

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, the American politician, diplomat and retired four-star general who served as the 65th United States Secretary of State from 2001 to 2005 has died due to complications from COVID-19, his family said in a statement shared on Facebook on Monday. He was 84.

According to Powell's family, he was fully vaccinated and was receiving treatment at Walter Reed National Medical Center.

"We have lost a remarkable and loving husband, father, grandfather and a great American," the family wrote in the statement.

*Full statement: "General Colin L. Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, passed away this morning due to complications from Covid 19. He was fully vaccinated. We want to thank the medical staff at Walter Reed National Medical Center for their caring treatment. We have lost a remarkable and loving husband, father, grandfather and a great American."*

Powell was the first African American to serve as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and later U.S. secretary of state, for which he was unanimously confirmed in 2001.

As head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he oversaw the U.S. invasion of Panama and later the U.S. invasion of Kuwait to oust the Iraqi army in 1991.

He would go on to make a persuasive case before the U.N. Security Council in 2003 for U.S. military action against Iraq, claiming that Saddam Hussein was building weapons of mass destruction. The war was waged, Saddam was toppled and killed, Iraq was destabilized, but no such weapons were found and his reputation suffered a painful setback.

Powell consistently defended his support of the Iraq War. He cited faulty information claiming Hussein had secretly stashed away weapons of mass destruction. He told the U.N. that Iraq's claims that it had not represented "a web of lies."

A lifelong Republican, Powell had little use for former President Donald Trump, endorsing Hillary Clinton in 2016 and speaking in support of Joe Biden at the 2020 Democratic National Convention. He left the Republican Party after the Jan. 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol.

Former President George W. Bush said he and former first lady Laura Bush were “deeply saddened” by Powell’s death.

“He was a great public servant” and “widely respected at home and abroad,” Bush said. “And most importantly, Colin was a family man and a friend. Laura and I send Alma and their children our sincere condolences as they remember the life of a great man.”