

# Putin Gives Roy Jones Jr. Russian Citizenship

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Roy Jones Jr.

Vladimir Putin has given Russian citizenship to former world heavyweight boxing champion Roy Jones Jr.

A decree published on the Kremlin's website in the Russian president's name Saturday said the American, a four-weight champion once regarded by many as the world's best boxer, had been given Russian nationality.

Jones asked Putin for citizenship in August over a cup of tea when they met in Crimea — the territory annexed by Russia last year — saying it would make doing business in Russia much easier.

Putin said this would be possible if Jones planned to spend a significant part of his life in Russia, while the boxer said he hoped sport could help "build a bridge" between the U.S. and Russia.

After the decree was published, Jones told Russian news agency R-Sport that he planned to learn the Russian language.

"I want to speak so well in Russian that people understand me without any problems," Jones said. "I think that'll take about a year. I hope that next year I'll already be speaking like a Russian."

He added that he now wanted to "earn two or three billion dollars," open boxing schools in Russia and develop his rap career.

Still fighting at cruiserweight against mostly little-known opponents, the 46-year-old Jones has competed three times in Russia in the last five years, most recently knocking out Egyptian fighter Hany Atiyo last year in the southern city of Krasnodar.

While Jones insists he has no plans to hang up his gloves and still wants to win a world title, he has also begun working as a trainer for Russian fighters — including unbeaten WBA super middleweight champion Fyodor Chudinov and his brother, ex-WBA interim middleweight champion Dmitry Chudinov.

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