

# The CIA's Spy Cats: The Acoustic Kitty Project



In the 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States embarked on a number of unconventional and often bizarre intelligence projects. One of the most curious and controversial of these was the **Acoustic Kitty Project**. This initiative aimed to turn ordinary cats into spies, capable of infiltrating Soviet embassies and consulates. The idea, while surprising, was based on the concept that cats, due to their small size and ability to move stealthily, could be used to listen in on sensitive conversations among enemies.

## The Origin of the Project

The Acoustic Kitty Project was launched by the CIA in the early 1960s. At that time, the United States was deeply engaged in an espionage battle with the Soviet Union, and all sorts of ideas were being explored to gain critical information. The CIA's engineers and scientists conceived the project with the belief that cats could be equipped with

miniature listening devices to spy on meetings and conversations among Soviet diplomats.

## The Technology Behind Acoustic Kitty

The central idea of the project was to surgically implant a microphone, a radio transmitter, and a battery inside a cat's body, effectively turning the animal into a mobile eavesdropping device. The microphone was inserted near the cat's ear, while the transmitter and battery were placed in its abdominal cavity. The cat's tail served as an antenna to transmit the captured signals.

This implantation required delicate surgery, demanding a high level of precision to avoid compromising the cat's health. The CIA's engineers also faced the challenge of training the cats to follow commands, which proved to be a significant hurdle. Cats, known for their independence and sometimes rebellious nature, were not the most cooperative agents, even after extensive training.

## Testing the Project

After several years of development and laboratory tests, the CIA finally decided to test the device in real-world conditions. The objective was to send a cat equipped with the spy device near the Soviet embassy in Washington, D.C., to record the conversations of diplomats. However, the tests turned out to be disastrous.

During the first field mission, the spy cat was released on a street near the Soviet embassy. But before it could even reach its target, the cat was struck and killed by a taxi. This incident highlighted the practical challenges of using animals for espionage, particularly in unpredictable urban environments.

## Abandonment of the Project

After the catastrophic failure of the initial mission, the CIA quickly realized that the project was not only cruel but also impractical. The costs of the Acoustic Kitty project were estimated at around \$20 million—a staggering amount for the time, especially for a project that yielded no tangible results. Ultimately, the project was abandoned, and the lessons learned likely led the CIA to focus on more reliable and ethical technologies.

## Revelations and Legacy

The Acoustic Kitty project remained classified for several decades, and it wasn't until 2001, following the declassification of certain CIA documents, that the public became aware of this unusual espionage attempt. The revelation sparked a mix of astonishment and amusement, along with criticism regarding the use of animals for military purposes.

Today, the Acoustic Kitty project is often cited as an example of the extreme and sometimes absurd efforts undertaken during the Cold War to gain a strategic advantage. Although the project was a total failure, it illustrates the CIA's willingness to explore every possible avenue, no matter how unusual, in the pursuit of secret information.

## Sources

- [www.caminteresse.fr](http://www.caminteresse.fr)