

Oregon Air Guard to Watch for Santa Christmas Eve

by Bend Weekly News Sources

The Oregon Air National Guard will be extra vigilant again this Christmas Eve as they work closely with the U.S. Air Force to scan the skies for the arrival of Santa Claus. Both Oregon Air Guard flying units, the 142nd Fighter Wing (FW) in Portland and the 173rd FW in Klamath Falls, will again partner with the Air Force and the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) to track the annual journey of the "Jolly Old Elf." "Every Christmas Eve, we begin receiving reports from the Western Air Defense Sector at McChord Air Force Base (Wash.) concerning erratic blips on their radar screens," said Major Mike Allegre, an Oregon Air Guard spokesperson. "Because our F-15 aircrews are on continuous alert, they may be ordered airborne to investigate anything that we can't readily identify on radar." Many Oregon and southwest Washington radio stations will again be broadcasting Santa's progress through reports provided by the Air National Guard. Since 1991, more than 60 stations have annually participated in the Air Guard's "Santa Sighting" radio reports. For more than 65 years the Oregon Air Guard's mission in Portland has been to provide air defense for the Pacific Northwest "24 hours a day, seven days a week. In Klamath Falls the unit's mission is train pilots to fly the F-15. All Air Guard members are also prepared to respond to other state and local emergency contingencies. More than 2,100 Oregon Air Guard members voluntarily serve full-time and part-time in support of these missions.

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