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## 'Nightline' to Read Off Iraq War Dead

By BILL CARTER

In a conscious echo of a famous, Vietnam War-era issue of Life magazine, the ABC News program "Nightline" will broadcast Friday night the names and faces of every soldier killed by hostile fire since the start of the war in Iraq.

Ted Koppel, the program's anchor, will deliver a brief introduction before reading the more than 530 names, as photographs and captions with the ages and hometowns of the dead appear on the screen. "Nightline" will not include those who died by accident and other causes because of time constraints; Mr. Koppel will barely have two seconds for each name.

"I have always felt, and I said it when I was in Iraq last year, that the most important thing a journalist can do is remind people of the cost of war," Mr. Koppel said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Leroy Sievers, the executive producer of "Nightline," said in a telephone interview yesterday that his inspiration for the program was a June 1969 issue of Life, which presented photos of all the men killed during one week in Vietnam.

Although that issue is now remembered as a crystallizing moment for opposition to the Vietnam war, Mr. Sievers denied the program carried any political message. "There is no intended political statement," Mr. Sievers said. "If that was the intention, we would spell it out."

But William Kristol, the editor of The Weekly Standard, said the message was clear to him. "This is a statement with a capital S, and it's a stupid statement," he said. The program's conceit, he added, was a selective one, chosen to emphasize the controversy over the war in Iraq while neglecting to mention the casualties in Afghanistan or those killed by terrorists.

Mr. Koppel did not dispute that "Nightline" is looking for impact. "You can read the headlines every day - two soldiers killed, three Marines killed - and it doesn't have the same impact as seeing one page of these photos," he said. "All of a sudden you look at all those young people and it really hits you."

But he said "Nightline" was not taking political sides. "If the motivation to go to war is good, is justifiable," he said, "then the cost, whether it is 500, or 5,000, or 50,000, is something people will accept. Should the motivation not be good, then 5 is too many."

The White House declined to comment officially. But a senior Administration official, who requested anonymity, said: "If that's what Mr. Koppel chooses to do, it's his program. We don't make program decisions for them."

"The White House mourns the loss of every soldier," the official added. "It's good that Americans that have given their lives in a sacrifice for freedom and democracy be recognized."

The "Nightline" program will appear just one day short of the anniversary of President Bush's declaration of an end to major combat operations, when he appeared on the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln under a banner reading "Mission Accomplished."

Mr. Koppel said the show was not timed to mark that anniversary. "That is purely a coincidence," he said.