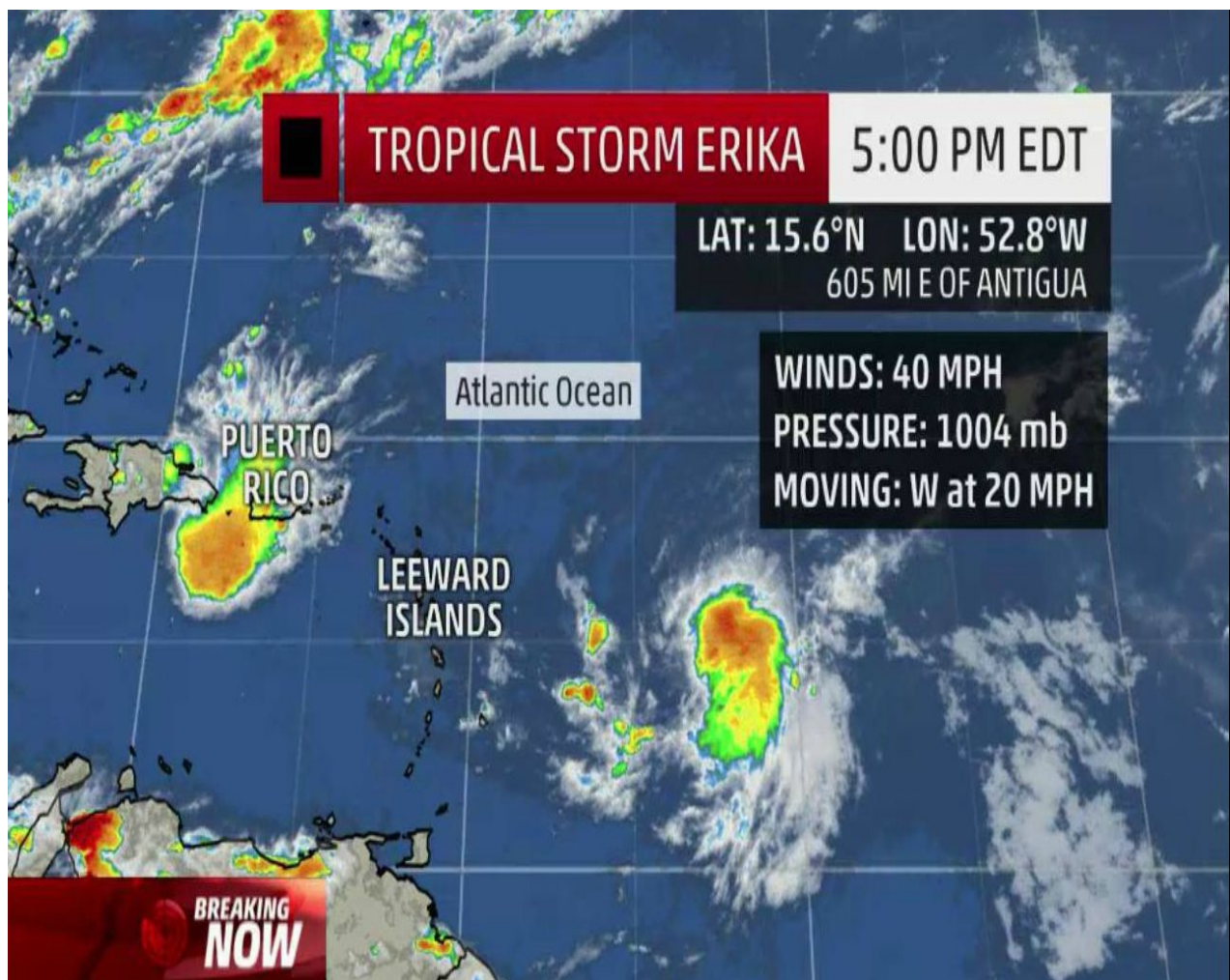


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Erika's Impact Will Be Felt Starting Thursday Morning; Mapp Calls Press Conference

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Tropical Storm Erika will begin impacting the territory on Thursday morning, according to VITEMA and the National Hurricane Center, and is projected to be a mid-grade storm packing winds of up to 70 miles per hour as it passes through the territory, although the system saw a slight decrease in intensity.

In light of the strengthening storm's projected path, Governor Kenneth Mapp has announced a press conference for Wednesday morning at Government House in Christiansted, St. Croix, where he is expected to address residents on the seriousness of the storm, and make known preparedness steps his administration has been implementing.

At 5:00 p.m. AST, the center of Tropical Storm Erika was located near latitude 15.6 North, longitude 52.8 West. Erika is moving toward the west near 20 mph (31 km/h), and a west- northwestward motion at a slightly slower forward speed is expected over the next 48 hours. On the forecast track, the center of Erika will be near the Leeward Islands Wednesday night and early Thursday.

Maximum sustained winds are near 40 mph with higher gusts. Some slow strengthening is forecast during the next 48 hours. Tropical storm force winds extend outward up to 80 miles (130 km) from the center.

The minimum central pressure reported by an Air Force Hurricane Hunter aircraft was 1004 mb (29.65 inches).

A Tropical Storm Watch is in effect for Montserrat, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla, Saba and St. Eustatius, St. Maarten, Guadeloupe, St. Martin and St. Barthelemy. A Tropical Storm Watch means that tropical storm conditions are possible within the watch area, generally within 48 hours. Watches may be required for additional areas later today.

USVI Forecast

On its current path and based on projections, the center of Erika should make its closest point of approach to the Virgin Islands on Thursday at 6 p.m. when the storm center will be located about 25 miles to the north-northeast of St. John. At that time, Erika is forecasted to be a strong tropical storm with sustained winds of up to 70 miles per hour, according to the National Weather Service – Weather Forecast Office at San Juan.

Based on latest forecast model marine conditions will deteriorate by early Thursday morning and the first rain bands could reach the area on Thursday morning. Rain could affect through Friday as the system moves to the west or west-northwest.

While there is uncertainty in the intensity and track forecast, most models continue to indicate a significant amount of tropical moisture over the local area with a good potential for significant rainfall over the region, according to the National Weather Service.

VITEMA and the National Weather Service are advising the public to begin taking preparedness steps and to closely monitor the track and forecast of Tropical Storm Erika. Stay tuned to local radio and television for weather updates and for more information and instructions from local government officials.