Last Soviet Defense Minister Dies From Coronavirus – Reports

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Yevgeny Shaposhnikov **Dmitry Sokolov / TASS**

Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, the last Defense Minister of the Soviet Union and a Marshal of Aviation, has died at age 78, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency [reported](#) Tuesday.

The state-run TASS news agency [reported](#), citing unnamed medical sources, that Shaposhnikov had died as a result of Covid-19.

According to the Mash Telegram channel, Shaposhnikov was [diagnosed](#) with the coronavirus and pneumonia on Nov. 25. The former marshal was hospitalized and placed on a ventilator as his condition worsened.

Shaposhnikov was born on Feb. 3, 1942, in the Rostov region, and had served in the Air Force of the U.S.S.R. since 1959. He was a senior pilot and navigator of the regiment, then commanded a squadron, a fighter aviation regiment and a fighter aviation division. By the end of the 1970s, he took up the post of Air Force Commander for Combat Training of the Carpathian Military District, and in 1984 he became Deputy Air Force Commander of the

Odessa Military District.

During the attempted coup of August 1991, Shaposhnikov spoke out against the State Emergency Committee which was trying to seize power and supported then-President of the RSFSR Boris Yeltsin.

He was named Defense Minister on Aug. 23, 1991, a position he would hold until the Soviet break-up on Dec. 26, 1991.

Shaposhnikov would play an important role in the subsequent transfer of powers after the Soviet Union's dissolution. On Dec. 26, 1991, he received the "nuclear briefcase" from former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and handed it over to the first Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

After a long career in Soviet aviation, Shaposhnikov held a variety of posts in the Yeltsin and Putin administrations, including as a presidential assistant for space and aviation development. He then worked as an adviser and board member of civil aviation companies like Aeroflot and Sukhoi for the rest of his career.

President Vladimir Putin [sent](#) a message of condolence to Shaposhnikov's family and friends on Wednesday.

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