

# AEROTECH NEWS



Journal of Aerospace, Defense Industry and Veteran News

*and Review*

## Northrop Grumman's B-21 Raider makes first flight



Northrop Grumman photograph

The Northrop Grumman-built B-21 Raider made its first flight from Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, Calif., Nov. 10, 2023.

Neither the Air Force nor Northrop Grumman made any prior announcements about the flight, but the aircraft was spotted in the skies of Southern California's Antelope Valley, home to the Northrop Grumman facility that is designing and building the United States' newest bomber, and Edwards Air Force Base where the bomber will be tested.

"The B-21 Raider is in flight testing," Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek said.

The test "is a critical first step in the test campaign managed by the Air Force Test Center and 412th Test Wing's B-21 Combined Test Force to provide survivable, long-range penetrating strike

capabilities to deter aggression and strategic attacks against the United States, allies, and partners," Stefanek continued.

The Raider is designed to carry conventional and nuclear weapons, in either a crewed or uncrewed configuration.

According to Northrop Grumman, the "program is reimagining traditional acquisition processes. Through active contract management, Northrop Grumman and the Air Force have worked in a partnership focused on shared success over the long term. The teams' focus on transparency is evident in the industry-first data sharing agreement that provides the end user with access to valuable data, including the B-21 digital twin."

See RAIDER, Page 2



Courtesy photograph



# Here is what you need to know about Northrop Grumman's B-21 Raider as it continues flight test



## Sixth Generation

The B-21 Raider is setting standards for sixth-generation technology. On the outside, next-gen stealth and advancements in low observable processes will make the aircraft easier and less costly to maintain than prior systems. Inside, the B-21's open architecture will enable rapid upgradability from inclusion of new weapons to software upgrades thanks to advanced networking capabilities and successful cloud environment migration. With these innovations, the B-21 is designed to meet evolving threats for decades to come.

## Partnership Approach

The B-21 Raider program is reimagining traditional acquisition processes. Through active contract management, Northrop Grumman and the Air Force have worked in a partnership focused on shared success over the long term. The teams' focus on transparency is evident in the industry-first data sharing agreement that provides the end user with access to valuable data, including the B-21 digital twin.

## Backbone of the Fleet

The B-21 Raider forms the backbone of the future for U.S. air power. The B-21 will deliver a new era of capability and flexibility through advanced integration of data, sensors and weapons. Capable of delivering both conventional and nuclear payloads, the B-21 will be one of the most effective aircraft in the sky, with the ability to use a broad mix of stand-off and direct attack munitions.

## Production Focus

A key strategy of the program was to build a production representative first test aircraft. Rather than a prototype, the B-21 test aircraft is equipped with mission systems and was built by the same manufacturing technicians using the same processes and tooling for production aircraft. The body of knowledge and experience gleaned in the development process supports a smooth transition into production on the path to delivering operational capability.

## A Digital Aircraft

Northrop Grumman uses agile software development and digital engineering tools to mitigate production risk and enable modern sustainment practices for the B-21 program. Ground testing demonstrated the efficacy of digital modeling with results that outperformed industry standards, paving the way for next-gen platforms and systems.

## Advanced Manufacturing

By embracing the benefits of advanced manufacturing, Northrop Grumman invested in a digital ecosystem for the B-21 throughout the aircraft's lifecycle. From training and augmented reality tools allowing technicians to visualize tasks and solve problems before ever touching the plane, to easing integration of supplier parts on the aircraft, these advancements have reduced risk, supported efficiency and cultivated expertise throughout the manufacturing workforce.

## A National Team

Since contract award in 2015, Northrop Grumman has assembled a nationwide team to design, test and build the world's most advanced strike aircraft. The B-21 team includes more than 8,000 personnel from Northrop Grumman, industry partners and the Air Force, with more than 400 suppliers across 40 states. The partnership approach extends to the flight test campaign. Initially stood up in 2019, the B-21 Combined Test Force is comprised of

Northrop Grumman and Air Force personnel working together to conduct flight test operations prior to aircraft delivery.

## Sustainment at the Forefront

Sustainment was a program priority throughout the B-21 program's design phase. In addition to driving efficiency over the long term, this approach yields more near-term benefits and sets the B-21 further along on tech data, materiel readiness and training which will benefit the user community upon fielding.

## Global Reach

The B-21 Raider is pivotal to supporting our nation's strategic deterrence strategy. In addition to its advanced long-range precision strike capabilities that will afford Combatant Commanders the ability to hold any target, anywhere in the world at risk, it is designed as the lead component of a larger family of systems that will deliver intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, electronic attack and multi-domain networking capabilities. In a dynamic global security environment, the B-21 will provide the flexibility and deterrence critical to the security of the U.S. and our allies.

## Continuing the Legacy

The B-21 Raider is named in honor of the Doolittle Raid of World War II when 80 airmen, led by Lt. Col. James "Jimmy" Doolittle, and 16 B-25 Mitchell medium bombers set off on a mission that changed the course of the war. The raid was a catalyst to a multitude of future progress in U.S. air superiority and serves as the inspiration behind the Raider name and the pioneering, innovative spirit instilled across the workforce bringing the B-21 to life.

## RAIDER, from 1

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"This isn't just another airplane," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said at the announcement. "It's the embodiment of America's determination to defend the republic that we all love."

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# T-7A Red Hawk, named to honor Tuskegee Airmen, arrives at Edwards AFB for flight test

by Chase Kohler  
Edwards AFB, Calif.

The first Boeing T-7A Red Hawk successfully arrived at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Nov. 8, 2023.

This milestone formally commences the Air Force's developmental flight test campaign for the aircraft, aimed at fielding a replacement pilot training capability for the 1960s-era Northrop T-38 Talon.

The aircraft, known as APT-2, is the first production representative jet off the assembly line and was piloted by a joint U.S. Air Force and Boeing aircrew. The journey to Edwards included stops at Vance AFB, Okla., Kirtland AFB, N.M., and Luke AFB, Ariz.

"This arrival marks an exciting transition into the next phase of developmental flight" noted Maj. Jonathan "Gremlin" Aronoff, T-7A test pilot. "The T-7A gives immense capability updates that will allow the Air Force to train the next generation of combat aviators. Success of first delivery is truly a testament to the joint U.S. Air Force-industry team we have in place" added Aronoff.

The collaboration in the cockpit represents the construct of the T-7A Integrated Test Force, which will see Air Force and Boeing team members working shoulder-to-shoulder to rapidly test and certify the aircraft. The T-7A team has been leveraging digital transformation through Distributed Test Operations since 2019. This method allows seamless networked capability between Boeing's facilities in St. Louis and mission control rooms at Edwards. The T-7A ITF is part of the larger Airpower Foundations Combined Test Force at Edwards, in association with the 416th Flight Test Squadron.

"This is a pivotal moment for the T-7 program," said Evelyn Moore, vice president and program manager, T-7 programs at Boeing. "Bringing the T-7A Red Hawk to the heart of the U.S. Air Force's test community at Edwards for dynamic flight testing will prove the jet's performance as an agile and safe trainer for future pilots."

Test pilots have been busy rehearsing missions in the simulator and will quickly begin to fly up to three times daily, utilizing APT-2 for envelope expansion testing before moving into mission systems. The T-7A ITF will utilize a mix of both Air Force and contractor-owned aircraft to swiftly bring cutting edge capability to train the next generation of war fighters.

The T-7A notched its first Air Force-piloted flight on June 28, 2023, in his-

Air Force photograph by Todd Schannuth

**Right:** The first T-7A Red Hawk arrives at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Nov. 8, 2023. The aircraft's test campaign is being executed by the T-7A Integrated Test Force, part of the Airpower Foundations Combined Test Force in association with the 416th Flight Test Squadron. The Integrated Test Force is a partnership between the U.S. Air Force and T-7A manufacturer, Boeing.



Air Force photograph by Bryce Bennett

The first T-7A Red Hawk, piloted by Air Force test pilot Maj. Jonathan "Gremlin" Aronoff and Boeing test pilot Steve "Bull" Schmidt, soars over Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Nov. 8, 2023, prior to arrival. The T-7A will replace the 1960s-era T-38 aircraft by providing advanced pilot training capabilities for aviators learning to fly both tactical and bomber aircraft.

toric fashion. The name "Red Hawk" honors the legacy of Tuskegee Airmen and pays homage to their signature red-tailed aircraft from World War II.

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and mission control rooms at Edwards. The T-7A ITF is part of the larger Airpower Foundations Combined Test Force at Edwards, in association with the 416th Flight Test Squadron.

"Like most test programs, we'll have discovery and we'll overcome it quickly," said Col. Kirt Cassell, division chief, U.S. Air Force, T-7A Red Hawk program. "This is the right team to go after any challenges we find."

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daily, utilizing APT-2 for envelope expansion testing before moving into mission systems. The T-7A ITF will utilize a mix of both Air Force and contractor-owned aircraft to swiftly bring cutting edge capability to train the next generation of warfighters.

The T-7A notched its first Air Force-piloted flight on June 28, 2023, in historic fashion. The name "Red Hawk" honors the legacy of Tuskegee Airmen and pays homage to their signature red-tailed aircraft from World War II.



Air Force photograph by Giancarlo Casem

Col. Christopher L. Manning, Individual Mobilization Augmentee to the 412th Test Wing commander, and Col. Ahave Brown Jr., take a closer look at the T-7A Red Hawk after it arrived at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Nov. 8, 2023.

# Mojave Cemetery will continue as official location for National Wreaths Across America Day

National nonprofit Wreaths Across America has announced that Mojave Cemetery in Mojave, Calif., has once again joined in the mission to Remember, Honor, Teach, as an official location for 2023. This is the 9th year that the cemetery will

participate in this national program, and the cemetery will join the more than 3,900 participating locations across the country to Remember, Honor and Teach. Wreaths Across America started as a simple gesture of thanks that has grown into a



**WREATHS**  
— across —  
**AMERICA**



Army photograph by Audrey Chappell

A volunteer places a wreath on a grave as part of the Wreaths Across America effort. This year, the Mojave Cemetery will again be taking part in this nationwide observance.

national movement of dedicated volunteers and communities coming together to not only remember the nation's fallen and honor their service, but to teach the next generation about the sacrifices made for us to live freely. This year, there will be more than 3,100 participating locations placing veterans' wreaths on National Wreaths Across America Day — Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023 — with more than two million volunteers coming together.

The goal for Mojave Cemetery is to raise enough funds to place 520 sponsored veterans' wreaths on the headstones of all the local heroes laid to rest there, to ensure that the individuals who served to protect the freedoms of our country never be forgotten and to bring the community together in patriotic commemoration.

"We are forever grateful for the thousands of supporters who dedicate their time and effort to fulfilling our mission all year long," said Karen Worcester, executive director, Wreaths Across America. "These individuals and their communities know the value of re-

membering the fallen, honoring those who currently serve and teaching the next generation about the sacrifices made for our freedom every day, and without their continued support, Wreaths Across America would not exist."

Those interested in volunteering for Wreaths Across America or sponsoring a wreath for Mojave Cemetery, are invited to visit [www.wreathscrossamerica.org/CA0635](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/CA0635) to learn more. National Wreaths Across America Day is a free community event open to all people.

Wreaths Across America is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded to continue and expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery begun by Maine businessman Morrill Worcester in 1992. The organization's mission — Remember, Honor, Teach — is carried out in part each year by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies in December at Arlington, as well as at thousands of veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond.

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# NASA supports tests of dust sensor to aid lunar landings

by **Chloe Tuck**  
NASA Armstrong

A research team from the University of Central Florida recently tested an instrument designed to measure the size and speed of surface particles kicked up by exhaust from a rocket-powered Moon or Mars lander.

Supported by NASA's Flight Opportunities program, researchers evaluated the instrument in a series of flight tests on Astrobotic's Xodiac rocket-powered lander in Mojave, Calif.

When spacecraft land on the Moon or Mars, the rocket exhaust plume creates regolith ejecta — abrasive dust and large particles moving at high speeds — that can damage the lander and sur-

rounding structures. Understanding how a rocket engine's exhaust affects this ejecta will help mission designers plan more effectively for lunar landings by allowing them to model the soil erosion rate, the particle size distribution, and the velocities associated with plume-surface interaction.

Researchers at the University of Central Florida developed the laser-based instrument, named Ejecta STORM (Sheet Tracking, Opacity, and Regolith Maturity), to answer this need while embracing the Flight Opportunities program's "fly, fix, fly" ethos to quickly advance the technology.

Four tethered flights enabled researchers to test the system's integration with a lander and operation in flight conditions that simulated the

plume effects of a lunar lander. These tests build on data collected during a 2020 flight campaign leveraging Xodiac. These 2020 flight tests, funded by the program's TechFlights solicitation, allowed researchers to measure the density and size of particles during terrestrial simulations of lunar landings.

Researchers expect the technology to inform model development and reduce risk for future lunar landings, ultimately improving mission design for rover-based planetary science missions, crewed missions to the Moon and other bodies, and in-situ resource utilization. Flight Opportunities is managed at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center at Edwards, Calif., and is part of the agency's Space Technology Mission Directorate.



NASA screenshots

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# EOD Airmen train at National Training Center

by **Harley Huntington**  
Edwards AFB, Calif.

In a unique inter-service collaboration, the Explosive Ordnance Disposal flight from the 812th Civil Engineer Squadron, Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., recently teamed up with the Army's C Company, 2916th Aviation Battalion, "Desert Dustoff," for an intensive series of training exercises at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

The objective was to put the EOD team through physically and mentally demanding scenarios, including one they call "team leader down," where team members had to apply Tactical Combat Casualty Care to an injured leader.

What set this exercise apart were the real-world elements integrated into the training.

"We've done nine-line exercises, but this is the first one where our guys got to call the nine-line to a helicopter at Fort Irwin," said Tech. Sgt. Joseph Griffin, 812th CES - EOD training manager.

The team had the opportunity to communicate directly and interact with helicopter pilots during landing — all without any simulation.

Griffin said the cooperation of Fort Irwin's medical team was crucial to the training.

"The Army was great. They used a lot of creativity to make this happen for us," Griffin noted. He praised the flexibility and ingenuity of the Army personnel who were willing to adapt their routines to accommodate the EOD team's needs.

But the training was not without its setbacks. The EOD team had to deal with real-world problems like a Hum-vee breaking down in the middle of a drill.

"That's the whole goal — to stress them out," Griffin emphasized. He expressed optimism about his team's performance: "It didn't go perfectly, but it went better than I thought it would."

Sgt. Branden Breidenbach, C Co., 2916th Avn. Bn. flight medic, echoed the sentiment of the value of such cross-branch training: "It's always a learning curve when bringing together different branches, but we're all on the same team."

As the exercises concluded, Griffin was appreciative of how his team performed in the austere NTC environment.

"I wanted to extend my gratitude to my leadership team and my airmen. They've been suffering, but they've kept their chin up," he said.

The training event underscored the adaptability and ingenuity inherent in U.S. military operations, providing invaluable lessons for future inter-service collaborations.

An Airman from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight, 812th Civil Engineer Squadron, searches for training explosives during an exercise at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., Oct. 19, 2023.



Air Force photograph by Chloe Bonaccorsi

Airmen from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight, 812th Civil Engineer Squadron, brief an Army flight paramedic on a patient's status before handing him over to the air medevac team during a training event at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., Oct. 19, 2023.



Air Force photograph by Chloe Bonaccorsi



Air Force photograph by Chloe Bonaccorsi

Airmen from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight, 812th Civil Engineer Squadron, carry their wounded team leader to a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter assigned to C Company, 2916th Aviation Battalion, during a training scenario called "Team Leader Down" at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., Oct. 19, 2023.

An Airman from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight, 812th Civil Engineer Squadron, investigates a suspected weapon cache during a training exercise at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., Oct. 19, 2023.



Air Force photograph by Chloe Bonaccorsi

*On this date...*



**Dec. 2, 1942:** The first flight of the experimental Curtiss canard fighter design, the CW-24B, took place from the dry lakebed at Muroc. The company pilot was J. Harvey Gray. The CW-24B was a swept-wing pusher design with a small canard which was developed into three XP-55 Ascender prototypes. The design lacked stability and never went into production.

On this date, Dec. 2, 1974: A U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School team began a weeklong evaluation of the BD-5J for the Very Low Cost Air Combat Trainer project.



**Dec. 3, 2005:** XCOR Aerospace flew its EZ-Rocket (a rocket-powered Long-EZ aircraft the company built as a demonstrator for its reusable rocket engines) from Calif., to California City, Calif., both in Kern County. Test pilot Dick Rutan made the flight, which lasted about 9 minutes and carried U.S. mail from the post office in Mojave to addresses in California City. This was the first time that a manned, rocket-powered aircraft was used to carry U.S. Mail.



**Dec. 3, 2017:** Expedition crew members on board the International Space Station hosted the first pizza party in space. From left: NASA astronaut Mark Vande Hei; Russian cosmonauts Sergey Ryazanskiy and Alexander Misurkin; European Space Agency astronaut Paolo Nespoli and NASA astronauts Joe Acaba and Randy Bresnik show off their pizza creations.



**Dec. 7, 1972:** Apollo 17, the last manned mission to the moon in the Apollo series, launched with astronauts Eugene A. Cernan, commander, Ronald E. Evans, command module pilot, and Harrison H. Schmitt, lunar module pilot, on board. Apollo 17 was a "J-type mission" that included three days on the lunar surface, extended scientific capability, and the use of the third Lunar Roving Vehicle.



**Dec. 8, 1953:** The needle-nosed X-3 Stiletto jet-powered research airplane, was delivered to the U.S. Air Force after initial flight testing by the Douglas company. The Flight Test Center was to conduct a series of flights before turning it over to the NACA's High Speed Flight Research Station at Edwards for further flight research.

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# AV Wall on display in Rosamond elementary school

by Adrienne King  
Aerotech News

On Saturday, Nov. 11, a Veterans Day ceremony was held at Westpark Elementary in Rosamond, Calif., to honor veterans for their service.

Westpark Elementary also hosted the AV Wall from Nov. 7-12, 2023. The AV Wall is a half-scale size tribute monument of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. It is cared for by Point Man Antelope Valley, a veterans outreach organization that ministers to veterans of all wars.

The ceremony began with the presentation of colors by the Rosamond High Early College Campus Cadet Corp under the direction of Captain Charles Wallis.

Barbara Gaines, Superintendent of Southern Kern Unified School District acknowledged the students who played an instrumental role this week in service. On Nov. 8 and 9 students from Rosamond schools and neighboring districts were given the opportunity to visit the AV Wall on field trips.

To get as many students involved as possible, students were asked to participate in an essay contest. The middle school students were asked to answer "What does service to your country mean to you?" While the high school students were asked to answer "What does the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall mean to you?" Anna Zarley, representative from Assemblyman

Tom Lackey's office, presented certificates to the three winners, Lynnette McReynolds from Tropico Middle School and Betsy Rodriguez and Carrie Bean from Rosamond High Early College Campus.

Gerry Rice, U.S Army Vietnam veteran was the guest speaker.

In 1968 he was drafted and served as a Scout Dog Handler, 33rd IPSP, 11 Bravo until 1970. He considered himself to be a right, left, right soldier and learned all the things that he thought were going to keep him alive. So, with that rebellious nature, they saw some leadership skills in him. He repeatedly asked to be sent to Vietnam but they had different plans for him.

Instead they sent him to dog handler school. In the end, he said it was the best thing that happened to him, "because the dog could only be in the field for three weeks at a time. And wherever I went the dog went." Through a little manipulation he worked Vietnam on his schedule.

In August 1970, Rice came home but wasn't ready to re-engage with his family and community. He worked jobs that allowed him to be rough around the edges. In 1975, Rice and his family moved to the Antelope Valley.

In 2002, at the urging of his wife, Rice visited the AV Wall looking for some names, one of them being his cousin, who was killed in Vietnam in 1968. On Veterans Day, he checked in



Photograph by Adrienne King

Wooden benches, created by the CTE Construction trades classes from Rosamond High School, were placed in front of the wall for visitors viewing the wall.

with his cousin.

During the first visit to the AV Wall Rice met George Palermo, Mike Bertel, Larry Pratl and Steve Baker.

"When I found those people, I found people that accepted me, I found people that could embrace me and finish my sentences." When people started welcoming me home and acknowledge by service it made him feel like he was back in his infantry. These Vietnam

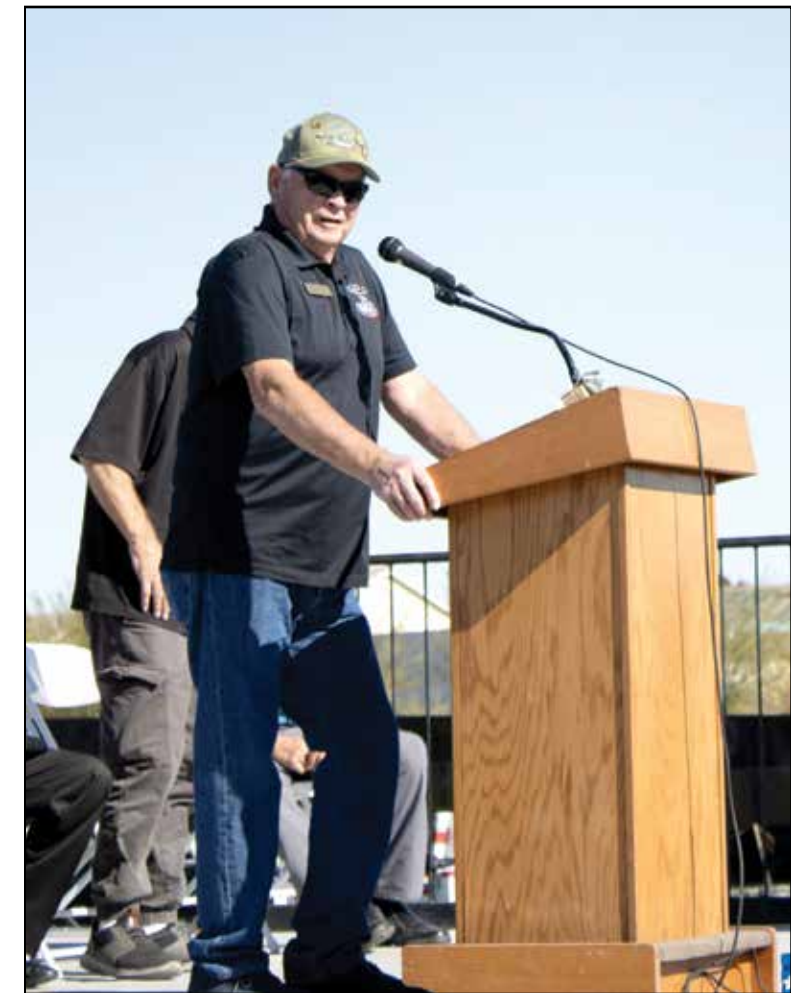
vets taught him that "he could live better with is stuff."

"We are living testimonies, living proof that we can live through anything. We could do anything we know what sacrifice, duty and loyalty is all about." The biggest takeaway he found from those he met was "Helping others is where you get help for yourself."

From 2009-2015, he was part of the original staff of the VA Antelope Val-

ley Vet Center. He was also instrumental in the founding of Vets 4 Veterans and now serves as the president. Rice works with the Vets 4 Veterans Training program to assist veterans make the transition from military to civilian life in the community.

Several benches, created by the CTE Construction trades classes from Rosamond High School, were placed for visitors to sit while viewing the wall.



Photograph by Adrienne King

Gerry Rice, U.S Army Vietnam veteran, was the guest speaker. In 1968 he was drafted to the Army and served as a Scout Dog Handler, 33rd IPSP, 11 Bravo until 1970. From 2009-2015 was part of the original staff of the VA Antelope Valley Vet Center. He was also instrumental in the founding of Vets 4 Veterans and now serves as the president. Rice works with the Vets 4 Veterans Training program to assist veterans make the transition from military to civilian life in the community.



Photograph by Adrienne King

The AV Wall Veterans Day ceremony began with the presentation of colors by the Rosamond High Early College Campus Cadet Corp under the direction of Captain Charles Wallis.



Photograph by Adrienne King





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# Lancaster Cemetery marks Veterans Day



Photograph by Adrienne King

Marine Corps League Detachment 930, under the leadership of Commander John Graves, presented the colors as more than 100 people gathered at Lancaster Cemetery for the Veterans Day ceremony.



Photograph by Adrienne King

U.S. Navy Veteran Mike DeBry, spoke about his experience during Vietnam at the Lancaster Cemetery Veterans Day ceremony. DeBry served in Squadron 13 of the Mobile Riverine Force as a boat electrician. DeBry said "At one point I spent about six months without touching land as we were up and down the rivers on the boats."



Photographs by Adrienne King

Members of the Antelope Valley Blue Star Mothers Chapter 14 placed memorial wreaths for each branch of the service at the Lancaster Cemetery Veterans Day ceremony.

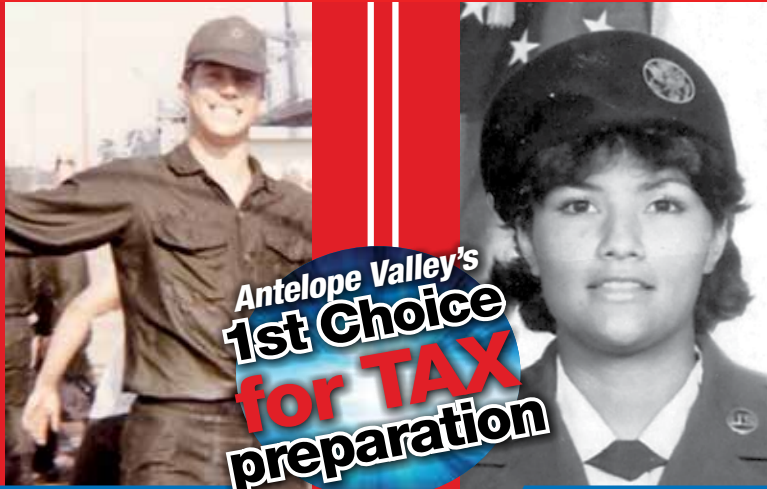


Photograph by Adrienne King

U.S. Air Force veteran Mayra Duarte, who served in the Iraq War and global war on terrorism from 2003 to 2023, spoke at the Lancaster Cemetery Veterans Day ceremony. Duarte is now involved with various veterans groups in the Antelope Valley.

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# One wrong number sparks a Christmas tradition!

by Bob Alvis  
special to Aerotech News

In today's world with so much information, we can lose track of the large and small traditions that meant so much to us as kids.

Looking at the media offerings, it's no wonder our kids today struggle to appreciate the spirituality of the holiday season, and why it seems many want to crush belief in that jolly old man we call Santa Claus.

When asked whether I believe in Santa Claus many roll their eyes when I say "Well of course I do, since I have seen his good works in my almost

Col. Harry Shoup feared the worst when his red phone rang on his desk. It was 1955, the height of the Cold War, and Shoup was in the operations center of the Continental Air Defense Command in Colorado. CONAD, as it was known then, stood as the early warning system for a Soviet attack. So, the ringing of the red telephone never meant anything good.

What happened next launched the now-named North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, into a decades-long tradition to track Santa and bring joy to children around the world. And it started with a simple act of kindness, a Cold War scare, and a youngster hoping to tap into a little Christmas magic.

The colonel picked up the phone and said, "Can I help you, sir? Hello? Can you read me alright? This is Colonel Shoup."

A little girl's voice came on the phone and said, "Are you really Santa Claus?"

A very gruff Colonel Shoup replied, "What? Is this a joke? Just what do you think you're doing calling us here and how did you get this number?"

"Well Santa I got this number from an ad in our Sears and Roebuck advertisement, and it said call any time after December 15."

The quick-witted officer realized that it was no joke, but a mistake. And a good-hearted child on the other end of one of the most important telephones in history thought she was calling Santa. So, to the surprise of his staff, Colonel Shoup, who was a father himself, did what any good dad would do when presented with the opportunity to bring a little Christmas joy.

"Of course, I'm Santa Claus. We have this phone set up just to talk to you. Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho! Have you been very good this year?"

"Yes. I want to tell you what I want for Christmas. And can you bring something for my mommy too?"

"Well, I'd love to hear what you'd like for Christmas. And of course, I will try to bring something nice for your mom. Would it be all right if I talk to her now?"

Shoup heard the kid pass the phone to her mother. She explained that her child dialed a number listed in a Sears Roebuck ad in a Colorado Springs newspaper, so the legend goes. It featured a picture of old Saint Nick and an invitation to call him on

his private phone at any time. But the phone number was apparently one digit off, and suddenly, Colonel Shoup, a stern, no-nonsense Air Force officer, found himself playing the jolly fellow.

The Santa Colonel, as he became known as over the decades, ordered his staff to answer the phone for any child wanting to know the location of Santa as he delivered toys around the world. And through that act of kindness, a Cold War scare, and a youngster hoping to tap into a little Christmas magic, a decades-long tradition was born.

Reading this recollection of how that phone call played out over the years can get me pretty emotional because as a baby boomer of the early 1950s I know how important it was for our parents to keep the spirit of Christmas alive for their children and pass off those same magical moments in kids' dreams for future generations.

Growing up in a world under the threat of nuclear annihilation, we held on to these beliefs and, for many of us, we believed that maybe Santa had a peaceful resolution in his bag all along and we only had to believe.

Does Santa really exist? All I can say is that for my entire life he shows up in December and has never let me down. Some will say Santa is not a physical being and it's hard to not see his presence in our lives this time of the year as we travel around and watch the many entertainment outlets.



Courtesy image

The original Sears Roebuck ad that started the NORAD Tracks Santa phenomenon.

these phone calls.

The one takeaway to volunteering is the excitement. Everybody has this desire to give back, to play a part in this tradition that's gone on for decades. There is eagerness to deliver some Christmas magic and cheer to folks. The volunteers described the reasons why people volunteer their time to go work in the call center.



Air Force photograph by Master Sgt. Charles Marsh

But really, the Santa Claus I know is that joy old spirit who pulls at our hearts and wants us to bring good into the world and keep our children's Christmas spirits alive and well.

Many times, we who served in the military far from home understand how the appearance of a gray-haired old man in a makeshift red costume made us smile and think of our family around the Christmas tree and even shedding a couple tears of joy. Does Santa Claus exist?

I guess that question comes down to how you look at the world — this old airman hopes that whatever you do or don't believe in that you still find the peace and happiness you search for. And for those like me who do believe in that spirit, may you always find the peace that comes with good friends, family and neighbors during the times of Christmas.

Oh, and by the way, let's give a shout out to all those volunteers who man those phones on Christmas Eve.

You may wonder about service members and volunteers behind the tradition. You know, who are these people and where do they come from?

It is service members from NORAD, who are very familiar with the tradition and volunteered their time on Christmas Eve. But also, it's made up of volunteers around Colorado Springs, who you know, work in the military, who are veterans, as well as some civic leaders and just people who are connected to the military community in some way ... spouses, kids ... who volunteer to answer

People are waiting for months to sign up. And they're just so excited to be a part of the NORAD Tracks Santa program. So, it's a lot of fun. Volunteerism has a little bit of selfishness to it, if you will, because it makes you feel good doing something for other people. And I think the NORAD Tracks Santa for us — and for a lot of members — it's the same thing, it makes us feel so good that we're able to give back to our communities in this way. And so, it's something we gladly do. And we're happy to parallel with existing missions.

By the way, don't forget to have your kids become part of the magic this year by going online or calling. It takes a village of 1,500 volunteers to field emails and the 140,000 or so telephone calls to 1-877-HI-NORAD (1-877-446-6723). They staff phone banks equipped with monitors inside a building at Peterson Space Force Base, Colo., which offers a view of snow-capped Pikes Peak to the west.

Merry Christmas from this old believer Bob, and may we never let the spirit of old Saint Nick fade from our children's lives as we see the smiles and happiness in the faces of our children who also believe!

Until next time, Bob out ó Happy New Year!

Editor's note: The official NORAD Tracks Santa website goes live on Dec. 1, with live satellite tracking on Dec 24 and can be reached at [www.noradsanta.org](http://www.noradsanta.org).



Air Force photograph

Col. Harry Shoup

70 years of life here on earth."

Being an Air Force veteran, I have the added joy of knowing that my beloved branch of the service has been carrying on the legacy of Santa Claus since a misdialled phone call in 1955 to NORAD Central Command started a program that grew into a most cherished tradition that still carries on today.



DOD photograph by Chuck Marsh

Nearly 1,000 volunteers cycled through the NORAD Tracks Santa Operations Center on Peterson Space Force Base, Colo., between 4 a.m. and 10 p.m. Dec. 24, 2022. Volunteers providing updated information on Santa's location and gifts delivered worked in two-hour shifts answering phone calls from children and adults located around the globe.

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The items to be sold are generally described as follows: Furniture, clothing, tools and or other household items stored by the following persons.

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- 0430 Scheller, Stacey
- 0478 Miller, Cary
- 0460 Smith, Darrell
- 0341 Lasha, Pablo
- 0308 Calzada, Patricia
- 0009 Dinwiddie, Amanda
- 0318 Greenberg, Tracy
- 0556 Garcia, Anna

Date: November 27th, 2023 Signed NOVA STORAGE This notice is given in accordance with the provisions of section 21700 et seq. of Business & Professional Code of the State of California. The owner reserves the right to bid at the sale. All purchased goods are sold "As Is" and must be paid for and removed at the time of sale. Sales subject to prior cancellation in the event of settlement between owner & obligated party. Auctioneer: Nova Storage

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- E374 Casey, Amy
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- E445 Trammell, Joseph
- A007 Cox, Michaela
- E344 Vasquez, Jacklyn
- D132 Fields, Shalon
- A009 Stanley, Letrice

Date: November 27th, 2023 Signed NOVA STORAGE This notice is given in accordance with the provisions of section 21700 et seq. of Business & Professional Code of the State of California. The owner reserves the right to bid at the sale. All purchased goods are sold "As Is" and must be paid for and removed at the time of sale. Sales subject to prior cancellation in the event of settlement between owner & obligated party. Auctioneer: Nova Storage

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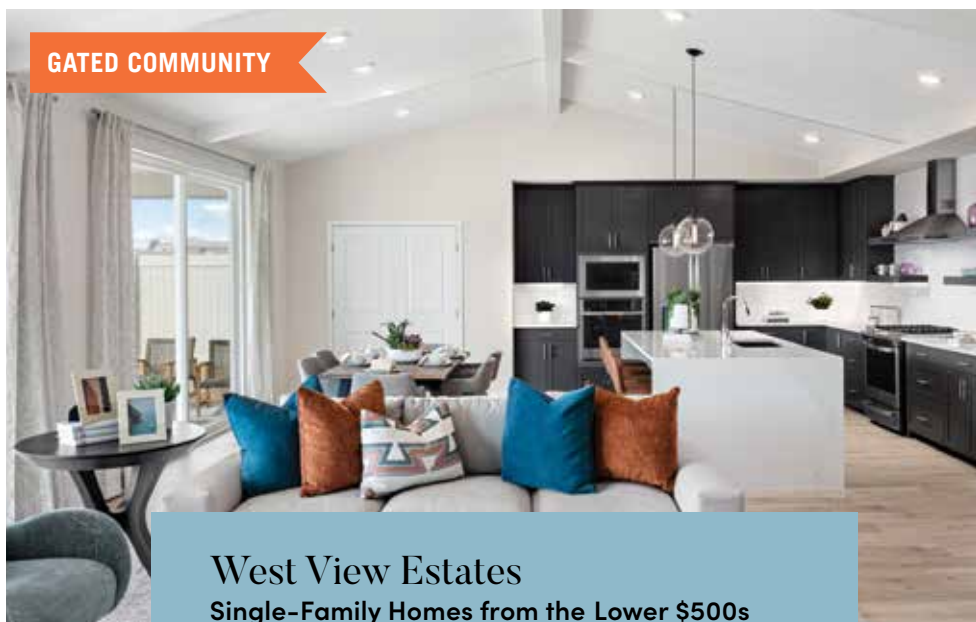


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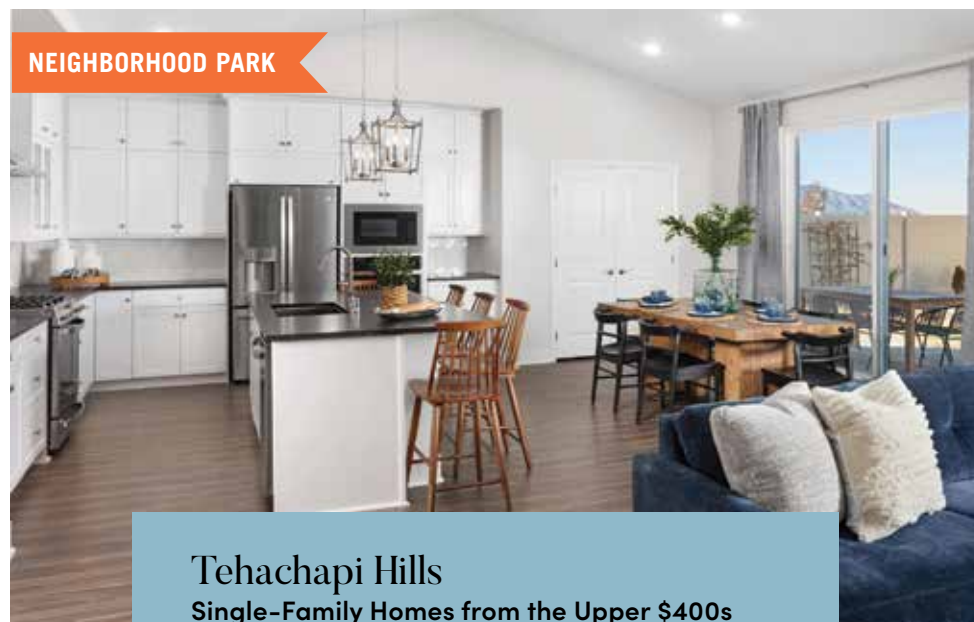
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