

From [Democracy Now](#) | Original article Could tension between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un bring us to the brink of nuclear war? As tensions ramp up, we discuss what nuclear war would look like with a former nuclear war planner and one of the world's most famous whistleblowers—Daniel Ellsberg. In 1971, Ellsberg was a high-level defense analyst when he leaked a top-secret report on U.S. involvement in Vietnam to The New York Times and other publications, which came to be known as the Pentagon Papers. He played a key role in ending the Vietnam War. Few know Ellsberg was also a Pentagon and White House consultant who drafted plans for nuclear war. His new book, published Tuesday, is titled “The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner.” We speak with Ellsberg about his top-secret nuclear studies, his front row seat to the Cuban missile crisis, whether Trump could start a nuclear war and how contemporary whistleblowers Chelsea Manning and Ed Snowden are his heroes.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: North Korea is warning that U.S. actions are bringing the Korean Peninsula to the brink of nuclear war. The warning came Monday as the U.S. and South Korea held massive war games, mobilizing warships, thousands of troops and some 200 U.S. planes, many of them capable of deploying nuclear bombs. North Korea's Foreign Ministry issued a statement calling President Trump a, quote, “nuclear demon.” Earlier this year, North Korea said it would freeze its nuclear weapons program in exchange for an end to U.S. and South Korean war games, an overture rejected by the Trump administration.

As tensions between the U.S. and North Korea ramp up, today we're joined for the hour by a nuclear war planner to discuss what nuclear war would look like. He is already well known for another reason, as one of the world's most famous whistleblowers. In 1971, Daniel Ellsberg was a high-level military analyst when he leaked a top-secret report that detailed the history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, including a secret dramatic escalation of troops and bombings in what looked like an unwinnable war. He photocopied and shared the 7,000-page document with *The New York Times* and other publications. The report came to be known as the Pentagon Papers and played a key role in ending the Vietnam War.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, few know that 10 years before, in 1961, Daniel Ellsberg was a consultant with the Pentagon and the the White House, where he drafted plans for nuclear war. In his book, just out this week, titled *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, Dan Ellsberg

reveals for the first time he also made copies of top-secret documents from his nuclear studies—an entire second set of papers in addition to the Pentagon Papers, for which he is known. Dan Ellsberg is also the author of a 2003 memoir about the Pentagon Papers and Vietnam called *Secrets*

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, in which he did not discuss this other set of papers. He's the subject of the Oscar-nominated documentary

The Most Dangerous Man in America

. Dan Ellsberg will be a character in the forthcoming Steven Spielberg film about the Pentagon Papers called

The Post

When we come back from our break, we'll speak with Dan Ellsberg for the hour about nuclear war, the plans he drew up, what nuclear war would look like and his history as the most famous whistleblower in America. Stay with us.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: "We Will All Go Together When We Go" by Tom Lehrer. This is *Democracy Now!* I'm

Amy Goodman, with Juan González. We're joined by Dan Ellsberg for the hour, yes, known for leaking the Pentagon Papers in 1971. Today we learn about something else he did over the years, in fact, decades ago: writing up plans for a nuclear war. His book details this, just out this week,

The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner

So, you made copies of top-secret reports for plans about nuclear war years before you copied the Pentagon Papers—

DANIEL ELLSBERG: That's right.

AMY GOODMAN: —and released them to the press?

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Essentially, my notes, and sometimes verbatim excerpts, not the entire plans themselves, but on plans that were then unknown to the president, to begin with, to President Kennedy. I briefed his aide, McGeorge Bundy, in his first month in office on the nature of the plans and some of the other problems, like the delegation of authority to theater commanders for nuclear war by President Eisenhower, which was fairly shocking to McGeorge Bundy, even though Kennedy chose to renew that delegation, as other presidents have.

But I was given the job of improving the Eisenhower plans, which was not a very high bar, actually, at that time, because they were, on their face, the worst plans in the history of warfare. A number of people who saw them, but very few civilians ever got a look at them. In fact, the joint chiefs couldn't really get the targets out of General LeMay at the Strategic Air Command.

And there was a good reason for that: They were insane. They called for first-strike plans, which was by order of President Eisenhower. He didn't want any plan for limited war of any kind with the Soviet Union, under any circumstances, because that would enable the Army to ask for enormous numbers of divisions or even tactical nuclear weapons to deal with the Soviets. So he required that the only plan for fighting Soviets, under any circumstances, such as an encounter in the Berlin corridor, the access to West Berlin, or over Iran, which was already a flashpoint at that point, or Yugoslavia, if they had gone in—however the war started—with an uprising in East Germany, for example—however it got started, Eisenhower's directed plan was for all-out war, in a first initiation of nuclear war, assuming the Soviets had not used nuclear weapons.

And that plan called, in our first strike, for hitting every city—actually, every town over 25,000—in the USSR and every city in China. A war with Russia would inevitably involve immediate attacks on every city in China. In the course of doing this—pardon me—there were no reserves. Everything was to be thrown as soon as it was available—it was a vast trucking operation of thermonuclear weapons—over to the USSR, but not only the USSR. The captive nations, the East Europe satellites in the Warsaw Pact, were to be hit in their air defenses, which were all near cities, their transport points, their communications of any kind. So they were to be annihilated, as well.

I couldn't believe, when I saw these, that the joint chiefs actually had ever calculated how many people they would actually kill in this course. In fact, colonels who were friends of mine in the Air Staff told me they had never seen an actual figure for the total casualties. We had exact

figures of the number of targets and how many planes would be needed and every sort of thing, many calculations. But not victims.

So, I drafted a question, which the aide to McGeorge Bundy, Bob Komer, sent to the joint chiefs in the name of the president. And the question was: In the event of your carrying out your general nuclear war plans, which were first-strike plans, how many will die? First I asked, in the USSR and China alone, in the thought that, by the way, they'd be embarrassed to discover—to say, “We have to have more time. We've never really calculated that.” I was wrong. And my friends were wrong in the Air Force. They came back with an answer very quickly: 325 million people in the USSR and China alone.

Well, then I asked, “All right, how many altogether?” And a few days later, 100 million in East Europe, the captive nations, another 100 million in West Europe, our allies, from our own strikes, by fallout, depending on which way the wind blew, and, however the wind blew, a third 100 million in adjoining countries, neutral countries, like Austria and Finland, or Afghanistan then, Japan, northern India and so forth—a total of 600 million people. That was a time, by the way, when the population of the world was 3 billion. And that was an underestimate of their casualties—a hundred Holocausts.

It was very clear that they hadn't included—I hadn't asked, actually, what would Russian retaliation be against us and against West Europe. They were thought, at that time—wrongly—to have hundreds of weapons against the U.S. But they did have hundreds of weapons against West Europe, no question. West Europe would go, under any circumstances. If we were defending West Europe—Germany, for example—we were planning to destroy the continent in order to save it.

Six hundred million, that was a hundred Holocausts. And when I held the piece of paper in my hand that had that figure, that they had sent out unembarrassedly, you know, proudly, to the president—“Here's what we will do”—I thought, “This is the most evil plan that has ever existed. It's insane.” The weapons, the machinery that will carry this out, this was no hypothetical plan, like Herman Kahn might have conceived at the doomsday machine that he thought up at the RAND Corporation as my colleague. This was an actual war plan for how we would use the existing weapons, many of which I had seen already that time.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Dan Ellsberg, the colossal carnage that they were envisioning as a result

of this first-strike use was doubly—made doubly worse, as you reveal, by the fact that the image that we have that the president is the one who holds the switch or has his hand on the button is not true, that many people have the capacity to initiate a nuclear war. If you could you talk about that, as well?

DANIEL ELLSBERG: To start with, even if it were only the president, no one man—really, no one nation—should have the ability—the ability even—to threaten or to carry out a hundred Holocausts at his will. That machinery should never have existed. And it does exist right now, and every president has had that power, and this president does have that power.

But the recent discussions of that, which emphasize his sole authority to do that, don't take account of the fact that he has authority to delegate. And he has delegated. Every president has delegated. I don't know the details of what President Trump has done or since the Cold War. Every president in the Cold War, right through Carter and Reagan, had delegated, in fact, to theater commanders in case communications were cut off. That means that the idea that the president is the only one with sole power to issue an order that will be recognized as an authentic authorized order is totally false.

How many fingers are on buttons? Probably no president has ever really known the details of that. I knew, in '61, for example, that Admiral Harry D. Felt in CINCPAC, commander-in-chief of Pacific, for whom I worked as a researcher, had delegated that to 7th Fleet, down to various commanders, and they, in turn, had delegated down to people. So when you say, "How many altogether feel authorized?" if their communications are cut off—and that happened part of every day in the Pacific when I was there—communications got better, but the delegations never changed. There's—we've never allowed it to be possible that an enemy could paralyze our retaliation by hitting our president or our command and control.

And neither did the Russians. When President Carter and then President Reagan advertised the fact that their plans emphasized decapitation, hitting Moscow, above all, which the French and British always planned to do, by the way, with their smaller forces—and when that became clear, the Russians instituted what they called a dead hand, a perimeter system, in Russian, which assured that if Moscow was destroyed, other commanders would have the power and would be told to launch their strikes.

There was even a plan to do that automatically by computer, as a number of our military always recommended, to make the whole thing computerized, as in the doomsday machine of Herman

Kahn and Stanley Kubrick. But, generally, they allow for lower-level majors, colonels to decide, “The time has come. We’ve lost our commanders. The time has come to go.” That’s almost certainly true in North Korea right now.

AMY GOODMAN: So, when you heard about President Trump having that meeting with the joint chiefs of staff in the summertime, the one where allegedly—I mean, Rex Tillerson has not confirmed or denied this—he called the president an “F—ing moron,” that apparently was in response to Trump asking three times in that meeting, “If we have nuclear weapons, why don’t we use them?”

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Well, he had asked that, allegedly, according to Joe Scarborough and others, to people during the campaign a year earlier. And an answer to that, of course, is he will use them.

And he is using them right now. It’s not a question of whether the president might use them. He’s using them the way you use a gun when you point it at somebody in a confrontation, whether or not you pull the trigger. And both Trump and Kim are using their weapons in that encounter right now, as many presidents have done, as I discovered later—as there’s a chapter in the book of a couple dozen, perhaps three dozen cases, mostly in secret, where presidents have actually pointed the gun, aside from wearing it ostentatiously on their hip at all times, as in NATO. I think the—one of our commanders just said, “Oh, we use the weapons every day, every hour of the day,” which is true. We use them on the hip.

But at the moment, they’re being pointed. And they’re being pointed by two people who are giving very good imitations of being crazy. That’s dangerous. I hope they’re pretending. They might be pretending. But to pretend to be crazy with nuclear weapons is not a safe game. It’s a game of chicken. Nuclear chicken.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Well, this is an excerpt of President Kennedy’s address to the nation at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, perhaps the closest the United States has ever come to nuclear war.

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: Good evening, my fellow citizens. This government, as

promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military buildup on the island of Cuba. Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere.

AMY GOODMAN: So, that was President Kennedy. Can you talk about your own experience of the Cuban missile crisis in October of 1962? Talk about what you were doing. This is before you released the Pentagon Papers years later.

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Yeah. I listened to the president on October 22nd, I remember, announcing that there were missiles in Cuba, and I called up my friend, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Harry Rowen, later president of RAND, and asked, "Do you need some help out there?" And he said, "Get on the next plane," which I did.

I flew out to Washington, then, the next morning, early, got into the Pentagon, the day, actually, that the blockade was instituted—no, the day before, actually—and was given the task, for example, since I was a command-and-control specialist, of—that's how I got into nuclear planning—what can the Russians do with 30-some missiles on Cuba? Well, they can hit Moscow—I'm sorry, they can hit Washington. They can hit Washington, which is what our joint chiefs would do. And they could hit various other places. And that, I knew, would not paralyze our response. It would only make it quickly carried out against all the cities in Russia and China and so forth. It would do them no good, but that's probably what they would do, and so forth.

I worked during that week. Some nights I slept in the office of president—of, sorry, Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, and on a couch in his office, while we were—I was on several task forces, working for the Executive Committee, EXCOMM, of the National Security Council. Now, the next year I spent studying a great deal on that crisis, with higher than top-secret access, on the whole. And yet, I didn't learn many of the things that are most important about that crisis, which have taken decades and decades to come out of secrecy.

For one thing, I've concluded, contrary to what I thought at the time, that both President Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev were determined not to carry out the threats they were making of armed conflict—compared to the North Korean crisis right now. Imagine that both sides have decided they are absolutely not going to armed conflict, they're only gesturing and

breast-beating and trying to get the other side of back down. That's what was happening in the Cuban missile crisis. And yet, to make the threats credible, Khrushchev was maneuvering submarines within the range of our forces, armed with nuclear torpedoes we didn't know they had at all. And they were subject to mock depth charges to bring them to the surface, with our Navy not knowing that they were facing submarines that could blow them all out of the water. Kennedy, on the other hand, was moving troops, exactly like those exercises. As a matter of fact, we had done exercises, just before the crisis broke, of invading Cuba—not named Cuba. The enemy they were against was announced in the papers as Ortsac, which, as Khrushchev inferred, cleverly, was Castro spelled backwards, said, "Yes, that was a game we used to play when I was a kid," said Khrushchev.

So, here we were threatening to invade Cuba. It was not a way to keep the Cubans from acquiring a deterrent force, just as our exercises of invading North Korea, going on right now, essentially, don't seem a very well-chosen way to get Kim Jong-un to give up his deterrent capability in the—in North Korea. But that's what we were doing.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: But you say in the book also—

DANIEL ELLSBERG: The other thing I learned was that in the course of these maneuvers, we came within a hair's breadth of blowing the world up, of having the plans I've just described go into action. A nuclear submarine—I should say, a submarine that was armed with nuclear torpedoes had the two top commanders, who thought they were being—going to go down, actually, as a result of these mock depth charges that were actually meant to force them to the surface. The commander, Savitsky, ordered the nuclear torpedo armed and ready for action against the destroyers or the cruiser. The second-in-command, whose assent was needed, agreed with him. And they were ready to go.

It happened that a commodore of several submarines in the area was on that sub rather than some other one. It could have been one of the others, but he was there. And since he was the commodore, his assent was also needed. And he said no. And thanks to that man, Vasili Arkhipov, we didn't blow a cruiser out of the water and cause the nuclear explosion that Kennedy had already announced would cause an all-out attack on the Soviet Union. That's why we're still here.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: And you said that you only learned years later that Khrushchev himself had, again, delegated authority to these folks to start a war?

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Some of the things we learned relatively recently, in the '90s, and confirmed just in this century, were that Khrushchev had not only managed to get nuclear warheads to the medium-range missiles that he had put in Cuba—which, by the way, were the exact counterpart of what Kim Jong-un is trying to do now. Khrushchev had decided that his ability to destroy our allies directly, with his medium-range missiles in Europe, which we could not find and destroy, MEL mobile [inaudible]—he could kill a hundred million and more in Europe. That didn't seem to be fazing us in Berlin. It wasn't getting us out of Berlin. It wasn't getting us determined to keep access to Berlin, even though doing that would force us to go to tactical nuclear war. So he said, "I have to have missiles in range of the U.S." And so he moved missiles to Cuba, medium-range missiles that would be in range of the U.S.

Kim does not have a Cuba now to put—and probably couldn't anyway, in the case of Cuba—so he's building ICBMs that can reach the U.S., even though he can already destroy entirely our ally in South Korea and in Japan. So he's doing what Khrushchev did in—and it's dangerous, as it was for Cuba for Khrushchev at that time.

OK, moreover, we had no idea at that time, though it was the most surveilled island in the history of the world—U-2s and satellites were flying over it, and even low-level reconnaissance planes, that managed not to discover that he had put tactical nuclear weapons, short-range weapons, in Cuba. We didn't know they were there. And moreover, he had done what we thought was unthinkable for a Russian dictator who wanted central control of everything: He and his presidium had delegated the use of those weapons against our invasion fleet to the local commanders. Now, that's almost necessary tactically. You can't wait on Moscow if an invasion fleet is coming at you. But we didn't think he would ever do that.

His theory was—Khrushchev—and Khrushchev was a very smart man, actually. And his theory was, and the presidium's theory, they can't reach Miami. These are only tactical missiles, short-range missiles. They can only blow the invasion fleet out of the water, kill 100,000 Americans, and let it stop there. It won't escalate further. When McNamara learned that 30 years later, he said, "That's insane. To think that we could lose 100,000 men and not go to all-out war against the Soviet Union?" And it was insane.

Kim Jong-un seems to have a very similar belief, that he could initiate war against our forces in South Korea and keep it limited. That's insane. But it's no more insane than our plan to initiate nuclear war against Russia, which would kill nearly everyone in the world.

AMY GOODMAN: We're going to go to break, then come back to our conversation. We're talking with Daniel Ellsberg. Yes, he leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971, but his new book is called *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*. And, yes, that is what he did, as well. He was involved in planning for nuclear war. Ellsberg reveals he also made copies of top-secret reports on plans for nuclear war. Stay with us.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: "No More Weapons" by Steel Pulse. This is *Democracy Now!* I'm Amy Goodman, with Juan González.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Well, we're spending the hour with Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971. His new book is *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*. Ellsberg reveals he also made copies of top-secret reports on plans for nuclear war. I want to turn to a clip from the film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, directed by Stanley Kubrick. Ellsberg has joked that it could be a documentary. The black comedy was released in 1964, just two years after the Cuban missile crisis.

AMY GOODMAN: The film centers on a nuclear crisis that begins when a U.S. bomber plane loaded with nuclear weapons is on a routine flight pattern near the Soviet Union at the time when it receives orders to carry out "Wing Attack Plan R." That's nuclear war, from lunatic General Jack D. Ripper, using the pre-delegated authority given to him in case of an attack on Washington. Much of the film takes place in the War Room, where the president meets his top Pentagon advisers, who want to proceed with the attack despite his hesitation. They hit a snag when the Soviet ambassador informs them of Russia's new weapon: a doomsday machine that will destroy the entire world if they're attacked. So, in this scene from the film, we're in the War Room when the president's adviser, Dr. Strangelove, is asked to describe the doomsday machine, based on a study he commissioned from the so-called **BLAND** Corporation.

PRESIDENT MERKIN MUFFLEY: [played by Peter Sellers] But, how is it possible for this thing

to be triggered automatically, and at the same time impossible to untrigger?

DR. STRANGELOVE: [played by Peter Sellers] Mr. President, it is not only possible, it is essential. That is the whole idea of this machine, you know. Deterrence is the art of producing in the mind of the enemy the fear to attack. And so, because of the automated and irrevocable decision-making process which rules out human meddling, the doomsday machine is terrifying, as is simple to understand, and completely credible and convincing.

GEN. "BUCK" TURGIDSON: [played by George C. Scott] Gee, I wish we had one of them doomsday machines.

AMY GOODMAN: That's a clip from the 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove* about the doomsday machine, which is also the title of our guest Daniel Ellsberg's new book, *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*. Your colleague at the RAND Corporation—I mean, the RAND Corporation is the one who coined that term?

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Herman Kahn invented that idea. And he said, by the way, that it kills so many people—everyone, actually—that no one ever would produce such a machine. He said it doesn't exist, and it never would exist. He said that in 1959 and '60. He was wrong. It did exist at that time, and it's existed ever since. We didn't know that for another 20 years. We didn't know that the weapons we had targeted on all these cities—and, by the way, I tried to change that under Secretary McNamara. I said, "Have a withhold option against all the cities here. You know, why are you killing the cities here in—either in retaliation or, least of all, in a first strike? Which would force them or, you know, which would cause them, certainly, to hit our cities inevitably, which they probably will do anyway. But this gives them no incentive to refrain from our cities, whatever. Why are we hitting Moscow? How do you possibly ever get the war stopped? How can you possibly get it limited? How could they surrender or the war end in any way, if you've hit their central command?" And that seemed to make some sense, and there was a withhold option against that—never implemented. When Cheney came in, years later, he was amazed to discover how many weapons were still targeted on Moscow. And we're talking about hundreds here, which seemed crazy to me.

Anyway, the system, however, as I've already said, they knew—they did plan that they were going to kill—I said 600 million, but actually they weren't including the effects of fire. They never have, because it's too incalculable in the weather and the inflammable materials and so forth. Actually, that's the biggest effect of thermonuclear weapons. So the number would really have been, at that time, well over a billion, plus the Soviet retaliation against Europe. So we're talking about over a billion people, a third of the Earth's population at that time. And I've actually heard Edward Teller, one of the sources of Dr. Strangelove, the fictional Dr. Strangelove, the father of the H-bomb, Teller, say, "At most, thermonuclear weapons could cause the deaths of one-third of the population," very close to what the joint chiefs had said. I thought of that as the glass two-thirds full, when I heard him say that. But the fact is, he was wrong. And Kahn was wrong. Nobody's perfect. In fact, it would be three-thirds.

The fact is that the weapons on these cities, which continued always, despite the supposed withholding option, to be targeted on military targets in the cities—the cities would burn nevertheless. And not only would there be fire, that were not in the calculations, there would be smoke, surprise. And the firestorms that would be caused by these simultaneous widespread fires, as in the Tokyo firestorm of March 9th and 10th, 1945—there were only three so-called firestorms in World War II—Hamburg, Dresden and Tokyo—where the fires were so widespread that they caused a column of air to rise abruptly very high into the stratosphere. And what had not been calculated before, 'til 1983, was that the millions and millions, possibly 100 million, tons of smoke and black soot would be lofted into the stratosphere, where it would not be rained out ever, and it would spread quickly around the world, causing a blanket that would destroy—or, rather, absorb—most of the sunlight from reaching the Earth, 70 percent of the sunlight, killing all the harvests worldwide and preventing any vegetation, starving everyone on Earth, essentially—nearly everyone, let me correct that. Carl Sagan, when he first was reporting this in 1983, more than a third of a century ago, said extinction was possible. The latest calculations show, no, extinction is very unlikely. We're so adaptable, we can live in the tip of New Zealand eating mollusks, some millions of people. But 98 or 99 percent of the people will go near extinction—close enough to be called a doomsday machine.

And that is what both U.S. and Russia have still on hair triggers, with the delegation, with launch on warning, with ICBMs on both sides that are vulnerable to attack by the other, and therefore have the incentive to use them or lose them if there's warning of an attack on the way. Now, false warnings have occurred on both sides repeatedly and gone into several minutes. In 1995, years after the—seven years after the Cold War was over, Premier Yeltsin—for the first time, either side—was shown his briefcase and the buttons that he would push to launch nuclear war, because of what was in fact a Norwegian weather rocket that was mistaken for a rocket that might be headed at Moscow for decapitation. And he hesitated, Yeltsin, at that time, long enough that the missile would have arrived. And they decided it was a false alarm. If he had not, we wouldn't be here, because the nuclear winter resulting from the

attack on one side, or both, would have produced smoke that long ago would have starved us and nearly everyone else on Earth.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: So, when you hear the news accounts now of the threats of North Korea and the response of the president, that he will rain fire and fury on the Korean Peninsula, what's your reaction to the nature of the debate now? Because I would think that back in the '80s the public consciousness of nuclear winter, of the dangers of nuclear weapons, seemed a lot greater throughout the United States than it is today.

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Well, these are the first threats that any American president—and American presidents have made many nuclear threats, as we said earlier, in the past. These were the first ones since the Cuban missile crisis, more than half a century ago, against a nuclear weapon state. Harry Truman made nuclear threats 67 years ago against North Korea, but North Korea wasn't a nuclear state then. And by the way, we didn't need nuclear weapons to bring fire and fury like the world had never seen, except in Tokyo and Dresden and Hamburg. We burned North Korea to the ground without using nuclear weapons at that time, left not a stick of man-made structure left standing in North Korea. So they all remember that if they're President Trump's age or older, actually. He was four at the time. But that was indelible memory. They can believe we would do that.

But now they have nuclear weapons. If they were smart, they wouldn't send them back at us, because that would be sheer suicide for them. Every man, woman and child in North Korea, as he's implied, would be killed. Should we count that they won't do that, that they won't retaliate to our strike? No. He's not going to take his nuclear weapons entirely out of Korea as we have these exercises. He thinks he would be crazy to do that. It would be suicidal. And that's not the kind of crazy he is. The kind he is is the kind we are, which is nuclear weapons are to be met, or even preempted, with nuclear weapons, that striking first is better than striking second, and striking second is better than not striking at all. It's crazy, but we've shown that kind of craziness for 70 years.

AMY GOODMAN: You have called for whistleblowers to come forward. I wanted to play a clip of—well, you have said that the Army whistleblower Chelsea Manning, who is now out of jail, who spent seven years behind bars and leaked more than 700,000 classified files and videos to WikiLeaks about U.S. foreign policy and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Manning had been sentenced to 35 years in prison in 2013, after she was convicted under the World War I-era Espionage Act. In January, President Obama commuted her sentence shortly before leaving office. She was the longest-held whistleblower in U.S. history. After her release, Manning spoke with ABC News about her decision to become a

whistleblower.

CHELSEA MANNING: I'm getting all this information, and it's just death, destruction, mayhem. And eventually you just stop—I stopped seeing just statistics and information, and I started seeing people.

JUJU CHANG: There are those who say you may have been motivated to get the information into the public sphere, but you might also have given it to our enemies.

CHELSEA MANNING: Right, but I have a responsibility to the public. You know, it's not just about—you know, we all have a responsibility.

AMY GOODMAN: So, that was Chelsea Manning. Dan Ellsberg, you've called, in your book, for other people to—in positions, to raise the alarm about nuclear weapons. You visited Ed Snowden in Russia. What kind of information would you like to see released now?

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Well, let me say, first of all, Chelsea Manning and Ed Snowden are heroes of mine. And at the same time, I can say I identify more with them than with any other people on Earth, because they went through the same process of challenge that I did, and made the same kind of decisions. I would say to people who are in her position or Ed Snowden's position, especially in a high position right now, if you are aware of documents—and I am certain these documents exist, in the Pentagon, in CIA, in the White House—that show the true scale of the horrors, the damage, the devastation that would occur if President Trump were to carry out his threats of armed conflict, armed action against this nuclear state, against North Korea—I'm sure, by the way, that these estimates exist—then—

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think it's going to be North Korea? Do you think it could be Russia? I know, I mean—

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Well, you see, the difference there is—

AMY GOODMAN: —given all the controversy. Or Iran?

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Yeah, of course, any of those, if there was a chance of initiating nuclear war, as President Trump is moving us toward, actually, in Iran, with—by talking about revoking the deal, and probably restarting their nuclear program. The chance of war with Iran would erupt immediately, as was true half a century ago, when I was in RAND and in the Pentagon. We always considered that initiating nuclear war in the case of conflict in Iran was essential. We couldn't match the Russians in that period.

OK, if you knew this, consider revealing that to Congress and the press, whatever the cost to you, even if the cost is what I faced, life in prison, what Chelsea Manning was charged with, actual possible life in prison. A world's worth of lives are at stake here. And I would say, do what I wish I had done in '61, which is put out those documents then, or in '64, before the Pentagon war actually got started in a big way. Don't wait. As Martin Luther King says, there is such a thing as too late. And he talked of the fierce urgency of now. This crisis right now may awaken people in the Pentagon and in the public to the dangers we've been living with secretly for so long.

AMY GOODMAN: We have to leave it there. Dan Ellsberg, thanks so much for being with us. His new book, *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, Ellsberg revealing he also made copies of top-secret reports on plans for nuclear war.