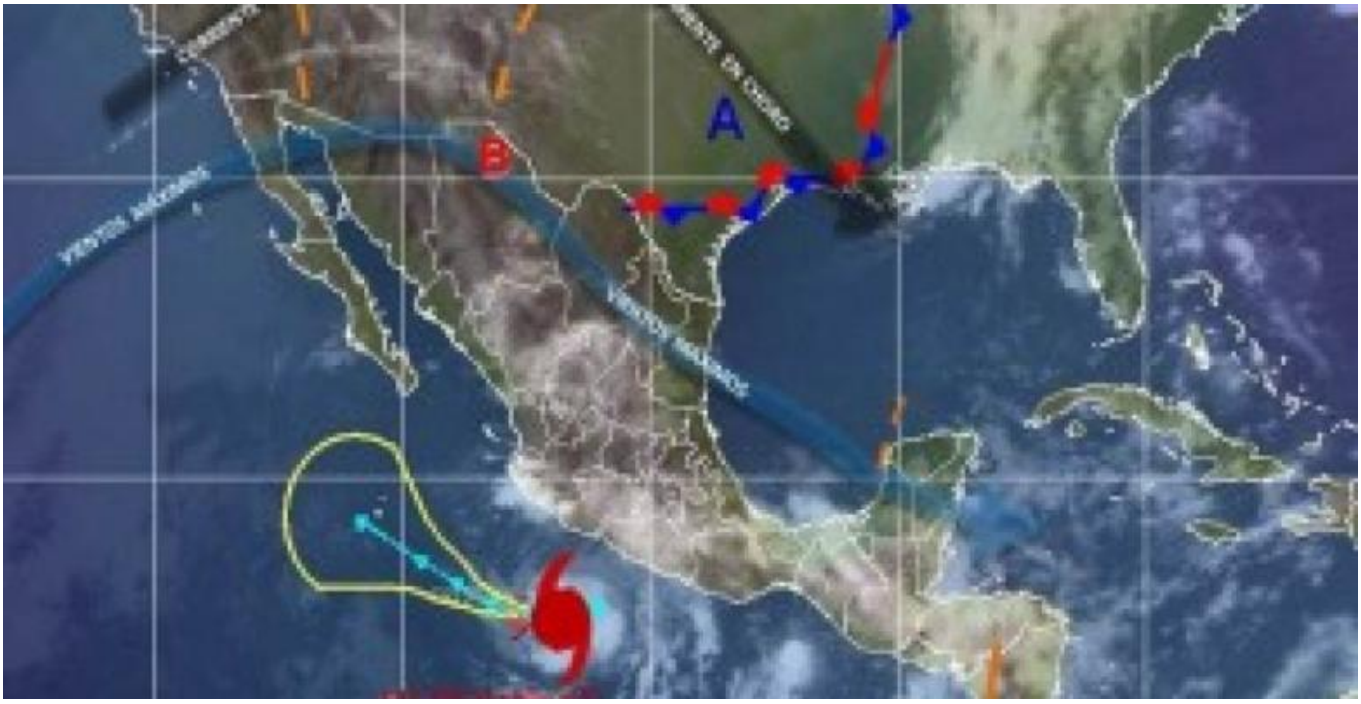
Hurricane Cristina strengthens to Cat 4 storm

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The hurricane's maximum sustained winds increased to near 145 mph (230 kph) Thursday morning. The hurricane reached Category 4 strength just hours after becoming a Category 3 storm.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center says some additional strengthening is possible during the day but weakening is expected to begin Thursday night.

Cristina is centered about 250 miles (400 kilometers) southwest of Manzanillo, Mexico, and is moving west-northwest near 8 mph (13 kph).

There are no coastal watches or warnings in effect, but forecasters say swells generated by the hurricane are affecting parts of Mexico's southwest coast and could cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions.