

Tropical Outlook: Atlantic Activity Increases; USVI Officials Urge Preparedness Amid Drought

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The National Hurricane Center is monitoring three areas across the Atlantic basin for possible tropical development, including a disturbance in the central tropical Atlantic with a high chance of formation during the next seven days. (Photo courtesy National Hurricane Center)

Tropical activity is increasing across the Atlantic basin, with the [National Hurricane Center](#) monitoring three areas for possible development, including one that could become a tropical depression later this week. However, dry air, wind shear, and Saharan dust may make strengthening more difficult near the northern Lesser Antilles.

The uptick in activity comes as the [climatologically busiest portion of the Atlantic hurricane season](#) approaches, with Sept. 10 historically marking the peak of the season.

In other weather news, during Monday's Government House press briefing, Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. announced that the territory has requested a federal drought disaster declaration for the islands, and USVI officials addressed worsening drought conditions.

NHC Monitoring Three Areas Across Atlantic

[The NHC is tracking three areas across the Atlantic basin](#) for possible tropical development, including two tropical disturbances between Africa and the Lesser Antilles, designated by the NHC as "Disturbance 1" and "Disturbance 2." Additionally, an area of low pressure north of Bermuda is called "Disturbance 3."

Infrared satellite imagery shows several tropical disturbances moving across the Atlantic between Africa and the Caribbean on Monday, with areas of showers and thunderstorms visible along portions of the tropical Atlantic. (Photo courtesy NOAA)

Of the areas being watched by the NHC, [Disturbance 1](#), currently located off the coast of West Africa and moving across the central tropical Atlantic, has the greatest opportunity to organize. As of the 8 p.m. update from the NHC, the agency has given the system a high, 70% chance of development during the next seven days. While the eventual track of the system remains uncertain, forecasts indicate that environmental conditions will likely become more favorable for development as the disturbance travels westward to west-northwestward across the [Main Development Region](#) between Africa and the Caribbean. The NHC said that a tropical depression is likely to form during the latter half of this week.

A Tropical Weather Expert's Perspective

The Source contacted Alex DaSilva, lead hurricane expert at [AccuWeather](#), for details on the current tropical weather conditions. DaSilva explained that while portions of the tropical Atlantic may become favorable enough for development this week, he noted that significant [wind shear](#) and dry air could ultimately limit the strength and longevity of tropical systems.

Similar to the forecast from the NHC, DaSilva said AccuWeather considers Disturbance 1 to have a high risk for tropical development, with the best chance of organization occurring between Aug. 12 and 14.

“Right now, this area is in a mostly favorable environment for development. Wind shear near this tropical wave is light; however, some dry air will prevent any rapid organization,” DaSilva said. “This wave has a high chance to develop into a tropical depression or storm during the middle or latter portions of this week, as it moves west across the Main Development Region.”

While development appears increasingly possible, DaSilva added that environmental conditions may become considerably more challenging as the system moves closer to the northern Lesser Antilles.

If the disturbance intensifies into a [tropical storm](#), with winds of at least 39 mph, it would be named Cristobal, the third named system of the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season.

“Individuals in the Lesser Antilles should monitor the progression of this tropical wave,” DaSilva advised. “As the tropical wave approaches the northern Lesser Antilles late this weekend into early next week, it will begin to encounter more wind shear which should help to limit strengthening,” DaSilva explained. “It is also possible that the wave will completely get ripped apart by the shear near the islands.”

DaSilva said that the eventual strength of the system could also influence its track.

“The stronger the tropical wave becomes, the more likely it is to move north and away from the Lesser Antilles,” DaSilva stated. “If this happens, the storm will likely move north into the open Atlantic and not impact the U.S.”

However, a weaker system could potentially travel farther west.

“If the wave stays weaker, there is the chance it could move a little closer to the Southeast coast of the U.S. mainland. However, it would have to travel through a wall of wind shear which would likely substantially disrupt the storm,” DaSilva said.

Any potential approach toward the U.S. mainland would not occur until the middle or latter part of next week according to DaSilva, leaving plenty of time to monitor the system.

For the northeastern Caribbean, including the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, a northern track of the potential storm would likely keep much of the system’s moisture north of the islands.

“As for the Lesser Antilles, with a track currently favored to the north, not much rain is expected,” DaSilva reported. “This could change if the wave moves more south,” he acknowledged.

Information Regarding the Additional Tropical Waves

DaSilva provided details about the two additional tropical areas of interest Monday, including Disturbance 2 in the Atlantic and Disturbance 3, located over the open Atlantic near Bermuda.

DaSilva said that the two waves currently have a low chance of development. However, Disturbance 2, which is traveling toward the Lesser Antilles, could bring some limited rainfall to the local islands later this week.

“Environmental conditions are expected to become less favorable for development once it approaches the Lesser Antilles late this week,” DaSilva said. The system could still provide beneficial rainfall for portions of the southern Lesser Antilles. However, DaSilva said he is “not expecting anything in the USVI from this wave at this time.”

Meanwhile, Disturbance 3 is not expected to be a threat to land, regardless of any possible development.

Wind Shear, Dry Air Could Continue Limiting Development

Despite increasing tropical activity, atmospheric conditions across much of the basin remain challenging for significant or long-lasting development. DaSilva explained that

several environmental factors will continue to play a significant role in determining which systems can develop and how long they can survive.

AccuWeather forecasts persistently strong wind shear across much of the Caribbean through mid-August, which could inhibit tropical development as disturbances approach the region. (Photo courtesy AccuWeather)

“It doesn’t look like conditions will allow for large, long-tracked hurricanes in the basin. There are just too much shear and dry air,” DaSilva said. “The Caribbean looks to have high wind shear through at least the next few weeks and likely longer.”

However, warm ocean temperatures across much of the Atlantic could help offset some of the otherwise unfavorable atmospheric conditions.

“Warm [sea-surface temperatures](#) across most of the basin can counteract some of the hostile conditions,” DaSilva declared.

Government House Update

During Monday’s [Government House weekly press briefing](#), Gov. Albert Bryan Jr., [VITEMA](#) Director Daryl Jaschen, and [Human Services Department](#) Commissioner Avril George provided updates on the current weather situation, drought conditions, and hurricane preparedness.

Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. announced during Monday’s Government House press briefing that the territory has requested a drought disaster declaration from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins for St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. (Photo courtesy Government House Facebook page)

Jaschen encouraged residents to closely monitor tropical weather updates and asked residents and businesses to voluntarily conserve water, as extreme drought conditions continue across the territory. Conservation measures include limiting unnecessary water use and reducing outdoor water consumption to help protect local water supplies. He also emphasized the heightened fire danger due to the dry conditions, noting [an ongoing brush fire on St. Croix](#).

Jaschen also said that WAPA has reduced standpipe hours for water-hauling trucks to help maintain pressure throughout the distribution system, although the amount of water available to haulers has not been reduced.

Jaschen explained that WAPA supplies about half of the territory’s potable water through [reverse-osmosis desalination](#) and said current water production is only slightly higher than consumption, underscoring the importance of conservation.

Puerto Rico, where portions of the island are also gripped by extreme drought, recently implemented [water rationing in some areas](#) as officials work to conserve limited water supplies.

George urged residents to remain prepared for possible disasters and outlined the territory's [emergency shelter network](#), which includes designated shelters across St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John that can be activated if needed.

Additionally, Bryan said the territory has formally requested that U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins issue a drought disaster declaration for St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John, as drought conditions continue to affect farmers and water resources. [According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency](#), a Secretarial disaster designation makes low-interest emergency loans available to eligible agricultural producers in designated areas and may also serve as an eligibility trigger for other federal agricultural disaster assistance programs.

El Niño Expected to Remain Significant Factor Throughout Hurricane Season

While local officials continue to emphasize preparedness amid ongoing drought conditions, climate patterns are also likely to influence tropical development across the basin in the weeks ahead.

[El Niño](#) is expected to remain a significant factor impacting tropical activity across the Atlantic and Caribbean during the remainder of hurricane season.

"El Niño will continue to play a major role in the wind shear across the basin and especially in the Caribbean throughout most of the season," DaSilva said.

As the Source recently reported, seasonal updates from [NOAA](#) and [Colorado State University](#) also asserted that strong wind shear is present across portions of the Caribbean, and the strengthening El Niño pattern is expected to continue favoring conditions that generally inhibit tropical development.

Still, an overall hostile environment does not mean tropical development is impossible.

"It is important to note that even with a strong El Nino, there can be breaks in the shear," DaSilva emphasized. "These breaks in wind shear combined with warm sea-surface temperatures can still allow for impactful storms."

Those temporary windows could become particularly significant as the season progresses, especially if tropical waves remain intact while traveling across the Atlantic and eventually reach exceptionally warm waters farther west.

DaSilva said it will remain vital to monitor individual tropical waves, even if they struggle to organize during their initial journey across the Atlantic.

“It will be especially important to closely watch each tropical wave this season. Some tropical waves may remain disorganized while crossing the Atlantic, only to develop and intensify once they reach the exceptionally warm waters near the United States, such as in the Western Caribbean or Gulf,” according to DaSilva.

Tropical Activity May Increase

DaSilva stressed that tropical systems do not necessarily need to pass directly over the local islands to create impacts. [Hurricane Erin, a cyclone that tracked very close to the USVI in August of 2025](#), is an example of a cyclone that caused impacts across the region, although it did not make a direct hit.

“For the USVI, it will be important to watch storms moving north of the islands. For example, several storms in 2025 moved just north of the islands but still brought heavy rain,” DaSilva pointed out.

Unfortunately, substantial beneficial rainfall does not appear likely across the territory in the immediate future.

“It doesn’t look like much rain will be coming in the short term,” DaSilva stated. “I would expect worsening [drought conditions](#), since most of the waves are losing their moisture due to shear and dry air.”

Looking further ahead, DaSilva expects tropical activity to increase somewhat, as the Atlantic moves toward the climatological peak of hurricane season. Overall, activity is still expected to remain below normal.

“I do expect that as we move into September, things will pick up a little. However, tropical activity is expected to be below average overall,” DaSilva concluded.

Local Updates

In the short term, the weather across the U.S. Virgin Islands will continue to be very warm with gusty winds, along with periods of rainfall, particularly on Tuesday, [choppy seas](#), and pulses of [Saharan dust](#) arriving later this week.

The National Weather Service in San Juan provided an update Monday on the latest weather conditions across Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, including heat, Saharan dust, an approaching tropical wave, and increasing marine concerns later this week. (Photo courtesy National Weather Service, San Juan, Puerto Rico)

The [National Weather Service in San Juan, Puerto Rico](#), has noted that the forecast is relatively uncertain early next week pertaining to any possible impacts from the tropical waves monitored by the NHC. Meteorologists urge residents and individuals to follow the weather forecast closely.

“Model guidance suggests that one of these systems could approach the northeastern Caribbean early next week, but considerable uncertainty remains regarding its track, strength, timing, and any potential local impacts,” the NWS said on Monday. “Therefore, the forecast for next Monday and beyond may change depending on how these systems evolve,” the NWS reported.

Information regarding the weather across the USVI is available from the [NWS](#), the [NHC](#), and [NOAA](#). The local forecast is also regularly updated on the [Source Weather Page](#), and [a weekly video forecast](#) is available.

Finally, residents and visitors can view weather alerts and disaster preparedness information from the [Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency](#).

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