

Air Force ordered to stand-down tomorrow: NORAD, NORTHCOM on alert for U.N. meetings

By [Jerome R. Corsi](#)

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Contrary to rumors surrounding the Air Combat Command's stand-down of all 100,000 active-duty airmen ordered for tomorrow, the U.S. will not be devoid of fighter aircraft to protect the nation.

Michael Kucharek, spokesman for NORAD and USNORTHCOM, told WND the stand-down does not include the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves assigned to NORAD.

About 70 percent of the aircraft involved in NORAD alerts are Air National Guard or Air Force Reserves aircraft, according to Kucharek.

Meanwhile, NORAD and USNORTHCOM will be on alert status Monday when the U.N. convenes a high level meeting on climate change and also Tuesday when the General Assembly begins its 62nd Session in New York City.

The stand-down Friday was ordered by Gen. Ronald Keys to conduct a command-wide review of operations, safety procedures and checklists after the Aug. 30 incident at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota, [according to the Air Force Times](#).

At Minot, six cruise missiles with nuclear warheads were loaded onto a B-52H and flown to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana - without the bomber crew or ground command realizing nuclear weapons were on the aircraft.

Military sources insisted to WND the incident was a procedural glitch and there is no suspicion within the military of any other purpose.

At the U.N. Monday, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon will chair the meetings, and numerous heads of state are likely to attend.

According to Kucharek, Canadian and U.S. NORAD aircraft will be armed and on alert status, prepared to scramble from unspecified NORAD airbases.

Kucharek told WND the aircraft involved in the alert will be F-15s and F-16s assigned to the NORAD Air Defense Deterrence Mission.

Under Operation NOBLE EAGLE, which NORAD has conducted since 9/11, fighters on alert have scrambled from alert sites and diverted from irregular air patrols more than 2,400 times, Kucharek told WND.

More than 44,000 sorties have been flown in support of the missions, including support from

tanker and AWACS aircraft.

“NORAD and USNORTHCOM missions,” Kucharek said, “are conducted in close collaboration with homeland defense, security and law enforcement partners to prevent air attacks against North America and to safeguard the sovereign airspaces of the United States and Canada by responding to unknown, unwanted and unauthorized air activity approaching and operating within these airspaces, and to provide aerospace and maritime warning for North America.”

As [WND reported](#), NORAD is a bi-lateral U.S.-Canada command and USNORTHCOM is a U.S. continental military command that works with its counterpart Canada Command.

Kucharek also confirmed NORAD and USNORTHCOM were [scheduled Oct. 15-20 to conduct exercise Vigilant Shield '08](#), a series of field exercises [testing response abilities against a variety of potential threats](#), including the simulated detonation of three radiological dispersal devices within the USNORTHCOM and U.S. Pacific Command areas of responsibility.

The primary locations for the Vigilant Shield '08 field exercises will be Oregon, Arizona and the territory of Guam.

[WND reported Bush administration plans to utilize USNORTHCOM as a U.S. military command](#) to direct the operations of troops deployed in a wide range of continental North American emergencies, including health epidemics, natural disasters, terrorist events and even domestic violence or civil disorder.

[Jerome R. Corsi](#) is a staff reporter for WND. He received a Ph.D. from Harvard University in political science in 1972 and has written many books and articles, including his latest best-seller, [“The Late Great USA.”](#) Corsi co-authored with John O’Neill the No. 1 New York Times best-seller, [“Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry.”](#) Other books include [“Showdown with Nuclear Iran,”](#) [“Black Gold Stranglehold: The Myth of Scarcity and the Politics of Oil,”](#) which he co-authored with [WND columnist Craig. R. Smith](#), and [“Atomic Iran.”](#)

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