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HUFF POST

WEIRD NEWS

## 'Santa Claus' At United Nations: Prankster Joey Skaggs Demands Nuclear Disarmament

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NEW YORK -- Doesn't it seem like the holiday protest season starts earlier and earlier every year?

A protesting Santa on an adult-sized tricycle pedaled up First Avenue Tuesday, dragging an 8-foot missile to the United Nations. His message to world leaders: "Peace on Earth -- Or Else."

Nobody ran for cover. The comically fake bomb was a dud. And this St. Nick was the legendary media prankster [Joey Skaggs](#), accompanied by six performance artists serving as elves.

Given that New York suffered [the worst hurricane](#) in its history just two weeks ago, perhaps it's little surprise that this Santa and his giant toy explosive were overlooked.

Skaggs didn't care. He just wanted to kick off the holiday season with a not-so-gentle reminder about "the absurdity of nuclear Holocaust and the direction we're going with North Korea, Iran and Israel.

"Everyone wants a missile," Skaggs told The Huffington Post.

"If you don't do it now, when do you do it?," he said, "after the Holocaust?"

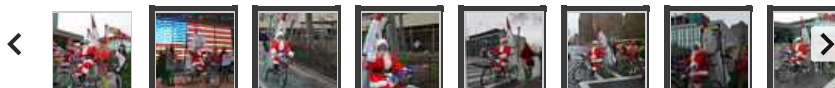
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[Santas Message To United Nations](#)

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Michael McLaughlin/The Huffington Post



Calling the event "Santa's Missile Tow," Skaggs and his toy-making helpers sang a rendition of Jingle Bells with lyrics like:

Jingle bells, we're going to Hell  
Burning all the way  
Oh what fun,  
it is to die,  
In a fiery nuclear way  
Hey!

Compared to Skaggs' body of work as a prankster bent on exposing the media as gullible, this protest was rather sincere. He's placed ads in the Village Voice for a bogus dog brothel, attracted New York Times coverage for a non-existent movement to rename the Gypsy moth on the grounds it offended the Romany or Gypsy people. He also appeared on Good Morning America as a Marine promoting the Fat Squad -- a phony business that claimed to rent out muscle-bound guards to stop overeaters from raiding their refrigerators.

A smattering of UN employees, tourists and adults pushing strollers stopped to take photos of Santa and the chipper elves outside the United Nations' gates. But when a security guard told Skaggs his tricycle was blocking the rainswept driveway, the veteran agitator quickly pedaled to make way for traffic. On the phone before the demonstration, he told HuffPost he didn't want to get arrested.

"The message is great. Nuclear annihilation is on the back burner. Unfortunately, there aren't enough people here to get it" said Deborah Thomas, the publisher of Extra!, a magazine put out by [Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting](#). She said she's known Skaggs for years through the downtown art scene. "I think people are distracted by other things," like the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

Skaggs' reputation as a performance artist able to outflank the mainstream media enabled him to fill the ranks of his elves.

"It's an honor, even in the rain," said Sarah Farrel, 28, who met Skaggs through Rev. Jen, another longtime performance artist in New York. She was moved by the message too. "It's an important opportunity to highlight the hypocrisy of demanding disarmament of other nations, but not our own."

After about 20 minutes outside the United Nations, the anti-nuclear protestors began a slow procession west on 42nd Street towards Time Square.

Some elves handed out miniature green toy soliders to passersby. Skaggs pedaled his three-wheeler along the sidewalk and the group occasionally burst into the altered version of Jingle Bells. They stopped to dance with a man collecting donations for the Salvation Army while shimmying exuberantly to Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas Is You" playing from his radio.

It didn't quite hark back to the anti-nuclear movement in 1982 when one million demonstrators amassed for a protest in New York City, but Skaggs was pleased with the "Missile Tow."

"It's a different era," Skaggs said about the turnout. "But the reaction is great. You can see it, people are taking pictures."