

Huge undersea mountain found off Indonesia: scientists

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This aerial view shows new homes being constructed to the north of Banda Aceh on the island of Sumatra in 2006. A massive underwater mountain discovered off the Indonesian island of Sumatra could be a volcano with potentially catastrophic power, a scientist said Friday.

A massive underwater mountain discovered off the Indonesian island of Sumatra could be a volcano with potentially catastrophic power, a scientist said Friday.

Indonesian government marine geologist Yusuf Surachman said the [mountain](#) was discovered earlier this month about 330 kilometres (205 miles) west of Bengkulu city during research to map the seabed's seismic faultlines.

The cone-shaped mountain is 4,600 metres (15,100 feet) high, 50

kilometres in diameter at its base and its summit is 1,300 metres below the surface, he said.

"It looks like a volcano because of its conical shape but it might not be. We have to conduct further investigations," he told AFP.

He denied reports that researchers had confirmed the discovery of a new [volcano](#), insisting that at this stage it could only be described as a "seamount" of the sort commonly found around the world.

"Whether it's active or dangerous, who knows?" he added.

The ultra-deep geological survey was conducted with the help of French scientists and international geophysical company CGGVeritas.

The scientists hope to gain a clearer picture of the undersea lithospheric plate boundaries and seafloor displacement in the area, the epicentre of the catastrophic Asian [quake](#) and tsunami of 2004.

The tsunami killed more than 220,000 people across Asia, including 168,000 people in Aceh province on the northern tip of Sumatra.

[Indonesia](#) is on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and [seismic activity](#).

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