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U.S. Basketball Star Griner's Drug Detention Extended in Russia – TASS

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WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner leaves a courtroom after a hearing, in Khimki just outside Moscow, Russia, Friday, May 13, 2022 **AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko/TASS**

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

Griner was detained at a Moscow airport on Feb. 17, en route to play for UNMC Yekaterinburg during the WNBA offseason, on charges of carrying vape cartridges with cannabis oil in her luggage.

"The court granted the investigation's petition and extended the detention of U.S. citizen Griner for 18 days until July 2," a spokeswoman for the Moscow region's Khimki court told the state-run TASS news agency.

If convicted, Griner, 31, could face a jail sentence of up to 10 years in Russia.

Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and WNBA champion, is one of several American

basketball players who supplement their income playing in the Russian league before the start of the U.S. season.

The U.S. State Department said last month it determined that Griner had been wrongfully detained. Her case has been turned over to the U.S. special envoy in charge of hostages.

State Department officials and the special envoy met with Griner's Phoenix Mercury coach and teammates on Monday to discuss efforts to secure Griner's release.

"We are on day 116 since [Griner] has been wrongfully detained. It was great to hear from the State Department that we should continue to amplify that message and that we should continue to press all those who have any influence or power to help bring [Griner] home," Mercury coach Vanessa Nygaard said.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said last month that speculation of a possible prisoner exchange involving Griner was premature until the legal procedure in her case is complete.

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