OCHA Regional Office for Asia Pacific

Tectonic Plates and Faults in Asia Pacific

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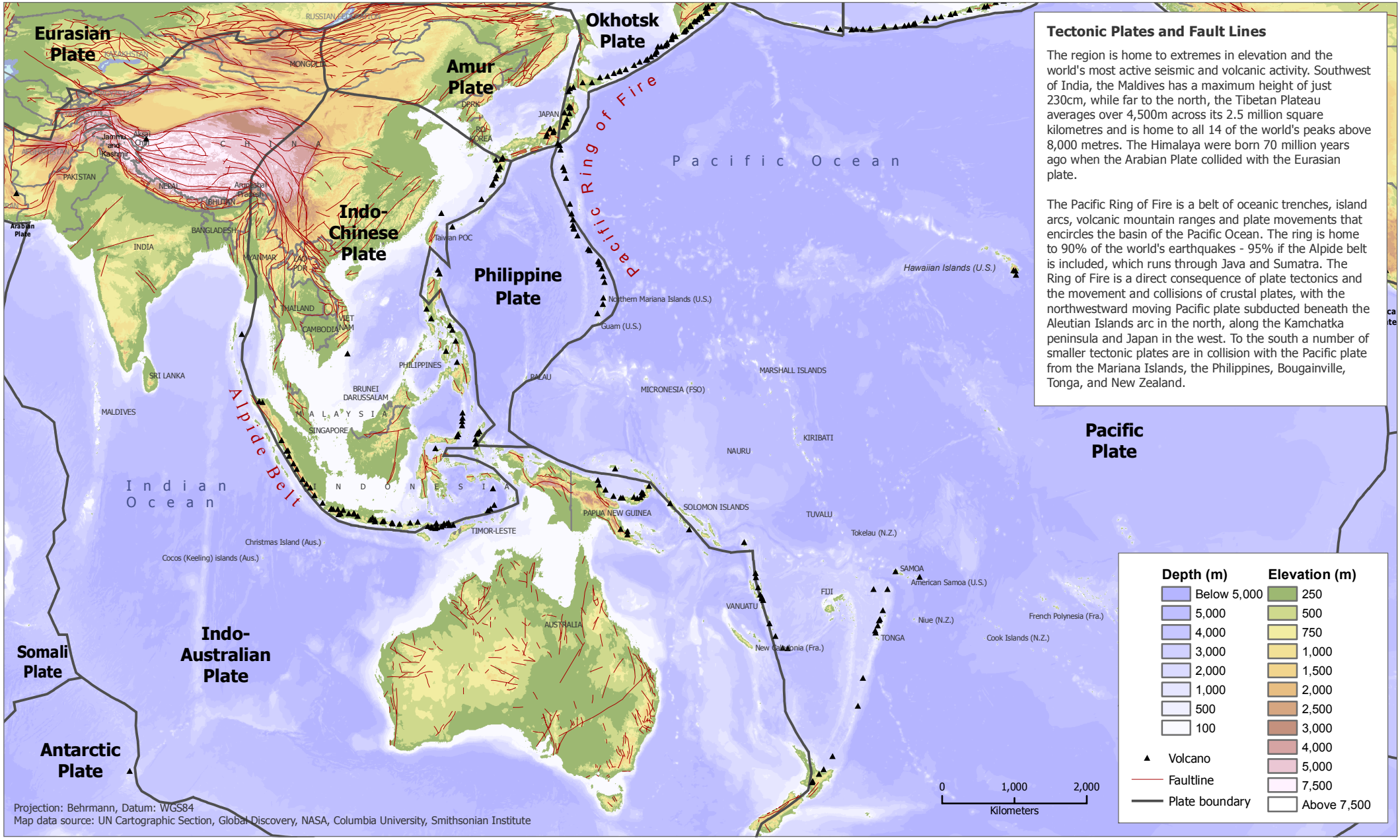

Tectonic Plates and Fault Lines

The region is home to extremes in elevation and the world's most active seismic and volcanic activity. Southwest of India, the Maldives has a maximum height of just 230cm, while far to the north, the Tibetan Plateau averages over 4,500m across its 2.5 million square kilometres and is home to all 14 of the world's peaks above 8,000 metres. The Himalaya were born 70 million years ago when the Arabian Plate collided with the Eurasian plate.

The Pacific Ring of Fire is a belt of oceanic trenches, island arcs, volcanic mountain ranges and plate movements that encircles the basin of the Pacific Ocean. The ring is home to 90% of the world's earthquakes - 95% if the Alpide belt is included, which runs through Java and Sumatra. The Ring of Fire is a direct consequence of plate tectonics and the movement and collisions of crustal plates, with the northwestward moving Pacific plate subducted beneath the Aleutian Islands arc in the north, along the Kamchatka peninsula and Japan in the west. To the south a number of smaller tectonic plates are in collision with the Pacific plate from the Mariana Islands, the Philippines, Bougainville, Tonga, and New Zealand.

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