

= Cyclone Wasa ? Arthur =

Severe Tropical Cyclone Wasa ? Arthur was the first major tropical cyclone to affect French Polynesia and Tahiti since the 1982 @-@ 83 season . The system was first noted on December 3 , 1991 as a shallow tropical depression that was embedded within the monsoon trough , to the north of the Cook Island : Rarotonga . Over the next couple of days the system gradually developed further , before it was classified as a tropical cyclone and named Wasa during December 5 . The system gradually strengthened further and acquired hurricane @-@ force winds on December 6 , as it performed a small clockwise loop . After completing the loop , Wasa moved southwards before it peaked in intensity during December 8 , with sustained wind speeds of 165 km / h ( 105 mph ) . Over the next few days the system started to weaken as it passed through the French Polynesian Society Islands , and became the first major tropical cyclone to affect French Polynesia since 1983 .

During December 12 , Wasa passed through the French Polynesian Austral Islands and passed directly over Tubuai , before it degenerated into a tropical depression later that day . However , gale force winds remained associated with the depression , before the system turned towards the east @-@ northeast and entered into warmer waters near the Tuamotu Islands . During December 14 , Wasa regenerated into a tropical depression and was renamed Arthur for various reasons . During that day the system gradually intensified before it reached its secondary peak intensity with sustained wind speeds of 95 km / h ( 60 mph ) . During December 15 , the system maintained its peak intensity , as it moved through the uninhabited Acteon Group of islands , before during the next day it started to gradually weaken . Arthur degenerated into a shallow depression during December 17 , before it was last noted during the next day as it dissipated to the north of the Pitcairn islands .

Tourists on the island of Bora Bora were evacuated to a local church , after Wasa ? Arthur had swept high seas into tourist bungalows . Overall the system caused an estimated US \$ 60 million in damage within French Polynesia , with the majority of the damage done between December 9 ? 12 . The system destroyed or damaged several homes , a variety of crops and damaged several public buildings , hotels , roads and power installations , with the worst affected islands being Bora Bora and Tubuai . On Rurutu island , Moerai harbour was destroyed by a cyclonic swell generated by the system , while the local school and police station were destroyed by high waves . Two people were killed after torrential rainfall from the system caused a mudslide on the island of Moorea , during a night of torrential rain the day after Wasa had made its closest approach to the island . The French Government incurred costs of about FF68 million including FF53 million for the efforts of the French Military . The French Polynesian Government subsequently borrowed FF55 million and built up a fund from local banks of about FF1.5 billion , to help with the reconstruction . The name Wasa was later retired , from the list of tropical cyclone names by the World Meteorological Organization .

= = Meteorological history = =

On December 3 , the Fiji Meteorological Service started to monitor a shallow tropical depression , that had developed within a monsoon trough about 1 @,@ 250 km ( 775 mi ) to the north of Rarotonga , in the Southern Cook Islands . Over the next two days , the system gradually developed further as it moved towards the southwest , before during December 5 , the Naval Western Oceanography Center ( NWOC ) started to monitor the depression and designated it as Tropical Cyclone 07P after it had become equivalent to a tropical storm . Later that day , TCWC Nadi reported that the system had developed into a category one tropical cyclone on the Australian tropical cyclone intensity scale and named it Wasa , while it was located about 250 km ( 160 mi ) to the south @-@ west of the Cook Islands Penhryn . During December 6 , Wasa developed hurricane force winds in an area of low vertical wind shear as it performed a small clockwise loop before it started to move towards the southeast during December 8 , as an equatorial westerly wind burst affected the system . Early on December 8 , the NWOC reported that Wasa had peaked in intensity with 1 @-@ minute sustained wind speeds of 195 km / h ( 120 mph ) , which made it equivalent to a category 3 hurricane on the Saffir @-@ Simpson hurricane wind scale . TCWC Nadi subsequently reported during the next day , that Wasa had become a Category 4 Severe tropical cyclone , as it

reached its peak intensity with 10 @-@ minute sustained winds of 165 km / h ( 105 mph ) .

Over the next few days the system started to weaken as it passed through the French Polynesian Society Islands , and became the first major tropical cyclone to affect French Polynesia since 1983 . During December 12 , Wasa passed through the French Polynesian Austral Islands and passed directly over Tubuai . Later that day , TCWC Nadi reported that the system had weakened into a tropical depression , before the NWOC issued their final advisory on Wasa during December 13 . However , gale force winds remained associated with the depression , in particular within the systems southeastern quadrant , the system subsequently turned and started to move towards the east @-@ northeast and entered into warmer waters near the Tuamotus . TCWC Nadi subsequently reported during December 14 , that the system had regenerated into a category one tropical cyclone and renamed it : Arthur , for various reasons including operational purposes and to avoid confusion among recipients of their warnings . During that day the system gradually intensified further , as it passed about 130 km ( 80 mi ) to the north @-@ northwest of the atoll : Mururoa , with the automatic weather station there reporting sustained wind speeds of 70 km / h ( 45 mph ) . At 12 : 00 UTC TCWC Nadi reported that Wasa ? Arthur had re @-@ peaked with 10 @-@ minute sustained wind speeds of 95 km / h ( 60 mph ) , which made it a category 2 tropical cyclone on the Australian scale . During the next day the system maintained its peak intensity and moved through the uninhabited Acteon Group of islands and several other atolls , before as Wasa @-@ Arthur turned eastwards , the NWOC decided to classify the storm as Tropical Cyclone 08P , with peak 1 @-@ minute sustained wind speeds of 85 km / h ( 55 mph ) . During December 16 , the system started to gradually weaken as it turned more towards the east , before it degenerated into a shallow depression late the next day . The remnant depression was last noted dissipating during December 18 , to the north of the Pitcairn islands .

= = Preparations and impact = =

During December 9 , ahead of Cyclone Wasa affecting French Polynesia , the High Commissioner Jean Montpezat , declared a state of maximum alert which closed schools and banned navigation . On December 12 , tourists on the island of Bora Bora were evacuated to a local church , after the system had swept high seas into tourist bungalows . Overall Cyclone Wasa ? Arthur caused an estimated US \$ 60 million in damage within the six Leeward Islands , the two Windward Islands of Tahiti and Moorea and several of the Austral Islands with the majority of the damage done between December 9 ? 12 . The system destroyed 367 homes , damaged 855 other homes , destroyed or damaged a variety of crops and damaged several public buildings , hotels , roads and power installations , with the worst affected islands were Bora Bora and Tubuai . On Rurutu island , Moerai harbour was destroyed by a cyclonic swell generated by the system , while the local school and police station were destroyed by high waves . A women and her child were killed while asleep , after torrential rainfall from Wasa caused a mudslide on the island of Moorea the day after the system had made its closest approach to the island .

During the aftermath of the cyclone , a French Military cargo plane and several helicopters carried out initial relief efforts to several of the islands affected by Wasa , before the French Polynesian Government and private cargo ships continued the effort , by carrying emergency relief supplies and reconstruction materials . The French Government 's Minister for Overseas France : Louis Le Pensec arrived in Tahiti on December 15 , to inspect the damage and explore ways of rebuilding the island nation , after similar tours were conducted by the President of French Polynesia , Gaston Flosse and several of his cabinet ministers . During the emergency period , the French Government incurred costs of about FF68 million including FF53 million for the efforts of the French Military . The French Polynesian Government subsequently borrowed FF55 million from the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation and built up a fund from local banks of about FF1.5 billion , to help with the reconstruction of infrastructure and territorial buildings . The name Wasa was later retired , from the list of tropical cyclone names by the World Meteorological Organization .