

'Pointless' to Pressure Russia Over Jailed U.S. Reporter – Moscow

By [AFP](#)

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The Lefortovo pre-trial detention center in Moscow, where U.S. journalist for the Wall Street Journal Evan Gershkovich is being held on espionage charges. **Tatyana Makeyeva / Reuters**

Russia's Foreign Ministry said Thursday it was "pointless" to try to pressure Moscow over its case against U.S. journalist Evan Gershkovich, who is being held in Russia on suspicion of espionage.

"Hype around this case, which is being fanned in the United States, with the aim of pressuring Russian authorities and the court... is pointless and meaningless," Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told U.S. Ambassador Lynne Tracy, according to a statement.

The statement said Ryabkov pointed to the "serious nature of the charges" against Gershkovich, a reporter for the Wall Street Journal who previously worked for AFP in Moscow.

"He was caught red-handed while trying to obtain secret information, using his journalistic

status as a cover for illegal actions, qualifying as espionage," the statement added.

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Gershkovich was detained in Yekaterinburg, some 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) east of Moscow, then transferred to the capital and placed in detention until May 29 pending trial.

Both The Wall Street Journal and the reporter deny the charges.

U.S. President Joe Biden has called for Gershkovich's release with the White House calling the accusations against him "ridiculous."

The 31-year-old is believed to be the first foreign journalist arrested on spying allegations since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

His arrest has drawn outrage from the West and is seen as a serious escalation of Moscow's crackdown on media.

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