

Hurricane Jose spares storm-ravaged French Caribbean islands

September 10 2017, by Amandine Ascensio And Cecile Remusat With Cecile Azzaro In Paris



Wrecked boats line the Geminga shipyard in Saint Martin after Hurricane Irma. Officials on the island of Guadeloupe, where French aid efforts are being coordinated, suspended boat crossings to the hardest-hit territories of St Martin and St Barts

Storm-hit Saint Martin and Saint Barts escaped a further battering by Hurricane Jose, which had "markedly less" of an impact on the French

Caribbean islands than anticipated, France's meteorological agency said Sunday.

The meteorological agency had issued its highest warning, saying the Category Four Hurricane Jose could become a "dangerous event of exceptional intensity".

But "there's not a cloud in the sky," one AFP reporter at the scene said.

Jose passed 135 kilometres (83 miles) north of Saint Barts and 125 kilometres from Saint Martin—95 percent of which has already been ravaged by Hurricane Irma, which struck three days ago and is expected to reach Florida at 1000 GMT Sunday.

"Thanks to a passage which was further away than anticipated, the effects on the territory were markedly less," the meteorological agency said.

Many on St Martin, an island which is divided between France and The Netherlands and known for its vibrant nightlife and pristine beaches, had been concerned about where to go ahead of the second storm.

Earlier in the day, there was an anxious and tense scramble to fly out of the islands before air links were closed as a precautionary measure. The ports had also been closed to traffic.

'Nothing left'

Twelve people were killed on the two [islands](#) by Hurricane Irma, which also flattened thousands of buildings and has left the authorities struggling to control looting.



Many on St Martin had scrambled to evacuate before air links were closed as a precautionary measure ahead of the storm

Residents are still grappling with dwindling supplies.

"We have only 12 bottles of water for a family of three to wash and drink," said Saint Barts resident Olivier Toussaint.

When Irma hit on Wednesday, it ripped off roofs and uprooted trees, tossing cars and boats about like matchsticks.

Debris still clogs the streets, many homes are uninhabitable, communications are still down and tens of thousands are without food, water or power.

Nicolas, an official posted in Saint Martin for six years who gave only

one name, is "angry with Paris and the way it's handling the crisis".

He said he had little information on what to do and "no information or addresses" for those rendered homeless. There were soldiers but with little equipment, he added.

On the seafront, a woman wept as she spoke on the telephone. "We've lost everything you know. There's nothing left."

Officials said they would begin distributing food rations and water after Hurricane Jose had passed.

On the southern Dutch half of the island, 70 percent of the infrastructure has been destroyed in the storm, officials said.

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Citation: Hurricane Jose spares storm-ravaged French Caribbean islands (2017, September 10) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-09-hurricane-jose-storm-ravaged-french-caribbean.html>

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