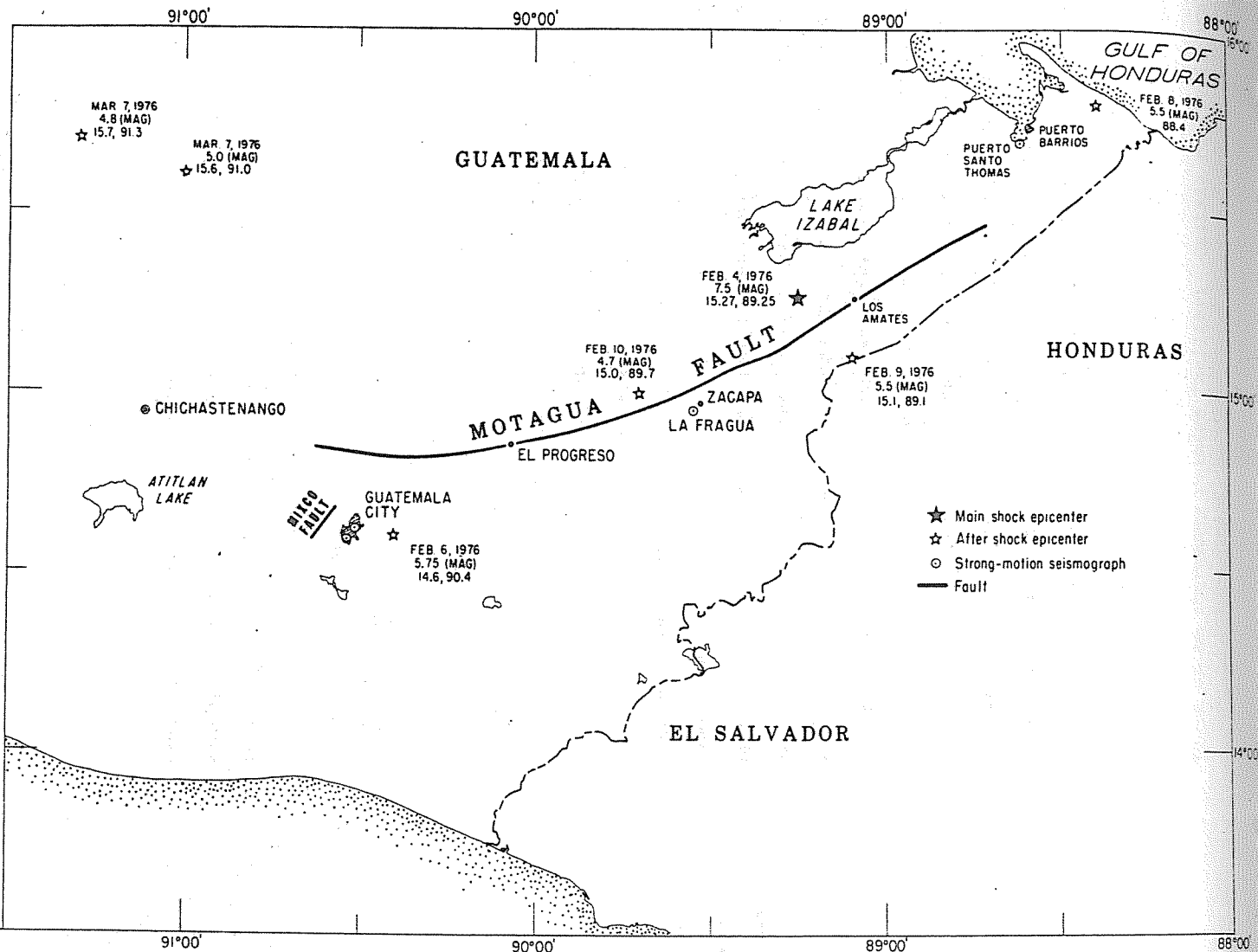


MORE ON GUATEMALA EARTHQUAKE OF FEBRUARY 4, 1976



Seismic Engineering Program Report Jan-Mar 1976, USGS Circular 736-A, 1976

Figure 3.- Locations of February 4, 1976 Guatemala earthquake and aftershocks.

term at fault

Your notice of the Guatemalan earthquake [p. 25, March] contains a misleading statement that I should like to straighten out. It was fashionable before the beginning of detailed mapping to refer to the 'Motagua Fault'. The term is a misnomer; the Motagua Valley contains a complex of faults which should be called the Motagua Fault Zone. What makes the recent earthquake especially interesting, however, is that the neotectonic movements along most of the faults of the valley have been dominantly vertical, as far as we have been able to determine. One fault in particular, however, showed neotectonic sinistral offsets measured in tens of meters. This fault,

called the Cabañas Fault in the PhD dissertation of Eric Bosc (1971), was the subject of a chapter in the dissertation of David Schwartz, who demonstrated the sinistral offsets. The dissertation draft was on my desk when the earthquake occurred; surely this was one of the most vivid dissertation defenses in recent times. The name 'Cabañas' is preferred to the misleading 'Motagua', and the implications of the apparent recency of this fault should not go unnoticed.

Thomas W. Donnelly
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