

[Daniel Ellsberg: Covert Ops ‘Provoke Our Adversaries’ To Create An Excuse For War](#)

The whistleblower who leaked ‘The Pentagon Papers’ also said one of the largest covert operations in history almost led to nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis.

by [MintPress News Desk](#)

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Daniel Ellsberg speaks with a Vietnamese soldier during his deployment to Vietnam.

MINNEAPOLIS — MintPress News is proud to host “[Lied to Death](#),” a 13-part audio conversation between famed whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg and social justice activist Arn Menconi. Menconi wrote that these interviews are a “mixture of historical, political science and Dan’s sixty-year scholarly analysis as a former nuclear planner for Rand Corporation.”

For more information on the interview and Ellsberg, see [the introduction to this series](#).

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December 14th, 2015 By [MintPress News Desk](#)

Daniel Ellsberg, center, is seen at a rally supporting Chelsea Manning in San Francisco, Tuesday, April 30, 2013. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

MINNEAPOLIS — MintPress News is proud to host this 13-part audio conversation between famed whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg and social justice activist Arn Menconi.

Menconi is the founder of SOS Outreach, a nonprofit which supports at-risk youth through outdoor adventures that encourage them to lead better lives. In May, he recorded [Lied to Death](#), a series of interviews with Ellsberg about the lies and propaganda that fuel the American war machine.

Menconi wrote that these interviews are a mixture of historical, political science and Dan’s sixty-year scholarly analysis as a former nuclear planner for Rand Corporation. Many of the facts Ellsberg shares in future installments were revealed for the first time in these interviews after he obtained them through Freedom of Information Act requests.

Introduction: This is the human condition

In part one, Menconi asked a question about one of the major themes throughout the interviews: Why do we go to war?

In response, Ellsberg compared the U.S. military and other superpowers armies to two biker gangs which are eternally fighting for territory, much like the [May shootout which occurred between two Texas biker gangs](#) (although more recent reports suggest [police may have triggered the violence](#)).

You do not back down from a fight. You cannot lose territory, you cannot lose face. Im not just saying this metaphorically. Im saying this IS in the small whats going on in the large. This battle for turf.

This is the human condition.

Ellsberg also touched on the historic nuclear arms race and the concept of [mutual assured destruction](#), and argued that Americas nuclear threats against the Soviet Union prolonged the Vietnam War by 20 years because it kept Soviet forces from joining the ground war in South Vietnam.

Chapter 6: US covert operations are ‘pin pricks’ that provoke larger wars

In previous chapters, Ellsberg explained the United States’ covert involvement in the conflict in Vietnam for decades prior to the official outbreak of war. In [chapter 6](#), the whistleblower tells Menconi that would-be military analysts often look at the small scale of U.S. forces in foreign countries and wonder, “What were these pin pricks going to achieve?”

The military, Ellsberg says, knows that covert operations can’t win a war, but they can “provoke our adversaries to give us an excuse to invade them.” This was the case with the work of the [thousands of “advisors”](#) who were on the ground in Vietnam before the military formally joined the conflict in 1965.



Daniel Ellsberg in Vietnam in 1965.

Ellsberg also cites U.S. operations in Cuba ahead of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when a disastrous attack on Cuba, known as the “Bay of Pigs” invasion, led to a dramatic escalation of nuclear tensions between Russia and the United States. Although U.S. officials told Congress that the paramilitary group behind the invasion was composed of independent Cuban revolutionaries, Ellsberg emphasizes that they were “100% CIA controlled” and that the Bay of Pigs was, at that time, “the largest covert operation in our history.”

Today, U.S. covert forces or advisors are found [in over 100 countries](#), including [dozens of nations in Africa](#). Recently, the U.S. military poured over [\\$500 million](#) into the effort to train “moderate” rebels to destabilize Syrian President Bashar Assad, even though U.S. military aid and weapons usually end up in the hands of [al-Qaida and Daesh](#) (an Arabic acronym for the group commonly known in the West as ISIS or ISIL). Many analysts believe the [U.S. and its allies deliberately created Daesh](#) to provoke profitable energy wars in the Middle East. In chapter 6, Ellsberg and Menconi also touch on the lengths that career politicians and military officials will go to in order to maintain their positions of power. Ellsberg discusses Clark Clifford, a lawyer who advised several presidents, describing him as “a real cold warrior” — a key architect of foreign policy during the United States’ protracted proxy war with Russia. Despite his enthusiastic support for the expansion of American empire, Clifford forecast a disaster in Vietnam, famously telling President Lyndon Johnson that he believed war would be “[a catastrophe for my country](#)” and result in 50,000 American deaths. Ultimately, the Vietnam War would kill over 58,000 American troops and over a million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians.

Like Clifford, military officials close to the White House, the whistleblower explains, supported presidential policies in Vietnam, despite their knowledge that they would fail. “That’s going on today, too, of course,” Ellsberg cautioned.

Listen to Chapter 6 | US covert operations are ‘pin pricks’ that provoke larger wars:

About Daniel Ellsberg

As sites like WikiLeaks and figures such as Edward Snowden continue to reveal uncomfortable truths about America’s endless wars for power and oil, one important figure stands apart as an inspiration to the whistleblowers of today: [Daniel Ellsberg](#), the whistleblower who leaked the “Pentagon Papers,” over 7,000 pages of top secret documents, in 1971. A military veteran, Ellsberg began his career as a strategic analyst for the RAND Corporation, a massive U.S.-backed nonprofit, and worked directly for the government helping to craft policies around the potential use of nuclear weapons. In in the 1960s, he faced a crisis of conscience while working for the Department of Defense as an assistant to Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs John T. McNaughton, where his primary duty was to find a pretext to escalate the war in Vietnam. Inspired by the example of anti-war activists and great thinkers like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., he realized he was willing to risk arrest in order to prevent more war. Lacking the technology of today’s whistleblowers, who can carry gigabytes of data in their pockets, he painstakingly photocopied some 7,000 pages of top secret documents which became the “Pentagon Papers,” first excerpted by The New York Times in June 1971.

Ellsberg’s leaks exposed the corruption behind the war in Vietnam and had widespread ramifications for American foreign policy. Henry Kissinger, secretary of state at the time, famously referred to Ellsberg as “the most dangerous man in America.”

Ellsberg remains a sought-after expert on military and world affairs, and an outspoken supporter of whistleblowers from Edward Snowden to Chelsea Manning. In 2011, he told the [Chelsea Manning Support Network](#) that Manning was a “hero,” and added:

“I wish I could say that our government has improved its treatment of whistleblowers in the 40 years since the Pentagon Papers. Instead we’re seeing an unprecedented campaign to crack down on public servants who reveal information that Congress and American citizens have a need to know.”

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