# Tomas moving away from Fiji Islands after causing damages

EurekAlert

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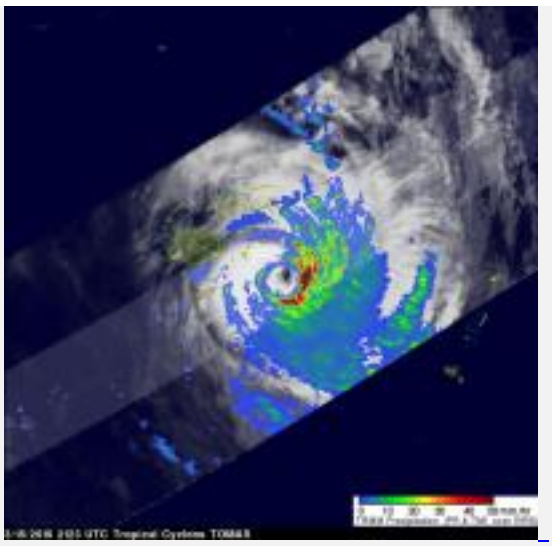
Cyclone Tomas hit the north and east areas of Fiji as a Category 4 Cyclone on the Saffir-Simpson Scale, and has now moved south of them. NASA's Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission satellite captured an image of the heavy rains that were falling in Tomas during his swath of destruction in the Fiji Islands.

Today, March 17, at 0900 UTC (5 a.m. EDT), Tomas was 710 miles southeast of Nadi, Fiji, near 27.0 South and 174.7 West and was a Category One cyclone. Tomas has maximum sustained winds near 86 mph (75 knots) and was speeding south-southeast at 31 mph (27 knots). Tomas is a large cyclone with hurricane-force winds extending 65 miles from the center, and tropical storm-force winds extending as far as 215 miles from the center. That makes Tomas 430 miles in diameter.

The Fiji Meteorological Service issued bulletin 32 at 2:40 p.m. EDT on March 16, which would be March 17 at 7:40 a.m. Fiji local time. At that time, the tropical cyclone warning for the Fiji group of islands was canceled. However, a Strong Wind Warning remained in force for Southern Lau only. Southern Lau was forecast to experience winds from the southwest to the northwest, waning later today. Tomas is also creating very rough seas with waves up to 23 feet and heavy swells. The rest of the Fiji islands will experience moderate to rough seas today as Tomas continues to track south and away from the islands.

The Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission satellite, also known as "TRMM" passed over powerful tropical cyclone Tomas near the International Dateline in the South Pacific on March 15 at 2123 UTC (5:23 p.m. EDT). TRMM measures rainfall from space, and the rainfall analysis used data from TRMM's Microwave Imager (TMI) and Precipitation Radar (PR) instruments revealed that Tomas had a large circular eye, and was located about 242 kilometers (150 miles) from Fiji at that time. Tomas was decreasing in intensity but wind speeds were still estimated to be over 105 knots (~121 mph). TRMM detected very heavy rainfall of over 50 mm/hr (~2 inches) mainly in Tomas' southeastern quadrant.



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Areas of north and east Fiji encountered winds near 109 mph (175 km/hour) and storm surges. About 17,000 people had gone to the evacuation centers before the storm hit. As a result of damages caused by Tomas, a "state of disaster" was declared in those areas, so that foreign assistance can come into the country. Houses were damaged, electricity, water and sewage systems were affected, and flooding was reported.

The Atmospheric Infrared Sounder instrument on NASA's Aqua satellite captured a visible image of the western half of Tropical Cyclone Tomas as it flew overhead on March 17 at 01:53 UTC (March 16 at 9:53 p.m. EDT), and it showed the storm was still well-organized.

Tomas is now quickly moving southeast and is in cooler waters, which will continue to cause Tomas to weaken. Tomas is also transitioning into an extra-tropical storm.

SOURCE [3]

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