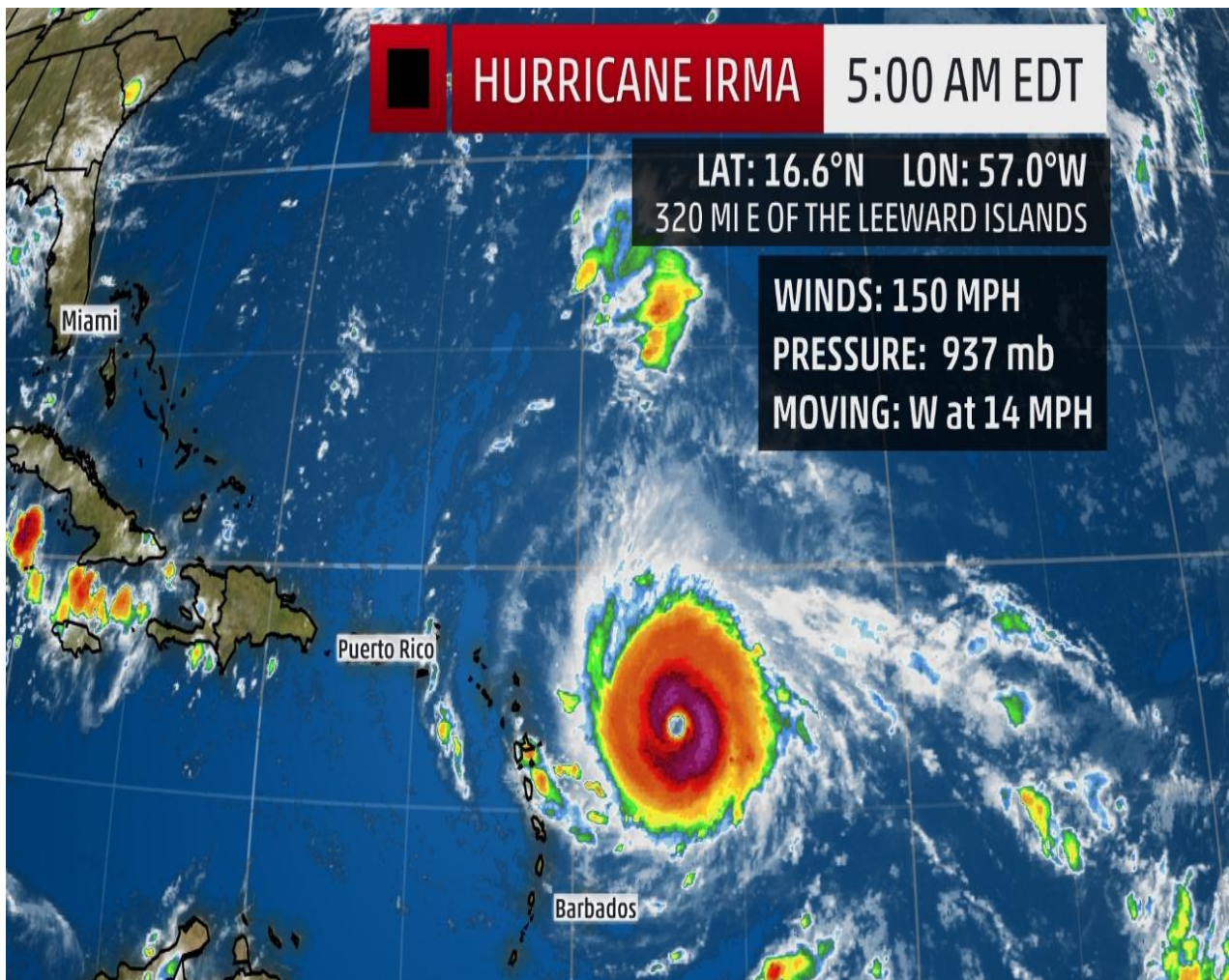


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Irma Now Packs 150 Mile-Per-Hour Winds As It Barrels Toward USVI

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Staff **September 05, 2017**



Hurricane Irma gained strength overnight, and is now a 150 mile-per-hour storm heading towards the Leeward Islands, among them the U.S. Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The National Hurricane Center (N.H.C.) has issued a hurricane warning for the USVI, PR, Culebra and Vieques.

At 5:00 a.m. today, N.H.C. described the storm as "dangerous," and said that the distinct eye of Hurricane Irma was located near latitude 16.6 North, longitude 57.0 West. Irma is moving toward the west near 14 mph (22 km/h), and this general motion is expected to continue today, followed by a turn toward the west-northwest tonight. On the forecast track, the core of Irma will move near or over portions of the northern Leeward Islands

tonight and early Wednesday, N.H.C. said.

Maximum sustained winds have increased to near 150 mph (240 km/h) with higher gusts. Irma is a category 4 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. A NOAA Hurricane Hunter plane is scheduled to be in the eye of Irma within the hour.

Some fluctuations in intensity are likely during the next day or two, but Irma is forecast to remain a powerful category 4 hurricane. Hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 45 miles (75 km) from the center and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 140 miles (220 km). The estimated minimum central pressure is 937 mb (27.67 inches).

Along with the U.S. territories, hurricane warnings are now in effect for the BVI, Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla, Saba, St. Eustatius, Saint Martin, and Saint Barthelemy. A tropical storm warnings are now in effect for Guadeloupe and Dominica.

Governor Kenneth Mapp on Monday night [declared a state of emergency](#), and said that residents should not panic, but should instead prepare for the storm. "We have to be prepared. We have to take this event very seriously," he said.

Shelters on St. John Bethany Methodist Church Julius Sprauve School

Shelters on St. Thomas E. Benjamin Oliver School Lockhart Elementary Nisky Moravian Church Knud Hansen Complex Sugar Estate Head Start Special Needs: Community Health Center

Shelters on St. Croix St. Croix Educational Complex Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged Claude O. Markoe School

Sandbag distribution will continue at the locations below on Tuesday from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Individuals requiring sandbags must arrive during this time, as no other opportunities to collect sandbags will be available after:

St. Croix:

- Department of Public Works, Anna's Hope
- Department of Public Works, Frederiksted
- Grove Fire Station
- Cotton Valley Fire Station
- Richmond Fire Station.

St. Thomas:

- Department of Public Works
- Bordeaux Fire Station
- Tutu Fire Station

St. John:

- Department of Public Works

