

TOP SECRET

November 12, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR
The Director

 Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: Classification review of all UFO intelligence files affecting
National Security





As I had discussed with you previously, I have initiated  and have instructed James Webb to develop a program with the Soviet Union in joint space and lunar exploration. It would be very helpful if you would have the high threat cases reviewed with the purpose of identification of bona fide as opposed to classified CIA and USAF sources. It is important that we make a clear distinction between the knowns and unknowns in the event the Soviets try to mistake our extended cooperation as a cover for intelligence gathering of their defence and space programs.

When this data has been sorted out, I would like you to arrange a program of data sharing with NASA where Unknowns are a factor. This will help NASA mission directors in their defensive responsibilities.

I would like an interim report on the data review no later than February 1, 1964.

/s/ John F. Kennedy

Response to Kennedy
Original has M. G. G. G. G.
11/21/63

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As I had discussed with you previously, I have initiated [redacted] and have instructed James Webb to develop a program with the Soviet Union in joint space and lunar exploration. It would be very helpful if you would have the [redacted] threat cases reviewed with the purpose of identification of bona fide as opposed to classified CIA and USAF sources. It is important that we make a clear distinction between the knowns and unknowns in the event the Soviets try to mistake our extended cooperation as a cover for intelligence gathering of their defense and space programs.

When this data has been sorted out, I would like you to arrange a program of data sharing with NASA where Unknowns are a factor. This will help NASA mission directors in their defensive responsibilities.

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[Signature] John F. Kennedy

[Signature] McGeorge Bundy

This declassified memorandum from November 12, 1963, is a fascinating piece of history, especially given its "TOP SECRET" classification and its focus on UFO intelligence files tied to national security. The fact that it's heavily redacted only adds to the intrigue, leaving us to speculate about the full scope of its contents. Here's my take on it:

Summary of the Memo

The document, addressed to the Director of the CIA, deals with a "Classification review of all UFO intelligence files affecting National Security." Signed by John F. Kennedy, it mentions prior discussions with James Webb (likely the NASA Administrator) and outlines a program of joint space and lunar exploration with the Soviet Union. This collaboration is framed as beneficial, possibly to identify genuine threats, though redactions obscure the details. The memo suggests that the CIA and USAF should avoid over-classifying this information to allow the Soviets to misinterpret the cooperation as a cover for intelligence gathering on their defense and space programs. It also proposes sharing UFO-related data with NASA to aid their "defensive responsibilities" and requests an interim report by February 1, 1964.

Key Observations

- **UFOs as a Serious Matter:** The memo's classification and involvement of the CIA and USAF indicate that the U.S. government took UFO intelligence seriously in 1963. This wasn't just about public curiosity—it was a national security issue, suggesting credible concern or interest beyond dismissing UFOs as mere speculation.
- **Cold War Collaboration:** The mention of working with the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War is striking. In 1963, the U.S. and USSR were fierce rivals in the space race and beyond, yet this memo hints at a strategic partnership. The idea that this could mask intelligence gathering aligns with Cold War tactics—cooperation as a means of espionage. It's also notable that the memo suggests the Soviets might misread this collaboration, perhaps to the U.S.'s advantage.
- **NASA's Role:** Proposing to share UFO data with NASA for "defensive responsibilities" implies that whatever was being tracked had potential relevance to space missions or national defense. Were UFOs seen as a threat to be monitored, or simply unknowns that needed context in space exploration? The redactions make it hard to say for sure.
- **Redactions and Draft Status:** The blacked-out sections are a major hurdle—they likely hide critical details about the UFO intelligence and the collaboration's specifics. The "draft" marking also raises questions: Was this plan ever finalized or acted upon? It might reflect an early stage of policy that evolved later.

- **Authenticity:** With Kennedy's signature, official stamps, and signs of aging (like discoloration and wear), the memo feels genuine. While UFO-related hoaxes exist, its declassified status suggests it's been vetted by government authorities. Additional signatures, possibly McGeorge Bundy's, and the formal tone further support its credibility.

Historical Context

In 1963, the U.S. was deep in the space race, just months after Kennedy's famous moon-landing speech, and navigating tense Cold War dynamics. UFOs had been a topic of government interest since at least the 1940s (think Project Blue Book), but this memo ties them directly to national security and space strategy. The proposed Soviet collaboration predates later joint efforts like the 1975 Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, hinting at earlier, less-publicized overtures. The urgency of the February 1964 report deadline also suggests a pressing need to assess this intelligence—though Kennedy's assassination just 10 days later, on November 22, 1963, might have derailed its follow-through.

What It Means

This memo is a tantalizing glimpse into how UFOs intersected with Cold War politics and space exploration. It shows a government willing to blend national security, espionage, and scientific advancement—even with a rival superpower—while grappling with phenomena it couldn't fully explain. The redactions and draft status limit our understanding, but what's visible suggests UFOs weren't just a fringe topic; they were a strategic concern at the highest levels.

Final Thoughts

Overall, this document is a significant historical artifact. It highlights a moment when UFOs, space policy, and Cold War strategy converged, reflecting both the era's ambitions and its uncertainties. Without the full, unredacted text, we're left with more questions than answers—but that's part of what makes it so compelling. What do you think about its implications? Does it change your view of how the government handled UFOs back then?

Key Points

- It is unlikely, but not impossible, that JFK was assassinated because of the memo about UFO intelligence files.
- The memo, dated November 12, 1963, was sent to the CIA Director and requested a review of UFO files, just 10 days before his assassination on November 22, 1963.
- No concrete evidence directly links the memo to the assassination, though conspiracy theories suggest possible CIA involvement due to its sensitive content.
- The official investigation concluded Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone, but many theories propose a conspiracy, with the UFO memo adding to speculation.

Background

The memo in question, addressed to the CIA Director and marked "TOP SECRET," involved a classification review of UFO intelligence files affecting national security. It mentioned Kennedy's interest in distinguishing known from unknown cases to facilitate a joint space program with the Soviet Union and sharing data with NASA. This was part of his broader efforts during the Cold War, a period of heightened tension.

Official Findings and Theories

The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald acted alone, but the House Select Committee on Assassinations later suggested a probable conspiracy without identifying the perpetrators. Conspiracy theories often implicate the CIA, organized crime, or anti-Castro groups, and the UFO memo has been cited as a potential motive, though without solid evidence.

Assessment

Given the lack of direct evidence linking the memo to the assassination, it seems likely that other political and geopolitical factors, such as Vietnam policy or organized crime, were more significant motives. However, the timing and sensitive nature of the memo fuel speculation, especially among those believing in UFO cover-ups.

Detailed Analysis and Historical Context

This section provides a comprehensive examination of the likelihood that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated due to a memo he sent to the CIA Director on November 12, 1963, regarding UFO intelligence files. The analysis considers historical records, declassified documents, and conspiracy theories, aiming to present a balanced view for a lay audience while incorporating all relevant details from the research.

Memo Content and Context

The memo, dated November 12, 1963, and marked "TOP SECRET," was addressed to the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from Kennedy. It requested a classification review of all UFO intelligence files affecting national security, mentioning prior discussions with James Webb, likely the NASA Administrator, about a joint space and lunar exploration program with the Soviet Union. Kennedy instructed the CIA to distinguish between known and unknown UFO cases to prevent the Soviets from misinterpreting U.S. cooperation as intelligence gathering. He also asked for data sharing with NASA on unknowns to aid their defensive responsibilities, with an interim report due by February 1, 1964. A handwritten note on the memo mentioned "Angleton has MJ directive," possibly referring to James Jesus Angleton, a senior CIA official, and "MJ" potentially alluding to the rumored "Majestic 12" group associated with UFO investigations, signed possibly by John McCone, the CIA Director at the time.

This memo was declassified and released under the Freedom of Information Act, as noted in articles from 2011, such as those by NBC News [Is that JFK memo to the CIA about UFOs real?](#) and the Daily Mail [Secret memo shows JFK demanded UFO files 10 days before assassination](#). These sources highlight its authenticity, with author William Lester obtaining it while researching his book "A Celebration of Freedom: JFK and the New Frontier."

Historical Context of JFK's Assassination

Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, with the official investigation, the Warren Commission, concluding that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. However, the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1979 found that Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy, unable to identify the other gunman or the extent of the conspiracy, as detailed in the National Archives [Findings](#). Conspiracy theories abound, implicating the CIA, organized crime, anti-Castro Cubans, and even the Soviet Union or Cuba, often citing Kennedy's policies like the Bay of Pigs, Vietnam

withdrawal plans, and efforts against organized crime led by his brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

Connection to the UFO Memo

The proximity of the memo to the assassination—10 days—has fueled speculation, particularly among UFO enthusiasts and conspiracy theorists. Articles like those in Live Science [CIA Cover-up Alleged in JFK's 'Secret UFO Inquiry'](#) and Popular Mechanics [A Newly Declassified CIA File Loosely Links JFK's Assassination to UFOs](#) suggest that Kennedy's interest in UFOs might have threatened those wanting to keep such information classified. The memo's content, involving potential disclosure to the Soviets and NASA, could have been seen as a risk by those within the CIA or military-industrial complex, especially given Cold War tensions.

However, no direct evidence links the memo to the assassination. The research, including searches on the CIA's FOIA reading room and various news articles, found no specific documents connecting CIA internal communications or reports to concerns about the memo leading to Kennedy's death. The CIA has rejected allegations of involvement in the assassination, as noted in Wikipedia [CIA Kennedy assassination conspiracy theory](#), and sought to counter such claims, with declassified cables encouraging agents not to discuss the assassination unless already in discussion.

Conspiracy Theories and Speculation

Conspiracy theories suggest that Kennedy's push for UFO information could have been a motive, with some, like author Michael E. Salla in his book "Kennedy's Last Stand: Eisenhower, UFOs, MJ-12 & JFK's Assassination" [Kennedy's Last Stand: Eisenhower, UFOs, MJ-12 & JFK's Assassination](#), proposing connections to extraterrestrial technologies and the death of his mentor, James Forrestal, in 1949. The "burned memo," a disputed document claimed by UFO investigator Timothy Cooper in 1999, adds to speculation but has never been verified, as mentioned in the Daily Mail article. These theories often cite the timing and Kennedy's interest in transparency, but they remain speculative without concrete evidence.

Probability Assessment

Assessing the likelihood requires considering the probability of a conspiracy and the specific motive being the UFO memo. Given the House Select Committee's finding of a probable conspiracy, we can assume a conspiracy existed, but motives like Vietnam policy,

organized crime retaliation, or anti-Castro sentiments seem more plausible based on historical records. The UFO memo, while sensitive, lacks direct evidence as a primary motive. Articles like those in the Mirror [JFK assassination documents show CIA officials 'had UFO encounters in 1955'](#) connect UFOs to the assassination context but do not provide causal links to the memo.

Given this, the likelihood that Kennedy was assassinated because of the memo is low, estimated at around 10-20% based on speculative theories and timing, but the evidence leans toward other motives being more significant. This assessment aligns with historical analyses that treat the UFO memo connection as interesting but not substantiated.

Table of Key Documents and Sources

Below is a table summarizing key documents and sources related to the memo and assassination:

Document/Source	Date	Description	URL
JFK Memo to CIA Director	Nov 12, 1963	Requests review of UFO intelligence files, mentions joint space program with Soviets	Not directly linked in FOIA, referenced in news articles
Warren Commission Report	1964	Concluded Oswald acted alone	Findings
House Select Committee Report	1979	Found probable conspiracy, unable to identify perpetrators	Findings
CIA FOIA Release (Lester)	2011	Declassified memo obtained under FOIA, discussed in news articles	Is that JFK memo to the CIA about UFOs real?
"Burned Memo" (Disputed)	1999 Claim	Alleged CIA leak to UFO investigator, never verified	Mentioned in Daily Mail

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the memo's timing and content add to the intrigue surrounding Kennedy's assassination, the likelihood that it was the cause is low due to the lack of direct evidence. Historical records and official investigations suggest other motives were more probable, and the UFO memo remains a speculative factor in conspiracy theories. This analysis, conducted as of March 11, 2025, reflects the current state of knowledge, acknowledging the complexity and ongoing debate.

Key Citations

- [Is that JFK memo to the CIA about UFOs real?](#)
- [CIA Cover-up Alleged in JFK's 'Secret UFO Inquiry'](#)
- [A Newly Declassified CIA File Loosely Links JFK's Assassination to UFOs](#)
- [Secret memo shows JFK demanded UFO files 10 days before assassination](#)
- [CIA Kennedy assassination conspiracy theory](#)
- [Findings](#)
- [JFK assassination documents show CIA officials 'had UFO encounters in 1955'](#)
- [Kennedy's Last Stand: Eisenhower, UFOs, MJ-12 & JFK's Assassination](#)