

UNPUBLISHED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

No. 21-7053

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff - Appellee,

v.

LEE THOMAS SMITH,

Defendant - Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina, at Greensboro. Thomas D. Schroeder, Chief District Judge. (1:14-cr-00291-TDS-1; 1:17-cv-00895-TDS-LPA)

Submitted: November 18, 2021

Decided: November 22, 2021

Before MOTZ, THACKER, and HARRIS, Circuit Judges.

Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

Lee Thomas Smith, Appellant Pro Se.

Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Lee Thomas Smith seeks to appeal the district court's order accepting the recommendation of the magistrate judge and denying relief on Smith's 28 U.S.C. § 2255 motion. The order is not appealable unless a circuit justice or judge issues a certificate of appealability. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(1)(B). A certificate of appealability will not issue absent "a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). When the district court denies relief on the merits, a prisoner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that reasonable jurists could find the district court's assessment of the constitutional claims debatable or wrong. *See Buck v. Davis*, 137 S. Ct. 759, 773-74 (2017). When the district court denies relief on procedural grounds, the prisoner must demonstrate both that the dispositive procedural ruling is debatable and that the motion states a debatable claim of the denial of a constitutional right. *Gonzalez v. Thaler*, 565 U.S. 134, 140-41 (2012) (citing *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)).

We have independently reviewed the record and conclude that Smith has not made the requisite showing. Accordingly, we deny a certificate of appealability and dismiss the appeal. We dispense with oral argument because the facts and legal contentions are adequately presented in the materials before this court and argument would not aid the decisional process.

DISMISSED