

FAQ

2017 JFK ASSASSINATION RECORDS RELEASE

The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza acknowledges the recent interest in the 2017 JFK assassination records release. We anticipate the records will have potential value to researchers and historians and lead to a broader understanding of the assassination and the time period. The answers below provide information for accessing and navigating the released records on the National Archives and Record Administration website.

The Museum views the release as a developing story and will continue to monitor and add to this page as new information is received. For additional assistance, email readingroom@jfk.org.

What is the JFK Records Collection?

On December 28, 1992, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA or National Archives) established the [John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection](#) as part of the [President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992](#). The Act assigned the task of collecting these records to the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB), an independent temporary agency that was in existence from 1994 to 1998. The JFK Records Collection consists of approximately 2,000 cubic feet of records or approximately 5 million pages of records. Even though the ARRB no longer exists, additions are being made as agencies review and transfer records to the National Archives. The JFK Records Collection continues to evolve to this day.

Can I see the documents from NARA's JFK Assassination Records Collection?

Yes, approximately 88% of the records in the JFK Records Collection have been open in full to the public since the late 1990s (see <https://www.archives.gov/research/jfk>). The remaining 12% were withheld due to personal and national security concerns and, according to the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, slated for public disclosure by October 26, 2017.

How can I see the documents from the 2017 release?

You can access the individual documents on the National Archives website in several ways:

1. The best option for most researchers is to download the JFK Records Index spreadsheet containing details about the documents. Go to the [JFK Assassination Records - 2017 Additional Documents Release page](#) and click the "Download Excel" icon.

The files are sorted by "NARA Release Date," with the most recent files appearing first. This spreadsheet will be most helpful to researchers because it can be sorted and organized by the various descriptive fields. To access individual documents, click on the PDF links provided in the first column labeled "File Name."

2. You can also browse the NARA webpage and select the PDF link in the “Doc Date” column to access individual documents: <https://www.archives.gov/research/jfk/2017-release>.
3. If you wish to bulk download all the documents, NARA has provided links and instructions for downloading compressed PDF and WAV zip files. Be aware the bulk download is approximately 36 GB in total. You can find the bulk download links here: <https://www.archives.gov/research/jfk/jfkbulkdownload>.

Is it true that all the records were not released in 2017 and a portion of records remain withheld?

Yes, that is true. According to the [Presidential Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies](#) issued on October 26, 2017, security and intelligence agencies made the case to continue withholding some documents to protect national security and individual identities.

What will happen to the records that have not been released?

According to the [Presidential Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies](#), the deadline for release of the remaining records is extended by 180 days to April 26, 2018. Security and intelligence agencies have until March 26, 2018, to make a case for whether specific information within records warrant continued withholding from public disclosure after April 26, 2018.

The [FBI issued a statement on October 30, 2017](#) authorizing release of all previously withheld materials in its JFK assassination files. The National Archives will release the remaining FBI records on a rolling basis in the coming weeks.

Did the National Archives issue a press release?

Yes, there are six press statements associated with the six records release events:

July 24, 2017 – 3,810 records

<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2017/nr17-68>

October 26, 2017 – 2,891 records

<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/nr18-05>

November 3, 2017 – 676 records

<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/nr18-07>

November 9, 2017 – 13,213 records

<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/nr-18-09>

November 17, 2017 - 10,744 records

<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/nr-18-10>

December 15, 2017 - 3,539 records

<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/nr-18-16>

Why are there many different reports for the numbers of files released and why do they differ from what NARA is stating?

The root of this confusion is with the terms used to describe the files. In some cases, they are referred to as “files,” in others “records” or “documents” or “pages.” As you read, keep in mind these terms mean different things and the numbers differ accordingly.

Why are documents withheld either partially or in full?

Upon review of the JFK assassination records, the ARRB authorized that government agencies could withhold certain documents, partially or in full, for reasons such as personal or national security. Learn more about the criteria for withholding documents in the [Executive Summary of the Final Report of the ARRB](#).

What do the terms withheld, withheld in part or partially withheld, and redacted mean?

Withheld documents have not been released to public.

Withheld in part or *partially withheld* documents are not released in their entirety; parts of the document remain classified.

Redacted documents are released in full, but portions that contain sensitive information are blacked-out.

Why are some of the pages blurry or faded and difficult to read?

Many of these documents are now over fifty years old and have faded with time. The digitization process cannot reverse the effects of age.

Why are the documents difficult to understand?

At the time of their creation, these documents were not meant for the general public. They were written by federal government employees for government agencies and use bureaucratic language, jargon, acronyms and codes that most of us find confusing and difficult to comprehend. We rely on the community of historians, researchers and journalists to help us understand the files.

Was The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza involved with processing or reviewing the released files?

The Museum is not involved with the processing, release or review of the National Archives JFK Assassination Records. Learn more about [NARA's JFK Assassination Records Processing Project](#).

Can we access the files at the Museum?

We invite researchers and the public to visit the Museum's Reading Room to access the JFK Records Index spreadsheet and examine the released files. Our existing library and museum collections will support research efforts and help place the records into historical context for a broader understanding of the assassination and the time period. Our curators and librarian are available by appointment (<https://www.jfk.org/the-collections/reading-room/request-form/>) or via email (readingroom@jfk.org) to answer questions and provide research assistance.