SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN Th	HE SUPREME COURT OF THE	E UNITED STATES
		-
JESUS C. HER	RNANDEZ, ET AL.,)
	Petitioners,)
	v.) No. 17-1678
JESUS MESA,	JR.,)
	Respondent.)
		_

Pages: 1 through 68

Place: Washington, D.C.

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5	v.) No. 17-1678
6	JESUS MESA, JR.,)
7	Respondent.)
8		
9	Washington, D.C.	
10	Tuesday, November 12	, 2019
11		
12	The above-entitled matter	came on for
13	oral argument before the Supreme	Court of the
14	United States at 11:31 a.m.	
15		
16	APPEARANCES:	
17	STEPHEN I. VLADECK, ESQ., Austin	, Texas;
18	on behalf of the Petitioners	
19	RANDOLPH J. ORTEGA, ESQ., El Pas	o, Texas;
20	on behalf of the Respondent.	
21	JEFFREY B. WALL, Principal Deput	y Solicitor
22	General, Department of Justi	ce, Washington, D.C.
23	for the United States, as am	icus curiae,
24	supporting the Respondent.	
25		

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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:31 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument next in Case 17-1678, Hernandez versus
5	Mesa.
6	Mr. Vladeck.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF STEPHEN I. VLADECK
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
9	MR. VLADECK: Mr. Chief Justice, and
10	may it please the Court:
11	When this case was first argued to
12	this Court two years ago, counsel for Respondent
13	and counsel for the United States were both
14	asked whether Petitioners would have a Bivens
15	remedy if Sergio Hernandez had been standing on
16	U.S. soil when he was shot and killed by
17	Respondent. Both said yes.
18	The question before this Court today
19	is, therefore, whether a Bivens action is
20	nevertheless foreclosed because, in this case,
21	Sergio was standing a few feet to the Mexican
22	side of the border at the time he was shot.
23	For two reasons, we believe that it
24	isn't. First, the fortuity of where a victim is
25	standing does not, in fact, trigger any of the

1	special factors counseling hesitation identified
2	by Respondent or the United States.
3	Most importantly, it is difficult to
4	see how foreign relations could be a special
5	factor precluding a Bivens suit here if it
6	wouldn't have precluded a Bivens claim had
7	Sergio been standing just a few feet away.
8	Moreover, the government's assertion
9	that permitting Petitioners' suit would
10	dramatically undermine U.S. foreign relations
11	and diplomacy is belied by the long history of
12	successful tort claims against federal law
13	enforcement officers, including, as in the
14	Apollon, cases in which the victim was a
15	foreigner harmed on foreign soil, the Court
16	awarded damages, and the diplomatic sky did not
17	fall.
18	Nor does extraterritoriality cut
19	against a Bivens remedy here. Not only was
20	Respondent standing on U.S. soil when he pulled
21	the trigger, but he could not have known in that
22	instant where the bullet would even land, let
23	alone the nationality of anyone it might hit.
24	Second and as importantly, for
25	Petitioners here, it is Bivens or nothing.

- 1 Neither Respondent nor the United States
- 2 seriously disputes that the Westfall Act
- 3 preempts the Texas tort remedy Petitioners could
- 4 otherwise have pursued, and neither has
- 5 identified any other alternative remedy for the
- 6 Petitioners here as opposed to other parties in
- 7 other cases.
- 8 All of this goes to why this Court was
- 9 right in Abbasi when it explained that there are
- 10 powerful reasons to retain Bivens as a remedy
- 11 for individual instances of law enforcement
- overreach. And it goes to why, even though
- 13 Sergio was standing on Mexican soil when he was
- shot and killed, this case presents the exact
- 15 kind of law enforcement overreach that Abbasi
- 16 had in mind.
- 17 I think Abbasi is a useful place to
- 18 begin our analysis because, in that case, not
- only did this Court suggest that there were
- 20 still important reasons to retain Bivens in law
- 21 enforcement contexts, but this Court itself
- 22 actually preserved and retained one of the
- 23 plaintiffs' Bivens claims. This Court returned
- to the district court, rather than dismissing,
- 25 the prisoner abuse claim against the warden of

- 1 the MDC.
- 2 And we think that reflects four of the
- 3 reasons why retaining Bivens in the law
- 4 enforcement sphere makes sense. First, as this
- 5 Court said in Abbasi, it is difficult to
- 6 contemplate other remedies when individual
- 7 instances of law enforcement overreach are at
- 8 play. In those contexts, a damages action after
- 9 the fact will usually be the only possible legal
- 10 recourse. It's going to be difficult to bring a
- 11 claim in advance.
- 12 Second, the deterrence effect, what
- 13 this Court has called the core purpose of
- Bivens, which is to deter individual officers,
- 15 could quite easily be lost in the absence of
- 16 remedies in the law enforcement context, unlike
- in Abbasi, where, as this Court stressed, there
- 18 were alternative remedies available to the
- 19 plaintiffs.
- 20 Third, the historical tradition that
- 21 we note in our brief, where federal courts and
- 22 state courts, going all the way back to the
- founding, routinely imposed tort damages against
- 24 federal officers acting ultra vires, without
- 25 suggesting there were separation-of-powers

- 1 obstacles to doing so, without suggesting that 2 there was anything wrong with the federal courts providing a cause of action in those cases. 3 As opposed to, I think, where the 4 5 inquiry historically has focused, immunity. Are 6 there reasons in these cases to actually hold the -- the defendant officer harmless, not 7 8 because there's no cause of action but because 9 he was acting in good faith or, under the modern 10 standard, because he did not violate clearly established rights of which a reasonable officer 11 12 in his position would have been aware. 13 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: They argue --14 JUSTICE ALITO: If the --15 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Go ahead. JUSTICE ALITO: If the officer in this 16 17 case had been a state officer and everything 18 else was the same, would the victim have a claim 19 in federal court? MR. VLADECK: So, if the question is 20 21 in federal court, Justice Alito, I think it would depend on diversity. I don't believe the 22
- 25 language of that statute limits the class of

because, as the government points out, the

23

24

victim would be able to bring a claim under 1983

- 1 plaintiffs to U.S. citizens and those subject to
- 2 the jurisdiction thereof.
- But, Justice Alito, Congress, when it
- 4 enacted 1983, as Judge Prado noted in his
- 5 dissent below, was not thinking about limiting
- 6 remedies that were otherwise available; it was
- 7 thinking about expanding remedies, in that
- 8 context in 1871, to newly freed slaves.
- 9 So 1983 does nothing to displace
- 10 whatever state tort remedies might be available
- 11 against state officers. Now, of course, that's
- 12 going to vary a bit.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Suppose -- suppose
- 14 there were no 1983, and a state officer had done
- 15 exactly what the Bureau of Narcotics agents did
- in Bivens. Would there be an action against the
- 17 state officer?
- MR. VLADECK: There would be, Justice
- 19 Ginsburg. And, actually, I think it's worth in
- 20 this context reminding the Court of the
- 21 government's position in Bivens. The
- 22 government's position in Bivens itself was not
- 23 that the federal courts should not be
- 24 recognizing these remedies in any context.
- 25 Rather, the government's position in Bivens was

- 1 that New York State tort law would have provided
- an adequate remedy, Justice Ginsburg, not just
- 3 against the federal officer defendants in Bivens
- 4 but also had they been, say, New York City
- 5 police officers, that New York trespass law
- 6 would have provided the remedy.
- 7 To quote from the government's brief
- 8 in Bivens, a federal remedy should only be
- 9 recognized when it is necessary. And the
- 10 argument in Bivens was simply as to whether a
- 11 complementary federal remedy was necessary to
- vindicate the plaintiff's Fourth Amendment
- 13 rights, given the existence of New York trespass
- law, given the government's argument that New
- 15 York trespass law in that context was adequate
- to vindicate the plaintiff's Fourth Amendment
- 17 interests.
- 18 And this was the common law model. I
- 19 mean, I think we are all familiar with Henry
- 20 Hart's dialectic where Professor Hart suggested
- 21 that the original understanding was that even
- 22 federal officers would be principally
- 23 responsible to judges in state court. There was
- 24 no general federal question statute.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Your -- your

- 1 -- you reference the government's position in
- 2 Bivens. That was almost 50 years ago. In the
- 3 interim, there's been a fairly dramatic change
- 4 in how we approach things as implying causes of
- 5 action, both under statutes and under Bivens.
- I mean, it's been, what, 40 years,
- 7 right, since the last time we recognized a cause
- 8 of action in Bivens? So I -- I -- I think you
- 9 need to sort of move up half a century and
- 10 explain to us why we should take your -- your
- 11 approach today regardless of what the -- the
- 12 prevailing legal regime was in '71.
- MR. VLADECK: I take the point,
- 14 Mr. Chief Justice, and if I may offer two points
- 15 in response. The first is I say all of this by
- 16 way of putting Bivens in context. That is to
- 17 say that, rather than a bolt from the blue,
- 18 Bivens was a continuation of this tradition.
- 19 But, to -- to wind the clock forward,
- 20 which I think is, of course, the -- the task for
- 21 the Court today, I think it's worth stressing
- 22 that, of the nine cases this Court has decided
- 23 since Carlson, which the government points out
- 24 at page 11 of its amicus brief, where this Court
- 25 has had the opportunity to recognize a Bivens

- 1 remedy and has chosen not to do so, none of
- 2 those involved a claim that an individual
- 3 federal law enforcement officer was acting ultra
- 4 vires. None of the suits involved the kind of
- 5 claim we have here. None of the suits involved
- 6 the context in which this historical tradition
- 7 was at its richest, Mr. Chief Justice. None of
- 8 the suits or at least not all of the cases even
- 9 involved claims that would have had a common law
- 10 parallel.
- 11 And so we certainly recognize that
- this Court has been increasingly skeptical of
- judge-made causes of action in general and of
- 14 Bivens in particular. Our point is simply that
- that skepticism has been reserved or at least
- 16 focused on categories unlike this one.
- 17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: If Bivens were a
- 18 statute, in effect, we would apply the
- 19 presumption against extraterritorial
- 20 application. And the other side argues that,
- 21 therefore, even if it were a statute, it
- 22 wouldn't apply in a circumstance like this.
- What's your answer to that?
- MR. VLADECK: Well, I think we have
- 25 two answers, Justice Kavanaugh. And I think the

- 1 -- the first and most important is that but
- 2 Bivens is not a statute and that this Court has
- 3 never suggested, for example, that in looking at
- 4 whether particular constitutional provisions
- 5 apply extraterritorially, we would use any of
- 6 the typical presumptions that we apply to
- 7 statutes because it is a fundamentally different
- 8 task from the perspective of looking at the
- 9 extent to which the Constitution applies
- 10 overseas versus what Congress would have
- 11 intended.
- But even if this Court, nevertheless,
- 13 believes that it's appropriate to map on that
- 14 presumption, I actually think Kiobel helps us
- more than it hurts us, because, in Kiobel, this
- 16 Court said there will still be cases in which
- 17 the -- the underlying conduct, the gravamen of
- 18 the plaintiff's complaint, involves activity
- 19 that touches and concerns U.S. soil with
- 20 sufficient force to displace the presumption
- 21 against extraterritoriality.
- 22 And so I think this Court could assume
- 23 without deciding that extraterritoriality is a
- 24 special factor for purposes of Bivens and still
- 25 say this case is different because Respondent

- 1 was standing on U.S. soil at the time he pulled
- 2 the trigger, that is touching and concerning
- 3 U.S. territory from my perspective the way
- 4 Kiobel meant it.
- 5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: What would
- 6 distinguish --
- 7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the -- the --
- 8 the victim, Hernandez, this Court has -- has
- 9 said, I think, that a non-citizen who's injured
- abroad doesn't have any Fourth Amendment rights.
- 11 So what is -- it seems like a rather
- 12 arid discussion if, at the end of the day, there
- is no federal constitutional right that can be
- 14 asserted by a non-citizen who is injured abroad.
- MR. VLADECK: So I think -- I think,
- 16 Justice Ginsburg, that Verdugo certainly stands
- 17 for the proposition that in that case there was
- 18 no Fourth Amendment protection for a Mexican
- 19 national whose home was searched by DEA agents
- 20 operating in conjunction with the Mexican
- 21 government.
- 22 I think this Court itself suggested in
- 23 Hernandez I, two years ago, that the Fourth
- 24 Amendment question in the context of a
- 25 cross-border shooting is more complicated, and

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1
      it is the fact that that question is unsettled
 2
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, what --
 3
 4
               MR. VLADECK: -- that is -- sorry.
 5
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- what -- this is
 6
     my question, too. I want to pick up on Justice
     Ginsburg.
7
 8
               What -- what then is the limiting
9
     principle? We have a foreign national injured
10
      abroad by an action in the United States.
11
                I can think of a lot of cases that
12
      that's going to encompass, right? And not just
13
      cross-border shootings but all kinds of torts
14
      that can occur transnationally. Would you
15
      capture all of those or -- or --
               MR. VLADECK: Not at all, Justice
16
17
     Gorsuch. And as I hope was clear --
18
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: It can't -- it can't
19
     be that this is good for one shooting only,
20
     right?
21
               MR. VLADECK: No. And, first, I mean,
22
      I think -- I think this Court is well aware that
23
     there's been more than one shooting, so --
24
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: I understand that.
               MR. VLADECK: But -- but no, I mean, I
25
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- 1 think the -- the larger point is our position
- 2 focuses on the law enforcement nature of the
- 3 conduct at issue here.
- 4 And so many of the hypotheticals that
- 5 I suspect you are thinking of, Your Honor, that
- 6 I'd be thinking of, for a context in which a
- 7 U.S. government person in the United States
- 8 could --
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Why would it be
- 10 limited to law enforcement as opposed to other
- 11 governmental functions that happen here but
- happen to injure persons abroad?
- MR. VLADECK: Because I think it's in
- 14 the law enforcement context that there is the
- 15 strongest argument, the strongest appeal to the
- 16 historical tradition we note in our briefs.
- where there is a straight line dating all the
- 18 way back to the founding where it was law
- 19 enforcement, where common law remedies against
- 20 federal officers were so important.
- There aren't many examples, I could
- find none, of combat operations, for example,
- 23 where state courts were imposing tort remedies
- 24 against federal officers.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: So you'd have us --

- 1 you'd draw a line there, actively in this case
- 2 and say that any -- any actions involving
- 3 military operations, diplomatic operations, any
- 4 other operations of government are not -- there
- 5 -- there's no Bivens action there, it's only for
- 6 law enforcement, whatever that means,
- 7 operations?
- 8 MR. VLADECK: So, I mean, I --
- 9 obviously, I wouldn't decide more than is
- 10 necessary. But I do think --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Ah, ah, okay.
- 12 That's what -- that's what I thought you'd say.
- MR. VLADECK: But -- but, Justice
- 14 Gorsuch --
- 15 JUSTICE GORSUCH: All right. And so
- 16 -- so where is, if -- if you're not willing to
- draw that line, where is it? And how is this
- 18 Court supposed to draw it? You -- you say --
- 19 you say you could say this, but I wouldn't say
- 20 it. All right.
- 21 MR. VLADECK: I -- I -- I --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Where would you draw
- 23 the line?
- 24 MR. VLADECK: I think -- I think based
- on this Court's jurisprudence, and based on

- 1 Abbasi itself, I think the line could
- 2 reasonably, plausibly, and --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, no, not
- 4 reasonably, plausibly. Where would you have
- 5 this Court draw the line?
- 6 MR. VLADECK: Well, I think, frankly,
- 7 there are decisions this Court has handed down
- 8 in the Bivens context that I think don't
- 9 necessarily -- aren't necessarily consistent
- 10 with this full tradition.
- 11 But it has still left open law
- 12 enforcement conduct, Justice Gorsuch. And it's
- 13 not just this Court that has done that.
- 14 Congress, in the 1974 amendment to the
- 15 Federal Tort Claims Act, went out of its way to
- 16 expand the liability of the United States for
- 17 intentional torts committed by law enforcement
- 18 officers.
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: They are --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- but I -- it's
- 22 not just intentional torts. It's roque
- 23 intentional torts. That's an important limiting
- 24 principle.
- MR. VLADECK: It absolutely is,

- 1 Justice Sotomayor. And I hope it's clear in our
- 2 briefs --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And accepting the
- 4 facts of this case, the use of force is on U.S.
- 5 land and it's unreasonable because the claim is
- 6 that this young man was doing nothing but
- 7 standing on the other side of the border.
- 8 MR. VLADECK: And I think this might
- 9 be a -- a -- sort of a more convincing answer, I
- 10 hope, to Justice Gorsuch, which is I do believe
- 11 that it is relevant to the claim and the
- 12 strength of our claim in this case that the
- 13 Respondent was, according to the plausible
- 14 allegations in the plaintiff's complaint,
- 15 violating not just the Constitution but his own
- departmental regulations, that we have not just
- 17 a law enforcement officer, Justice Gorsuch, but
- 18 a law enforcement officer acting ultra vires.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Are we supposed to
- 20 decide this? I mean, I thought -- I wrote a
- 21 dissent, I guess, but I thought this is special
- 22 because it's American law enforcement, American
- soil, and he thought he might be shooting at an
- 24 American, and the -- the border in this case is
- 25 rather special, it's not just the line, it was

- 1 the river, and it's administered by an
- 2 international commission, dah-dah-dah, okay, I
- 3 have about six wonderful reasons that persuaded
- 4 only me. Okay.
- 5 But the --
- 6 (Laughter.)
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Or now -- now --
- 8 MR. VLADECK: I believe you also
- 9 persuaded --
- JUSTICE BREYER: -- I thought we're
- 11 taking this case on the assumption that the
- 12 Fourth Amendment does apply, and the only issue
- in front of us is not that but, rather, we
- 14 assume that the Fourth Amendment applied, that
- it is a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment,
- and the question is Abbasi, whether there is a
- 17 Bivens action for a clear rogue violation of the
- 18 Fourth Amendment that takes place in the way
- 19 this does.
- Is that sufficient, to use the Abbasi
- 21 term that -- which I've now lost, but the Abbasi
- 22 term that this is some kind of extension of the
- 23 Fourth Amendment or that this is some kind of
- 24 special situation? That, I thought, was the
- 25 issue.

1 And at some point, I -- I feel, I'll 2 try to answer that question, but I'd like to hear what you say about that. 3 MR. VLADECK: I -- I -- I agree 4 5 completely, Justice Breyer. I mean, I think 6 that Abbasi -- I don't think Abbasi --7 JUSTICE BREYER: I don't care whether 8 you agree or not. All I want to hear is your 9 argument on -- I don't want to repeat myself --10 but on the assumptions I gave --11 MR. VLADECK: Yes. 12 JUSTICE BREYER: -- what is your 13 argument that this is not an extension, that 14 this is not special, that this is not an unusual 15 thing? 16 MR. VLADECK: I understand. 17 JUSTICE BREYER: What's your argument? 18 MR. VLADECK: So our argument is, 19 first, that this Court has long recognized that claims against individual law enforcement 20 21 officers for excessive force are what the Fifth 22 Circuit called classic Bivens claims. 23 I believe there's an opinion by then 24 Judge Kavanaugh referring to it as the core of 25 Bivens to bring a claim that an individual law

- 1 enforcement officer is acting ultra vires.
- So, Justice Breyer, I think there's at
- 3 least an argument that this might not even be a
- 4 new context. But, even if it is a new context,
- 5 the government and Respondent have identified
- 6 three special factors that they argue counsel
- 7 hesitation.
- First, they say it's because this case
- 9 implicates foreign relations and national
- 10 security. As we suggest in our briefs, we don't
- 11 believe that follows simply from the fact that
- 12 Sergio Hernandez was standing on the Mexican
- 13 side of the border as opposed to the American
- 14 side of the border.
- The government also argues
- 16 extraterritoriality as a special factor. As I
- 17 think I hope I explained in response to Justice
- 18 Kavanaugh's question, we don't think
- 19 extraterritoriality is implicated here because
- 20 this case touches and concerns U.S. territory
- 21 with sufficient force to displace the
- 22 presumption.
- 23 And the third extra -- the third
- 24 special factor invoked by Respondent and the
- 25 government is congressional action. And I

- 1 think, in that context, there's no example of
- 2 Congress specifically trying to preclude claims
- 3 like Petitioners here.
- 4 And the only time Congress has ever
- 5 spoken to the tort liability of, again, Justice
- 6 Gorsuch, this is where we get our test from,
- 7 individual federal law enforcement officers,
- 8 Congress has expanded that liability.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel --
- 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Tell me --
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- just to go
- with the first of the things you mentioned, the
- international relations, there has been
- 14 diplomatic correspondence between the Mexican
- government and our government with respect to
- 16 this -- this -- this incident.
- 17 The Border Patrol has conducted an
- 18 investigation, and it reached the determination
- 19 that the action of the agent was not contrary to
- 20 policy.
- 21 And you would have the courts look
- 22 into this by avail -- providing a Bivens remedy
- that could well come to the opposite conclusion.
- 24 So that in terms of our relations with Mexico,
- 25 we'd have one agency saying this was not

- 1 inconsistent with policy. We'd have the court
- 2 saying it is.
- And that is the type of thing that it
- 4 makes it at least a -- a new context. You can
- 5 say it doesn't make a difference, but, in terms
- of our relations with Mexico, they've got two
- 7 different things, and at least with respect to
- 8 foreign relations, I thought the country was
- 9 supposed to speak with one voice.
- 10 MR. VLADECK: So I do -- I certainly
- 11 agree that the -- that the country is supposed
- 12 to speak with one voice, Mr. Chief Justice. Two
- 13 -- two points in response. The first is, of
- 14 course, if the government continues to believe
- 15 and if Respondent continues to believe there
- would be a Bivens remedy if Sergio Hernandez had
- simply been standing on American soil, it's not
- 18 clear to me why the same concerns wouldn't be
- 19 equally present.
- That is to say, by that logic, any
- 21 time a U.S. officer harms any foreign national,
- 22 even if Bivens itself -- if Bivens had been a
- 23 foreign national, it's not hard to imagine
- 24 similar diplomatic correspondence following from
- 25 that incident.

1	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: They argue it's
2	not merely the foreign policy implications that
3	the Chief Justice identified but that border
4	security is also national security in some
5	respects and that that's a different context,
6	slightly different than the foreign relations.
7	Can you address that?
8	MR. VLADECK: Absolutely. And we
9	certainly agree that border security as a policy
LO	is an important policy of the United States,
L1	that if we were here challenging one of the
L2	government's border patrol policies, this would
L3	be a different case.
L4	But I think it's important to note,
L5	back to the Chief Justice's question, that the
L6	dispute here is over whether Respondent violated
L7	the very government policy at issue. That is to
L8	say, we are not challenging a policy of the
L9	government. We are claiming Respondent himself
20	did not comply with that policy.
21	The government's entitled, Mr. Chief
22	Justice, to its own preliminary determination of
23	that question. We don't think it is the kind of
24	policy to which this Court has historically
25	accorded deference in the foreign relations and

- 1 national security sphere, if it's an
- 2 after-the-fact factual determination about a
- 3 single incident, as opposed to, say, a challenge
- 4 to an entire border patrol policy.
- 5 JUSTICE ALITO: I thought you were
- 6 challenging the --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Can you go back
- 8 to --
- 9 JUSTICE ALITO: -- I thought you were
- 10 challenging the constitutionality of what was
- done, not whether it was consistent with border
- 12 patrol policy.
- MR. VLADECK: So, Justice Alito --
- 14 JUSTICE ALITO: Is that -- is that --
- does that provide the basis for a federal claim?
- 16 If it were -- if you put the Fourth Amendment
- 17 aside, but the action was contrary to border --
- border patrol policy, would that provide the
- 19 basis for a federal claim?
- MR. VLADECK: Not for a damages suit,
- 21 of course, but --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Yes.
- 23 MR. VLADECK: -- but it is our
- 24 position, Justice Alito, that -- just to go back
- 25 to my colloquy with Justice Gorsuch, again, the

- 1 reason why we believe this is in the heartland
- of Bivens, notwithstanding the concerns that the
- 3 Chief Justice has referred to and that Justice
- 4 Kavanaugh alluded to, is because, here, we do
- 5 not have a case where the claim is that a
- 6 particular policy of the United States in the
- 7 foreign relations or national security sphere
- 8 was the source of the injury to the plaintiffs.
- 9 Here, our argument is that the policy
- 10 is actually coextensive with the Constitution,
- and so that if we are correct, which we have not
- 12 yet, of course, had a chance to prove, but if we
- 13 are correct that Respondent violated
- 14 Petitioner's constitutional -- or Sergio
- 15 Hernandez's constitutional rights, Justice
- 16 Alito, there would also be a violation of
- 17 policy.
- And so, to us, the questions blend
- 19 together because it helps to drive home why this
- 20 case is not like the nine cases this Court has
- 21 had since Carlson --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can -- can we --
- 23 can we go back to the question that I asked? If
- 24 breaking into someone's home and searching and
- 25 seizing, if that's not a Fourth Amendment

- 1 violation because the person is a non-citizen
- and it happened abroad, you said a cross-border
- 3 shooting is more complicated. Why should it be
- 4 different?
- 5 MR. VLADECK: So, Justice Ginsburg,
- 6 with respect, I actually think it was this Court
- 7 that said that in Hernandez I. And I think the
- 8 reason why is because there is some uncertainty
- 9 in the lower courts, as reflected in the Ninth
- 10 Circuit's decision in the Rodriguez case, the
- 11 original three-judge panel decision in this
- 12 case.
- 13 There is some uncertainty about just
- 14 how broadly this Court's decision in
- 15 Verdugo-Urquidez, in which the Court said a
- 16 Mexican national could not invoke the Fourth
- 17 Amendment to challenge the search of his home --
- 18 the warrantless search of his home by a DEA
- officer, there's uncertainty about how far that
- 20 sweeps. Is that a categorical on/off switch at
- 21 the border, or are there reasons to actually
- 22 think the Fourth Amendment question is more
- 23 complicated in the context in which you have
- 24 cross-border episodes, especially after
- 25 Boumediene? And that is say, does Verdugo still

- 1 have the same force? Now --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Vladeck, there
- 3 is one part of the Chief's question you didn't
- 4 answer. The government's speaking with one
- 5 voice, and you said the government should. But
- 6 he's posited a big difference here. The
- 7 government -- the executive has said this was
- 8 not a rogue action. This security guard.
- 9 They've concluded on -- based on what, we don't
- 10 know -- that this officer was being attacked and
- 11 that's why he shot. The allegations of this
- 12 complaint are to the contrary.
- 13 If the court were to rule in favor of
- 14 your client -- not the court, but a jury were to
- 15 have found in favor of your client, wouldn't we
- 16 be speaking in two voices? You haven't
- 17 addressed that.
- 18 MR. VLADECK: Thank you, Justice
- 19 Sotomayor. And I think our response is I think
- 20 that this Court has never suggested that every
- 21 single thing the United States says that has any
- 22 bearing on any possible sliver of foreign
- 23 relations is the kind of foreign policy where
- 24 this Court has said the -- the government should
- 25 be allowed to speak with one voice.

1 And so I think there's a meaningful 2 distinction between a policy that is ex ante shaping the conduct of our border patrol 3 officers, of our government officers, where a 4 5 judicial decision might call into question the policy, and a context where the dispute rises 6 and falls on whether the government's own policy 7 8 prohibiting excessive force in violation of the 9 Constitution was violated. That is to say, it 10 seems to me that there's merger. 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: But what if, 12 Mr. Vladeck, you had -- you have this one incident and the executive branch had a very 13 14 different view of what happened than a court did? A court said there was unconstitutional 15 conduct here, the use of excessive force. 16 17 the executive branch thought he did everything 18 by the book, and, you know, he isn't subject --19 he shouldn't be subject to any action, even a 20 disciplinary one. 21 And then the court's decision, 22 contrary to that -- let's say Mexico wants to 23 extradite the border patrol officer. And that 24 puts, I would think, the executive branch in a 25 quite difficult situation. Should -- you know,

- 1 Mexico is pointing at a court judgment, but the
- 2 executive branch thinks that there's no earthly
- 3 reason to extradite. What happens then?
- 4 MR. VLADECK: Well, I think, Justice
- 5 Kagan, there's a critical difference between
- 6 what the preclusive effect of a civil judgment
- 7 about the unconstitutional conduct by the
- 8 officer would prove and whether the Mexican
- 9 government would be able to satisfy the very
- 10 different inquiry of whether there's sufficient
- 11 evidence to sustain a criminal indictment and to
- 12 warrant extradition under the terms of the
- 13 U.S./Mexico extradition treaty.
- 14 And I think that's the key point here,
- is that, on the government's logic, all it takes
- is the government showing up after an incident
- and saying, oh, there's some reason why we don't
- 18 believe this was unlawful or there's some
- 19 foreign relations implication to a judgment
- 20 holding it's lawful. And if it's after the
- 21 fact, that won't matter; it would still preclude
- 22 Bivens.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's,
- 24 I think, a fairly unfair characterization of
- 25 what the government did in this case. According

- 1 to their representations, it was a fairly
- 2 thorough investigation.
- 3 And maybe it's -- at the end of the
- 4 day, maybe a jury would come to a different
- 5 determination than the governmental
- 6 investigation, but I don't think that's fully
- 7 responsive to the international relations
- 8 concerns.
- 9 MR. VLADECK: That -- that's fair that
- 10 you ask --
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But, even if
- 12 not fully responsive, it has to be demonstrated
- it's simply a new context for the Bivens
- 14 question.
- MR. VLADECK: That -- that may well
- be, and I think our submission is simply that
- 17 the question this Court has always suggested in
- 18 the Bivens context is how to preserve its core
- 19 deterrent purpose, and in a context in which the
- 20 government's after-the-fact factual
- 21 determination that an officer had acted
- 22 appropriately under the circumstances were
- 23 sufficient to be a policy choice, that does not
- 24 actually give rise to the kind of deference this
- 25 Court has historically accorded.

1 Right? That's what we're worried about because it's not clear how that wouldn't 2 potentially, if not in this case, swallow the 3 category, right? That is to say, if Abbasi 4 meant what it said when it said there are 5 powerful reasons to retain Bivens in the law 6 enforcement context, we think that's true, 7 8 Mr. Chief Justice, even when the government has 9 other -- other equities at stake. 10 Because, again, the key for us is when a court is saying an individual officer has 11 12 acted ultra vires, it is not the same thing as 13 saying the government's policy is somehow 14 inconsistent with the Constitution. 15 It's not the same thing as saying we 16 are second-guessing how the government has 17 chosen to conduct border patrol policies. It's 18 simply saying this one officer went out of 19 bounds. And that's the kind of claim that was 20 historically available at common law. It's the 21 kind of claim Congress preserved in the FTCA 22 amendment. 23 And if I may, I think the -- the point 24 of Abbasi at the end of the day is to draw the 25 distinction between the kind of claim this Court

- 1 rejected, which was a high-level challenge to
- 2 post-9/11 policies formulated by the attorney
- 3 general and the FBI director, and the individual
- 4 law enforcement officer engaged in overreach.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 6 counsel.
- 7 Mr. -- Mr. Ortega.
- 8 ORAL ARGUMENT OF RANDOLPH J. ORTEGA
- 9 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- 10 MR. ORTEGA: Mr. Chief Justice, and
- 11 may it please the Court:
- 12 The Petitioners are asking this Court
- to create a cause of action, an implied cause of
- 14 action, where none has existed since the
- formation of our republic, by extending Bivens
- in a new context, where Congress has not -- has
- declined to provide a remedy. And Congress's
- 18 silence is telling. They've addressed this
- issue in the FTCA, which bars foreign claims.
- 20 They've addressed it again in the Alien Tort
- 21 Statute. And they addressed it again in
- 22 Westfall, that carved out an exception for
- 23 Bivens.
- 24 The new context in this case is not
- 25 only the transnational aspect but also the

- 1 utilization of the Fifth Amendment's Due Process
- 2 Clause. The new context itself fails, and the
- 3 argument that there's a lack of a remedy fails
- 4 when the Court takes into consideration the
- 5 special factors that are involved in this case:
- 6 intruding on the separation of powers, where
- 7 Congress and the executive have their domain;
- 8 national security -- and border patrol is
- 9 national security.
- 10 The border patrol is the forefront of
- our national security. The border patrol, much
- 12 like the military, is a paramilitary
- organization charged with protecting our
- 14 borders. Congress has chosen, and
- 15 non-inadvertently, not to create a damages
- 16 remedy.
- 17 And if a damages remedy is
- 18 appropriate, it is the unique domain of Congress
- 19 to consider the public policy, to balance the
- 20 projected costs. And it requires an assessment
- of its impact system-wide.
- The executive is in charge of foreign
- 23 affairs. There's an actual dispute in this case
- 24 as Mexico would like a remedy and the United
- 25 States has argued against a remedy. Mexico --

1	JUSTICE GINSBURG: If we can go back
2	to the this complaint, and at this stage,
3	this very preliminary stage, we're supposed to
4	accept the complaint's allegations as true,
5	which is that, here, we have a rogue officer
6	acting in violation of the agency's own
7	instruction, using excessive force to kill a
8	child at play, how does that call into question
9	any foreign policy or national security policy?
LO	MR. ORTEGA: Well, it would create a
L1	chilling effect as to the border patrol agents
L2	in conducting their day-to-day activities, but
L3	not only a chilling effect, you would be the
L4	lower courts would be in chaos. There would be
L5	
L6	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, doesn't that
L7	happen if the shooting happened in our own land?
L8	Meaning a border patrol agent who sees a child
L9	at play and kills him two feet from the line is
20	not chilled. He knows he can't do that.
21	What makes it chilling to tell a
22	border patrol agent don't shoot indiscriminately
23	at children standing a few feet from the border?
24	We have to accept the facts of the complaint on
5	their face

- 1 MR. ORTEGA: That's correct. 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. On their face, the complaint says that's what the 3 4 border agent did. 5 MR. ORTEGA: But -- but you can't view 6 it in a vacuum. It would be applicable --JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, the 7 8 vacuum -- what -- this doesn't involve a Mexican 9 defendant, Mexican law, or Mexican courts. 10 involves a U.S. defendant acting on U.S. soil, pulling the trigger on U.S. soil, and subject to 11 12 U.S. law. We're not dragging the border patrol 13 agent into a Mexican court. 14 So how would we be interfering? MR. ORTEGA: Your Honor, are you --15 are you suggesting that the decedent would be 16 inside of the border of the United States? 17 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, I just said to 19 you it involves a U.S. defendant, the border 20 patrol agent, acting on U.S. soil, pulling the 21 trigger on U.S. soil, and subjecting the U.S. 22 border agent to a U.S. court. 23 MR. ORTEGA: But the --
- MR. ORIEGA: But the --
- 24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: We're not dragging
- 25 the agent anywhere else.

1 MR. ORTEGA: That's correct, but the 2 agent would know when he took his actions that he was inside of the jurisdiction of the United 3 4 States. 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: He always knows he's inside and subject to U.S. law. Don't --6 that never changes no matter what we do here. 7 8 MR. ORTEGA: That's correct. But, in 9 this case, you're asking for -- the Petitioners 10 are asking for an extension of the Constitution into a foreign republic, which is quite --11 12 JUSTICE BREYER: We assume -- we assume here that it is extended. We assume the 13 14 Fourth Amendment applies, my understanding is. 15 So we know this place by picture. It's a big culvert like here to 16 It's a culvert. 17 the end of the room. And there's a bridge. And 18 across this bridge, hundreds, perhaps thousands, 19 of people walk each day on their way to work or 20 on their way home. 21 Now a border agent who's standing near 22 the bridge picks up a gun and shoots one of 23 them. If he's crossed that imaginary line in 24 the center of the bridge, I take it, you agree 25 that you can bring a Bivens action?

- 1 MR. ORTEGA: That's correct.
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: And if he is an
- 3 American and on the other side, you agree he can
- 4 bring a Bivens action?
- 5 MR. ORTEGA: That would be correct,
- 6 Your Honor.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So the only
- 8 person who cannot bring a Bivens action -- and
- 9 the border agent has no idea whether he's
- 10 shooting such a person -- is someone who is just
- on the Mexican side of the imaginary line on the
- bridge and whom he shot deliberately or roquely
- or whatever.
- MR. ORTEGA: That would be correct,
- 15 but --
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: See, all right, now
- 17 here is the standard. Justice Kennedy writes
- 18 it. The necessary inference is that the -- the
- 19 necessary -- the inquiry that we're after about
- 20 whether this is an extension of a Bivens action,
- 21 must concentrate on whether the judiciary is
- 22 well suited, absent congressional action, to
- 23 weigh the costs and benefits of allowing the
- action to proceed, okay?
- That's my standard. I've given you

- 1 the facts. What's the problem? We would like
- 2 -- we ordinarily have such actions. The
- 3 Mexicans want it. They want the action. So
- 4 what's the special problem?
- 5 MR. ORTEGA: It would become a matter
- of line drawing. Where would the court --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no, not line
- 8 drawing. There's no line drawing problem. We
- 9 assume -- the line drawing problem may come in
- 10 as to whether the Fourth Amendment applies, but,
- 11 here, we're assuming it does. And assuming it
- 12 applies, what's the problem with the Bivens
- action? What's the line drawing problem there?
- MR. ORTEGA: It would be the extending
- of Bivens into a new country.
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: Why is it extending?
- 17 I mean, after all, maybe in Hawaii there's never
- been a Bivens action brought before on the 14th
- 19 island. Is that an extension?
- 20 MR. ORTEGA: It's not. It's within
- 21 the United States. Here, we have --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, I understand
- 23 that. And this is on the other side of the
- line. Also, by the way, it was at 7:00 in the
- evening, in fact, 7:02. And there never has

- 1 been a Bivens action brought at 7:02.
- 2 MR. ORTEGA: But there's never been a
- 3 Bivens action that involves a transnational
- 4 shooting.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Ah, I got that point.
- 6 All I am saying is, why is that different in
- 7 terms of a problem caused than the fact that it
- 8 was 7:02:59 on the fourth island of Hawaii? You
- 9 got my point?
- 10 MR. ORTEGA: I do.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Good. All right. He
- 12 got it. Now what's -- what is it?
- MR. ORTEGA: It's -- it's --
- 14 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE BREYER: Don't ask my point.
- 16 I want to know your answer.
- MR. ORTEGA: I have to go back to --
- 18 to it being different in so much as it is
- 19 transnational. And it --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Well, you've said
- 21 that. All I'm asking you is why that makes a
- 22 difference? Where it's on a bridge, in the
- 23 culvert, the -- I won't repeat myself, but I
- 24 went through every factor I thought that I could
- 25 -- seems to me very, very similar, and I just

- 1 don't understand it.
- 2 So far, what you've said is: It will
- 3 freeze the border patrol, to which I think good.
- 4 I don't think there's an American who --
- 5 anywhere in the world who wouldn't want to stop
- 6 the kind of action here, so that doesn't seem a
- 7 factor cutting against.
- 8 And, anyway, he can do it if it's an
- 9 American, and he doesn't even know if it's an
- 10 American.
- MR. ORTEGA: If there was a remedy to
- be fashioned, that would be for Congress to
- 13 decide.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: That's a conclusion.
- 15 And my answer -- my question is, why?
- MR. ORTEGA: Because they'll be able
- to weigh the costs and benefits of the actual
- 18 remedy itself, the limits of the remedy, the
- 19 parameters of the remedy for the courts to be
- able to provide quidance to the lower courts.
- 21 There would be very little guidance to
- 22 the lower courts --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I -- I don't
- 24 understand your answer. You can't shoot an
- 25 unarmed juvenile playing. And the remedies

- limit is that one. That -- that's the only
- 2 thing that a court would be deciding, whether
- 3 there truly was cause or no cause for this
- 4 shooting.
- 5 MR. ORTEGA: But -- but then wouldn't
- 6 the -- the determination would be on an ad hoc
- 7 basis, creating instability in the lower courts.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why? What's the
- 9 greater instability when you already admit that
- 10 Bivens -- Bivens would apply if that child was
- 11 standing two feet from the border? And it even
- would apply, according to you, if it was an
- 13 American child standing two feet on the Mexican
- 14 border. I don't see where the greater
- instability arises in that situation.
- MR. ORTEGA: Well, the instability
- 17 would rise because of the -- the actual areas
- 18 where you're at. It's a national border with
- 19 the border patrol providing national security in
- 20 that area.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why -- what
- you're basically saying is Bivens shouldn't
- 23 apply ever against a border -- a rogue border
- 24 patrol who just stands there shooting people
- 25 both on the U.S. side, indiscriminately, takes a

1 gun and just sweeps both sides of the border? 2 MR. ORTEGA: Well, it would apply to those standing on the United States side 3 4 certainly. JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well --5 JUSTICE BREYER: Let -- let me ask 6 because I'm putting all my -- this is actually 7 8 bothering me. I'm not asking you to -- look, if 9 we were talking about extending the Fourth 10 Amendment, I would see a problem. I might think we should or I might think we shouldn't, but I 11 12 might think we should, but I certainly would say 13 there is a problem. 14 But, once we say the Fourth Amendment 15 is there in just the same way it is two feet on 16 the other side, at that point, what's the 17 special problem of giving a damages remedy to a Mexican youth just as you would give it to an 18 19 American youth, whether that American youth is over on one side of the border or the other? 20 21 MR. ORTEGA: Assuming --That's where I --22 JUSTICE BREYER: 23 that's -- at that point, I hesitate. I say, 24 well, that's what we're supposed to find here 25 under the statute. And -- and what is it?

- 1 MR. ORTEGA: Assuming Verdugo did not
- 2 foreclose that, then there would not be a
- 3 difference.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, if there's no
- 5 difference, then that's the end of it, isn't it,
- 6 because Kennedy says, look, he says, you've got
- 7 to find -- he's not talking about the Fourth
- 8 Amendment. He's actually not even thinking
- 9 about that, possibly. I don't know. We're
- 10 thinking about Sixth Amendment, Eighth, Tenth
- 11 Amendment. I don't know. But -- but assuming
- 12 he is, once we're there, the Fourth Amendment
- 13 really does apply.
- 14 You say you can't think of a
- 15 difference. And I can't think of a difference.
- 16 So we send the case back. Now consider the
- 17 Fourth Amendment.
- MR. ORTEGA: Consider the Fourth --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Is that what we
- 20 should do?
- 21 MR. ORTEGA: Well, the Fourth
- 22 Amendment, I believe, is foreclosed by Verdugo
- in its language claiming that a U.S. agent, even
- 24 acting on foreign soil, is not constrained by
- 25 the Fourth Amendment.

1	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I thought your				
2	JUSTICE BREYER: I'm not sure				
3	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I thought your				
4	point was the foreign policy implications are				
5	triggered when it's on the other side of the				
6	border, and that's why we give significance to				
7	the border, but I want to press on that because				
8	wouldn't there be foreign policy implications				
9	even if the victim were a Mexican Mexican				
10	national and killed even on the U.S. side of the				
11	border? Those kinds of incidents create lots of				
12	international and foreign policy implications as				
13	well.				
14	So why do foreign policy implications				
15	track the border so neatly in your view?				
16	MR. ORTEGA: They track the border				
17	because the border is a paramilitary area that				
18	the border patrol patrols under the guidance of				
19	the executive.				
20	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But do you agree				
21	there could be serious foreign policy				
22	implications even from a incident inside the				
23	United States with a victim who's a Mexican				
24	national?				
25	MR. ORTEGA: Absolutely, just the way				

- 1 that there were in this case dealing with the
- 2 extradition and the damage -- damages remedy
- 3 asked for by the Mexican government and the U.S.
- 4 government deciding -- or opposing their request
- 5 for a damages remedy.
- 6 So it's been 40 years and there's been
- 7 no extension of Bivens beyond the trilogy that
- 8 this Court has -- has outlined. The presumption
- 9 against the extension provides the lower courts
- 10 stability versus an ad hoc application of the
- 11 law.
- 12 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Should we think
- 13 about the lack of alternative remedies?
- 14 Mr. Vladeck mentioned that, there's just no
- 15 remedy at all, which is unlike not all the
- 16 Bivens cases but certainly some of them?
- MR. ORTEGA: But, when you look at the
- 18 myriad of special factors, including the
- 19 separation of powers, national security, foreign
- 20 diplomacy, public policy, and the projected
- 21 costs, I think that that creates quite a
- 22 different -- a different picture of that. And
- 23 it's better left for Congress and the executive
- 24 to decide those issues and, specifically,
- 25 Congress to balance the public policy, the

- 1 limits of the law, and to provide guidance for
- 2 this Court to interpret an actual statute that
- 3 they would have created.
- 4 I believe the new context of this
- 5 nature in a transnational shooting should be
- 6 dispositive. An injury to a foreign national on
- 7 foreign soil is untenable because excessive
- 8 force that relates to a seizure, as we've
- 9 discussed, is covered by the Fourth Amendment
- 10 and is not a substantive due process claim.
- 11 It would require an extension of
- Boumediene to a foreign country where the U.S.
- maintains no jurisdiction whatsoever, whether de
- 14 facto or actual. It would create line drawing.
- 15 It would create an unpredictable application.
- 16 Even if this Court were to fashion a damages
- 17 remedy, the application of that remedy would be
- 18 very difficult and would create chaos, in my
- 19 opinion, of the lower courts in its very
- 20 application.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Why -- why chaos?
- 22 I guess I'm not seeing that. You would just
- 23 extend it and it would apply just like Bivens
- 24 applies to lots of cases all the time.
- MR. ORTEGA: Well, it would be line

- drawing, wouldn't it? The line drawing of the
- 2 border, extension of the border.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, Justice
- 4 Sotomayor gave you the line. You have a
- 5 defendant on U.S. soil who's a U.S. official.
- 6 MR. ORTEGA: Well, if he's on -- if
- 7 they're in --
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And then you just
- 9 look --
- 10 MR. ORTEGA: -- the United States,
- 11 there's no question --
- 12 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- and then you
- just look at the actions to see whether it was
- 14 excessive force. I guess I'm -- I take your
- point on the new context, but I guess the chaos
- 16 argument's not resonating with me.
- 17 MR. ORTEGA: The lower courts have
- 18 stood on this Court's presumption against the
- 19 extension in order to provide stability and
- 20 guidance to them in their decisions.
- 21 Extending it again and extending it
- 22 transnationally would create a myriad of
- 23 problems.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Ortega, I think
- 25 I'm a little bit confused. Do you or do you not

- 1 contest -- suppose there were a -- a border
- 2 patrol officer used excessive force but 10 miles
- 3 from the border while carrying out border
- 4 security operations.
- 5 MR. ORTEGA: Ten miles from the border
- 6 inside of the United States?
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, he's a border
- 8 patrol officer, he's acting within the scope of
- 9 his employment, it's very important, he's trying
- 10 to find people who have crossed the border.
- 11 He's engaged in, you know, usual law enforcement
- 12 work.
- 13 Can you bring a Bivens action against
- 14 that officer?
- MR. ORTEGA: The injury is occurring
- in the United States or outside of the United
- 17 States?
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: You know -- yes, it's
- 19 -- it's -- it's in the United States, but this
- is border patrol work. This is border work.
- 21 This is border security work.
- MR. ORTEGA: Well, you can bring the
- 23 Bivens action if he was actually a rogue officer
- 24 acting outside of policy, which does not present
- 25 itself here.

- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, yeah -- I mean,
- 2 if -- if -- if we are assuming that the officer
- 3 used excessive force, you can bring the Bivens
- 4 action, is that correct?
- 5 MR. ORTEGA: If it fell outside the
- 6 policy, correct. Excessive force.
- 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. Now we're
- 8 bringing it 10 miles up to the border, except
- 9 the person involved -- this is Mr. Vladeck's
- 10 hypo -- is -- is on the U.S. side of the border.
- 11 Still a Bivens action?
- 12 MR. ORTEGA: Inside of the -- the
- 13 United States border, correct.
- 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. So a lot of
- foreign affairs concerns are present there, so
- 16 too a lot of national security concerns, if
- we're saying that border security is a facet of
- 18 national security, right?
- 19 MR. ORTEGA: Correct.
- 20 JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. So then the
- 21 question is why, when we just moved three inches
- over, there's a different answer? That, I
- think, is the question that many people have
- 24 been asking you.
- MR. ORTEGA: That's correct. And I

- 1 believe that the border is real. It's a real
- 2 line. And it can't be extended. The
- 3 Constitution cannot be extended into a foreign
- 4 country. But --
- 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: Yes, it is a real
- 6 line. And, you know, one way to line-draw is
- 7 find a real line, I suppose.
- 8 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE KAGAN: But I guess, you know,
- 10 usually, the -- the -- the analysis that we go
- 11 through in a Bivens claim -- and I think that
- this is the analysis that the government wants
- us to go through -- is to ask about, are there
- 14 special foreign affairs concerns? Are there
- 15 special national security concerns?
- And the question is, why would there
- 17 be special foreign affairs and national security
- 18 concerns with respect to a shooting that occurs
- 19 three inches on one side of the border versus
- three inches on the other side of the border or
- 21 even a little bit away from the border but very
- 22 much involving border security work?
- 23 MR. ORTEGA: If it keeps going,
- 24 extending into Mexico, then there would be no
- 25 line. It would just keep going and going. It

- 1 could be all of Juarez, it could be all of
- 2 Chihuahua, it could be all of Mexico. It would
- 3 never end. It would be no different than a
- 4 drone pilot in Colorado hitting the wrong
- 5 village in Syria. He would still be --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I think we're
- 7 positing a defendant who is in the United States
- 8 and who is committing his action in the United
- 9 States. So, unless this is a very far-reaching
- 10 bullet, I don't think so.
- 11 MR. ORTEGA: That's correct. And that
- 12 was the -- the hypothetical I gave you regarding
- a drone pilot in Colorado who happens to hit a
- 14 village in Syria. It would be the same action.
- 15 He would be in the United States, the victims
- 16 would be in Syria, the injury would -- would
- 17 occur in Syria.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 19 counsel.
- Mr. Wall.
- 21 ORAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY B. WALL
- FOR THE UNITED STATES, AS AMICUS CURIAE,
- 23 SUPPORTING THE RESPONDENT
- MR. WALL: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
- 25 it please the Court:

1	A foreign national was killed on
2	foreign soil by a federal officer patrolling an
3	international border. That is plainly a new
4	context for Bivens purposes, and several special
5	factors counsel hesitation here: clear foreign
6	relations concerns with Mexico and the need for
7	border security, clear extraterritoriality, and
8	clear signals from Congress in 1983 and the FTCA
9	that it does not approve of damages liability
10	for injuries abroad.
11	Taking a step back, Abbasi and other
12	decisions have made lower courts markedly less
13	willing to imply causes of action for damages.
14	If this Court extends Bivens here, on
15	these facts, it will threaten to reverse that
16	trend by undermining this Court's consistent
17	message about the importance of caution and
18	judicial modesty in this area.
19	To turn to the first of the three
20	special factors, the foreign relations with
21	Mexico, I don't think it's difficult to figure
22	out exactly why we think Congress might pause,
23	as it has in 1983 and the FTCA, before extending
24	damages liability here.
25	The United States and Mexico have an

- 1 active disagreement over what happened here. We
- 2 have bilateral mechanisms for working it out,
- 3 like the Border Violence Prevention Council,
- 4 which meets and talks about things like use of
- 5 force.
- 6 When we are conducting those
- 7 negotiations, if we are taking positions about
- 8 what has happened at the border and courts --
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Wall, the
- 10 problem is that the allegation here is not about
- 11 their meeting and talking about policies. It's
- 12 about rogue actions.
- 13 And -- and I take a look at the amici,
- 14 the former, like the CPB, but others who tell me
- 15 pretty persuasively and extensively that the
- 16 border patrol might be a bit of a mess and that
- 17 disciplining is at a minimum here,
- investigating, et cetera, is not done in the way
- 19 that others of us would think would be
- 20 appropriate to an agency.
- 21 All of those things suggest to me that
- 22 the class you want to create is a class of
- 23 border patrol agents, whether they shoot across
- 24 the border or shoot in the border.
- MR. WALL: Justice Sotomayor, I'm

- 1 happy to go through all the reports and the
- 2 evidence. I'm happy to say, look, there were 55
- 3 incidents of use of force with firearms in
- 4 fiscal year '12. There were 15 last year in
- fiscal year '18. That's a more than 70 percent
- 6 drop.
- We can go back and forth about whether
- 8 we think the Customs and Border Patrol is doing
- 9 a good job at the border or not.
- I think my bottom line point, though,
- 11 is that all of that is the subject of
- 12 legislative debate. There is a body that can
- 13 consider these kinds of questions and tailor a
- 14 damages scheme to whatever --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But that --
- MR. WALL: -- the facts on the --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- that would mean
- 18 --
- MR. WALL: -- ground are, but --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But that would
- 21 have been --
- MR. WALL: -- that's Congress.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- that would have
- 24 been true in Bivens itself. Someone could have
- 25 said there are all sorts of things that control

- 1 the FBI, and we shouldn't extend Bivens, but we
- 2 did because there's a fundamental belief that
- 3 unconstitutional actions that stem from the
- 4 United States, this agent fired that gun from
- 5 here, should provide a remedy.
- 6 MR. WALL: Yes, as you said in Abbasi,
- 7 Bivens was a product of an era in which you
- 8 freely and judiciously --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, it's not a
- 10 product of an era.
- MR. WALL: But that's to be --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I -- I mean --
- MR. WALL: Justice Sotomayor, that's
- 14 what the Court said in Abbasi. You said --
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, no, no. It --
- 16 it -- Abbasi -- that's what Abbasi said, but if
- 17 you look at Bivens itself, it was based on a
- 18 historical finding that rogue actions, even in
- 19 foreign soils, taking a ship improperly, doing
- 20 other things across the border, required a
- 21 remedy.
- 22 MR. WALL: I -- Justice Sotomayor, if
- I may, they're very different. And I want to be
- 24 really clear on this with the Court.
- Yes, it is certainly true that courts

- 1 for a long time applied the same common law
- 2 rules for trespass and the rest to federal
- 3 officers that they applied to everybody else.
- 4 And that was perfectly fine under federal common
- 5 law up until Erie. And it was perfectly fine
- 6 under state, statutory, and common law right up
- 7 to the Westfall Act.
- 8 But that's not what the Court was
- 9 doing in Bivens and that's not the way it's
- 10 conceived of Bivens in its later cases.
- 11 It was implying a special rule, not
- 12 for everybody, but for federal officers directly
- 13 under the Constitution in the absence of any
- 14 statutory authorization from Congress. That's a
- 15 very different animal from what state and
- 16 federal courts were doing for a --
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: I would like --
- MR. WALL: -- really long time.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: -- at some point to
- 20 hear your three reasons. You had three reasons.
- 21 And I hope you -- leave you enough time to go to
- 22 the same question I've asked 15 times: Look,
- isn't this all a problem for the Fourth
- 24 Amendment?
- 25 But if you assume the Fourth Amendment

1 applies, what's the added problem? 2 MR. WALL: So --JUSTICE BREYER: After all, the Fourth 3 Amendment suppresses evidence. 4 5 MR. WALL: So --JUSTICE BREYER: We're not going to 6 change that, are we? And if the Fourth 7 8 Amendment applies, suppressing evidence will 9 still happen when there's a violation and, after 10 all, that's arguable in Congress. It creates a 11 mess in the court, dah-dah-dah. Okay. 12 So what's special about this? MR. WALL: 13 So I'll try to get through 14 a couple of things really quickly. One, the 15 friction with Mexico, which I think is pretty obvious and exemplified by this very case. 16 17 Two, extraterritoriality. I don't 18 have much to add to what Justice Kavanaugh said 19 in Meshal in the D.C. Circuit. If there were a statute and it were the same as 1983 for federal 20 21 officers, I don't take anybody to be disputing that, absent some clear indication in the 22 23 language, that it wouldn't pick up an entry 24 across the border. And it seems in passing 25 strange that if this express statute didn't get

- 1 -- get it, an implied cause of action wouldn't.
- 2 And even if you disagreed with me on
- 3 that, then I think you'd say, look, Congress has
- 4 made judgments in this area. It cut off all
- 5 liability in the FTCA for things that happened
- 6 across the border, injuries abroad. And you
- 7 couldn't get it if you were a state officer
- 8 under 1983.
- 9 So at least as far as we can tell in
- 10 the judgments Congress has made, it has
- 11 recognized that the border is really
- 12 significant.
- And why?
- 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Wall --
- MR. WALL: Because, when you're
- injured abroad, you don't work it out through
- 17 damages lawsuits. You work it out through
- 18 diplomatic and administrative processes. And
- 19 that's always been how Congress has done it.
- 20 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, I think I need
- 21 to -- somebody to explain to me a little bit the
- 22 kind of foreign affairs concerns that you're
- 23 worried about. And, you know, it's easy to just
- 24 sort of wave your hands and say foreign affairs
- when there's been a cross-border shooting.

- 1 But I think it would help me at least
- 2 to have some specifics about what kind of
- 3 situations you're worried about.
- I mean, here, obviously, Mexico would
- 5 prefer that a Bivens action be -- be given. And
- 6 that's not dispositive by any means.
- 7 But I guess I'm wondering, what is the
- 8 problem?
- 9 MR. WALL: I guess the -- the problem
- 10 is that the United States and Mexico actively
- 11 discuss incidents at the border, both specific
- incidents and general policies, right, as they
- 13 have for years.
- And, for instance, CBP revised its use
- 15 of force --
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: And as they did in
- 17 this case even while the Bivens suit was going
- 18 forward. The Bivens claims does not seem to
- 19 have prevented Mexico and the United States from
- 20 having discussions and negotiations about this
- 21 very incident. Did it?
- MR. WALL: That's right. But the
- 23 question under Abbasi isn't, look, can you show
- 24 that in every case this is always the kind of
- 25 thing --

1 JUSTICE KAGAN: I'm looking for any 2 case. MR. WALL: Right. And what I'm saying 3 is I -- take this case. We disagree with 4 5 Mexico. We had a pair of cases. In one of 6 them, we thought the agent acted unlawfully. In the other, we did a very thorough 7 investigation, it's not in the record, but I've 8 reviewed all the evidence and would be happy to 9 10 talk about it, we concluded he hadn't acted 11 unlawfully. 12 Mexico believes that we're wrong about It believes we ought to extradite him, 13 that. 14 they ought to get their crack. 15 It may believe as a result of this incident that we're not taking seriously our 16 policy at the border. That's exactly the sort 17 18 of thing that we have an ambassador and a 19 foreign minister. We have a State Department 20 and they have one and they talk about these 21 issues. And there's a --JUSTICE KAGAN: I guess I'm -- I'm 22 23 still looking for, you have -- in one state of

the world, you don't have a Bivens claim, in Mr.

Hernandez's position. In another state of the

24

- 1 world, he does have a Bivens claim.
- 2 How does that interfere with the
- 3 United States' foreign policy?
- 4 MR. WALL: Justice Kagan, do you
- 5 really think that the next time we go in to talk
- 6 to Mexico and we take a position on something at
- 7 the border they won't say, how is your
- 8 representation credible? You told us last time
- 9 that your officer didn't do anything wrong. And
- 10 your own courts, potentially even your Supreme
- 11 Court, told you you were wrong. I think it does
- 12 directly undermine the credibility of the
- 13 executive branch in working with a foreign
- 14 government.
- 15 But, even if you thought I were wrong,
- 16 you still know --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, why wouldn't --
- 18 MR. WALL: -- under Chappell --
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- why wouldn't the
- 20 United States then say, you know, we live in a
- 21 country in which courts play an important role
- 22 in determining whether conduct is lawful. And
- 23 that's not an embarrassment to the United States
- 24 or to the executive branch.
- MR. WALL: Of course, courts play a

- 1 role, but the role under Abbasi is a limited one
- where, if there are special factors that counsel
- 3 hesitation, the court says we leave it to
- 4 Congress, even if you disagree with me on
- 5 foreign relations, you still have clear signals
- from Congress in terms of the statutes it's
- 7 passed and you have clear extraterritoriality.
- 8 And we know from Chappell that you
- 9 weigh the special factors in aggregate. So the
- 10 question just is, across all of these things, is
- 11 there enough here to think that we ought to
- 12 pause before we judicially imply a cause of
- action, and we ought to leave it to Congress.
- 14 And I just think looking at the
- 15 balance, there's clearly enough to say there is
- 16 a body that can address these kinds of
- 17 on-the-grounds concerns at the border. But it's
- 18 Congress. It's not the courts.
- 19 And I guess the -- the last thing I'd
- 20 say is, you know, the Fifth Circuit looking at
- 21 this said, look, the facts are tragic. This
- 22 Court said last time it's a heartbreaking loss
- of life but said this is not a close case under
- 24 Abbasi.
- 25 I -- I disagree with Respondent's

- 1 counsel about some of the hypotheticals, three
- 2 inches inside of the line or 10 miles inside the
- 3 line, but you don't have to agree with us on
- 4 those or disagree whether there is a Bivens to
- 5 think that once you've crossed the border and
- 6 you're dealing with foreign nationals on foreign
- 7 soil, now you've crossed into territory where
- 8 Congress has never gone.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Did you say you
- 10 disagree, Mr. Wall?
- MR. WALL: I do.
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: So the three inches
- inside the line, what would be the -- the case
- 14 there?
- MR. WALL: I think if you're talk -- I
- 16 mean, so take the easiest hypothetical. You
- 17 have just foreign nationals going across the
- 18 border, right. Certainly grant that a couple of
- 19 the special factors aren't going to apply,
- 20 extraterritoriality and congressional action.
- I think you've still likely got
- 22 foreign relations and national security
- 23 concerns. I think probably best answer is
- there's not a Bivens action.
- 25 JUSTICE KAGAN: And how about 10 miles

1 from the border but doing border security work? 2 MR. WALL: I think maybe you've still 3 got foreign relations and border security. But, again, whether or not you agree with us on that, 4 5 this is the easy case where all of those special factors are triggered. 6 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, 8 counsel. Mr. Vladeck, three minutes. 9 10 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF STEPHEN I. 11 VLADECK ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS 12 MR. VLADECK: Thank you, Mr. Chief 13 Justice. 14 Let me just say briefly that I take Mr. Wall's answer to Justice Kagan's last 15 16 question to mean that the government has now 17 changed its position from Hernandez I, where the 18 government argued that the inside the border 19 hypothetical would be actionable under Bivens. 20 That aside, I mean, I do want to go 21 back to putting this case in the broader context 22 because I think it's important to understand how 23 we got here. Historically, the whole way that

the tort liability regime worked for government

misconduct was that this Court and state courts

24

- 1 looked to existing common law causes of action
- and focused on immunity defenses as the way of
- 3 calibrating the harm that citizens and others
- 4 faced when injured by government officers
- 5 against the need to protect officers acting in
- 6 good faith, back to Judge Hand in Gregoire
- 7 versus Biddle.
- 8 The Court struck this balance by
- 9 fashioning immunity defenses where the fight
- 10 would be over whether the officer was entitled
- 11 to immunity or not. And for law enforcement
- 12 officers specifically, this Court has long
- 13 rejected the argument that there should be any
- 14 context in which law enforcement officers,
- 15 because of the frequency with which they
- interact with average individuals, because of
- 17 the nature of their interactions, because of the
- 18 powers they have to search, to seize, to arrest
- in this context, to use lethal force, did not
- 20 justify absolute immunity and instead justified
- 21 a more narrower, qualified kind of immunity for
- those most likely to come face-to-face with
- 23 private citizens.
- 24 Distilled to its simplest, the
- 25 government's position in this case is that

- 1 officers in what is self-described as the
- 2 nation's largest law enforcement agency should
- 3 have a functional absolute immunity at least
- 4 where foreign nationals are concerned.
- 5 And our submission is that that is not
- 6 consistent with how this Court has always
- 7 understood the relationship between causes of
- 8 action and immunity defenses in this context.
- 9 It is not required by any of this Court's Bivens
- 10 decisions. It does not abide by this Court's
- 11 suggestion in Abbasi that there are strong
- 12 reasons and powerful reasons to retain Bivens in
- 13 this context.
- 14 And it would eliminate the one
- deterrence that is meaningfully available to
- 16 ensure that officers in the nation's largest law
- 17 enforcement agency are complying with the law.
- 18 Our rule is --
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Before you finish
- 20 --
- 21 MR. VLADECK: -- not case-specific.
- 22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- before you
- 23 finish, can you address one decision that the
- 24 government seems to put a lot of stock -- stock
- in, and that is RJR -- RS -- what is it -- R --

1	is it RJR Nabisco?				
2	MR. VLADECK: So, Justice Ginsburg,				
3	that goes again to the question of whether				
4	extraterritoriality is a special factor				
5	counseling hesitation. And I want to be clear,				
6	we agree that there will be much harder cases,				
7	if, say, for example, Agent Mesa was miles into				
8	Mexico, somehow acting under legal authority.				
9	But RJR Nabisco reinforces, it does				
10	not distinguish Kiobel in its suggestion that				
11	the presumption against extraterritoriality				
12	Mr. Chief Justice can be displaced when the				
13	underlying conduct touches and concerns U.S.				
14	territory with sufficient force to displace the				
15	presumption.				
16	If ever there was a case, Your Honors,				
17	where the underlying conduct touched and				
18	concerned U.S. territory with sufficient force,				
19	it's when a U.S. law enforcement officer				
20	standing on U.S. soil uses lethal force.				
21	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,				
22	counsel. The case is submitted.				
23	(Whereupon, 12:33 p.m., the case was				
24	submitted.)				

	<u>. </u>	t to Final Review	
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