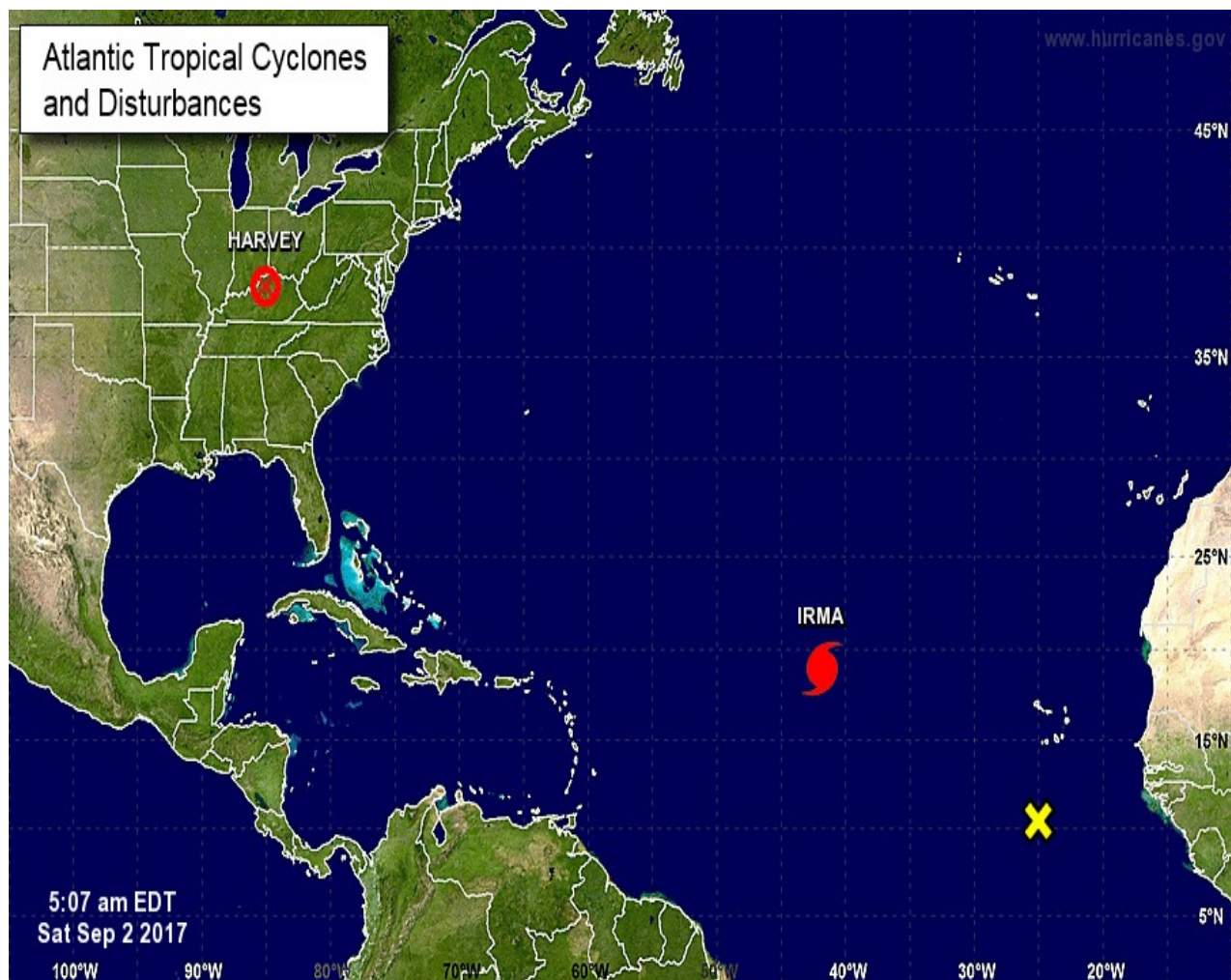


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp On Hurricane Irma: 'Government Prepared For Any Event'

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Governor Kenneth Mapp issued a statement on Friday relative to the potential impact to the territory by Hurricane Irma, a storm with the force to exact immense damage to those in its path. Mr. Mapp said while he did not believe that the territory was in any danger of being impacted as of Friday, he, along with the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (V.I.T.E.M.A.) and other government vital agencies, are urging residents to be vigilant as the storm continues to move in a west, southwest direction towards the Leeward Islands.

But the Government of the Virgin Islands stands ready to respond, come what may, Mr. Mapp said in a [Sound Cloud message](#). "We are prepared for any event, but we want you

to do your part to ensure that your property is safe and around you is safe, as we get through the weekend. If you know that you have debris or things in your yard, around you home that can be easily moved about by high winds, we should use this opportunity to clean up around our properties," Mr. Mapp said.

He added, "We want you to know that your government is on top of everything. We've been speaking with our partners at FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency]." He said some of the government's emergency preparedness assets will be deployed throughout the territory, but residents should not be alarmed.

"It does not mean Irma's going to come and strike," Mr. Mapp stressed. "That's part of our positioning, both on the St. Thomas-St. John area and on St. Croix."

"We are monitoring the events and speaking on a continuous basis with our federal partners as we monitor what's going on," the governor said. He added that the Department of Public Works, along with the Virgin Islands National Guard, V.I.T.E.M.A., the V.I.P.D., Dept. of Health and others are working together for a complete response, if necessary.

On Irma's path, he said, "As of today, we cannot say where the storm's going to go; it's about 1,500 miles away from us and it has different trajectories. And so we will know more by Sunday, what we think and how that may be forming."

The governor closed his statement by asking residents to pray for the diaspora in Houston Texas, who were adversely affected by heavy flooding from Hurricane Harvey. "Let's pray for them and keep them in our prayers and hope that they get through this event as best as possible," he said.

As of 5:00 a.m. today, Irma had downgraded to a category 2 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 110 miles per hour. But the slight downgrade should not be cause for relief, meteorologists say, because the storm is expected to fluctuate as it churns in the Atlantic, but grow stronger when it turns left toward warmer waters, heading toward the west-southwest in the coming days from a strong ridge of high pressure over the central Atlantic.

According to the National Hurricane Center's 5:00 a.m. report, the center of Irma was located near latitude 19.0 North, longitude 41.8 West. The storm is moving toward the west near 14 mph (22 km/h). A west-southwest motion is expected during the next couple of days.

Maximum sustained winds are near 110 mph (175 km/h) with higher gusts. Fluctuations in strength, up or down, are possible during the next couple of days, but Irma is expected to remain a powerful hurricane into early next week.

Hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 25 miles (35 km) from the center and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 70 miles (110 km). The estimated minimum central pressure is 970 mb (28.65 inches).

VITEMA Director Mona Barnes on Thursday encouraged the Virgin Islands community to closely monitor weather reports on Hurricane Irma, and to be ready in the event the territory is placed under a hurricane watch or warning.

“Although there is still uncertainty with the track of Hurricane Irma, now is the time to make sure you are ready,” Ms. Barnes said Thursday. “Don’t wait for a hurricane watch or warning to prepare. Stock up on emergency supplies now, make sure everyone in your home knows what to do in an emergency and stay informed about the weather.”

“We have been fortunate in the past few years. The territory has been spared from the type of devastation we have seen in Houston over the past several days. But we cannot afford to be complacent,” Ms. Barnes concluded.

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