

Grace regains hurricane force ahead of second Mexican landfall

August 20 2021, by Alejandro Castro



Destruction from Hurricane Grace is seen in Tulum, Mexico, on August 19, 2021.

Grace barreled westwards in the Gulf of Mexico Friday as it regained hurricane strength ahead of an expected second landfall later in the day, having already torn through Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

The hurricane first struck the coast of Mexico before dawn on Thursday as a Category One storm—the lowest on the five-level Saffir-Simpson scale—near the town of Tulum, famed for its Mayan temples.

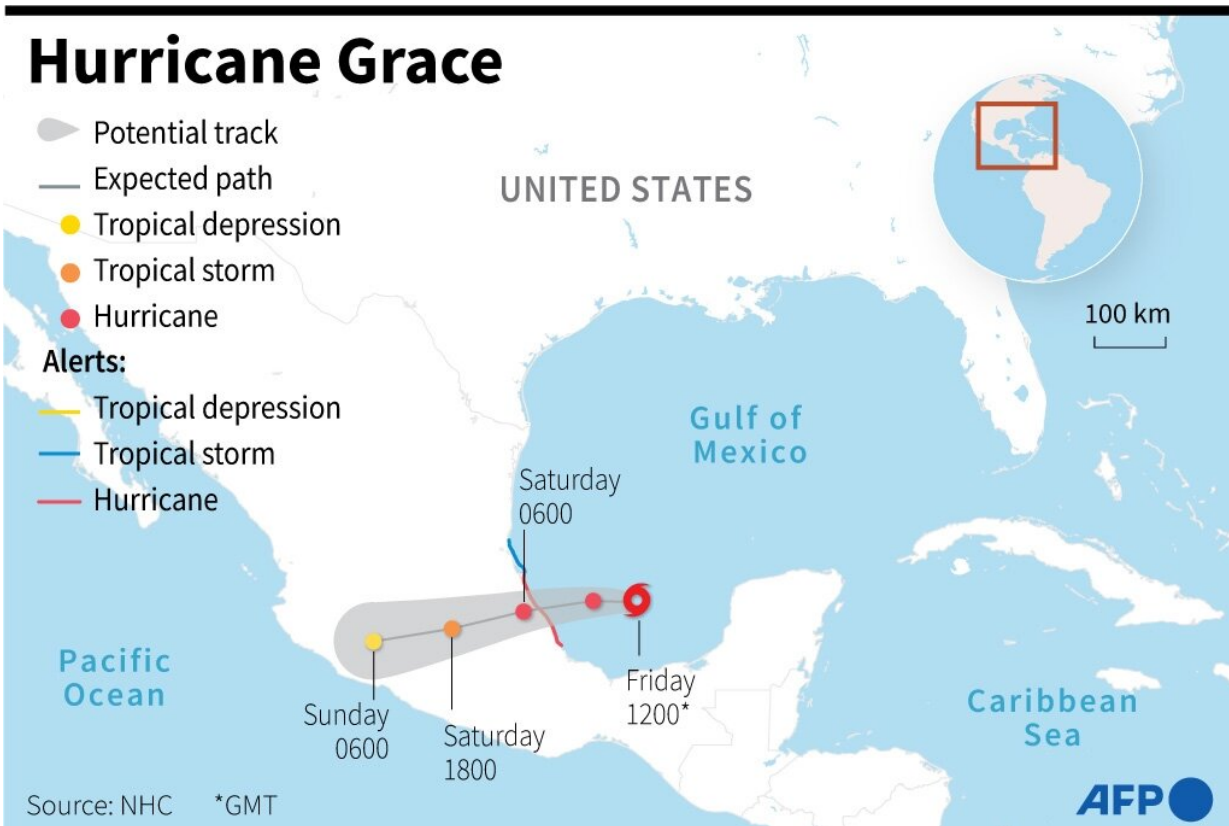
After losing strength, Grace's winds whipped back up to 85 miles (135 kilometers) an hour on Friday as it moved over water, according to the US National Hurricane Center (NHC).

"Air force hurricane hunters find Grace has strengthened into a hurricane," the NHC said, maintaining a warning zone stretching from Puerto Veracruz to Cabo Rojo.

"The center of Grace is forecast to move across the southwestern Gulf of Mexico this afternoon, and then make landfall along the coast of mainland Mexico within the hurricane warning area this evening or tonight," it said.

As of 1500 GMT, Grace was centered about 155 miles (250 kilometers) northeast of the major port of Veracruz, and heading west towards the coast at a speed of 14 mph.

"Strengthening is forecast until Grace makes landfall, with rapid weakening expected as Grace moves inland over the mountains of central Mexico," the NHC said.



Location and projected path of Hurricane Grace.

Authorities in the state of Veracruz said they had prepared 200 storm shelters and planned to open another 2,000 if necessary.

Veracruz Governor Cuitlahuac Garcia warned of the risk of flooding and mudslides as the storm dumps heavy rain on the mountainous region.

Members of the Mexican armed forces were ready to deploy if needed to protect residents, said civil protection national coordinator Laura Velazquez.

'Scare is over'

As the hurricane approached Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula earlier in the week, more than 6,000 tourists and residents were evacuated to storm shelters across the southeastern state of Quintana Roo, according to local authorities.

The storm passed the Riviera Maya coastline without any loss of life, said Quintana Roo Governor Carlos Joaquin. He said electricity had been almost completely restored across the state.



Hurricane Grace buffets the coast of Cancun, Mexico on August 19, 2021.

Workers were seen clearing up fallen branches and other debris in Tulum but the town escaped major damage.

"The scare is over and luckily everything turned out okay," said Sandra Rodriguez, a 39-year-old Argentinian tourist visiting Cancun.

Rodriguez admitted she had been worried because she was not used to such storms.

"I thought the hurricane was going to drown us," she said.

Intense wind and rain caused some damage to structures on the Cancun beach, which was pounded by strong waves.

In the neighboring state of Yucatan, the storm toppled trees in the city of Valladolid and damaged some of the less sturdy buildings, according to images released by local authorities.

The NHC warned that heavy rainfall in Mexico through the weekend "will result in areas of flash and urban flooding as well as mudslides."



Intense wind and rain caused some damage to structures on the beach in the resort city of Cancun.

A "dangerous storm surge" would be accompanied by "large and destructive waves" near the coast, the report said.

"Hurricane conditions and dangerous storm surge are likely along portions of eastern mainland Mexico beginning late today," it said.

The NHC added that "life-threatening surf and rip current conditions" could continue into the weekend.

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