

Russia Extends Drug Detention of U.S. Basketball Star Griner

By [AFP](#)

May 13, 2022



WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner leaves a courtroom after a hearing in Khimki just outside Moscow, May 13. **Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP / TASS**

A Russian court on Friday extended the pre-trial detention on drug charges of U.S. basketball star Brittney Griner, state media reported.

Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and WNBA champion, was detained at Moscow airport in February on charges of carrying in her luggage vape cartridges with cannabis oil, which could carry a 10-year prison sentence.

A court in the town of Khimki outside Moscow extended Griner's arrest until June 18, state news agency TASS reported, citing a court representative.

Related article: [U.S. Says Basketball Star 'Wrongfully Detained' in Russia](#)

Griner's detention came days before Russia defied U.S. warnings and sent troops into Ukraine, prompting Western powers to impose sweeping sanctions and send military aid to Kyiv.

Washington said last month that Russia had "wrongfully detained" the six-foot-nine (2.06-meter) basketball star, 31, and turned her case over to the U.S. special envoy in charge of hostages.

The WNBA has said it is working to bring Griner home and honored her when the latest season started in May.

Griner is considered among the greatest female basketball players and is a high points scorer, partly thanks to her ability to dunk the ball.

She was playing club basketball in Russia before the resumption of the U.S. season, a common practice for American stars seeking additional income.

Despite sky-high tensions between the U.S. and Russia, the two countries conducted a high-profile prisoner exchange in April, in scenes reminiscent of the Cold War.

In the exchange, Russia freed Trevor Reed, a former U.S. Marine accused of drunkenly fighting with police.

Washington also says Russia has unjustly detained Paul Whelan, a former security official at a vehicle parts company who was sentenced to 16 years in prison on espionage charges in 2020.

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