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Bret Gains Strength, But Threat to USVI and PR Currently Minimal; New System Becoming Better Organized in Atlantic

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The National Hurricane Center early Thursday morning issued updated advisories on Tropical Storm Bret, now characterized by stronger winds and lower pressure than previously estimated. A Hurricane Watch has also been triggered for St. Lucia as the storm continues to gain momentum. However, Lesser Antilles islands such as the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, will be spared the brunt of the storm's wrath, according to the latest trajectory forecast.

Tropical Storm Bret is located about 250 miles east of Barbados, carrying maximum sustained winds of 70 mph. The storm is moving west at a speed of 16 mph. Air Force Reserve Hurricane Hunters recorded a minimum central pressure of 996 MB in the storm, indicating its intensifying strength.

A Hurricane Watch has been initiated for St. Lucia, while Tropical Storm Warnings are in place for Dominica, St. Lucia, and Martinique. Tropical Storm Watches are also effect for Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Residents in these areas can anticipate possible hurricane conditions within the next 24 to 36 hours, and are encouraged to keep a close eye on Bret's progression.

On its current trajectory, Bret is anticipated to approach the Lesser Antilles today and move westward across the eastern and central Caribbean Sea over the next few days. However, the storm is expected to begin weakening after passing the Lesser Antilles tonight or on Friday and is projected to dissipate over the central Caribbean Sea by Saturday.

Despite the expected weakening, Bret's impact is likely to be significant. Rainfall amounts of 3 to 6 inches are expected across portions of the Lesser Antilles, with a potential maximum of 10 inches. These conditions could lead to flash flooding, especially in high terrain areas, and urban flooding is also a possibility.

While attention is focused on Bret, another system is brewing in the central tropical Atlantic. The new system, designated AL93, is showing signs of organization. If current trends persist, it could develop into a tropical depression by later today as it moves westward to west-northwestward at 10 to 15 mph. The National Hurricane Center gives this system a 90 percent chance of formation within the next 48 hours and the next 7 days.

Residents and visitors in the affected areas are advised to stay informed about these developments and prepare for potential impacts.