Beat: Miscellaneous

6.8-magnitude earthquake strikes near Vanuatu, no damage

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USPA News - A strong but fairly deep earthquake struck the Pacific Ocean near the island nation of Vanuatu on Saturday morning, 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 9:28 a.m. local time was centered about 63 kilometers (39 miles) south-southwest of Sola, the capital of Torba province on the island of Vanua Lava. in Vanuatu. It struck about 207.9 kilometers (129.2 miles) deep, making it a fairly deep earthquake, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties following the earthquake, but the USGS estimated some 1,000 people on nearby islands may have perceived moderate shaking. The agency said as many as 145,000 others may have felt light shaking, according to computer models which showed serious damage or casualties are unlikely. Neither the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) nor the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department issued a tsunami warning following Saturday`s earthquake. "A destructive tsunami was not generated based on earthquake and historical tsunami data," PTWC said in a bulletin. Vanuatu 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. On average, the island nation and the surrounding waters are struck by about three powerful earthquakes every year. Volcanic eruptions also occur frequently in the region. In August 2011, two powerful earthquakes measuring 7.1 and 7.4 on the Richter scale struck about 63 kilometers (39 miles) south-southwest of Port-Vila. Tsunami waves of up to 1.05 meter (3.4 feet) were observed on the island of Efate, but there were no reports of damage.

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