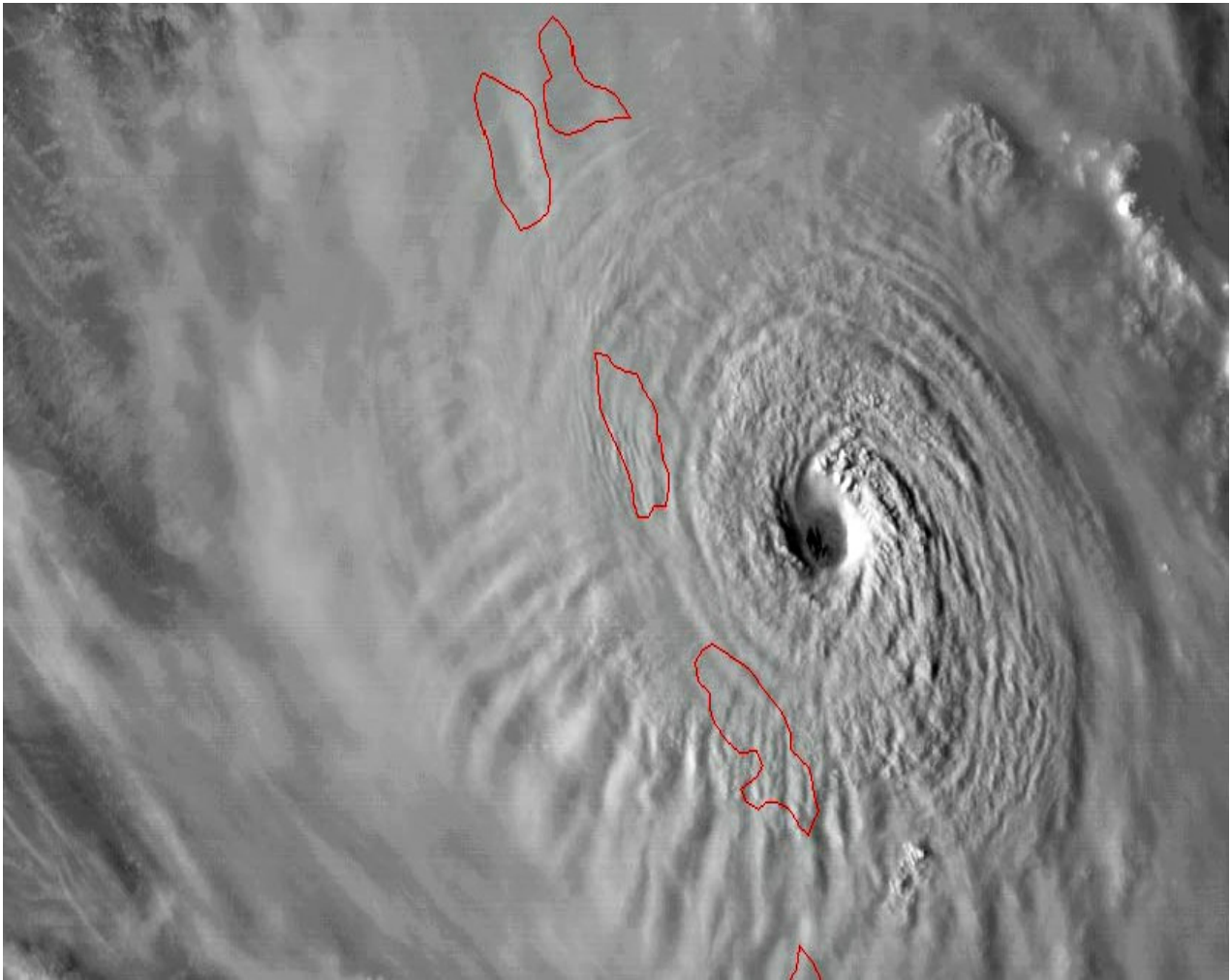


The Virgin Islands Consortium

'Widespread Devastation' Reported In Dominica As Hurricane Maria Barrels Toward USVI

Weather Updates / **Published On September 19, 2017 11:06 AM /**

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DOMINICA -- It will be days, maybe weeks and even months before a true assessment of Hurricane Maria's damage to the island of Dominica can be made. But reports emanating from the Nature Island, as Dominica is called, have not been encouraging, and foretells of destruction caused by a storm that exacted punishing rain and 160 mile-per-hour winds for hours to the island of just over 73,000.

Satellite imagery showed Maria on Monday night sitting on Dominica for hours, as the island sustained a direct impact from the storm. So devastating the hurricane was that Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, couldn't help but to tell of his frightening experience as Maria pummeled the country.

"My roof is gone. I am at the complete mercy of the hurricane. House is flooding," Mr. Skerrit [managed](#) as he witnessed the ravaging of one of his homes by a storm that rapidly strengthened in the Atlantic Ocean after meeting favorable, warm conditions. Although heavy rain started falling in the day, Maria's hurricane-force winds slammed Dominica during the night beginning just before the 10:00 p.m. hour, compounding the fear of islanders who only two years ago had experienced [catastrophic flooding from Tropical Storm Erika during the nighttime](#).

Mr. Skerrit only last week pledged \$200,000 to the U.S. Virgin Islands, after the territory's St. Thomas-St. John District sustained ruinous damage from Hurricane Irma. Now, the prime minister will be needing all the help he can get. "We will need help, my friend, we will need help of all kinds," he said.

"Initial reports are of widespread devastation. So far we have lost all what money can buy and replace. My greatest fear for the morning is that we will wake to news of serious physical injury and possible deaths as a result of likely landslides triggered by persistent rains," Mr. Skerrit said.

The prime minister said early reports were indicating island-wide damage, with roofs being ripped from their hinges and flung about the island like projectiles. "So far, the winds have swept away the roofs of almost every person I have spoken to or otherwise made contact with. The roof to my own official residence was among the first to go and this apparently triggered an avalanche of torn-away roofs in the city and the countryside," Mr. Skerrit said.

Now, Maria is barreling towards the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico with hurricane-force winds of 155 miles per hour, seeing a slight decrease in speed overnight after making landfall in Dominica. According to the National Hurricane Center's (N.H.C.) 5:00 a.m. advisory, some fluctuations in intensity are likely during the next day or two, but Maria is forecast to remain an extremely dangerous category 4 or 5 hurricane while it approaches the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. An Air Force Hurricane Hunter aircraft is currently investigating Maria, the N.H.C. said.

The storm's hurricane-force winds extend out 30 miles, while tropical storm-force winds extend 125 miles, according to the N.H.C. Maria is estimated to bring 12-18 inches of rain to the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, with isolated areas seeing up to 25 inches or more, N.H.C. said.

According to the National Weather Service, Maria remains an extremely dangerous Hurricane. Hurricane conditions are likely to begin Tuesday night across the USVI, Vieques and Culebra; and across Puerto Rico Wednesday morning. Hurricane force winds will likely continue across USVI, Vieques and Culebra through Wednesday afternoon; and across Puerto Rico through Wednesday night. These winds will bring catastrophic damage. Severe injury is possible in less than a strong structure.

"Now is the time to complete the preparations in your emergency plan to secure your home or business," N.W.S. said in its latest update.

Governor Kenneth Mapp during a press conference Monday evening, urged all residents, visitors and emergency relief workers remaining in the U.S. territory to be prepared for

the imminent arrival of Maria.

The governor announced a curfew that will take effect 10:00 a.m. today. The territory's seaports will be closed at 8:00 a.m. Tuesday, and the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority plans to keep St. Croix's power supply system on until approximately 2:00 p.m. Tuesday afternoon.

Shelters territory-wide are as follows:

St. Thomas-St. John District

Knud Hansen (Special Needs will be co-located at this shelter)
Lockhart School (maxed out)
Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School

St. John

Guy Benjamin in Coral Bay

Bethany Moravian Church (Julius Sprauve School in St. John is being evacuated)

St. Croix

Educational Complex

Canegata Ballpark facility

Herbert Grigg

Mr. Mapp has called a press conference for 11:00 a.m. today, where he is expected to give latest updates on the storm's course, as well as his continuous warning that Virgin Islanders should take Maria seriously, and make all necessary preparations.