

Beat: Travel

Powerful earthquake strikes western China, no casualties

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USPA News - A powerful earthquake struck a sparsely populated area of western China's Xinjiang region on Wednesday afternoon, causing some damage though there were no immediate reports of casualties. The same region was hit by a similar earthquake nearly six years ago.

The 7.3-magnitude earthquake at 5:19 p.m. local time (1948 GMT) on Wednesday was centered in Yutian County about 255 kilometers (158 miles) east-southeast of Hotan, a city in the southwestern part of Xinjiang. It struck about 12 kilometers (7.4 miles) deep, making it a shallow earthquake, according to China's Earthquake Network Center (CENC). The United States Geological Survey (USGS) put the magnitude of Wednesday's earthquake at 6.9 on the moment magnitude scale. It estimated approximately 225,000 people in the region may have perceived "moderate" to "strong" shaking, which may cause some damage but makes casualties unlikely. The Chinese government immediately initiated an emergency response and sent rescue workers to the remote region to assess the situation, but said it had not received any reports of casualties by late Wednesday evening. The state-run Xinhua news agency reported that some houses were damaged in the village of Aqqan, but said most houses in the region are resistant to earthquake tremors. More than 140 aftershocks were recorded in the immediate aftermath, with the largest measuring 5.7 just five minutes after the initial quake. The same region was also rocked by a 7.3-magnitude earthquake in March 2008, damaging more than 2,200 houses but causing no casualties.

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