Mr. Speaker, tonight, I will read an article that was

written by Joan Ryan, a columnist at the San Francisco Chronicle, that

was in the newspaper on September 9, 2004. Joan was talking before a TV

show, and she wrote an article about the conversation she had with

Dolores Kesterson, and these are Joan's words:

Her face remained expressionless, but her eyes lifted to meet mine as

if to say, do you get it? That is what it feels like.

Later, during the show, I saw a picture of Eric: good-looking,

square-jawed, and smiling. But what I really saw on the screen was my

own son, my own only child.

That is why we do not look too closely, I think, on those occasions

when the names and photos of the dead appear in print. We do not want

to get too close to that pain. That is why neighbors have been giving

Kesterson a wide berth. They do not know what to say, but they also do

not want to think too hard about what she has lost: not a soldier, but

a boy, who once slept in footie pajamas, who waved at her from the

merry-go-round, who liked her cooking more than any on Earth.

The only way to make this war at all tolerable is to allow it to be a

televised blur of road-side bombings, insurgent militia and thick

reports issued from Washington at regular enough intervals to keep the

talking heads occupied on the Sunday morning shows.

When embedded reporters covered the start of this war, the big

picture issues, namely, the shaky rationale for the war, were buried

beneath the stories of individual military units. This is why embedding

reporters was such a brilliant stroke. The unwavering focus on the grit

and courage of the American soldiers made it nearly impossible to

criticize the war publicly.

Now that those soldiers are dying, the lens has gone panoramic. The

farther we stay from Erik Kesterson and Steven Bridges and Jimmy

Arroyave and Arron Clark and Ken Ballard, the easier to imagine that

this war is not a horrifying disaster.

The Bush administration is so determined to keep us from thinking

about dead soldiers that it even will not allow photographs of flag-

draped coffins being transported back to the United States.

one parent at the town hall meeting said, which is exactly

the point. This administration would rather we not listen

too closely to Mark Crowley tell us that his 18-year-old son, just 10

months out of high school, was killed on patrol, or that his gunner,

who weathered six hits to his machine gun, was killed when the seventh

bullet went through his head.

It would rather we not listen to Cindy Sheehan holding her son's

childhood Teddy bear, say that she sleeps only when she takes a pill,

and even then, just 3 or 4 hours. she said

Tuesday night. Her son, Casey, died in April.

All of our children have given their futures, and our futures,

Kesterson satisfied, finally raising her hand to speak on camera toward

the end of the show:

Somewhere, there is a mother hearing on the news that there have been

casualties in Mosul or Fallujah or Baghdad. She prays,

Maybe this time it will not be, but it is always

somebody's child.

The number of dead Americans in the Iraqi war passed the 1,000 mark

this Tuesday, before the show's taping, and kept going. More knocks on

the door, more gentle suggestions to sit down.

Mr. Speaker, there is a smarter, safer way for America to conduct

itself in Iraq. The course the Bush administration currently has us on

is not it.