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International Relief Delivery Flights Carry Supplies to Those in Need

When an airline customer takes delivery of a new airplane from Boeing Commercial Airplanes in Seattle, generally all or a portion of the airplane's cargo space is available on the flight home. This means, for example, a Boeing 747 Freighter flying with an empty cargo hold has approximately 20,000 cubic feet (566 cubic meters) of space going unused.

Relief supplies destined for victims of the earthquake in southeast Turkey are loaded onto a Turkish Airlines Boeing 737 in 1999.

Fortunately, there is a program at Boeing that takes advantage of this available cargo space to help ship much-needed supplies to charitable organizations worldwide.

The process begins when Boeing receives a request from a qualified relief agency looking for help transporting cargo to a specific country. Boeing then checks the airplane delivery schedule and contacts an airline that will be flying an airplane to the area.

"After the airline agrees to help, the relief agency packs the supplies for shipment and brings them to the Boeing Delivery Center for transport to the airline's home base, where the relief agency receives the cargo," said Carol Cella, former manager of the program at Boeing. "Basically, Boeing serves as the liaison between relief agencies, airline customers and people in need around the world."

The program began in 1992 when TACA Airlines carried antibiotics and other medicines to El Salvador. Since then, Boeing has coordinated 128 relief flights to areas around the world, totaling 2 million pounds of medicine, food, clothing, educational materials and other items. The supplies have reached more than 30 countries on five continents.

"Because of the high cost of transportation, a lot of this aid might not have made it to its final destination," Cella said. "Our airline customers provide a valuable service to humanitarian agencies all over the globe."

The largest relief flight Boeing organized was in May 1999, when a 747-200 transported 100,000 pounds of desperately needed supplies for Kosovar refugees in Albania.

The flight originated at Boeing's plant in Wichita, Kan., where five nonprofit organizations had gathered supplies for the effort. Although Boeing Wichita employees were themselves coping with the aftermath of deadly tornadoes, they pitched in and loaded the supplies onto the freighter for the flight to London. From there, the items went via truck to Amsterdam and then Albania.

This shipment was significant not only for its size, but also because of the 30,000 care kits included for the emotionally traumatized Kosovar children. Camp Fire Boys and Girls of the Pacific Northwest coordinated the collection of these kits from people across the United States. Each kit contained a beanbag animal, coloring book and crayons, some hard candy and a hand-written letter from an American child, all carefully printed out in the Albanian language. The letters contained messages of goodwill such as, "Our thoughts are with you from afar" and "We're thinking about you."

Other noteworthy relief flights include:

- 1998: Six Air China 747 flights carrying \$5 million worth of pharmaceuticals to flood victims in China;
- 1999: Two Turkish Airlines 737 shipments of relief supplies for victims of the devastating earthquake in southeast Turkey;
- 1999: Four Aeroflot 767s filled with basic necessities and 10,000 pounds of dehydrated potatoes for orphanages in Russia; and
- 2000: A Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique (LAM) 767-200ER (extended range) delivery that carried 9.9 tons of supplies from Johannesburg to Maputo for flood victims.

Lifesaving medicine and medical supplies for clinics and field hospitals make up the majority of items shipped on Boeing delivery flights over the past decade. Other items include food, hygiene items, clothing, toys and educational materials like computers, books and basic school supplies.

"At Boeing, working together with our airline customers is our way of life," said Alan Mulally, president and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "The Boeing International Relief Delivery Flights program is one of the most satisfying ways we work together because it allows us to reach out to our global neighbors in need."

Because the flights originate in the United States, organizations participating in the relief flight program must have a U.S. Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 nonprofit designation with a tax identification number. Proof of a

credible, established distribution network is also required.

A complete set of guidelines for relief agencies and further information about the Boeing International Relief Flights are available [here](#).

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