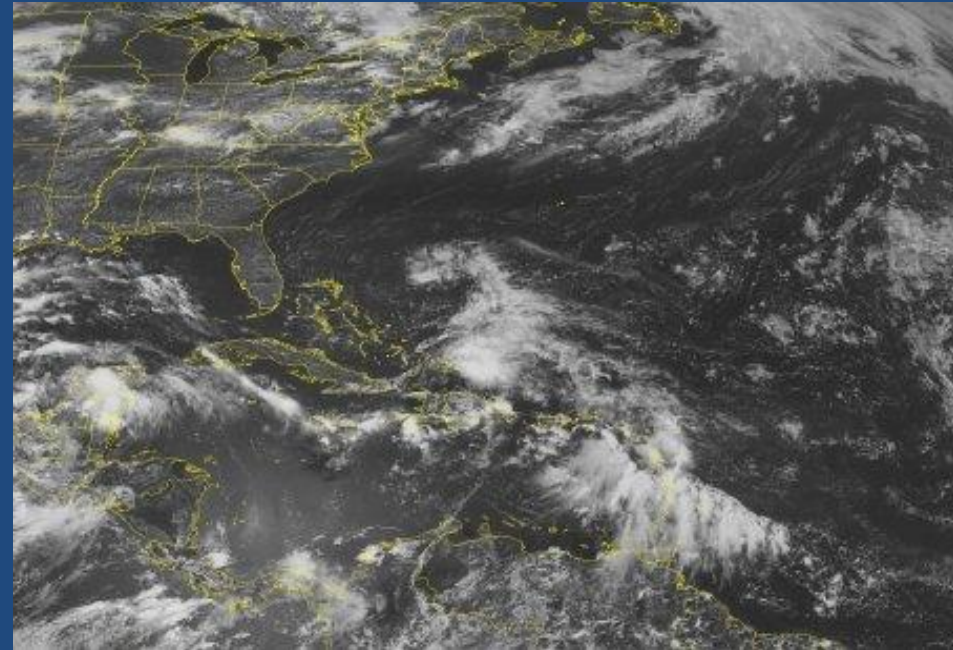
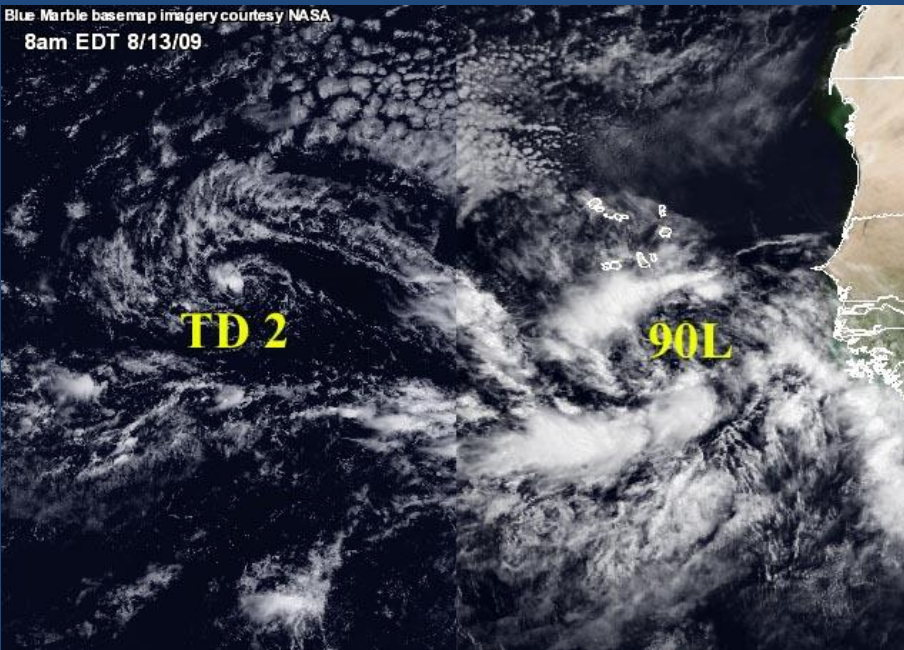




# Tropical Waves



John Cangialosi and Lixion Avila  
National Hurricane Center

WMO Region IV  
Tropical Cyclone Workshop



# Outline

- Basic definition
- Schematic diagrams/Interactions
- Operational products/forecasts
- Tools for tracking
- Exercise



# What are tropical waves?

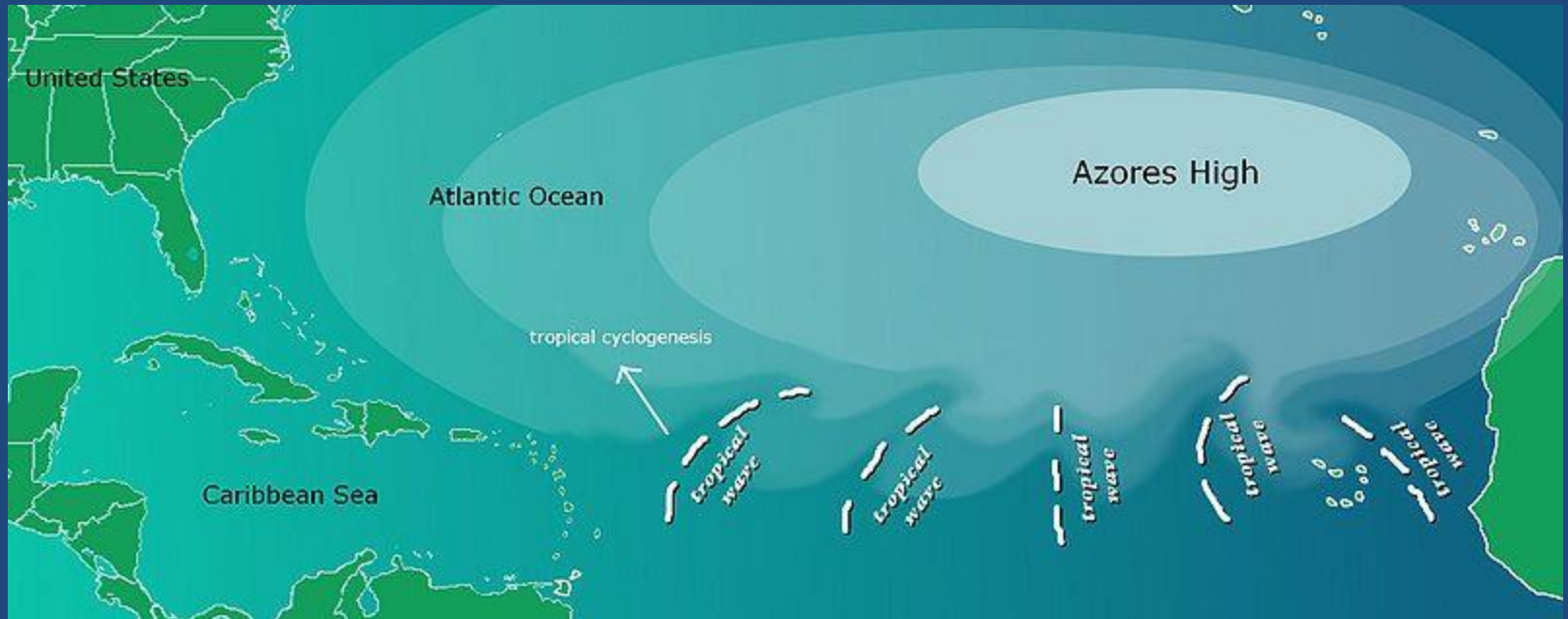
- \* Perturbations / disturbances in the tropical easterlies that typically move from east to west.
- \* Often seen as inverted troughs of low pressure (inverted-V pattern in satellite imagery). Significant rain producers.
- \* Convection typically on the east side. Subsidence/clearing on the west side.
- \* Convection highly modulated by atmospheric moisture, upper level features, topography, etc.
- \* Develop into tropical cyclones.
- \* Around 60 tracked per year (little annual variability)

# How/where they form

- Generated by an instability (baroclinic-barotropic) of the African easterly jet
- Jet arises as a result of reversed lower tropospheric temperature gradient over west-central north Africa due to extremely warm temperatures over the Sahara Desert and substantially cooler temperatures along the coast of Guinea.



# Typical Synoptic Setup

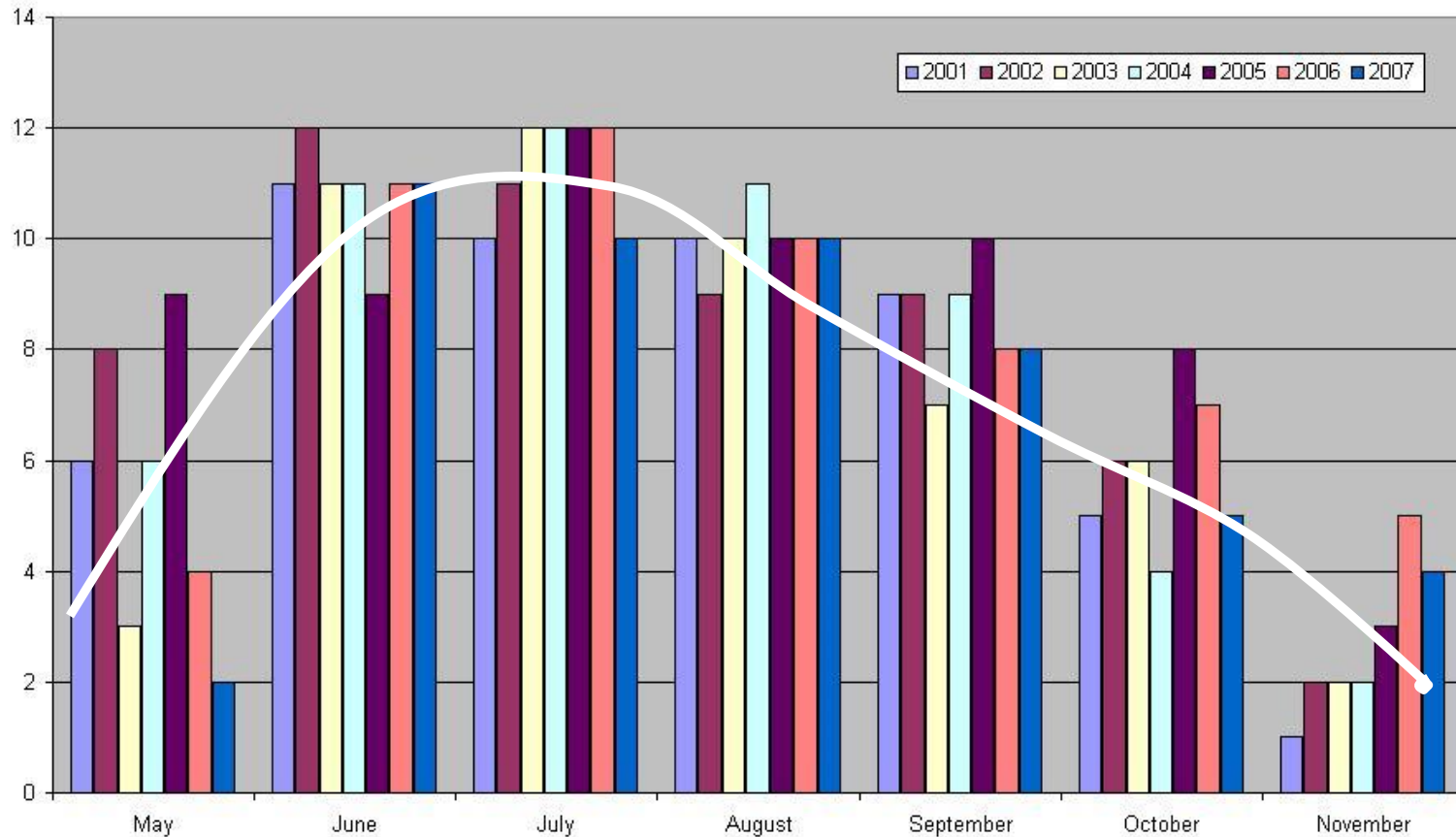


Tropical waves/African easterly waves move westward within the trade wind flow south of the Bermuda-Azores high



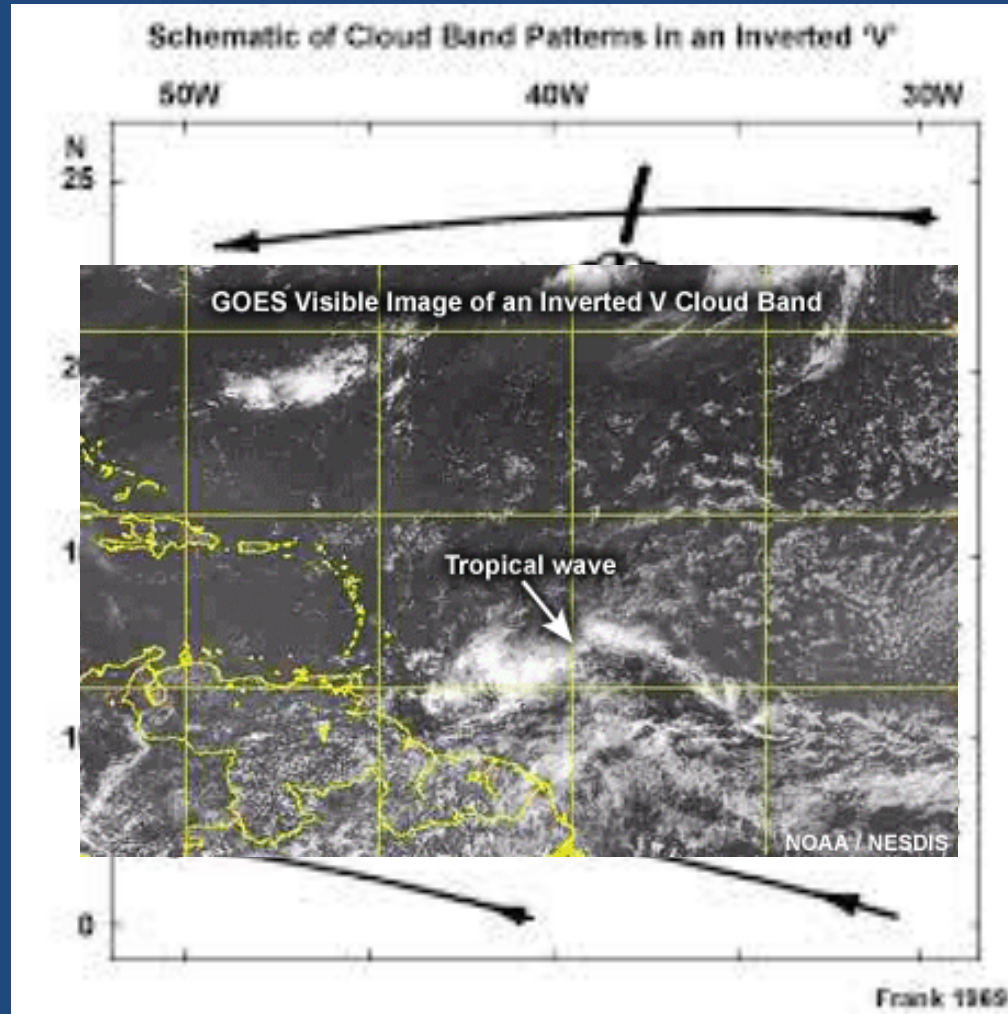
# Frequency by month

Tropical Waves tracked by NHC



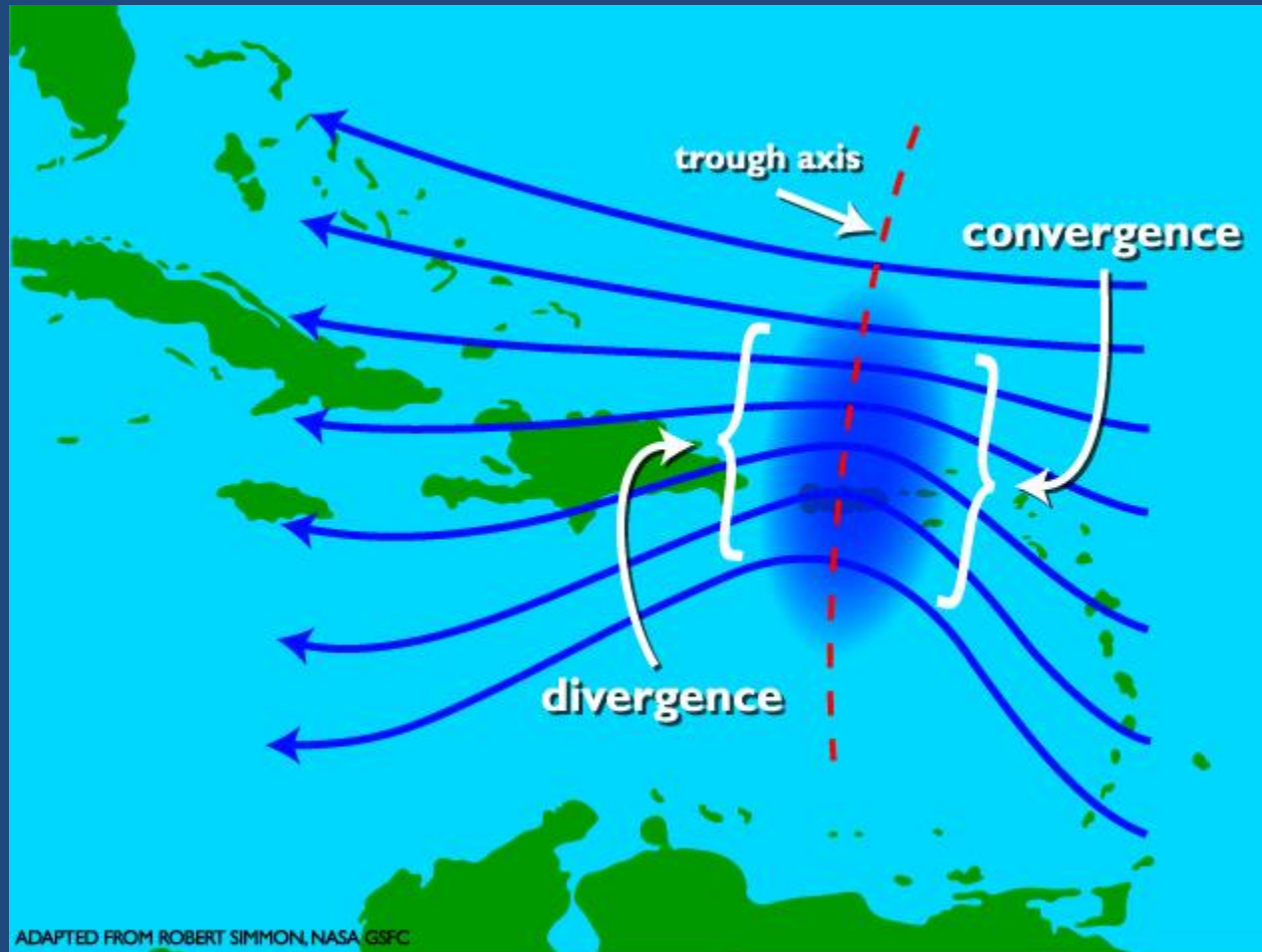
*Tropical wave activity in terms of numbers is highest June-August*

# Schematic diagrams



Classic inverted V-shape near the eastern Caribbean

# Schematic diagram



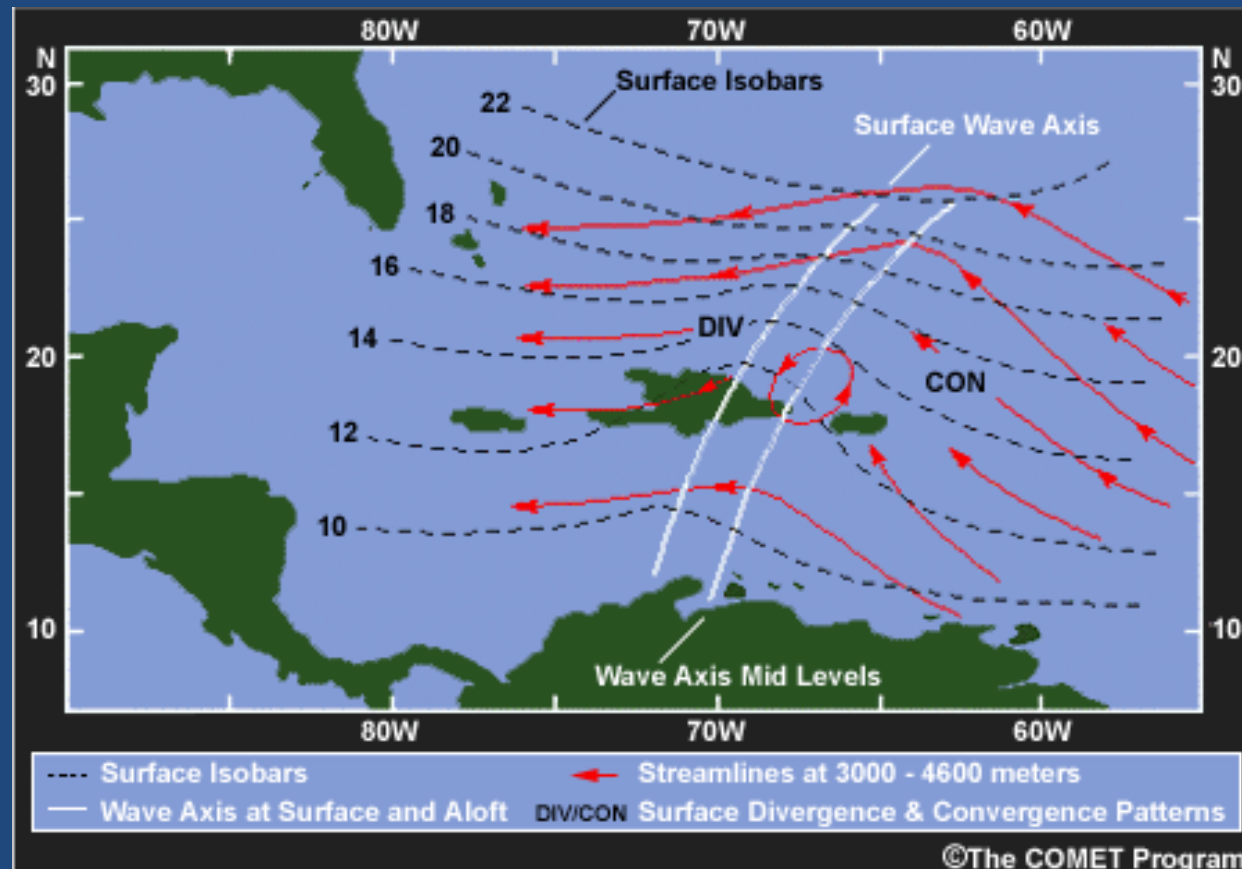




At what pressure level is the maximum amplitude?

- (a) 700 mb
- (b) 500 mb
- (c) 200 mb
- (d) surface

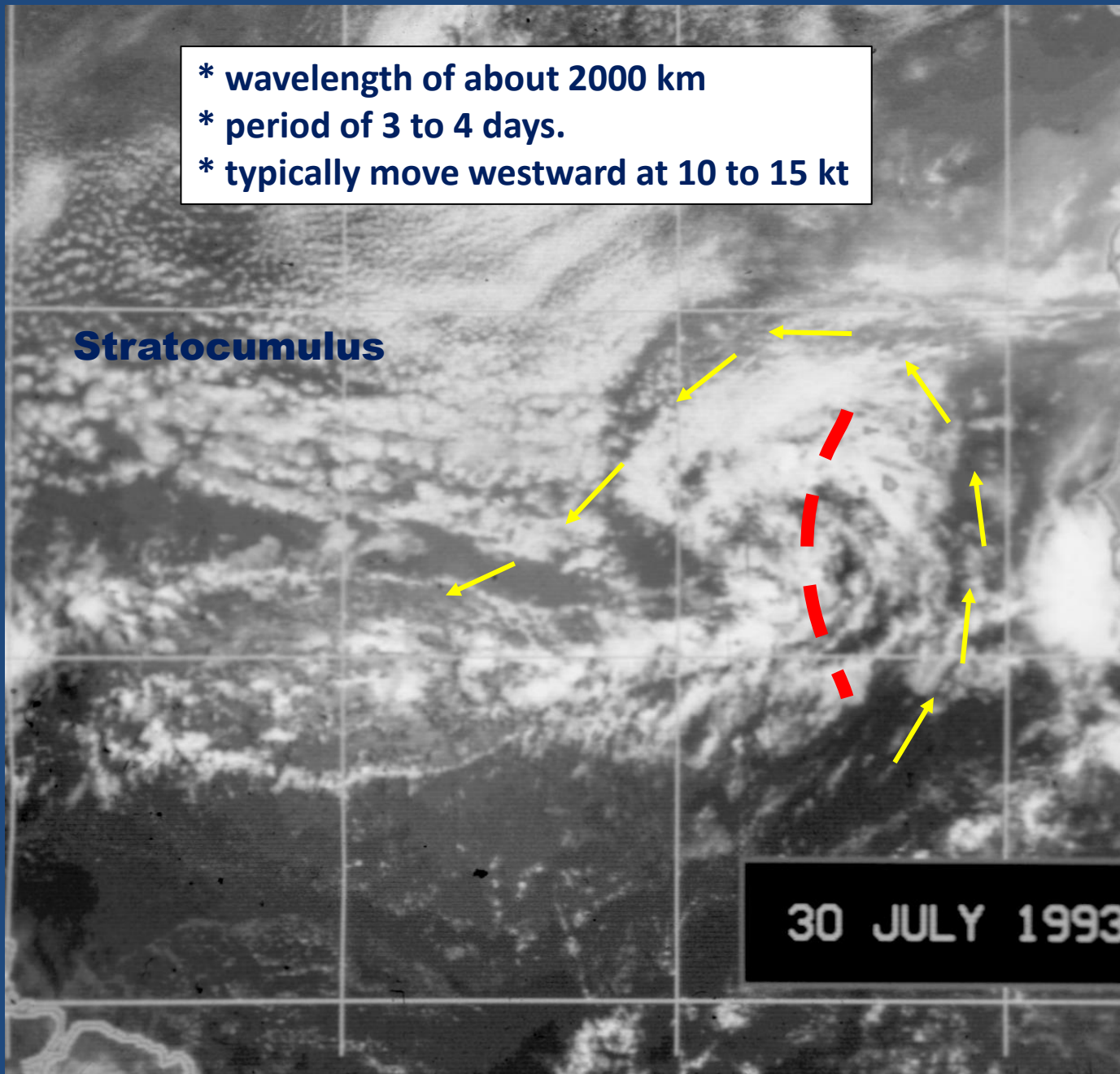
# Schematic diagram



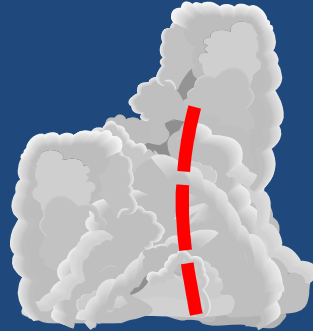
- Notice eastward slope will height
- Maximum amplitude is around 700 mb

- \* wavelength of about 2000 km
- \* period of 3 to 4 days.
- \* typically move westward at 10 to 15 kt

## Stratocumulus

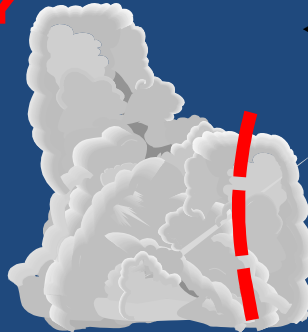


**NO  
SHEAR**



High  
Levels  
Mid  
Levels  
Low  
Levels

**EASTERLY  
SHEAR**



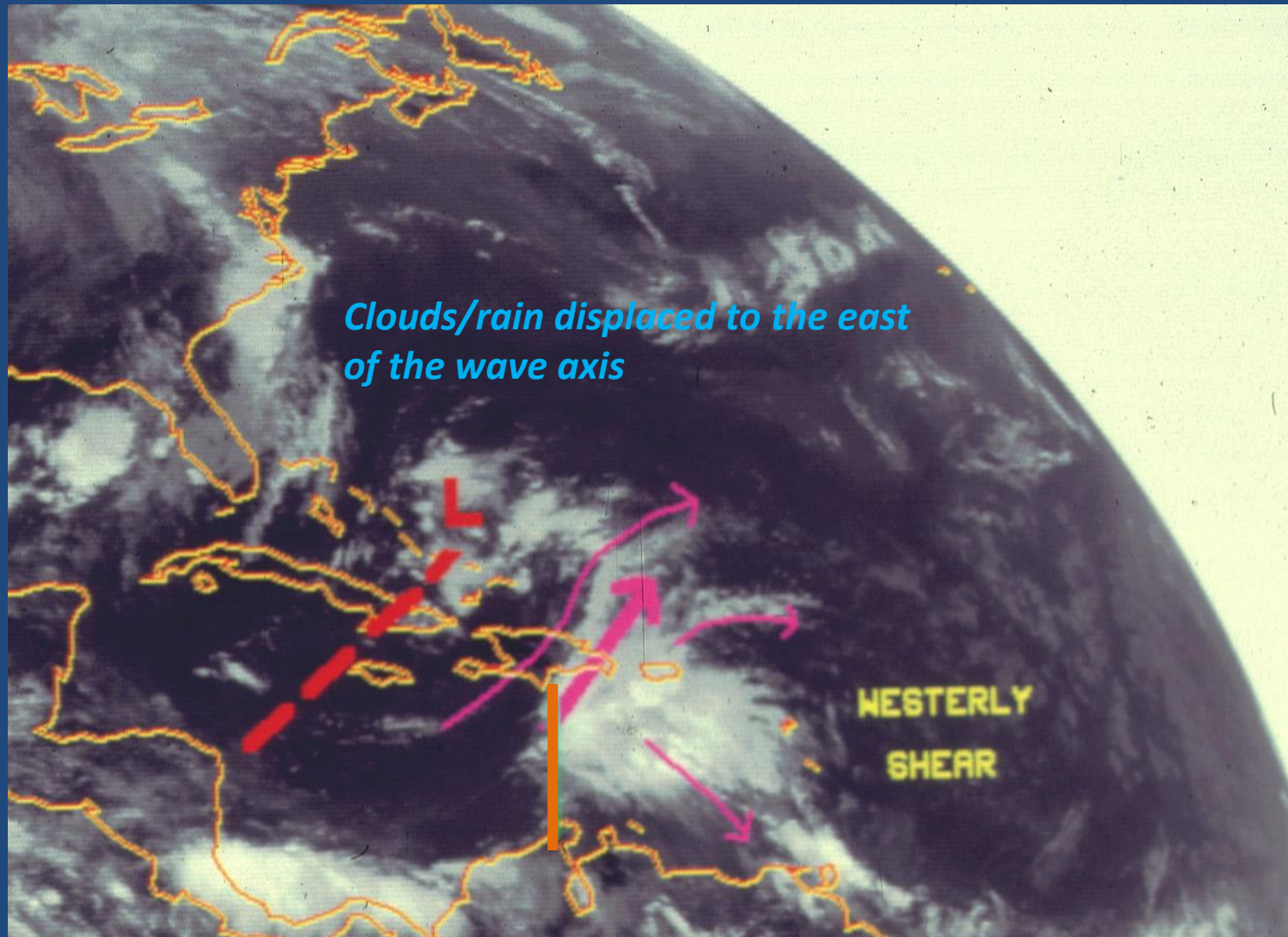
High  
Levels  
Mid  
Levels  
Low  
Levels

**WESTERLY  
SHEAR**



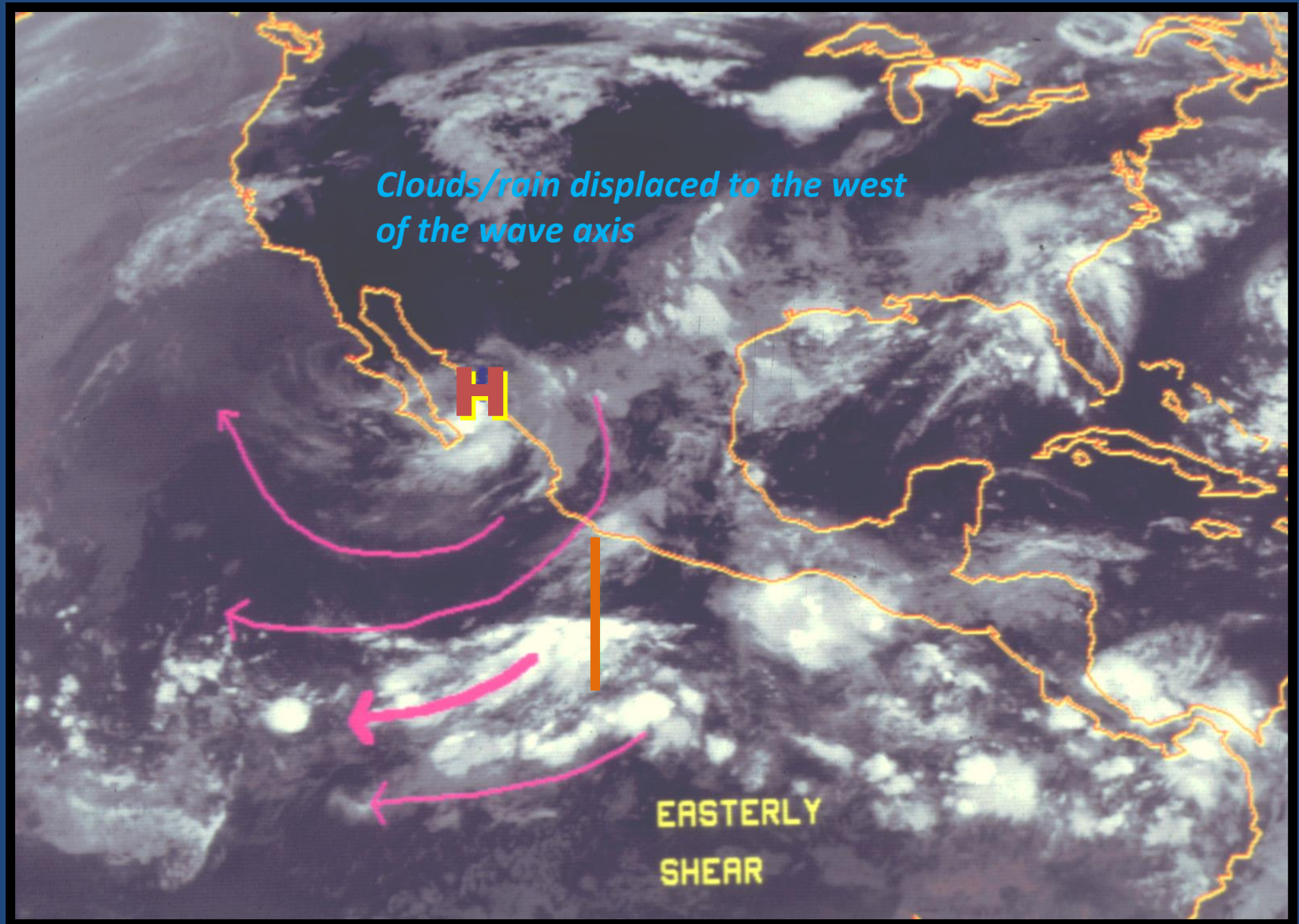
High  
Levels  
Mid  
Levels  
Low  
Levels

# Waves in Westerly Shear





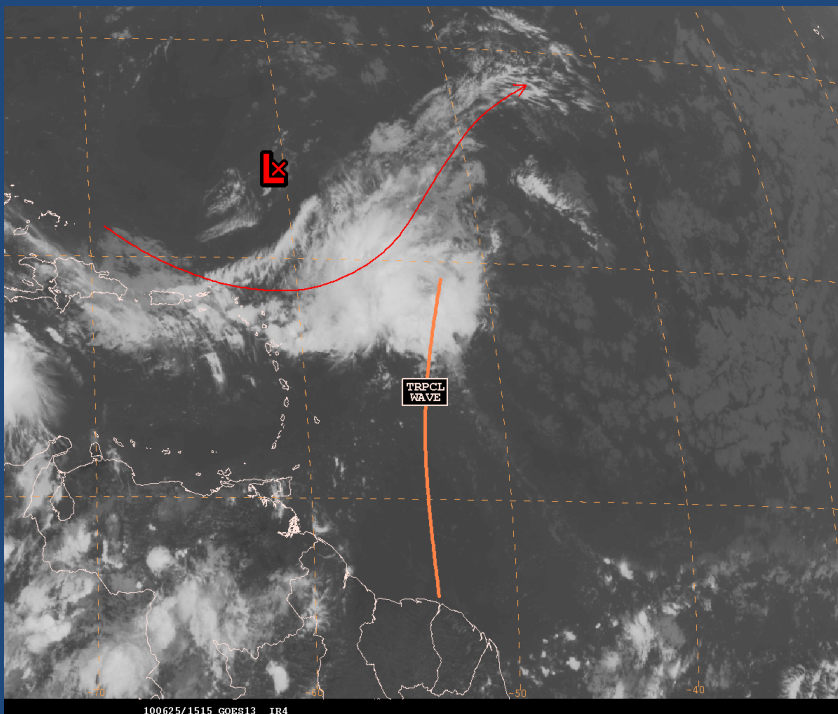
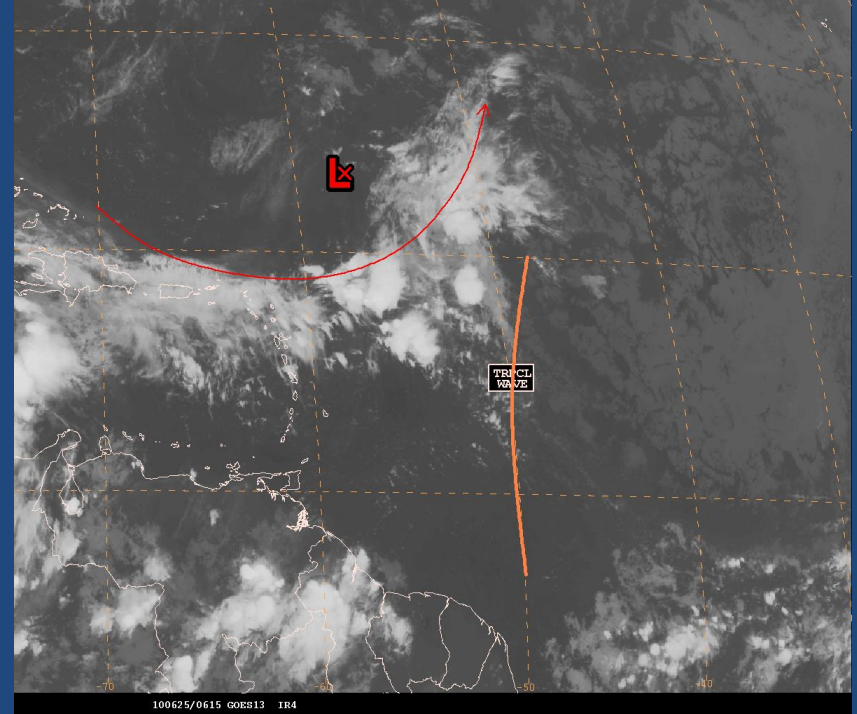
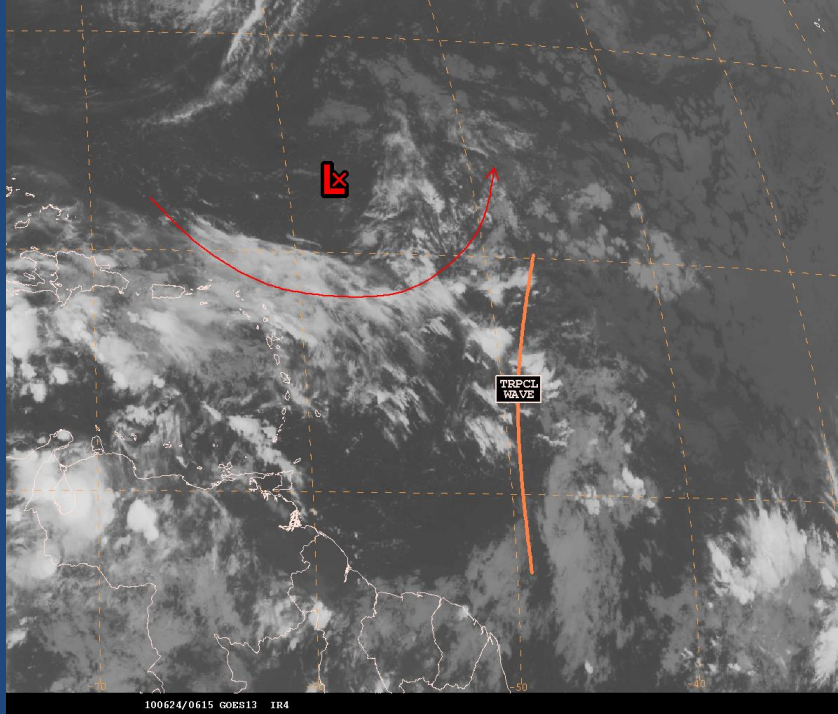
# Waves in Easterly Shear





What happens when tropical waves interact with upper-level lows and troughs?

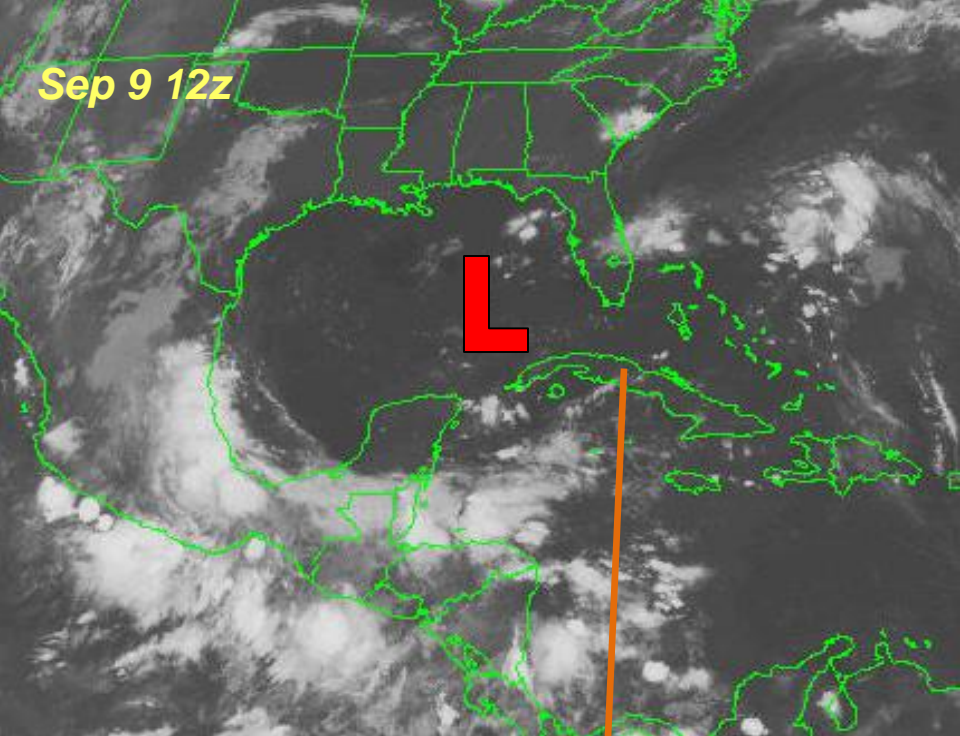
- (a) Convection decreases
- (b) Convection increases
- (c) A tropical cyclone forms



*Although interaction with upper-level lows are unfavorable for tropical cyclogenesis, it can often induce heavy rainfall.*

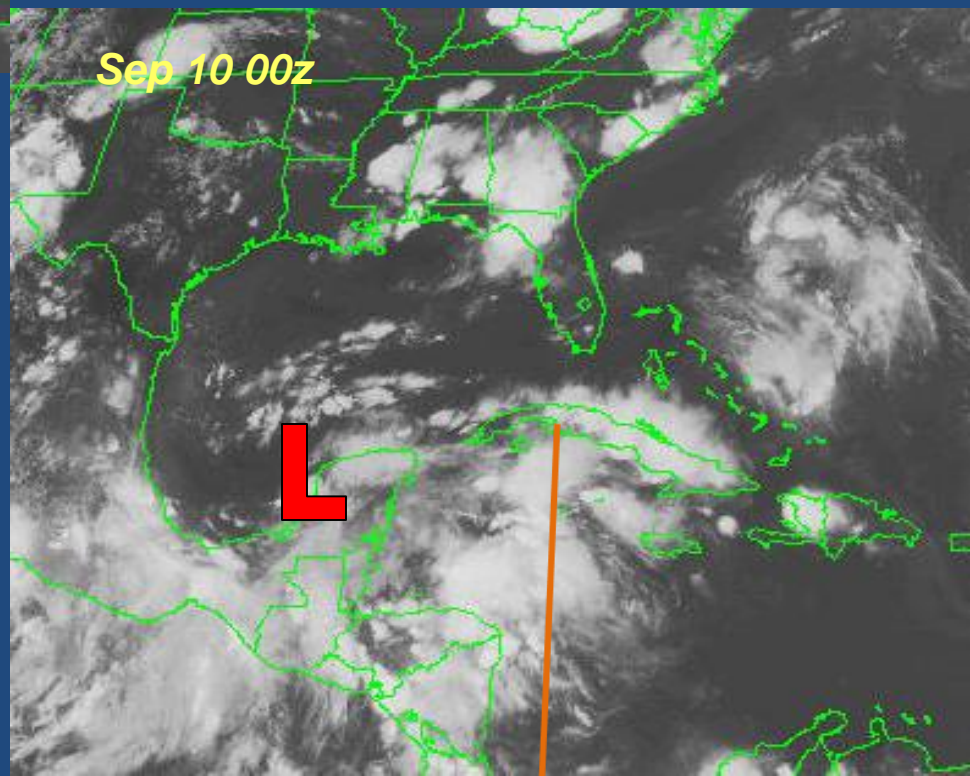


Sep 9 12z

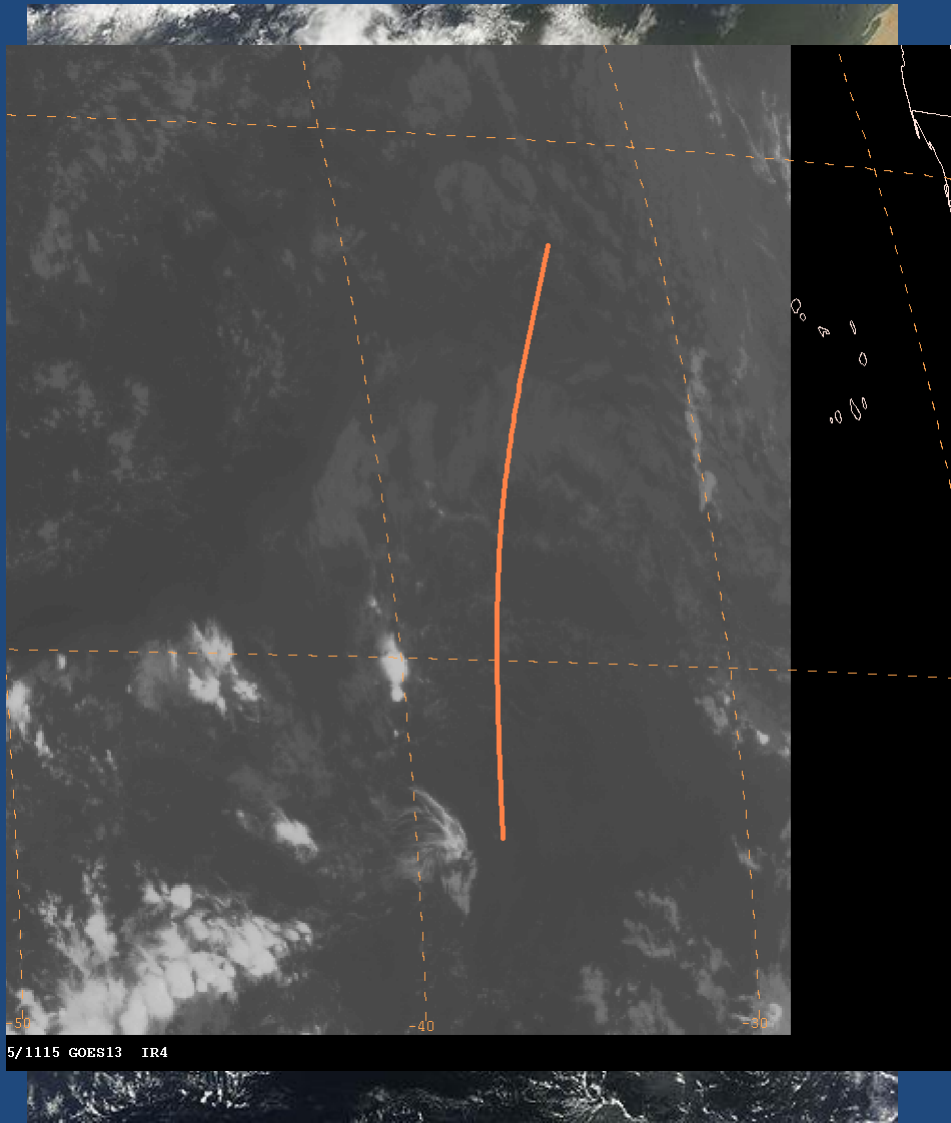


*Sea-breeze convergence, upslope flows, and afternoon heating can cause convection to become chaotic and difficult to predict.*

Sep 10 00z



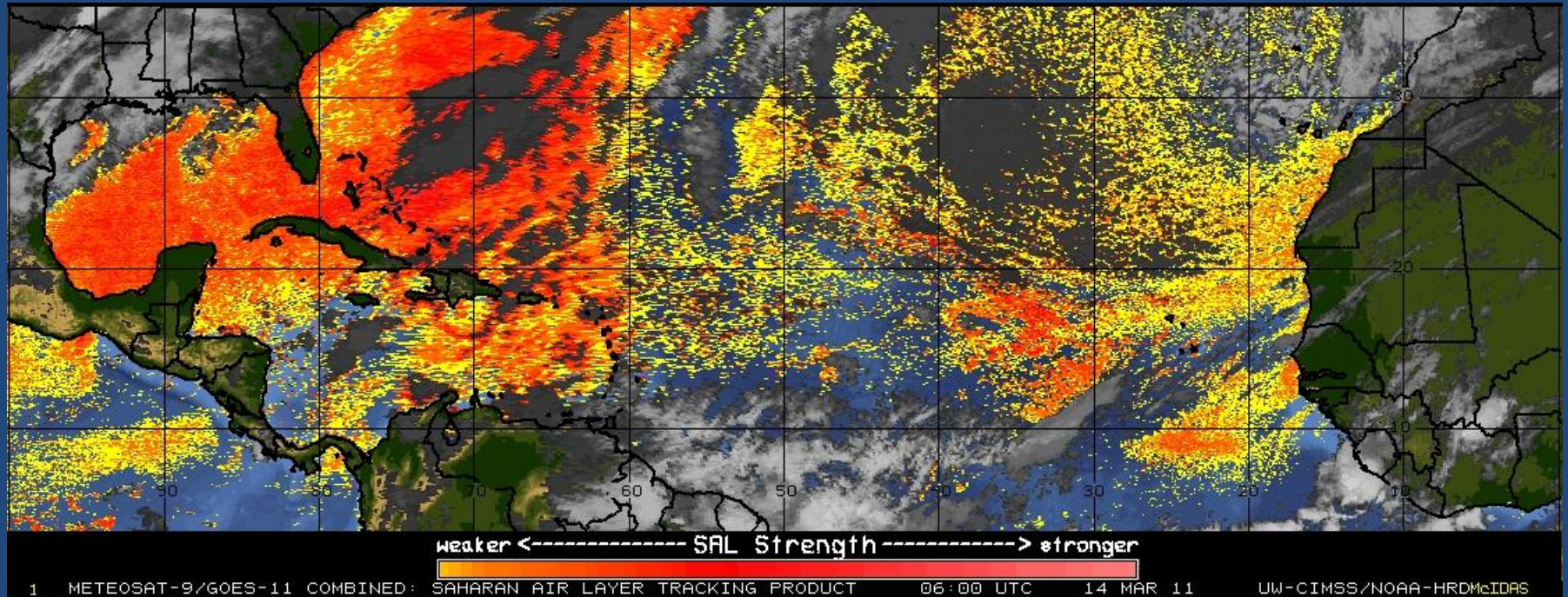
# Saharan Air Layer



*Very dry/warm air in the low-mid levels of the atmosphere limits convection.*



# Saharan Air Layer



*Tool to help track the strength and position of the SAL*



# NHC Products



## Analyze current positions



# TAFB products: Tropical Weather Discussion



TROPICAL WEATHER DISCUSSION FOR NORTH AMERICA...CENTRAL AMERICA...GULF OF MEXICO...CARIBBEAN SEA...NORTHERN SECTIONS OF SOUTH AMERICA...AND ATLANTIC OCEAN TO THE AFRICAN COAST FROM THE EQUATOR TO 32N. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS BASED ON SATELLITE IMAGERY...METEOROLOGICAL ANALYSIS...WEATHER OBSERVATIONS...AND RADAR.

BASED ON 1800 UTC SURFACE ANALYSIS AND SATELLITE IMAGERY THROUGH 2315 UTC.

...TROPICAL WAVES...

A TROPICAL WAVE IS ALONG 32W S OF 17N MOVING W NEAR 13 KT. THIS WAVE COINCIDES WITH A DEEP LAYER MOISTURE MAXIMUM OBSERVED IN TOTAL PRECIPITABLE WATER IMAGERY. ISOLATED MODERATE CONVECTION IS FROM 13N-15N BETWEEN 30W-34W.

A TROPICAL WAVE IS ALONG 49W S OF 14N MOVING W NEAR 18 KT. THIS WAVE REMAINS ON THE LEADING EDGE OF DRY SAHARAN AIR AND DUST INHIBITING DEEP CONVECTION ALONG THE WAVE AXIS. HOWEVER... SCATTERED SHOWERS ARE FROM 10N-12N BETWEEN 46W-50W.

A TROPICAL WAVE IS ALONG 66W S OF 18N MOVING W NEAR 15 KT. THIS WAVE COINCIDES WITH A DEEP LAYER MOISTURE MAXIMUM THAT STRETCHES NWD INTO THE SW NORTH ATLANTIC DUE TO AN UPPER LEVEL LOW CENTERED NEAR 23N67W. INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE TROPICAL WAVE AND UPPER LEVEL LOW ARE PRODUCING SCATTERED SHOWERS AND ISOLATED MODERATE CONVECTION FROM 10N-19N BETWEEN 60W-70W.

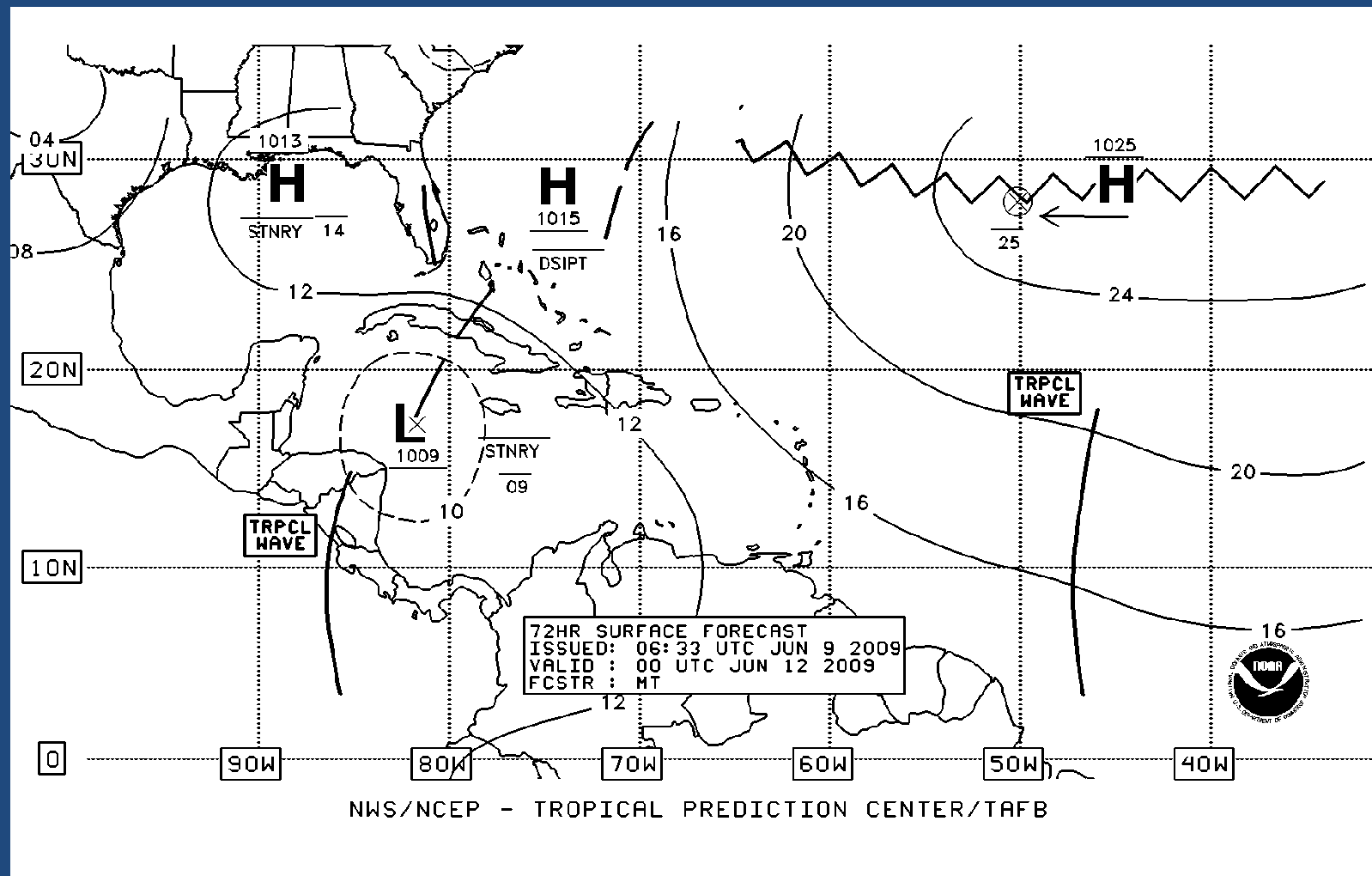
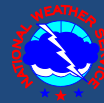
A TROPICAL WAVE IS ALONG 82W S OF 21N MOVING W NEAR 15 KT. THIS WAVE LIES IN A BROAD AREA OF DEEP LAYER MOISTURE OBSERVED IN TOTAL PRECIPITABLE WATER IMAGERY. THIS WAVE CONTINUES MOVING BENEATH A DIFFLUENT PATTERN ALOFT ENHANCING SCATTERED MODERATE CONVECTION OVER THE SW CARIBBEAN S OF 12N AND ACROSS PANAMA AND COSTA RICA. ALSO SCATTERED MODERATE/ISOLATED STRONG CONVECTION IS OVER THE NW CARIBBEAN N OF 18N BETWEEN 80W-89W...INCLUDING PORTIONS OF WRN CUBA AND THE YUCATAN PENINSULA.

Discussion of  
tropical waves





# TAFB products: graphical forecast

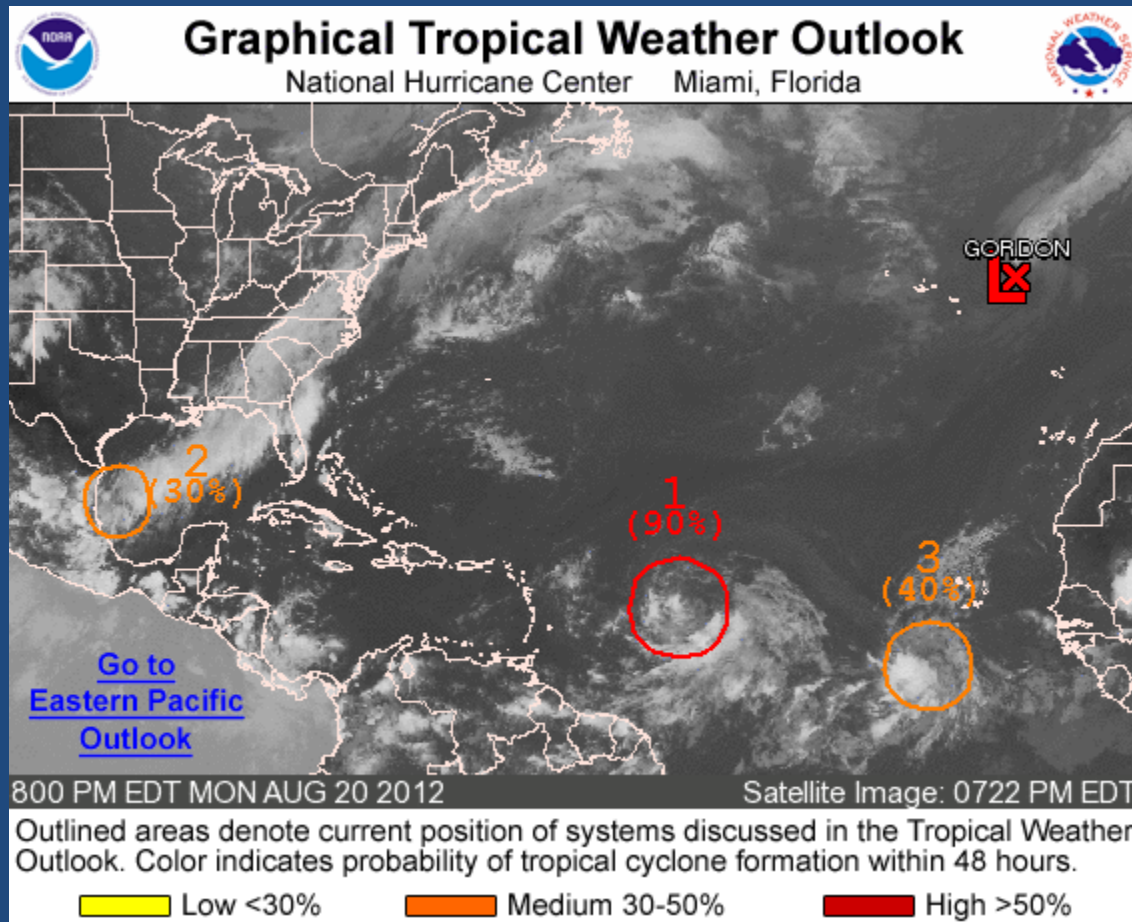


Predict future positions: 24h, 48h, and 72h





# Tropical Weather Outlook



Approximately 70 % of Atlantic tropical cyclones and 85 % of major hurricanes originate from tropical waves



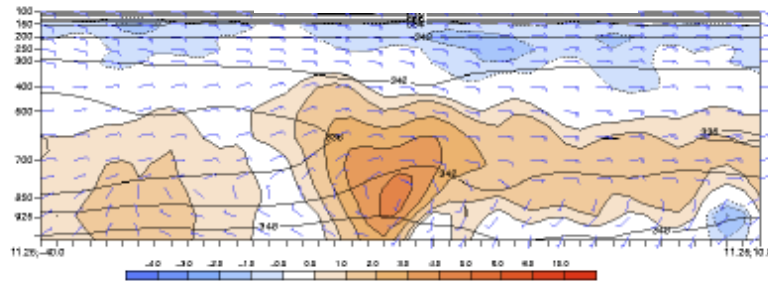
What is more important for tropical  
cyclogenesis?

- (a) the wave structure
- (b) the environment

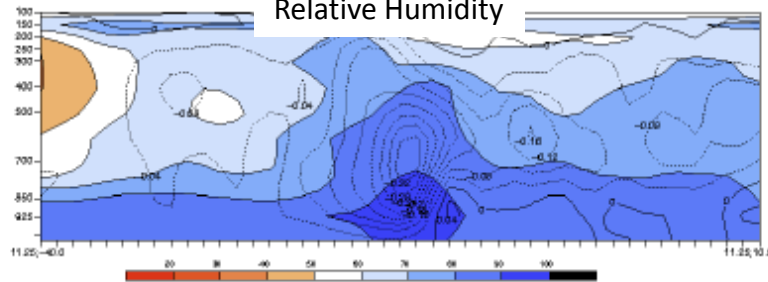
# Developing vs. Non-developing

## Developing (33)

### Relative Vorticity

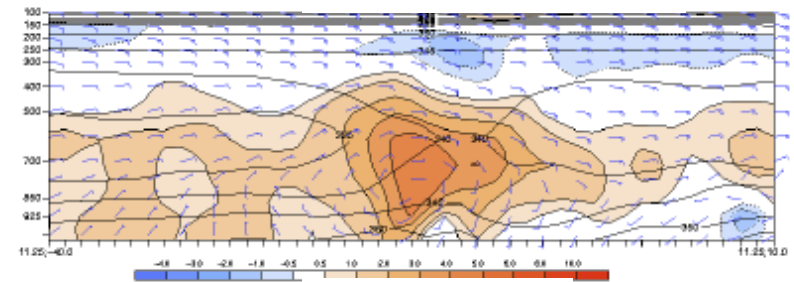


### Relative Humidity

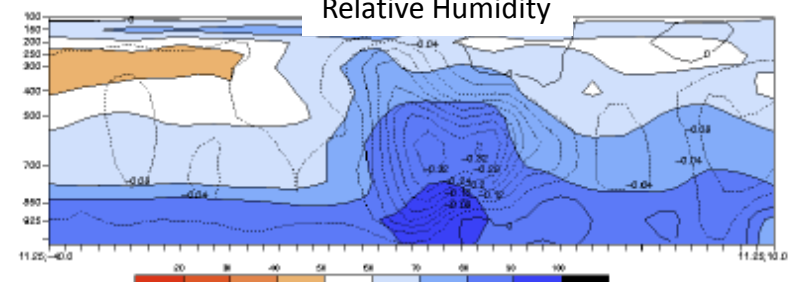


## Non-Developing (33 most intense)

### Relative Vorticity



### Relative Humidity



Hopsch, Thorncroft, and Tyle (2009)

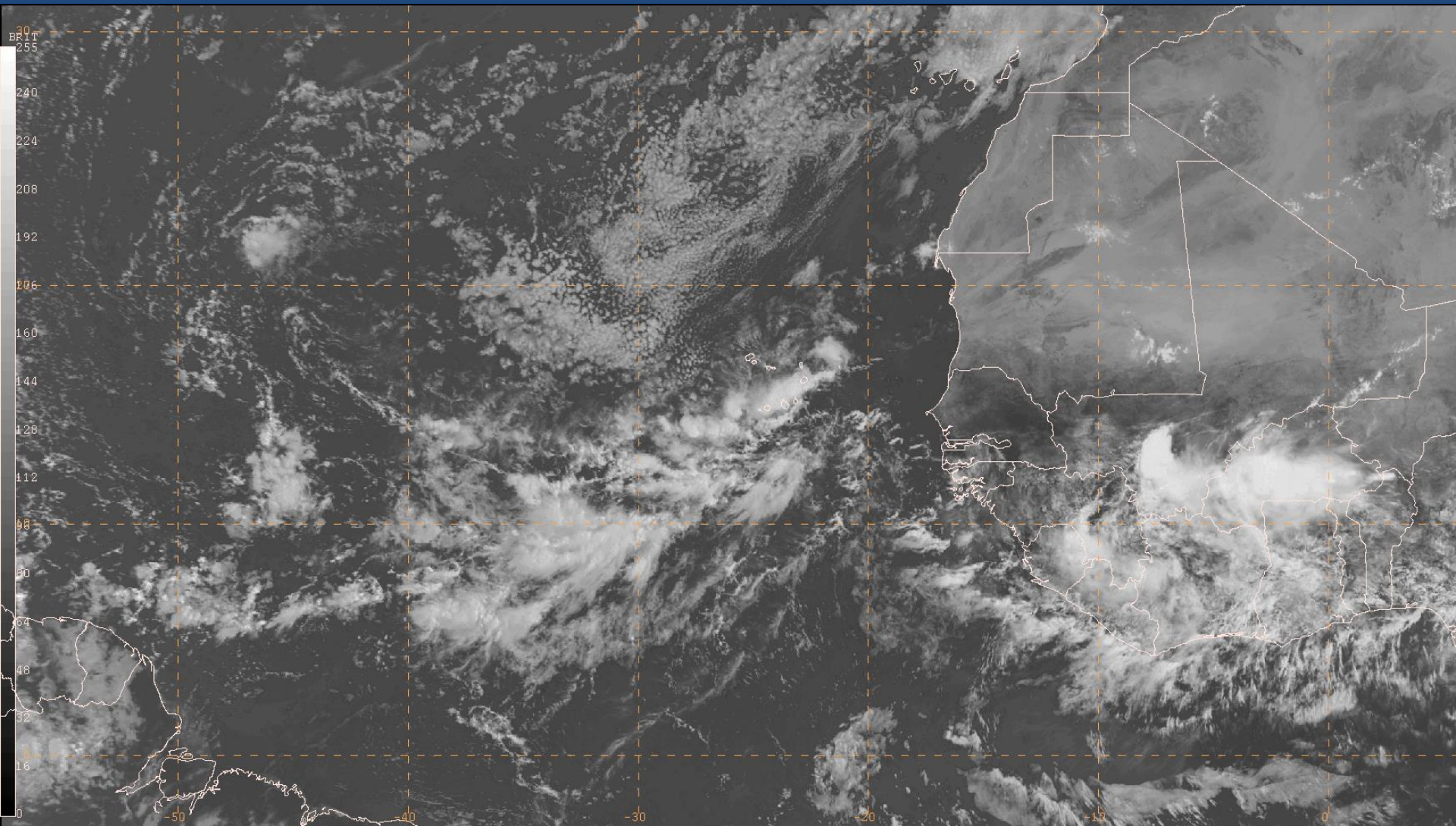
Very little different in structure between developing and non-developing waves



# Tools to track tropical waves



# Satellite Imagery



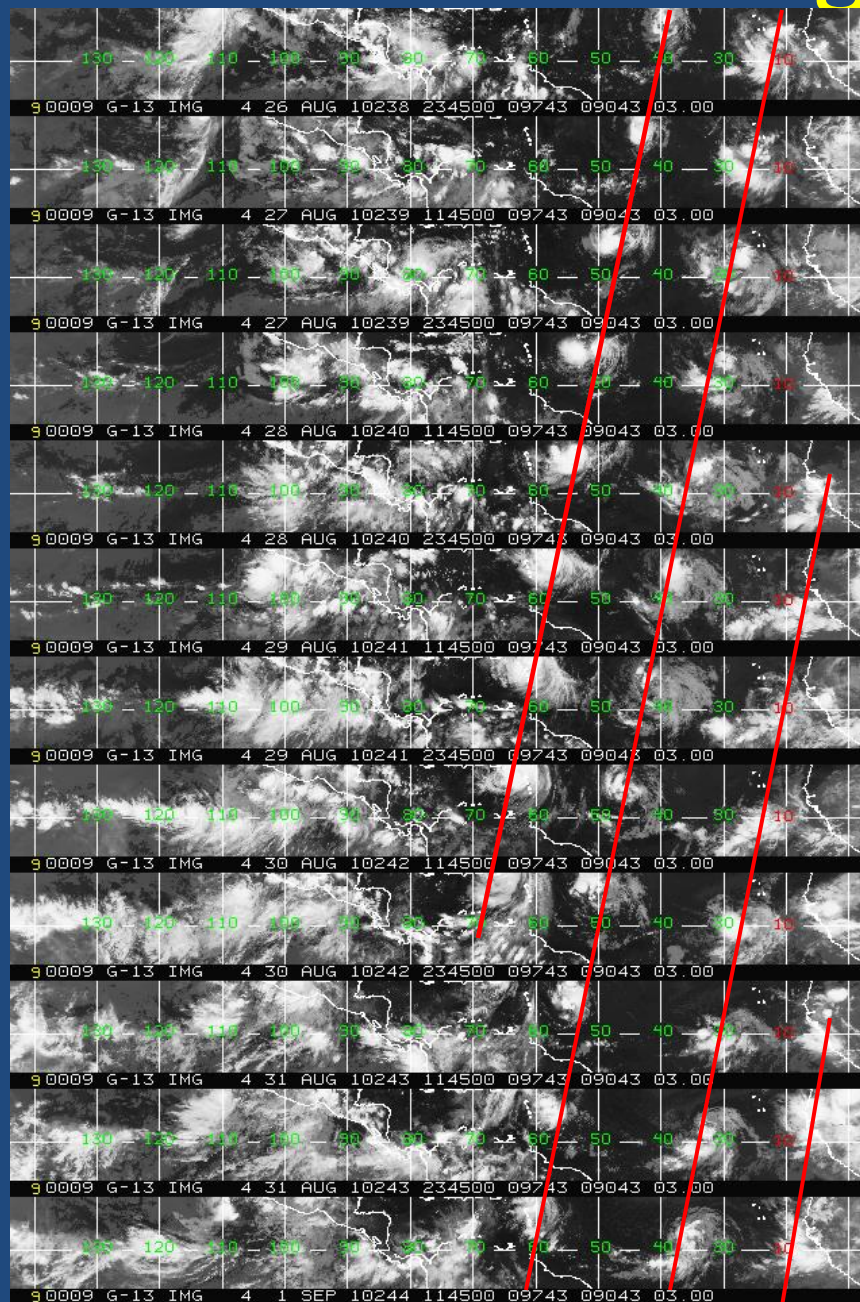




# Satellite Hovmoller Diagrams



Time  
↓



Aug 26

Aug 27

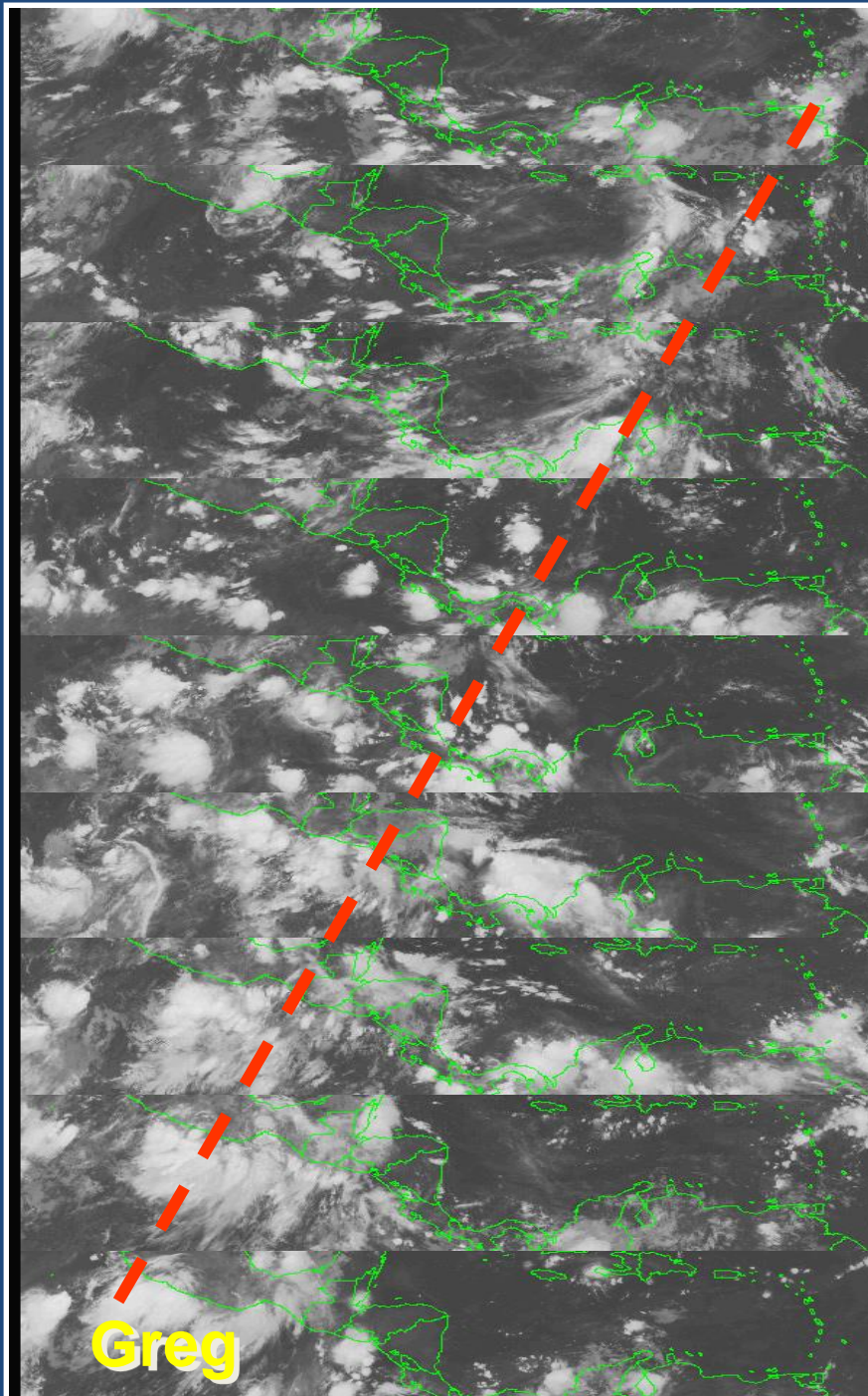
Aug 28

Aug 29

Aug 30

Aug 31

Sep 1



Greg

27

28

29

30

31

1

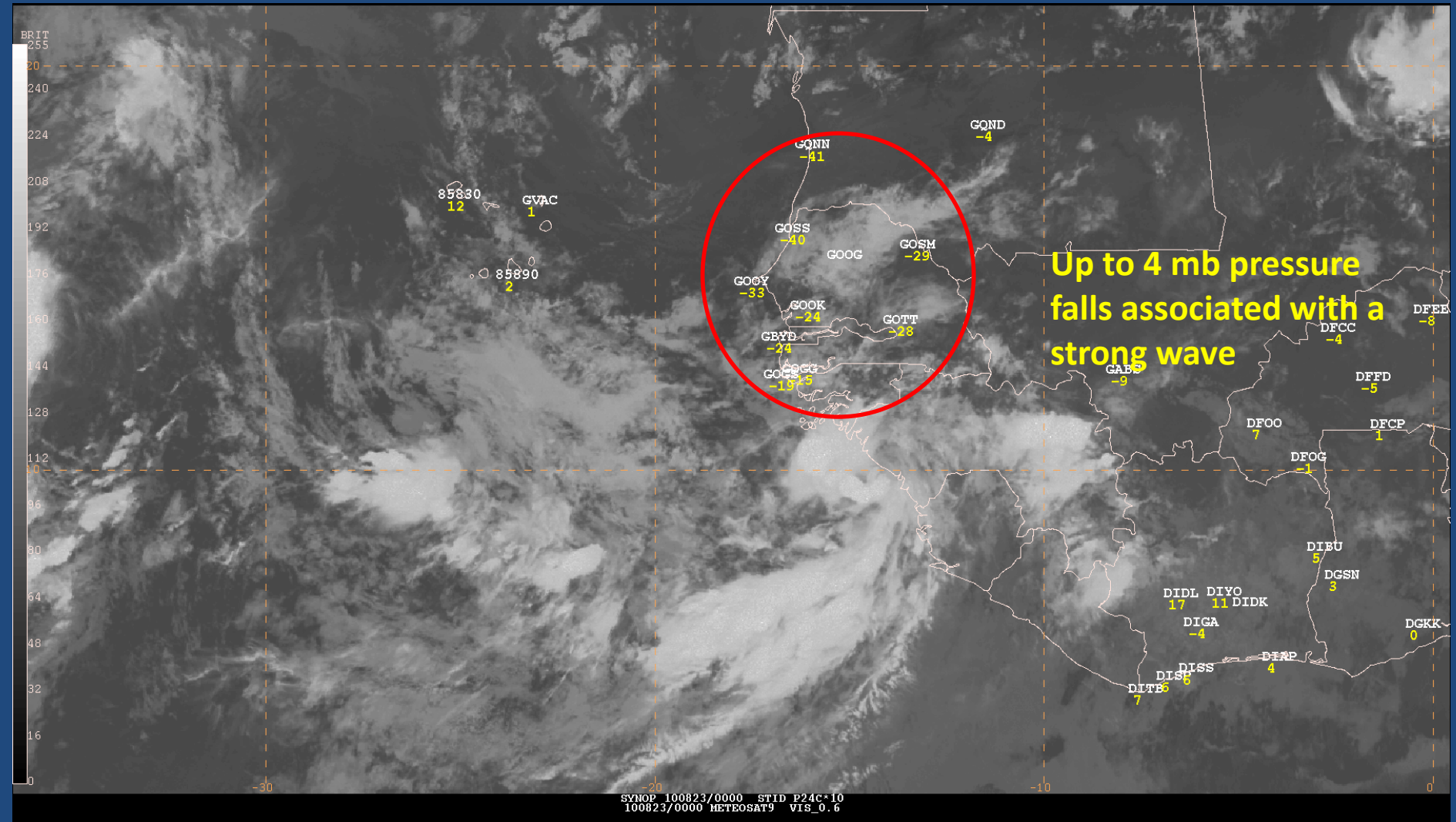
2

3

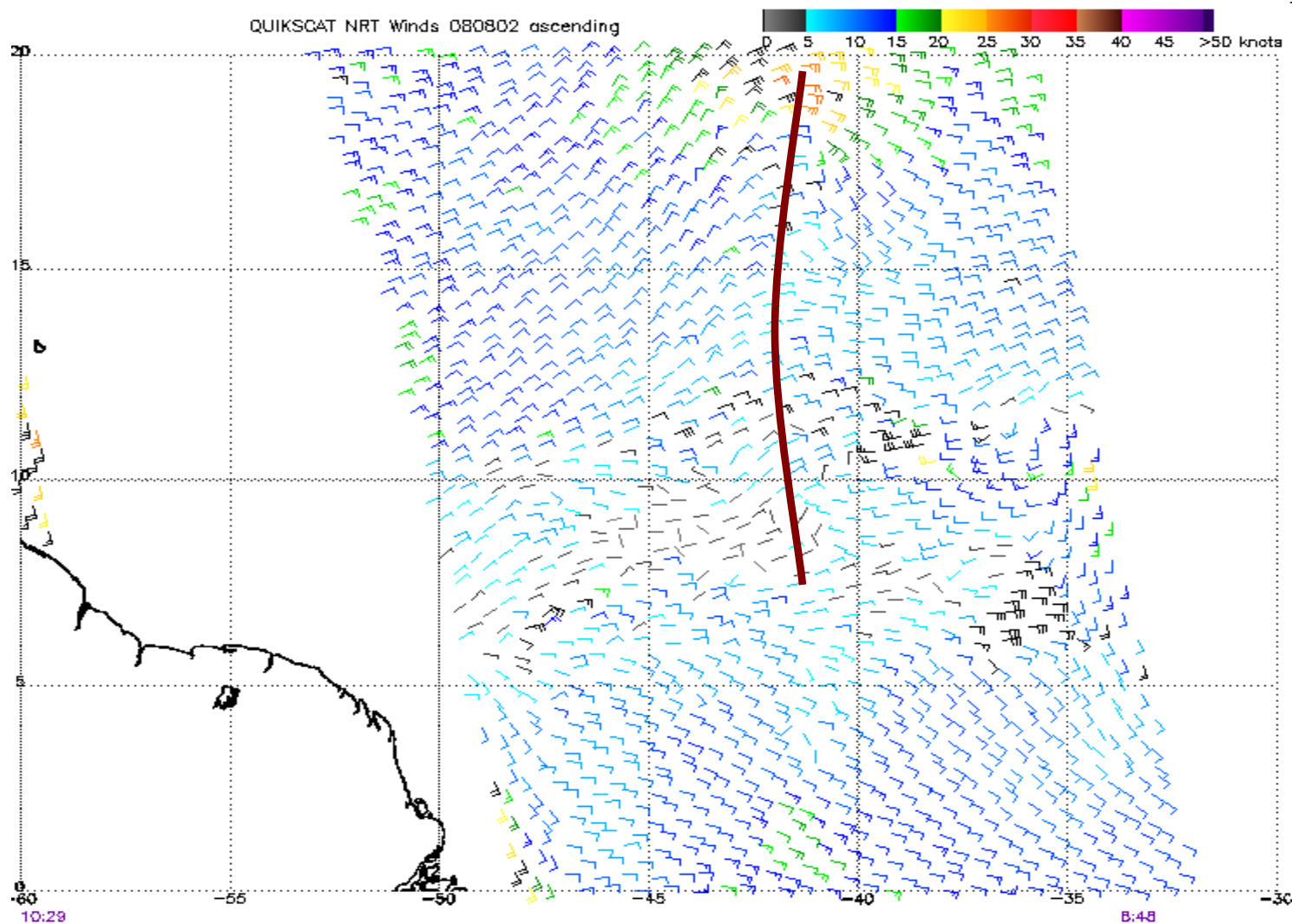
4



# Surface Observations



# Scatterometer

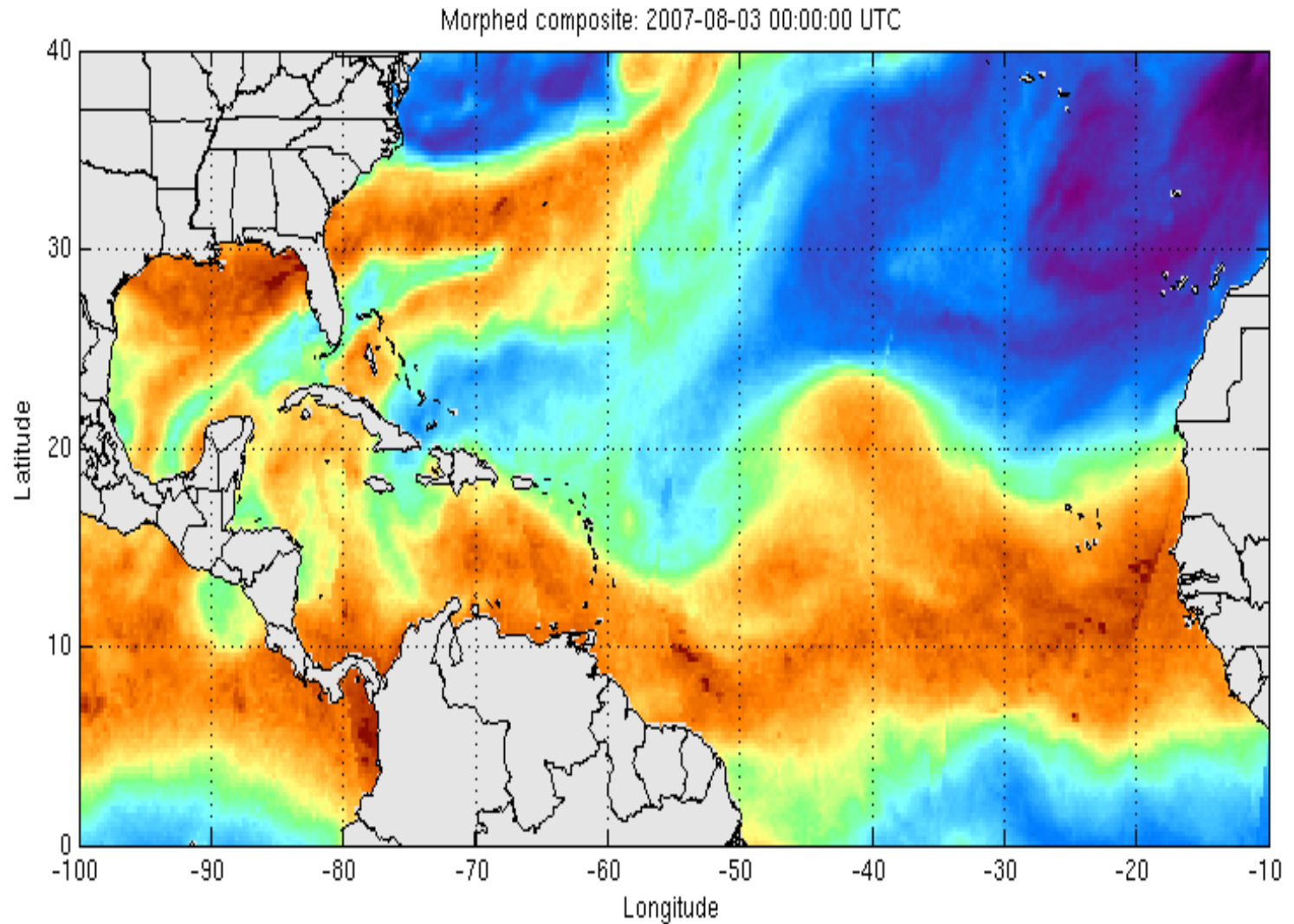


Note: 1) Times are GMT 2) Times correspond to 10N at right swath edge - time is right swath for overlapping swaths at 10N  
3) Data buffer is 24 hrs for D080802 4) Black barbs indicate possible rain contamination

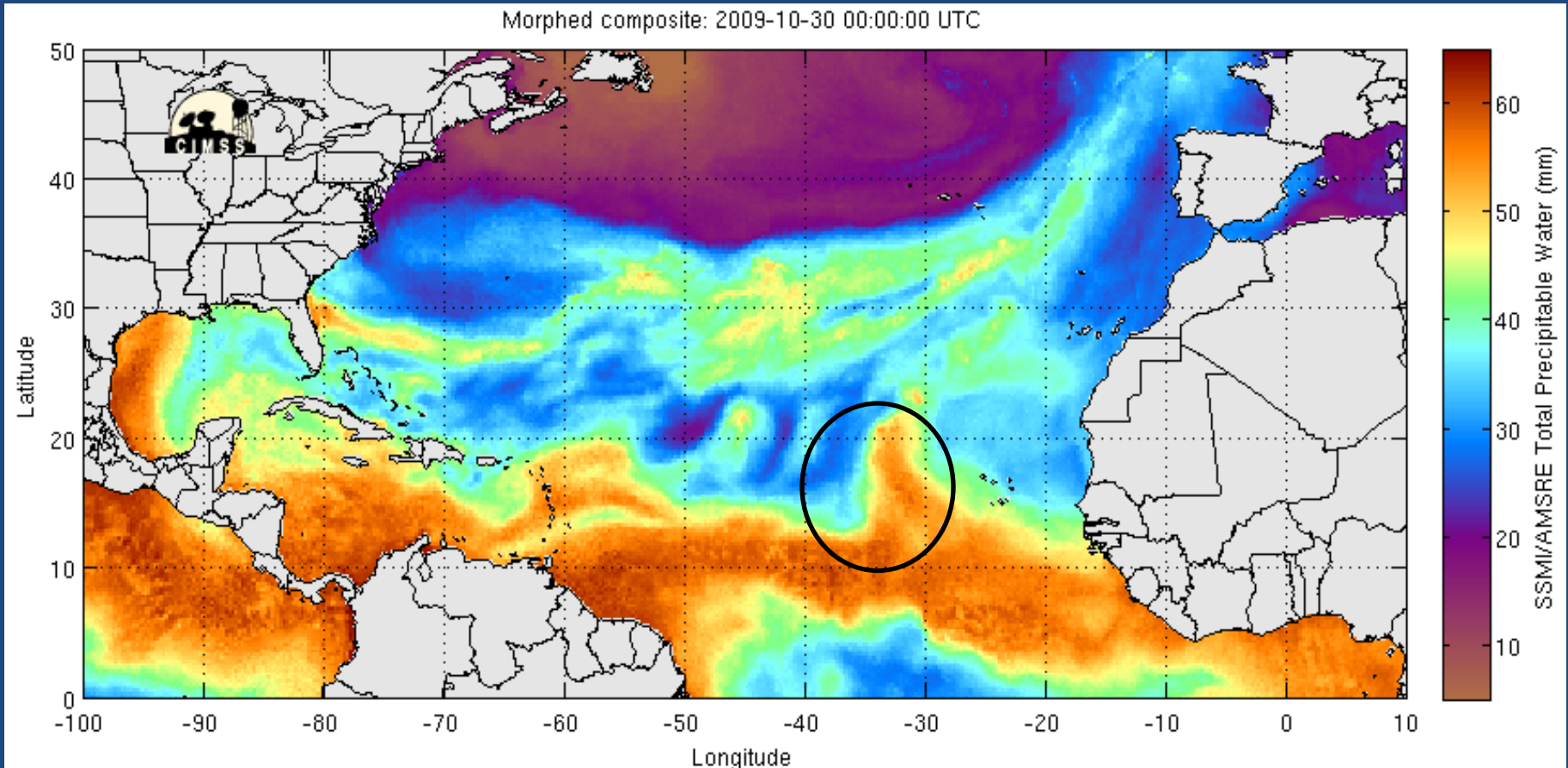
NOAA/NESDIS/Office of Research and Applications



# Total Precipitable Water



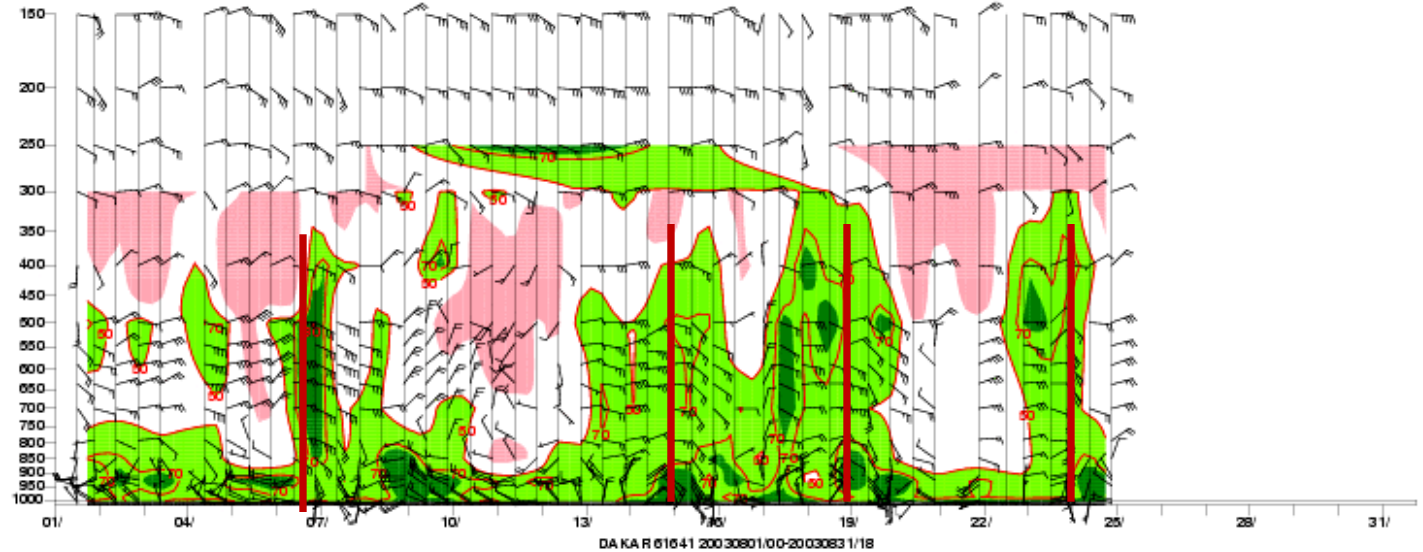
# Wave Splitting



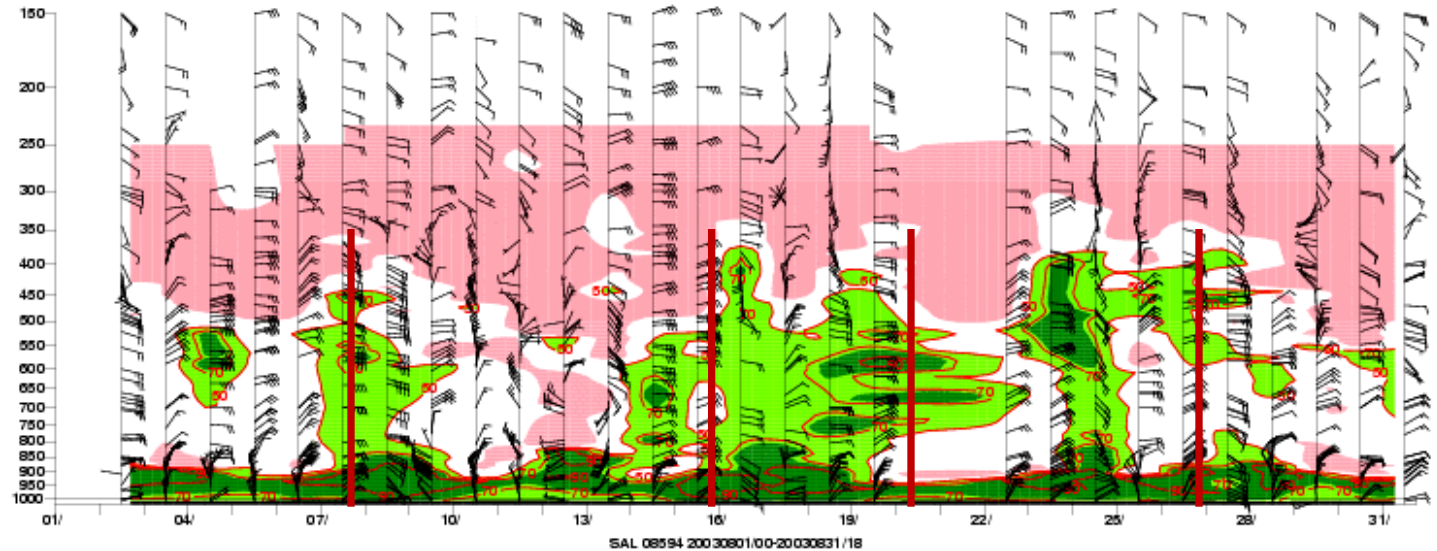
*The northern portion of the wave often fractures but the southern extension continues moving westward*

# Upper-Air Time Sections

Dakar

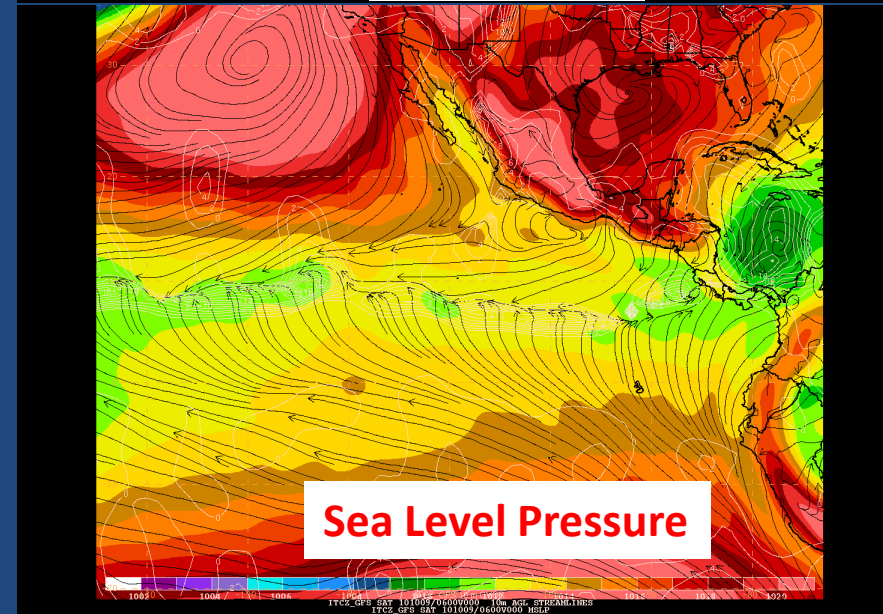
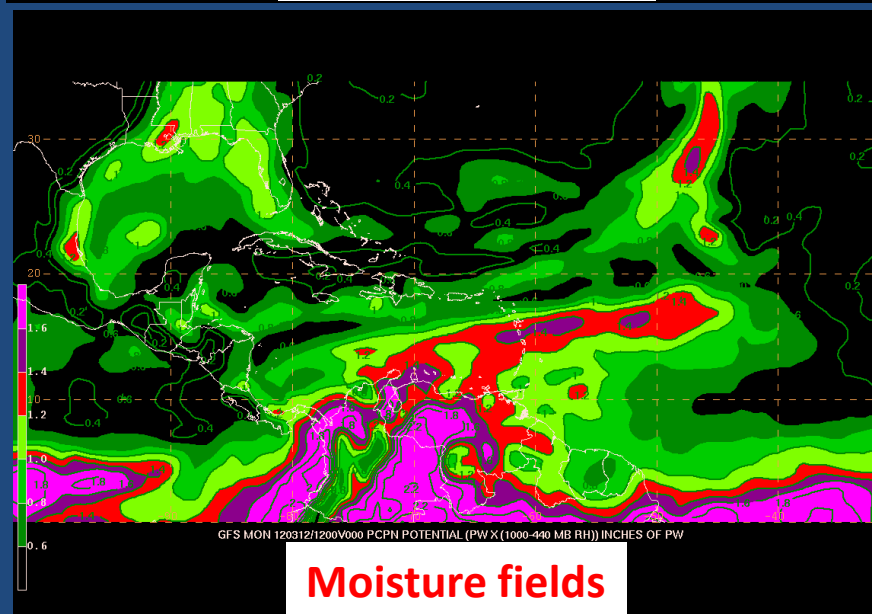
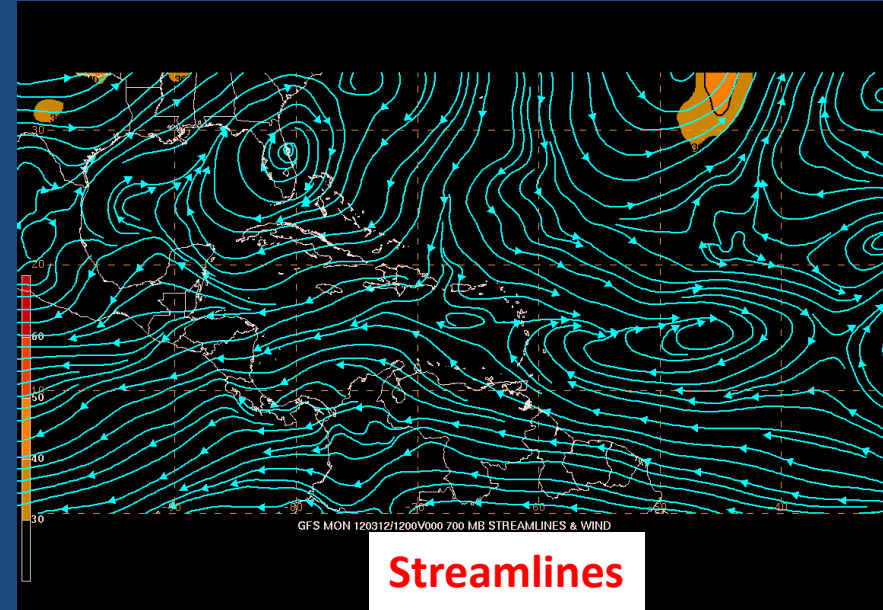
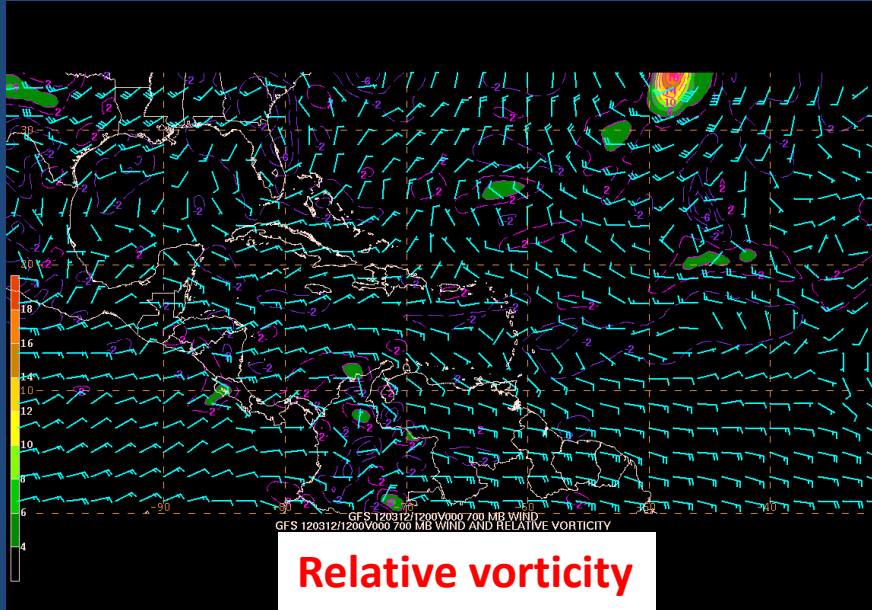


Sal





# Models

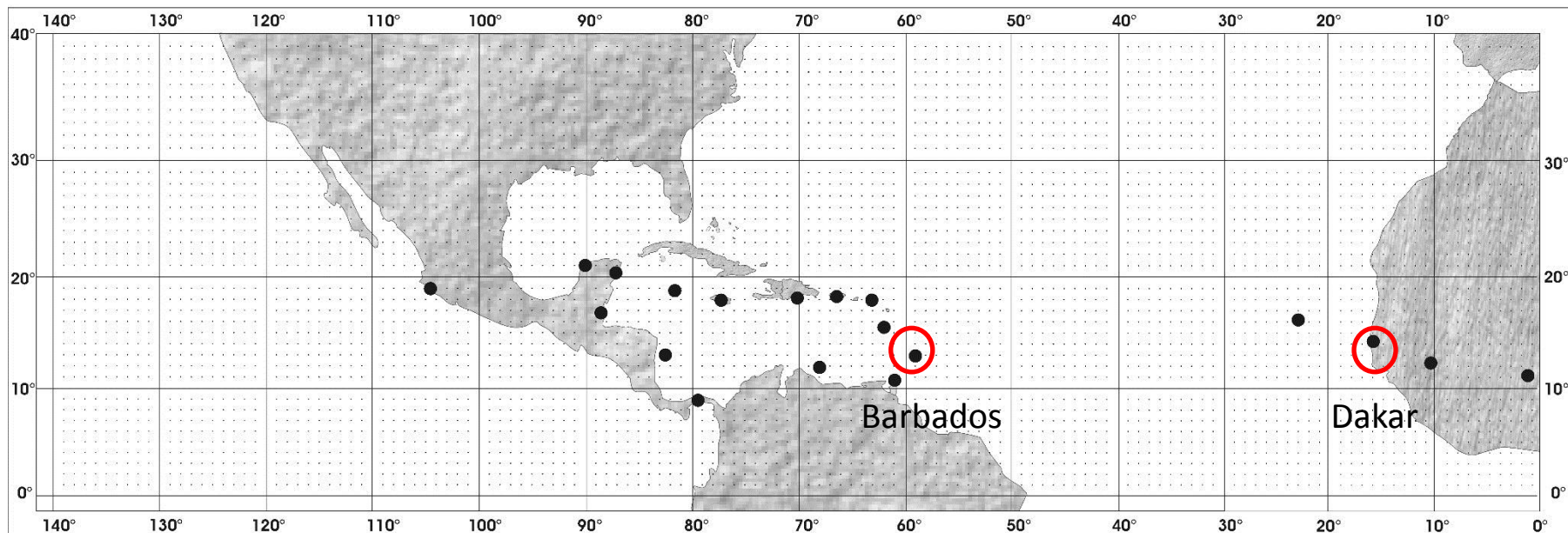




***EXERCISE***

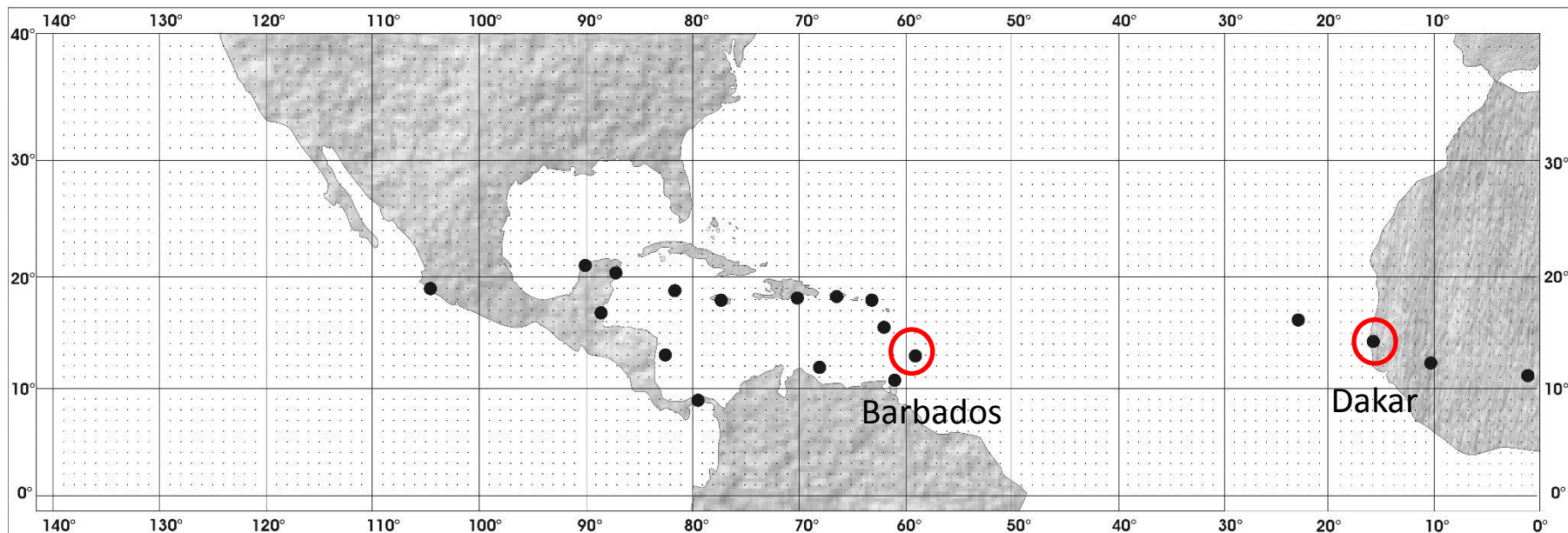
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Wave Number: \_\_\_\_\_

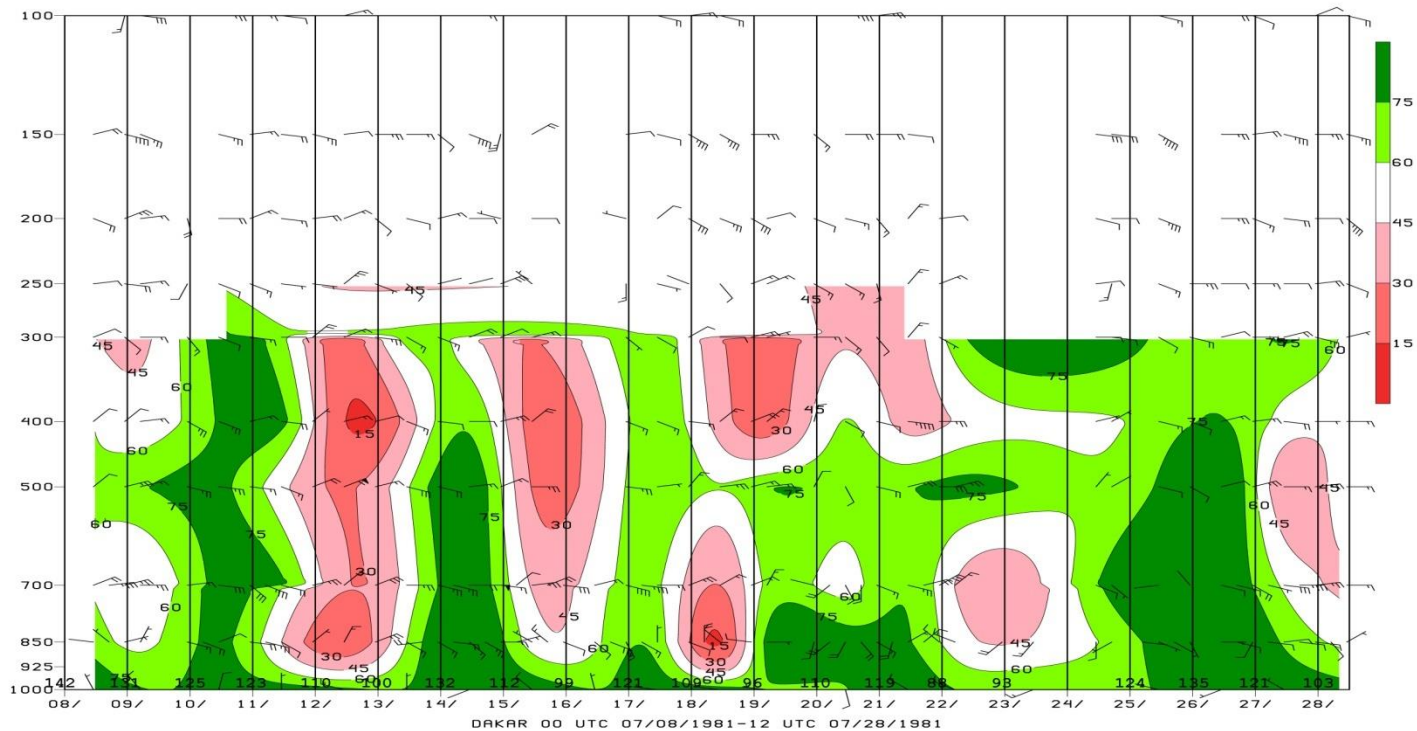


Date: \_\_\_\_\_

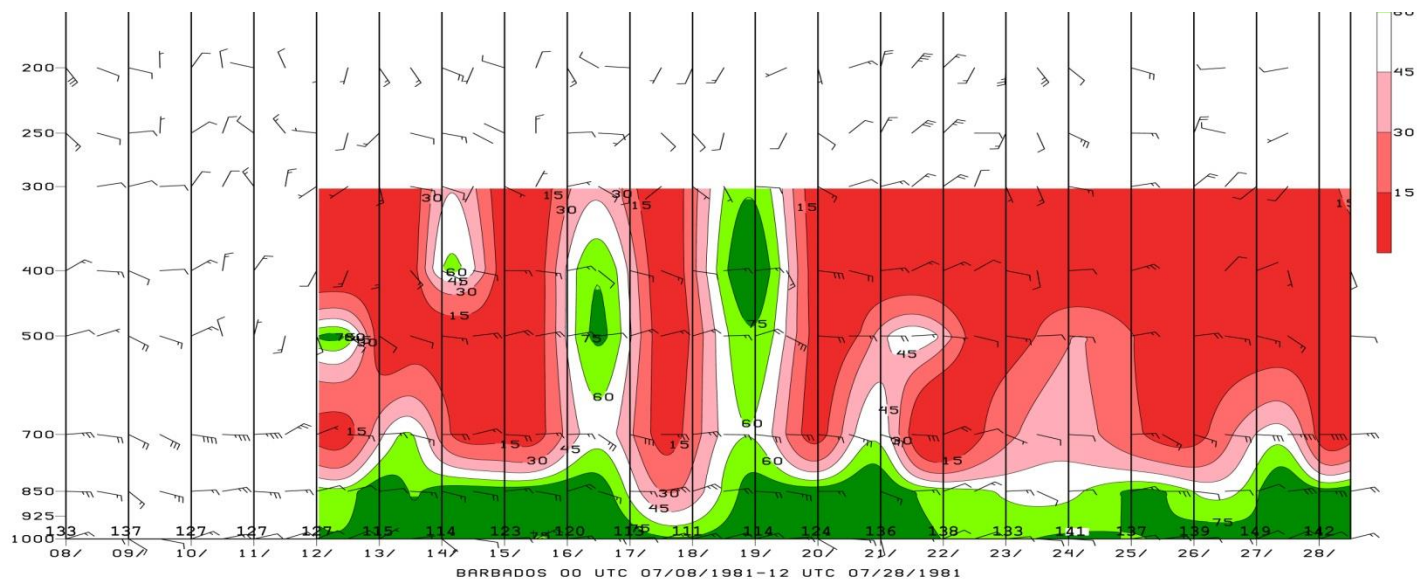
Wave Number: \_\_\_\_\_



# Dakar



# Barbados





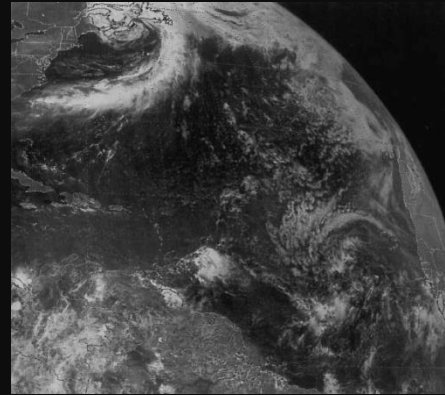
July 13, 1981 1600 UTC



July 14, 1981 1600 UTC



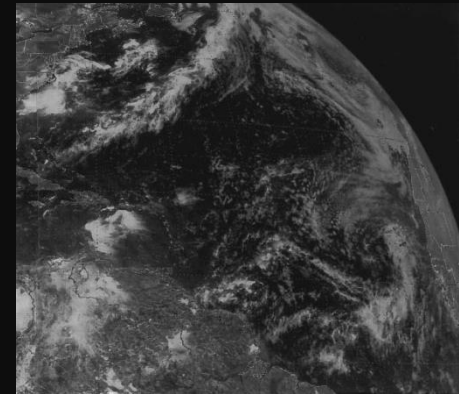
July 15, 1981 1600 UTC



July 16, 1981 1600 UTC



July 17, 1981 1600 UTC



July 18, 1981 1600 UTC



July 19, 1981 1600 UTC



July 20, 1981 1600 UTC



July 21, 1981 1600 UTC



July 22, 1981 1600 UTC



July 23, 1981 1600 UTC



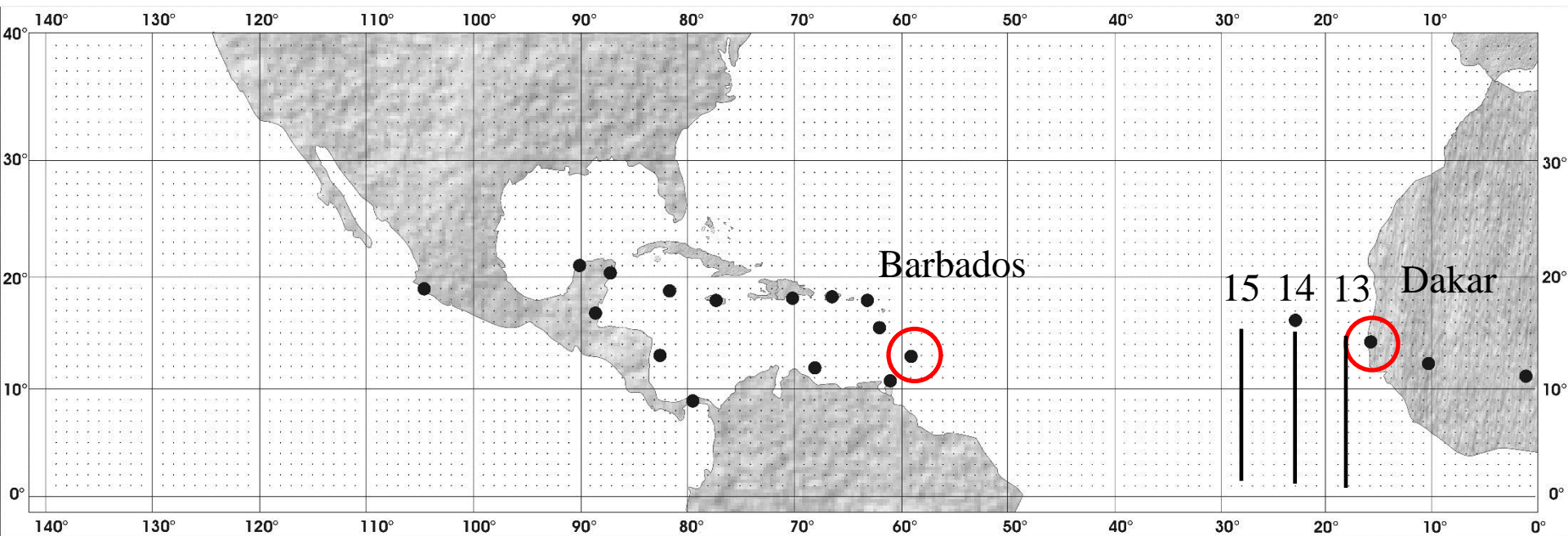
July 24, 1981 1600 UTC





Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Wave Number: \_\_\_\_\_



July 25, 1981 1600 UTC

70 W

60 W

50 W

40 W

30 W

20 W

