

# U.S. Man Arrested in Russia Over Cannabis-Laced Candy Released

February 17, 2025



Kalob Byers. **Kalob Byers / Facebook**

A U.S. citizen arrested by Russian customs officers for alleged drug smuggling has been released and is set to return home soon, his mother [said](#) Sunday.

Kalob Byers, 28, was detained on Feb. 7 at Moscow's Vnukovo Airport after arriving from Istanbul with cannabis-infused marmalade. Byers claimed the sweets were prescribed by a doctor in the United States to treat his seizures.

His mother, Tony Shuler, said he was held without medication for eight days, during which he suffered a "massive seizure." On Sunday, she announced that Russian authorities had released him.

"He is now in American custody and at the U.S. Embassy waiting for his flight home," Shuler wrote on Facebook.

Later on Monday, the Kremlin confirmed Byers' release, which it said was connected to an

upcoming meeting between top Russian and U.S. officials in Saudi Arabia where they are expected to discuss restoring bilateral relations.

There was no immediate response from U.S. officials.

**Related article:** [Russia Releases Footage of U.S. Man Detained at Moscow Airport](#)

Byers had traveled to Russia to finalize paperwork to marry his Russian fiancée, Naida Mambetova, whom he met when she was a foreign exchange student in the U.S., Shuler said. She did not disclose whether Mambetova was also in custody.

“He nor his fiancée deserve what they’re being charged with,” Shuler wrote last week. Drug smuggling charges in Russia carry prison sentences of five to 10 years.

Russia is currently holding U.S. citizens in detention, including dual national Ksenia Karelina, retired English teacher Stephen Hubbard and former U.S. Marine Robert Gilman.

Washington has previously accused Moscow of detaining Americans on politically motivated charges to use them as leverage in prisoner swaps.

Last week, Russia exchanged U.S. teacher Marc Fogel for convicted cryptocurrency fraudster Alexander Vinnik, marking the first prisoner swap between the two countries since August.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/02/17/us-man-arrested-in-russia-over-cannabis-laced-candy-released-a88044>