

Remember veterans' sacrifice for peace

by Sen. Frank Murkowski
for the Tundra Times

This spring, Alaskans have seen more than one thaw. Just as the ice has broken up on the rivers and coasts, so have we seen a warming of the chill that historically has marked relations between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

We have seen a Soviet icebreaker free trapped whales off our northern coast. We have seen a large state-of-the-art Soviet oil skimmer ship help clean the waters of Prince William Sound. These gestures are indicative of a trend which may mark a profound change in the way we live. The Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty, which eliminates an entire class of nuclear weapons, is a much more concrete expression of this trend. It seems each day's newspaper includes a headline describing a new relaxation in tension.

Only time will tell if indeed we are witnessing the dawn of a new era. During that time, and especially on Memorial Day, we should remember and honor those who set the stage and

make it possible to dream of a new era of peace. It was George Washington who said "to be prepared for war is one of the most effectual ways of preserving peace." If indeed, we are entering an era of peace, I'm convinced one of the reasons will be the military service of generations of American men and women who wore, and wear today, the uniform of the United States.

At the time you read these words, just as at the time I wrote them, men and women of our armed forces are on duty. Some are in the relative comfort of missile command posts, others endure the hardships of field exercises in remote areas of our state, as well as those manning Navy ships in Prince William Sound. The recent deadly fires on the USS Iowa, SS White Plains, and SS America illustrate that their service is not without danger. Our service men and women are united with us in a desire for peace. Through their service they demonstrate their willingness to sacrifice to achieve it. Recent events give us reason to hope that their service, and their sacrifice, has achieved

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ed its goal.

On Memorial Day, we honor those who died. Those who defeated the imperial Germany of World War I and the Nazi Germany of World War II. Those who avenged Pearl Harbor as well as those who turned back Communist aggressors in Korea. Those who answered their country's call in Vietnam. Those who serve us now in the preservation of peace. Many fell in the performance of their duty. Many more came back to enjoy the fruits of their service and have now passed on. All have earned the honored memory we

feel everyday and express on Memorial Day.

I urge my fellow Alaskans to enjoy both the thaws of winter that bring the fruits of spring and the thaw of the cold war that brings us new hope for a peaceful world. As we do so, I also urge you to pause and honor those whose military service made, and makes, this day possible. We are forever in their debt.

Murkowski is the Ranking Republican member of the Senate Veteran's Affairs Committee.