

Notable Conspiracies in History

by **eliot schlaack** (he/him)
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Spring of 1776, Bavarian Adam Weishaupt founded a secret, anti-religion organization, or order, he dubbed “The Illuminati.” According to BBC Travel, he was “inspired by the Freemasons and French Enlightenment philosophers...” The Bavarian Illuminati spread across Europe, aided by popular Enlightenment philosophies but died out within a century. Encyclopaedia Britannica explains that “after 1785 the historical record contains no further activities of Weishaupt’s illuminati, but the order figured prominently in conspiracy theories for centuries after its disbanding.”

1776
The Illuminati

Area 51
1955

The highly-classified zone of Area 51 has been subject to thousands of conspiracy theories. The most famous being that the CIA holds aliens at this site. All of this accumulated into an unsuccessful “Storm Area 51: They Can’t Stop All of Us”, in which 1,000 people showed up to the outskirts of Area 51 to try to find aliens.

1963
JFK’s Assassination

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963. Conspiracies immediately began to spread, one of the most famous being that the CIA was involved in his killing. The claim stems from the fact that JFK wanted a peace settlement with Vietnam, but nothing has been proven by any source that the CIA was involved.

The Moon Landing
1969

“One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind,” the first man on the moon said in 1969... or did he? Conspiracies that the American moon landing was fake began floating around when Americans began distrusting their government in events like Watergate, according to The History Channel writer Becky Little. There are many conspiracy theories as to why, including “the U.S. government had staged to win the space race,” Little reported.

2012
The Mayan Calendar

The Mayan calendar, used by the Mesoamerican civilization, allegedly stopped their calendar on December 21, 2012. According to National Geographic, the Mayan calendar runs on a cycle of 5,125 years, and this cycle was to end on December 21, 2012. This became a popular subject of media around the mid-2000s in quasi-documentaries produced by the History Channel and the Discovery Channel. As you may know, we are still alive and it is 2021, so it really wasn’t the end of the world.

Deflategate
2015

In 2015, a National Football League (NFL) quarterback, Tom Brady, was the main subject in a cheating scandal. It affected the league’s annual championship game, the Super Bowl, and became known by fans as “Deflategate.” As reported by ESPN writer Kevin Seifert, the conspiracy claimed the New England Patriots quarterback Brady requested footballs be deflated to his preference, an illegal practice for the league. “[NFL] then spent upward of \$22 million over the course of two years to investigate,” Seifert stated.

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