

= Terma (The X @-@ Files) =

" Terma " is the ninth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on December 1 , 1996 . It was directed by Rob Bowman , and written by Frank Spotnitz and series creator Chris Carter . " Terma " featured guest appearances by John Neville , Nicholas Lea and Fritz Weaver . The episode helped explore the series ' overarching mythology . " Terma " earned a Nielsen household rating of 10 @.@ 3 , being watched by 17 @.@ 34 million viewers during its original airing .

FBI special agent Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) and assistant director Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) attend a United States Senate hearing , while Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) attempts to escape from a Russian gulag . " Terma " is a two @-@ part episode , continuing the plot from the previous episode , " Tunguska " .

Several scenes in " Terma " were inspired by the novels of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn , while its tagline ? changed to " E pur si muove " from the usual " The truth is out there " ? is a reference to Galileo Galilei 's investigation by the Roman Inquisition . " Terma " features a climactic explosion at an oil refinery wellhead , requiring the physical effects staff to ignite a 300 feet (91 m) plume of flammable liquids .

= = Plot = =

Having been imprisoned in a gulag in Krasnoyarsk , Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) learns that Alex Krycek (Nicholas Lea) is a double agent working for the Russian taskmasters . Mulder is able to escape from the camp while taking Krycek hostage , although the two become separated in the confusion . Krycek is found by a group of men whose left arms have all been amputated , and has his arm forcibly severed to prevent his involvements in black oil vaccination tests .

Meanwhile , Vasily Peskow (Jan Rubes) , a former KGB agent , has come out of retirement and traveled to America . While there , he assassinates Bonita Charne @-@ Sayre , a doctor working for the Syndicate to develop a black oil vaccine . From here , Peskow tracks down Charne @-@ Sayre 's test subjects , testing a Russian vaccine on them before killing them to cover his tracks .

Mulder has been able to return to America with the help of a group of Russian peasants , and rejoins his partner Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) . Scully and assistant director Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) had been detained by a United States Senate committee seeking to uncover Mulder 's whereabouts , but the committee was adjourned upon Mulder 's arrival . The agents attempt to track down Peskow , following a trail of murders in Boca Raton , Florida . However , the assassin is able to outwit the agents , and destroys the last of the oil @-@ containing rocks seen in the previous episode in an oil @-@ well explosion . He returns to Russia , where it is revealed that he had been hired for this task by Krycek .

= = Production = =

The episode 's title refers to terma , a set of Buddhist teachings hidden from the world . Series creator Chris Carter felt these represented the secrets kept by the Syndicate . The opening credits of the episode saw the series ' usual tagline of " The truth is out there " replaced with " E pur si muove " . The phrase , Italian for " and yet , it moves " , is attributed to astronomer Galileo Galilei , when forced by the Roman Inquisition to denounce his belief in heliocentrism . The episode 's gulag scenes were inspired by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn 's novels The Gulag Archipelago (1973) and One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1963) .

Shots of the oil refinery seen in the episode were filmed at a thermal energy station situated in Port Moody , British Columbia . The climactic oil @-@ well explosion was achieved through physical effects , with crew member Dave Gauthier building a replica wellhead in a disused rock quarry , through which liquid was piped at pressures of 250 pounds per square inch (1 @,@ 700 @,@ 000 Pa) to create a plume 300 feet (91 m) high . This wellhead was rigged to spray oil @-@ colored water for shots of the plume itself , which was switched with a remote control to a stream of

kerosene and liquid propane for the shots involving the oil catching fire .

Actor Nicholas Lea , who plays recurring character Alex Krycek , worked with a Russian @-@ speaking vocal coach to ensure that his dialogue was delivered with the correct accent and stresses . Malcolm Stewart , who portrayed NASA scientist Dr. Sacks in the episode , had previously appeared in several earlier episodes of the series , including " Pilot " , the second season episode " 3 " , and the third season 's " Avatar " . Carter has called " Terma " , along with its companion piece " Tunguska " , " an action piece from beginning to end " .

= = Reception = =

" Terma " premièred on the Fox network on December 1 , 1996 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on November 4 , 1997 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 10 @.@ 6 with a 15 share , meaning that roughly 10 @.@ 6 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 15 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . A total of 17 @.@ 34 million viewers watched this episode during its original airing .

Writing for The A.V. Club , Zack Handlen rated the episode a B- , finding that it contained too much " vamping for time " , without enough focus on any of the individual plot threads . Handlen felt that the plot thread based on the murder of the Well @-@ Manicured Man 's doctor friend should have been the episode 's focus , and derided the " pomposity " of the dialogue elsewhere in the episode . Based on an advance viewing of the episode 's script , Entertainment Weekly rated " Terma " an A- , praising the " arms race " plotline . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , rated " Terma " one star out of five , comparing it unfavourably with the previous episode . Shearman and Pearson described the episode as " awful " , noting that there " is virtually no structure to it at all " . The episode 's dialogue was described as being " dreadful , boring and facile " , with its long , clumsy lines and " ever more complex and ever less interesting " speeches .