

= Three Words ( The X @-@ Files ) =

" Three Words " is the sixteenth episode of the eighth season ( and the 177th episode overall ) of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files and first aired in the United States and Canada on April 8 , 2001 , on Fox . It was written by executive producers Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz , and directed by Tony Wharmby . The episode explores the series ' overarching mythology and earned a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 6 and was viewed by 7 @. @ 77 million households , receiving mixed to positive reviews from television critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) , Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) and John Doggett ( Robert Patrick ) who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , Mulder secretly conducts his own investigation after a man is gunned down on the White House lawn attempting to inform the President of a planned alien invasion . However , he is soon in over his head as he tries to expose further evidence of colonization .

The episode was written as a way to signal Mulder 's exit from the FBI . The producers and writers felt that , if Mulder 's character was given a clean exit , the show could more easily focus on the characters of John Doggett and Monica Reyes in the following season . Former series star and recurring actor David Duchovny later declared that he had been happy to see his character depart in this manner .

= = Plot = =

Under the cover of darkness an unidentified man jumps over the fence to the White House and is intercepted by Secret Service personnel . As he struggles with them , he pulls a gun and accidentally shoots himself . Bleeding on the ground , the man hands over a computer disk , begging them to give it to the president . Three words are written on the disk : " FIGHT THE FUTURE " .

Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) remembers his experiences on the alien ship as he touches the scars on his face and chest . Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) enters with Dr. Lim and they give him surprisingly good news : The neurological condition that was killing him , before his disappearance , is gone and he is in perfect health . Mulder returns to his apartment with Scully and he congratulates her on the pregnancy she had sought for a long time . Meanwhile , in prison , an inmate librarian gives Absalom ? the former leader of a doomsday UFO " group " last seen in " DeadAlive " ? a book about the apocalypse . Hidden inside is a newspaper article about the man who jumped the fence . Absalom later escapes during a work detail by attacking a guard with a board with a nail in it .

At FBI headquarters , Deputy Director Alvin Kersh calls John Doggett ( Robert Patrick ) and Walter Skinner ( Mitch Pileggi ) into his office . He informs them that Mulder has applied for reinstatement to the X @-@ Files . He intends to deny the request , claiming a higher percentage of success with Doggett . Kersh ignores Doggett and Skinner 's defenses of Mulder , perceiving him to be a crusader unfit for proper Bureau work .

Agent Doggett returns home after work and finds Absalom waiting for him with a gun . Absalom demands Doggett show the back of his neck to confirm that Doggett is still himself . He tells Doggett that the man killed at the White House , Howard Salt , died for what he knew about an alien invasion . Absalom duct tapes his gun to Doggett 's back in a plan to get Salt 's information with Doggett used as a hostage . The two attempt to sneak into the census bureau 's database ; Absalom claims that the census bureau had data which showed the aliens were already here . Unfortunately , the plan fails because of an X @-@ Ray scanner detecting the gun . Security shoots Absalom through the head despite his use of Doggett as a body shield .

While debriefing with Skinner , Mulder enters Skinner 's office and accuses Doggett of deliberately attempting to cover up the truth by setting up Absalom to be killed , an accusation to which Doggett takes great offense . Doggett later meets with his liaison , Knowle Rohrer , who reveals the password to the statistics bureau is " Fight the Future . "

Scully , on Doggett 's request , tells Mulder that the disk was labeled ? Fight the Future . ? Mulder realizes that this is the password for the network and attempts to break into the census bureau .

Mulder slips into the Center with the help of The Lone Gunmen and begins searching the data on the computers . Doggett soon arrives , realizing that the password leak was a trap . After a bitter argument ( and upon both Scully and the Gunmen revealing to Mulder the arrival of black ops mercenaries on the scene ) , they leave before security arrives .

John Doggett confronts Rohrer about the tip he gave but Rohrer claims he was just trying to help Doggett learn the truth . As Doggett and Skinner leave , it can be seen that Rohrer has strange protrusions at the back of his neck .

= = Production = =

" Three Words " was written by executive producers Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz , directed by Tony Wharmby and saw Nelson Mashita reprise his role of Doctor Lim , having appeared in the previous episode " Deadalive " . Judson Scott also made his third appearance in the series as cult leader Absalom , reprising the role from both " Deadalive " and " This Is Not Happening " . The baseball field scene was filmed at Cheviot Hills Park , in Los Angeles , the park having previously been used in the sixth season episode " The Unnatural " and would be later re @-@ used in the ninth season episode " Lord of the Flies " .

In the episode , Mulder prepares to submit his application to be reassigned to X @-@ Files division . Meanwhile , Mulder 's boss , Deputy Director Kersh , informs Doggett that he intends to deny the request . As season eight was nearly over , the producers and writers decided to refuse Mulder re @-@ admittance into the FBI as a way to segue John Doggett and Monica Reyes into the series as the new main stars of season nine . David Duchovny agreed with this method , noting , " I completely thought it was correct that they should be trying to focus elsewhere , and that , since I was going to come back for the second half of season eight , if you were to refocus on whatever Mulder 's up to , you 'd be in the same lousy situation at the beginning of season nine . "

= = Broadcast and reception = =

The episode first aired on Fox on April 8 , 2001 , earning a Nielsen household rating of 7 @. @ 6 , meaning that it was seen by 7 @. @ 6 % of the nation 's estimated households . " Three Words " was viewed by 7 @. @ 77 million households and ranked as the 32nd most @-@ watched episode for the week ending April 8 . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Who will control the X @-@ Files ? " The episode was later included on The X @-@ Files Mythology , Volume 4 ? Super Soldiers , a DVD collection that contains episodes involved with the alien super soldiers arc .

" Three Words " received mixed to positive reviews from critics . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , rated the episode five stars out of five , calling it " extremely well @-@ performed by all concerned . " Shearman and Pearson felt that the episode was similar to the earlier " Per Manum " and was somewhat formulaic ; however , they noted that this was a necessary and positive step towards redefining the series after the changes made in its last two seasons explaining " the point of all this is only to emphasise how different The X @-@ Files universe now feels , the familiarity of the ingredients only making us more aware that the mix is never going to be the same again " . Writing for Television Without Pity , Jessica Morgan rated the episode a " B " , although she felt that by this stage the series ' mythology was moving " in concentric circles of pain and confusion " .

Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B + " and wrote that the episode , " finds Duchovny back on his feet and ready for action , and he brings a new energy to the part . " He enjoyed the way the show presented the story as one wherein , " we spend as much time watching Mulder from the outside as we do seeing events from his perspective , " because it " makes things interesting . " Handlen also wrote that while the episode did not hit the emotional notes that its predecessor , " Deadalive " , did , it was nonetheless " stronger plotwise " and built to an " inevitable conclusion in classic X @-@ Files style " .

Not all reviews were positive ; Tom Kessenich , in his book Examinations , gave the episode a mixed review , writing , " This was an episode that had tremendous promise and Carter and Spotnitz

almost got it right . Sadly , they failed to invest themselves fully and intelligently into Mulder 's return . " Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a largely negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . Vitaris wrote that , despite opening " with tremendously affecting acting from [ David ] Duchovny " , the episode lapses into " a lost opportunity to explore the psyche of a person who has suffered torture " .