

Commander's Call Topics



December 17, 2015

Special Holiday Edition

*A third page has been added to this pre-holiday issue of
Commanders Call Topics.*

*In keeping with traditions of holidays past, the
Annual NORAD Santa Tracker story can be found on page 3.*

"And to all a good night...."

Commander's Call Topics

goes on hiatus

until

January 7, 2016.

Tips to Stay Safe during the Holidays

"The winter holidays provide an opportunity to relax and celebrate with our families and friends. It's also an opportunity to re-establish a proper work-life balance by enjoying the seasonal festivities and activities." –[Senior Leader 2015 Winter/Holiday Message](#)



Holiday Stress: Be a good Wingman. Reach out for help, or if you see someone in need, reach out and engage them during this time.

- The Wingman Toolkit is a great resource to link Airmen and Wingmen with resources and support organizations to combat holiday stress. To visit the website, go to <http://www.wingmantoolkit.org>.

Travel Safely: Whether traveling across the street or around the world, don't drink and drive, wear a seat belt and keep situational awareness at all times.

- Put the cell phone away; distracted driving causes one-quarter of all crashes
- Use a designated driver or taxi service if you plan to drink
- Be aware of any travel alerts and warnings for your destination

Food Preparation: Don't give the gift of food poisoning.

- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is cooked to a safe temperature
- Refrigerate food within two hours
- Wash your hands frequently when handling food

Watch Out for potential Fire-Starters:

- Home cooking equipment:
 - Don't leave cooking equipment unattended
 - Ensure that flammable items are not stored near cooking equipment
- Holiday décor:
 - Check the wires and plugs on all lit decorations before use
- Candles and fireplaces:
 - Never leave fires unattended or sleep in a room with a lit fire
 - Keep candles out of reach of children

***Additional information can be found [here](#), at the National Safety Council website*

► RESOURCES

Website access to the following resources can be gained by clicking on the name.

[AF.mil](#)

[Airman magazine](#)

[Military OneSource/HomeFront](#)

[Air Force Personnel Center](#)

[Air Reserve Personnel Center](#)

[Department of Defense News](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[TRICARE](#)

[U.S. Government Website](#)

[Air Force Association](#)

[Scholarships](#)

[Air Force Safety Center](#)

[Civil Service Employment Opportunities](#)

[NAF Employment Opportunities](#)

[Air Force Bands/Outreach](#)

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

Dec. 17, 1903 – Orville Wright made the first sustained, controlled-power airplane flight in the Kill Devil Hills, near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. 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 Dec. 19, which was the first time a human voice had been heard from space.

Dec. 19 1951 – During the Korean War, the 307th Bombardment Wing sent 10 B-29s to bomb marshalling yards at Chongju.

Dec. 20, 1968 – NASA terminated the X-15 program.

Dec. 21, 2000 – At Edwards Air Force Base, California, Boeing's X-32A Joint Strike Fighter concept plane made its first supersonic flight, when Lt. Col. Edward Cabrera, the Air Force's lead X-32 test pilot, took the jet to 30,000 feet and exceeded Mach 1 (660 mph).

Dec. 22, 1964 – The Lockheed SR-71 strategic reconnaissance plane exceeded an altitude of 45,000 feet and a speed of 1,000 mph in its maiden flight at Palmdale, California.

Dec. 23, 1970 – A Sprint terminal-defense interceptor missile launched from Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific Ocean intercepted a Minuteman I reentry vehicle launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

Dec. 24, 1944 – Brig. Gen. Frederick W. Castle led some 2,000 heavy bombers against German airfields. On the way, an engine failed and his unescorted B-17 became a target to enemy fighters. After his bomber sustained serious damage, he ordered the crew to bail out while he remained at the controls. Another enemy attack caused the right wing gas tanks to explode, and the bomber crashed with the general still inside. For this sacrifice, Castle was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.



The OPM data breach, massive in its identity theft implications, gives rise to other crimes, and often one crime can result in two more. For example, phishing scams can morph into credit card fraud and social security abuse. Learn how to protect yourself [here](#).

To learn more about the Office of Personnel Management data breach, legitimate assistance being provided to impacted individuals, and to understand cybersecurity as it is grounded in the Air Force tradition, please go to the specially created [Air Force Cybersecurity](#) web page.



► CURRENT ISSUES

[AF announces FY16 aviator bonuses: RPA pilots eligible for the first time](#)

Sept. 30 is deadline for eligible active-duty aviators to apply for the FY2016 Aviator Retention Pay or Critical Skills Retention Bonus Program.

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

The Defense Media Activity produces *Commander's Call Topics* weekly. For questions or comments about this, or a other DMA products, send an e-mail to afbiographies.mil@mail.mil.

To subscribe to AF news and information products online, go to <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDODAF/subscriber/new>.

Santa travels at the speed of starlight, and NORAD is there

It sounds like an attempt at a Christmas riddle: "What's 60 years old and still loves Christmas?"

It's not Barbie. She's only 56. And it's not The Grinch. He started his attempted robbery career 58 years ago. It's the NORAD Santa Tracker!

And as with almost every seasonal riddle, there is a serious back story. With all the earmarks of a heartwarming Christmas classic (or maybe a Hollywood blockbuster), the story goes like this: A well-meaning big business botches its newspaper ad for their Christmas call-in to Santa. The bungled marketing campaign goes unnoticed until a child tries to access the Santa line and gets the commander-in-chief's hotline at the Continental Air Defense Command, and the director of operations answers the phone. The quick-thinking director, Col. Harry Shoup, a Christmas-spirited officer, commands his staff to check the radar for the whereabouts of Santa and his sleighful of toys. With the answer, a Christmas tradition is born.

It all began 60 years ago when a Sears Roebuck and Company store near Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, got the idea to promote their Toyland as it never had before.

"Hey, Kiddies!" the ad began next to a headshot of Santa. "Call me direct.... 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 North American Aerospace Defense Command headquartered at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. NORAD is a bi-national U.S. and Canadian organization charged with, among other responsibilities, the monitoring of man-made articles in space.

Shoup believed that he saw an opportunity in this child's call and had his staff check the radar, note where Santa was, and the tradition of giving children updates on Santa's progress began. Radar, satellites, Santacams and accompanying jet fighters (F-16s, F-15s, F-22s and CF-18s) track Santa's progress as he travels from the North Pole. In fact, it's such a worldwide tradition, that updates are given in eight languages. Annually, more than 1,250 volunteers in the NORAD Tracks Santa call center will each serve two-hour shifts. They will be posting to social media, tweeting, answering the phones, and responding to emails. The call center is open for 24 hours beginning at 5 a.m. EST Dec. 24.

Santa travels with the speed of starlight, and his ability to circumnavigate the globe is greatly enhanced by a "fighter jet mission" in North America. Santa's preparations and journey will be followed in real time starting Christmas Eve on a special holiday [website](#). It's up and running with a holiday countdown clock, games, movies, daily activities, and music. Children of all ages can dial the toll-free number, 1-877-446-6723, to get a moment-by-moment update.

NORAD has the experience and the state-of-the-art technology to accurately track Santa, but only a very minimal amount of federal funding from both the U.S. and Canada is used. In addition to the countless volunteer man-hours, almost all of the funding for the NORAD Tracks Santa program comes from over 60 corporate sponsors.

True story. You gotta believe!

*Martha J. Lockwood, APR
Chief, Air Force Information Products*