Beat: Travel

Magnitude-6.5 quake hits off New Zealand`s Kermadec Islands, no damage

-, 30.09.2013, 13:57 Time

USPA News - A strong earthquake struck off the uninhabited Kermadec Islands in the South Pacific Ocean on late Monday afternoon, seismologists said, but no tsunami warnings were issued. Damage or casualties in the New Zealand-governed region were not expected.

The 6.5-magnitude earthquake at 5:55 p.m. local time (0555 GMT) was centered about 71 kilometers (44 miles) south of Macauley Island, which is a volcanic island located halfway between New Zealand`s North Island and Tonga. It struck about 42.1 kilometers (26.2 miles) deep, making it a shallow earthquake, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Geoscience Australia said the earthquake was likely felt on nearby Raoul Island, which is home to a government-run station, but there were no reports of damage or casualties. There are no permanent residents elsewhere on the island or on any other islands close to the earthquake`s epicenter. Both the New Zealand government and the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Center determined there was no tsunami threat to their coastlines. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center also said there was no threat of a destructive widespread tsunami, although it initially cautioned about a very small risk of local tsunamis. New Zealand`s Kermadec Islands and the surrounding region are part of 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 in the region. In October 2011, a powerful 7.4-magnitude earthquake struck about 169 kilometers (105 miles) east of Raoul Island, generating a small tsunami but causing no damage. The largest tsunami wave, approximately 0.17 meter (0.6 feet) above normal sea levels, was recorded at Fishing Rock on Raoul Island. Three months earlier, in July 2011, a 7.6-magnitude earthquake struck about 163 kilometers (101 miles) east of Raoul Island. The powerful earthquake generated a 1-meter (3.2 feet) tsunami which hit the island, but no damage or casualties were reported.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1474/magnitude-65-quake-hits-off-new-zealands-kermadec-islands-no-damage.html

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619