

# Former Army captain wages peace; Author Chappell uses West Point skills to fight war

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Posted: 09/06/2010, 12:01 AM PDT

Waging peace is a lot like waging war, with two essential differences, says former Army captain and West Point graduate Paul K. Chappell.

War is based on deception and seeks to change enemies into corpses, he said, while peace is based on truth and seeks to change enemies into friends.

Except for his crop of long, curly hair, Chappell could pass for the modern day warrior he once was: lean, muscular, clean cut, confident and disciplined.

The author of two books: "Will War Ever End? A Soldier's Vision for Peace in the 21st Century," and "Peaceful Revolution," Chappell spoke optimistically to an audience of 50-plus at the Peace Resource Center in Seaside on Sunday about the possibility of world peace while debunking the "myth" that man is a naturally violent creature.

Chappell, an Iraq war veteran, graduated from West Point in 2002 and left military service a year ago.

The hardest job any army has, he said, is keeping the troops from running away from danger.

Simply threatening deserting soldiers with punishment won't work, Chappell said. "Immediate danger trumps possible danger."

To achieve that goal, soldiers undergo a process of indoctrination and bonding to convince them they are fighting to protect their family, friends, freedom and loved ones, and most of all, each other.

War is such a traumatic experience, he said, that 98 percent of troops exposed to 60 or more days of sustained combat will suffer some sort of mental disorder. "The other 2 percent," he said, "are already insane."

If humans were naturally violent, he asked, "Why would war traumatize them? People don't like to kill other human beings."

Killing is "a learned behavior," Chappell said, citing retired Army Lt. Col. Dave Grossman's work, "On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society," a work that is considered "must" reading in military academies, civilian universities and the peace movement.

Soldiers kill more easily when they are distanced from their targets: psychologically, by seeing the enemy as subhuman; mechanically, by killing at a distance; and morally, by viewing the enemy as evil.

Chappell cited the Chinese military philosopher Sun Tzu, whose "Art of War" has been a classic text for nearly three millennia. He described "five kinds of war," Chappell said, in order from best to worst: the war never fought, the war avoided, the war without bloodshed, war with casualties, and war without end.

Mohandas K. Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Desmond Tutu waged the best kind of wars, he said: those without bloodshed. War in the 21st century has evolved into the worst variety, war without end.

Learning to wage war and wage peace have more similarities than differences, Chappell commented. Both require training, organization, funding, recruiting, courage and discipline.

"I'm pro-military but anti-war," he said, adding that armies of the future may well change their missions from violence and destruction to humanitarian aid and rebuilding.

Chappell's appearance in Seaside was sponsored by the Peace Coalition of Monterey County, made up of 20 organizations devoted to peace and nonviolence.