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Devin Coldewey

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Google Earth pyramid claims stir up controversy

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Angela Micol / Google Earth

An archaeological researcher claims to have found two sets of what may be undiscovered pyramids in the Egyptian desert by using Google Earth, but experts say it's way too early to set the discovery in stone.

Angela Micol, a researcher who scrutinizes aerial imagery for signs of ruins and other man-made features, [found the mysterious features](#) in a survey of areas surrounding existing settlements.

[The first site](#) (left), just 1.5 miles from the ruins of an ancient town called Dimai, consists of a large, square formation and three (or possibly more) smaller features. The smaller ones are roughly aligned with true north, like the Giza pyramids, though the large one is conspicuously off-axis.

[The other potential discovery](#) (below) is about 12 miles from Abu Sidhum, a city on the Nile. Its most prominent feature is a large, triangular plateau with regular sides that have been severely eroded. The center of this triangle has a pair of circular features that may have been wells or mounds.



Angela Micol / Google Earth

In a news release, Micol said that Egyptologist Nabil Selim has determined both sites to be previously unknown. She said the

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findings have been sent to other experts for analysis and ground truthing.

Taken by themselves, the pyramid claims are not particularly meaningful just yet. Geological processes can, after all, form incredibly regular structures. Even if the structures are artificial, they could have had a more prosaic provenance.

Sarah Parcak, an archaeologist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham whose work with infrared satellite imagery led to the [discovery of several lost pyramids in 2011](#), said via email that the findings were not authoritative. In a separate email, Egyptologist Bob Brier, senior research fellow at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, said the claims were premature.

"There is a slight chance that one or two could be pyramids, but it doesn't look like it to me," Brier wrote.

Robert Littman, an archaeologist from the University of Hawaii who is a director of the Tell Timai excavation project in Egypt, agreed that it's premature to say what the structures were – but said the Google Earth imagery was nonetheless "very interesting."

"It may well turn out to be a pyramid, but it may turn out to be another structure," he said in a telephone interview.

The process for registering and protecting such sites may mean that the nature of these discoveries, if they are in fact discoveries, will not be made public for some time. In the meantime, amateur Egyptologists can continue scouring the area for more features by using the same method Micol used: Google Earth.

Devin Coldewey is a contributing writer for NBC News Digital. His personal website is [coldewey.cc](#). This report also includes information gathered by NBCNews.com's science editor, Alan Boyle.

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