

Hurricane Irma most enduring super-storm on record: French weather service

September 7 2017



Satellite image obtained from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows Hurricane Irma at 1130UTC on September 7, 2017

Hurricane Irma, rampaging across the Caribbean, has produced sustained winds at 295 kilometres per hour (183 miles per hour) for more than 33 hours, making it the longest-lasting, top-intensity cyclone ever recorded, France's weather service said Thursday.

"Such an intensity, for such a long period, has never been observed in the satellite era," which began in the early 1970s, said Etienne Kapikian, a forecaster at Meteo France.

"And it is continuing," he told AFP, adding that Irma would probably remain a Category 5-storm at least until it hits the Bahamas.

Category 5 is the level of highest intensity, with winds over 252 km/h.

The super-storm, which has ravaged small island nations in its path, tops the record set by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, which also packed nearly 300 km/h winds, but for 24 hours.

Haiyan left more than 7,000 people dead or missing.

Irma is barrelling past Haiti towards the Turks and Caicos Islands, and then the Bahamas.

The storm has already killed nine people according to a preliminary tally, eight of them in the French-speaking part of Saint Martin island.



Aerial photograph taken and released by the Dutch department of Defense on September 6, 2017 shows the damage caused by Hurricane Irma in Philipsburg, on the Dutch Caribbean island of Sint Maarten

The hurricane is one of the most powerful ever recorded in the Atlantic, and shares the record for the strongest to make landfall anywhere in the Atlantic basin, including the Caribbean, Kapikian said.

A Category 5 hurricane with 295-km/h winds hit Florida in 1935.

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