b)(1). The government must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the gun was possessed and that it was not "clearly improbable"

that the weapon was connected to the drug offense. *United States v. Anderson*, 618 F.3d 873, 880 (8th Cir. 2010).

The district court found that the enhancement applied because two witnesses testified that they witnessed Parrott with a firearm, and one observed a gun in a box with drugs. *See* USSG § 2D1.1(b)(1). At trial, West and Watson each testified that they saw Parrott in possession of firearms in the same bedroom where he kept drugs. The testimony established that Parrott had multiple firearms in his bedroom, and that he exercised sufficient control over the firearms to be in constructive possession. *Anderson*, 618 F.3d at 880.

Parrott argues that the testimony does not establish that he possessed a firearm during the time period when he was distributing drugs. But the testimony of both Watson and West established that Parrott possessed firearms while he was engaged in drug distribution. West testified that she saw the guns in Parrott's bedroom with the methamphetamine sometime during her relationship with him. West met Parrott in 2021, and she testified that she purchased drugs from Parrott several times per week from the end of 2021 through the end of 2022. Watson met Parrott in July 2022 when he supplied Watson's father with methamphetamine. Parrott sold methamphetamine to Watson until Watson's arrest on September 26, 2022. Parrott was engaged in drug distribution throughout their relationship, so Watson's observation of a firearm necessarily occurred during the period of Parrott's drug trafficking. Because two witnesses testified that Parrott kept firearms in the same room where he stored drugs, the district court did not clearly err in finding no clear improbability that Parrott possessed the firearms in connection with his drug trafficking activity.

Parrott also argues that the district court erred by applying an enhancement for maintaining a premises for drug distribution. *See* USSG § 2D1.1(b)(12). "This enhancement applies when the defendant knowingly maintains a building, room, or

enclosure for the purposes of manufacturing or distributing a controlled substance.” *United States v. Bush*, 156 F.4th 867, 870 (8th Cir. 2025). Manufacturing or distributing a controlled substance “must be one of the defendant’s primary or principal uses for the premises.” USSG § 2D1.1, comment. (n.17).

At sentencing, the district court recounted testimony showing that Parrott used his residence to store and sell drugs, and that he allowed other people to sell drugs from the residence. The court found that drug dealing or storage clearly was one of Parrott’s primary or principal uses for the premises.

Parrott argues that the court erred because it “did not specifically determine *which* premises Parrott maintained.” Parrott also contends that the evidence was insufficient to show that he maintained any specific premises for the purpose of distributing a controlled substance.

The district court did not clearly err in applying the increase. The evidence at trial showed that Parrott resided in the house where he and others distributed drugs. Because Parrott stored and distributed drugs in his bedroom, the distribution was more than “incidental or collateral” to his use of the room. *See United States v. Davis*, 151 F.4th 998, 1002 (8th Cir. 2025). Even though the witnesses did not recall the street address of Parrott’s residence, the district court did not clearly err by finding that they referred to his primary residence.

Parrott also challenges the substantive reasonableness of his sentence. We review reasonableness under a deferential abuse-of-discretion standard. *Gall v. United States*, 552 U.S. 38, 51 (2007). Parrott’s advisory guideline range was 360 months to life imprisonment. The district court granted Parrott’s motion for a downward variance and sentenced him to 300 months.

Parrott nonetheless argues that the district court abused its discretion by declining to vary downward further. He contends that the court “failed to consider the need to avoid unwarranted sentencing disparities, the impact of the death of Parrott’s son on Parrott, Parrott’s mental and emotional health, and that criminal history category V overstated the seriousness of Parrott’s criminal history.” The district court, however, explicitly discussed each of these factors during sentencing. The court explained that its decision took into account those considerations as well as the factors under 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a). Parrott disagrees with the court’s weighing of the factors, but that argument is insufficient to establish an abuse of discretion, especially where the court varied downward from the range recommended by the Sentencing Commission. *See United States v. Lazarski*, 560 F.3d 731, 733 (8th Cir. 2009).

The judgment of the district court is affirmed.
