# Arctic exploration finds large underwater mountain

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(AP) -- Joint U.S.-Canada exploration of the Arctic sea floor discovered an unusual underwater mountain and evidence that could boost the two countries' claims that their boundaries extend farther north. For the past two months ships from the countries have ventured north in icy areas of the Arctic where almost no surface ships have been, in an effort to find out how far the continental shelf extends.

The farther out the shelf, the more ocean floor - thought to be rich with oil and gas - that the two countries could claim.

The ships haven't had time to thoroughly examine their data. Early indications show more sediment buildup on the northern edges, hinting that the shelf - and thus the countries' borders - extend farther, said Jacob Verhoef, program director for Natural Resources Canada.

During the research Christine Hedge, a Carmel, Ind., middle school teacher aboard the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Healy, found the first indications of something unusual jutting up from the flat surface 8,700 feet deep. Further examination showed that it was a mountain almost 3,800 feet high, 12 miles long and 24 miles wide. It's about 700 miles north of Alaska.

"It's elongated, more ridge-shaped and flat on the top," said Canadian chief scientist David Mosher, who was on the other ship. Further examinations of the mountain may someday help explain key facts about the history of the Arctic Ocean, he said.

The ships also saw something that could be a buried and extinct underwater volcano, but it also may just be a ridge, Mosher said.