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Features

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Seymour Hersh: Journalist | Interview

Seymour Hersh: Journalist

On NOW's February 21, 2003 show (check [local listings](#)) Seymour Hersh talks with Jane Wallace about his recent articles for THE NEW YORKER on the United States and its changing relationship with Pakistan. This story is only the most recent example of the important breaking news Hersh has been digging up for over thirty years.

Read more about the U.S. - Pakistan relationship, and more about Seymour Hersh's intelligence community reporting below:

- [FRONTLINE: Why did U.S. Intelligence Fail September 11th?](#)
- [Salon.com: Brilliant Careers, Seymour Hersh](#)
- [BBCNews Kashmir Flashpoint](#)

Related Features

Resources

My Lai

In 1969 Seymour Hersh, then a freelance journalist, got a tip about an upcoming court martial. He followed the lead to the Pentagon and finally to a military prison in Georgia. There he met Lt. William Calley, a name now infamous. Calley spoke candidly to Hersh and the resulting story of the massacre of over 500 civilians at a small Vietnamese village called My Lai won Hersh the 1970 [Pulitzer Prize](#), and forever altered the way the American public thought about war and its own soldiers. Hersh returned to the story in 1972's COVER UP: THE ARMY'S SECRET INVESTIGATION OF THE MASSACRE AT MY LAI.

- [The My Lai Courts-Martial, 1970](#)
- [AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: Vietnam: The My Lai Massacre](#)

The CIA, Chile and Salvador Allende

Hersh then turned his investigative eye on the notoriously secretive CIA as a reporter for THE NEW YORK TIMES. It was the beginning of a long fascination with national security issues — his current series in THE NEW YORKER is entitled "Annals of National Security." Hersh had a series of CIA-related scoops, including breaking the story that the CIA was spying on domestic groups — in violation of its charter. Hersh was also early on the story of the CIA's involvement in the downfall of democratically-elected Chilean President Salvador Allende. Some of the documents Hersh fought hard to uncover are

now available for public view at Georgetown's National Security Archive.

- [Declassified Documents Relating to the Military Coup in Chile, National Security Archive](#)
- [PBS: A FORCE MORE POWERFUL, Defeat of a Dictator](#)

Henry Kissinger and the Secret Bombing of Cambodia

Long before Henry Kissinger became the object of Christopher Hitchens' scrutiny, Seymour Hersh had the Secretary of State in his sights. Hersh was the one who broke the story of Kissinger's direction of the secret bombings of Cambodia, started in 1969. Knowledge of these bombings led to widespread protests in the United States, including the deadly one at Kent State. Hersh continued his pursuit of Kissinger in his 1983 book, *THE PRICE OF POWER: KISSINGER IN THE NIXON WHITE HOUSE*.

- [NOW: THE TRIALS OF HENRY KISSINGER](#)
- [FRONTLINE: Cambodia — Pol Pot's Shadow](#)
- [Kissinger Documents, National Security Archives](#)
- [AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, Vietnam Timeline](#)

Flight 007 and Israel's Nuclear Arsenal

In the late 1980s and early 1990s Hersh turned his attention to two more controversial topics. In 1986 he published an investigative report called *THE TARGET IS DESTROYED: WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO FLIGHT 007*. It was the insider intelligence community's tale of the ill-fated Korean airline shot down by the Soviets in 1983. Hersh contended that the incident was an accident given a Cold War interpretation by both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Hersh's next book, *THE SAMSON OPTION: ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY* came out in 1991. Bound to cause a stir in many circles, Hersh's name is still much vilified on many Web sites dedicated to attaining clemency for Jonathan Pollard, convicted of spying for Israel.

Controversy and THE DARK SIDE OF CAMELOT

Hersh next took on one of America's seemingly sacred cows in *THE DARK SIDE OF CAMELOT* — a scathing look at the Kennedy administration which came out in 1997. The reaction was immense. So great was the controversy that *TIME* magazine published a [teacher's guide](#) for use with the book. The title has also become part of the cultural lexicon; a search finds it often used in reference to the Michael Skakel case (*THE IRISH TIMES*, September 14, 2002).

Chemical and Biological Warfare: 1960s and 1990s

In the late 1990s Hersh returned to a subject he investigated even before *My Lai* — chemical and biological warfare. He has written extensively on the exposure of Gulf War soldiers to chemical and biological agents in *AGAINST ALL ENEMIES: GULF WAR SYNDROME, THE WAR BETWEEN AMERICA'S AILING VETERANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT*.

- [Seymour Hersh vs. the Pentagon, Salon Newsreal](#)
- ["U.S. Study Finds No New Link to Gulf War Illness," Reuters, February 19, 2003.](#)

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