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Putin Grants MMA Fighter Jeff Monson Russian Citizenship

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Jeff Monson (Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency)

American mixed-martial arts (MMA) fighter Jeff Monson has joined the roster of foreign celebrities that have been naturalized as Russian citizens.

Monson, 47, was the first American to receive a passport from the Moscow-backed separatist Luhansk People's Republic in 2016. The former world wrestling champion and self-proclaimed communist is also a passport holder of the breakaway Republic of Abkhazia.

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President Vladimir Putin awarded Monson Russian citizenship in a decree published on the government's website on Tuesday.

"I felt deep down right away that this is my home," Monson wrote in an op-ed for Newsweek

in early 2016 after filing for Russian citizenship.

Past high-profile figures to become naturalized in Russia include Hollywood action movie star Steven Seagal and French actor Gerard Depardieu.

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