



Dec. 13, 2012

NORAD's Special Website Tracks Santa, Too

It was a dark and stormy night..., or Once upon a time..., or Long ago in a galaxy far, far away..., or 'Twas the night before Christmas.... Isn't that the way all the best stories begin? Here's another one, and it's filled with Santa, magic, a measure of well-founded patriotism, and a good dose of 2012 technology.

Plus it's true.

It was more than 50 years ago that a Sears Roebuck and Company store in Colorado got the idea to promote their Toyland like no other. "Hey, Kiddies!" the ad began next to a headshot of Santa. "Call me direct on my telephone. Just dial..." Unfortunately, that wasn't Santa's phone number. It went directly to the Commander-in-Chief's operations hotline at CONAD, Continental Air Defense Command, the forerunner of NORAD.

The Director of Operations, Col. Harry Shoup, a prince of a man, had his staff check the radar, note where Santa was, and the military tradition of giving children updates on Santa's progress began. In fact, it's become such an international event, that updates are given in eight languages, and NORAD men and women, family and friends selflessly volunteer their time to personally respond to emails and calls from around the world.

Over the years, there have been upgrades in the tracking system, and in 2003, Santa was followed by a Starr—Ringo Starr—who operated the SantaCam over Great Britain.

This year, Santa's preparations and journey will be followed in real time, and the wait for the right jolly old elf will be eased with the special holiday website where NORAD Tracks Santa. It's up and running with a holiday countdown, games and daily activities. Official apps are also available for free in the Windows Store, Apple Store, Google Play and others so children everywhere can count down the days on smartphones and tablets.

Santa's Countdown Calendar also features Christmas music by the Air Force Academy Band, the Air Force Band of Liberty, the Air Force Band of the Golden West, the Air Force Band of the West, the Air Force Band, the Air Force Heartland of America Band and the Air Force Band of Mid-America, among others.

SantaCams, starting in the early minutes of December 24th, will show Santa make preparations for his Christmas Eve flight. Starting at 4 a.m. Mountain Time on Christmas Eve day, live phone operators will be available to answer questions about Santa's whereabouts. Children of all ages can dial the toll-free number, 1-877-446-6723, to get a moment-by-moment update.

Numerous volunteers and companies make the "NORAD Tracks Santa" website and the live reports possible.

Believe.

It's all at www.noradsanta.org.

-- Martha Lockwood

Chief, Information Products, Defense Media Activity

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

Dec. 13, 1941 - In an executive order, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the Secretary of War to take control of any civilian airline needed for the war effort. Contracts with the airlines permitted the purchase of aircraft and airline services.

Dec. 14, 1903 - Wilbur Wright made a first powered airplane flight at Kill Devil Hills, Kitty Hawk, N.C. Although he flew 105 feet in 3.5 seconds, the plane crashed, and this effort was not recognized as the first sustained or controlled flight.

Dec. 15, 2006 - An F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter took off for its first flight as

part of system development testing in Fort Worth, Texas.

Dec. 16, 1958 - Launching operations began down the Pacific Missile Range with a successful Thor missile launch from Vandenberg AFB, Calif. This was the first ballistic missile flight over the Pacific Ocean.

Dec. 17, 1903 - Orville Wright made the first sustained, controlled power airplane flight in the Kill Devil Hills, near Kitty Hawk, N.C. In the fourth and longest flight of the day, the Wright Flyer flew 852 feet in 59 seconds.

Dec. 18, 1958 - The First Atlas satellite, a 4-ton communications relay, was placed in orbit. President Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered a Christmas message through the satellite on December 19, which was the first time a human voice had been heard from space.

Dec. 19, 1973 - The Air Force approved the procurement of 52 A-10 Thunderbolt production aircraft, associated engines, and GAU-8A 30 mm gun systems. This followed a successful flight evaluation fly-off of the A-10 with the A-7D Corsair.

► RESOURCES

AF.mil

<http://www.af.mil>

Airman magazine

<http://www.airmanonline.af.mil/>

Air Force Outreach

<http://www.afoutreach.af.mil/>

Military OneSource

<http://www.militaryonesource.com/>

Military HOMEFRONT

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.>

Air Force Personnel Center

<https://mypers.af.mil>

<http://www.afpc.af.mil>

Air Reserve Personnel Center

<http://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/>

Department of Defense News

<http://www.defense.gov>

Department of Veterans Affairs

<http://www.va.gov>

TRICARE

<http://www.tricare.mil>

U.S. Government Website

<http://www.firstgov.gov/>

Employment Opportunities

www.usajobs.com

www.nafjobs.org

Air Force Association

Scholarships

<http://www.afa.org/aef/aid/scholars.asp>

Air Force Safety Center

www.afsec.af.mil

A Real Year-End Gift: Few Changes in the Tax Laws

For all the news and analysis about the fiscal cliff, very few laws were passed during 2012 that affect tax change. In fact, most tax changes occurred by default, if they occurred at all.

Tax rates and brackets, so far, have not changed this year. The most recent extension of the current (Bush-era) tax rates and brackets extends through December 31 of this year.

Standard deductions exhibit no change this year, either, other than adjustments for inflation. Tax year 2012 is the last year, currently, where married-filing-jointly (MFJ) taxpayers take a standard deduction equal to double the amount that single taxpayers pay, and married-filing-separately (MFS) taxpayers' deduction equals the rate allowed single taxpayers.

Medical Expense deductions begin at the 7.5 percent floor for tax year 2012. For tax years 2013 and beyond, the floor increases to 10 percent.

Following is a list of most of the deductions, credits and exemptions that expired at the end of 2011. Therefore, as of this date, they will not affect 2012 taxes:

- Tuition Deduction
- Educator Deduction
- Personal residence Energy Tax Credits for storm windows and doors, insulation ...
- Homebuilder credit
- Home mortgage insurance
- Fifteen-year depreciable life for qualified leasehold improvements, qualified restaurant property improvements, and qualified retail establishment improvements
- Refundability feature of the Adoption Credit
- Tax-free transfers of IRAs directly to charity
- Research Credit
- Sales tax deduction
- AMT exemption and use of personal credits

Tax planning for 2013 remains a bit uncertain because Congress has yet to enact all but a few changes. Among items that will change, however, are medical flexible spending accounts (FSA), which will cap at \$2,500 starting in 2013, down from \$5,000 in 2012.

Following is a list of some of the items expiring at the end of this year, but can still be claimed on the 2012 return.

- Child Care Tax Credit for employers
- The extra Earned Income Tax Credit for the third child and the lower earned income level for the Additional Child Tax Credit
- The current Dependent Care Credit levels and percentages will be reduced after this year.

The real downer on diminishing returns is identity theft. The IRS notes that identity theft occurs in two ways. One is when one's social security number (SSN) is used to file a fraudulent return, thereby reaping unearned cash for the preparer and/or the filer. That's called refund fraud. Employment fraud is when a person's SSN is used by someone ineligible to work in the United States. Although the person fraudulently using the SSN is actually doing the work, they skip out on filing a tax return, and the person whose SSN was used appears to be underreporting income. The threat of identity theft is so common and onerous that the IRS has introduced [guidelines to assist victimized taxpayers](#).

Additionally, for taxpayers who have been victim of taxpayer fraud, the IRS is issuing special identity protection personal identification numbers (IP-PINS) to those who submitted required documentation and resolved their accounts.

Slightly less confusing, and just as well meant, is the help available for victims of Superstorm Sandy. Many of these special helps vary, relative to certain geographical areas, businesses, homeowners and individuals differently. The can be found in a special section on the IRS [website](#).

As always, it is best to consult a CPA, an enrolled agent, or other licensed tax preparer when preparing your return.

Don't go in there alone.

-- Martha Lockwood
Chief, Information Products, Defense Media Activity

"Naturally, [we hope very much that sequestration will be avoided](#) and we don't enter that phase." -- Dr. George Little, acting assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, speaking about required budget cuts if sequestration goes into effect Jan. 3.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[New process improves household goods shipments](#)

A system being implemented at U.S. Transportation Command is making permanent-change-of-station moves more convenient, while reducing lost and damaged shipments and saving the government money.

[Lt. Gen. Clarke nominated as Director, Air National Guard](#)

Lt. Gen. Stanley E. Clarke III, commander of the Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region - 1st Air Force, has been nominated by President Obama to be the next director of the Air National Guard.

[Lajes Field drawdown as part of force structuring announced](#)

Department of Defense officials announced today that Lajes Field will transition from an air base wing to an air base group with a reduction of more than 400 military personnel and 500 family members by the end of fiscal year 2014.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[OTS selection board results announced](#)

A total of 245 men and women from across America have earned an opportunity to become Air Force leaders following their selection for an officer's commission, officials here announced today.

► FAMILY, HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Through Airmen's Eyes: The Journey back to normal](#)

"Between August 2009 and March 2010, I lost myself during my deployment to Afghanistan. I remember coming off the airplane and seeing my family and knowing that my world would never be the same again. It took me more than a year to put my life back together," said MSgt. Rebecca Corey, 97th Air Mobility Public Affairs.

► ENVIRONMENT, SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY

[Q&A: AF chief information officer on Cyber Summit](#)

Air Force leaders held a Cyber Summit in November at Joint Base Andrews, Md., to discuss the Air Force's role in cyberspace and to ensure the mission needs of the Air Force and joint warfighter are being met going forward.

[Air Force launches 3rd X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle](#)

In the next installment to improve space capability and further develop an affordable, reusable space vehicle, the Air Force conducted its third X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle launch here on December 11, officials said.

"And to all a good night ..." Commander's Call Topics goes on year-end hiatus with this issue. We wish you the happiest holiday season and health and prosperity in the year ahead. CCT will resume Jan. 10, 2013.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit <http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>.

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