

A NASA satellite mosaic of twin tropical troublesome cyclones: Tomas and Ului

16 March 2010



On March 16 at 03:05 UTC, images from NASA's Aqua and Terra satellites were combined to show the close proximity of Tropical Cyclones Tomas (19P) and Ului (20P) in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. Credit: NASA MODIS Rapid Response Team

Tropical Cyclones Tomas and Ului are both causing problems for residents in the South Pacific Ocean today, March 16, and watches and warnings are in effect for the Fiji Islands and the Solomon Islands, respectively. NASA's Aqua and Terra satellites passed over each storm and their images were combined to show the close proximity of the troublemaking twins.

Tropical Cyclone Ului is farthest west and is impacting the Solomon Islands. Regional warnings that are in effect for the Solomon Islands include a tropical cyclone warning for Rennell/Bellona. In addition, a tropical cyclone watch is up for Guadalcanal, Makira, Central, Western, Malaita, Isabel and Choiseul provinces including the Shortland Islands. The gale-force winds in Rennell and Bellona and southern Guadalcanal provinces are expected to ease later in the day.

At 11 a.m. EDT (1500 UTC) today, March 16, Ului had maximum sustained winds near 126 mph (110 knots) making it a strong Category Three cyclone

on the Saffir-Simpson scale. It was located about 725 nautical miles northeast of Cairns, Australia, near 13.6 South and 157.8 East. It was moving southwest near 4 mph (3 knots). For updates from the Solomon Island Meteorological Service: <http://www.met.gov.sb/>.

The Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer, or MODIS instrument on NASA's Aqua and Terra satellites captured an image that showed Ului's eye reduced down to 20 nautical miles in diameter, and is cloud-filled at 0305 UTC (11:05 p.m. EDT, March 15). Recent [infrared satellite imagery](#) shows spiral bands of thunderstorms continue to wrap around the storm's center, and the storm still has good outflow. [Sea surface temperatures](#) are warm (at least 80 degrees Fahrenheit) and are enabling the system to maintain strength.

Ului is expected to turn west in two days, and steer toward the east coast of Australia, while gradually weakening from increased [wind shear](#). Residents of Queensland, Australia should monitor tropical cyclone forecasts and bulletins.

Meanwhile, farther east lays Tropical Cyclone Tomas. At 5 a.m. EDT (0900 UTC) today, Tomas was packing [maximum sustained winds](#) near 115 mph (100 knots) also making the cyclone a Category Three storm on the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale. Tomas, also known as Cyclone 14F in the Fiji Islands, was moving south at 13 mph (11 knots). At that time it was located approximately 215 nautical miles east-southeast of Nadi, Fiji, near 19.5 degrees South latitude and 179.3 West longitude.

Watches and Warnings are in effect for the Fiji Islands. In Fiji a Cyclone Warning is in effect for eastern quarter of Ono-I-Lau, Vatoa and nearby islands. Meanwhile a gale warning is in effect for the following: Oneata, Vanuavatu, Matuku, Totoya, Moce, Komo, Fulaga, Ogea, Namuka, Kabara and

nearby islands. For updates from the Fiji Meteorological Service: <http://www.met.gov.fj/>.

Trouble is coming for Tomas, and that means weakening awaits the system as it continues moving south. Satellite data has shown that Tomas' eye has become ragged, cloud-filled and asymmetric, indicating a weakening storm. In the next day, vertical wind shear is forecast to increase, and wind shear can weaken a storm. In addition, Tomas is moving into an area of cooler sea surface temperatures which will also rapidly decay the tropical cyclone.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center
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