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Fake hurricane videos shared online including AI-generated sharks

28 October 2025

Summary

We're seeing AI-generated videos supposedly from Hurricane Melissa spreading online, **including fake footage of sharks in coastal floods**

The team are keeping an eye out for real videos and images of the impact of the massive storm, as it batters Jamaica and other Caribbean islands

Our fact-checkers have also examined **how much UK government's plans to house asylum seekers in two military sites could cost**

BBC Verify uses open-source intelligence, satellite imagery, fact-checking and data analysis to help report complex stories

This feed is where we post our work throughout the day

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Live Reporting

Edited by Adam Durbin

19:51 28 October 2025

Where to find more Hurricane Melissa coverage



Thomas Copeland
BBC Verify Live journalist

We're expecting the strongest storm of the year, Hurricane Melissa, to make landfall in Jamaica in the next few hours.

While we are closing this BBC Verify Live page shortly, our verification team is monitoring social media to authenticate footage as it emerges and circulate it to our colleagues across BBC News.

You can follow the BBC's main coverage of the story here.

Already today we've been monitoring significant amounts of fake AI-generated storm videos spreading to millions of viewers online, tracked the 'Hurricane Hunter' aircraft flying directly into the eye of the hurricane and shown you how rare it is to see a storm of this magnitude.

And in the UK, we've looked into:

- Reform UK's plans to cut the number of civil servants
- What satellite imagery tells us about military sites the government has earmarked to house asylum seekers
- How much similar asylum accommodation schemes have cost in the past

Thanks for joining us, we'll be back tomorrow with more.

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19:34 28 October 2025

A reminder that not all fake images are AI-generated



Jacqueline Galvin
BBC Verify designer

While we have seen a recent spate of fake pictures and video made using AI, a false image from 2011 that came across my desk this morning reminded me that visual misinformation can come from more old-school methods.

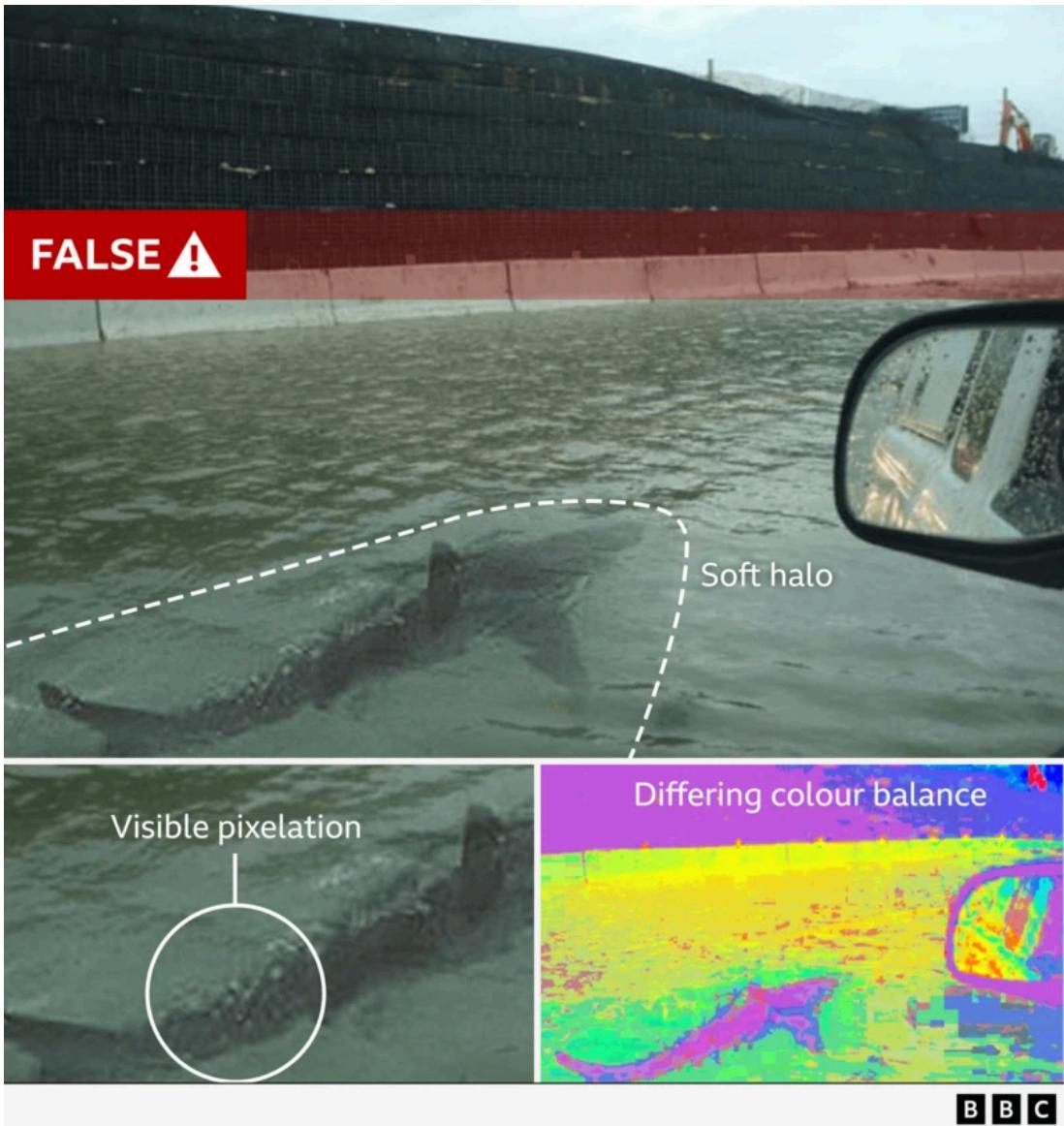
Examining this famous fake shark image from 2011 that we reported on earlier, it was interesting to note the use of basic editing techniques visible in the photo.

So here are some things to look out for. Closer inspection appears to show a visible soft halo around the shark, suggesting it was inserted into the picture from a different photo.

The resolution of the pasted section also appears to be slightly lower than the surrounding image, with increased pixelation particularly noticeable towards the tail end of the shark.

Additionally, the colour balance of the inserted section seems to differ from the rest of the scene. I would describe the water in the scene as having an element of yellow in it, causing it to appear brown.

Over the shark, that yellow tone is absent, which is especially obvious in the differential colour analysis shown in the bottom-right of the graphic I've put together below.



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19:23 28 October 2025

WATCH: ‘Hurricane Hunter’ aircraft fly into the eye of Melissa



Thomas Copeland
BBC Verify Live journalist

Earlier I reported on the two Hurricane Hunter aircraft heading towards Melissa to collect data and track the enormous storm’s movements.

In this video taken from aircraft tracking platform Flightradar24, you can see as the WP-3D Orion plane, operated by the the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and nicknamed “Kermit”, approaches the storm from the north.

It then flies through the storm's eyewall and circles inside the eye of the hurricane.

About 15 seconds into this video the US Air Force WC-130J Weatherbird switches on its transponder and also appears on screen, flying towards the storm from the south.



| Two 'Hurricane Hunter' aircraft approaching Hurricane Melissa

The planes have reported that Hurricane Melissa is getting stronger, with maximum sustained winds now up to 185 mph (295 km/h), [according to NOAA's latest public advisory.](#)

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18:16 28 October 2025

Two 'Hurricane Hunters' flying towards Melissa



Thomas Copeland
BBC Verify Live journalist



GETTY IMAGES

| One of NOAA's WP-3D Orion 'Hurricane Hunter' aircraft

You might have spotted some of the extraordinary footage taken from inside the eye of Hurricane Melissa earlier today.

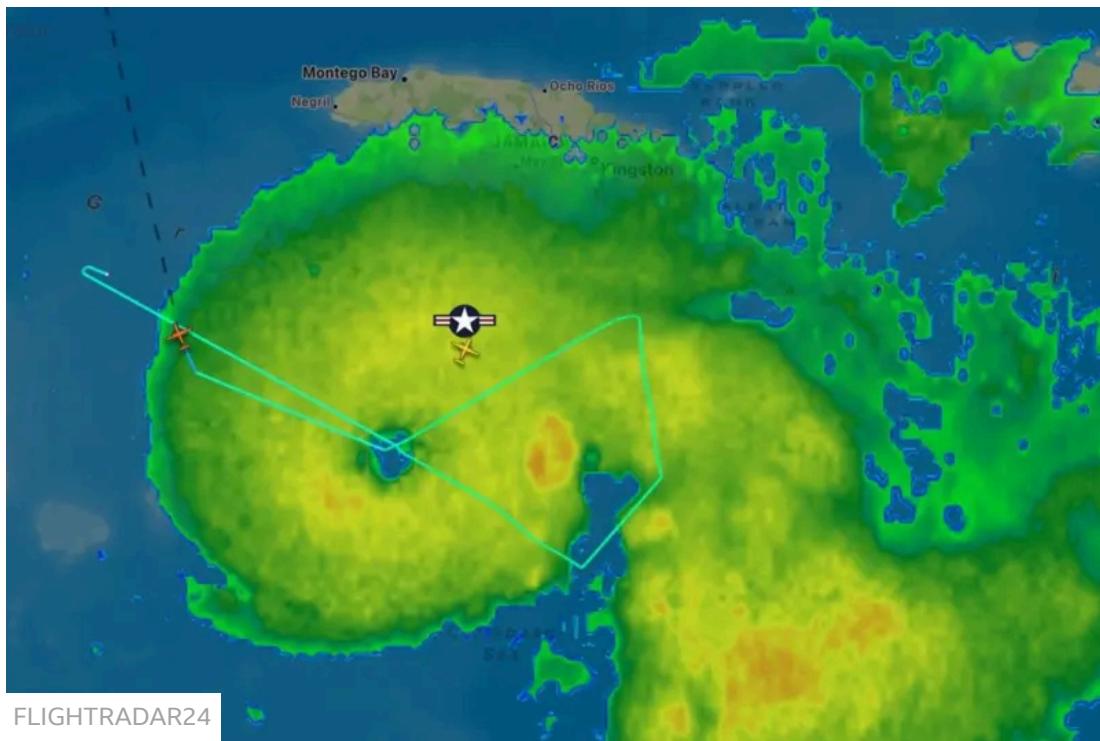
Videos like these are taken by specially-built Hurricane Hunter aircraft operated by the US Air Force and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) which fly through extreme winds and plunging temperatures into the eye of a storm to track movement and gather key data.

Right now we're monitoring the movements of two of these Hurricane Hunters en route to the eye of Hurricane Melissa, just south of Jamaica.

Currently visible on flight tracking platforms is a WP-3D Orion four-engine turboprop aircraft flying out of Lakeland in Florida. NOAA operates two of these planes, affectionately nicknamed "Kermit" and "Miss Piggy" after the beloved characters from the Muppets.

Closer to the eye of the storm right now is a WC-130J Weatherbird from the Air Force Reserve's 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron which departed from the small Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao about 10:00 GMT (06:00 local time).

Read more of my reporting on this story by clicking here.



A screenshot from Flightradar24 tracking NOAA's WP-3D Orion on the left and the US Air Force WC-130J Weatherbird on the right

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17:53 28 October 2025

Flooded streets and strong winds seen in verified Jamaica videos



Emma Pengelly
BBC Verify journalist

Overnight and this morning we've been monitoring social media for footage of Hurricane Melissa to help build a picture of what is happening on the ground.

While we've found plenty of AI-generated videos, some of which have gathered millions of views, we're also seeing more authentic material beginning to show the true impact of the record storm across Jamaica.

We've geolocated this video to downtown Kingston, where flood water is gushing down a street and thunder rumbles overhead.

In a second video that we've verified as being filmed from a hotel on the north coast of the island, we can see strong gusts of wind and rain ahead of the hurricane's expected landfall later today.



INSTAGRAM

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17:33 28 October 2025

Satellite imagery shows proposed asylum military sites



Lucy Gilder
BBC Verify journalist

We've been looking at satellite imagery from Planet Labs of the two military sites that the government has earmarked to house asylum seekers.

The top image is Cameron Barracks in Inverness. I checked and the site is just a 30-minute walk to the city centre, with schools and hospitals close by.

The image at the bottom is Crowborough army training camp in East Sussex. This site is slightly more remote. It's about 40 minutes on foot to the town centre and there are no schools or hospitals within around half a mile (1km).

Cameron Barracks is expected to hold about 300 people and Crowborough will hold around 600, according to the local councils in the areas the sites are located.

The councils say essential services will be provided on site and that asylum seekers will be free to leave.

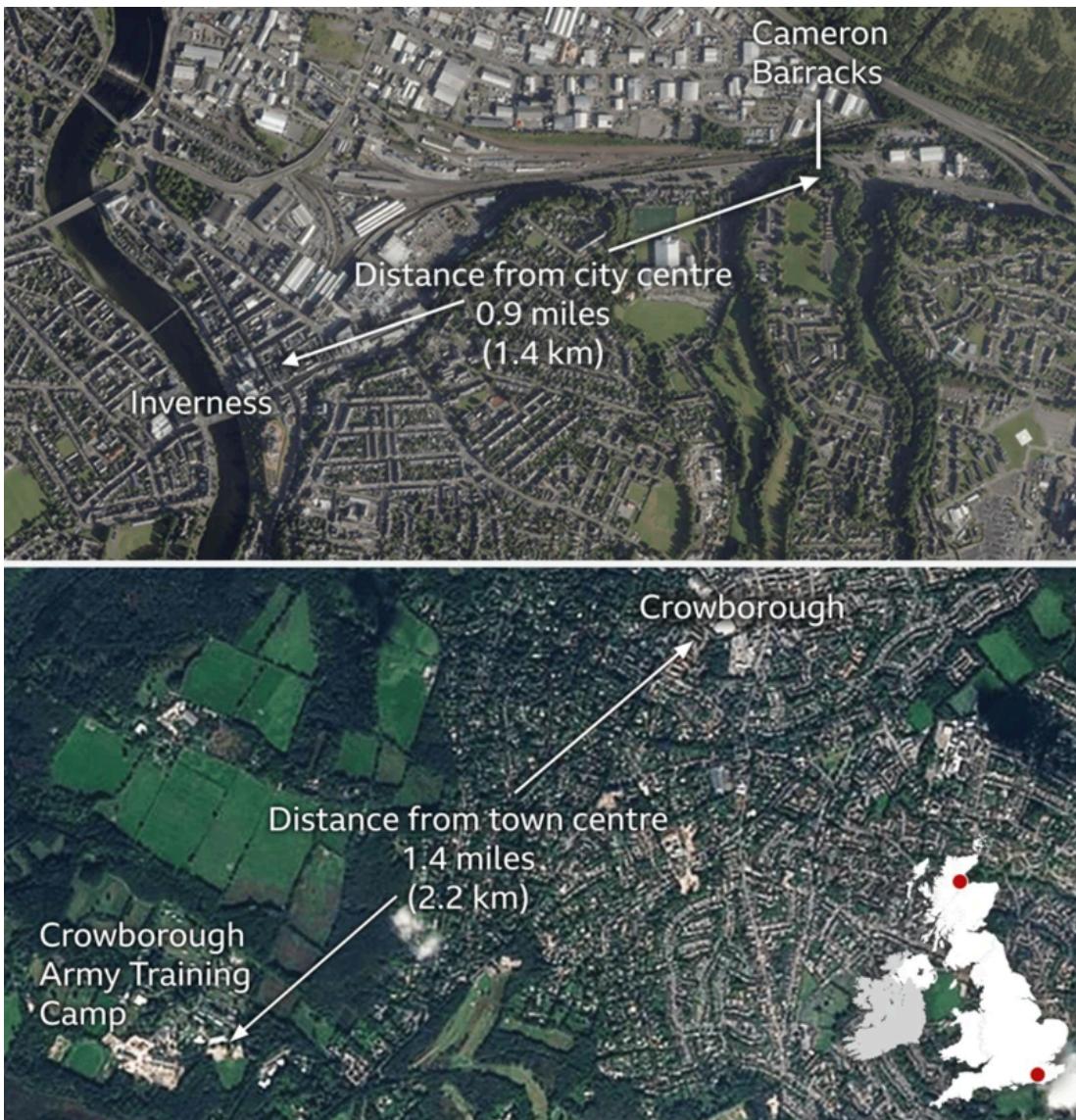


Image source: Planet Labs PBC

BBC

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17:04 28 October 2025

What do we know about Reform's plans to cut civil servants' numbers?



Tamara Kovacevic
BBC Verify senior journalist

Danny Kruger, the Reform UK MP who defected from the Conservatives last month, has promised a cut in civil service numbers if the party wins the next general election.

Speaking at a press conference this morning, Kruger did not specify how many civil servant jobs Reform would cut. But earlier on Times Radio he

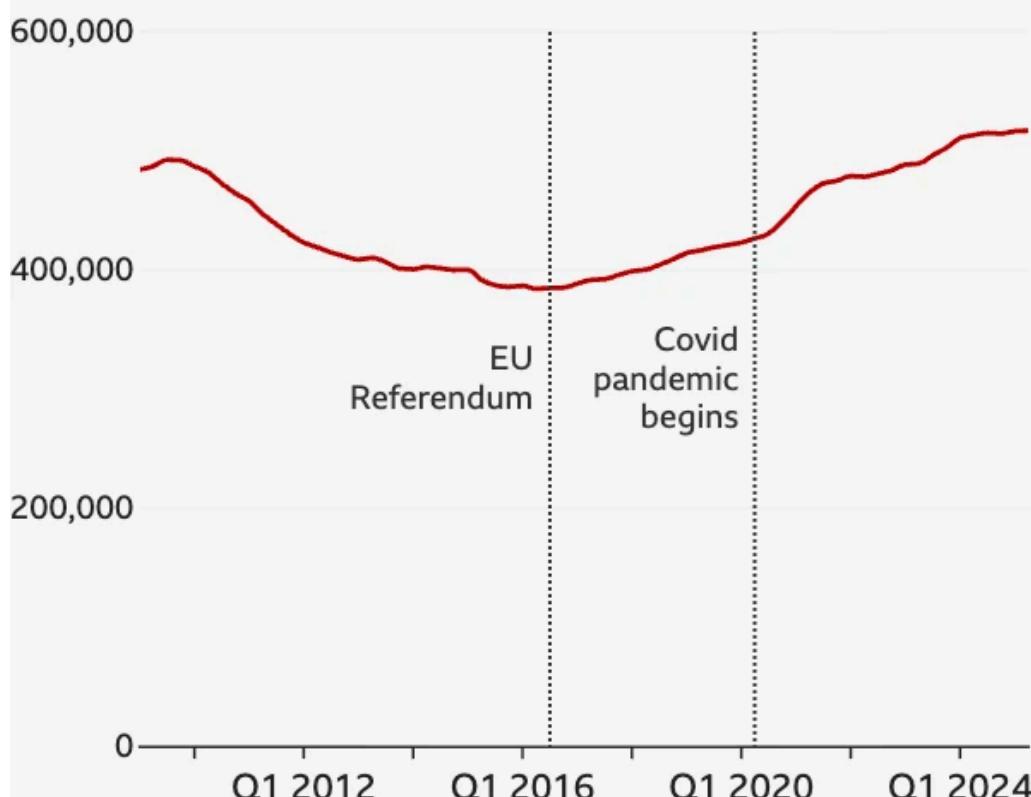
said: "It should be perfectly possible to get the headcount back down to the level from before Brexit."

At the end of June 2016, just after the EU referendum vote, there were **384,000 full-time equivalent civil servants**.

Since then, extra staff were hired for Brexit preparations and during the Covid pandemic, which meant this number reached 517,000 at end of June 2025 – 34% higher than before Brexit.

How many civil servants are there?

Civil servant numbers - full time equivalent



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS figures

BBC

The Conservatives also pledged to bring the civil servant numbers to the 2016 level at their party conference earlier this month. The Labour government has set out a number of reforms to shrink the size of the civil service as well.

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Paul Brown
BBC Verify senior journalist



A key feature of the bogus AI footage of Hurricane Melissa has been the appearance of sharks allegedly entering population centres inside the flood waters.

For many disinformation watchers on the team, these clips bring with them a sense of déjà vu.

The motif dates back at least 14 years to Hurricane Irene, when several media outlets were fooled by a fake image of a shark swimming along a flooded street in Puerto Rico. This was pre-AI, so the image was created in the old-fashioned way of combining two unrelated photos.

Since then the hurricane shark has tended to surface online during every major weather event, to the extent that it could be considered more of a meme than a deliberate attempt to mislead.

In fact, in a 2014 BBC article US broadcaster Rose Eveleth advised that any image of a hurricane featuring a shark is likely to be fake.

And it is a motif which seems to guarantee engagement. Some of the most popular AI images we've seen of Melissa include sharks.

In one fake clip, two dorsal fins can be seen in floodwaters racing towards a beach community. In another, two sharks are seen in a swimming pool as

one nervous voice laments having left his "sliders" in the pool.

As of now, these clips have amassed nearly one million views.

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15:21 28 October 2025

Just how unusual is Hurricane Melissa?



Becky Dale

BBC Verify senior data journalist

Hurricane Melissa is among the strongest to hit Jamaica directly since records began, as well as the **strongest storm of 2025** so far.

Tropical cyclones - called hurricanes in the Atlantic are categorised based on their wind speed and ranked between one and five according to the Saffir-Simpson scale.

Hurricane Melissa recorded sustained winds above 157mph (253 km/h) early on Monday, securing a slot as a category five storm. A day later, those speeds have increased to 175 mph.

Two other category five storms have occurred in the Atlantic this year - Erin reached that level on 16 August and Humberto late on 27 September.

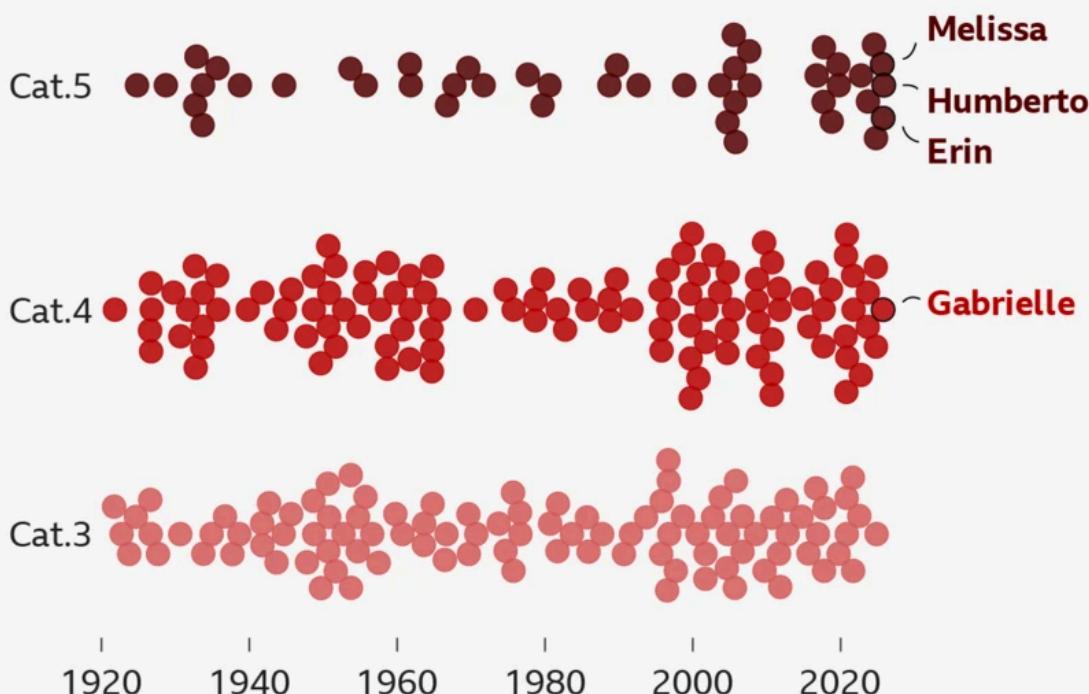
The last year to have had at least three was 2005, when there was a record-setting four category five storms.

Factors like warmer sea temperatures contribute to the strength of storms by causing fast increases in wind speed, a process called rapid intensification.

Scientists suggest a greater proportion of tropical cyclones will reach category four and five levels of intensity with climate change.

Major Atlantic hurricanes over past century

Yearly hurricanes category 3 and above by highest category reached, 1920-2025



A major hurricane is defined as category 3 or higher on the Saffir-Simpson scale.
Storm frequencies and intensities are less certain further back in time.

Source: US National Hurricane Center, HURDAT2

BBC

You can read the [latest news about the storm on the main BBC News live page here](#).

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14:53 28 October 2025

How much does it cost to house asylum seekers at military sites?



Lucy Gilder
BBC Verify journalist

Two military sites are under discussion to accommodate asylum seekers to help end hotel use, the UK government has confirmed.

It hasn't said how much it expects to spend converting the sites - one in Inverness and one in East Sussex - into asylum accommodation, but we

can examine similar plans which cost millions under the previous Conservative government.

Wethersfield in Essex was opened for asylum seekers in 2023. It can accommodate up to 1,245 people and is expected to cost £339m in total between 2023 and 2027.

The site is projected to cost £500,000 less than using hotels as asylum housing over this period, **according to a National Audit Office (NAO) report published last year.**

This is a significantly smaller saving than an earlier Home Office assessment, which initially estimated that the site would cost £66m less than hotels.

One reason for this is that the estimated costs of converting Wethersfield into asylum accommodation increased from £5m to £49m. Another is that fewer people have been accommodated at the site than expected.

In its report, the NAO also found that the Home Office had also incurred substantial costs setting up military sites which were never used.

For example, the last government spent nearly £3m preparing the former RAF base at Linton-on-Ouse in North Yorkshire to accommodate asylum seekers. But these **plans were ultimately scrapped because of local opposition.**



14:23 28 October 2025

Videos confirm RSF have taken area in central Sudan

Richard Irvine-Brown and Sherie Ryder
BBC Verify



We've been monitoring footage of fighters from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seizing control of another area in central Sudan.

Video posted online earlier this week shows the RSF celebrating its consolidation of the Um Dam Haj Ahmed area in North Kordofan province. It sits about 65km east of Barah, the easternmost major town under RSF control.

The RSF, which has been fighting a civil war with the Sudanese military for over two years, also seized control of North Darfur province's capital el-Fasher over the weekend after laying siege to the key city for 18 months.

The new footage shows armed men in camouflage with several flatbed trucks cheering outside a local government building in Um Dam Haj Ahmed, which is around 610km (380 miles) to the east of el-Fasher.

We could geolocate the large open space it was filmed in by matching nearby pylons and half-buried tyres which marked out the local football pitch on satellite images.

The video was shared by the RSF's Telegram channel - and the RSF claim they have taken total control of Um Dam Haj Ahmed. Yesterday, Al Jazeera cited Sudanese military sources also saying the RSF had taken control of it.

Hurricane Melissa AI videos widely circulating online

Paul Brown and Shayan Sardarizadeh

BBC Verify senior journalists

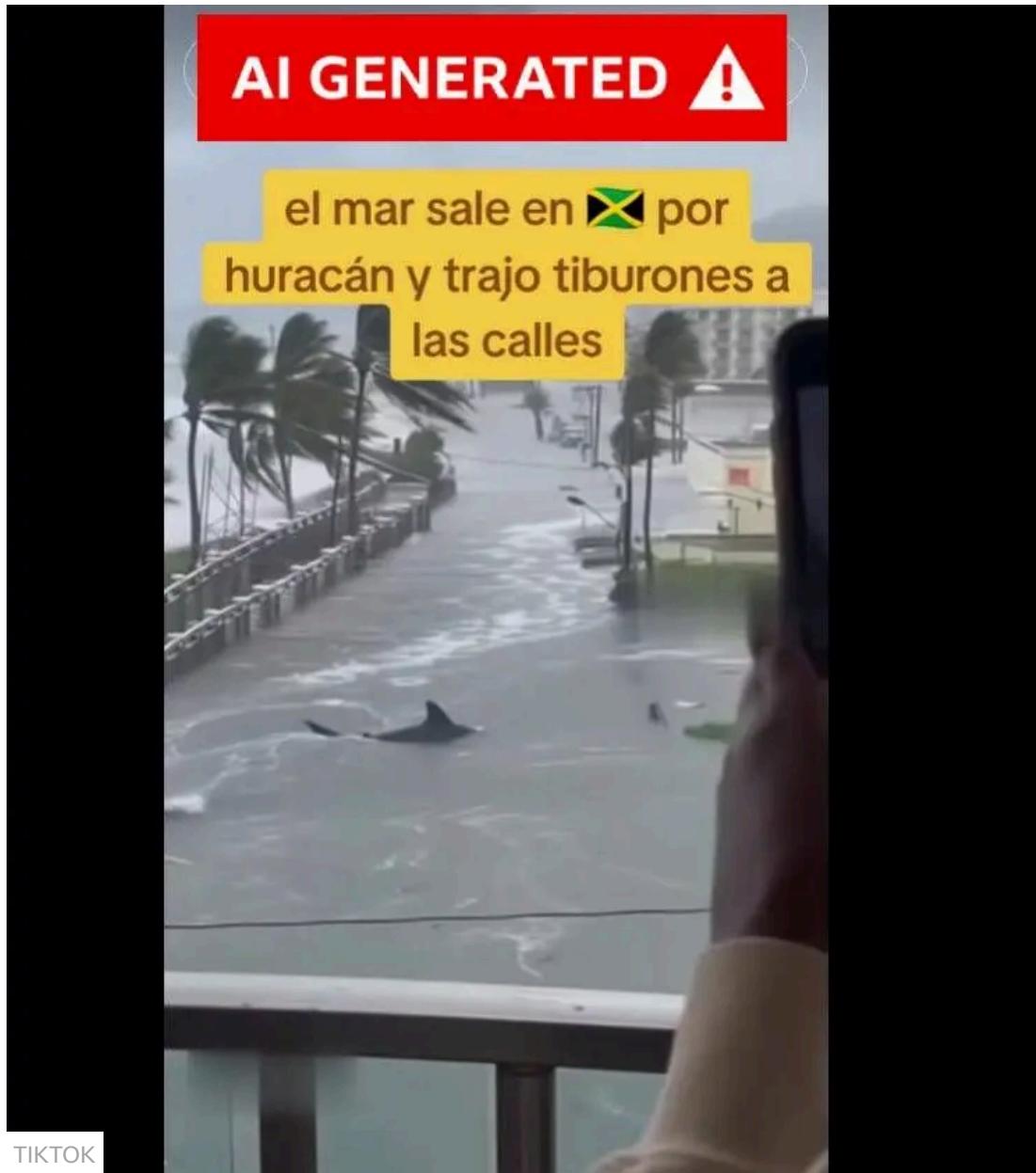
Many dramatic videos created with artificial intelligence are being shared online as Hurricane Melissa gets closer to Jamaica.

We have observed dozens of such videos on TikTok, which have racked up millions of views in total. A search for Hurricane Melissa on the platform leads users to many AI-generated or old clips from past storms. Some of the videos have watermarks that clarify they were created with AI-generators such as Open AI's text-to-video model Sora.

Others have removed or blurred watermarks in an apparent attempt to mislead viewers, or feature fake reporters and a mix of short clips that appear like legitimate reports from local sources.

One video, viewed half a million times on TikTok, shows a woman on a balcony filming two sharks swimming in heavily flooded streets.

There's a blurred sign visible on the bottom left of the clip, likely a watermark that's been hidden. The uploader later added a label to the caption to indicate the video was made with AI.



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One dramatic clip, viewed 2.6 million times, shows what appears to be the eye of the storm filmed from a passenger plane flying nearby.

"That moment when you realise the swirling clouds below aren't just clouds... they're a hurricane," reads the caption.

But the video is not real, and was posted by a user who has a history of sharing fake clips of natural disasters. The clip appears similar to real footage filmed by a US Air Force Reserve crew known as the "Hurricane Hunters" on Monday.

Another clip shows a group of men running for safety as a huge wave makes landfall near a coast. A small VEO watermark is visible on the bottom right, which makes it clear the video was made using Google's text-to-video generator.

According to an AFP report on Monday, TikTok recently removed more than two dozen AI videos of the hurricane. However, fake clips continue to

circulate widely on the platform.

BBC Verify has asked TikTok for comment.

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13:50 28 October 2025

AI sharks spreading on social media as hurricane hits Jamaica



Adam Durbin
BBC Verify Live editor

Good morning from BBC Verify Live.

We've been seeing a number of artificial intelligence videos circulating on social media purporting to be from Hurricane Melissa, which is currently battering Jamaica. Among them we have seen several AI-generated clips showing fake sharks swimming in floodwaters, as well as a fake video seemingly showing the eye of the storm filmed from a commercial plane.

Many of the AI videos have watermarks or labels, but some are not clearly labelled as AI and are fooling some people on social media. The team are also keeping an eye out for real footage from the Caribbean, as the enormous tropical storm causes real damage to communities in Jamaica and beyond.

Plus, our fact checkers are looking at the UK government's plans to use military sites to house asylum seekers, examining how much it could cost and how many people may be held in them.

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