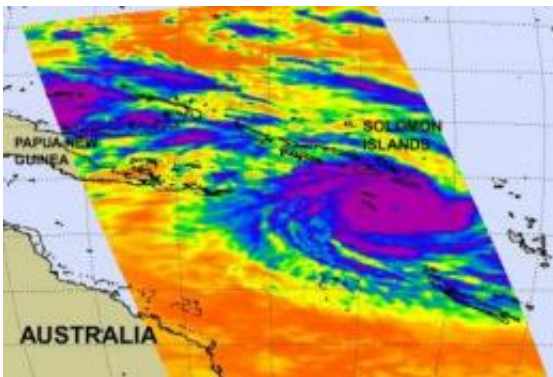


Solomon Islands under warnings for category 4 Cyclone Ului

March 15 2010



NASA's AIRS instrument provided an infrared look at Ului's cold thunderstorm cloudtops (blue and purple) on March 14 at 0311 UTC. Ului's eye is visible in the storm's center. Credit: NASA JPL, Ed Olsen

There are two powerful cyclones in the Southern Pacific Ocean this week, Tomas and Ului. Ului is a Category Four Cyclone on the Saffir-Simpson Scale and is affecting the Solomon Islands where warnings and watches have been posted today, March 15. NASA satellite data has confirmed that Ului is a strong cyclone with a wide reach.

Tropical cyclone warnings in the [Solomon Islands](#) are in effect for Rennell and Bellona, A tropical cyclone watch is in effect for the provinces of Guadalcanal, Makira, Central, Western, Malaita, Isabel and Choiseul, in addition to the Shortland Islands.

The Solomon Islands is a country in Melanesia, east of [Papua New Guinea](#) that is made up of almost one thousand islands. The combined islands cover a land mass of 10,965 square miles (28,400 square kilometers).

NASA's Atmospheric Infrared Sounder (AIRS) instrument provided an infrared look at Tomas' cold thunderstorm cloud tops (blue and purple) on March 14 at 0311 UTC. AIRS is an instrument that flies on NASA's Aqua satellite. The AIRS image showed a massive area of strong, high thunderstorms surrounding the eye of the storm. The thunderstorm cloud tops are so high that they are as cold as minus 63 degrees Fahrenheit, and bearing heavy rain. [Satellite imagery](#) also showed the majority of deep convection is located on the western side of the storm.

At 11 a.m. EDT (1500 UTC) today, March 15, Tropical Cyclone Ului was packing [maximum sustained winds](#) near 149 mph (130 knots). It was located near 13.1 South and 158.4 East, about 924 nautical miles north-northeast of Brisbane, Australia. It was moving west near 5 mph (4 knots). Ului is forecast to continue to track westward for the next 12 hours and then begin to turn southward. Cyclone Ului is forecast to begin weakening as it encounters an area of increasing vertical wind shear. Meanwhile Ului is generating dangerously high waves up to 36 feet in the waters of the Southern Pacific Ocean.

The Solomon Islands are not the only ones concerned with Ului. The Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology (ABM) in Queensland posted a bulletin today, March 15 at 10 p.m. local time (Queensland). At that time, Cyclone Ului was located over the north-east Coral Sea near latitude 13.1 south longitude 158.7 east, which is about 838 miles (1350 kilometers) northeast of Mackay, Queensland, Australia. The ABM said that "Severe Tropical Cyclone Ului poses no immediate threat to the Queensland coast and is expected to remain well off the Queensland coast for at least the next few days." The Joint Typhoon Warning Center,

however, has issued a forecast track that takes Ului toward Queensland around March 20, so residents on Queensland's northeast coast should monitor the storm.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

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