

# NORAD takes calls from kids around the world awaiting Santa

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In this Dec. 24, 2014, file photo, NORAD and USNORTHCOM Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Charles D. Luckey joins other volunteers taking phone calls from children around the world asking where Santa is and when he will deliver presents to their homes, inside a phone-in center during the annual NORAD Tracks Santa Operation, at the North American Aerospace Defense Command, at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. Hundreds of volunteers are on the phones at the base, answering questions from eager kids who want to know where Santa is on his Christmas Eve travels. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley, File)

Hundreds of volunteers at an Air Force base in Colorado were answering questions on Sunday from eager children who wanted to know where Santa was on his Christmas Eve travels. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump also pitched in and took calls for the NORAD Tracks Santa program from their Florida estate.

It is the 62nd year for the wildly popular program run by the U.S. and Canadian militaries.

Some key facts about the program:

#### HOW TO GET NORAD UPDATES:

The toll-free telephone number for NORAD tracks Santa is 877-Hi NORAD or 877-446-6723. About 1,500 volunteers answer the phones in shifts throughout Christmas Eve.

The website is [www.noradsanta.org](http://www.noradsanta.org) , with updates offered in a number of languages in addition to English.

Updates are also posted on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

New this year, Amazon's voice-activated computer service Alexa will be relaying NORAD Tracks Santa updates through the Echo device once the function has been enabled.

#### HOW IT STARTED:

A Colorado Springs newspaper ran an ad in 1955 inviting children to call Santa but mistakenly ran the phone number for the hotline at the Continental Air Defense Command, which was tasked with monitoring the skies for a possible nuclear attack by the Soviet Union. Children began calling and the CONAD staff happily played along.

The program is now run by CONAD's successor, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, a U.S.-Canadian command that monitors the skies over both countries.



This photo of the front page of The Greeley Tribune in Greeley, Colorado., from Dec. 23, 1955, shows an Associated Press story about the Continental Air Defense Command or CONAD tracking Santa Claus. The U.S. military's Santa-tracking program began that year after a newspaper ad invited children to call Santa but inadvertently ran the phone number of CONAD's hotline. Now in its 62nd year, the program is operated by CONAD's successor, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, a U.S.-Canadian military command at Peterson

Air Force Base, Colorado. (Josh Polson/The Greeley Tribune via AP)

## BY THE NUMBERS:

Last year, NORAD Tracks Santa received nearly 154,200 phone calls and drew 10.7 million unique visitors to its website. It had 1.8 million Facebook followers, 382,000 YouTube views and 177,000 Twitter followers.

Despite all those ways to track Santa, the phones have been ringing non-stop all day with kids from as far away as Japan and the United Kingdom asking where Santa is and when he will be at their house, NORAD spokesman Capt. Chase McFarland. Each volunteer was averaging about 80 calls an hour, he said.

Many callers have also been asking whether there is a special food they should leave for Santa, he said, and volunteers have been telling them that he'll eat anything they leave out. "He's not a picky eater," McFarland said.

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