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Russia To Put WNBA Star Griner on Trial in July

By AFP

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WNBA basketball superstar Brittney Griner arrives to a hearing at the Khimki Court outside Moscow on June 27. **Kirill KUDRYAVTSEV / AFP**

U.S. basketball star Brittney Griner, who is in detention in Russia on drug charges, will go on trial in Russia on July 1, a court said on Monday.

Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and WNBA champion, was detained at a Moscow airport in February after she was found carrying vape cartridges with cannabis oil in her luggage.

She was charged with drug smuggling, which carries a sentence of up to 10 years in prison in Russia.

Griner's detention came days before Russian President Vladimir Putin defied U.S. warnings and sent troops into Ukraine, prompting Western powers to impose sweeping sanctions and

send military aid to Kyiv.

A court in the town of Khimki outside Moscow said on Monday that Griner's trial will begin on July 1.

Griner's lawyer said on Monday the court had extended her detention for the duration of the trial.

"This was absolutely expected," he said.

He said his client, who was seen by journalists being escorted in handcuffs, was "worried."

Washington says that Russia has "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 also said it is working to bring Griner home.

She is considered among the greatest female basketball players and is a high points scorer.

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

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