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Small faults may reduce large quake risks

GRANADA, Spain, Nov. 30 (UPI) --

Spanish scientists say they've found smaller tectonic faults close to larger faults in the Baetic mountain range can reduce the risk of major earthquakes.

The researchers studying recent, active deformations in the Baetic mountains, located in southern and eastern Spain, say they have shown the activity of smaller tectonic structures close to larger faults in the Iberian Peninsula partially offsets the risk of earthquakes.

"There are large faults in the eastern part of the Baetic mountain range, which are active and occasionally cause moderate, low magnitude earthquakes," said Antonio Pedrera, lead author of the study and a researcher at the University of Granada.

"Although we can't exclude the possibility that these direction faults could cause earthquakes of greater magnitude, we have shown that the formation of small tectonic structures helps to partially relax the energy associated with the convergence of plates, and reduces seismic activity in these larger faults," Pedrera said.

The research was published recently in the *Journal of Quaternary Science*.

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