



But as we'll see below, this attempt to peddle magic pills to chase away the horrors of war is just one front in a long-term, wide-ranging "warfighter enhancement program" -- including the neurological and genetic re-engineering of soldiers' minds and bodies to create what the Pentagon calls "iron bodied and iron willed personnel": tireless, relentless, remorseless, unstoppable.

Coleman takes specific aim at the "Psychological Kevlar Act," aimed at reducing the alarming spread of soldier suicides and post-traumatic stress disorder spawned by the illegal invasion of Iraq. The program relies heavily on dosing soldiers with Propranolol, which, "if taken immediately following a traumatic event, can subdue a victim's stress response and so soften his or her perception of the memory," as Coleman notes. "That does not mean the memory has been erased, but proponents claim that the drug can render it emotionally toothless." She continues:

But is it moral to weaken memories of horrendous acts a person has committed? Some would say that there is no difference between offering injured soldiers penicillin to prevent an infection and giving a drug that prevents them from suffering from a posttraumatic stress injury for the rest of their lives. Others, like Leon Kass, former chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, object to propranolol's use on the grounds that it medicates away one's conscience...Barry Romo, a national coordinator for Vietnam Veterans Against the War, is even more blunt. "That's the devil pill," he says. "That's the monster pill, the anti-morality pill. That's the pill that can make men and women do anything and think they can get away with it. Even if it doesn't work, what's scary is that a young soldier could believe it will."

It is "a kind of moral lobotomy," says Coleman, whose husband killed himself after coming home from the Vietnam War. She puts the bill -- which is being sponsored by Robert Kennedy Jr., among others -- in the historical context of military training:

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