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St. Petersburg Athletes Banned From Unauthorized Foreign Travel

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Russia's national boxing team. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

Russian athletes training at schools in St. Petersburg have been banned from unauthorized travel abroad, state-run media reported Wednesday, citing three anonymous sources familiar with the matter.

Athletes, coaches and other personnel at state and municipal sports schools in the city are now required to seek prior approval to attend training camps or competitions outside Russia, according to the report by RIA Novosti.

Vacationing abroad is also subject to prior approval by St. Petersburg's sports committee.

The city had until recently maintained a list of so-called "friendly countries," where St. Petersburg's athletes were allowed to visit.

"Not long ago [the list] included Turkey, but then the committee said 'Forget about it'," an unidentified sports school manager was quoted as saying.

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The head of St. Petersburg's biathlon federation Dmitry Vasilyev later clarified that an approval process had been introduced for travel to "friendly countries" but said there was no ban on foreign trips.

However, Vasilyev did note that there was a ban in place for travel to "unfriendly countries," which he said was aimed at protecting Russian athletes.

"What are we to do in unfriendly countries? Have our car confiscated and jailed? That's nonsense," Vasilyev told the Fontanka news website Wednesday.

The International Olympic Committee banned Russia and Belarus from fielding athletes and organizing international sports events in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year.

On Thursday, Russia's Olympic Committee chief Stanislav Pozdnyakov said it will compensate Russian Olympic champions 500,000 rubles ($5,000) for missing international competitions.

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