

## Brittney Griner's detention in Russia extended through at least July 2



Brittney Griner (photo credit:ncaa.com)

By Karen Smith and Dakin Andone | CNN

(CNN) - US basketball star Brittney Griner -- who has been held in Russia since February on accusations of drug smuggling -- will remain in Russian custody through at least July 2, after a Russian court extended her detention, Russian state news agency TASS reported Tuesday.

Griner, 31, has been officially classified as "wrongfully detained," a US State Department official told CNN in May.

Supporters, including Griner's family and the WNBA, have vigorously advocated for her release, with some expressing concerns Russia would use Griner as a political pawn amid tensions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Griner was arrested at a Moscow airport in February, when Russian authorities claimed she had cannabis oil in her luggage and accused her of smuggling significant amounts of a narcotic

substance, an offense punishable by up to 10 years in prison. The two-time Olympic gold medalist and star of the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury plays in Russia during that league's offseason.

Griner's detention has been extended repeatedly. A Russian court announced in March it had extended her pretrial detention until mid-May. Last month, Griner's detention was extended once again until June 18, TASS reported at the time.

"Our position for some time on this has been very clear: Brittney Griner should not be detained. She should not be detained for a single day longer," State Department spokesperson Ned Price said Tuesday.

The State Department learned of the news through Russian state media reports, Price said. The US last had consular access to Griner last month, he told reporters.

Griner's case is being handled by the office of the US Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, a State Department official confirmed to CNN last month. The office leads the government's diplomatic efforts to secure the release of Americans wrongfully detained abroad and played a major role in securing the release of US citizen Trevor Reed in a late April prisoner swap with Russia.

In a statement late Tuesday, Griner's agent said it was clear the player was being used as a "political pawn."

"Her detention is inhumane and unacceptable. She has not had a single phone call in her 117 days of wrongful detention," said Lindsay Kagawa Colas, who called on President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to "act with urgency and do whatever it takes to bring Brittney home immediately."

## Federal Reserve Risks Recession In Order To Slow Inflation

by Arthur Delaney | HUFFPOST



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*Fed chair Jerome Powell thinks the labor market is strong enough to withstand higher borrowing costs without suffering widespread job losses.*

WASHINGTON - The Federal Reserve is willing to risk higher unemployment if doing so can bring down prices.

The Fed announced Wednesday it had hiked interest rates three quarters of a percentage point - the largest amount since 1994.

Higher interest rates put downward pressure on prices by making it more expensive for businesses and individuals to borrow money. When people have less money to spend, there's less demand for goods and services, meaning less incentive for firms to hike prices.

If spending slumps significantly, however, companies may wind up laying off workers. People who lose their jobs spend even less, and it can become a self-reinforcing cycle - known as a recession.

"You're destroying economic activity and constraining economic growth in order to bring down prices, but in the process of doing that you're artificially hurting the economy," Jin Woo Chung, senior economist at Groundwork Collaborative, a progressive think tank, said in an interview.

Nearly 70% of economists surveyed by the Financial Times this week said they expect the U.S. to enter a recession in the next year because of the Fed's aggressive action. Higher interest rates can affect the stock market immediately but may take months to ripple through the economy.

The central bank's

internal survey of its own board members and regional bank presidents, published Wednesday, indicated they expect the national unemployment rate to rise a tenth of a percentage point to 3.7% this year, 3.9% next year and 4.1% next year - levels that do not suggest a recession.

Reserve Board chair Jerome Powell has said he thinks the labor market is strong enough to withstand higher borrowing costs without suffering widespread job losses. He said Wednesday that 4.1% unemployment with lower inflation would be a policy success, and insisted that the Fed doesn't want to cause a recession.

Still, some job losses are undoubtedly part of the equation.

"We don't seek to put people out of work," Powell told reporters on Wednesday. "But we also think that you really cannot have the kind of labor market we want without price stability."

Fed board member Christopher Waller suggested in a speech last month that higher interest rates would cut the number of job openings without resulting in too many layoffs.

The Fed started hiking interest rates earlier this year, but picked up the pace this week in response to persistently bad monthly inflation reports. Fed officials had previously said they would continue raising rates by half a percentage point, but opted for three quarters of a percentage point Wednesday.

day. Powell said inflation had "surprised to the upside."

Higher interest rates affect demand, but strong consumer demand has been just part of surging inflation over the past year. Powell noted that supply chain problems and the war in Ukraine, which has boosted prices for commodities such as wheat and oil, are outside of the Fed's control.

"Our objective really is to bring inflation down to 2% while the labor market remains strong," Powell said. "I think that what's becoming more clear is that many factors that we don't control are going to play a very significant role in deciding whether that's possible or not."

Chung criticized the Fed's interest rate hike as a misguided response to inflation caused in large part by supply problems, arguing that a better policy would be for Congress and the White House to target corporate profiteering, since it's corporate America that decides what prices to put on store shelves.

High prices burden everyone and have cratered consumer sentiment, but layoffs are especially devastating for the smaller number of households affected.

"A recession is harmful for everyone in many ways but the people who bear the larger brunt, the disproportionate harm of an economic downturn is historically the Black and brown communities and the economically disadvantaged," Chung said.

## Serena Williams handed wild card entry for Wimbledon return

By Sammy Mngqosini and Amy Woodyatt | CNN

London (CNN) - Seven-time Wimbledon champion Serena Williams will make her much-anticipated return to the grass courts of SW19 when the tournament kicks off later this month, after being handed a wild card entry to arguably the most famous tennis tournament in the world.

Williams will compete in ladies' singles, according to an announcement from Wimbledon Tuesday.

The American also hinted at the highly anticipated news: "SW and SW19," Williams posted on Instagram Tuesday. "It's a date. 2022, see you there." SW19 is the postcode district in South-west London incorporating Wimbledon, among other boroughs.

The social media post showed her standing

on a grass court with white sneakers on.

Williams has not played competitively since an injury forced her to retire in a first-round match at Wimbledon last year.

The 23-time major champion last reached the Wimbledon final in 2019 where she lost to Simona Halep, who now works with Williams' former coach Patrick Mouratoglou.

Williams will first make her return to the court in Eastbourne next week for the LTA's Rothesay International, pairing up with Tunisia's world No. 4 Ons Jabeur for the doubles event, in what will be her first tournament appearance in almost a year, according to the tournament.

Widely considered to be the GOAT of

women's tennis, 23-time grand slam champion Serena Williams says she's still aiming to beat Margaret Court's record of 24.

"I should have been at like 30 or 32 (grand slam singles titles)," Williams told CNN's Christiane Amanpour earlier this year.

"I should have had it (the record), really, I've had many opportunities to have it. But I'm not giving up."

Williams was forced to miss January's Australian Open following the advice of her medical team, announcing in December that she wasn't "where I need to be physically to compete."

Wimbledon is scheduled for June 27 to July 10 at the All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club.