

We watched an official Air Force film about the DYNA-SOAR project.

- very pilot-focused; almost no mention of the importance of computer systems
- presented the project as another great step in the advancement of American flight history/technology
- did not call it a spacecraft; also, used the term "aerospace" rather than space
- no mention of specific applications for the craft; did mention "general air force/military applications," but in the end, the USAF didn't find compelling reasons to follow through with the project

The Kennedy Decision

General comments on the readings?

- Kennedy himself was not immediately committed to going to the Moon; he wanted options from his advisors and looked at it in terms of how to get ahead of the Russians. He was very explicitly intending to play leap-frog with them.
- The administration was open to other, more local options.
- Kennedy was also open to more civilian space options, e.g. weather or communications satellites.
- It was important to have had the prior space background; if NASA hadn't been on-board, it probably wouldn't have happened.
- It took the crisis of Kennedy's assassination to really make it happen; it was getting tough to get funding for further years of the project, until Kennedy was killed and the project became something of a memorial to him.

With Weisner advising against manned spaceflight, what convinced Kennedy to move forward with it?

- Gagarin's successful flight; it was also important for Shepard's flight to not fail, but Gagarin's flight is what really convinced him

What were Kennedy's motives?

- showing that capitalism is better than communism
- to restore America's global prestige (politically and in terms of the space race)
- to create civilian/peaceful uses for space (think of how the dominant color of Apollo is white – a very non-military color. There was probably some technical reason, probably not "reflectivity" because aluminum reflects very well; but it stands that they spend money and a lot of weight on painting the rockets white).
- national unity
- national politics

What's *not* on this list?

- science
- military
- exploration
- developing new technologies

We took another look at some of the readings; Kennedy's memo, Johnson's response memo, and the others

- Found confirmation that motivations were highly political and focused on competition with the Soviet Union; going into space was for the rest of the world; for prestige.
- Were there really no breakthroughs required to get to the moon? Was this just an incremental step?
- There was a sense that the further they tried to reach, the better chance they'd have of doing such a thing before the Soviets did; there was a general sense that the Soviets could easily accomplish the more reachable/obvious next steps first.

Interesting to note: the Americans assumed that the Soviets' craft were highly automated, as opposed to the American craft which required "skilled piloting" to control. The fact that the Soviets launched a woman into space first was "further proof" to sexist minds that Soviet spacecraft must be automated, because a woman clearly couldn't pilot a craft well enough.