

## 《双语新闻：美军圣诞老人追踪计划》

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From the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the personnel of the North American Aerospace Defence Command (Norad) scrutinise the skies for such aerial threats as missile attacks and hijacked planes.

But for the next 24 hours, Norad will not just be monitoring all aircraft, missiles and spacecraft with its network of satellites, ground and airborne radar and fighter jets.

The US and Canadian military will also track the global flight path of a distinctive rotund red-clad individual on a sleigh and his team of reindeer, for the entertainment of children around the world.

Deploying the latest social media tools to chart the progress of an ancient traveller, Norad's Christmas Eve Santa Tracker is expected to hit another record this year, bolstered by an unusual dose of controversy about the "militarisation" of the season.

Last year, the operation attracted some 22 million website visits, 1.2 million Facebook followers, 950,000 smartphone application downloads and 129,000 Twitter followers as well as 114,000 old-fashioned telephone calls.

Michelle Obama is among the 1,200 volunteers expected to help handle enquiries this Christmas Eve, fielding calls forwarded to the first family's holiday retreat in Hawaii, as she has since 2010. More than a fifth of the enquiries come from Britain.

Unsurprisingly, the most popular question are variants of "where is Santa and when is he arriving at my house?" But volunteers also handle inquiries ranging from his age and elf workforce to whether he leaves presents for dogs or delivers to heaven. And from some older children, there are inevitable doubts about whether Santa does exist.

Major Jamie Humphreys is among those who will be dealing with the incoming barrage. "Nearly all the kids want to know when he's going to be delivering their presents," he said. "We tell them that we can't give a firm time, but they do have to be asleep. When we say that, we can often hear the parents on the line adding 'yes' or 'did you hear that?' in a relieved tone."

"For those who ask his age, we tell them that Norad intelligence indicates that Santa is at least 16 centuries old. And if they are sounding sceptical, I tell them to believe in their dreams."

Nothing can prepare the Santa tracking team for some questions, however – like the boy who called the hotline last year, 10 days after the Sandy Hook school massacre.

"I'm from Newtown, Connecticut, where the shooting was," he said. "Is it possible that Santa can bring extra



