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# Putin Grants U.S. Boxer, Canadian Hockey Player Russian Citizenship

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Boxer Kevin Johnson. **Leonid Uteshev / Boxing Federation of Russia**

President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday granted U.S. heavyweight boxer Kevin Johnson and Canadian ice hockey player Brendan Leipsic Russian citizenship under a decree published on the government's website.

Johnson expressed his love for Russia and "Russian women" last year, asking Putin to give him Russian citizenship so that he could continue his career in the country after winning a fight organized by the state broadcaster Ren TV.

The boxer also said he had changed his middle name to "Vladimirovich" in honor of the Russian president.

Putin's decree lists Johnon's original middle name of Blue.

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Meanwhile, Leipsic, 29, has played for Russian hockey teams since he was sacked from the Washington Capitals in 2020 over misogynistic comments and inappropriate remarks toward other players, according to Reuters.

Putin's decree lists another 44 foreigners as new recipients of Russian citizenship, including U.S.-born Andrei Caralegorghi and Peter Lavelle.

Russian state media refers to Caralegorghi as a descendant of Catherine II and Prince Grigory Potemkin.

Lavelle hosts a political talk show on the Kremlin-funded English-language broadcaster RT.

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