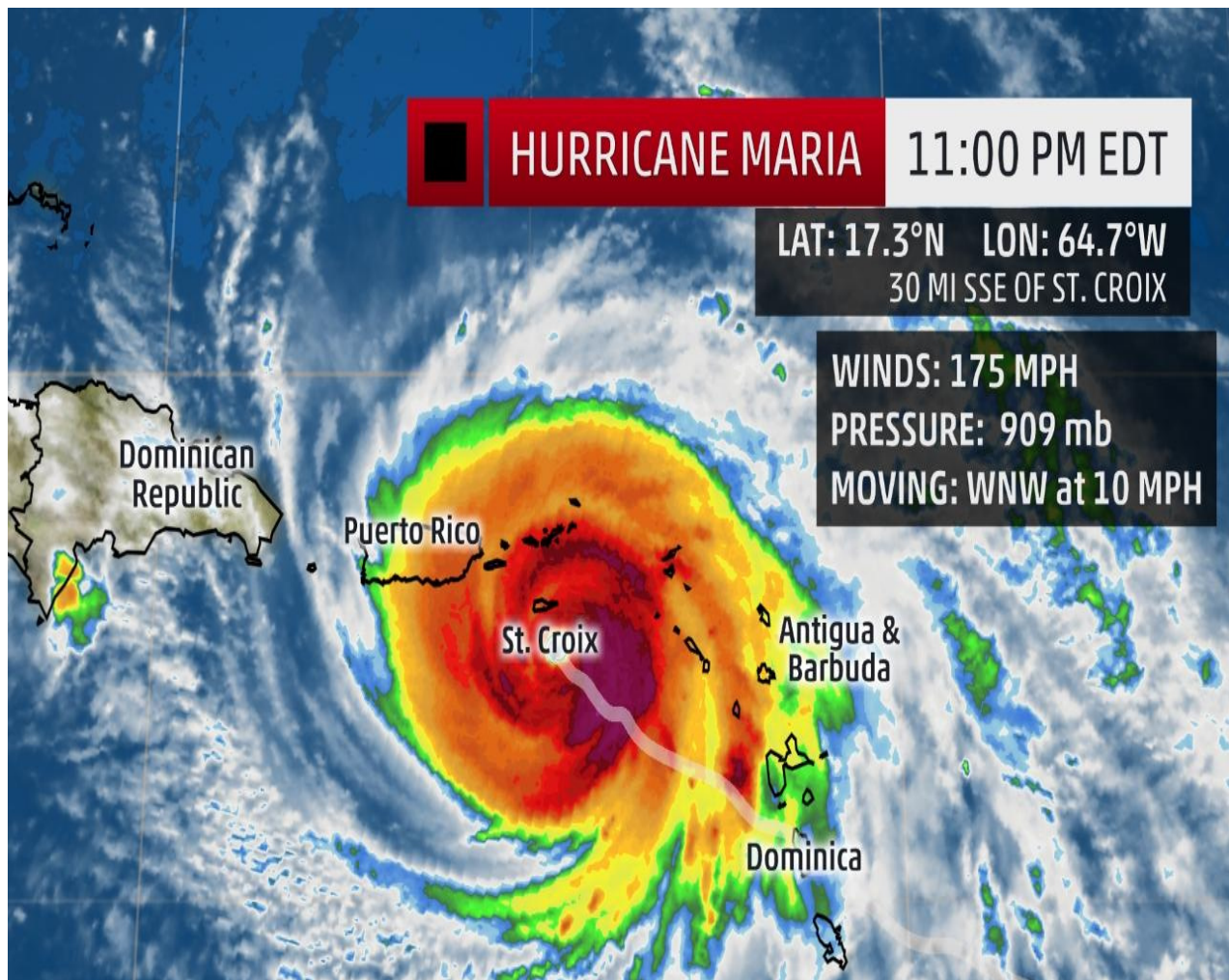


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Maria Has Arrived To St. Croix With Punishing Winds And Rain; Projected To Last Until Wednesday Morning Before Moving Over PR

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Staff **September 19, 2017**



Hurricane Maria has arrived in the U.S. Virgin Islands with sustained hurricane-force winds of 175 miles per hour, pummeling St. Croix, which was spared damage two weeks ago when Hurricane Irma laid waste to St. Thomas and St. John.

As of 11:16 p.m., violent winds whistled from the east to west side of the island, chilling the hearts of residents here, as they braced for impact. According to the National Weather Service, [as cited](#) by Governor Kenneth Mapp, hurricane-force winds will now last until 5:00 a.m. or 6:00 a.m. Wednesday.

According to the National Hurricane Center's (N.H.C.) 11:00 p.m. advisory, the center of Hurricane Maria was located near latitude 17.3 North, longitude 64.7 West. Maria is moving toward the west-northwest near 10 mph (17 km/h). A west-northwest to northwest motion is expected to continue through Wednesday night, followed by a northwestward motion on Thursday. On the forecast track, the eye of Maria will move near or over St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands within the next couple of hours, then cross Puerto Rico on Wednesday, and pass just north of the northeast coast of the Dominican Republic Wednesday night and Thursday.

Maximum sustained winds are near 175 mph (280 km/h) with higher gusts. Maria is a potentially catastrophic category 5 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. Some fluctuations in intensity could occur before the hurricane reaches Puerto Rico, but Maria is forecast to remain an extremely dangerous category 4 or 5 hurricane as it moves near or over the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Slow weakening is expected after the hurricane emerges over the Atlantic north of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

Reports from reconnaissance aircraft indicate that the area of hurricane-force winds has increased in size. Hurricane-force winds now extend outward up to 60 miles (95 km) from the center and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 150 miles (240 km).

The estimated minimum central pressure is 909 mb (26.85 inches).