Beat: Travel

Tropical storm forms off Mexico;s Pacific coast, warnings issued

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USPA News - Tropical Storm Barbara formed off Mexico`s Pacific coast on Tuesday afternoon, prompting storm warnings for coastal areas in the southernmost parts of the country, forecasters said. Landfall is expected to occur by late Wednesday morning.

Forecasters at the U.S. National Hurricane Center (NHC) had been following the weather system since Saturday when it emerged off the coast of Guatemala and began to merge with a larger disturbance nearby. It became a tropical depression on Tuesday afternoon and strengthened into a tropical storm in less than three hours. As of 5 p.m. PDT (0000 GMT Wednesday), the center of Tropical Storm Barbara was located about 145 miles (230 kilometers) south-southwest of Salina Cruz, a city in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. It is currently stationary but will likely continue moving northward overnight and reach the southeastern coast of Mexico on Wednesday. Maximum sustained winds of Barbara are near 40 miles (65 kilometers) per hour, with higher gusts, making it a tropical storm. "Additional strengthening is forecast before Barbara reaches the coast of Mexico on Wednesday," said NHC senior hurricane specialist Jack Beven, although the storm is not expected to reach hurricane strength. A tropical storm warning is in effect in Mexico from Lagunas de Chacahua to Boca de Pijijiapan. The storm is expected to produce total rain accumulations of 3 to 6 inches (7 to 15 centimeters) over southern Oaxaca with isolated maximum amounts of 10 inches (25 centimeters) in southeastern Oaxaca, according to forecasters. "After landfall, steady weakening is anticipated as the cyclone interacts with rugged terrain," NHC hurricane specialist John Cangialosi said. "Due to the large cloud field and expected slow motion, the biggest hazard will likely be heavy rainfall and the potential for flash flooding and mud slides." Barbara is the second tropical cyclone of the 2013 Eastern Pacific hurricane season, which officially began on May 15. According to figures released earlier this month, NOAA`s Climate Prediction Center is expecting a below-normal season in the Eastern Pacific this year. The outlook called for 11 to 16 named storms, with 5 to 8 becoming hurricanes and 1 to 4 of them expected to become a major hurricane (category 3 or higher). An average Eastern Pacific hurricane season produces 15 to 16 named storms, with eight to nine becoming hurricanes and four becoming major hurricanes. The Eastern Pacific hurricane season runs from May 15 through November 30, with peak activity from July through September.

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