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Hurricane Adrian reaches hurricane-strength, will strike Central America tonight

Tropical Storm Adrian in the Eastern Pacific Ocean reached hurricane strength on Thursday morning, according to readings obtained by the National Hurricane Center from a United States Air Force plane. This means the storm has maximum sustained winds of over 75 mph (120 km/h), and makes it the first hurricane of the 2005 Pacific hurricane season. At the path this storm is taking, it is possible it will cross into the Caribbean Sea and become Tropical Storm Arlene, the first named storm of the Atlantic season, over a week before that season officially begins.

Exclusive Interview: Piano Man is possibly a British actor



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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Weather:



Longest ever recorded Sumatra Quake

(New information concerning the quake on December 26th, 2004).

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The quake was centered in the Indian Ocean, and it created the biggest gash in the Earth's seabed ever observed. It measured nearly 800 miles, about the distance from northern California to southern Canada. Scientists have upgraded the magnitude of the quake from 9.0 to around 9.1-9.3, which is a dramatically more powerful quake. "Globally, this earthquake was large enough to basically vibrate the whole planet as much as half an inch, or a centimeter. Everywhere we had instruments, we could see motions," Ammon said.

"Two hours after the earthquake has occurred, the wave is spreading out from

the Bay of Bengal," Lay said. "Two satellites went over, with the capability of measuring the elevation of the ocean surface. It was just good luck that the passage of the satellites caught the tsunami in motion. There will be more earthquakes of this type, and with more humans exposed to the hazard there will be more devastating losses of life. What we hope to do is develop technologies that can minimize that loss."

Findings reported in the various papers: In Sri Lanka, more than 1,600 kilometres from the epicenter, the ground moved nearly 10 centimetres.

The rupture spread from south to north. Seismometers in Russia recorded the quake at a higher frequency because it was moving toward them, while those in Australia measured a lower frequency as it moved away.

When the surface waves from the Sumatra quake reached Alaska they triggered a swarm of 14 earthquakes in the Mount Wrangell area.

Journalist accused at Council of Europe human rights conference in Warsaw

11 protesters were arrested demonstrating outside the Council of Europe conference in Warsaw on Monday May 16, including an Indymedia correspondent. The activists claim the arrests are an attempt to suppress free speech.

The protesters organized their march, beginning from Warsaw Palace of Culture and Science and walking to the Royal Square and the Royal Castle, where the Council of Europe was meeting, believed to be concerning human rights conditions but attended by officials they accuse of human rights violations. They were unable to get into the Royal Square, so the demonstrators had to stop their march at Krakowskie Przedmiescie Street. A

large police presence was on hand to oversee the demonstrations.

As the demonstrations were ending, police arrested 11 activists, including Grzegorz Prujarczyk who had been filming the events. All were released by Wednesday, 18 May. Mr. Prujarczyk has been charged with assaulting a police officer, which could carry a sentence up to 10 years in jail. Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières, or RSF) report Mr. Prujarczyk was held for 39 hours, his tapes were reviewed, and though released he is under police surveillance and must report to the police weekly.

Activists and journalists believe the charge against Mr. Prujarczyk, as well as the charges against the other detainees, are attempts to suppress freedom of speech and the press in the country.

"This behaviour by police is a threat to press freedom. Polish journalists and other media workers should be able to cover every type of event, even those seen as sensitive, such as opposition demonstrations against the government's support for the war in Iraq," RSF said.

Indymedia Poland claims, "We have indisputable evidence of Grzegorz Prujarczyk's innocence (photos, film recordings, witness statements), which we can provide to any interested journalists. We are convinced that the detention of this Indymedia reporter is because of his journalist work carried out during the demonstration. This is an obvious violation of freedom of speech and a constraint against independence of the media."

Euro Disney SCA receives new CEO

Today Disney and Euro Disney SCA announced that Euro Disney chief executive officer Andre Lacroix would step down, and be replaced with Karl Holz immediately.

Holz has had a long career with Walt Disney Parks and Resorts; previously he has been president of the Disney Cruise

Line, and executive of operations at Walt Disney World. Holz was chief operating officer at Euro Disney before being promoted.

Euro Disney is Europe's largest theme park operator, and oversees Disneyland Resort Paris in Marne-la-Vallee, France. Disney is Euro Disney SCA's major share holder; other share holders include the French government and a Saudi prince.

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Since publication of our first article, we have been contacted by a fellow wiki contributor informing us that the Piano Man may be a British actor named Geoffrey Betts. Although our contact, Steve Magruder, strongly believes he knows the identity of the man, he wishes to express caution that nothing has yet been verified. He has also recently contacted the relevant authorities in regard to his belief. The following is an interview between wikinewsie CGorman and Steve.

CG: Who do you think the pianist is?

S: Geoffrey "Geoff" Betts, an actor and British citizen, who I last knew to be living in Eules, Texas (a suburb of Dallas), and who, the last time I saw him was living temporarily months at a time in Louisville, Kentucky.

CG: Why do you think it is him?

S: The person I knew should be 26, perhaps almost 27 now. The personal resemblances are the eyes, facial shape, asymmetric jawline, ears, nose and short hair. The person I knew had colored his hair blonde at least one time when I knew him. His mother is Italian, and his father is British, and the "Piano Man" has the appearance of such an ethnic

combination. I also knew that he composed music, but frankly, I did not know he could play the piano, although I don't find that to be out of the question, as I knew he could play other instruments. Both the man found and Geoff are thin and physically fit. I also knew Geoff to be a smart dresser.

CG: What is your relationship with Mr. Betts; were your good friends?

S: He is a former business associate of an ex-partner of mine in an upstart film production company that has since gone out of business. Geoff actually lived with us for periods of time in 2003. I would call him a friendly acquaintance, if not a friend, during that time.

CG: Has Mr. Betts any previous history of such behaviour?

S: Without getting too personal, I know that the relationship between Geoff and my ex-partner did lead to a lot of financial, legal and emotional issues for Geoff. There were also issues between Geoff and his mother, but again, I cannot get too personal here. I will say that Geoff, based on my knowledge, could indeed be emotionally scarred from various events, and that could further link him to this man.

CG: What is your knowledge of Mr. Betts' musical ability?

S: Geoff can compose music and play instruments of various sorts. I believe he had been in a band at one point.

CG: When was the last time you met Mr. Betts - was it long before the man turned up in England?

S: Early 2004, when Geoff last moved out of the residence where I and my ex-partner were living. I had heard various stories for months after that point regarding him continuing to live in Texas and occasionally visit Louisville, but I had no firsthand knowledge of that.

CG: What was Mr. Betts involved in in the weeks before the appearance of the man in England? Was he working on a film, on a break etc?

S: According to IMDB, Geoff was working on a film recently, but I am not

sure of the timing of that with respect to the time the man appeared in England. I have no information on where he might have been in the weeks before the man's appearance.

CG: On a scale of 1 to 10, how sure are you that the man is actually Mr. Betts?
S: 8. I admit I am not as confident as the Polish man living in Italy was (with his 99% certainty that it was his friend Massone), and it turned out he was incorrect. I have to say, however, that I am haunted by how much the "Piano Man" resembles Geoff. Further, the reports indicate the man is 6' while Geoff is 5'10"--I don't know whether the man found was measured with his shoes on or not. Last, my attempts to contact Geoff by a direct email address I found has failed to get any response. I am almost tossing and turning with cognitive dissonance about whether the man found could be Geoff or not.

CG: I know you have already contacted the relevant authorities, but if there was one thing about Mr. Betts that you believe could help further in verification of the pianist's identity; what would it be?
S: Geoff's website at <http://www.geoffreybetts.com> for physical comparison. Also, his mother may still be living in Euless, TX. Last, strangely enough, he also had a wish list at Amazon.com, and one of the last two items he added on April 4 (apparently just before the appearance of the man in England) is an audio CD titled "Silence."



Geoffrey Betts



"Piano Man"

Adrian reaches hurricane-strength, will strike Central America tonight



Hurricane Adrian 2115 UTC May 19.

Tropical Storm Adrian in the Eastern Pacific Ocean reached hurricane strength on Thursday morning, according to readings obtained by the National Hurricane Center from a United States Air Force plane. This means the storm has maximum sustained winds of over 74 mph (119 km/h), and makes it the first hurricane of the 2005 Pacific hurricane season.

As of 11 am Pacific time on May 19 (1800 UTC), the center of Adrian was located about 120 miles (195 km) southwest of San Salvador, El Salvador, moving northeast at 9 mph (15 km/h) with maximum sustained windspeeds of 75 mph (120 km/h), making it a Category 1 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale. The storm is expected to strengthen slightly before making landfall over Central America tonight, most likely over El Salvador, but also causing heavy rain to Guatemala and Honduras. Rainfall totals are expected to reach 10", reaching as high as 20" in isolated locales, which carries the risk of deadly mudslides and flash floods. Signs of Hurricane Adrian have already appeared in coastal regions of Guatemala and El Salvador.

The north-easterly track of this storm is extremely unusual. Only 4 tropical systems are recorded to have made landfall in Guatemala or El Salvador since 1966. The only named system ever to do so was Tropical Storm Andres on June 7, 1997, near San Salvador. On the storm's current track, a small possibility exists that Adrian will cross into Caribbean Sea and become Tropical Storm Arlene, the first named storm of the Atlantic season, over a week before that season officially begins.

Amazon deforestation accelerating



Figures released by the Brazilian

government have shown that the rate of deforestation in the Amazon has increased.

In the period August 2003 to August 2004, 26,000 square kilometres of the rainforest was felled. This number is up 6% from the 12 month period prior to August 2003. The total proportion of felled Amazon now stands at 17.3%, according to the World Wildlife Fund. This has led many environmentalists to worry that the cattle and soy trade are being put above the environment.

The 2003–2004 period saw the second largest tree felling, per area, in the Amazon's history. The worst was 1994–1995. The year prior to August 2003 had been another bad year for deforestation, it now being the third worst in history.



Amazon River near Manaus (Source: satellite photo)

That previous 2002–2003 period led Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's government to adopt an action plan to target deforestation. This included creating some of the largest reserves on earth and making closer satellite surveillance of threatened areas.

"This number is a tragedy and shows that deforestation is not a priority for the Lula government and that its plan [to fight destruction] is not working," said Paulo Adario, Greenpeace Amazon coordinator.

Much of the damage has been done in clearing trees to make space for crop land, especially in the worst hit state of Mato Grosso, where almost half of last year's deforestation occurred. This has led Greenpeace to condemn the governor of the state, a soya business man himself, as "king of deforestation". Much of this crop is exported to Europe and China, which

last year led Brazil to declare a trade surplus.

The clearing endangers the world's largest home of wildlife, which claims almost 30% of all animal and plant species.

There are also implications for the carbon cycle and hence for global warming. The respiration of trees involves the intake of carbon dioxide, and produces oxygen as a byproduct. With fewer trees a balance of CO₂ and O₂ in the atmosphere is harder to maintain. Increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide could result in global warming.

NOAA predicts increased hurricane activity in U.S.



Hurricane Frances, 2004

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association announced that it expects seven to nine hurricanes in the coming Atlantic hurricane season (June 1 to November 30), with three to four of them becoming "major".

"Major" hurricanes are defined as category 3 or above, having sustained winds above 111 mph. The annual predictions, the 2005 Atlantic Hurricane Outlook, were made as part of National Hurricane Preparedness Week, which began Sunday May 15.

This year's forecast is an increase from last season's, which was of six to eight hurricanes, two to three of them major. NOAA's predictions for 2004 were lower than the actual figures, which were nine hurricanes, six of them category 3 or above.

That unexpectedly heavy season had four of those storms hit Florida, and battered U.S. oil production. Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne slammed into Florida during a six-week period last year,

causing over \$40 billion in damage. Hurricane Ivan was the most damaging on record for the U.S. oil industry.

There were 60 direct deaths from hurricanes in 2004.

The NOAA report cites abnormally high sea surface temperature, low wind shear and low surface pressure as reasons for the high forecast. Although it is still too early to determine when or where hurricanes might hit this season, the agency is advising residents in at-risk areas to be prepared.

Scientists at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center, Hurricane Research Division and at the National Hurricane Center cooperated to produce the 2005 Atlantic Hurricane Outlook.

Uzbek rebel leader on horseback wants an Islamic state



Bakhtiyor Rakhimov, a rebel leader on horseback who claims control of an Uzbek town said the rebels are intent upon building an Islamic state.

"We will be building an Islamic state here in accordance with the Quran; the town is in the hands of people. People are tired of slavery," Rakhimov told The Associated Press on May 18th. "We will turn this land into gardens," he said. "If I turn this land into a good place, if everybody here will have plenty of food on the table, it will spread further."

Zakir Almatov, the Uzbek Interior Minister denied Rakhimov's claims. "It's all sheer nonsense, everything is normal there, if anything had happened there, I already would have been there," he said. But there were no Uzbek government officials to be found in Korasuv.

When asked whether the rebels belonged to an Islamic group Rakhimov said no,

that "We are just people, we just follow the Quran."

When asked if he was afraid that government forces would be back to regain control of the town he said, "Soldiers and police are also sons of this people. We don't have weapons, but if they come and attack us we will fight even with knives."

Uzbekistan soldiers sealed off the eastern border town after locals took over government buildings last Saturday. The unrest spread from nearby Andijan, where local sources said several hundred people died when troops opened fire at protesters on Friday.

Some refugees near Korasuv said troops shot at them as they tried to cross the border into Kyrgyzstan - and some died.

U.K. Foreign Minister Jack Straw said his Uzbek counterpart had pledged to allow diplomats access to Andijan on Tuesday.

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