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U.S. Basketball Star Brittney Griner Pleads Guilty to Russian Drug Charges

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Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency

American basketball player Brittney Griner has pleaded guilty to drug charges before a Russian judge.

The two-time Olympian denied that she had any intention of breaking Russian law when she was detained at a Moscow airport in February with cannabis vape cartridges in her luggage.

"I was in a rush packing. And the cartridges accidentally ended up in my bag," Griner said in the Khimki city court outside of Moscow.

Griner, 31, faces up to 10 years in prison on charges of drug smuggling.

Earlier Thursday, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that Moscow had no plans to discuss a prisoner swap for Griner until her formal conviction.

Related article: Russia Rules Out WNBA Star Griner's Exchange Until Conviction

“It’s clear that the necessary judicial procedures have not been completed,” the diplomat added, addressing rumors that Griner could be exchanged for Viktor Bout, a Russian arms trafficker serving a 25-year jail term in the United States.

U.S. President Joe Biden, who has written Griner a letter and spoken to her wife, said Wednesday that the WNBA star was “wrongfully detained.”

But Ryabkov lashed out at the designation, claiming that the remark reflected the United States’ unwillingness to “perceive the world around them adequately.”

Griner is due to appear in court for another hearing on July 14.

The White House, which has placed its special envoy in charge of hostages on Griner’s case, said Wednesday it is “working to secure Brittney’s release as soon as possible.”

In a handwritten letter presented to Biden on July 4, Independence Day, Giner asked him not to "forget about me and the other American Detainees."

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