The Virgin Islands Consortium

Subtropical Storm Andrea Forms In Atlantic Ahead Of Hurricane Season

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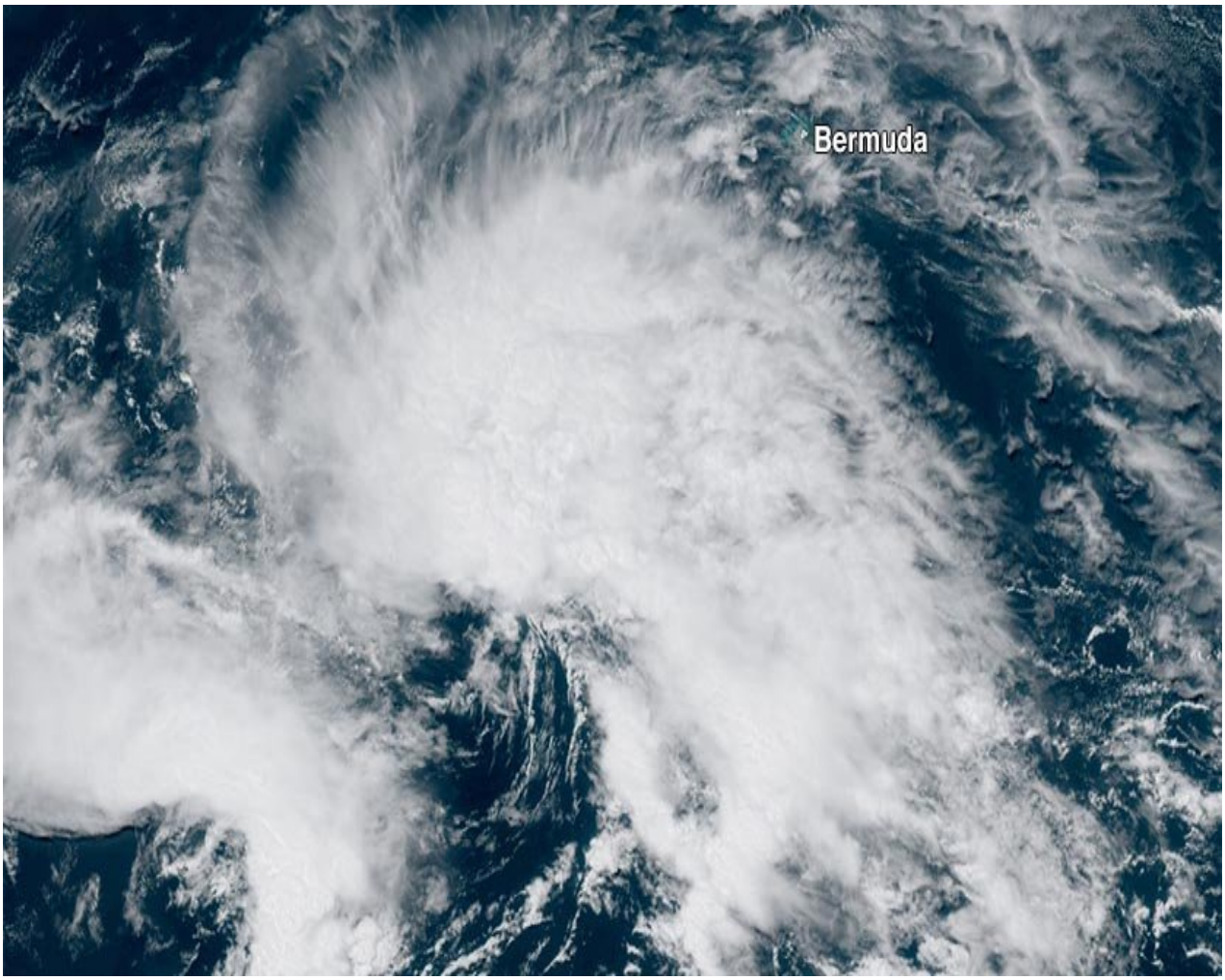

The 2019 Atlantic Hurricane Season starts on June 1, but a storm has formed in the Atlantic well over a week before the official start date, not a good sign for those hoping for a less active season. The storm, named Andrea, poses no threat to the Caribbean. It is, however, expected to pass near Bermuda, a British territory in the North Atlantic Ocean. The National Hurricane Center forecasts that the storm will remain southwest and south of Bermuda during the next day or two.

The storm's maximum sustained winds were near 40 mph with higher gusts as of 5:00 a.m. today. Little change in strength is forecast, followed by weakening late tonight. Andrea is expected to dissipate on Wednesday. Winds of 40 mph extend outward up to

60 miles from the center. The estimated minimum central pressure is 29.74 inches.

Data released mid-April by researchers at the North Carolina State University predicted a normal hurricane season, with the potential of 13 to 16 named storms, 5 to 7 hurricanes and 2 to 3 major hurricanes. The data was provided by Lian Xie, professor of marine, earth and atmospheric sciences at NC State, and includes the entire Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

While the forecast is slightly higher than the long-term (1950 to 2018) average of 11 named storms, it is in line with the recent (1995 to 2018) average of 14, the university said. The forecast predicts are more active season than that of Colorado State University's below average a week earlier, which forecasts 13 named storms, 5 hurricanes and 2 major hurricanes.

The NC State data predicts between 5 and 7 storms forming in the Gulf of Mexico, which is close to south states of the U.S. and cities such as Houston, Orlando and New Orleans. The others are predicted to form in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea.

NC State said its methodology evaluates more than 100 years of historical data on Atlantic Ocean hurricane positions and intensity, as well as other variables, including weather patterns and sea-surface temperatures, to predict how many storms will form in each ocean basin. Mr. Xie noted that this year, the potential for the ongoing weak El Niño to strengthen injected significant uncertainty into the forecast.