

PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEMAKING MINUTES



Col Pierre Ruel and BGen Christian Barabé check the radar screen in preparation for tracking Santa Claus.
Le Colonel Pierre Ruel et le Brigadier-général Christian Barabé se préparent à suivre le père Noël à l'écran radar.
<http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Commun/ml-fe/photo-eng.asp?id=1976>

The ultimate North American Defence: NORAD tracks Santa!

A mistake in a phone number in a newspaper ad near Christmas

1955 led numerous little folk to call up the US Colonel then in control of North America's con-

tinental defence system, a forerunner to NORAD. The ad had promised Santa would personally speak with them. Tying up the red phone line that was to be used if the Russians were attacking was not a good idea. What turned out to be a heart-warmingly good idea was using volunteers to answer the phones on Christmas Eve to tell young people about Santa's progress from the North Pole. And thus a tradition that will be 56 years old in 2011 was born.

Below is information from NORAD's Santa Web Site:

"NORAD uses four high-tech systems to track Santa—radar, satellites, Santa Cams and fighter jets. Tracking Santa starts with the NORAD radar system called the North Warning System. This powerful radar system consists of 47 installations strung across the northern border of North America. On Christmas Eve, NORAD monitors the radar systems continuously for indications that Santa Claus has left the North Pole."

"The moment that radar indicates Santa has lifted off, we use our second detection system. Satellites positioned in geo-synchronous orbit at 22,300 miles (35,888 km) from the Earth's surface are equipped with infrared sensors, which enable them to detect heat. Amazingly, Rudolph's bright red nose gives off an infrared signature which allows our satellites to detect Rudolf and Santa."

“The fourth system is made up of fighter jets. Canadian NORAD fighter pilots flying the CF-18 intercept and welcome Santa to North America ... flying alongside Santa and his famous reindeer: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen and, of course, Rudolf.”

Until just before he died in 2009, 92-year-old Colonel Harry Shoup who took the first call on the “hot phone” in Colorado Springs in 1955 carried Santa emails from children in his briefcase as if they were important international documents. Col Shoup understood the power of the imagination.