

ANDERSON COOPER 360 DEGREES

Cambodia's Illegal Sex Trade; Al Gore's Global Warning

Aired March 21, 2007 - 22:00 ET

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ROBERTS: Up next, close encounters of the governor's kind. What did he see over the skies of Arizona, when 360 continues?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ROBERTS: Earlier this month, a man in Tennessee reported seeing a dime-shaped object whirling through the sky at incredible speed. He's not sure that it was a UFO, but for three out of 10 Americans, the answer may be obvious.

There are many true believers out there, and one of them held the highest office in Arizona. CNN's Gary Tuchman reports.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

GARY TUCHMAN, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Fife Symington is now a businessman. He was the Republican governor of Arizona for six years, elected when the first George Bush was president.

Now, a decade after leaving the statehouse, he takes me to a Phoenix park and discloses something unlike anything uttered by any other high level U.S. politician.

SYMINGTON: If you -- if you had been here 10 years ago, standing out there looking up there at the lights and the view, you would have been astounded. You would have been amazed.

TUCHMAN: Governor Symington is referring to what is now known as the Phoenix lights, an object videotaped by many and seen by thousands over several nights in the Arizona sky in 1997.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Major sighting here.

TUCHMAN: It was described by witnesses as larger than a football field and silent.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It was giant V. All right? And the right side of the V went over us. The left side was like a couple blocks over it.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You just didn't know what to do. You know? It was just like,

my God, how big is this thing?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: ... the great state of Arizona, Fife Symington.

TUCHMAN: The former governor, a Vietnam Air Force veteran, had never publicly acknowledged seeing it until now.

SYMINGTON: And I suspect that, unless the Defense Department proves us otherwise it was probably one form of an alien spacecraft.

TUCHMAN: So why didn't he say anything then? Partly because he didn't want people to panic.

SYMINGTON: I think as a public figure you have to be very careful about what you say because people can have pretty emotional reactions. And I said my goal wasn't to try to stir the pot.

TUCHMAN: And he went to humorous and controversial lengths not to stir the pot. He held a news conference after the Phoenix lights to announce the mystery had been solved.

SYMINGTON: And now, I'll ask Officer Stein and his colleagues to escort the accused into the room so that we may all look upon the guilty party.

Don't get him too close to me, please.

TUCHMAN: In the alien costume, the governor's chief of staff.

SYMINGTON: This goes to show that you guys are entirely too serious.

TUCHMAN: UFO enthusiasts were not amused, especially since the governor was believed to have seen nothing. But now he's coming out.

SYMINGTON: The lights were really brilliant. And it was just fascinating. I mean, it was enormous. It just felt otherworldly. You know, in your gut, you could just tell it was otherworldly.

TUCHMAN: Symington will be talking about this in an updated film about UFOs called "Out of the Blue". He is also talking with an organization that wants UFO information more out in the open.

LESLIE KEAN, COALITION FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION: It's very significant that someone of the stature of a governor would come out and say that they experienced a UFO, because it brings a lot of credibility and strength to the case.

TUCHMAN: Governor Symington says he did tell his family, friends and staff about what

he saw early on.

SYMINGTON: I still, behind the scenes, tried to investigate it, but I got nowhere.

TUCHMAN (on camera): So what were the Phoenix lights? Frankly, we don't know. What we do know is that it's as much of a mystery today as it was a decade ago.

Gary Tuchman, CNN, Phoenix.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

ROBERTS: From UFOs to a story that's truly out of this world, the astronaut accused of trying to abduct her romantic rival. Well, it seems that she's got a new job. That's coming up.

Also tonight, our "Shot of the Day". Man on fire, the life and death struggle to save him. We've got the tape. We'll show it to you.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)