New Boeing 737 Carries Medical Team and Supplies to Assist Earthquake Relief Effort in Turkey

A team of volunteer medical personnel and 8,000 pounds of disaster relief supplies left Seattle last night for Istanbul aboard a new Turkish Airlines 737-800. The airplane was scheduled to arrive at 10:30 p.m. local Istanbul time today.

The relief flight was organized by the Boeing International Relief Delivery Flights program, which will coordinate 30 to 40 humanitarian missions this year. Before the earthquake, Turkish Airlines was planning to use the new airplane's first flight for a different philanthropic mission-transporting textbooks from the United States to a new university in Istanbul. To assist with disaster relief efforts, the airline agreed to substitute desperately needed relief cargo.

Shortly after the earthquake, Boeing contacted Portland, Ore.,-based Northwest Medical Teams International, which sent a five-person team of volunteer doctors, paramedics and nurses to meet the new airplane at the Boeing Delivery Center in Seattle. The team brought enough medical supplies to treat 10,000 people.

The flight also carried relief supplies collected by Boeing engineer John Gokcen, who is also vice president of the Washington state branch of the Turkish-American Cultural Association. In 24 hours, Gokcen and other Seattle-area residents collected 8,000 pounds of food, clothing, sleeping bags, blankets, hygiene items and other supplies for the flight.

Boeing International Relief Delivery Flights use the empty space on new airplanes being delivered to customers to carry food, medical supplies, clothing and educational materials to people in need around the world. Boeing coordinates with airline customers and relief agencies to arrange for the shipment. Roughly 2 million pounds of relief supplies have been shipped since the program began in 1992

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