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GUADALUPE ISLAND -- For the first time in history, man has taken cores from 234 feet beneath the deep ocean bottom, doing it during rough weather, it was announced today by the National Academy of Sciences -- National Research Council and the National Science Foundation.

The hole from which the cores were taken was drilled under 11,700 feet of water -- more than two miles -- near Guadalupe Island, off the western coast of Mexico.

Despite winds that averaged 25 miles per hour and waves up to 12 feet high, the CUSS I drilling barge successfully held itself in position by maneuvering to make possible the 61-hour drilling and coring operation.

The cores were taken during experimental drilling for Project Mohole, a scientific project looking eventually toward drilling through the earth's crust to the mantle. The project is being carried out by the AMSOC Committee of NAS-NRC under grants from the NSF.

Drilling in the present project is being done by crews from Global Marine Exploration Co., of Los Angeles, which owns and operates the CUSS I.

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Willard Bascom, project director for the experimental drilling program, said from the barge, "We believe that this first deep ocean hole is proof of the feasibility of our positioning and drilling methods, especially since it was drilled during rough weather. All hands continue to be confident and happy."

The diamond drilling bit first touched bottom at noon Tuesday, March 28, and began drilling. At 9 p.m. that evening the first core, 53 centimeters long, was taken. The hole was then deepened to 234 feet, and a second core, 60 centimeters long, was taken.

Both cores are firm, greenish-gray clay. They are being taken aboard the Spencer F. Baird, oceanographic vessel of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, for preliminary study.

Dr. Alan T. Waterman, Director, National Science Foundation, said today, "The pioneering deep-sea drilling in 11,700 feet of water places a radically new tool in the hands of scientists seeking to understand the secrets of the earth, and the history of the ocean, enabling them for the first time to obtain samples from hundreds of feet within the earth's crust beneath the deep oceans.

"All those concerned with planning and carrying out the notable experiment deserve the highest praise. I hope that this success will serve as a prototype for similar scientific work by many nations throughout the oceans of the world, adding a new dimension to studies of this planet."

Dr. Detlev W. Bronk, President of the Academy-Research Council, commenting on the achievement, said, "The scientists and engineers associated with the Mohole Project have accomplished an extraordinary feat of ingenuity, skill, and daring in proving the practicability of drilling into the deep ocean floor to a greater depth than man has ever gone before. Years may be required to evaluate fully the significance of this achievement but we already have spectacular evidence that science now has a remarkable new means for discovery.

"For the first time we have the capability of exploring deep below the ocean floor to gain not only a broader understanding of life as it existed many millions of years before the dawn of man, but also far more precise knowledge of the age, composition, and structure of the planet Earth.

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"Many individuals and groups have contributed to the success of this notable undertaking -- the membership and staff of the Academy-Research Council's AMSOC Committee, who have devoted years of intensive study and planning to the enterprise; the National Science Foundation, U.S. Navy, and other agencies of the Federal Government who provided financial support, personnel, and equipment; and the many industrial organizations both in this country and abroad, who also furnished generous assistance in men and materiel.

"The Mohole Project has demonstrated once more what can be accomplished when the nation's scientists and engineers, the Federal Government, and private industry unite in a common objective."

The coring operation was not without incident. In the first attempt to recover the deeper core barrel, the wire rope parted, dropping 2,500 feet of wire down the pipe. A fishing tool was devised and the lost wire recovered on the first try. The hole was then abandoned and the pipe retracted for inspection; the bit arrived back aboard ship at 1:30 a.m. local time, today.

Preparations for the second hole are well underway. All navigational devices are reported working aboard the vessel, which positions itself, unanchored over the drilling site, by means of four large outboard engines, using radar and sonar to determine its position. Weather reports from the area indicate that sea and wind conditions are improving.

Mr. Gordon Lill, chairman of the AMSOC Committee, observed, "We are witnessing the opening of the deep ocean basins to true exploration and eventual exploitation for scientific and economic purposes. In this sense most of the earth still lies before us thus far untouched. It lies beneath the deep sea."

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(Released simultaneously by the National Academy of Sciences -- National Research Council and the National Science Foundation both in Washington and in Los Angeles, Calif.)