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Elsa Gains Some Strength and Will Impact Southern Lesser Antilles Friday; USVI, Puerto Rico Urged to Monitor Storm's Path

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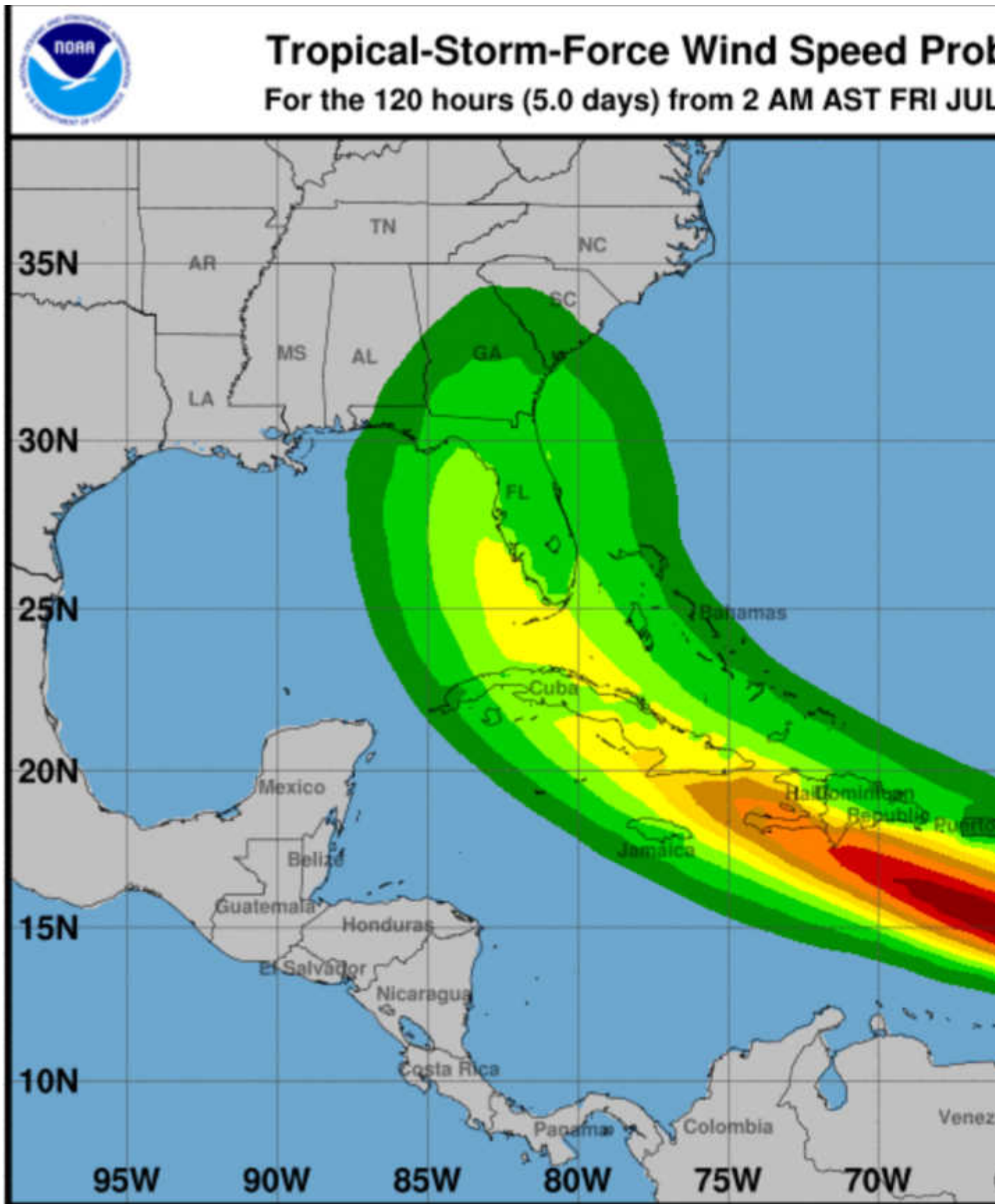
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The National Hurricane Center at 5:00 a.m. Friday urged interests in the Windward Islands, Leeward Islands, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Cuba to monitor the progress of Tropical Storm Elsa, which has gained some strength and is expected to start impacting portions of the Windward Islands and the southern Leeward Islands this morning.

Tropical storm warnings are in effect for Barbados, Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the southern coast of the Dominican Republic from Cabo Engano to the border with Haiti, and the entire coast of Haiti.

A Hurricane Watch has been issued for the southern portion of Haiti from Port Au Prince to the southern border with the Dominican Republic.



A tropical storm watch has been issued for Grenada and its dependencies, Saba and Sint Eustatius and Jamaica.

According to the National Hurricane Center's 5:00 a.m. forecast, the center of Tropical Storm Elsa was located near latitude 12.7 North, longitude 58.6 West. Elsa is moving quickly toward the west-northwest near 28 mph (44 km/h), and this motion is expected to continue during the next couple of days. On the forecast track, Elsa will pass near or over portions of the Windward Islands or the southern Leeward Islands this morning, move across the eastern Caribbean Sea late today and tonight, and move near the southern coast of Hispaniola on Saturday. By Sunday, Elsa is forecast to move near Jamaica and portions of eastern Cuba.

Maximum sustained winds have increased to near 60 mph (95 km/h) with higher gusts. Some additional strengthening is forecast over the next 12 to 24 hours, followed by little change in strength.

Tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 140 miles (220 km) from the center.

Key Message

1. Tropical storm conditions are expected to begin later this morning in portions of the Windward and Leeward Islands. Tropical storm conditions are expected and hurricane conditions are possible over southern portions of Hispaniola on Saturday. Flooding and mudslides are possible.
2. Heavy rainfall from Elsa will move quickly across the Windward and southern Leeward Islands today, including Barbados. Outer rain bands will impact Puerto Rico late into Saturday and southern Hispaniola and Jamaica Saturday into Sunday. Flooding and mudslides are possible.
3. There is a risk of wind and rainfall impacts in portion of Cuba, Turks and Caicos, and the Bahamas through early next week. Interests in these areas should monitor Elsa's progress and updates to the forecast.
4. There is a risk of storm surge, wind and rainfall impacts to the Florida Peninsula early next week. However, the forecast uncertainty remains larger than usual due to Elsa's potential interaction with the Greater Antilles this weekend. Interests in Florida should monitor Elsa's progress and updates to the forecast.

Wind: Tropical storm conditions are expected in portions of the Windward and southern Leeward Islands within the warning areas and possible in the watch areas later today. Tropical storm conditions are expected in the warning areas in the Dominican Republic and Haiti on Saturday, with hurricane conditions possible in southern Haiti. Tropical storm conditions are possible in Jamaica Saturday night or early Sunday.

Storm Surge: A storm surge will raise water levels by as much as 1 to 3 feet above normal tide levels in areas of onshore winds along the southern coast of Hispaniola.

Rainfall: Tropical Storm Elsa is expected to produce rainfall totals of 3 to 6 inches with maximum amounts of 10 inches today across the Windward and southern Leeward Islands, including Barbados. This rain may lead to isolated flash flooding and mudslides.

Over Puerto Rico, rainfall of 1 to 3 inches with localized amounts of 5 inches is expected late today into Saturday. This rain may lead to isolated flash flooding and minor river flooding, along

with the potential for mudslides.

Across portions of southern Hispaniola and Jamaica, rainfall of 4 to 8 inches with isolated maximum amounts of 12 inches is possible Saturday into Sunday. This rain may lead to scattered flash flooding and mudslides.

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