



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

Sonya L. Smith
Cabinet Secretary

The statement below is from DVS Cabinets Secretary Sonya L. Smith regarding today's passing of former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

I am deeply saddened over the passing today of retired U.S. Army General Colin Powell.

General Powell was a military and public servant pioneer. After serving two tours of duty in Vietnam—he became the youngest and first African American appointed as national security advisor when tapped for the position in 1987 by President Ronald Reagan. Two years later, he was the first African American appointed as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—a position he served under President George H.W. Bush through the Gulf War. In 2001, General Powell then became the first African American to be named Secretary of State when President George W. Bush appointed him to the position.

In 1991, I was an Air Force Reserve medic deployed during Desert Shield/Desert Storm to Oman. General Powell was serving as the chief military strategist for the Gulf War operations. As a military service member, I appreciated his leadership and devotion to the men and women under his charge. He was a calming voice during tense and uncertain times. As the first African American appointed as

Cabinet Secretary for the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, I stand on his shoulders. I admired him for his groundbreaking achievement up the military chain of command and, later, in public office.

General Powell was truly one of a kind. I salute him one last time...and offer my condolences to his family during their time of grief.

Sonya L. Smith
Cabinet Secretary,
New Mexico Dept. of Veterans Services.

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