

Foxes in Charge of Intelligence Hen House

Recent revelations of “inadvertent” deletions of electronic data at the FBI and NSA relating to alleged felonies are being described as a “foul-up,” but the intelligence agencies’ track record suggests a possibly more nefarious explanation, explains Ray McGovern in this op-ed.

By Ray McGovern

We learned in recent days that the FBI and the National Security Agency “inadvertently” deleted electronic messages relating to reported felonies, but one noxious reality persists: No one in the FBI or NSA is likely to be held to account for these “mistakes.”

It is a 70 year-old tradition. Today’s lack of accountability is enabled by (1) corruption at the top of intelligence agencies; (2) the convenient secrecy behind which their leaders hide; (3) bureaucratic indignities and structural flaws in the system; (4) the indulgence/complicity of most of the “mainstream media;” and (5) the eunuchs leading the Congressional “oversight” committees, who – history shows – can be bullied by threats, including blackmail, a la former longtime FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.

It is a safe bet, though, that neither the FBI nor NSA have deleted their holdings on key Congressional leaders – including House Democratic minority leader Nancy Pelosi, who used to boast about her very long tenure as head of the House Intelligence Committee, only to complain later that “they [intelligence officials] mislead us all the time.”

In fact, Pelosi was briefed by the NSA and CIA on all manner of crimes, including warrantless surveillance of U.S. citizens, in violation of the Fourth Amendment, and torture.

The lack of intelligence accountability has created a kind of perfect storm, enabling felonies and lesser mischief ordered by those sitting atop the intelligence community. While press reports indicate that the Congressional oversight committees now have “explosive” documentary proof – not yet deleted – of such crimes, it remains to be seen whether the committees will have the courage to do their duty under the law.

Even if they try, the odds are against their being able to make much headway, in the face of stiff resistance from the heads of intelligence agencies and a suborned/frightened “mainstream media.”

Rosemary Woods on Steroids

Those of us with a little gray in our hair will remember the infamous, 18.5-minute gap “mistakenly” caused by Rosemary Woods, President Richard Nixon’s longtime secretary, while transcribing a key Oval Office tape of a discussion between President Richard Nixon and his partner-in-crime-cum-chief of staff H.R. Haldeman right after the Watergate break-in. (The tape itself was then destroyed.)

Younger folks may recall reporting on the videotapes of waterboarding at a CIA “black site” in Thailand in 2002, tapes that were deliberately destroyed in 2005 at the order of Jose Rodriguez, head of the CIA operations directorate at the time.

Woods testified that she had erased part of the tape by mistake. She suffered no consequences for her “mistake,” and died in 2005 at age 87.

And to no one’s surprise, Rodriguez also landed on his feet.

CIA officials initially claimed that the videotapes were destroyed to protect the identity of the interrogators – read torturers. It was later revealed that then-Executive Director of the CIA, Kyle “Dusty” Foggo, wrote in an email that Rodriguez thought “the heat from destroying is nothing compared with what it would be if the tapes ever got into public domain,” adding that they would be “should devastating to us.”

Foggo ended up in prison as a result of an unrelated fraud case. Sadly, no senior intelligence official following the time-(dis)honored Foggo/Rodriguez approach today are likely to end up behind bars, unless this time Congress shows unaccustomed courage.

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‘The Post’ and the Pentagon Papers

The new movie “The Post” tells the story of the Pentagon Papers from a curious perspective that ignores much of the drama of the real history, as James DiEugenio explains.

By James DiEugenio

Imagine a film about a backer of an American war in the Third World who, as a State Department official, decides to visit and observe that war firsthand. After many months he learns that most of what our leaders have been telling the public about the war was wrong. In reality, our side was not winning, and most of the claims made for the effort were false. For example, patrols reported to protect certain areas did not even exist. The written reports describing these patrols were simply made up. Therefore both American troops, and the foreign natives we were allied with, were dying by the thousands for fraudulent reasons.

When he returns from his tour abroad, the official learns about a secret Defense Department study. It exposes much of what he had observed. The study is being supervised by his old boss, who gives him access to it. He then meets with a politician who is against the war and they begin to share certain ideas about opposing it. That politician decides to run for president in order to end the war. But he is assassinated while on the verge of winning his party's nomination. As a result, a new president takes office, yet he is not that interested in ending what has now become a continuing disaster. In fact, the new president actually expands combat operations into two neighboring countries.

The former hawk has now become a dove dedicated to ending the war. He decides his only option is to copy the secret study since it shows all the deceptions and failures of the war. He goes to Washington and offers it to four anti-war politicians to read on the floor of Congress. They all have reasons to refuse.

He then decides to go to an old reporter friend who, like him, went from backing the war to opposing it. His newspaper decides to publish a long series based on the secret study. But on the third day of publication, the new president goes to court to stop publication. So our protagonist goes to an old acquaintance at a rival newspaper, and that paper decides to publish. They are also sued but our converted dove gets copies to many other papers, nearly twenty in all. They all publish. And he finally finds a senator to read the documents into the congressional record. The new president charges him for theft and espionage. But the president's administration uses several unethical means in order to indict him—including influencing the judge with a job offer. These acts are publicized and the charges dismissed. He becomes a household name and, quite rightly, a national hero.

Who wouldn't want to see a movie based on that story? Who wouldn't like to be part of making a movie based on that story?

Well, evidently, Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg wouldn't. Instead, they have produced a movie, "The Post," depicting a very different set of events.

Those first few paragraphs describe the ordeal that Daniel Ellsberg went through

in order to expose what came to be known as the Pentagon Papers. By copying those secret documents and disseminating them to an array of newspapers, Ellsberg and his friend Anthony Russo risked going to prison for a combined 150 years.

Russo did go to jail for refusing to testify against Ellsberg. Their trial went on for several weeks in Los Angeles in 1973. But while in process, it was revealed by the Watergate prosecutor that the FBI had illegally wiretapped Ellsberg, that the White House had sent burglars to break into the office of his psychiatrist, and that President Richard Nixon and his domestic aide John Ehrlichman had offered their judge, Matt Byrne, the directorship of the FBI while the trial was proceeding. As a result of these abuses, the charges against Ellsberg and Russo were dismissed.

All of this, and much more, is profusely detailed in Ellsberg's 2002 book, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*. That book provides the scaffolding for a gripping story full of both epic and personal drama. In the 457 pages of Ellsberg's fine book, *Washington Post* executive editor Ben Bradlee is mentioned exactly once, on page 392. Katharine Graham, the owner and publisher of the *Post*, is not mentioned at all. But it is upon Bradlee and Graham that Hanks and Spielberg decided to base their film about the Pentagon Papers.

Ellsberg and the Times

Yet, in naming the film "The Post," Hanks and Spielberg even distort who should get credit for breaking the Pentagon Papers in the press. As noted above, Ellsberg had gone to four politicians in Washington and asked them to insert the voluminous Pentagon Papers study into the Congressional Record. He thought this would be the safest legal way for him to get the study out since the Constitution's free debate clause protects senators and congressman from being questioned for what they say on the floor. (ibid, p. 361) But, for various reasons, Senators George McGovern, William Fulbright, Charles Mathias, and representative Pete McCloskey, all turned him down.

It was at this point that Ellsberg got in contact with a man he had met while he was in Vietnam, *New York Times* reporter Neil Sheehan. When first stationed in Vietnam, Sheehan—like his friend and colleague David Halberstam—had been a backer of the war. He and Halberstam were critical of President Kennedy's policies for not being aggressive enough and for not inserting American combat troops. (David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire*, pgs. 321-22) But once they saw that President Johnson's escalation had not worked, they began to have second thoughts about the expanded American involvement. By 1971, Sheehan was now seriously questioning his former beliefs about the war.

At this time, Ellsberg had a teaching fellowship at MIT, so the reporter drove up to Cambridge. He read some of the documents, and took some notes. He then told his editors at the *Times* about them. Ellsberg had given Sheehan a key to his apartment on a weekend he was not there and—unaware to Ellsberg—Sheehan copied the Pentagon Papers and brought them to New York. (Ellsberg, p. 375)

One of the hidden heroes of the Pentagon Papers case at this point stepped forward. James Goodale was the general counsel for the *Times*. In March of 1971, he had been tipped off that the newspaper might be coming into possession of a large amount of classified information. In the next three months he and his assistant studied all of the legal issues involved and predicted the possible ways President Nixon could halt publication through prior restraint.

He then looked at the stories the *Times* wanted to run. This included one on how Johnson had used false information about the Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964 to pass a congressional resolution to wage war against North Vietnam. Goodale predicted the administration would use the Pentagon Papers as a way to continue Nixon's and Vice President Spiro Agnew's war against the press. He then mapped out the defenses the *Times* would be able to utilize to neutralize the administration's attack.

Goodale's legal analysis was remarkably prescient: it was the issues he studied in March that decided the case for the *Times* in June. (Goodale, *Fighting for the Press*, pgs. 41-43) Once the *Times* had the documents there was a debate at the higher levels of management over whether to publish. Managing editor Abe Rosenthal threatened to resign if they did not. And it was the threat of mass resignations that convinced Punch Sulzberger, owner of the *Times*, to publish. But once that decision was made, the *Times'* conservative Republican law firm deserted them. Therefore, on the eve of trial, it was Goodale who put together an ad hoc defense team, literally overnight. (ibid, p. 71) It was that team—which included Yale professor Alexander Bickel and Floyd Abrams at the firm of Cahill Gordon—which argued the first hearings over the Pentagon Papers case in New York.

The Post Gets Involved

Contrary to what the Hanks/Spielberg film depicts, after the first day of publication—June 13, 1971—Nixon did not fly into a rage. After all, the Pentagon Papers stopped in 1968, before Nixon was elected. The stories by the *New York Times* had focused on the escalations during the Johnson administration. On that first day, White House Counsel Charles Colson had advised Nixon not to overreact, and he did not. (Steve Sheinkin, *Most Dangerous*, p. 217)

There were two people who reversed Nixon's position. The first was Henry

Kissinger, Nixon's National Security Advisor. Kissinger had known Ellsberg from his days at Harvard. When Nixon took office, Ellsberg had consulted Kissinger on various options for the war from his position at Rand Corporation. (Ellsberg, pgs. 231-34) Kissinger knew about the Pentagon Papers and he suspected almost immediately that Ellsberg had given them to the *Times*. On the second day of publication, Kissinger talked to Bob Haldeman, Nixon's Chief of Staff. He told him the president now had to act, for there was a wholesale subversion of the government going on. He then told Nixon that the stories somehow made him look like a weakling. (Sheinkin, p. 221)

Nixon asked Attorney General John Mitchell for an opinion on the issue. Mitchell, who had been a bond lawyer in New York, gave Nixon some poor legal advice. He told the president that the government had sued to stop a newspaper from publishing before. And it was customary to give the paper notice of such legal action. (Goodale, p. 73) This information was completely wrong. Such an act—legally called prior restraint—had never happened before in America. The reason being that, in the United States, unlike in Great Britain, there is no Official Secrets Act to justify stopping publication before the information is printed.

Goodale knew this from his research. Therefore, when Mitchell forwarded a telegram to the *Times*, Goodale advised them not to obey the request to stop publishing. Mitchell then went into court to apply for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) on the grounds that the series was causing irreparable harm to national security. This was granted in New York by a newly appointed judge named Murray Gurfein. In the meantime, Nixon enlisted some friends—Maxwell Taylor, John Tower, Averill Harriman—to begin attacking the *New York Times*. (ibid, p. 85)

It is only at this point, a year into Ellsberg's struggle to make the Pentagon Papers public, that the *Washington Post* entered the picture. And it did not happen the way the film depicts it. For example, Ben Bradlee never sent a spy to infiltrate the *New York Times* office; therefore that fictitious spy never saw a mock up with a front page with Sheehan's name on it.

As Ellsberg writes in *Secrets*, he had never planned on going to the *Washington Post*. Dunn Gifford, a friend of Sheehan's—who is completely absent from the film—first suggested he go to the *Post*. Ellsberg wrote that, on his own, he never would have thought of the *Post* himself. (We will speculate as to why that was later, see Ellsberg pgs. 388-89.) But it was at this point, with the Justice Department's TRO in place, the *Times* going a day without publishing, with Gifford urging him to go elsewhere to keep the current moving, that Ellsberg, through a friend, called journalist Ben Bagdikian, who worked for the

Washington Post. (ibid, p. 391)

Dramatic License

The problems the film has with dramatic license, which, as we shall see, are going to get worse, owe to three interwoven facts. First was the decision by the screenwriters—Liz Hannah and Josh Singer—to tell the story through the *Washington Post*. In turn, that choice left them with paltry source material. And that owes to the fact that the *Post* only figured in the story for about two weeks. Yet, as we will see, the saga of the Pentagon Papers extended to well over two years.

The primary sources for the screenplay amount to Katharine Graham's book *Personal History*, Ben Bradlee's autobiography *A Good Life*, and Bradlee's authorized biography written by Jeff Himmelman, *Yours in Truth*. Those three narratives do not differ very much in information. And the longest of the three is Graham's, which totals a miniscule 12 pages. One dramatic problem is that Graham and Bradlee never really acted to attain a goal. They are acted upon, are therefore reacting to external events: the *Times* story, Mitchell's TR0, Ellsberg and Gifford's discussions. To work their way out of this dramatic problem the writers created Bradlee's ersatz spy and, as we shall see, some other confections.

But there is also a different use of dramatic license that creeps into the story. These deal with the reasons the *Post* wanted the story in the first place. Throughout the film Bradlee is portrayed as some kind of crusader for both truth and the right to free speech for the press. Later in the film, to further this angle, the script fabricates another scene. Towards the end, when Graham is deciding whether or not to print the documents—her lawyers have advised her not to—she walks in to talk to Robert McNamara, the former Secretary of Defense. This scene was manufactured—there is no evidence for it in any book on the case. And it is fabricated for two apparent reasons. First, to somehow convey that Graham was surprised at what had happened in Vietnam under McNamara's direction, and second, to show McNamara trying to talk Graham out of printing the Pentagon Papers.

For anyone who knows the Pentagon Papers case and the history of the *Washington Post*, there is no other way to say it: this scene is an insulting fairy tale. Robert McNamara actually commissioned the Pentagon Papers study back in 1967. In order to ensure that it was objective and scholarly he deliberately did not exercise any influence over it during the 18 months it took to complete. The chain of command in the writing and editing of this valuable encyclopedia were from McNamara's deputy John McNaughton, to McNaughton's assistant Morton Halperin.

Halperin appointed research analyst Leslie Gelb to supervise various teams to write the individual chapters. According to Gelb, he never had any difficulty getting documents once he invoked McNamara's name. One of the reasons that McNamara wanted the study classified Top Secret was so his boss, Lyndon Johnson, would not find out about it. McNamara knew LBJ would terminate it. (Sheinkin, p. 125) In other words, without McNamara, there would have been no Pentagon Papers. And there is no evidence of him ever trying to stop any of that record from being published.

Second, the idea that Kay Graham was surprised at the revelations in the Pentagon Papers also does not jibe with the record. When Graham took control of the *Washington Post* in 1964, President Johnson immediately began a full court press to gain her trust and favor. One of the reasons for this was that he wanted to have her and the *Post* in his corner as he began to escalate the war.

Anyone who witnessed the 1964 presidential race between GOP candidate Barry Goldwater and Johnson will recall that Johnson painted Goldwater as the extreme Vietnam hawk while saying that he would not send American boys to do what Asian boys should and also that "We seek no wider war." (Joseph Goulden, *Truth is the First Casualty*, pgs 38, 164) As Frederick Logevall showed in his book *Choosing War*, this was a deliberate deception. At the very least, by the summer of 1964, Johnson had started planning on direct American intervention in the war. (See Logevall, pgs 128-30) This would be done by the escalated bombing of the north and, later, through the insertion of combat troops. The target date was February of 1965. Johnson missed it by one month: both began in March.

Are we somehow to believe that Graham did not hear Johnson make the pledges he did in the 1964 race? Was she then blind to the air escalation through Operation Rolling Thunder, and the eventual 540,000 combat troops in theater by 1968? And somehow she did not notice the difference? There were neither combat troops in theater nor any Rolling Thunder over Vietnam on the day John F. Kennedy was killed.

The truth is that, as more than one Kay Graham biographer has shown, Johnson's charm offensive paid off in spades. In fact, in April of 1964, LBJ invited Graham and the executives of the *Post* to lunch at the White House. In the family dining room, he asked for their support for his planned expansion of the war in Indochina. (Carol Felsenthal, *Power, Privilege and the Post*, p. 234) In other words, Graham knew Johnson was lying as he hit the campaign trail. In spite of that, the *Post* endorsed his attacks on North Vietnam after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August of 1964. (ibid) In fact, the *Post* went further. They blasted the two senators who voted against the Tonkin Gulf resolution. The paper wrote that it was false to equate the resolution to a declaration of war. In fact,

that is what Johnson used it for. (ibid, p. 304)

There was never any wavering of the *Post's* support through Johnson's milestone escalations of 1965. As one observer said of Graham, "She liked being respectable, and was very uneasy about being different from the norm." (ibid, p. 239) This extended to letting Johnson have assistants call her and ask for modifications to stories about the war. At times Graham would invite the whole upper level of the State Department to dinner, knowing that Dean Rusk was an unmitigated hawk. (ibid, p. 240) LBJ sent her on a tour to Vietnam where she met with General Westmoreland. Upon her return, she asked her editorial board if anyone thought they should bring up the question of withdrawal. When one writer said he did, she replied, "You're so stupid." (ibid, p. 241)

As Johnson's escalations continued into 1966, the *Times* began to be at least a bit critical of some elements. For instance, they criticized civilian casualties in the bombing of Hanoi. The *Post* defended the bombing and criticized the *Times*, comparing their story to "those in communist propaganda leaflets." (ibid, p. 255) The *Post* then criticized Martin Luther King when he spoke out against the war in 1967. (ibid, p. 256)

The Post Joins the 'Big League'

But perhaps the strongest indication of just how far the *Post* would go in backing Johnson's massive escalation of the war occurred in 1968. Ward Just had been the main *Post* reporter in Vietnam. He never questioned the causes of the war, or whether America should be there. But he was an honest and accurate reporter who tried to portray things as they were without spinning them.

The problem was that after the Tet offensive, any kind of realism made Johnson and the war effort look pretty bad. Johnson and Westmoreland's light at the end of the tunnel had grown dark. So Bradlee now switched out Just and replaced him with Peter Braestrup. Like Johnson, Braestrup argued that the Tet offensive was really a failure for Hanoi and a military victory for America. In fact, he went on to write a very long book defending that bizarre thesis. (Daniel Hallin, *The Uncensored War*, p. 173) This record may explain why Ellsberg never thought of giving the documents to the *Washington Post*.

That record made me cringe at another scene near the end. At the Supreme Court hearing in Washington, Graham is walking into the building alone. A young Hispanic legal assistant shows her a side door to get into the hearing room. While walking through the corridor she thanks Graham since she had a brother in Vietnam. Understanding Graham and the *Post*—which the script does not want us to do—it was Graham's support for that war that helped put her brother in Vietnam. If one needed any more convincing of how this picture spins the facts, all one

needs to know is that Graham supported Nixon's re-election. This is not only after the Pentagon Papers case, but after the *Post's* initial coverage of the Watergate break in. (Robin Lerber, *Katharine Graham* p. 134)

Therefore, what was the reason that the *Post* was so eager to publish the Pentagon Papers? It was quite simply a matter of Bradley's overweening ambition. Graham even admitted this. She later recalled that Bradley "was driven crazy by the *Times* having this enormous and important material." (Felsenthal, p. 299) Bradley's overarching goal once he got into an editorship position at the *Post* was to make it the equal of the *New York Times*. In other words, when those in power talked about the "paper of record", he wanted to alter that discussion to the "*papers* of record" so that the *Post* would have the same kind of imprimatur as the Grey Lady. Bradley himself admitted this was the case.

He later said that the Pentagon Papers was a key moment for the *Post*. Not because what was in the documents, and not for any impact it would have on the war. But because it meant that the *Post* had graduated into what, for him, was the highest ranks of American journalism. Referring to himself and Graham, he said: "One of our unspoken goals was to get the world to refer to the *Post* and the *NYT* in the same breath, which they previously had not done. After the Pentagon Papers, they did." (Graham, *Personal History*, p. 458) Or to put it in football terms, as Bradley was wont to do, "The score was 36-0 and we were trying to get even." (Sanford Ungar, *The Papers and the Papers*, p. 131)

Probably the worst scene in the film comes after Attorney General Mitchell has secured a TRO against the *Washington Post*. Therefore, after two days, the *Post* had to halt publication and await the outcome of the Supreme Court decision. Journalist Ben Bagdikian comes into Bradley's office and places a tall grocery bag on his desk. He then says something like: I always wanted to be part of a rebellion. Bradley looks into the bag and then carries it to Graham's office. There he starts taking out the other newspapers that have now published the Pentagon Papers. Editor and publisher jubilantly celebrate.

Again, there is no evidence that this scene happened. What really occurred was that, after his conversation with Dunn Gifford, Ellsberg decided that he had better start making multiple copies of the documents. Therefore, on a staggered basis, he would then parcel them out to other interested newspapers. Once they were enjoined, he would give them to another paper. All told there were four papers that Mitchell decided to sue. In addition to the *Times* and *Post*, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* and the *Boston Globe* were also enjoined. But the documents, through Ellsberg's support group, kept on getting out, up to and even past the Supreme Court decision. (Ungar, p. 190) The idea that somehow these newspapers were inspired by Graham, or empowered by her, is simply false. It was Ellsberg

who empowered them at his own personal risk. Just as he originally empowered the *Times* and the *Post*. The Hanks/Spielberg version excises that key fact.

A 'Feel Good' Fairytale

Because the film was directed by Spielberg, it is quite skillfully made. He has almost always been a visually acute director. But he has also said about himself that—unlike Alfred Hitchcock or Michelangelo Antonioni—he really does not have a visual style. He added that he saw his function as serving the writer's intent, therefore adapting his style to the material. He does a nice job of that here.

The montage sequence where the *Post* gets out its first-day story based on the Pentagon Papers is a well shot and paced paragraph of action: going from the copy desk to the delivery trucks. The scene with Graham in her den deciding to publish the documents surrounded with differing opinions by her business and editorial advisors is shot from above, conveying the idea that powerful forces are pressuring her into a fateful decision. The penultimate scene with Graham and Bradlee in the printing room after the court decided in their favor, and they can now publish again, is nicely composed: the camera pulling back until the two characters are dwarfed by the image and sound of the printing press getting the Pentagon Papers out.

Meryl Streep is Kay Graham. She delivers her usual studied, technically sound, precisely prepared performance. My only problem with her acting is that the character is written as if this was Graham's first day on the job. At this point, Graham had been in charge of the paper for eight years. The idea that she was just finding her way into her position is hard to swallow. To say that Tom Hanks plays Bradlee would be a misleading statement. Streep does what Hanks does not do: she uses her mental and emotional powers to create someone else. Hanks is—for all intents and purposes—Hanks, not Bradlee. With one exception, the rest of the characters seem cast on appearances: They look like board members or cub reporters. That one exception is *Breaking Bad's* Bob Odenkirk who shows some genuine acting range in his portrayal of Ben Bagdikian.

As mentioned, in 1967-68 Ellsberg had gotten close to a presidential candidate who agreed with him about the war, but who was assassinated before the November election of 1968. That candidate was, of course, Robert Kennedy. Kennedy wanted Ellsberg to be his main advisor on Vietnam. In fact, in his book, Ellsberg hints that it was Kennedy who gave some documents to the *New York Times* which helped prevent another escalation by Johnson after Tet. And during his presidential campaign, Ellsberg worked on a speech for RFK about Vietnam. (Ellsberg, pgs. 203, 218) When he got the news Kennedy had been killed, Ellsberg broke down and cried for a half hour. He then wrote, "I loved Bobby. He was the only politician I ever felt that way about." (ibid, p. 220) But

because the film marginalizes Ellsberg, this important and moving aspect of the story is nowhere on the screen.

And neither is the senator who actually did read the Pentagon Papers on the floor of the senate, which made the Supreme Court decision all but inconsequential as far as their publication went. That senator was Mike Gravel of Alaska. He started to read the documents late on the night before the Supreme Court decision was announced. After about four hours, he nearly collapsed and moved to place them into the record. (Ungar, p. 262) He had timed it so his subcommittee would be absent and consequently there could be no objections to his motion. It was that stenographic record which produced the first privately published version of the Pentagon Papers, named after Gravel, from Beacon Press in Massachusetts.

After the Supreme Court ruled for the *Times* and *Post*, Nixon and Mitchell did not give up. They opened a grand jury proceeding in Massachusetts to go after Ellsberg, Gravel and Beacon Press. This failed because of the debate privilege enjoyed by all senators speaking from the floor. (ibid, p. 284) But they did indict Ellsberg and Anthony Russo in California, where Rand was located. Russo went to prison for seven weeks on contempt charges for refusing to testify against Ellsberg. He did so even though he was granted immunity in return for his testimony. (ibid, p. 273) Mitchell charged Ellsberg with eleven counts, which carried a maximum jail time of 115 years, or life in prison. Russo was charged with three counts, which carried a maximum of 35 years in prison.

Unlike what the film tries to convey, it was this trial that was directly impacted by Watergate. Because the Watergate prosecution uncovered the illegal electronic surveillance of Ellsberg, the burglary at his psychiatrist's office, and the attempt by Nixon to influence Judge Matt Byrne by offering him the FBI directorship while the trial was proceeding. Because of those acts, the charges were dismissed. (Ellsberg, pgs. 444-449)

"The Post" tries to imply that the publication of the Pentagon Papers caused Watergate. As new research by writers like Robert Parry and Ken Hughes has shown, such was not the case. What caused the creation of the Plumbers Unit in the White House was Nixon's fear that hidden documents would expose his interference in the 1968 election through Anna Chennault and officials in Saigon. That effort sandbagged Johnson's 1968 peace efforts and helped Nixon defeat Hubert Humphrey.

As the reader can see, "The Post" does not come close to telling the full story about the Pentagon Papers, or the perfidy of the Nixon administration in trying to prevent their publication. And what it does present is—in this reviewer's opinion—seriously slanted. If Hanks and Spielberg were really interested in

history, the only way to do this story justice would have been through a four-part mini-series. That would have made for both honest and genuine history, but also for more dramatic visuals.

Cinematically, the best parts of "The Post" are the early scenes in Vietnam and the heisting and copying of the Pentagon Papers. But in addition, that approach would have allowed for the introduction of legendary characters like General Ed Lansdale and Colonel Jean Paul Vann, since Ellsberg met and served under both in Vietnam. We then could have later met others that Ellsberg encountered like Kissinger and McGovern and RFK. But that kind of presentation—with Ellsberg asking Kissinger in public how many civilians he and Nixon planned on killing in Indochina in one year, not knowing that Nixon had already told Kissinger he did not care about civilian deaths—that would have produced a much harder edged film than this one. (Ellsberg, pgs. 353-54, 419)

Instead, Hanks and Spielberg have given us a combination Washington/Hollywood fairy tale. A "feel good" film that works only for those who are unaware of the underlying facts, which they and their screenwriters have truncated and altered to produce their desired effect. The best thing I can say about this film is that it could provoke the viewer to get the real story by reading Ellsberg's book *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*.

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