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U.S. Basketball Star Brittney Griner's Trial to Resume in Russia

August 02, 2022



WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner speaks to her lawyers standing in a cage at a court room prior to a hearing in Khimki just outside Moscow, July 26. **AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko, Pool/TASS**

U.S. basketball star Brittney Griner's trial on drug charges resumes in Russia on Tuesday amid intensified diplomatic efforts by Washington to secure her release through a high-profile prisoner exchange.

Griner, 31, faces up to 10 years in a Russian penal colony if convicted of smuggling cannabis vape cartridges into the country. The two-time Olympic champion told the court last week she did not intend to smuggle drugs into Russia, while her defense lawyers presented doctors' notes authorizing her to use medical marijuana, which is illegal in Russia.

A court in the town of Khimki north of Moscow resumes hearings Tuesday, one month after the beginning of the trial.

Related article: U.S. Basketball Star Griner Says Didn't Intend to Smuggle Drugs Into Russia

U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration has breached its own policy of secrecy when it floated a proposal to exchange Griner and former Marine Paul Whelan, who is serving a 16-year prison sentence on espionage charges. Several reports have suggested the swap could include convicted Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout.

U.S. State Secretary Antony Blinken spoke with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov by phone for the first time since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, urging him to accept the prisoner swap. Lavrov called for "quiet diplomacy without any dubious media leaks" after the call.

Bloomberg reported Monday, citing unnamed people familiar with discussions, that Russia is seeking to extract a two-for-two prisoner swap.

A potential second Russian prisoner that Moscow officials had floated include Vadim Krasikov, who is serving a life sentence for murder in Germany, and Vladislav Klyushin, who has been extradited to the United States from Switzerland on insider-trading charges.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and White House National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson accused Russia of making a "bad faith" counteroffer that they dismissed as "not serious."

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