



AMERICAS | NYT NOW

## 6 Killed in Earthquake off Northern Chile

By PASCALE BONNEFOY and SIMON ROMERO APRIL 2, 2014

SANTIAGO, Chile — A magnitude 8.2 earthquake struck off the coast of northern Chile on Tuesday night, setting off a tsunami and forcing a huge evacuation along the country's long coastline. At least six people were reported to have died.

The first waves hit several cities along the coast, which extends 2,653 miles. Dozens of aftershocks rattled the region, but by Wednesday morning the tsunami warning had been lifted.

The epicenter of the earthquake, which struck at 8:46 p.m., was in waters 53 miles southwest of Cuya, a small town in Arica Province near the border with Peru. The deaths were the result of heart attacks or falling debris, Interior Minister Rodrigo Peñailillo said. The national emergency service had ordered the immediate evacuation of all coastal areas throughout the country, including Easter Island and the archipelago of Juan Fernández.

The coasts of Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua were also put on alert, and an advisory was issued for Hawaii, but no major damage was reported.

"We are evaluating minute by minute the variations in tide, and ask the population to remain informed," Mr. Peñailillo said.

In the hours after the earthquake, more than 300 prisoners escaped during the evacuation of a women's prison in Iquique, the authorities said. More than a dozen of the inmates were recaptured, according to the

police.

The government said it was sending more than 100 special forces personnel and military troops to coordinate with the security forces in Iquique, Mr. Peñailillo added.

Electricity failures occurred across most of Arica, a port city of about 200,000 people, and some adobe homes crumbled in the quake, Chilean news media reported. Mining companies in northern Chile did not immediately report damage to their installations.

No looting was reported, said Ricardo Toro, the director of the national emergency service.

Chile lies in one of the world's most earthquake-prone zones. A magnitude 8.8 earthquake in 2010 off the coast of central Chile left at least 525 people dead. In 1960, a magnitude 9.5 earthquake, thought to be the largest of the 20th century, hit near Chile's coast near the city of Valdivia; the disaster left about 1,600 people dead, largely from a subsequent tsunami.

About 300 earthquakes of varying magnitude have shaken Chile's northern coast in several weeks, delivering an unusual surge in seismic activity in the region. Since the 2010 earthquake, the Chilean authorities have sought to improve evacuation procedures.

The evacuations on Tuesday night seemed to proceed in a calm and orderly fashion. Since 2010, there have been several tsunami emergency drills along the coast, so people are much more prepared and aware of what they should do.