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Ellsberg Says U.S. Presidents

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Daniel Ellsberg, the man who released the Pentagon Papers, said that the Defense Department's top brass concealed nuclear war plans from President Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy.

Ellsberg, interviewed at a demonstration against the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant, said the Strategic Integrated Operational Plan, or SIOP, called for dropping hydrogen bombs on every major city and military installation in the Soviet Union, China and other communist nations.

Ellsberg revealed the information as part of his anti-nuclear weapon campaign. "I live in the reality that every president has considered using nuclear bombs," he said. "I was in a unique place with unique information and it revealed to me that humans are not to be trusted with nuclear weapons."

The SIOP was drawn up by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Eisenhower administration and, in typically grisly Pentagonese, was called "wargasm."

"It set up one operation for all

circumstances of war involving the Soviet Union," said Ellsberg. "If the SIOP were activated, we would have hit every city in the Soviet Union and China in addition to all the military targets."

"The nuclear bombs were already prepared and were on a ten-minute alert status."

Kennedy and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara assigned Ellsberg to study U.S. war plans. "I, having read the SIOP, spoke to Kennedy and told him and the secretary of Defense to read it. It had never been read outside the

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Pentagon. The very name was made to make sure people were not interested."

Ellsberg was ordered to re-write the SIOP. "Kennedy and McNamara were horrified," he said. "The real danger of the 1961 SIOP was that the president would assume that it was just Russia we

were bombing in general war. The JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) had no other plan . . ."

Ellsberg said he drew up a new plan, giving the President "options" like deciding not to bomb China or Eastern European countries.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff accepted Ellsberg's revisions, he said,

because he had coached McNamara to ask if Eisenhower had seen the SIOP. The answer was no, he said, and rather than admit that, the brass accepted the plan.

Every president between Harry Truman and Richard Nixon considered using nuclear weapons, Ellsberg said.

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