| 1  | IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES              |
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| 3  | MICHELLE ORTIZ, :                                      |
| 4  | Petitioner :   |
| 5  | v. : No. 09-737  |
| 6  | PAULA JORDAN, ET AL. :                                 |
| 7  | x  |
| 8  | Washington, D.C.                                       |
| 9  | Monday, November 1, 2010                               |
| 10 |  |
| 11 | The above-entitled matter came on for oral             |
| 12 | argument before the Supreme Court of the United States |
| 13 | at 10:03 a.m.  |
| 14 | APPEARANCES:   |
| 15 | DAVID E. MILLS, ESQ., Cleveland, Ohio; on behalf of    |
| 16 | Petitioner.  |
| 17 | BENJAMIN C. MIZER, ESQ., Solicitor General, Columbus,  |
| 18 | Ohio; on behalf of Respondents.                        |
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| 1   | PROCEEDINGS   |
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| 2   | (10:03 a.m.)  |
| 3   | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument              |
| 4   | first this morning in Case 09-737, Ortiz v. Jordan.     |
| 5   | Mr. Mills.  |
| 6   | ORAL ARGUMENT OF DAVID E. MILLS                         |
| 7   | ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER                             |
| 8   | MR. MILLS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it                |
| 9   | please the Court:                                       |
| L O | Denial of summary judgment is not reviewable            |
| L1  | on appeal after trial, especially where the decision    |
| L2  | depends on whether the evidence on the merits of the    |
| L3  | claim is sufficient to cross the legal line for         |
| L 4 | liability. In this case                                 |
| L5  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry to                     |
| L6  | interrupt so quickly, but that especially, I take it    |
| L7  | I take it, is a concession that there's a difference    |
| L8  | between claims for qualified immunity based on evidence |
| L9  | and claims that are based on law.                       |
| 20  | MR. MILLS: Well, there's a difference                   |
| 21  | between defenses that depend on the evidence at trial.  |
| 22  | What I would say about qualified immunity is that, to   |
| 23  | the extent any court of appeals is going to enter       |
| 24  | judgment based on qualified immunity, it needs to       |
| 25  | understand the conduct of the officials in the case.    |

- 1 And so you're always talking about the evidence of that
- 2 conduct.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, of course there's
- 4 always -- there are always facts. There are often
- 5 disputed facts. But suppose the issue is whether or not
- 6 this right -- and maybe there are two rights here --
- 7 this right was clearly established. That's -- that's an
- 8 issue of law.
- 9 MR. MILLS: That is -- that is an issue of
- 10 law, Your Honor.
- 11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And doesn't that fall
- 12 within the "except" clause that the Chief Justice was
- 13 talking to you about, which you haven't had much time to
- 14 fill out, I understand.
- But -- well, if you're going to say -- and
- 16 it's really not whether the summary judgment is -- is
- 17 appealed. That's a little bit -- it's whether or not
- 18 the issues resolved by the summary judgment motion are
- 19 appealable. I read into your response, or implied from
- 20 your response, what the Chief Justice did, that maybe
- 21 sometimes the summary judgment motion, say, on an issue
- 22 of law is sufficient to preserve the issue.
- 23 MR. MILLS: Well -- and that gets to what I
- 24 think is the heart of the split in the circuits and the
- 25 confusion, is that every circuit recognizes a very

- 1 general rule that where the evidence at trial moots that
- 2 at summary judgment, we're not going to review the
- 3 summary judgment decision.
- 4 Now, a number of courts said: Well, wait a
- 5 second; there are summary judgment issues that don't
- 6 depend on the evidence, and we're -- those are typically
- 7 called questions of law. And Respondents point to a
- 8 number of good examples in their brief of defenses such
- 9 as statute of limitations, pre-emption, and the like,
- 10 that indeed very often don't depend at all on the
- 11 evidence at trial. The difference with qualified
- 12 immunity is that qualified immunity requires the court
- 13 to look at the evidence of the claim itself.
- Now, statute of limitations, for example, is
- 15 actually quite different, because in statute of
- 16 limitations -- let's suppose Michelle Ortiz filed her
- 17 suit 20 years late. It would not matter at all how much
- 18 evidence she adduced of the Respondents' misconduct. It
- 19 would be barred by statute of limitations.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So Mr. Mills, what then
- 21 is the difference? You point out, quite rightly,
- 22 summary judgment looks to what evidence there was, and
- 23 the question for the court is: What could the plaintiff
- 24 prove? When we get past trial, the issue becomes: What
- 25 has the plaintiff proved?

- So, what was brought out at trial? What was
- 2 the record at trial that was larger than the record at
- 3 summary judgment? Because if there -- if there was
- 4 no -- no new fact presentation, no more ample fact
- 5 presentation, then it wouldn't matter. It would be the
- 6 same body of evidence, right?
- 7 MR. MILLS: Well, I think that's largely --
- 8 largely right, Justice Ginsburg, and here's an example
- 9 of what did change in this case.
- 10 At the summary judgment stage, what we had
- 11 were affidavits of the Respondents discussing their role
- in relation to this case, with no comment whatsoever
- 13 about what the consequences would have been had
- 14 Ms. Jordan immediately reported the first sexual
- 15 assault. The record was bare at summary judgment from
- 16 Respondents' perspective on that -- on that point.
- 17 At trial, under cross-examination,
- 18 Ms. Bright testified that Respondent Jordan indeed
- 19 violated prison policy by not reporting it and then,
- 20 very crucially, also agreed that the second, more
- 21 violent assault would have actually been precluded had
- 22 that report taken place.
- Now, that's --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, this gets to what
- 25 troubles me about this case. Although the Sixth Circuit

- 1 referred to summary judgment in its opinion, it seems to
- 2 me the Sixth Circuit actually reviewed the evidence at
- 3 trial and determined that the defendants were entitled
- 4 to judgment as a matter of law based on the evidence at
- 5 trial.
- 6 So I don't know why this case actually
- 7 presents the question on which cert was granted. It
- 8 seems to me it presents a question of -- a purely
- 9 factual question in the end, whether there was --
- 10 whether judgment as a matter of law was appropriate.
- 11 And you never raised the judgment as a matter of law.
- 12 You never raised in the court of appeals, as
- 13 I understand it, the argument that the defendants'
- 14 ability to object to the entry of judgment as a matter
- of law was waived because they never filed a Rule 50(b)
- 16 motion. Isn't that right?
- 17 MR. MILLS: Well -- well, there's a couple
- 18 points in there that I need to address.
- 19 First, I think that you are exactly right.
- 20 What the Sixth Circuit did here is it -- it reviewed a
- 21 summary judgment decision, but it did peek ahead to the
- 22 trial evidence, and it said it was doing that. I think
- 23 that highlights the fundamental problem of reviewing
- 24 summary judgment after the trial. The Sixth Circuit is
- 25 implicitly recognizing it would be illogical to look at

- 1 that summary judgment record, those affidavits, and then
- 2 ignore this cross-examined testimony of what --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, suppose we were to
- 4 hold that they -- that they couldn't review the denial
- of summary judgment. The case is remanded to them, and
- 6 they say: Okay, well, we made a slip of the pen when we
- 7 referred to summary judgment in the prior decision. We
- 8 really were saying that the defendants were entitled to
- 9 judgment as a matter of law, and, although there wasn't
- 10 a Rule 50(b) motion, that was waived because it wasn't
- 11 raised on appeal.
- 12 So we are -- we come back to exactly where
- 13 we are now. All we've done is to correct a slip of
- 14 the -- what was arguably a slip of the pen, perhaps
- 15 motivated by their belief that the Rule 50(b) issue is
- 16 jurisdictional. But it really is not under our cases
- 17 distinguishing between jurisdictional guestions and
- 18 claims processing questions.
- 19 MR. MILLS: And I agree with that last
- 20 point. But here's the problem and here's why it isn't
- 21 just simply a slip of the pen that can be fixed by
- 22 remanding. Even if this was not summary judgment
- 23 whatsoever and it was, as Respondents say, essentially a
- 24 Rule 50(a) review, that conflicts with an entire line of
- 25 this Court's decisions leading into Unitherm, which

- 1 makes clear that the court of appeals absolutely lacks
- 2 the power to review the sufficiency of the evidence
- 3 where that question wasn't ruled upon by the district
- 4 court. And so the court of appeals here, regardless of
- 5 any sort of forfeiture argument, absolutely lacked the
- 6 power to consider it.
- 7 The additional point about your --
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: But that's not the point
- 9 that you've made here. I mean -- and that isn't the
- 10 point on which we granted certiorari.
- 11 MR. MILLS: That's right, and I think -- I
- 12 think what I just said about the 50(b) point is that I
- think it highlights that this really was a summary
- 14 judgment review by the Sixth Circuit of --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Now, Mr. Mills, if I could
- 16 just understand your answer to Justice Alito. You
- 17 concede that the Sixth Circuit opinion is using the
- 18 record built on the whole trial and that that's a
- 19 different record from the record that existed at summary
- 20 judgment; is that correct?
- 21 MR. MILLS: I do concede it, except to the
- 22 extent that I concede they did an adequate review of the
- 23 record. But I -- I concede that point. For the example
- 24 -- for example --
- 25 JUSTICE KAGAN: So they have that first

- 1 paragraph where they suggest that they're ruling on a
- 2 summary judgment motion. Then they go through an entire
- 3 opinion that talks about the facts and the record. And
- 4 there are very few citations, but your understanding is
- 5 that when they talk about the facts in the records,
- 6 they're talking about the post-trial -- I mean the
- 7 record that has been built up as a result of the trial?
- 8 MR. MILLS: There are -- there are certainly
- 9 a number of instances where they definitely are talking
- 10 about the trial. I do think it -- it is even muddy the
- 11 extent to which they are incorporating trial facts
- 12 versus summary judgment facts. The example I gave about
- 13 this point where Ms. Bright conceded on cross that Ms.
- 14 Ortiz indeed would have been separated and the assault,
- 15 second assault, precluded, it's one of two things:
- 16 Either the Sixth Circuit's reviewing summary judgment
- 17 and picking a couple of trial facts it thinks helps to
- 18 review and missing the facts, or it's doing -- it's
- 19 looking ahead at these trial facts and because --
- 20 particularly because the district court never weighed in
- on that, on a Rule 50(b), it's botching the record. And
- 22 it goes to the heart of this Court's cases from Cone
- 23 v. West Virginia Pulp & Paper in 1947 up through
- 24 Unitherm, which says we have to have the district court
- 25 review the sufficiency of the evidence before the court

- of appeals could even have the power to possibly
- 2 consider --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That -- that answer is
- 4 not addressing Justice Alito's point, which he said a
- 5 Rule 50 motion is not jurisdictional. You are in
- 6 essence claiming it is. You're saying they lacked the
- 7 power, but Justice Alito's question to you said they
- 8 don't, that they've misread the fact that this is not a
- 9 jurisdictional motion. So address that question: Why
- 10 is it jurisdictional as opposed to a claim processing?
- 11 MR. MILLS: Your Honor, I -- I am not
- 12 disputing that the Sixth Circuit had jurisdiction to
- 13 consider the case. But I am making a distinction among
- 14 jurisdiction and power, and it's the same distinction
- 15 actually the Tenth Circuit employed in a case called
- 16 Williams v. Gonterman, which is cited in our reply
- 17 brief; I think it's at page 10. This exact issue came
- 18 up, where the verdict loser said: Wait a second; this
- 19 issue's been forfeited. The Tenth Circuit, reading
- 20 Unitherm, reading the debate between the majority and
- 21 the dissenters, who said plain error and those doctrines
- 22 should apply, said: We lack the power to review this;
- 23 we have jurisdiction, but we lack the power to --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The claim processing
- 25 rules, we have said that, unless you object, the court

- 1 doesn't lack power. Since you didn't object below to a
- 2 -- a argument that Rule 50(b) precluded consideration by
- 3 the court of appeals, why wasn't that argument waived
- 4 before the court?
- 5 MR. MILLS: It's not waived because, while
- 6 the general principle is that claims processing rules
- 7 are indeed subject to waiver and forfeiture, this
- 8 particular context, as this Court has made clear, that
- 9 the word "power" is not an accidental use. It's been
- 10 used in all of these cases.
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Why is it -- I mean,
- 12 power -- jurisdiction is power, power to proceed in a
- 13 case. But we are in an area where there are many, many
- 14 cases of this Court that distinguish the Rule 50(a),
- 15 50(b) from the run-of-the-mine claim processing rule
- 16 because in the background is the Seventh Amendment
- 17 Re-examination Clause. That's the whole reason why
- 18 there is this 50(a)-50(b) litany, why the verdict loser
- 19 must repeat the 50(a) motion, after -- after the
- 20 verdict.
- 21 So I'm surprised that you're using the word
- 22 "power." You're not referring to any of that history
- 23 which stems from a constitutional provision, the Seventh
- 24 Amendment.
- 25 MR. MILLS: Well, Justice Ginsburg, you're

- 1 absolutely correct, and I think that footnote 4 of
- 2 Unitherm goes right to your point. In footnote 4 of
- 3 Unitherm, the Court explains that the very reason a
- 4 court of appeals lacks the power, lacks the power to
- 5 review that question, is because it is essentially, as
- 6 in Unitherm, going to be as a court of appeals reviewing
- 7 the conduct -- the sufficiency of the evidence, without
- 8 a district court ruling on the question. And this Court
- 9 said in Unitherm that that raises serious Seventh
- 10 Amendment concerns. This case is actually a very good
- 11 example --
- 12 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, Mr. Mills, I got you
- 13 started on this, but this -- none of this is the
- 14 question on which we granted review, is it?
- MR. MILLS: Well --
- JUSTICE ALITO: We didn't grant review to
- 17 decide whether a court of appeals can consider judgment
- 18 of a -- judgment as a matter of law where there isn't a
- 19 50(b) motion and no argument is made that the -- that
- 20 issue was waived by failing to make the motion. We
- 21 didn't grant review on that.
- MR. MILLS: And, Justice Alito, that
- 23 highlights another important point about this exchange,
- 24 and that is that Respondents in the Sixth Circuit did
- 25 not suggest that the Sixth Circuit did have the

- 1 authority to take the summary judgment question and then
- 2 look ahead to trial facts. And so, the Sixth Circuit
- 3 has taken the summary judgment decision and then acted
- 4 without authority to look ahead at the trial facts. And
- 5 so if the argument is that we have forfeited a
- 6 pre-emptive argument to the Sixth Circuit that it
- 7 couldn't do this frankly very unorthodox approach, I
- 8 don't think that that's a proper invocation of
- 9 forfeiture even regardless of the point about power.
- 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What -- are you saying
- 11 then that if we explain to the Fifth Circuit -- to the
- 12 Sixth Circuit, that the record they must look at is the
- trial record, so it's different from the summary
- 14 judgment stage, if we told them that, then maybe they
- 15 would look at the evidence differently, even though they
- 16 purported to look at the trial evidence?
- 17 MR. MILLS: Well, I think if that order were
- 18 given, they would indeed do that. But I would still
- 19 come back to the point that there is absolutely no basis
- 20 on which they would have the authority to do that. And
- 21 the point is, in the Unitherm line of cases, that if you
- 22 don't have a district court ruling on the very question,
- 23 the question here of whether their conduct, as they say,
- 24 crossed a constitutional line, you're circumventing the
- 25 district court's role in the entire process.

| 1 As this Court has explained repeatedly | lγ, | 6 |
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- 2 requisite of a court of appeals reviewing that evidence
- 3 that went to the jury is that the district court first,
- 4 who has the feel of the case, who saw the witnesses, who
- 5 saw Respondent Bright on cross-examination, first have
- 6 the opportunity in the judge's discretion to grant a new
- 7 trial --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So, if you're right, then
- 9 there has to be a remand to the Sixth Circuit with
- 10 instructions to send the case back to the district court
- 11 to ask the district court what -- whether it thought the
- 12 evidence was sufficient?
- MR. MILLS: I don't think so, Your Honor. I
- 14 think that the best way to see this case is it's indeed
- 15 a review of the summary judgment decision. That's the
- only decision by the district court that had to do with
- 17 qualified immunity.
- 18 The Sixth Circuit expressly invoked an
- 19 exception to say: We can review summary judgment after
- 20 the trial because it's qualified immunity; and the
- 21 Eighth Circuit said that's okay and we say that's okay;
- 22 we're looking ahead at trial facts.
- 23 And I think what this Court can and should
- 24 conclude is that it's improper to review the summary
- 25 judgment decision after trial because the facts have

- 1 changed --
- JUSTICE ALITO: And your argument is that
- 3 where a --the district court denies summary judgment on
- 4 a qualified immunity issue that is based even purely on
- 5 an issue of law, there can't be a review unless that's
- 6 renewed -- there can't be appellate review unless that
- 7 purely legal question is renewed in a Rule 50(b) motion.
- 8 That's your -- that's your argument?
- 9 MR. MILLS: That is my argument, with a
- 10 couple key pieces -- first of all, they could, of
- 11 course, take a collateral order appeal, but if they
- 12 proceed to trial -- and here's -- here's sort of the
- 13 fundamental point about qualified immunity. Sure, there
- 14 are purely legal questions in the qualified immunity
- 15 inquiry. Was the right clearly established? But to
- 16 enter judgment, to enter judgment, whether it's the
- 17 district court or the court of appeals, that court must
- 18 know what the conduct is.
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: But what if the facts are
- 20 utterly undisputed? There's a videotape of exactly what
- 21 went on. Nobody has the slightest disagreement about
- 22 the facts. The only question is whether the right was
- 23 clearly established, and the district court rejects that
- 24 at summary judgment. What benefit -- what is the point
- 25 of saying that the defendants have to raise that same

- 1 issue again in a Rule 50(b) motion? It's utterly a -- a
- 2 pointless exercise.
- 3 MR. MILLS: Well, it's certainly a less
- 4 compelling case than this one where the facts indeed
- 5 change. But I would say that there -- it's not utterly
- 6 pointless because the 50(b) motion still invokes all the
- 7 protections that this Court has described where the
- 8 district court, who had the feel of the case, gets the
- 9 first chance to consider whether a new trial should be
- 10 granted --
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Mills, when -- when
- 12 Unitherm talks about the district court feeling the case
- 13 and having a feel for the case, it's talking about
- 14 having the feel for the evidence and for the facts. The
- 15 whole rationale of Unitherm is based on the evidence,
- 16 the facts, not on purely legal questions.
- 17 So suppose we disagree with you about the
- 18 reach of Unitherm. Suppose we say Unitherm doesn't have
- 19 any application to purely legal questions. What would
- 20 that mean for your case? Which part of your claims were
- 21 purely legal and which part were instead founded on the
- 22 facts, in which case you would have a better Unitherm
- 23 argument?
- MR. MILLS: It -- it would still mean you'd
- 25 have to reverse in this case, and I think in

- 1 Justice Alito's hypothetical perhaps, perhaps not.
- 2 But in this case, as -- as Respondents
- 3 themselves say, the question here is actually very
- 4 simple. It's whether their conduct crossed a
- 5 constitutional line. And the point is that, even in the
- 6 qualified immunity inquiry, the question is: Does the
- 7 conduct -- and that's conduct in one way at summary
- 8 judgment and another way at trial -- does that conduct
- 9 cross a clearly established constitutional line?
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I don't understand,
- 11 counsel, how your argument -- that in every case you
- 12 need to know the facts, every qualified immunity case
- 13 you need to know the facts, and those only come out
- 14 after trial -- is consistent with our recognizing that
- 15 you can have a collateral order appeals denial of
- 16 summary judgment. In other words, you can consider
- 17 qualified immunity without knowing how the facts are
- 18 going to come out at trial, which is why we allow you to
- 19 have an appeal before trial.
- MR. MILLS: You're absolutely right. And at
- 21 summary judgment, officers are entitled to invoke
- immunity, and they're entitled to take that immediate
- 23 appeal. And it's typically -- well, required under
- 24 Johnson v. Jones that it be what this Court's called a
- 25 question of law. The defendants assume the facts

- 1 against them, and they say to the court of appeals, it
- 2 may be a purely legal question, like this isn't -- this
- 3 is clearly established or isn't clearly established.
- 4 But to -- to say whether that line is crossed, I mean,
- 5 as recently as Iqbal, this Court explained --
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well -- so you're
- 7 just saying your case on qualified immunity isn't like
- 8 that case; is that all?
- 9 MR. MILLS: Well, I'm saying it -- it's like
- 10 that case to the extent that the court still has to
- 11 understand, if it's going to enter judgment, what the
- 12 conduct was. Even if it's looking at purely legal --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: No, it doesn't. It doesn't
- 14 have to know what it was. It assumes it to be what --
- 15 what the plaintiff claims it was.
- MR. MILLS: That's right.
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: At the summary judgments,
- 18 you give the benefit of the doubt to the plaintiff.
- 19 MR. MILLS: That's right.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So there's always a factual
- 21 element to the -- to the ruling.
- 22 MR. MILLS: That's right. And I -- I think
- 23 that bolsters my point. There is always a factual
- 24 element to the ruling. And so, when you go to trial and
- 25 you put on a trial that is all about Respondents'

- 1 conduct and you have them under cross-examination and
- 2 that evidence grows of their misconduct, then we're
- 3 talking about a situation where --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's never going to be any
- 5 better than what you assumed. It's never going to be
- 6 any better for the plaintiff than what you assumed at
- 7 the summary judgment stage.
- 8 MR. MILLS: Your Honor, it actually was in
- 9 this case. It actually was better at trial in this
- 10 case --
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: For -- for --
- MR. MILLS: -- for the plaintiff.
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why was that?
- MR. MILLS: And it was -- one example I gave
- 15 earlier: Ms. Ortiz, before trial, didn't have knowledge
- of what would have happened had Mrs. Jordan not violated
- 17 prison procedures and immediately reported the first
- 18 assault. On cross-examination, however, Mrs. Bright, at
- 19 page 242 of the trial transcript, said: "The second
- 20 assault, the violent assault, would have been
- 21 precluded."
- Now, it seems to me, again reading the cold
- 23 transcript --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's -- just finish:
- 25 Because if Ms. Jordan had reported the incident that she

- 1 was required to, they would have put Ms. Ortiz in
- 2 segregation automatically; is that it?
- 3 MR. MILLS: Not that they would have put her
- 4 in segregation, but that they would have taken steps to
- 5 separate her from the officer, whether that meant
- 6 removing the officer from the location or putting her in
- 7 another cell. The important piece of that is not only
- 8 did it change from summary judgment to trial; the Sixth
- 9 Circuit got it entirely wrong.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But you have an
- 11 obligation in opposing summary judgment to, in your list
- of disputed facts or facts that preclude summary
- 13 judgment, to put all that in. And why didn't you put
- 14 the point you are raising now in the opposition to
- 15 summary judgment?
- MR. MILLS: That's not something Ms. Ortiz
- 17 would have knowledge of.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I know. So it --
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But you -- you prevailed
- 20 on the summary judgment motion. There was a summary
- 21 judgment motion, right? And it was denied.
- MR. MILLS: That's right. That's right.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So the -- we know that
- 24 the district judge thought that, at that point, there
- 25 was a case to be presented for trial based on the

- 1 plaintiff's allegations.
- 2 MR. MILLS: That's absolutely right. And --
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but -- but you
- 4 may prevail. You may have three different factual
- 5 disputes that the other side is saying are undisputed,
- 6 and the fact that you prevail on one doesn't meant that
- 7 you didn't have an obligation to put in your opposition
- 8 the others.
- 9 MR. MILLS: Well, Your Honor, I -- I just
- 10 can't see how Ms. Ortiz would have an obligation to put
- in some fact that's outside of her knowledge and,
- 12 frankly, something that came out when a Respondent caved
- in a bit on cross-examination.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: How would you put the rule
- 15 about when you have to renew a motion? You move for
- 16 summary judgment. Can you say this? You've looked up
- 17 the treatises and so forth. If the motion for summary
- 18 judgment involves either a question of fact or a mixed
- 19 question of fact and law, it has to be renewed. If it
- 20 involves neither of the others, neither of those two
- 21 things, but it's a pure question of law and not mixed,
- 22 it doesn't have to be renewed.
- MR. MILLS: I think that's -- that's a fair
- 24 way to state it.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Is there any authority for

- 1 that? I mean, is there any -- it seems to be roughly
- 2 what you're trying to argue, roughly. At least it seems
- 3 to me a rule that would make sense. Is it that -- what
- 4 do you find related to that? It seems to me that must
- 5 have been thought about before this minute.
- 6 MR. MILLS: Well --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Not necessarily by you, but
- 8 by somebody.
- 9 MR. MILLS: Yes, indeed. I think it has
- 10 been thought about. I think it's been thought about
- 11 really by every circuit when they recognize the very
- 12 basic principle that the real evidence of a case is the
- 13 evidence at the trial, and what that means is that, if
- 14 the evidence at trial goes to the question at summary
- 15 judgment, whatever that legal issue may be, it's
- 16 illogical to ignore exactly what happened at trial and
- 17 go back to summary judgment.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, but let's imagine it
- 19 has nothing to do with qualified immunity.
- MR. MILLS: Yes.
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: A bread-and-butter case.
- MR. MILLS: Yes.
- 23 JUSTICE BREYER: You can't appeal a denial
- of motion for summary judgment. But there's a trial and
- 25 the lawyer forgets to renew the motion. So sometimes

- 1 he's lost it; I quess sometimes he hasn't. I would
- 2 think he would have lost it if it's a mixed question of
- 3 fact or law or if it's a pure question of fact that the
- 4 answer turns on. I would think he hadn't lost it if in
- 5 fact it's a pure question of law. But is that the basic
- 6 hornbook rule out of this context?
- 7 MR. MILLS: Yes, I think it is. I think it
- 8 is the basic horn rule --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: And, Mr. Mills, if that were
- 10 the basic hornbook rule, your claims are all matters of
- 11 fact or mixed questions of fact and law?
- 12 MR. MILLS: Our claims are mixed questions
- 13 of fact and law, yes.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: There are no purely legal
- 15 issues?
- MR. MILLS: There are purely legal
- 17 components to those inquiries; there's no doubt about
- 18 it. Again, a purely legal question might be what is the
- 19 constitutional right; is it clearly established?
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, that's what I'm
- 21 asking. I'm asking is -- is -- are the questions that
- 22 you have those sorts of questions, or are they factual
- 23 inquiries that would fall on the other side of
- 24 Justice Breyer's line?
- 25 MR. MILLS: At the end of the day, these are

- 1 factual inquiries in which you have to understand the
- 2 officers' conduct. All I'm saying is that the second
- 3 component to establish immunity or anything else does
- 4 include always a pure question about whether the right's
- 5 clearly established. But there is no doubt that, to
- 6 assess whether that line has been crossed, you have to
- 7 understand what the facts are.
- 8 JUSTICE ALITO: The -- what's -- determining
- 9 what is a mixed question is notoriously difficult. What
- 10 about the -- the situation where the -- the ruling is,
- 11 assuming certain facts to be true, the -- the right was
- 12 not clearly established? Now, is the fact that certain
- 13 facts are assumed to be true enough to make that a mixed
- 14 question?
- MR. MILLS: Yes, it is, because that's a
- 16 classic sufficiency challenge at Rule 50, to assume
- 17 the -- that's what Rule 50 requires. Assume the facts
- 18 against you after the verdict's come back and now say,
- 19 you know what, Your Honor, it was insufficient.
- I'd like to reserve my time.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- Mr. Mizer.
- 23 ORAL ARGUMENT OF BENJAMIN C. MIZER
- ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- 25 MR. MIZER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it

- 1 please the Court:
- 2 As I think the discussion has already
- 3 demonstrated, Ms. Ortiz's question presented hinges on a
- 4 false assumption. That assumption is that the Sixth
- 5 Circuit was reviewing the summary judgment order as the
- 6 final appealable order in this case.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Except that it begins,
- 8 2(a), "Although courts normally do not review the denial
- 9 of a summary judgment motion after trial on the merits,
- 10 the denial of summary judgment based on qualified
- 11 immunity is an exception to this rule." And that's --
- MR. MIZER: And --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's the opening. That
- 14 sets the stage for what follows.
- 15 MR. MIZER: And --
- 16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Now, it may be that
- 17 everybody, including the Sixth Circuit, misapprehended
- 18 the rule because there are some cases that depend on an
- 19 assessment of the record and some cases that don't, but
- 20 that's not what the Sixth Circuit said.
- 21 MR. MIZER: I think that the Sixth Circuit's
- 22 word choice in the sentence that you just read was not
- 23 perfectly clear, but --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, Mr. Mizer, you asked
- 25 for an appeal of the summary judgment motion, so they

- 1 might have chosen their words based on your request.
- MR. MIZER: Actually, Your Honor, the
- 3 summary judgment motion was only one of several orders
- 4 listed in the notice of appeal. And the Sixth Circuit
- 5 brief was very clearly couched as an appeal from the
- 6 verdict, which at the bottom of the prior page of the --
- 7 of the petition appendix, from where Justice Kennedy
- 8 just read, the bottom of page 7a, the Sixth Circuit
- 9 calls it an "appeal from the jury verdict."
- 10 And then the Sixth Circuit, at petition
- 11 appendix 2a and throughout its opinion, refers to "trial
- 12 evidence."
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But, Mr. Mizer, then you
- 14 must concede that this opening sentence that
- 15 Justice Kennedy just quoted is wrong. Courts normally
- 16 don't review the denial of summary judgment motion after
- 17 trial on the merits, but when the summary judgment
- 18 denial is based on qualified immunity, there's an
- 19 exception.
- 20 MR. MIZER: I think that what the Sixth
- 21 Circuit meant there was that the issue of qualified
- 22 immunity raised at summary judgment was preserved. I
- 23 don't think its word choice was perfectly clear, but I
- 24 think other -- other phrases in the Sixth Circuit's
- 25 opinion make clearer that what it was doing was viewing

- 1 the full trial record and viewing --
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So that we should -- I
- 3 think what that means to me is that you really ignore
- 4 whether it was raised at summary judgment. If you're
- 5 going to look at the evidence at trial, what do we look
- 6 at, at trial, to see that the claim of qualified
- 7 immunity was preserved?
- 8 MR. MIZER: It would --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because it's a little
- 10 illogical to -- to say you're reviewing the summary
- judgment record when you're not.
- 12 MR. MIZER: Well, and I don't think the
- 13 Sixth Circuit was saying it was reviewing the summary
- 14 judgment record, and that would have been not
- 15 appropriate. What it was doing was looking at the whole
- 16 record. And a legal issue doesn't have to be raised
- 17 post-trial in order for it to have been adequately --
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: But surely it has to be
- 19 raised post-trial if your legal argument is: Look at
- 20 the facts; the facts of this case as proved do not
- 21 support liability.
- I mean, I would have thought that was a
- 23 classic instance where you do have to make the motion.
- 24 That's the whole point of having to renew it.
- MR. MIZER: To the extent --

| 1  | JUSTICE BREYER: Am I wrong?                             |
|----|---|
| 2  | MR. MIZER: Partly, yes, Your Honor. To the              |
| 3  | extent the the argument is that there needed to be a    |
| 4  | 50(b) motion  |
| 5  | JUSTICE BREYER: Why not?                                |
| 6  | MR. MIZER: and it was                                   |
| 7  | JUSTICE BREYER: I mean, do you normally                 |
| 8  | forget this case. What the lawyer says is: Judge, they  |
| 9  | are never going to be able to prove that my client      |
| 10 | crossed the intersection. Okay? We go to trial. At      |
| 11 | trial, he wants to say: We've heard all the evidence    |
| 12 | now, and it doesn't show my client crossed the          |
| 13 | intersection, so not liable. Okay?                      |
| 14 | Doesn't he have to renew it?                            |
| 15 | MR. MIZER: In your hypothetical?                        |
| 16 | JUSTICE BREYER: Yes.                                    |
| 17 | MR. MIZER: Yes.   |
| 18 | JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. Fine.                             |
| 19 | MR. MIZER: But that's been                              |
| 20 | JUSTICE BREYER: Now, how is yours one bit               |
| 21 | different? Because what you're saying is that the       |
| 22 | evidence, when you look at it, will show the facts are  |
| 23 | such that there must have been qualified immunity under |
| 24 | the law.  |

MR. MIZER: The difference, Your Honor, is

25

- 1 that this Court's case law concerning -- the Mitchell
- 2 line of cases concerning collateral order appeals in the
- 3 qualified immunity context divides qualified immunity
- 4 claims into two halves.
- 5 There are evidentiary sufficiency-based
- 6 qualified immunity claims, and there are legal claims.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Yes, that -- that is
- 8 right, and I find it, in the context where that already
- 9 matters, whether they're appealable as a collateral
- 10 issue already very difficult and complicated to sort
- 11 out. Now, what you want us to do is take that
- 12 difficulty and continue it on in terms of when you can
- 13 appeal and when you can't.
- Some qualified immunity claims are purely
- 15 legal. Some are purely factual. Some are in the
- 16 middle. Wouldn't it be easier if we just said: Here's
- 17 the rule from now on; you've got to renew them all in a
- 18 50(b) motion. And that makes it a lot easier for the
- 19 trial courts and the appellate courts to figure out when
- 20 they have to -- when they can consider it and when they
- 21 can't.
- I understand your argument that it makes a
- 23 difference. I think it's a good argument, because some
- 24 don't depend on the facts. But going forward, it just
- 25 creates an awful lot of difficulty that we don't need to

- 1 buy into.
- 2 MR. MIZER: Well, first of all, I think
- 3 that, because it is a difficult question, it should have
- 4 been raised by Ms. Ortiz properly, and she hasn't raised
- 5 the 50(b) argument properly. But even if the Court were
- 6 to reach it, I think the clearer rule is to map the
- 7 Johnson line onto the sufficiency of the evidence line,
- 8 otherwise -- for 50(b) motions. Otherwise, then --
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: The Johnson line isn't much
- 10 of a map, is what the Chief Justice is suggesting. It's
- 11 a mess. It's very hard to sort those things out. Why
- 12 -- why should we double the difficulty by -- by bringing
- it in at the -- at the Rule 50 stage as well?
- MR. MIZER: Because the converse rule, Your
- 15 Honor, would create even more difficulties. On
- 16 Ms. Ortiz's --
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why? All you have to do --
- 18 any lawyer going in knows he has to make the motion at
- 19 the close of the evidence. What -- what's the big deal?
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: And, in fact, you did.
- 21 You did move under 50(a). This whole case is here
- 22 because apparently -- well, what reason was it that you
- 23 didn't make the 50(b) motion? You told the court under
- 24 50(a), after all the evidence was in but before the case
- 25 went to the jury, that the jury would not have a legally

- 1 sufficient evidentiary basis to find for Ms. Ortiz.
- 2 That was -- that was your motion.
- 3 You were saying: Court, there was no
- 4 legally sufficient evidentiary basis. Evidentiary
- 5 basis. That was the motion that you made, recognizing
- 6 that the judgment -- the question is whether there is a
- 7 sufficient evidentiary basis.
- 8 MR. MIZER: And that argument is a different
- 9 species of argument than the argument on which -- than
- 10 the -- than the reasoning on which the Sixth Circuit
- 11 resolved the case, which is, even assuming all the facts
- 12 as given by Ms. Ortiz and taking -- treating those facts
- 13 as uncontroverted, still there was not a violation of
- 14 clearly established law.
- 15 And under Johnson v. Jones and Mitchell,
- 16 that is a different question than from the question of
- 17 whether or not particular conduct has been proven.
- 18 As --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, then what you're
- 20 saying is you didn't even -- you didn't need to make the
- 21 50(a) motion, that that was just an unnecessary touching
- 22 base with Rule 50(a)? Is that what you're saying?
- 23 MR. MIZER: That is our position, yes, Your
- 24 Honor, because a legal issue is adequately preserved
- 25 once it's pressed and passed on in the district court.

- 1 And to move for summary judgment on the issue is enough
- 2 to preserve a legal claim, the legal claim being not
- 3 that particular -- that sufficient evidence exists to
- 4 prove that particular conduct occurred, but rather that
- 5 the -- given all of that, that claim as assumed, still,
- 6 the Harlow line of objective legal reasonableness has
- 7 not been crossed.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But didn't they --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: I suppose there are some
- 10 cases in which the failure of the court to give a
- 11 requested instruction preserves the issue, and perhaps
- 12 50(b) is not required there.
- Were there any instructions proffered and
- 14 denied in this case that would have preserved the issue
- 15 for appeal?
- MR. MIZER: There was a requested
- instruction regarding qualified immunity, yes, and it
- 18 was not given. We're not arguing that that --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What was that
- 20 instruction?
- 21 MR. MIZER: The -- the instruction was about
- 22 the objective legal reasonableness standard under
- 23 Harlow. I actually don't think that that request was
- 24 proper --
- 25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Do you have a cite to

- 1 the record?
- 2 MR. MIZER: I don't have a cite to the
- 3 record at the moment. But -- but the -- the point is
- 4 that actually, that that instruction wasn't proper,
- 5 because the jury doesn't resolve the Harlow objective
- 6 legal reasonableness question. Instead, the jury
- 7 resolves the disputed facts, and then the court takes
- 8 those facts as a given for purposes of the Harlow
- 9 question.
- 10 And -- and, in this case, I think there's an
- 11 example of this distinction. There was very much
- 12 disputed at trial the question of whether Ms. Ortiz told
- 13 Ms. Jordan the name of the guard who had assaulted her.
- 14 And that fact was disputed at trial. We -- we didn't
- move for 50(b) over that factual dispute, and so we
- 16 couldn't appeal on that question.
- But what we did appeal was that, taking that
- 18 fact as assumed for purposes of -- of the qualified
- 19 immunity question, still qualified immunity was
- 20 warranted.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could you --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Then explain to me what
- 23 -- you made a 50(a) motion. Why did you -- was there a
- 24 reason for making the 50(a) motion and not following it
- 25 up with a 50(b) motion?

- 1 MR. MIZER: I'm not aware of a reason, Your
- 2 Honor. But at pages 4 to 5 of the joint appendix, I
- 3 think it's clear that there were two different types of
- 4 arguments being made at the 50(a) stage. One argument
- 5 was a dispute over facts. The other argument was, even
- 6 if we don't dispute those facts, still Ms. Ortiz's
- 7 arguments haven't shown a constitutional violation.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How could you --
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: It's -- it's very clear
- 10 from Rule 50 that 50(a) and 50(b) go together, and the
- 11 explanation, as I indicated when Petitioner's counsel
- 12 was speaking, is the Re-examination Clause of the
- 13 Seventh Amendment. So I think every first year
- 14 Procedure student learns 50(a), 50(b) go together, and
- there's a historic reason why you must back up a 50(a)
- 16 motion with a 50(b) motion. They're not -- they all --
- 17 they all ask the same question. The Rule 56, the Rule
- 18 50, 50(b), they all ask: Is there sufficient evidence
- 19 to warrant a jury finding, whatever. They all ask that,
- 20 but they ask -- ask it on the basis of a different
- 21 record: the summary judgment record, the trial record,
- 22 and the jury verdict.
- 23 MR. MIZER: But still, Your Honor, I think
- 24 the question of whether particular conduct has been
- 25 proven is a sufficiency question, and that differs in

- 1 nature from the question of whether, taking that proven
- 2 conduct as a given, assuming it to be true, without --
- 3 without questioning the correctness of the plaintiff's
- 4 version of the facts, that the -- then the Harlow
- 5 question is a separate question.
- 6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do you know of any case
- 7 holding that you don't have to couple a 50(a) motion
- 8 with a 50(b) motion depending upon what's in your 50(a)
- 9 motion?
- 10 MR. MIZER: I am not aware of any case, no,
- 11 although I am aware of cases, including the K & T
- 12 Enterprises case from the Seventh -- or sorry -- from
- 13 the Sixth Circuit, that we cite in our brief, which says
- 14 that legal claims, purely legal claims, may be raised in
- judgment as a matter of law motions under either 50(a)
- or 50(b), but that 50(b) is not required with respect to
- 17 those motions.
- 18 And so -- so the 50(a) motion here was a
- 19 belt-and-suspenders -- belt-and-suspenders effort, but
- 20 it wasn't legally required because of the -- the --
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could -- could you
- 22 articulate for me the line that you see between assuming
- 23 all of the facts and it's not enough as a matter of law,
- 24 and a sufficiency claim. And -- and let's break out the
- 25 two claims: one against Ms. Jordan, one against Ms.

- 1 Bright.
- On a due process claim against Ms. Bright,
- 3 there are two prongs, I think, to your argument. One is
- 4 that, as a matter of law under Sandin, putting her in
- 5 solitary confinement did not violate any -- any
- 6 constitutional right. And then there's "she didn't
- 7 retaliate" part of your claim.
- 8 The two seemed mixed up to me, below. And I
- 9 thought in reading your submissions to the district
- 10 court you were saying that, if she retaliated in putting
- 11 her in segregated confinement, it doesn't matter whether
- 12 there is a Sandin violation or not; she couldn't do the
- 13 retaliatory act; is that correct?
- 14 MR. MIZER: The -- the Sixth Circuit held in
- 15 this case that the retaliation claim is a different
- 16 claim from the due process claim, that it would be based
- 17 on --
- 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The First Amendment.
- 19 MR. MIZER: -- the First Amendment or some
- 20 other amendment. And --
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm trying to separate
- 22 out your --
- MR. MIZER: Yes.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- your argument,
- 25 however. What is your -- what is your position on this

- 1 question?
- 2 MR. MIZER: Our position is that the Sixth
- 3 Circuit got it right, and Ms. Ortiz hasn't appealed to
- 4 this Court on that holding, that as a -- as a matter of
- 5 law under Sandin, placing an individual in segregated
- 6 confinement does not amount to a due process violation
- 7 vis-à-vis the -- the ordinary conditions of prison
- 8 confinement.
- 9 I also have an answer, Justice Sotomayor, to
- 10 your question about the -- the jury instruction request.
- 11 It's in document 84 in the district court record.
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, you -- you refer to
- 13 Sandin. There are some extra things about the
- 14 confinement here. She was shackled, she was ill, and
- 15 nobody attended to her.
- 16 MR. MIZER: The -- the medical treatment
- 17 claims were dismissed by the district court at summary
- 18 judgment because Ms. Bright did not participate and did
- 19 not have any knowledge of --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, is -- on the
- 21 question of whether this treatment was punitive rather
- 22 than just protective custody.
- 23 MR. MIZER: And, again, on the question of
- 24 punitiveness, the Sixth Circuit held that that was not
- 25 preserved -- that claim was not preserved by Ms. Ortiz.

- 1 And she has not petitioned to this Court for review of
- 2 that holding by the Sixth Circuit, and so the only
- 3 question is the square Sandin question of whether
- 4 segregated confinement is an atypical and significant
- 5 hardship vis-à-vis the routine conditions of -- of her
- 6 confinement.
- 7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, wouldn't it be
- 8 this, the segregated confinement in this case, not at
- 9 large?
- 10 MR. MIZER: The -- again, the Sixth
- 11 Circuit's holding was that Sandin answered that -- that
- 12 question as a matter of clearly established law. And
- 13 since Ms. Ortiz hasn't petitioned for review of the
- 14 merits of that question, I'm not sure how it's presented
- 15 to this Court.
- 16 JUSTICE ALITO: Mr. Mizer, is it your
- 17 understanding that -- that Unitherm was based on Seventh
- 18 Amendment considerations, or was it based on prior
- 19 decisions that in turn were grounded on considerations
- 20 of fairness to the verdict-winner, namely the
- 21 opportunity, when a -- a motion for judgment as a matter
- 22 of law is made after the verdict, to move for dismissal
- 23 without prejudice or move for a new trial?
- 24 MR. MIZER: I think Unitherm was more
- 25 squarely the latter, although it -- the Court did refer

- 1 to the Seventh Amendment in responding to Justice
- 2 Stevens's dissent. And the Seventh Amendment concerns I
- 3 don't think are implicated here, because it is well
- 4 established that legal claims like qualified immunity
- 5 are not for the jury to resolve. And so taking --
- 6 taking the case away from --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, then you're --
- 8 you're saying the category -- the mixed claim -- as
- 9 Justice Breyer proposed, if it's a purely legal claim,
- 10 then you're right. If it's a mixed claim, then you're
- 11 wrong.
- 12 MR. MIZER: And I think those -- those
- 13 categorizations are -- are fairly slippery and would be
- 14 difficult to apply, as I think the Chief Justice
- 15 suggested. And so the guidance that is clear is the
- 16 guidance that already exists from Johnson v. Jones,
- 17 which is that there are -- there two types of qualified
- immunity claims, and if you're assuming the facts to be
- 19 true as the plaintiff posits them and you're not
- 20 controverting particular conduct, then you're in the
- 21 legal --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, Mr. Mizer, just --
- 23 JUSTICE KENNEDY: One -- one way to make the
- 24 formulation work is to say whether or not the issue
- 25 depends on an assessment of the record.

- 1 MR. MIZER: Well, qualified immunity is
- 2 always going to be an application of clearly established
- 3 law to fact. And Mitchell notes that -- that there will
- 4 be some -- some --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, but we've been
- 6 through this. I think it was Justice Alito who gave the
- 7 hypothetical -- suppose that everybody agrees on what
- 8 happened; the question is whether or not the right's
- 9 clearly established.
- 10 MR. MIZER: And that is this case.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's a pure issue of
- 12 law.
- MR. MIZER: And, as this Court has called
- 14 it, that's correct and that is this case.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How is that --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, is it this case, Mr.
- 17 Mizer? Take the deliberate indifference claim. The
- 18 question is whether the conduct amounted to deliberate
- 19 indifference. Why is that any different from asking
- 20 whether a particular kind of conduct amounted to
- 21 negligence, which in a previous case this Court said you
- 22 had did have to make 50(b), a 50(b) motion in order to
- 23 preserve? That was in the Johnson v. New York case.
- MR. MIZER: It's different, Your Honor,
- 25 because the -- the prong of the analysis in the

- 1 deliberate indifference conduct that the Sixth Circuit
- 2 was looking at was the objective prong of whether or not
- 3 the response was reasonable. So assuming all of the
- 4 worst of -- of Ms. Jordan's intent, as proven by the
- 5 trial record, and assuming the worst of what she did or
- 6 didn't do, still her response was as a legal matter
- 7 objectively reasonable, and that was the Sixth Circuit's
- 8 holding.
- 9 And so, therefore, because that's a legal
- 10 inquiry, there was no 50(b) requirement even if Ms.
- 11 Ortiz had preserved the 50(b) argument.
- 12 The -- the -- Ms. Ortiz has also posited
- 13 that a collateral order appeal is a requirement in order
- 14 to preserve a qualified immunity claim. That argument
- is clearly foreclosed not only by the broad agreement
- 16 among the circuits but also by this Court's decisions in
- 17 United States v. Clark.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. When you go back --
- 19 you're the one who has read these cases pretty
- 20 thoroughly, and as I looked at it, I -- with the
- 21 incomplete knowledge, I would have thought that
- 22 Justice Ginsburg's statement of it is basically right.
- 23 What Rule 50 is about is sufficiency of the evidence.
- 24 And 50(a) involves we're saying it won't be sufficient.
- 25 And 50(b) involves it wasn't sufficient. Then you could

- 1 have the Chief Justice's rule. It would work perfectly.
- 2 But apparently there's a Second Circuit
- 3 case, and some things in the treatises, that says
- 4 sometimes Rule 50(a) is being used for some other
- 5 purpose. And that's what seems to be going wrong. Like
- 6 if you have a pure question of law, you ought to be
- 7 outside 50(a); you ought to be doing some other thing.
- 8 You know, a question like: Was there collateral
- 9 estoppel that means that he couldn't say he was a
- 10 policeman because they litigated this 4 months ago?
- 11 That's a pure question of law.
- 12 So, what are these cases and that exception
- in the treatise about? What are they thinking of? What
- 14 kinds of instances do they think come under 50(a) that
- 15 aren't sufficiency of the evidence?
- 16 MR. MIZER: The -- the courts have said that
- 17 you had can raise in a judgment as a matter of law
- 18 motion legal arguments like the statute of limitations,
- 19 collateral estoppel, pre-emption. Very often those will
- 20 be --
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. Suppose we could say
- 22 this: That when a lawyer uses 50(a) to make the kind of
- 23 motion that does not involve sufficiency of the evidence
- but rather, in fact, could be made without 50(a), under
- 25 those circumstances, he doesn't have to say 50(b). How

- 1 would that work?
- 2 MR. MIZER: That would work just fine from
- 3 our perspective, Your Honor, and in fact --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I don't know it would
- 5 work fine, because it seems to me you have a lot of
- 6 sufficiency of the evidence thing, but that's another
- 7 question.
- 8 MR. MIZER: The --
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Excuse me. I -- why do you
- 10 -- why do you seem to concede that 50(a) only -- only
- 11 applies to evidentiary stuff? I mean --
- JUSTICE BREYER: They're not --
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- the way it reads is, if
- 14 during a trial by jury, a party has been fully heard and
- 15 there is no -- no legally sufficient evidentiary basis
- 16 for a reasonable jury to find for that party on that
- 17 issue. Well, if it's as a matter of law, no amount of
- 18 evidence would ever allow a -- a jury verdict in that
- 19 direction. Surely, that falls within -- within (a) --
- MR. MIZER: And that --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- even though evidence has
- 22 nothing to do with it. No matter what the evidence is,
- 23 this is simply a matter of law. No jury, no reasonable
- 24 jury, could find for that party on that issue. I don't
- 25 read this as being purely a -- you know, a provision

- 1 governing whether there is -- there's enough evidence in
- 2 an area where there is no absolute rule of law. I think
- 3 it applies to the absolute rule of law as well.
- 4 MR. MIZER: If -- if Rule 50(b) -- if Rule
- 5 50(a) and 50(b) motions were required for all matters of
- 6 law, then that would change the hornbook understanding
- 7 of what 50(b) is about. It would expand the Unitherm
- 8 requirement in -- in ways that it hasn't been applied
- 9 before, and it would turn Rule 50(b) motions into a
- 10 clearinghouse for anything that must be -- that's going
- 11 to be raised on appeal. That's not --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is that bad? That's
- 13 what Justice -- the Chief Justice asked you earlier.
- 14 Why is that such a horrible thing?
- 15 MR. MIZER: Your Honor, because it would
- 16 radically change the way that -- that 50(b) is currently
- 17 treated by parties. If it -- for example, in the
- 18 Southern District of Ohio, where this case --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You -- I'm -- I'm not
- 20 sure that answers the question.
- 21 Isn't it better for the court of appeals to
- 22 know a district court's opinion on every issue that's
- 23 going to come up on appeal? And wouldn't our
- 24 announcement of a rule -- that whether it's an issue of
- 25 law or fact, it has to be renewed under 50(b), so

- 1 everybody's on the same page as to what's going to be
- 2 heard on appeal -- why is that a bad rule? Why would
- 3 that be a bad outcome as a matter of law?
- 4 MR. MIZER: Because, Your Honor, the
- 5 Rule 50(b) motions would then become miniature -- or not
- 6 even miniature -- full-blown appellate briefs. And the
- 7 rule in the Southern District of Ohio at the moment, for
- 8 example, is that 50(b) motions are 20 pages long. If --
- 9 JUSTICE ALITO: I mean, the answer is it's a
- 10 -- it's a pointless gotcha rule. That's -- that's --
- 11 isn't that the answer? It's a pure issue of law, and
- 12 the district court has already said: I ruled on this on
- 13 summary judgment; don't bother me with this again. And
- 14 we're going to say, well, you still have to raise it in
- 15 a 50(b) motion? What -- that'd be -- that's -- that
- 16 there's no point. We might as well say that the lawyer
- 17 has to stand on his head when the motion is made or jump
- 18 up and down three times.
- MR. MIZER: That's correct, Your Honor. And
- 20 the current rule --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: The point would be that,
- 22 therefore, you don't have to sort out whether there --
- 23 there is any factual content to this issue. You don't
- 24 have to sort out what's a pure question of law and what
- 25 is a mixed question of law and fact, which is always

- 1 very difficult. What's the big deal? Make the motion.
- MR. MIZER: Because, Your Honor, the -- the
- 3 district courts have never insisted, nor do the rules
- 4 insist, that the district courts get multiple cracks at
- 5 a legal question. And the parties --
- 6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The -- the purpose of
- 7 50(b) -- Justice Alito brought out that it's not simply
- 8 the historical background of the Seventh Amendment, but
- 9 in that same line of cases, the Court gave a practical
- 10 reason. And the practical reason related to the
- 11 district court, that if the motion is made after the
- 12 jury comes in, the district judge would have the
- 13 opportunity to exercise her discretion to grant a new
- 14 trial.
- 15 Let's take -- is it Ms. Bright -- where the
- 16 Sixth Circuit said that, well, maybe there could have
- 17 been a retaliation claim, but the plaintiff didn't make
- 18 it. The district judge, given the chance, might have
- 19 said: I would exercise my discretion to allow the
- 20 plaintiff to have a new trial on this retaliation claim.
- 21 I thought it was before -- before the court and it was a
- 22 good claim. The Sixth Circuit thought it wasn't.
- I mean, the purpose is to get the district
- 24 judge into the picture to exercise the district judge's
- 25 discretion on the very question.

- 1 MR. MIZER: But if a claim is not in a case,
- 2 Your Honor, then there's no discretion as to whether or
- 3 not to give it to the jury. And so, just as the
- 4 qualified immunity question doesn't -- doesn't belong
- 5 with the jury, so, too, a claim that hasn't been
- 6 adequately pressed doesn't go to the jury.
- 7 And so we're not talking about questions
- 8 that should and can be resolved by the jury. We're
- 9 talking about legal claims that the jury has no business
- 10 deciding at all.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Your case, anyway, is a
- 12 case, judging from what they wrote, which -- I'm back to
- 13 where I started -- the mixed questions and the
- 14 fact-based questions are you really have to renew your
- 15 motion. And reading your opinion, it seems to me it's
- 16 filled with determinations of fact. They're reviewing
- 17 what the jury did and could have found, and on the basis
- 18 of what they could have found, they say you're not
- 19 entitled to -- or you are entitled to qualified
- 20 immunity.
- 21 So this would seem like a hornbook case
- 22 where you have to make the motion, and if you have to
- 23 make the motion, you didn't; and if you didn't, you
- 24 don't go back and review the facts as the motion on the
- 25 basis of the facts as they were before the trial. End

- 1 of matter. What's wrong with that?
- 2 MR. MIZER: I would disagree with the
- 3 characterization of the Sixth Circuit's opinion as
- 4 resolving factual questions, because on the contrary, I
- 5 think --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no. I mean they went
- 7 on the jury's resolution of the facts.
- 8 MR. MIZER: That's correct. And so it's
- 9 the -- the --
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: For that reason, they can't
- 11 take the facts as they were in your motion for summary
- 12 judgment. They have to take them on the basis of --
- 13 they can't just go back and review them on the -- yes.
- MR. MIZER: And that goes to show, Your
- 15 Honor, that the Sixth Circuit wasn't -- wasn't doing
- 16 what Ms. Ortiz has -- what Ms. Ortiz has posited, which
- 17 is that they were reviewing the summary judgment record
- 18 order.
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, Mr. Mizer, suppose
- 20 that they were. Suppose they committed an error in that
- 21 respect and that they thought they were reviewing the
- 22 summary judgment order, and not the final judgment.
- 23 If that's what they thought, would you agree
- 24 that they had no jurisdiction at that point to take that
- 25 appeal because the 30 days had run?

- 1 MR. MIZER: Yes. Then it would be like a
- 2 late collateral order appeal that --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: So your position is --
- 4 rests, is dependent, on our finding that the Sixth
- 5 Circuit was reviewing a final judgment order, which was
- 6 not what the Sixth Circuit in fact said it was doing.
- 7 MR. MIZER: Again, I would disagree that
- 8 that's what the Sixth Circuit said because of the
- 9 language at the bottom of page 7a of the petition
- 10 appendix, where they clearly say that it's an appeal
- 11 from the verdict.
- 12 And so because it's demonstrably not true
- 13 that they were treating the summary judgment order as
- 14 the final appealable order here, the question presented
- 15 by Ms. Ortiz is not actually presented by this case.
- 16 And the further arguments that a 50(b) motion was
- 17 required here under Unitherm were never made in the
- 18 Sixth Circuit and not made in her opening cert petition.
- 19 And so that argument also is not presented by this case.
- 20 And so I think the clear resolution is to
- 21 dismiss the case as improvidently granted, but if the
- 22 Court were inclined to the view that the merits should
- 23 be reached, then the clear rule that we posit resolves
- 24 the case, which is that orders made by the district
- 25 court along the way in the course of a district court

- 1 proceeding are adequately preserved for appellate review
- 2 from the final judgment once they are pressed and passed
- 3 on below.
- 4 If there are no further questions --
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I didn't hear your -- your
- 6 last -- are adequately preserved when?
- 7 MR. MIZER: Once they are pressed and passed
- 8 on by the district court. And the qualified immunity
- 9 claim here was pressed and passed on --
- 10 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So you're saying that if
- 11 there's anything in the record of the trial that
- 12 indicates that the judge ruled on the issue, there need
- 13 not be a 50(b) motion?
- 14 MR. MIZER: That's correct, Your Honor. And
- 15 the lower courts, I think, are well-equipped to assess
- 16 whether or not an issue has adequately been pressed and
- 17 passed on in the district court.
- 18 That has been the settled rule of appellate
- 19 reviewability, and I don't think that it should be
- 20 changed by imposing a Rule 50(b) requirement for
- 21 anything other than a sufficiency of the evidence
- 22 motion.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I just want to be
- 24 clear. Your answer to Justice Kennedy had the caveat
- 25 that except for the issue we addressed in Unitherm.

| 1  | MR. MIZER: That's correct.                              |
|----|---|
| 2  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay.                            |
| 3  | MR. MIZER: If there are no further                      |
| 4  | questions, we ask you to affirm the Sixth Circuit.      |
| 5  | Thank you.  |
| 6  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.              |
| 7  | Mr. Mills, you have 3 minutes remaining.                |
| 8  | REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF DAVID E. MILLS                     |
| 9  | ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER                                 |
| 10 | MR. MILLS: Thank you.                                   |
| 11 | The one thing that's important about the                |
| 12 | Sixth Circuit's language when it said it was reviewing  |
| 13 | summary judgment, the single decision it cited was the  |
| 14 | Eighth Circuit's decision in Goff v. Bise. Now, in that |
| 15 | in that decision, the Eighth Circuit said, yes, we      |
| 16 | can review this after trial even though it was summary  |
| 17 | judgment, because it's qualified immunity, but the      |
| 18 | Eighth Circuit actually ignored the trial evidence. It  |
| 19 | actually did this seemingly illogical step of just      |
| 20 | looking at the summary judgment evidence as-is.         |
| 21 | Now, I think what that shows is the Sixth               |
| 22 | Circuit was definitely reviewing summary judgment, but  |
| 23 | it, implicitly at least, recognized that would be       |
| 24 | entirely illogical. So it tied its decision to the only |
| 25 | decision by the district court on qualified immunity,   |

- 1 summary judgment, and said: We've got to look at what
- 2 really happened in this case. And so they looked ahead.
- Now, the reason the question is adequately
- 4 presented is because I think the Sixth Circuit's
- 5 decision shows this entire debate about Unitherm and
- 6 whether this was a quasi-50(a) review is the -- one of
- 7 the precise reasons the Sixth Circuit hinged its
- 8 decision on summary judgment.
- 9 I think it was quite aware that an appellate
- 10 court, since at least 1947, in Cone, cannot review the
- 11 sufficiency of the evidence at trial and overturn the
- 12 jury's verdict. And so the Sixth Circuit said: Wait a
- 13 second; we can look to the summary judgment record.
- 14 Now --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What's the rule that you
- 16 want us to adopt to answer the question presented? You
- 17 asked us to take cert on a question presented. What's
- 18 the answer you want us to give on the question
- 19 presented?
- MR. MILLS: Yes. The answer is that a party
- 21 may not appeal the denial of summary judgment after
- 22 trial.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: In no circumstances?
- MR. MILLS: I would say that the clearest
- 25 rule is to say in no circumstances. That's the position

- 1 of the Fourth Circuit. You say, if you want to
- 2 challenge a judgment, simply make your motion.
- 3 But I would add that whichever way this
- 4 Court goes, the decision here has to be reversed,
- 5 because there's no doubt that the legal issue of
- 6 qualified immunity at summary judgment depended entirely
- 7 on the officers' conduct at trial.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So your rule, in
- 9 response to Justice Sotomayor, would basically require
- 10 anyone who has an assertion of qualified immunity to
- 11 take their collateral appeal or interlocutory appeal.
- 12 MR. MILLS: It would only require it, Your
- 13 Honor, to the extent that they wish to challenge that
- 14 decision on the summary judgment record. I'm not at all
- 15 suggesting that that appeal is required to preserve the
- 16 issue of immunity. It's easily preserved, but to the
- 17 extent a trial occurs on the officers' conduct -- and
- 18 the officers want to say, wait a second, we're still
- 19 immune -- that evidence even at trial is insufficient
- 20 for liability. You've got the right to preserve your
- 21 immunity issue, but you have to have the district court
- 22 consider the question.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So they are put to a
- 24 choice whether or not their qualified immunity claim
- 25 rests entirely on law or might turn out, as you say it

- 1 did in your case, to have some factual aspect?
- 2 MR. MILLS: That's right. And they --
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's kind of
- 4 a tough choice to put them to, isn't it?
- 5 MR. MILLS: Well, they have an absolute
- 6 right to take that immediate appeal, and -- and they
- 7 chose not to.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So they have to take
- 9 the immediate appeal, and when they do so, they lose the
- 10 right to appeal at the end?
- MR. MILLS: No, they do not.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, why is that?
- 13 MR. MILLS: They do not because if they lose
- 14 the appeal and they go to trial, you've got a new case.
- 15 You've got -- I shouldn't say a new case. You've got
- 16 new evidence of conduct. And so there's no loss of the
- 17 issue of immunity. It's just that it turns on the facts
- 18 from the trial.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You've assumed -- you've
- 20 assumed all the evidence in their favor at the summary
- 21 judgment stage.
- MR. MILLS: Yes.
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: So you really think that
- 24 this is a realistic scenario where there's going to be
- 25 even more evidence against them than -- I mean, you're

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| 1  | assuming the evidence against them. There's going to be  |
|----|--|
| 2  | even more evidence against them than they assumed at the |
| 3  | summary judgment? That's not going to happen very        |
| 4  | often.   |
| 5  | MR. MILLS: It happened here.                             |
| 6  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.               |
| 7  | MR. MILLS: Thank you very much.                          |
| 8  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The case is                       |
| 9  | submitted.   |
| 10 | (Whereupon, at 11:04 a.m., the case in the               |
| 11 | above-entitled matter was submitted.)                    |
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