

# Rita set to strike Gulf Coast

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KEY WEST, Fla. — Rapidly strengthening Hurricane Rita lashed the Florida Keys on Tuesday and headed into the Gulf of Mexico, where forecasters feared it could develop into another blockbuster storm targeting Texas or Louisiana.

Thousands of people were evacuated from the Keys and low-lying areas of northern Cuba. On the far side of the Gulf of Mexico in Texas, Galveston started evacuations and officials made plans to move refugees from Hurricane Katrina who had been housed in the Houston area to Arkansas.

Forecasters said Rita could intensify in the Gulf of Mexico into a Category 4 storm with winds of at least 131 mph. The most likely destination by week's end was Texas, although Louisiana and northern Mexico were possibilities, accord-

ing to the hurricane center.

Acting FEMA Director R. David Paulson told reporters that the agency has aircraft and buses available to evacuate residents of areas the hurricane might hit. Rescue teams and truckloads of ice, water and prepared meals were being sent to Texas and Florida.

"I strongly urge Gulf coast residents to pay attention" to the storm, he said.

Stung by criticism of the government's slow initial response to Hurricane Katrina, President Bush signed an emergency declaration for Florida and spoke with Texas Gov. Rick Perry about planning for the storm's landfall.

"All up and down the coastline people are now preparing for what is anticipated to be another significant storm," Bush said.

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush said more than 2,000 Florida National

Guard troops and dozens of law enforcement officers were ready to deal with the storm's aftermath, although it appeared the Keys were spared the storm's full fury.

"I think we did, so far, dodge a bullet," said Key West Mayor Jimmy Weekley.

Rita started the day as a tropical storm with top sustained wind of 70 mph. But as it cruised through the Florida Straits between the Keys and Cuba, it gathered energy from the warm sea and by early afternoon it had top wind of 100 mph with higher gusts, the National Hurricane Center said.

Bush received a briefing about Rita aboard the USS Iwo Jima, which is docked near downtown New Orleans, as the hurricane caused new anxiety among Katrina victims in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama.

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin

suspended his plan Monday to start bringing residents back to the city after warnings that Rita could follow Hurricane Katrina's course and rupture his city's weakened levees.

"There's still plenty of warm water that it needs to move over in the next couple days. The forecast is favorable for further intensification," said Michelle Mainelli, a meteorologist at the National Hurricane Center.

Residents and visitors had been ordered out of the Keys, and voluntary evacuation orders were posted for coastal mainland areas such as Miami Beach. Some 58,000 people were evacuated in Cuba, on the southern side of the Florida Straits.

Many of Key West's shops and bars were boarded up, and at least one segment of the Keys highway, U.S. 1, was barricaded because of water and debris, the Florida Highway Patrol said.

## TAX

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a more affordable level, especially for people on fixed incomes."

He said he would like to suspend the variable tax rate for two years or until prices come down.

Georgia's state legislature called a special session earlier this month and voted to approve a suspension of the state gas tax until Sept. 30. The initiative was led by Ga. Gov. Sonny Perdue. Most discussions across the nation about suspending the tax in the wake of Hurricane Katrina have proposed doing so for a few months at most.

Bernard Weinstein, director of the Center for Economic Development and Research at the University of North Texas, said the proposals are shortsighted.

"Most states are hungry for revenue," he said. "They cannot afford to give up the gasoline tax or part of the gasoline tax, especially if you

*"I think the problem is we, in America, consider cheap gasoline a natural birthright."*

BERNARD WEINSTEIN, RESEARCHER

look at the federal government, in the aftermath of Katrina, could put a lot of highway projects on hold."

"I think the problem is we, in America, consider cheap gasoline a natural birthright."

Pate said that while highway funding is an issue, it is outweighed by prices upwards of \$3.

"I think it's what can the people stand," he said. "People on a fixed income are having great difficulty ... and I don't think it's right."

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## POKER

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Kevin Kruger, associate executive director of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, says that for the most part, the game is fairly harmless and even can be a positive social experience for students.

But he does say there are a few issues to consider, such as if play negatively impacts students' academics, social life and personal finances.

"Like a lot of activities like this, I think it will peak, but there's nothing in the popular literature that suggests that it is slowing down at all," Kruger says. "I think we're looking at something that's going to continue for a number of years."

Carman says his parents, who are former professional bridge players, encourage him to play because they view poker as a safer alternative to other behaviors.

"I've had 20-plus-people tournaments at my house in Durham," he says. "It's kind of a thing that my parents would rather have me sit downstairs and play poker with friends than have me go out and drink and drive."

Although Carman says he's made a small amount of money playing, it's the competitive thrill of the game he likes.

"It's more just kind of a thing that I like to have a good time and hopefully make some money," he says.

Others treat poker more as a money-making skill. Reid Young, a 20-year-old sophomore at Wake Forest University, started playing Texas Hold'em online this summer because of his interest in other card games.

"Once I start playing a game like that, I do what I can do to get pretty good at it," he says.

Part of Young's strategy is reading the seven poker books he's bought.

"You can study and have more experience than someone, and it

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STEVE CARMAN, SOPHOMORE

pays off," he says.

And for Young, it pays off in the thousands. Since he started playing this July, he has made about \$5,000.

He says his poker playing doesn't impact his other activities at school. "I come back from the gym and I'll play for half an hour, or if I have some time off and there's nothing else to do."

Jeremy Wisuthseriwong, a junior business administration major at UNC, was inspired by old western movies and started playing five-card draw in his elementary and middle school days with chips from the game Connect Four.

Now he plays with his friends as a social occasion. "It's a good way to start conversation," he says. "When excitement does build up in one of those monster hands, it's a lot of fun for everybody."

Wisuthseriwong also started playing poker online last year by investing \$200 he'd saved from various jobs. He says if he ever dips below that amount, he'll stop. But so far, he's made about \$600 in profit.

At school, he typically plays on the weekends because he says it would take up too much of his time otherwise.

"(If I were to lose money), I'm going to get frustrated and that's going to affect how I perform in class and around other people," he says.

"I think it's just too dangerous. There's a chance you can win big, but there's a big chance you can lose big."

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## PROTEST

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a message program and a civil disobedience class.

The civil disobedience class will teach the students to use direct action as a way to effect change, Carson-Dewitt said.

And individuals will be able to participate in painting umbrellas — or "peace parasols" — Thursday as a way to express their concerns visually.

"People everywhere understand umbrellas as a symbol of security," said Roger Ehrlich, coordinator of Public Assembly, an activism group that sponsored the parasols alongside the camp site.

Painting the parasols is an ideal opportunity to participate in free expression, he said.

But all the week's activities are a mere lead-in to the Washington, D.C., trip.

The protest expedition will provide several possibilities for people's voices to be heard at both the national and local scenes, Carson-Dewitt said.

"Hopefully it provides visibility to the growing anti-war movement," she said. "Also, it empowers people to continue to do work in their own community."

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## KIDS

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coping with Katrina justified federal support for all affected students, regardless of where they enroll.

More than 370,000 students are estimated to have been displaced by the storm, and Thornton said more than 40,000 are expected to enroll in Texas schools.

"They are children of this nation, and whether they go to a private school right now or a public school, this is due to being displaced by a catastrophe," she said. "Wherever these children find a home for education, I believe the federal government should help them because of this unusual situation."

Many public education advocates contend that allowing federal dollars to pay for private schools is a backdoor way of implementing a large-scale voucher program. The Bush administration has voiced consistent support for school-choice initiatives.

"It is a failed issue that they're trying to take advantage of in these tragic circumstances," said Bruce Hunter, associate executive director of public policy for the American Association of School Administrators.

"There's no reason for subsidizing the private schools. This is merely an attempt to get something they have been unable to

enact under other circumstances."

Most students forced to relocate because of the storm likely will be enrolling in the nearest available public school, he said, so the focus should be on shoring up school districts that will face enormous costs from the sudden influx.

Without sufficient funding, Hunter said, schools would have to dangerously stretch resources to deal with such rapid growth in student population.

"They would end up robbing Peter to pay Paul internally in their districts," he said.

Legislation introduced last Thursday in the U.S. Senate, sponsored by Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., does not specifically mention private schools.

Alexa Marrero, spokeswoman for the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, said Congress would begin examining long-term aid proposals in the coming weeks, and the outline of any final aid package still is up in the air.

"Both public and private schools have been opening their doors," she said. "We are certainly working with the administration to determine how we can help all of the children and families displaced by the hurricane."

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## STATE

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permit included a map of where their table could be. "We were asked to stay at the table on one side (of the brickyard)," he said.

CR members passed out protest signs and yellow ribbons to anyone who wanted them.

When Sheehan arrived, protesters rushed to the bus — an area Everett says was off-limits to the College Republicans — and a shouting match began.

The controversy is about who was protesting — the College Republicans or other people who attended.

"People who were at the table stayed at the table," said Brittany Farrell, a CR member who was working at the table. "We just took the grief of everyone who was opposed to Sheehan."

But she also said that when she heard the commotion by the bus, she ran to see what was happening.

Gene Feldman, former president of ACLU, said he was in attendance to listen to Sheehan, but stepped in to protect the Campus Greens' and Sheehan's freedom of speech.

Campus Greens also is filing a complaint against the Campus Police Department for its mishandling of the situation. She said it should have kept the protesters away from the bus.

Campus police Sgt. Jon Barnwell said officers were told only that two groups would be in the brickyard.

"They could be anywhere in the brickyard as long as they weren't fighting," he said.

Feldman said police did not help restrain the crowd despite his efforts to get support. He said the disruption led to a violation of the group's First Amendment rights.

"It was a blatant disregard for the civil liberties that the Greens — that any group — was entitled to."

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