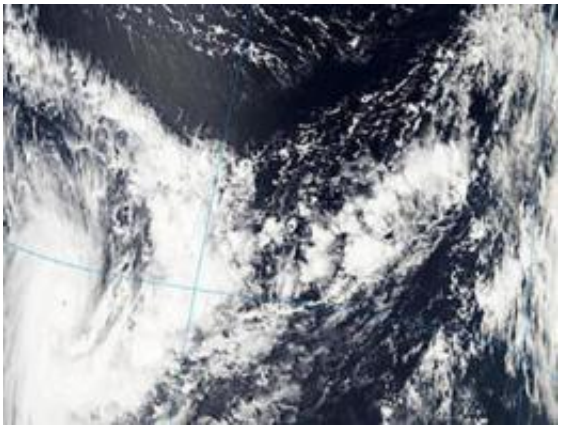
NASA captures a visible image of Cleo's new eye

December 8 2009



This is a visible image of Cleo (left) on December 8 at 08:15 UTC from the Moderate Imaging Spectroradiometer, MODIS, instrument on NASA's Aqua satellite. The blue longitude line helps show the curvature of the Earth. Credit: NASA MODIS Rapid Response Team

The Moderate Imaging Spectroradiometer or MODIS instrument that flies on NASA's Aqua satellite has amazing resolution from space, and captured Cleo's cloudless eye early this morning. Cleo has intensified from a Tropical Storm into a Cyclone.

MODIS captured an image of Cleo today, December 8 at 08:15 UTC (03:15 a.m. ET) as it passed overhead from its orbit in space. The development of an eye is an indication that Cleo strengthened overnight, and is now a tropical cyclone. Cleo has sustained winds near 109 mph

(95 knots) with higher gusts. Hurricane-force winds only extend out to 25 miles from the center right now, while tropical storm-force winds extend as far as 65 miles. Cleo is at the top end of the Category Two Saffir-Simpson scale. Category three cyclones have sustained winds from 111-130 mph.

Cleo was located 340 miles southeast of Diego Garcia, near 10.8 degrees South latitude and 76.4 degrees East longitude. It was moving west-southwest near 12 mph. Currently, Cleo isn't threatening any landmasses.

Because Cleo is in a favorable area for strengthening, it is expected to reach Category 3 status later today or tomorrow. The current forecast track takes Cleo passing well to the north of La Reunion and Mauritius.

Source: NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (news : web)