

Beat: Local

Magnitude-7.3 Southern Ocean quake is region;s strongest in decades

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USPA News - A powerful earthquake struck the Southern Ocean near the South Sandwich Islands on Monday afternoon, making it the region's largest earthquake in decades but causing no damage or casualties, seismologists said. No tsunami alerts were issued.

The 7.3-magnitude earthquake at 12:03 p.m. local time (1403 GMT) was centered about 218 kilometers (135 miles) south-southeast of Bristol Island, a small island that is part of the British overseas territory South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. It struck about 31 kilometers (19.3 miles) deep, making it a shallow earthquake, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The earthquake occurred east of a complex plate triple junction between the South America, Antarctica, and Sandwich plates, seismologists said. It was the largest earthquake near the South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands since September 1961, when the region was struck by three powerful earthquakes that measured 7.5, 7.7 and 7.7 on the Richter scale. There were no reports of damage or casualties from the mostly uninhabited islands, and no tsunami alerts were issued. "A destructive widespread tsunami threat does not exist based on historical earthquake and tsunami data," the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said in a bulletin. The warning center initially cautioned about the small possibility of a local or regional tsunami that could affect coasts located no more than a few hundred kilometers (miles) from the earthquake epicenter, but no unusual sea level activity was recorded. It is believed Monday's earthquake was not felt on any land.

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