

SECOND SUMATRAN QUAKE

A magnitude 8.7 quake on a fault to the south of the Boxing Day rupture occurred on March 28th, spreading fear of a new tsunami and triggering evacuation of coastal communities in Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Although the resulting tsunami was generally only a few tens of centimetres high and took no lives, the quake itself is currently estimated to have killed more than 500 people. The event was forecast two weeks earlier by John McCloskey of the University of Ulster and co-workers, in a paper published in *Nature*. They revealed that the massive fault slip that triggered the Boxing Day tsunami had dangerously elevated the stress levels on adjacent faults beneath the submarine Sunda Trench and below the island of Sumatra itself. Such a stress transfer mechanism has been recognised for some time, and is held responsible for earthquakes sometimes occurring in pairs or groups.

Reference: Indonesian earthquake: Earthquake risk from co-seismic stress. *Nature* **434**, 291.