

## **CNN Anderson Cooper 360 Transcript Aired on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

ROBERTS: On the other side of the globe tonight, six months after a massive earthquake hits Pakistan, there is still a huge need for help.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PHIL SUAREZ, NYC MEDICS: The people, when you walked in there, were still hugging us. They were still, like, so grateful, so, so grateful that we had come, and we were Americans was even a bigger shocker to them.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

ROBERTS: Coming up, see how some New York City paramedics have saved lives in the hard-hit region, answering the desperate call for help.

COLLINS: Also, the latest on the Homeland Security official accused of looking for sex with a minor on the Internet. Police say he confessed, but does he fit the profile of a sexual predator? What exactly is the profile? All that ahead on 360.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ROBERTS: A team of New York City emergency medical technicians have used their street smarts far away from home and in a much different environment. They have traveled halfway around the world to isolated towns in rugged terrain in earthquake-ravaged Pakistan.

In next week's issue of "People" magazine, you can read their amazing story. Tonight, in partnership with the magazine, here is a look at their critical mission to save lives.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

ROBERTS (voice-over): The world watched the heartbreaking pictures of the aftermath of the earthquake, the overwhelming death and destruction. A group of New York City emergency medical workers were watching, too, and they knew they had to act.

NICK LOBEL-WEISS, NYC MEDICS: When you arrive at a place and you see that there's a need for medical care, for people that need help, and our group, our team of people had the tools and the talent to provide that and to fulfill that need.

ROBERTS: The quake devastated towns in the shadows of the Himalaya Mountains. The numbers were staggering: 73,000 dead, 69,000 injured, 3.5

million homeless. When this band of paramedics arrived, they were stunned to find that many of the injured had never even been seen by a doctor.

PHIL SUAREZ, NYC MEDICS: It was incredible. This was about two weeks after the earthquake, and there were wounds that were never, ever had been tended to, except for local remedies of herbs, and mud, and stuff like that.

ROBERTS: Their mission of mercy was complicated by obstacles: a language barrier kept patients from accurately communicating their pain; the perilous terrain made moving between camps nearly impossible; shelter was almost nonexistent, so were medical supplies; and a punishing winter that would cover the mountains in snow was approaching fast.

But still, the injured and wounded kept coming to their makeshift E.R.

SUAREZ: Old men would be carrying these sick people over this rubble that I could barely walk on with a backpack. And the more we walked, the more we saw these dozens of people walking, trying to make it to us.

ROBERTS: For two weeks, the paramedics worked in the harshest conditions, for their very grateful patients doing what they could with what little they had available.

SUAREZ: When we walked in, they were still hugging us. They were still, like, so grateful, so, so grateful that we had come.

ROBERTS: When they returned home from Pakistan to their lives, their jobs, their families, they knew their work in the mountains was not yet done. In March, they made their way back.

But this time, they were armed with donations, supplies, even prefabricated shelters for some of those still displaced by the quake, but unwilling to come down from the mountain.

Six months had passed, and little had changed for people in some of the poor Pakistani villages crushed by the quake. But much has changed for these paramedics who responded to an emergency call a half a world away from home.

LOBEL-WEISS: It was shocking and amazing to everybody. It made an incredible impact, not just on the people that we treated, but on the entire valley.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

ROBERTS: So many people desperate for medical help and the generosity of strangers making a huge impact.

Earlier, I talked more about the paramedics' special mission with Susan Schindehette, who traveled with them and wrote the article for "People" magazine.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

ROBERTS: Susan, you spent 10 days in the Himalaya, in the area of what's known as Azad-Kashmir, with these paramedics, as they were helping out folks in the area, even six months after the earthquake. What was it that compelled them to want to go back?

SUSAN SCHINDEHETTE, "PEOPLE" MAGAZINE: I think that, when they saw the devastation that they did on the first trip, it was something otherworldly for them in a way. On the one hand, you know, these guys work the streets of New York City. They see things that people pay them so that they don't have to see. They're really used to some pretty horrific scenes.

And Phil Suarez told me, when he saw the televised images coming out of Pakistan, he thought to himself, "People are dying of trauma and infection, and these are things that paramedics know how to take care of. This is what we do."

ROBERTS: By and large, in that area of the world, they're very gentle people, they're very honest people, and they certainly needed a lot of help. Did these paramedics know that, between the time that they left, shortly after the earthquake, and the time that they came back in March that these people were likely not to see a doctor that entire time?

You know, you recount the story of this one paramedic who's cleaning off this one child's wounds, and what he's cleaning is actually a bone that's protruding through the skin.

SCHINDEHETTE: That's right. There's some pretty horrible things like that. And I think they were very well-aware of this, and that's why they wanted to go back.

When you see a country like that, that has so little to begin with, and then it's so incredibly damaged by a natural disaster like this, you really understand what it means when an infrastructure is gone, when hospitals and schools are just gone.

We took a little walk outside of the camp not far from the town of Garey Havevulah (ph), and I stood on the earth where a school had collapsed and killed 300 little girls. ROBERTS: Unbelievable. These are the stories that tend to change a journalist's life; did it change your life?

SCHINDEHETTE: Yes, I think it did. I don't think it made me a different person. I think it made me more of the same person that I already was.

It's kind of reinforced my notion that, for all of the awful things that we see as journalists and people who cover news, that there's a tremendous amount of good in this world. And it really was remarkable to connect with these people, when you had no language in common, no history in common, no ethnicity in common, just me, and a mother, and a sick baby. And it was pretty remarkable.

ROBERTS: Well, it's a great story you wrote following these paramedics back up to the Himalaya in Pakistan. Thanks for doing it.

SCHINDEHETTE: Thank you.