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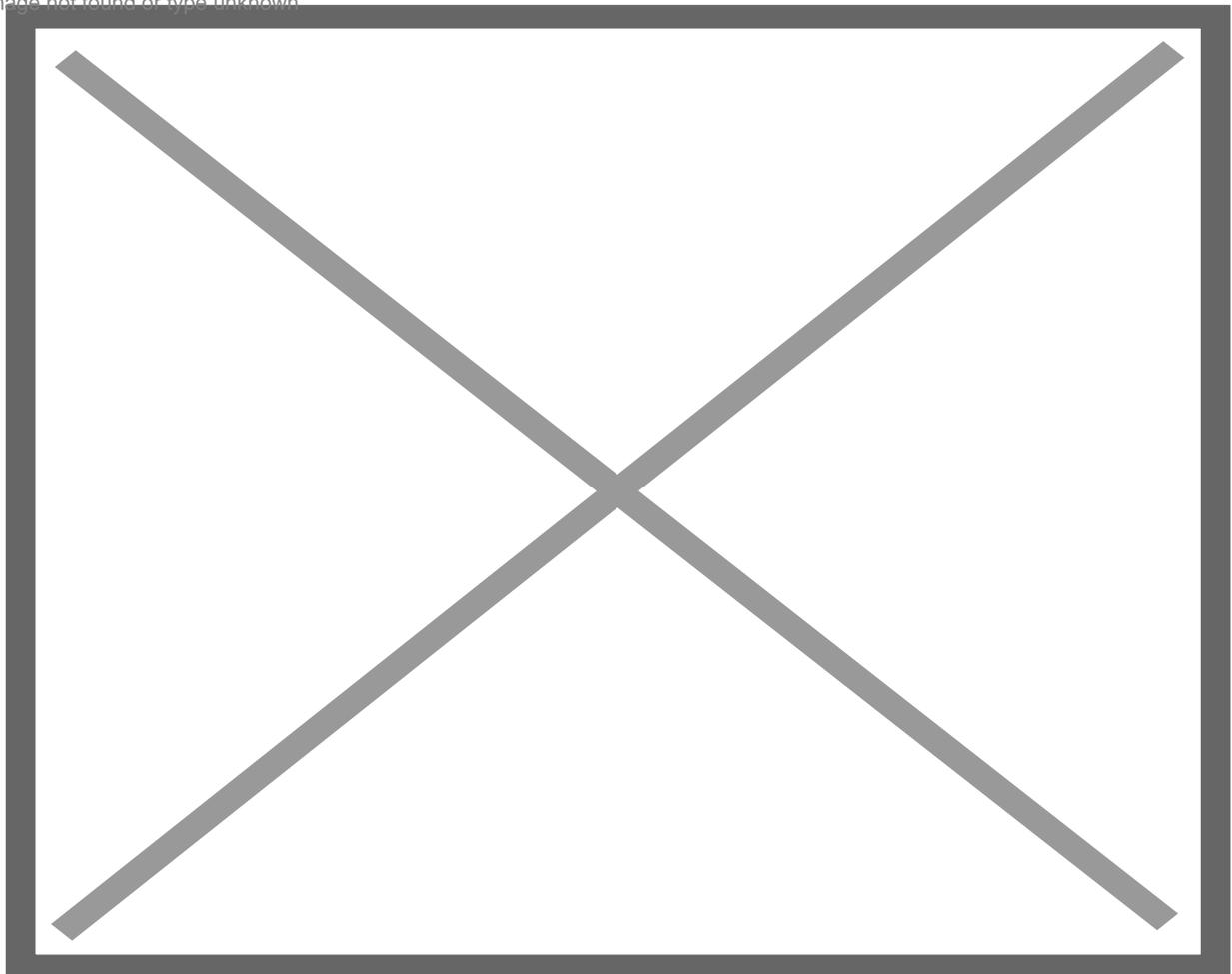
## **Ernesto Lashes USVI With Heavy Rain, Strong Winds; Outer Bands to Impact Territory All Day; Storm to Strengthen Into Hurricane**

**Governor Bryan and VITEMA to address public at 10:00 a.m. as USVI remains under tropical storm warning; residents urged to stay vigilant as outer bands will impact the territory all day. Ernesto will become a hurricane today**

Hurricane Season / **Published On August 14, 2024 05:57 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **August 14, 2024**

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NOAA's NESDIS/STAR GOES-East satellite imagery of Tropical Storm Ernesto at 5:00 a.m. on Wed. Aug. 14, 2024. By. NOAA

*Last updated at 6:44 a.m. on Wednesday, August 14, 2024.*

Residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands were taken aback as Tropical Storm Ernesto, the fifth named storm of the 2024 Hurricane Season, delivered heavy rains and strong winds across the islands Tuesday night and into Wednesday morning. Although Ernesto has not yet reached hurricane status, the National Hurricane Center projects that it will intensify into a hurricane today and possibly a major hurricane in the coming days.

The U.S. Virgin Islands remain under a tropical storm warning, while Ernesto moves over eastern Puerto Rico. The USVI will continue to experience the effects of the storm's outer bands for the entire day, according to National Weather Service in San Juan, PR. An island-wide power outage on St. Croix that began Tuesday night persists, affecting many residents.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen will brief the community at 10:00 a.m. today. Previously, the briefing was scheduled for 7:00 a.m.

### **Current advisory and storm information**

As of the 5:00 a.m. Wednesday advisory from the National Hurricane Center, Ernesto was located near latitude 19.5 North and longitude 66.6 West, about 85 miles north-northwest of San Juan, Puerto Rico. The storm is moving northwest at approximately 16 mph, with maximum sustained winds of 70 mph and higher gusts. The minimum central pressure is 996 mb.

### **Watch and warnings**

- Hurricane Watch: British Virgin Islands
- Tropical Storm Warning: British Virgin Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Vieques, and Culebra

The hurricane watch has been discontinued for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Vieques, and Culebra.

Ernesto is anticipated to turn north-northwest and north with a gradual decrease in speed tonight and Thursday. On its current forecast track, Ernesto's center should pass north of Puerto Rico today and move over the western Atlantic later in the week, nearing Bermuda by Saturday. The storm is expected to strengthen into a hurricane by this morning and could become a major hurricane within a few days.

### **Hazards affecting land**

**Rainfall:** Ernesto is forecasted to produce 4 to 6 inches of rain over the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, 6 to 8 inches across southeastern Puerto Rico, and 2 to 4 inches across northwestern Puerto Rico. Some areas could see rainfall totals reaching up to 10 inches.

**Wind:** Tropical storm conditions will persist across the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Vieques, and Culebra through the night. Hurricane conditions are possible in portions of the watch area during the next few hours.

**Storm Surge:** Minor coastal flooding is possible along the eastern coast of Puerto Rico, including Culebra and Vieques, and in the U.S. Virgin Islands, including St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix.

**Surf:** Swells generated by Ernesto are impacting the Leeward Islands, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. These swells will reach the Turks and Caicos Islands and southeastern Bahamas today, and Bermuda and the rest of the Bahamas on Thursday. The swells are expected to reach the east coast of the United States by Thursday night and continue into the

weekend, posing life-threatening surf and rip current conditions.

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