



Dr. Daniel Ellsberg decided to release Pentagon Papers after Cambodia invasion  
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## Ellsberg: 'I'm War Criminal --So Are Nixon, Kissinger'

By Mark Newhouse

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CAMBRIDGE (Mass.) —

Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, who revealed the massive top-secret Pentagon study on the war in Vietnam, said in an interview last month he believes he is "a war criminal."

"I'm a war criminal," he said, "because I participated in acts that violated international law, our Constitution and some of our treaty obligations like the United Nations Charter.

"There's no way around it. As our government has defined war crimes, I am guilty, and so are Nixon and Kissinger and hundreds of other people in the government."

(Ellsberg made these and other statements in an interview in May, apparently with the knowledge that the Pentagon study was to be made public. On Monday after he was charged, however, Ellsberg was quoted as saying: "The simple fact is that I

never felt tortured by guilt by anything I did in Vietnam.")

Misled

In the May interview Ellsberg also said that:

- Washington officials have been misled by official cables from United States leaders in Saigon because such cables are "worthless."

- He believes Dr. Henry Kissinger, top White House adviser for National Security Affairs, is "arrogant" and

—Turn to Page 2, Col. 1

“has a real ignorance of Vietnamese affairs.”

● As far back as 1969, Ellsberg and other “inside types” urged unilateral withdrawal by the United States, but most advisers were “unwilling to come out publicly.”

“I went to San Clemente to talk to Kissinger in September of 1969,” Ellsberg said. “I wanted to ask him if he’d read or had anyone summarize for him a 10,000-page study of the history of the Vietnam decision - making by the U.S. that I’d been working on.”

(Ellsberg, indicted by a federal grand jury for his role in “leaking” the documents, formerly was an analyst with Rand Corporation. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird ordered all classified information withdrawn from the custody of Rand Friday.)

“Kissinger said he knew of the study, but hadn’t had time to read it. He said ‘Do you really think it would be worthwhile?’ And then said that ‘After all, we make decisions very differently now.’

“When he said that, I went into a trance of despair. The main feature of that study was the repetitiveness of decision crises for the last 20 years ...

“You make a choice to keep things going, and in a year the course you have chosen fails to make the Communists capitulate. Then the process starts all over again. This is evidently going on unchanged.

“Kissinger didn’t read the study, so he doesn’t realize this. None of the Presidents or their advisers have realized they are going down a well - worn path.”

Ellsberg said the chief danger of classifying Vietnam war reports isn’t that the public is deprived of vital information, but that decision-makers tend to be blinded to opinions of persons without access to such reports.

He dismissed the value of much of the classified material, particularly cables from Vietnam to Washington, and said:

“It’s not possible for someone who hasn’t spent some time in Vietnam, especially people in Washington, to see how reality is obscured by the process that’s supposed



## Laird Cracks Down

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird ordered all classified information withdrawn from the custody of the Rand Corporation Friday on grounds the research firm allowed the leak of the Pentagon Papers on the Vietnam War. He met newsmen at Andrews Air Force Base before setting out on a 17-day trip to the Far East. Laird announced stricter security measures ordered for protection of classified information.

—AP Photo

to communicate that reality. I know. I used to write those cables from Saigon.”

Ellsberg said that because the cables were “worthless,” Washington decision-makers aren’t sufficiently familiar with four basic areas of “extreme relevance.” He listed the areas as the “concrete situation” in Vietnam, the history of U.S. decision-making, the history of Vietnam as a country, and “an understanding of our opponents.”

“Reading those cables is like putting on magic spectacles that make everyone else in the world look stupid,” he said. “It’s a real ego trip, but it’s a very misleading thing, because you’re the one who becomes stupid.

“I’d rather read The New York Times,” he said. “You don’t get all the details there, but on the whole you get a more balanced picture of what’s going on in Vietnam than you do in the government.”

Ellsberg was critical of

Kissinger, although he called him “a very intelligent man and a good analyst.”

He called the White House aide “arrogant” and said Kissinger “still has a real ignorance of Vietnamese affairs.”

“For example,” Ellsberg said, “I suspect he is not sentimental about the South Vietnamese government. I don’t think he has any illusions about its being able to stand after our troops leave.”

Ellsberg, now a senior research associate at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and formerly a Rand Corp. analyst and special assistant in the Pentagon, continued:

“Kissinger’s grasp of the concrete situation in Vietnam is rudimentary. I must say, however, that he absorbed a lot in the few times he’s been there. Kissinger learns fast.”

Ellsberg said Kissinger has suffered from bad information in cables and added: “Kissinger’s arrogance lies in the belief that what he’s

getting is information so crucial that outsiders who contradict it can’t be listened to. This is the spell of secret information — it makes them morons. Liek Circe’s spell, it turns them into swine.”

(Circe, a sorceress in Greek literature, used her magic powers to change men into animals.)

“Outsiders become for Kissinger people to accommodate and conciliate — his mission is to keep them happy, talk to them, tell them what they want to hear. But it doesn’t occur to him that they should be listened to,” Ellsberg said.

Ellsberg said his experience in Vietnam convinced him that the wisest decision for the United States was withdrawal as early as possible.

But before severing his ties with the government and becoming active in the peace movement, he said, he worked as a “discret critic” to change United States policy from within. He said he took this position from the spring of 1967, when he returned from Vietnam, until the fall of 1969.

Ellsberg said during that period he pressed for a plan for a civilian government in South Vietnam to supervise free elections. He said he worked on the proposal with Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, William P. Bundy, Robert F. Kennedy and W. Avrell Harriman, among others.

During the 1968 campaign year, he said he worked on speeches for Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), and also consulted with the staffs of former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey and New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.

“I was open,” Ellsberg said. “I talked to anyone who wanted to change current policy.”

After Richard Nixon was elected President, Ellsberg said he continued to work within the government and in fact served on Kissinger’s White House staff in the opening months of the Nixon Administration. He said he worked on the first “paper” produced by the Nixon National Security Council, a paper outlining options for Vietnam policy for the new administration.