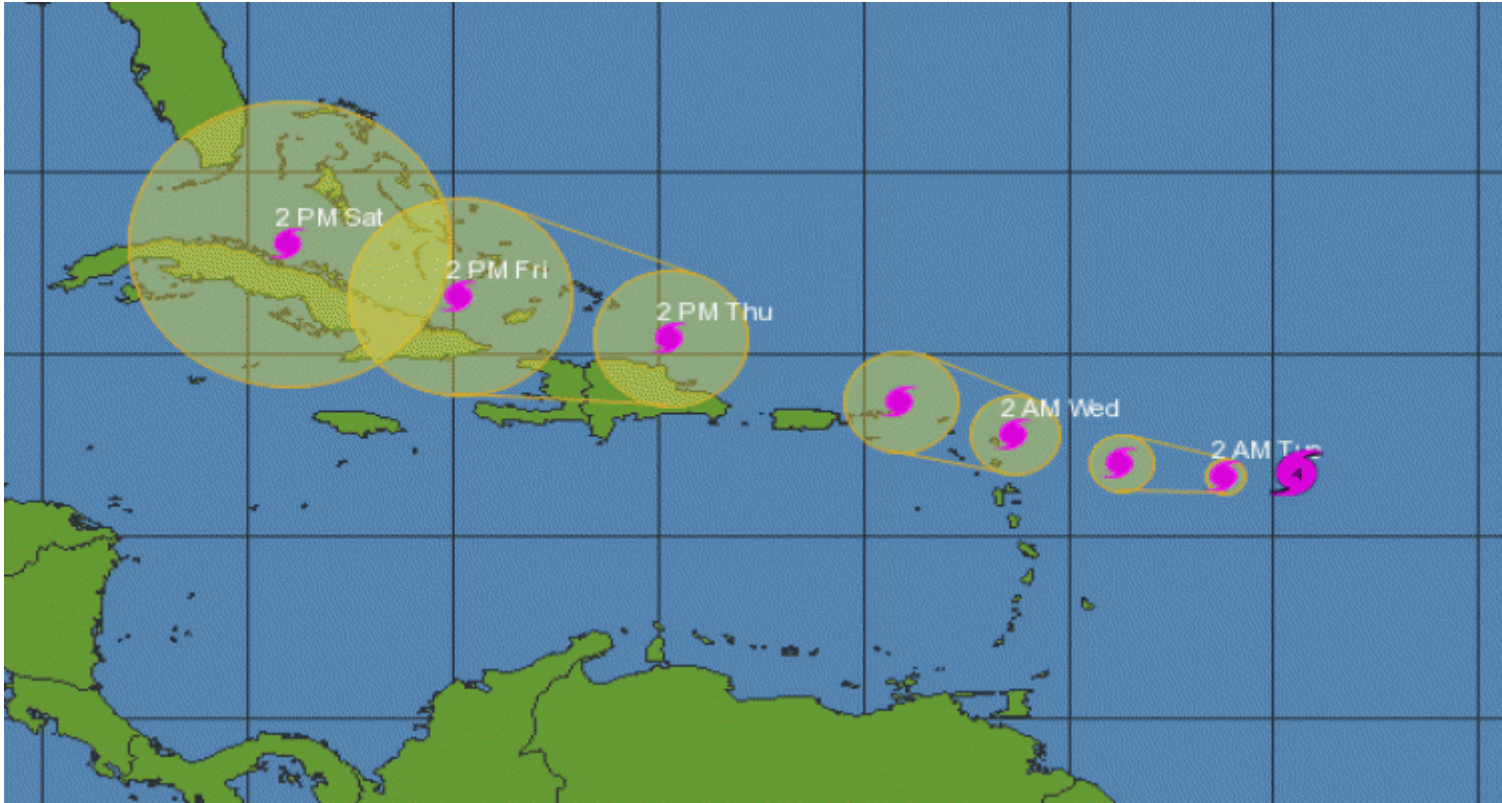


Hurricane Irma Intensifies to Category 5 in Caribbean



Havana, September 5 (RHC)-- Currently located to the east of Antigua and Barbuda, Hurricane Irma is packing maximum sustained winds of 175 mph. Irma has intensified into an extremely dangerous Category 5 hurricane — the highest on the Saffir-Simpson scale — on route to the eastern Caribbean. Reports say it is the most powerful hurricane in nearly 30 years.

It is forecast to remain a powerful category 4 or 5 hurricane during the next couple of days and will move near or over portions of the northern Leeward Islands early Wednesday. Weather forecasters say that Irma will affect the northern Leeward Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. and British Virgin Islands during the next several days.

Hurricane watches have been in effect for Antigua and Barbuda as well as Anguilla, Monserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Martin, Guadeloupe and the British Virgin Islands since Monday. And, following the strengthening of the weather system, emergency declarations were issued for both Florida and Puerto Rico.

In anticipation of Irma, drain-clearing and tree-pruning activities are being carried out across eastern Caribbean countries. In the state of Florida, Governor Rick Scott declared a state of emergency in all 67 counties in the state.

In Puerto Rico, Governor Ricardo Rossello also activated the national guard after a hurricane watch was declared for the island. Rossello said government agencies in the U.S.-held territory were prepared to deal with any emergencies caused by the storm.

Multiple-day forecasts show Irma's path shifting towards the northwest before making its way to the north of the eastern Caribbean islands.

Antigua and Barbuda's weather service forecast said Irma will usher in heavy rain and high winds, causing choppy seas. Antiguan Prime Minister Gaston Browne urged people to take the necessary precautions. "The passage of a hurricane is not a matter to be taken lightly, but we must not panic," Browne said in a statement.

Dominican Republic Public Works Minister Gonzalo Castillo said drains were being cleared, adding that President Danilo Medina will meet with emergency agencies to discuss disaster preparation.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/140489-hurricane-irma-intensifies-to-category-5-in-caribbean>



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