**Single Integrated Operational Plan**

**Single Integrated Operational Plan** (or **SIOP**) is a blueprint that tells how [American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [nuclear weapons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_weapon) would be used in the event of [war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War). At a NATO level an agreement to use nuclear weapons envisages the United Kingdom participating in the SIOP ([see below](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SIOP#United_Kingdom_participation#United_Kingdom_participation)). The plan integrates the nuclear capabilities of manned bombers, long-range intercontinental missiles and ballistic-missile firing nuclear submarines. The SIOP is implemented in case the United States is under nuclear attack or if a nuclear attack on the United States is imminent.

**Implementation**

Only the President of the United States, in collaboration with the [Secretary of Defense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secretary_of_Defense) (SecDef), may order that the SIOP be implemented. These two individuals must confer through secure communications modes with the [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chairman_of_the_Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff) (CJCS) and agree that a nuclear strike must be ordered. *Contrary to the beliefs of some, the President by himself cannot order a strategic nuclear strike on any country.*

The President, SecDef and CJCS all have ready access to a book of SIOP strike options, broken into Major Attack Options (MAOs), Selected Attack Options (SAOs), and Limited Attack Options (LAOs). Individual countries or regions can be included in or "withheld" from nuclear attacks depending on circumstances. The President's SIOP book, sometimes called the [football](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_Football), is carried by a military aide who is never far from the President.

The SIOP is created from a conceptual guide issued by the [President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States). The guide is converted by the [Secretary of Defense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Secretary_of_Defense) into the Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy (NUWEP) of basic targeting objectives, target lists and operational constraints. The NUWEP is then delivered to the [Joint Chiefs of Staff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff) (JCS) and emerges as the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP). The JSCP is then converted into the actual targeting orders, timing and weapon allocation, the SIOP, by [STRATCOM](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Strategic_Command). The entire process takes up to 18 months. Under President Clinton the SIOP held four major attack options, 65 limited attack options, and a number of generalised adaptive options for threats originating outside [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia) or [China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China).

Nuclear strike targets are listed as the National Target Base (NTB), built from an Intelligence list of 150,000-plus sites across the world. The number of targets in the NTB has varied enormously. It peaked at around 16,000 in 1985, fell to around 12,500 following the collapse of the Soviet Union, dropped to about 2,500 in 1995, before rising to the current list of 3,000 targets. Around 75% of the current targets are in Russia, 1,100 are nuclear weapons sites.

The US nuclear arsenal holds around 7,000 individual warheads. A 'strong' [counterforce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterforce) strike (military targets) using up to 1,500 warheads would kill around 120 million Russians; a 'limited' [countervalue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countervalue) strike (civilian targets) of just 200 warheads would kill around 50 million Russians [[1]](http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/warplan/index.asp).

The Single Integrated Operational Plan is a highly classified document, and has been one of the most secret and sensitive issues in U.S. national security policy.

Currently SIOP plans are named after the fiscal year in which they come into effect, this was first officially applied to SIOP-93, prior to that plans used a two-character alphanumeric designation. A new SIOP is approved every year, although the plan may well be unchanged.

**United Kingdom participation**

While the [United Kingdom's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) nuclear deterrent, four [Trident](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trident_missile) [*Vanguard* class submarines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanguard_class_submarine), are strictly under UK national control they do have two distinct roles. The first is part of a UK-only retaliatory response to a nuclear attack, whether a full strategic strike involving all of the [Royal Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Navy)'s Trident submarines, or a limited tactical strike involving perhaps only one missile. The second role is one in which the Royal Navy participates in the SIOP, in effect becoming non-distinct from the U.S. Navy's Trident submarines. This role was to be part of a [NATO](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO) response to a Soviet nuclear strike.

The Royal Navy's contribution to the SIOP shows the power of the nuclear arsenal committed to the plan, the four *Vanguard* submarines could strike a maximum of 512 separate targets; this is equivalent to 7% of the total U.S. nuclear strike capacity.

**History**

Plans were developed from the immediate post-war period. By the 1950s around 5,500 targets were listed to receive [SAC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_Air_Command) bomber strikes — mainly industrial sites but also 'counterforce' targets. Pressure from the [Eisenhower administration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight_D._Eisenhower), and development of effective [ICBM](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ICBM) and [SLBM](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SLBM) systems, forced a more formalised procedure — the SIOP.

The first SIOP was developed in 1960, consisting of a list of targets (the National Strategic Target List, NSTL) and identifying the assets to be used against each target. This first SIOP was extensively revised by a team at the [RAND Corporation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAND) to become SIOP-62, a massive strike with the entire US arsenal of 3,200 warheads against the USSR, China and Soviet-aligned states, casualty estimates exceeding 250 million. In 1963 the Kennedy administration ordered [Robert McNamara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_McNamara) to revise this plan, resulting in SIOP-63 — a strong counterforce strategy with a number of options, and the '[no first use](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_first_use)' policy became implicit.

Counterforce dominated SIOP plans until SIOP-5 in 1976 when the plan became a model for deterrence, based on [Nixon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_M._Nixon)'s NSDM-242 and sometimes called the 'Schlesinger Doctrine' after then-Secretary of Defense, [James Schlesinger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Schlesinger). The ever expanding target lists were split into classes of targets, with a wider range of plans matching strikes to political intentions from counterforce to countervalue, or any mix/withhold strategy to control escalation. The SIOP policy was further modified during the presidency of [Carter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Carter) under [Presidential Directive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_directives)-59, although the 'ethos' remained the same. Under [Reagan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan), through NSDD-13, there was a return to a strong counterforce strategy. Although first-strike was still explicitly removed, the vision was of an extended exchange.

The SIOP was renamed "OPLAN 8044" in [March 2003](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_2003).

**Executing the SIOP**

If the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense, acting jointly as the [National Command Authority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Command_Authority), decide the United States must launch nuclear weapons, they will direct the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to do so, specifying MAOs or LAOs that are in the SIOP. The CJCS in turn will direct the general officer on duty plus one other officer on duty in the [National Military Command Center](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Military_Command_Center) (NMCC) at the Pentagon to release an [Emergency Action Message](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emergency_Action_Message) (EAM) to all nuclear forces. Additionally, the message will go to the [Alternate National Military Command Center](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Site_R) (ANMCC), located in Raven Rock Mountain, Pennsylvania, and also to the National Emergency Airborne Command Post ([NEACP](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeing_E-4B)), a ruggedized Boeing 747 (military designation E-4B) that has a war staff and is on duty 24 hours a day. If the NMCC is destroyed by an enemy's first strike, either the ANMCC or the NEACP can execute the SIOP (also previously [*Looking Glass*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Looking_Glass), now [TACAMO](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TACAMO)). At all times and under all circumstances, the release of nuclear weapons is governed by the [two-man rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-man_rule).