

LIVING ROOM TIMES

BINDER UPDATE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1998

Category 5 Mitch reaches 180 mph

Hurricane is Atlantic's strongest in ten years, fourth-strongest this century; track uncertain

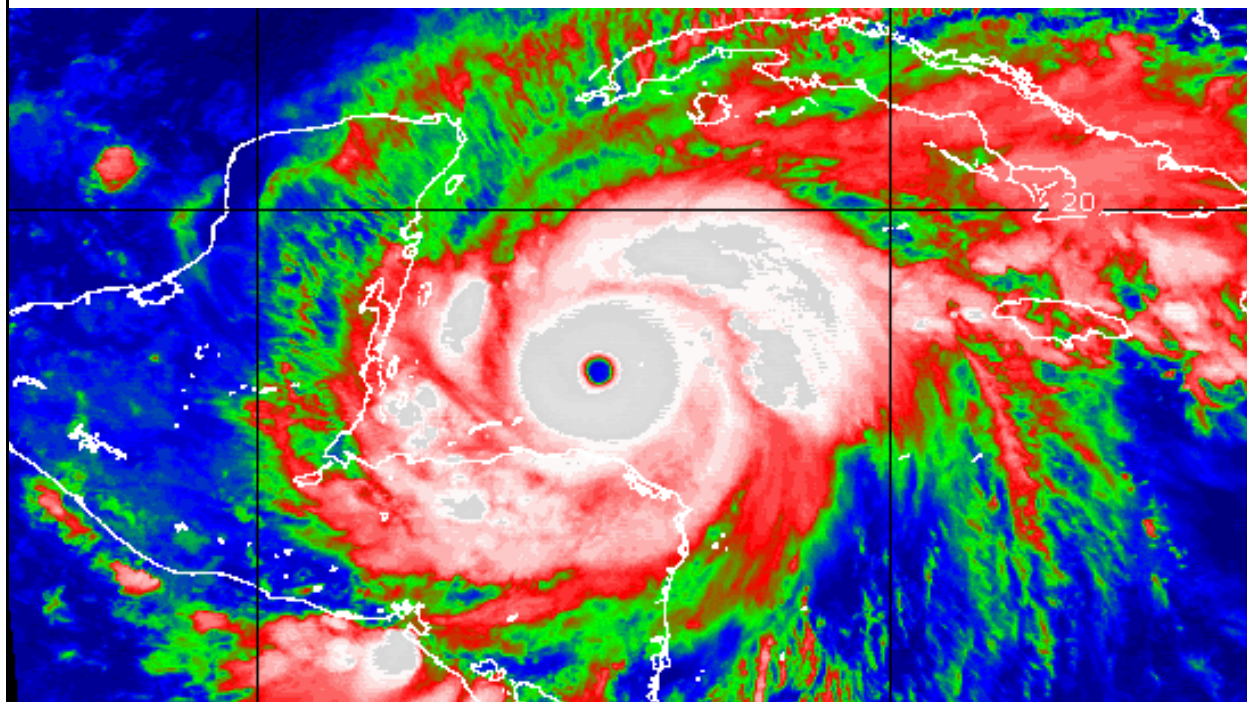
Top Five Atlantic Hurricanes *(listed by lowest barometric pressure)*

1. Hurricane Gilbert, 1988 — 888 mb
2. Florida Keys Hurricane, 1935 — 892 mb
3. Hurricane Allen, 1980 — 899 mb
4. Hurricane Mitch, 1998 — 905 mb
5. Hurricane Camille, 1969 — 909 mb

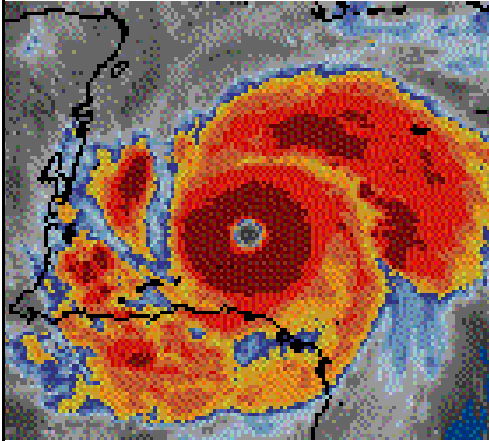
MIAMI (Reuters) - Hurricane Mitch Monday grew into one of the strongest Atlantic storms ever recorded, threatening the east coast of Central America with sustained winds reaching 180 mph (290 kph), forecasters said.

At 7 p.m. EST (midnight GMT), Mitch remained at least three days from landfall as it edged west-northwest at 8 mph (13 kph) north of Honduras in the Caribbean Sea, the U.S. National Hurricane

(Continued on page 2)



Cat. 5 Hurricane Mitch churns up Caribbean



(Continued from page 1)

Center said.

But its outer bands were spreading heavy rains over the Cayman Islands, Nicaragua and Honduras, causing forecasters to warn of life-threatening flash floods and mudslides. One death was reported from flooding in Panama.

Mitch grew into a rare, potentially catastrophic Category Five hurricane, the highest rating on forecasters' Saffir/Simpson scale of hurricane strength, earlier Monday.

Category Five hurricanes, with maximum sustained winds exceeding 155 mph (250 kph), attack shore areas with pounding winds and rains that level many buildings, tear roofs off others and flood huge areas. Only two hurricanes are known to have been Category Five storms when they made landfall in the United States.

"Interests in Belize, the Caribbean coast of Guatemala and the Yucatan Peninsula (in Mexico) and elsewhere in the northwestern Caribbean should closely monitor the progress of this extreme hurricane," the center said.

Forecasters said Mitch was among the five strongest hurricanes ever recorded in the Atlantic hurricane basin, which includes the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. It is significantly more powerful than Hurricane Georges, which killed more than 500 people in a rampage across the eastern Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico last month.

At 7 p.m. EST (midnight GMT), the hurricane center said Mitch's center was located about 110 miles (176 km) north of the coast of Honduras, at latitude 17.3 north and longitude 83.8 west.

The eye was near Swan Island, which belongs to Honduras and is uninhabited except for a military monitoring station.

Forecasters said it was impossible to say where Mitch might eventually make landfall.

"It could strike Cuba and make landfall. It could strike the Yucatan. It's really impossible to say," National Hurricane Center meteorologist Jeremy Pennington said.

The government of Honduras extended a hurricane warning west to cover all of its coast from the Nicaraguan border to the Guatemalan border.

A less urgent hurricane watch was in effect for the Cayman Islands and Belize.

Mitch was not expected to make landfall in Honduras, but hundreds of people were evacuated from its Caribbean

(Continued on page 3)

FALL SPORTS '98: SENIOR WEEK

NHS "Senior Day" or "Senior Night" Games/Meets

Tonight: Boys soccer vs. Bristol Eastern, 7:00 PM

Thursday: Girls swimming vs. Bulkeley, 3:30 PM

Friday afternoon: Field hockey vs. Glastonbury, 3:00 PM

Friday evening: Girls soccer vs. Bristol Central, 7:00 PM

Next Monday: Girls volleyball vs. Southington, 6:00 PM

Monster Mitch at 180 mph

(Continued from page 2)

tourist islands as high winds, pounding waves and heavy rains spinning off the powerful storm lashed its coast. The nation's principal port, Puerto Cortes, north of Tegucigalpa, was shut down.

"Aid organizations, the army and police are on maximum alert through the country," said Dimas Alonson, a spokesman for the government's emergency commission.

In Guatemala, emergency officials were on alert. Air traffic was suspended in the northern provinces and boat traffic stopped along the country's short Caribbean coastline.

In the tiny nation of Belize, officials moved residents out of Mitch's possible path, evacuating islands off its northern shore and urging people in low-lying coastal areas and near rivers on the mainland to evacuate.

Government offices, schools and businesses were closed in the Cayman Islands, the British territory south of Cuba, hit by heavy rains and high winds from Mitch's outer bands. More than 3,000 tourists and many residents took flights from the Caymans to anywhere

not in Mitch's path Sunday.

Cuban authorities began evacuating tourists and workers from islands off its southern coast, as heavy winds and high seas began to be felt from Mitch's outer edge.

At least 500 foreign vacationers and hundreds more Cuban hotel staff were taken off Cuba's Isla de la Juventud and Cayo Largo islands, officials said. Waves up to four meters (feet) high, and winds up to 42 mph (67 pH) were reported.

The recent passage of Hurricane Georges caused six deaths and extensive damage to crops and infrastructure across Cuba.

Flooding triggered by heavy rain from the hurricane killed one person and left thousands homeless in Panama, the country's civil protection agency said.

The strongest hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic Basin was Hurricane Gilbert, which devastated Jamaica, the Caymans, Martinique and parts of Mexico in 1988, killing 318 people.

Forecasters noted that the western Pacific regularly saw stronger storms known as supertyphoons.