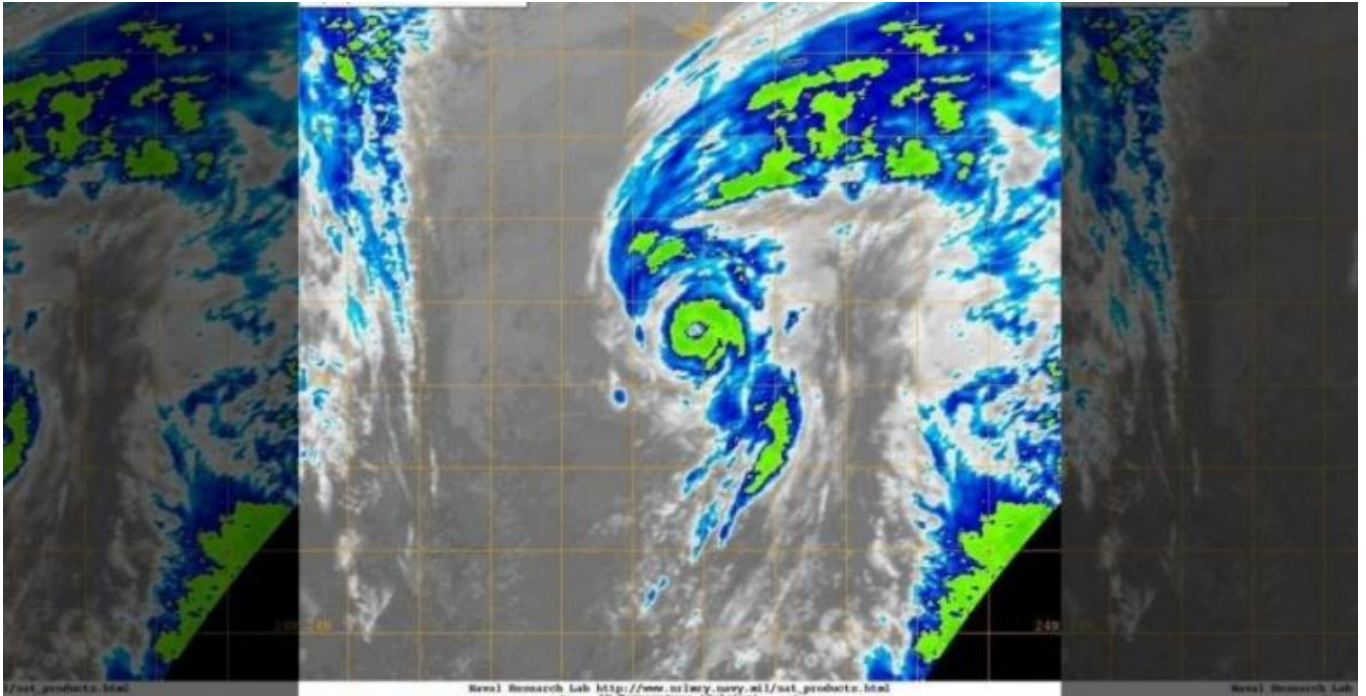


Hurricane Alex forms, first January hurricane in decades

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A Hurricane Warning was issued for the Azores, the islands roughly 900 miles west of Portugal. Alex was centered about 490 miles south of Faial Island in the central Azores and was moving north-northeast near 20 mph Thursday.

Related Image



(National Hurricane Center)

Forecasters said the hurricane's maximum sustained winds approached 85 mph.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center reports Alex will move near or over parts of the Azores on Friday. It was first reported as a subtropical storm Wednesday.

Forecasters also say Alex is the first hurricane to churn in the Atlantic any time in January since 1955. That storm had formed in December of the previous year.

The Azores government on Thursday advised kindergartens to stay closed and told residents to ensure drainage systems aren't blocked.

The archipelago, which has a population of around 250,000, has been threatened by hurricanes before but they usually lose their strength as they move into colder northern water.

Alex formed only days after a rare event in the Pacific. An El Nino-related tropical storm formed southwest of Hawaii last week. Tropical Storm Pali, only the third such system to develop in January in over 40 years, had weakened to a depression by Thursday and was expected to dissipate in the next day or so. It never made landfall and was no threat to land.