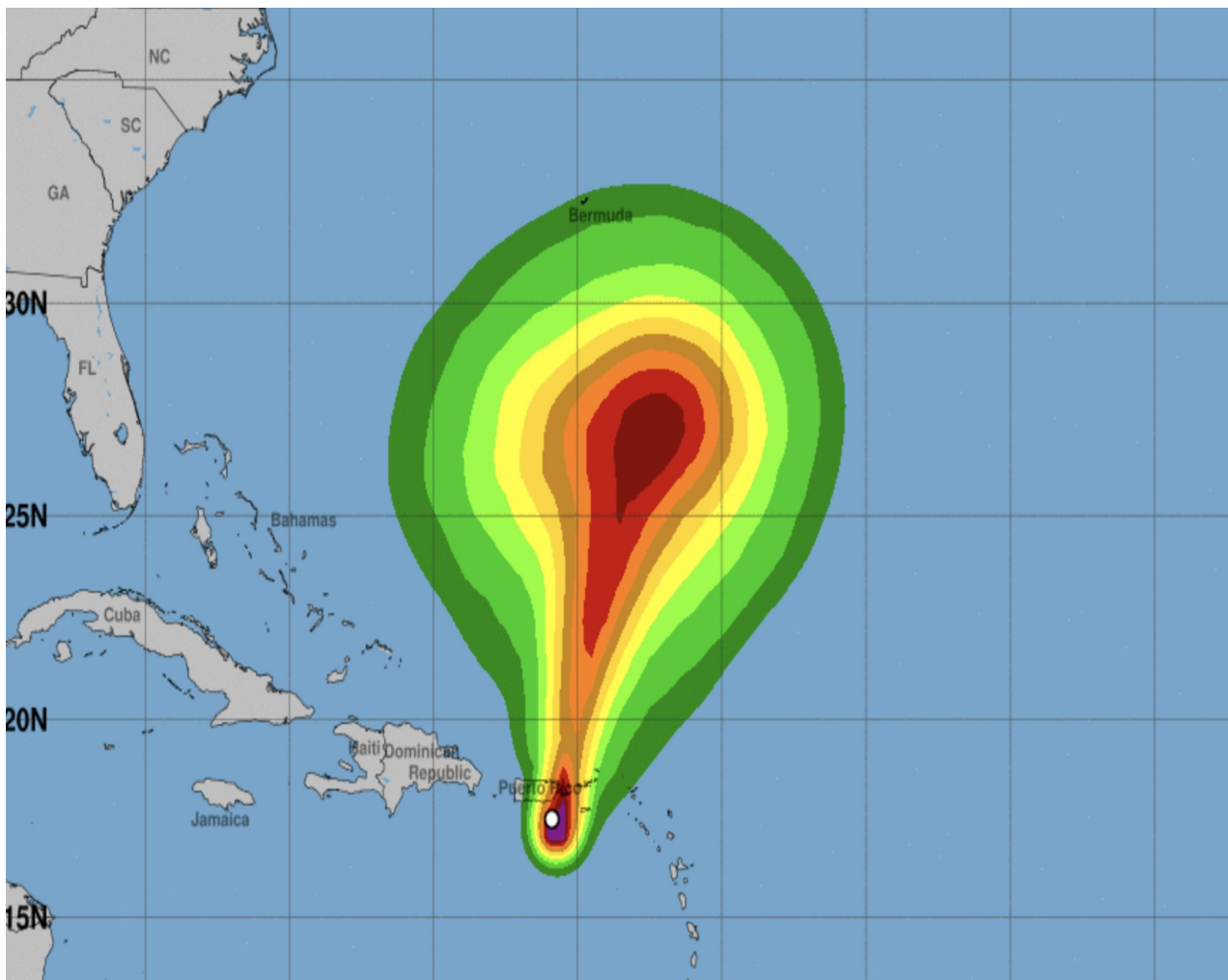


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Government Offices And Schools Tentatively Set To Open Wednesday; Heavy Rainfall From Karen Expected Tonight

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Governor Albert Bryan said during a 5:30 p.m. press briefing that government offices and schools in St. Thomas and St. Croix were tentatively set to open tomorrow. Government employees in St. John have been granted administrative leave for Wednesday because the Coast Guard will not be able to clear the harbor until 11:30 a.m. tomorrow, the governor said.

The announcements come even as Tropical Storm Karen is still expected bring a lot of rainfall to the U.S. Virgin Islands tonight. To that end, Mr. Bryan said his administration

would provide an update at 6:30 a.m. Wednesday to give a final determination as to whether government offices and schools would open on St. Croix and St. Thomas.

"So far everything in the territory remains quiet. No damage so far. We've seen less than anticipated rainfall from this particular event," Mr. Bryan said.

According to the National Hurricane Center's 5:00 p.m. advisory, Tropical was moving toward the north near 8 mph. A turn toward the north-northeast with some increase in forward speed is forecast tonight, with this motion continuing through Wednesday night.

On the forecast track, the center of Karen will pass near or over Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands during the next few hours and then move over the western Atlantic tonight and Wednesday.

Maximum sustained winds are near 45 mph with higher gusts. Slow strengthening is forecast during the next couple of days. Tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 80 miles mainly to the southeast of the center. During the past few hours, wind gusts of tropical-storm force have been reported in portions of the Virgin Islands. The estimated minimum central pressure is 1005 mb (29.68 inches).

Mr. Bryan said later in the press briefing that while the territory had seen little activity for most of Tuesday, "we're not out of the woods yet," noting the N.H.C.'s forecast that sees the storm moving over or near the USVI and PR tonight, bringing a lot of rainfall.

Rainfall

Karen is expected to produce the following rainfall accumulations through Wednesday:

- Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands: 3 to 6 inches, isolated 10 inches.
- Leeward Islands: 1 to 3 inches, isolated 5 inches.

These rains may cause flash flooding and mudslides, especially in mountainous areas.

Wind

Tropical-storm-force winds, especially in gusts, are currently spreading across the warning area. Winds could be higher on the windward sides of hills and mountains, and also in elevated terrain.