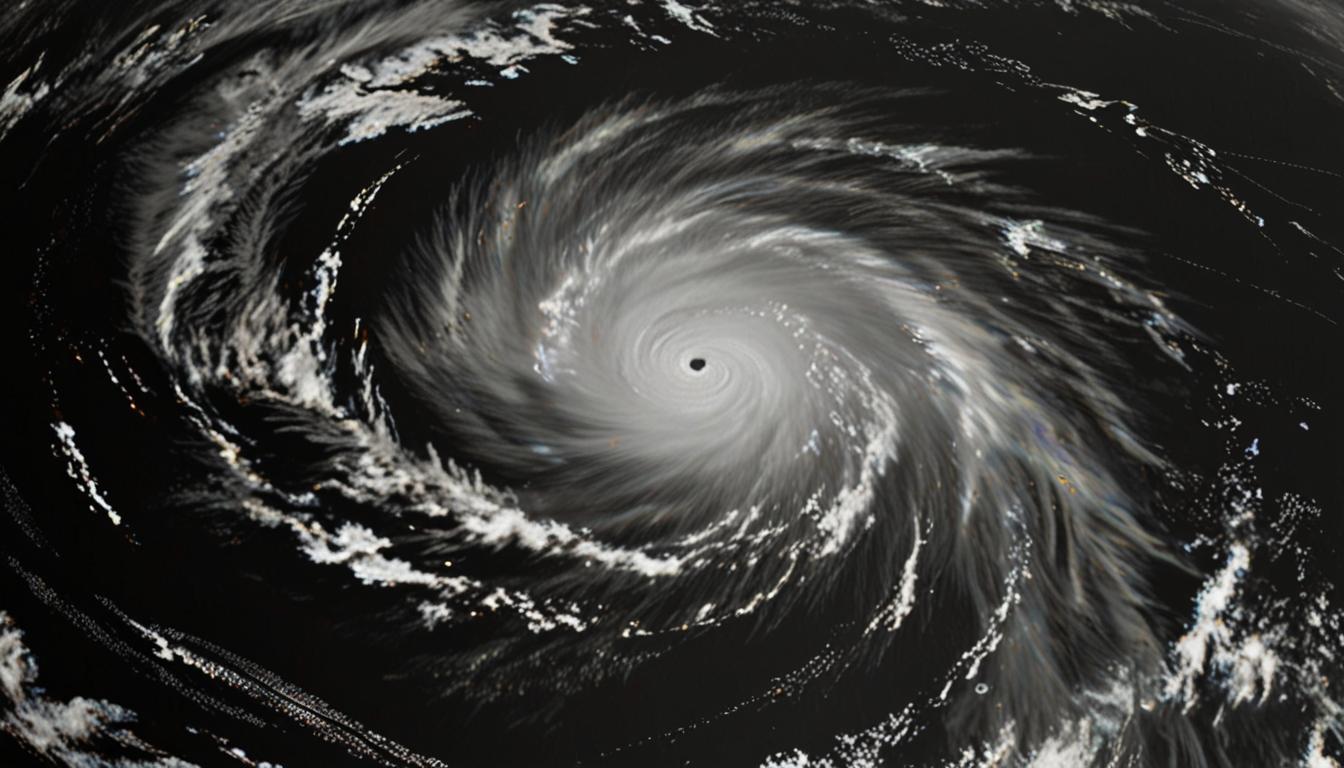
# Hurricane Beryl Strengthens to First Major Storm of Atlantic Season, Poses Threat to Caribbean Islands



**Hurricane Beryl Becomes First Major Storm of Atlantic Season**

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—Hurricane Beryl has intensified into the first Atlantic hurricane of the season, with forecasts indicating it may become a major storm as it heads towards Barbados. This development marks the earliest formation of a hurricane so far east in the tropical Atlantic since records began, breaking a previous record from 1933.

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) reported that Beryl, currently a Category 1 hurricane with sustained winds of 75 mph, is projected to strengthen rapidly. It may reach Category 3 status before impacting Barbados late Sunday or early Monday. As of Saturday afternoon, Beryl was about 720 miles southeast of Barbados, moving west at 22 mph.

A hurricane warning has been issued for Barbados, and hurricane watches are in place for St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Additionally, Martinique, Dominica, and Tobago are under tropical storm watches.

Prime ministers in the Caribbean islands affected have urged residents to prepare, with Barbados's Prime Minister Mia Mottley emphasizing the need for readiness amid the ongoing Twenty20 World Cup cricket final in Bridgetown. Authorities are making logistical preparations and ensuring availability of essential services.

The NHC forecasts that Beryl will bring significant rain, with up to 6 inches expected in the affected areas, and warns of a storm surge of up to 7 feet, along with waves reaching up to 13 feet. Beryl's path is expected to continue towards Jamaica and potentially Mexico, although wind shear may weaken the storm as it progresses.

Meteorologists attribute Beryl’s rapid intensification to unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the tropical Atlantic. With predictions indicating an active hurricane season, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration anticipates up to 25 named storms, including as many as 13 hurricanes with four reaching major status.

This story continues to develop as Beryl approaches the Caribbean.