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## Indian Health Service Memorial Day, May 31, 2004

“Remember Them Always”

by

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On Monday, May 31, 2004, as we celebrate Memorial Day with picnics and parades, we should keep in mind those who are not here today to join in the celebrations; both those who made the ultimate sacrifice to secure freedom for all Americans, as well as those who are at this moment fighting to defend that freedom, and opening the door to freedom for others, on foreign soil.

To help us honor all our military veterans, as well as those who are presently serving at home and abroad to keep American strong and safe, please pause for 60 seconds at 3 p.m., Eastern Time, on Memorial Day for a moment of silence in memory of all our heroes who protected and continue to protect our great nation. And let us not forget to say a prayer for all the families of our fallen sons and daughters, who have been left behind with broken hearts and proud memories to take the place of their loved ones.

Let us also help keep alive the memory of the remarkable military contributions of American Indian and Alaska Native people. In World War II, more than 44,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives, out of a total population of less than 350,000, served with honor. The now famous American Indian Code Talkers took part in every assault the U.S. Marines conducted in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945, transmitting messages in their native language -- a code that the Japanese never broke.

American Indian and Alaska Native men and women on the home front also served their country with pride. More than 40,000 Indian people left their reservations to work in ordnance depots, factories, and other war industries, and Indian people invested more than \$50 million in war bonds, and contributed generously to the Red Cross and the Army and

Navy Relief societies.

Indian troops also fought during the Korean conflict, and approximately 42,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives, more than 90 percent of them volunteers, fought in Vietnam. In the 1980s and 1990s, they saw duty in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and the Persian Gulf. And this extraordinary history of service continues today, as American Indian and Alaska Native soldiers serve in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other locations, joining in the fight against global terrorism.

Remember them all with pride and gratitude. Remember Lori Piestewa, the first American Indian woman to die in combat, and say a prayer for the young children she left behind. Remember also all the other soldiers who gave their lives in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We must never forget any of those who died throughout the years serving our country, including all the lesser known, and even unknown, soldiers who served with valor and courage. We must remember them all, always....

I encourage all IHS employees to join me and the rest of a grateful nation in honoring our heroes through the National Moment of Remembrance on Memorial Day, May 31, 2004.