

P.R. proposed as site of regional tsunami warning center



STAR FILE PHOTO

Christa Von Hillebrandt

BY FRANK GAUD CARRAU

The Associated Press

The island is looking to be the site of a regional tsunami warning center, says the head of the Puerto Rico Seismic Network, Christa Von Hillebrandt.

Several countries proposed Puerto Rico as the headquarters for the network during a meeting several weeks ago in Panamá, but the final decision will not be made until November 2009 during an event in Martinique, she said.

"Although our installations, for now, are not appropriate, the island

could be chosen for these plans because of the advances we've made in the placement of modern systems to detect this type of phenomenon in time," she said during a weekend workshop at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez.

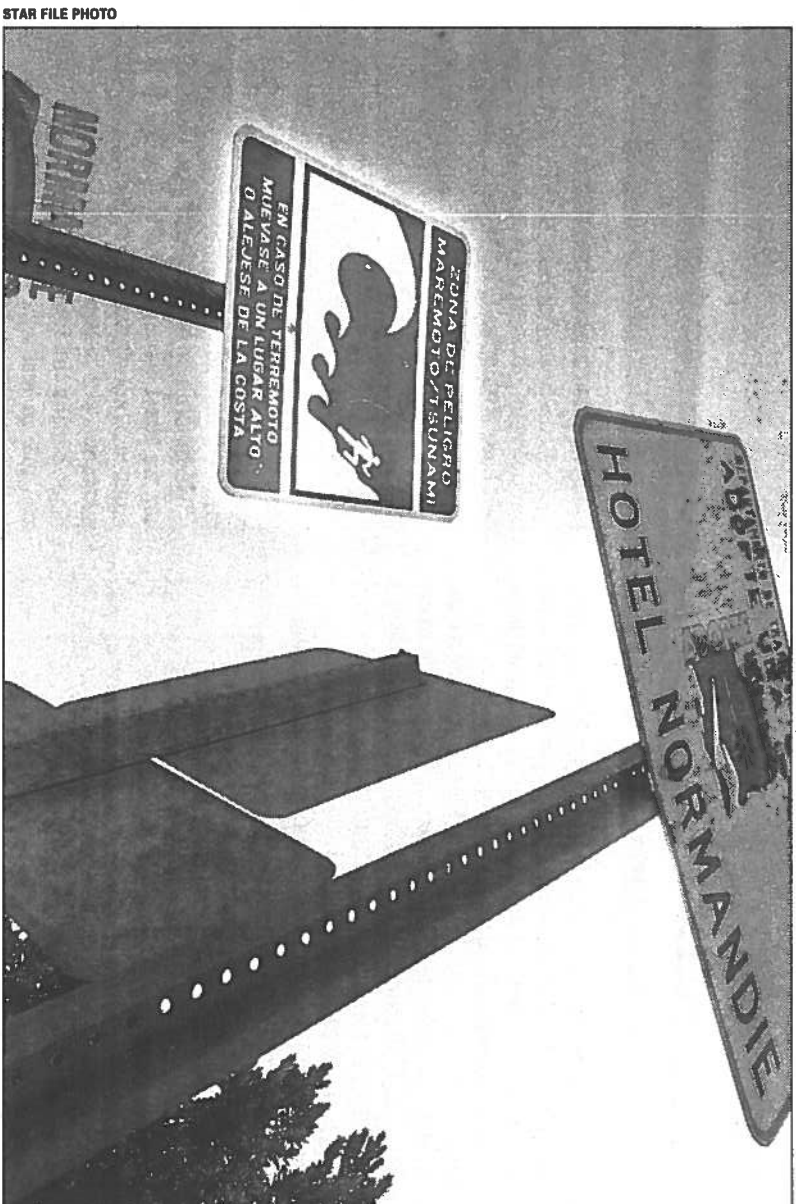
"Puerto Rico already has a system with good technology, even though Venezuela also asked to be the site, and Nicaragua said it could be an alternative."

Although Puerto Rico could be the site chosen for the system, there could be objections due to its relationship with the United States — as investigators have called for Cuba to be included in the network.

"That could be resolved, because we know the National Weather Service in San Juan [part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] has maintained good relations with Cuba," Von Hillebrandt said.

UPR is already seeking to identify funds to construct a new, modern building for the Seismic Network; the organizations are the core of a Tsunami Warning and Mitigation Program launched several years ago.

Von Hillebrandt, president of a committee named to establish the criteria for the Caribbean Tsunami Warning System, said the installa-



STAR FILE PHOTO

A tsunami-zone warning sign in Condado

tion could be ready in 2010. Tsunami warnings in the region currently are the responsibility of a facility in Hawaii.

The Puerto Rico Seismic Network has 25 earthquake detection stations, including two near the Dominican Republic, and 31 techni-

cians. It operates 24 hours a day, although at night investigators are on call.

The network also monitors seven buoys, recently installed in the region by NOAA, that can detect tsunamis. Aguadilla was hit by a major

tsunami in 1918, and a 2003 study by the U.S. Geological Survey pointed to the west-southwest as the most vulnerable area here.

The effort to establish a regional system began after a massive tsunami in 2004 in the Indian Ocean killed at least 230,000 people.

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owes \$709,961.13 to Marketing & Media Motivation for services the advertising firm rendered in 2003 and 2004. The grand jury indictment of the governor says that he allegedly conspired to have services from such an unnamed "advertising and media production" firm paid directly by donors to avoid reporting such money to the FEC and the SEC.

date Luis Fortuño, which includes New Progressive Party debt, shows that the party owes \$2 million to Marti, Flores & Prieto for "media" work done between 1998 and 2000, and another \$306,101 to MPP&W Advertising, Inc. for "media" work in 2003.

The electoral law says that parties that still carry such debt before the general elections will have 25 percent of their election-year Electoral Fund of \$600,000 discounted to pay it down.

agency had been probing for months alleged campaign irregularities regarding dozens of candidates from the Popular Democratic and New Progressive parties' conduct during the 2004 elections.

News of the probe came to light in August when a local radio station publicized a subpoena issued by Justice to NPP Electoral Commissioner Ramón Bauzá, requiring that he hand over information on campaign contributions made by some 160 donors during the 2004 campaign.