

# A volcanic eruption has created a new island off Japan, but it may not last

November 9 2023, by Mari Yamaguchi

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In this photo provided by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, steam billows from the waters off Ioto island, Ogasawara town in the Pacific Ocean, southern Tokyo, on Nov. 1, 2023. An unnamed undersea volcano, located about 1 kilometer (half a mile) off the southern coast of Iwo Jima, which Japan calls Ioto, started its latest series of eruptions on Oct. 21. Credit: Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force via AP

An undersea volcano erupted off Japan three weeks ago, providing a rare view of the birth of a tiny new island, but experts say it may not last very long.

The unnamed undersea volcano, located about 1 kilometer (half a mile) off the southern coast of Iwo Jima, which Japan calls Ioto, started its latest series of eruptions on Oct. 21.

Within 10 days, volcanic ash and rocks piled up on the shallow seabed, its tip rising above the sea surface. By early November, it became a new island about 100 meters (328 feet) in diameter and as high as 20 meters (66 feet) above the sea, according to Yuji Usui, an analyst in the Japan Meteorological Agency's volcanic division.

Volcanic activity has increased near Iwo Jima and similar undersea eruptions have occurred in recent years, but the formation of a new island is a significant development, Usui said.

Volcanic activity at the site has since subsided, and the newly formed island has somewhat shrunk because its "crumbly" formation is easily washed away by waves, Usui said.

He said experts are still analyzing the development, including details of the deposits. The new island could survive longer if it is made of lava or something more durable than volcanic rocks such as pumice.



In this aerial photo, plume billows out from the water off the Ioto island, following an eruption in Ogasawara, southern Tokyo, Japan, on Oct. 30, 2023. An unnamed undersea volcano, located about 1 kilometer (half a mile) off the southern coast of Iwo Jima, which Japan calls Ioto, started its latest series of eruptions on Oct. 21. Credit: Kyodo News via AP



In this aerial photo, plume billows from the water off the Ioto island, following an eruption in Ogasawara, southern Tokyo, Japan, on Oct. 30, 2023. An unnamed undersea volcano, located about 1 kilometer (half a mile) off the southern coast of Iwo Jima, which Japan calls Ioto, started its latest series of eruptions on Oct. 21. Credit: Kyodo News via AP



In this aerial photo, plume billows from the water off the Ioto island, seen rear, following an eruption in Ogasawara, southern Tokyo, Japan, on Oct. 30, 2023. An unnamed undersea volcano, located about 1 kilometer (half a mile) off the southern coast of Iwo Jima, which Japan calls Ioto, started its latest series of eruptions on Oct. 21. Credit: Kyodo News via AP



This aerial photo shows steam billowing from the waters off Iwoto Island, Ogasawara town in the Pacific Ocean, southern Tokyo, on Oct. 30, 2023. A new island, 100 meters in diameter, formed by erupted rock, is seen near the steam, according to Kyodo News. Credit: Kyodo News via AP



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In this aerial photo, smoke billows from the water off the Ioto island, following an eruption in Ogasawara, southern Tokyo, Japan on Oct. 30, 2023. An unnamed undersea volcano, located about 1 kilometer (half a mile) off the southern coast of Iwo Jima, which Japan calls Ioto, started its latest series of eruptions on Oct. 21. Credit: Kyodo News via AP

"We just have to see the development," he said. "But the island may not last very long."

Undersea volcanoes and seismic activities have formed new islands in the past.

In 2013, an eruption at Nishinoshima in the Pacific Ocean south of Tokyo led to the formation of a new island, which kept growing during a decadelong eruption of the volcano.

Also in 2013, a small island surfaced from the seabed after a massive 7.7-magnitude earthquake in Pakistan. In 2015, a new island was formed as a result of a monthlong eruption of a submarine volcano off the coast of Tonga.

Of about 1,500 active volcanoes in the world, 111 are in Japan, which sits on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," according to the Japan Meteorological Agency.

Iwo Jima was the site of some of the fiercest fighting of World War II, and the photograph taken by AP photographer Joe Rosenthal of a flag-raising atop the island's Mount Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945, came to symbolize the Pacific War and the valor of the U.S. Marines.

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