

Study to probe risks of giant Antarctic glacier melting

This undated handout photo provided by NASA shows the Thwaites Glacier in West Antarctic. | Photo Credit: [AP](#)

Britain and the United States launched a \$25 million project on April 30 to study the risks of a collapse of a giant glacier in Antarctica that is already shrinking and nudging up global sea levels.

The five-year research, involving 100 scientists, would be the two nations' biggest joint scientific project in Antarctica since the 1940s. The scientists would study the Thwaites Glacier, which is roughly the size of Florida or Britain, in West Antarctica, the U.K. Natural Environment Research Council and U.S. National Science Foundation said in a joint statement.

"Rising sea levels are a globally important issue which cannot be tackled by one country alone," U.K. science minister Sam Gyimah said.

Thwaites and the nearby Pine Island Glacier are two of the biggest and fastest-retreating glaciers in Antarctica. If both abruptly collapse, allowing ice far inland to flow faster into the oceans, world sea levels can rise by more than a metre (3 feet), threatening cities from Shanghai to San Francisco and low-lying coastal regions.

The scientists would deploy planes, hot water drills, satellite measurements, ships and robot submarines to one of the remotest parts of the planet to see "whether the glacier's collapse could begin in the next few decades or centuries," the statement said. Despite satellites, "there are still many aspects of the ice and ocean that cannot be determined from space," said Ted Scambos of the National Snow and Ice Data Center and the lead U.S. scientific coordinator.

Scientists from South Korea, Germany, Sweden, New Zealand and Finland would also contribute. The United States is keeping up research even though President Donald Trump doubts mainstream scientific findings that human activities, led by the burning of fossil fuels, are the main cause of global warming.

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