

Retired General Colin Powell

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Powell

United States Army (Ret.) KCB (Honorary) (born April 5, 1937) is an American statesman. He was the 65th United States Secretary of State (2001-05), serving under President George W. Bush. He was the first African American appointed to that position.^{[1][2][3][4]} As a General in the United States Army, Powell also served as National Security Advisor (1987–1989) and as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989–1993), holding the latter position during the Gulf War.

Personal background

Colin Powell was born in the New York City neighborhood of Harlem in 1937, and raised in Hunts Point, South Bronx. His parents, Luther Theophilus Powell and Maud Ariel (née McKoy),^[5] emigrated from Jamaica to the United States and worked in Manhattan's Garment District. Colin Powell is also of Irish ancestry.^[6]

Powell was educated at Morris High School, a former public school in The Bronx, New York City, from which he graduated in 1954. He gained a bachelor's degree in geology from City College of New York attaining a "C" average, according to his 2006 graduation address at Marymount University. He later obtained an MBA from The George Washington University after his second tour in Vietnam in 1971.

In 1962, he married his wife, Alma, who is now the co-chair of America's Promise. He is the father to Michael Powell, the former chair of the Federal Communications Commission. (Michael Powell was known mostly for a public battle with Howard Stern, causing the latter to leave regular radio for satellite radio.)

Powell's first name is fairly common in the United Kingdom and Ireland but rare in the United States. He pronounces his name "cole-in"; most other men with this name pronounce it "call-in", or "coll-in" in the United Kingdom. In general, public officials and radio and television reporters have used Powell's preferred pronunciation.

Military career

While at City College Powell joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and later described it as one of the happiest experiences of his life: finding something he loved and could do well, he had "found himself." Cadet Powell joined the Pershing Rifles, the ROTC fraternal organization and drill team started by GEN John Pershing. Even after Powell became a General, he still kept on his desk a pen set he had won for a drill team competition. After graduating from City College in June 1958, he was granted a commission as an Army Second Lieutenant.^[7] Powell was a professional soldier for 35 years, during which time he held a variety of command and staff positions and rose to the rank of General.^[8] Powell obtained an MBA from George Washington University in 1971 and then served a White House fellowship under President Richard Nixon. In his autobiography *My American Journey*, Powell mentioned several officers he served under that inspired and mentored him.

As a Lieutenant Colonel serving in South Korea, for example, Powell was very close to General Henry "Gunfighter" Emerson. Powell said he regarded this man as one of the most caring officers he ever served under. Emerson reputedly had a somewhat eccentric personality. For example, he insisted his troops train only at night and made them repeatedly watch the television film *Brian's Song* to promote racial harmony. Powell always professed, however, that what set Emerson apart was his great love of his soldiers and concern for their welfare.

While serving with the Third Armored Division in Germany as a Lieutenant, he met Elvis Presley, then serving in that unit. During the Vietnam War, Powell served as an advisor from 1962 to 1963. He returned to Vietnam from 1968 to 1969 where he served as the executive officer and later as the assistant chief of staff of operations for the Americal Division (the 23rd Infantry Division) with the rank of Major, was charged with investigating a detailed letter by Tom Glen (a soldier from the 11th Light Infantry Brigade), which backed up rumored allegations of the My Lai Massacre. Powell wrote: "In direct refutation of this portrayal is the fact that relations between American soldiers and the Vietnamese people are excellent." Later, Powell's assessment would be described as whitewashing the news of the massacre, and questions would continue to remain undisclosed to the public. On May 4, 2004, United States Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said to Larry King, "I mean, I was in a unit that was responsible for My Lai. I got there after My Lai happened. So, in war, these sorts of horrible things happen every now and again, but they are still to be deplored."^[9]

In the early 1980s, Powell served at Fort Carson, Colorado. It was there that he had a major clash with General John Hudachek, his commander. Hudachek said in an efficiency evaluation that Powell was a poor leader who should not be promoted. Many of Powell's supporters have said this was pettiness and spite on Hudachek's part^[citation needed] and Powell's rising military career was unhindered by Hudachek's evaluation report. After he left Fort Carson, Powell became senior military assistant to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, whom he assisted during the invasion of Grenada and the raid on Libya. In 1989, prior to being named Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Powell served as the Commander in Chief, Forces Command headquartered at Fort McPherson, Georgia.