

Map locating Hurricane Joaquin.

Joaquin Batters Bahamas; Fate Of Cargo Ship Uncertain

BY BEN FOX
Associated Press

ELEUTHERA, Bahamas — Hurricane Joaquin destroyed houses, uprooted trees and unleashed heavy flooding as it hurled torrents of rain across the Bahamas on Friday, and the U.S. Coast Guard said it was trying to reach a disabled cargo ship with 33 people aboard that lost contact during the storm.

The Coast Guard said the 735-foot (224-meter) ship named El Faro had taken on water and was listing at 15 degrees near Crooked Island, one of the islands most battered by the hurricane. Officials said the crew includes 28 U.S. citizens and five from Poland.

"This vessel is disabled basically right near the eye of Hurricane Joaquin," said Capt. Mark Fedor. "We're going to go and try and save lives. We're going to push it to the operational limits as far as we can."

Officials said they hadn't been able to re-establish communication with the vessel, which was traveling from Jacksonville, Florida, to San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard said the crew earlier reported it had been able to contain the flooding.

Fedor said there were 20- to 30-foot (up to 9-meter) waves in the area, and that heavy winds could have destroyed the ship's communications equipment. The ship went missing when Joaquin was a Category 4 storm. The hurricane has since lost strength and become a Category 3 storm.

On Friday evening, Coast Guard Petty Officer Jon-Paul Rios said the planes and helicopters involved in the search had returned to base because of darkness and would resume the search for the ship at first light.

Florida-based TOTE Services, the ship's owner, said in a brief statement that it was working with the U.S. Coast Guard and trying to establish communication with the ship.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Joaquin's threat to the U.S. East Coast was fading as new forecasts showed it

likely to curve out into the Atlantic while moving north and weakening in coming days.

But the slow-moving storm continued to batter parts of the Bahamas, cutting communication to several islands, most of them lightly populated. There had been no reports of fatalities or injuries, said Capt. Stephen Russell, the director of the Bahamas National Emergency Management Agency.

Officials were investigating reports of shelters being damaged and flooded, as well as two boats with a total of five people that remained missing.

About 85 percent of homes in one settlement of a couple dozen houses on Crooked Island were destroyed, said Marvin Hanna, an Acklins representative. He said he has had no communication with Acklins since late Thursday morning.

"At that time, vehicles were floating around and the water level was up to the windows of some homes," he said.

Residents reached by relatives said they were "trapped in their homes, and reported feeling as if their structures were caving in," Russell said. "It's too dangerous to go outside because the flood waters are so high, so we ask that persons stay inside and try to go into the most secure place of their home."

Power also was knocked out to several islands, and Leslie Miller, executive chairman of the Bahamas Electricity Corporation, said the company "is in no position to do much" to restore electricity. "All the airports are flooded," he said.

Schools, businesses and government offices were closed as the slow-moving storm roared through the island chain.

Streets were largely deserted as people remained hunkered down on the island of Eleuthera, which was bracing for heavy winds later Friday.

Authorities in the nearby Turks & Caicos Islands closed all airports, schools and government offices. Bermuda, meanwhile, issued a tropical storm watch.

An Ailing Global Economy Starts To Weigh On US Job Market

BY CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — A sagging global economy has finally caught up with the United States.

Nervous employers pulled back on hiring in August and September as China's economy slowed, global markets sank and foreigners bought fewer U.S. goods. Friday's monthly jobs report from the government suggested that the U.S. economy, which has been outshining others around the world, may be weakening.

Lackluster growth overseas has reduced exports of U.S. factory goods and cut into the overseas profits of large companies. Canada, the largest U.S. trading partner, is in recession. China, the second-largest economy after the United States, is growing far more slowly. And emerging economies, from Brazil to Turkey, are straining to grow at all.

A result is that economists now expect the Federal Reserve to delay a long-awaited increase in interest rates, possibly until next year.

Employers added just 142,000 jobs in September, and the government sharply lowered its estimate of gains in July and August by a combined 59,000. Monthly job growth averaged a mediocre 167,000 in the July-September quarter, down from 231,000 in the April-June period.

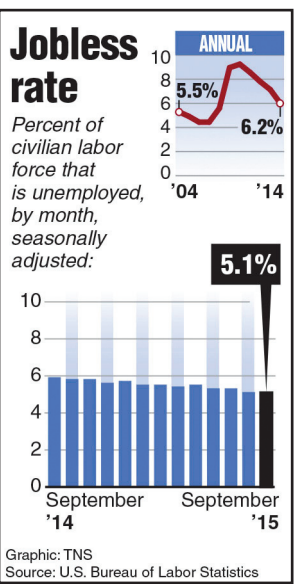
The unemployment rate remained a low 5.1 percent, but only because many Americans have stopped looking for work and are no longer counted as unemployed. The proportion of adults who either have a job or are looking for one is at a 38-year low.

U.S. stock prices have tumbled as fears of a global slowdown have intensified. Volatile financial markets can make businesses too anxious to expand and hire.

"We're back to a period of what I call corporate caution," says Nariman Behravesh, chief economist at IHS. "It's wait and see. If things stabilize, we could see hiring come back."

On Friday, the Dow Jones industrial average fell about 200 points soon after the jobs report was issued before recovering to close up 200. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note dipped below 2 percent, a sign that investors anticipate sluggish growth and low inflation.

Over the past year, the dollar has risen about 15 percent against overseas currencies, making U.S. goods costlier overseas and imports cheaper. Declining exports have led many analysts to slash their growth estimates for the July-September quarter to



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a subpar 1.5 percent annual rate or less.

Heavy equipment maker Caterpillar has said it will cut up to 5,000 jobs by year's end. Lower oil prices have hurt its sales of drilling equipment, and overseas sales of its construction machines have fallen.



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