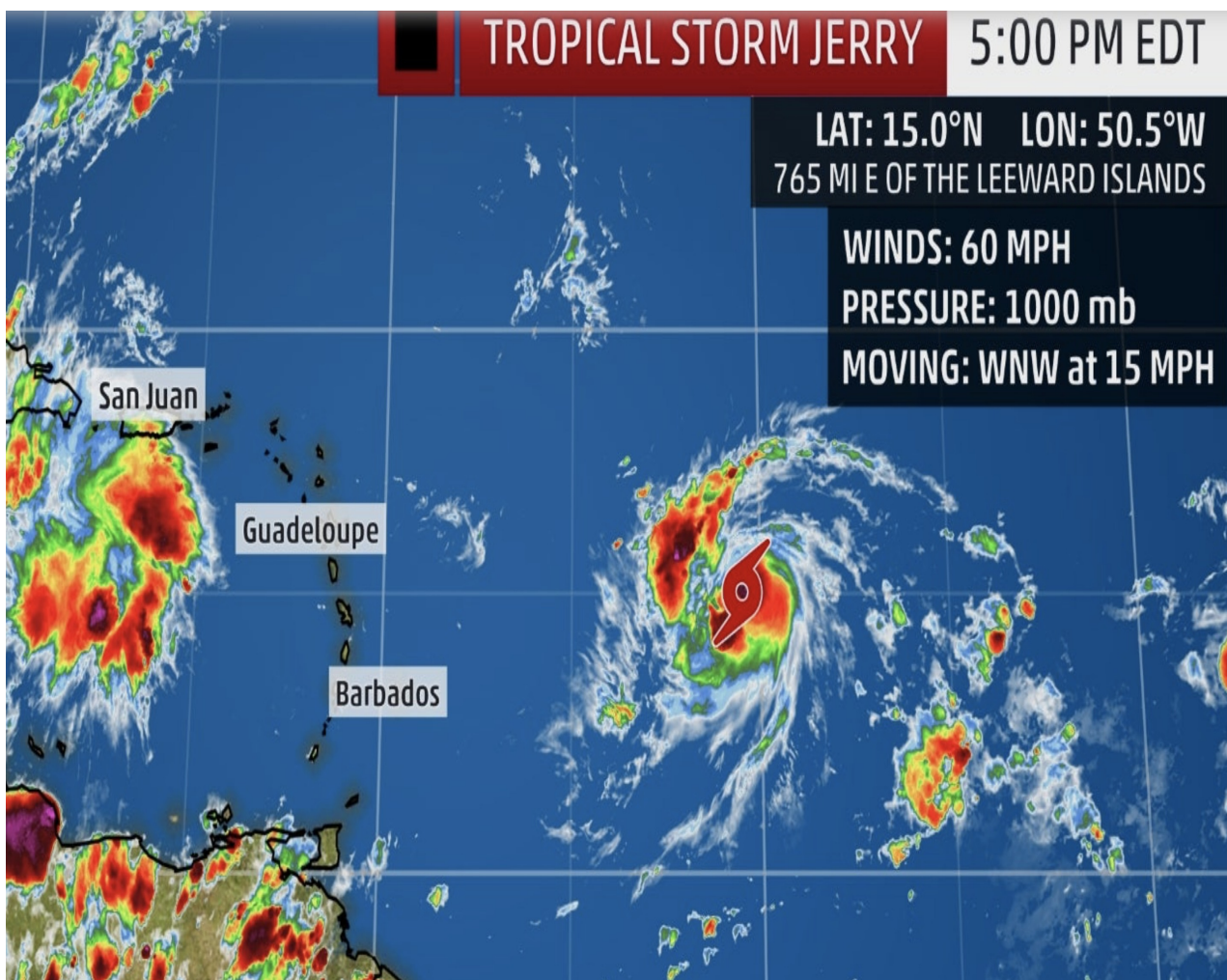


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Tropical Storm Jerry To Become Hurricane Thursday, National Hurricane Center Says; T.S. Watches Issued For Parts Of Leeward Islands; Virgin Islands And PR Urged To Monitor Progress

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Tropical Storm Jerry continues to gain strength as it approaches the northern Leeward Islands, with the storm projected to become a hurricane by Thursday as it moves near or north of the USVI and Puerto Rico, according to the National Hurricane Center's 5:00 p.m. forecast.

Tropical storm watches have been issued for St. Maarten, St. Martin and St. Barthelemy.

Governor Albert Bryan will host a joint press conference with members of his cabinet at 2:00 p.m. Thursday to address the public.

N.H.C. said the center of Tropical Storm Jerry was located near latitude 15.0 North, longitude 50.5 West. Jerry is moving toward the west-northwest near 15 mph (24 km/h). A west-northwest motion at a slightly faster forward speed is expected over the next few days.

On the forecast track, the center of Jerry will be near or north of the northern Leeward Islands Friday and pass north of Puerto Rico on Saturday.

Maximum sustained winds have increased to near 60 mph (95 km/h) with higher gusts. Jerry is forecast to become a hurricane on Thursday, with little change in strength anticipated on Friday or Saturday. Tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 45 miles (75 km) from the center. The estimated minimum central pressure is 1000 mb (29.53 inches).