

Beat: Travel

Magnitude-6.8 earthquake strikes Papua New Guinea

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USPA News - A strong earthquake struck the Solomon Sea off a large island in Papua New Guinea on Wednesday evening, seismologists and witnesses said, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. No tsunami warnings were issued.

The 6.8-magnitude earthquake at 8:31 p.m. local time (1031 GMT) was centered about 64 kilometers (40 miles) west-southwest of Panguna, a town on Bougainville Island that is located northeast of mainland Papua New Guinea and is geographically part of the Solomon Islands archipelago. It struck about 54.1 kilometers (33.6 miles) deep, making it a shallow earthquake. Approximately 3.000 people living near the epicenter may have experienced `very strong` shaking that could result in `moderate` to `heavy` damage, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS) which used computer models to determine the possible impact. It said some 160.000 people may have experienced `moderate` to `strong` shaking. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties from the region. Earthquakes in the mountainous nation of New Papua Guinea do rarely cause damage or casualties as most structures in the region are light and flexible. This allows them to bend, rather than snap, when a major earthquake happens. No tsunami alerts were in effect following Wednesday`s earthquake, although the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center cautioned about a very small chance of local tsunamis. "No destructive widespread tsunami threat exists based on historical earthquake and tsunami data", the center said in a bulletin. Papua New Guinea, close to Indonesia, is on the so-called `Pacific Ring of Fire,` an arc of fault lines circling the Pacific Basin that is prone to frequent and large earthquakes. Volcanic eruptions also occur frequently along the fault lines. In July 1998, a powerful 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck just off the north coast of the country`s island of New Guinea, causing a landslide which resulted in a local tsunami. The disaster left at least 2,183 people killed and thousands injured.

Article online:

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UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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