Document Content

1. Hurricane Gilbert swept toward the Dominican Republic Sunday, and the Civil Defense alerted its heavily populated south coast to prepare for high winds, heavy rains and high seas

2. The storm was approaching from the southeast with sustained winds of 75 mph gusting to 92 mph

3. ``There is no need for alarm,'' Civil Defense Director Eugenio Cabral said in a television alert shortly before midnight Saturday

4. Cabral said residents of the province of Barahona should closely follow Gilbert's movement

5. An estimated 100,000 people live in the province, including 70,000 in the city of Barahona, about 125 miles west of Santo Domingo

6. Tropical Storm Gilbert formed in the eastern Caribbean and strengthened into a hurricane Saturday night

7. The National Hurricane Center in Miami reported its position at 2 a

8. Sunday at latitude 16

9. 1 north, longitude 67

10. 5 west, about 140 miles south of Ponce, Puerto Rico, and 200 miles southeast of Santo Domingo

11. The National Weather Service in San Juan, Puerto Rico, said Gilbert was moving westward at 15 mph with a ``broad area of cloudiness and heavy weather'' rotating around the center of the storm

12. The weather service issued a flash flood watch for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands until at least 6 p

13. Strong winds associated with the Gilbert brought coastal flooding, strong southeast winds and up to 12 feet feet to Puerto Rico's south coast

14. There were no reports of casualties

15. San Juan, on the north coast, had heavy rains and gusts Saturday, but they subsided during the night

16. On Saturday, Hurricane Florence was downgraded to a tropical storm and its remnants pushed inland from the U

17. Residents returned home, happy to find little damage from 80 mph winds and sheets of rain

18. Florence, the sixth named storm of the 1988 Atlantic storm season, was the second hurricane

19. The first, Debby, reached minimal hurricane strength briefly before hitting the Mexican coast last month

20. Hurricane Gilbert, packing 110 mph winds and torrential rain, moved over this capital city today after skirting Puerto Rico, Haiti and the Dominican Republic

21. There were no immediate reports of casualties

22. Telephone communications were affected

23. ``Right now it's actually moving over Jamaica,'' said Bob Sheets, director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami

24. ``We've already had reports of 110 mph winds on the eastern tip

25. ``It looks like the eye is going to move lengthwise across that island, and they're going to bear the full brunt of this powerful hurricane,'' Sheets said

26. Forecasters say Gilbert was expected to lash Jamaica throughout the day and was on track to later strike the Cayman Islands, a small British dependency northwest of Jamaica

27. Meanwhile, Havana Radio reported today that 25,000 people were evacuated from Guantanamo Province on Cuba's southeastern coast as strong winds fanning out from Gilbert began brushing the island

28. All Jamaica-bound flights were canceled at Miami International Airport, while flights from Grand Cayman, the main island of the three-island chain, arrived packed with frightened travelers

29. ``People were running around in the main lobby of our hotel (on Grand Cayman) like chickens with their heads cut off,'' said one vacationer who was returning home to California through Miami

30. Hurricane warnings were posted for the Cayman Islands, Cuba and Haiti

31. Warnings were discontinued for the Dominican Republic

32. ``All interests in the Western Caribbean should continue to monitor the progress of this dangerous hurricane,'' the service said, adding, ``Little change in strength is expected for the next several hours as the hurricane moves westward over Jamaica''

33. The Associated Press' Caribbean headquarters in San Juan, Puerto Rico, was unable to get phone calls through to Kingston, where high winds and heavy rain preceding the storm drenched the capital overnight, toppling trees, causing local flooding and littering streets with branches

34. Most Jamaicans stayed home, boarding up windows in preparation for the hurricane

35. Some companies broadcast appeals for technicians and electricians to report to work

36. The weather bureau predicted Gilbert's center, 140 miles southeast of Kingston before dawn, would pass south of Kingston and hit the southern parish of Clarendon

37. Flash flood warnings were issued for the parishes of Portland on the northeast and St

38. Mary on the north

39. The north coast tourist region from Montego Bay on the west and Ocho Rios on the east, far from the southern impact zone and separated by mountains, was expected only to receive heavy rain

40. Officials urged residents in the higher risk areas along the south coast to seek higher ground

41. ``It's certainly one of the larger systems we've seen in the Caribbean for a long time,'' said Hal Gerrish, forecaster at the National Hurricane Center

42. Forecasters at the center said the eye of Gilbert was 140 miles southeast of Kingston at dawn today

43. Maximum sustained winds were near 110 mph, with tropical-storm force winds extending up to 250 miles to the north and 100 miles to the south

44. Prime Minister Edward Seaga of Jamaica alerted all government agencies, saying Sunday night: ``Hurricane Gilbert appears to be a real threat and everyone should follow the instructions and hurricane precautions issued by the Office of Disaster Preparedness in order to minimize the danger''

45. Forecasters said the hurricane had been gaining strength as it passed over the ocean after it dumped 5 to 10 inches of rain on the Dominican Republic and Haiti, which share the island of Hispaniola

46. ``We should know within about 72 hours whether it's going to be a major threat to the United States,'' said Martin Nelson, another meteorologist at the center

47. ``It's moving at about 17 mph to the west and normally hurricanes take a northward turn after they pass central Cuba''

48. Cuba's official Prensa Latina news agency said a state of alert was declared at midday in the Cuban provinces of Guantanamo, Holguin, Santiago de Cuba and Granma

49. In the report from Havana received in Mexico City, Prensa Latina said civil defense officials were broadcasting bulletins on national radio and television recommending emergency measures and providing information on the storm

50. Heavy rain and stiff winds downed power lines and caused flooding in the Dominican Republic on Sunday night as the hurricane's center passed just south of the Barahona peninsula, then less than 100 miles from neighboring Haiti

51. The storm ripped the roofs off houses and flooded coastal areas of southwestern Puerto Rico after reaching hurricane strength off the island's southeast Saturday night

52. Flights were canceled Sunday in the Dominican Republic, where civil defense director Eugenio Cabral reported some flooding in parts of the capital of Santo Domingo and power outages there and in other southern areas

53. Hurricane Gilbert slammed into Kingston on Monday with torrential rains and 115 mph winds that ripped roofs off homes and buildings, uprooted trees and downed power lines

54. No serious injuries were immediately reported in the city of 750,000 people, which was hit by the full force of the hurricane around noon

55. For half an hour, the hurricane lashed the city, tearing branches from trees, blowing down fences and whipping paper through the air

56. The National Weather Service reported heavy damage to Kingston's airport and aircraft parked on its fields

57. The first shock let up as the eye of the storm moved across the city

58. Skies brightened, the winds died down and people waited for an hour before the second blow of the hurricane arrived

59. All Jamaica-bound flights were canceled at Miami International Airport

60. Flights from the Cayman Islands, reportedly next in the path of the hurricane, arrived in Miami packed with travelers cutting short their vacations

61. ``People were running around in the main lobby of our hotel (on Grand Cayman Island) like chickens with their heads cut off,'' said one man

62. A National Weather Service report said the hurricane was moving west at 17 mph with maximum sustained winds of 115 mph

63. It said Jamaica would receive up to 10 inches of rain that would cause flash floods and mud slides

64. ``Right now it's actually moving over Jamaica,'' said Bob Sheets, director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami

65. ``It looks like the eye is going to move lengthwise across that island, and they're going to bear the full brunt of this powerful hurricane,'' he said

66. Gilbert reached Jamaica after skirting southern Puerto Rico, Haiti and the Dominican Republic

67. Hurricane warnings were issued Monday for the south coast of Cuba east of Camaguey, the Cayman Islands, and Haiti, while warnings were discontinued for the Dominican Republic

68. High winds and heavy rain preceding the storm drenched Kingston overnight, toppling trees, causing local flooding and littering streets with branches

69. Most of Jamaica's 2

70. 3 million people stayed home, boarding up windows in preparation for the hurricane

71. The popular north coast resort area, on the other side of the mountains, was expected to receive heavy rain but not as much damage from the hurricane as the south coast, where officials urged residents to seek higher ground

72. Havana Radio, meanwhile, reported Monday that 25,000 people were evacuated from coastal areas in Guantanamo Province on the nation's southeastern coast as Gilbert's winds and rain began to brush the island

73. In Washington, the Navy reported its bases at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, had taken various precautionary steps but appeared to be safe from the brunt of the hurricane

74. Ken Ross, a spokesman, said the Navy station at Guantanamo reported that as of 2:30 p

75. EDT, the brunt of the storm appeared to be passing southeastern Cuba

76. ``They have reported maximum winds of 25 knots and gusts up to 50 knots,'' said Ross

77. ``But there are no reports of injuries or damage''

78. The spokesman said earlier in the day, Guantanamo had moved to ``Condition Two,'' meaning electrical power usage was cut back to only essential uses and ``all non-essential personnel sent to their barracks''

79. The storm also skirted Puerto Rico without causing any damage to military facilities, Ross said

80. Sheets said Gilbert was expected next to sweep over the Cayman Islands, on its westward track, and in two to three days veer northwest into the southern Gulf of Mexico

81. Residents of the neighboring Caymans, a British dependency to the northwest, were urged to ``rush all preparatory actions''

82. The National Weather Service warned that the Caymans could expect high waters and large waves ``which may undermine buildings along the beaches''

83. ``All interests in the Western Caribbean should continue to monitor the progress of this dangerous hurricane,'' the service advised

84. Forecaster Hal Gerrish on Sunday described Gilbert ``certainly one of the larger systems we've seen in the Caribbean for a long time

85. ''  
 Hurricane Gilbert, one of the strongest storms ever, slammed into the Yucatan Peninsula Wednesday and leveled thatched homes, tore off roofs, uprooted trees and cut off the Caribbean resorts of Cancun and Cozumel

86. Looters roamed the streets of Cancun, stealing from stores whose windows were blown away

87. Huge waves battered the beach resorts and thousands were evacuated

88. Despite the intensity of the onslaught and the ensuing heavy flooding, officials reported only two minor injuries

89. The storm killed 19 people in Jamaica and five in the Dominican Republic before moving west to Mexico

90. Prime Minister Edward Seaga of Jamaica said Wednesday the storm destroyed an estimated 100,000 of Jamaica's 500,000 homes when it throttled the island Monday

91. The Jamaican Embassy reported earlier that 500,000 of the nation's 2

92. 3 million people were homeless

93. In Cancun, amateur radio operators said an oil tanker from the fleet of the government oil monopoly Pemex, the Lazaro Cardenas, had run aground on the beach in the Cancun hotel zone

94. Pemex officials however said all their vessels were secure

95. Army officials in Mexico City said about 35,000 people were evacuated from Cancun, but Cancun Mayor Jose Sanchez Zapata said about 11,000 fled

96. More than 120,000 people on the northeast Yucatan coast were evacuated, the Yucatan state government said

97. The eye of the storm passed over Cozumel and Cancun with howling winds clocked at 160 mph at about 8 a

98. The winds bent and toppled utility poles and uprooted slum dwellings

99. Ham radio operators around Cancun said Gilbert knocked down a radio and television communications tower, uprooted trees and blew the roofs off buildings

100. Floods prevented officials from reaching the hotel zone in Cancun and there were no relief efforts under way by late Wednesday

101. Shelters had little or no food, water or blankets and power was out

102. ``We can't do it yet

103. The wind would blow them away,'' said an army official at city hall who declined to give his name

104. Bands of 25-30 youths roamed the streets of Cancun Wednesday, looting stores with shattered windows, said Alfredo Moro Sanchez, investigative coordinator of the Quintana Roo state judicial police

105. He said he asked for army troops to halt the looting but none had arrived by late Wednesday

106. About 150 tourists took refuge at the Cancun city hall

107. Honeymooner Sheila Fournier of Long Island said she and her husband, Pete, had been evacuated from the Villas Playa Hotel

108. ``It had an ocean-front view \_ which is now washed away,'' she said

109. Officials were checking low-lying areas of Cancun for stranded residents

110. There was heavy damage visible to the humble wood and thatch homes typical of the Yucatan

111. ``There were some people who did not want to leave yesterday,'' the army official said

112. ``It was something new

113. They didn't know what a cyclone was''

114. At midnight EDT Gilbert was centered near latitude 21

115. 5 north, longitude 90

116. 2 west and approaching the north coast of Yucatan, about 60 miles east-northeast of the provincial capital, Merida, the National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables, Fla

117. The storm was about 550 miles southeast of Brownsville, Texas, the center said in a statement

118. Gilbert was moving west-northwest at 15 mph and winds had decreased to 125 mph

119. The Mexican National Weather Service reported winds gusting as high as 218 mph earlier Wednesday with sustained winds of 179 mph

120. Earlier Wednesday Gilbert was classified as a Category 5 storm, the strongest ad deadliest type of hurricane

121. Such storms have maximum sustained winds greater than 155 mph and can cause catastrophic damage

122. By Wednesday night the National Hurricane Center downgraded it to a Category 4, but center director Bob Sheets said:``There's no question it'll strengthen again once it comes off the Yucatan Peninsula and gets back in open water''

123. As Gilbert moved away from the Yucatan Peninsula Wednesday night, the hurricane formed a double eye, two concentric circles of thunderstorms often characteristic of a strong storm that has crossed land and is moving over the water again

124. One eye was about eight miles wide, and the second about 25 miles wide, said hurricane center meteorologist Jesse Moore

125. ``This is one of the features that we expected to see as the hurricane moved back over the water, and we do expect intensification,'' he said

126. Only two Category 5 hurricanes have hit the United States \_ the 1935 storm that killed 408 people in Florida and Hurricane Camille that devastated the Mississippi coast in 1969, killing 256 people

127. Oil companies evacuated thousands of workers from rigs in the Gulf of Mexico

128. The peninsula ports of Campeche, Celestum, Progreso, Sinzal, Ucaltepen, Tel-Chac, Cancun, Puerto Morelos, and Ciudad del Carmen were closed, the government news agency Notimex said

129. Airports in the region were closed

130. ``The sound of the wind outside is horrible,'' said receptionist Pablo Torres at Cancun's Hotel Carrillos as the storm approached

131. The National Hurricane Center said a hurricane watch was in effect on the Texas coast from Brownsville to Port Arthur and along the coast of northeast Mexico from Tampico north

132. In Mexico City, the National Civil Defense System said it lost telephone contact with Cancun and Cozumel at about 8 a

133. Public buildings in Cancun were used as shelters, said Cecila Lavalle, a spokesman for Quintana Roo state government in Chetumal, 155 miles southeast of Cozumel

134. Jennie Valdez, a U

135. consular representative in Cancun, said she did not know how many tourists were in Cancun, but government figures estimate 40,000 to 65,000 monthly visitors

136. Hurricane warnings were in effect for the entire Yucatan Peninsula and widespread evacuations were reported

137. Winds destroyed at least 100 homes in slums of Valladolid, a town of about 45,000 about 100 miles from Cozumel, Alberto Pol, a judicial police officer, said by telephone

138. The National Hurricane Center said Gilbert was the most intense storm on record in terms of barometric pressure

139. It was measured at 26

140. 31 inches, breaking the 26

141. 35 inches recorded for the 1935 hurricane that devastated the Florida Keys

142. ``That's the lowest pressure ever measured in the Western Hemisphere,'' said forecaster Mark Zimmer

143. On Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, Gilbert pounded the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

144. Seaga said Jamaica would need $8 billion in aid

145. Officials in the Dominican Republic, sideswiped Sunday by the storm, reported five dead

146. Gilbert also buffeted the Cayman Islands, but no deaths were reported

147. Hurricane Gilbert's growth from a harmless low pressure zone off Africa to a ferocious killer in the Gulf of Mexico was fueled by a combination of heat, moisture and wind that baffles forecasters

148. ``It's a matter of getting everything together in the right place in the right time,'' Gil Clark of the National Hurricane Center said Thursday

149. ``It doesn't happen very often

150. How it develops, we don't know''

151. Gilbert came to the attention of center forecasters Sept

152. 3 as a dry low pressure trough moving west out of Africa

153. ``We get 50 or 60 of these off Africa every summer

154. About one of six develop,'' said Clark

155. 8, the system became a depression

156. It reached tropical storm status by Saturday and a hurricane Sunday

157. A tropical wave becomes a depression when winds start swirling

158. When sustained winds reach 39 mph, the system becomes a named tropical storm

159. It reaches hurricane status when sustained winds hit 74 mph

160. Why Gilbert organized and strengthened while other systems didn't ``is a mystery more or less,'' said University of Miami meteorology Professor Rainer Bleck

161. ``The first part of the summer we were biting our nails, wondering why these (other) disturbances didn't develop,'' he said Thursday

162. ``That's something meteorologists would like to know more about''

163. But the scientists do know what fuels a budding storm once development begins

164. And they know that development is sparked when winds converge, and that growth is affected by time and place

165. ``If that happens in an area where there's plenty of moisture in the lower atmosphere (the bottom 10,000 feet or so), this convergence may lead to upward motion and cloud formation,'' Bleck said

166. ``If clouds form, the heat of condensation in the clouds occasionally provides `positive feedback' to the convergence pattern

167. That strengthens it,'' he said, adding that storms can begin budding only off the equator because of the Earth's rotation

168. Eventually, a vortex is created

169. ``Any time you contract an air mass, they will start spinning

170. That's what makes the tornadoes, hurricanes and blizzards, those winter storms,'' Bleck said

171. Hurricanes ``are useful to the climate machine

172. Their primary role is to transport heat from the lower to the upper atmosphere,'' he said

173. ``The sun puts energy into the water, the top of the oceans and lowest part of the atmosphere

174. That has to be distributed from the bottom to higher levels of the atmosphere''

175. When the depression that would become Gilbert neared Barbados, warm Atlantic waters nurtured it

176. ``This time of year in the northwest Caribbean is best for development,'' Clark said

177. ``If you get a storm in this area in September, when the water's warmest, it can just explode

178. This is where Camille formed and exploded,'' referring to the 1969 storm that slammed into the Gulf Coast

179. ``It is an exciting thing to watch

180. If you're on the beach watching the storm surge, it's a different story,'' he said

181. The hurricane center said Gilbert was the most intense storm on record in terms of barometric pressure, measured at 26

182. 13 inches Tuesday night

183. That broke the 26

184. 35 inches of the 1935 hurricane that devastated the Florida Keys

185. Hurricane Gilbert swept toward Jamaica yesterday with 100-mile-an-hour winds, and officials issued warnings to residents on the southern coasts of the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba

186. The storm ripped the roofs off houses and caused coastal flooding in Puerto Rico

187. In the Dominican Republic, all domestic flights and flights to and from Puerto Rico and Miami were canceled

188. Forecasters said the hurricane was gaining strength as it passed over the ocean and would dump heavy rain on the Dominican Republic and Haiti as it moved south of Hispaniola, the Caribbean island they share, and headed west

189. "It's still gaining strength

190. It's certainly one of the larger systems we've seen in the Caribbean for a long time," said Hal Gerrish, forecaster at the National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables, Fla

191. EDT, the center of the hurricane was about 100 miles south of the Dominican Republic and 425 miles east of Kingston, Jamaica

192. The hurricane was moving west at about 15 mph and was expected to continue this motion for the next 24 hours

193. Forecasters said the hurricane's track would take it about 50 miles south of southwestern Haiti

194. The hurricane center said small craft in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico should remain in port until conditions improve

195. The forecasters said the Dominican Republic would get as much as 10 inches of rain yesterday, with similar amounts falling in Haiti last night and tonight

196. Hurricane warnings were issued for the south coast of Haiti and Cuba by their respective governments

197. In Jamaica, the government issued a hurricane watch for the entire island

198. Tropical Storm Gilbert formed in the eastern Caribbean and strengthened into a hurricane Saturday night

199. In Puerto Rico, besides tearing off several roofs, the storm caused coastal flooding and brought down power lines and trees along roads and highways in the west and southwestern regions

200. Three people were injured in Guayanilla, Puerto Rico, when a tree fell on their vehicle as they traveled along Route 97, police reported

201. Four policemen stationed on Mona Island, between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, were stranded as a result of the weather