Waves Beneath the Waves
Trinidad

Internal waves are the surface manifestation of slow waves that move tens of meters beneath the sea surface. These waves beneath the waves produce enough of an effect on the sea surface to be visible from space when they are enhanced by the reflection of sunlight, or sunglint, back toward a camera.

This January 2013 photograph from the International Space Station shows at least three sets of internal waves interacting. The most prominent set (top left) shows several waves moving from the northwest due to the tidal flow toward the north coast of Trinidad. Two less prominent sets can be seen further out to sea. All of these internal waves are probably caused by the shelf break near Tobago. The shelf break is the step between shallow seas (around continents and islands) and the deep ocean. It is the line at which tides usually start to generate internal waves.