2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook

Potentially less intense season ahead

compiled by CIMH ***(issued: 27.05.2026)***
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The essence

2026 Hurricane Season Forecasts – Potentially less intense season ahead

Forecast Parameter (1991-2020 average in parentheses)	CSU (68% confidence range) 9th April 2026	Tropical Storm Risk 09th April 2026	Accu-Weather 26th March 2026	NOAA CPC (70% confidence range) 21 May 2026	CIMH (70% confidence range) 27 May 2026
Named Storms (NS) (**14.4**)	**13** (10-16)	**12**	**11-16**	**8-14**	**12** (6-18)
Hurricanes (H) (**7.2**)	**6** (4-8)	**5** (3-7)	**4-7**	**3-6**	**5** (3-8)
Major Hurricanes (MH) (**3.2**)	**2** (1-4)	**1**	**2-4**	**1-3**	**2** (0-4)
Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE) (**123**)	**90** (49-141)	**66** (35-125)	**125-175**	**56-144**	**85** (37-157)

Comparing 2026 CSU Atlantic Hurricane Season outlook to 1997 & 2015 (previous very strong El Niños)

Forecast Parameter and 1991–2020 Average (in parentheses)	Issue Date 9 April 2026	1997 Obs.	2015 Obs.
Named Storms (NS) (14.4)	13	8	11
Named Storm Days (NSD) (69.4)	55	30	43.5
Hurricanes (H) (7.2)	6	3	4
Hurricane Days (HD) (27.0)	20	9.5	12
Major Hurricanes (MH) (3.2)	2	1	2
Major Hurricane Days (MHD) (7.4)	5	2.25	4
Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE) (123)	90	40.9	62.7

Agencies* predict about **5 Atlantic Hurricanes in 2026** (*as of 19 May 2026)

seasonalhurricanepredictions.bsc.es

Caribbean Landfall probabilities

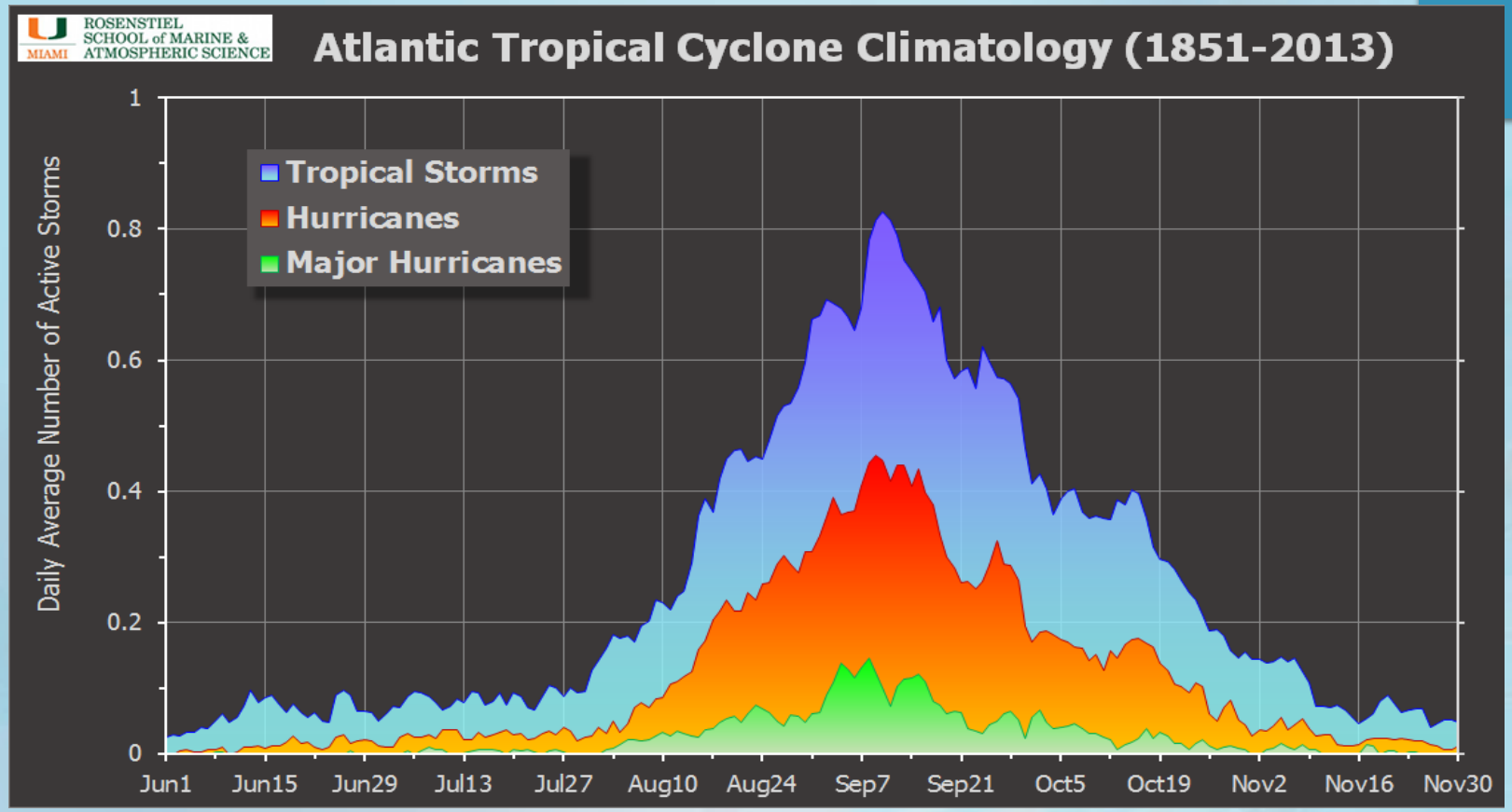
- **CSU:**
  - **35% probability for at least one major hurricane (Cat 3, 4 or 5), tracking into the Caribbean (10-20°N, 60-88°W).**
    1880-2000 average probability for major hurricanes is 47%.
  - **For country-by-country forecasted probabilities of named storms and hurricanes passing within 50 miles of the location, see https://tropical.colostate.edu/TC_impact.html.**

2026 Atlantic tropical cyclone names

(Source: World Meteorological Organization)

Arthur	Hanna	Omar
Bertha	Isaias	Paulette
Cristobal	Josephine	Rene
Dolly	Kyle	Sally
Edouard	Leah	Teddy
Fay	Marco	Vicky
Gonzalo	Nana	Wilfred

What we know



Basin-wide TC activity historically **peaks on 10 September**

Drivers of hurricane season activity in 2026

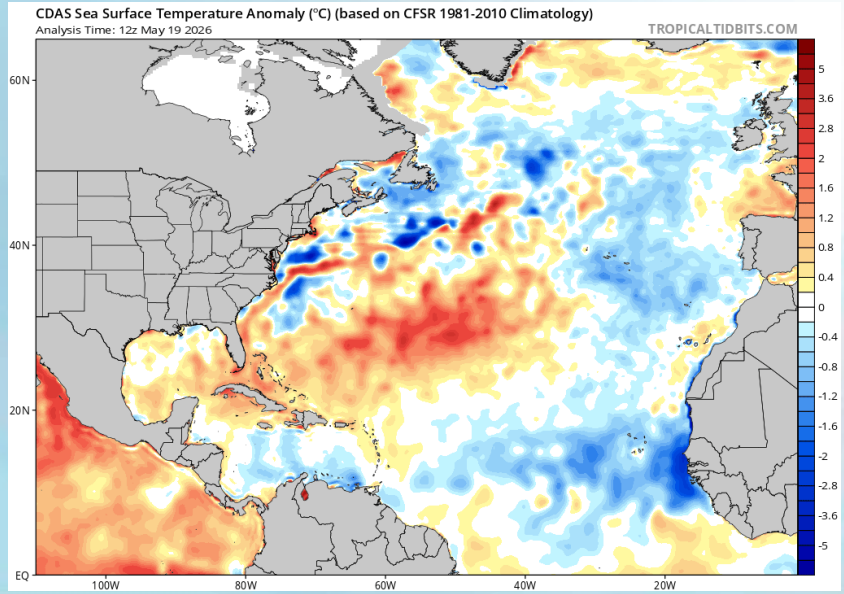
- **Main Development Region of tropical cyclones: currently unusually warm around the islands, and forecast to remain warmer than average.**

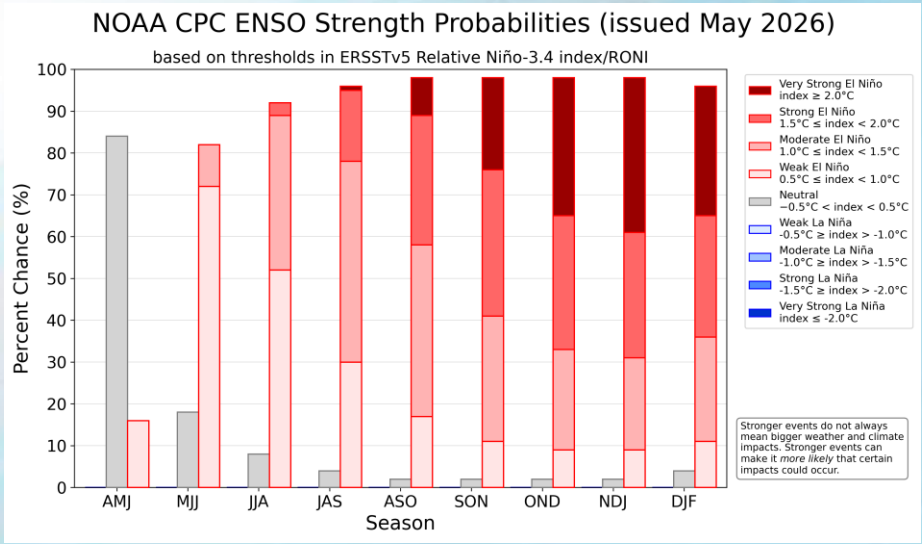
➔ **Increases hurricane season activity north of 18°N**

➔ **Boosts chance of rapid intensification near landfall**

A *likely* strong (*possibly* very strong) El Niño developing in the Pacific

➔ **Reduces late hurricane season activity**

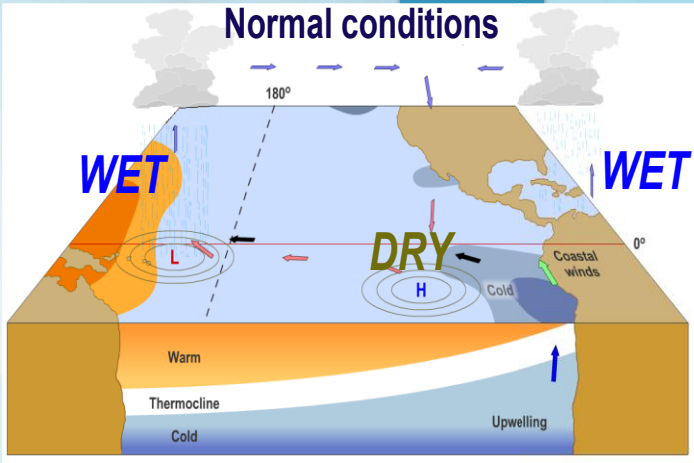


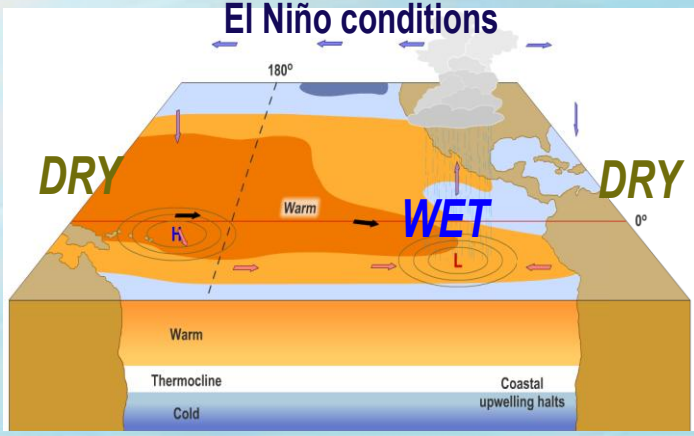


El Niño & the Caribbean

- El Niño **impacts on the atmosphere** in the Caribbean:
  - Increases upper level temperatures, stabilising the atmosphere.
    ➔ This promotes subsidence and **inhibits deep convection**.
  - Increases **vertical wind shear** between trade winds near the surface and upper level westerly winds.
    ➔ This **tears up storm** clouds.
  - From November to March, the subtropical jet stream shifts further south than in other years.
    ➔ This leaves more room for rain-carrying **cold fronts** to intrude the **Greater Antilles**, but **increases wind shear further south**.

- In doing so, **El Niño tends to lead to**
  1) **Rainfall deficits** during summer across the region;
  2) **Rainfall deficits** continuing into the next winter & resulting in **widespread drought** in the Lesser Antilles and Guianas;
  3) **Reduced hurricane activity**, particularly after August;
  4) **Higher temperatures** and **more heat waves** from summer onwards and until the following summer;
  5) **Earlier onset of the wet season** the year after.

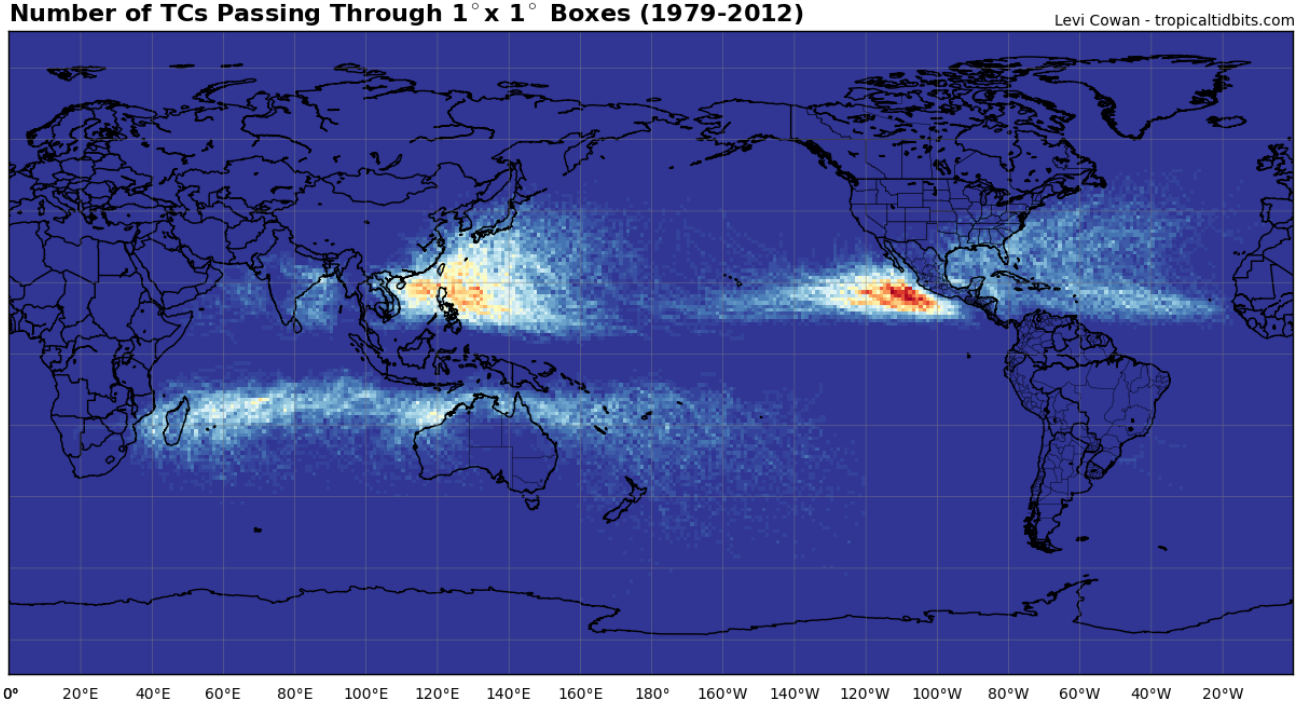




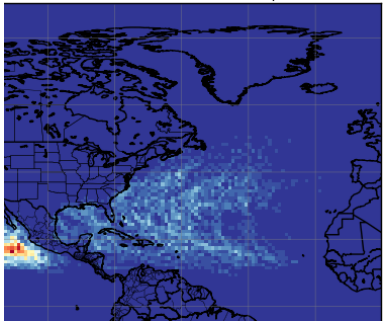
Two little known climatological facts that contribute to risk:

1/ The **Hurricane Belt is larger** than most people think (*see maps below*).

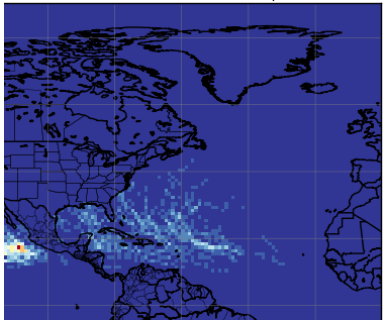
2/ Atlantic Hurricane Season **activity levels vary more** from year to year than in any other basin.



Number of hurricanes



Number of major hurricanes



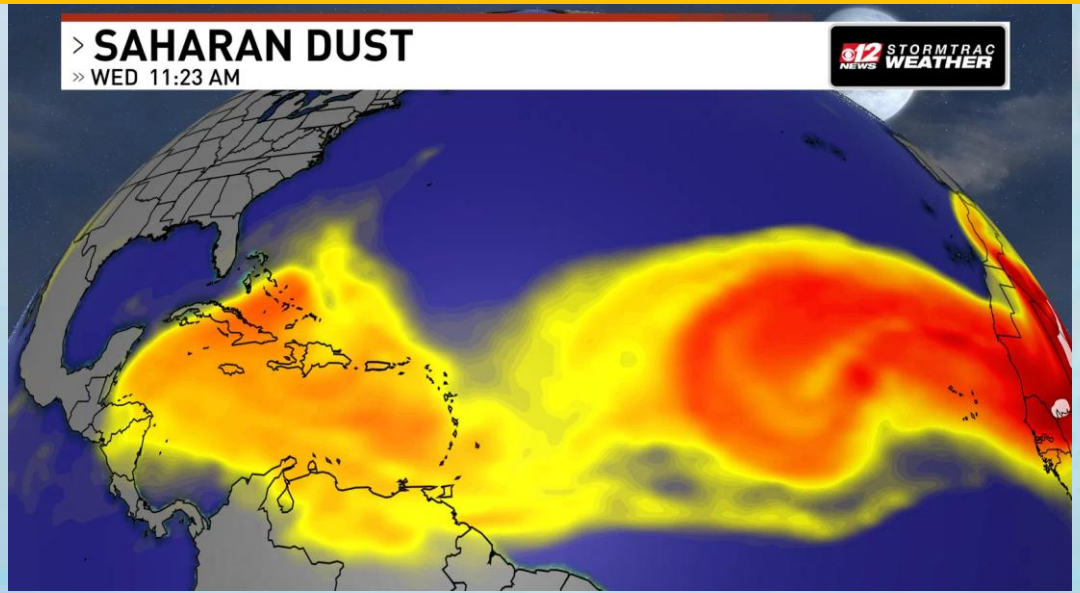
Sahara Dust/SAL 2024

What we do not yet know

Drivers of Hurricane Season activity in 2026
What we do not know yet…

There are **no skilful predictions of how often** intrusions of the dry (often dusty) Saharan Air Layer **(SAL) will stifle hurricane season activity*.**

*Note: Explosive activity is possible between episodes of SAL intrusions.



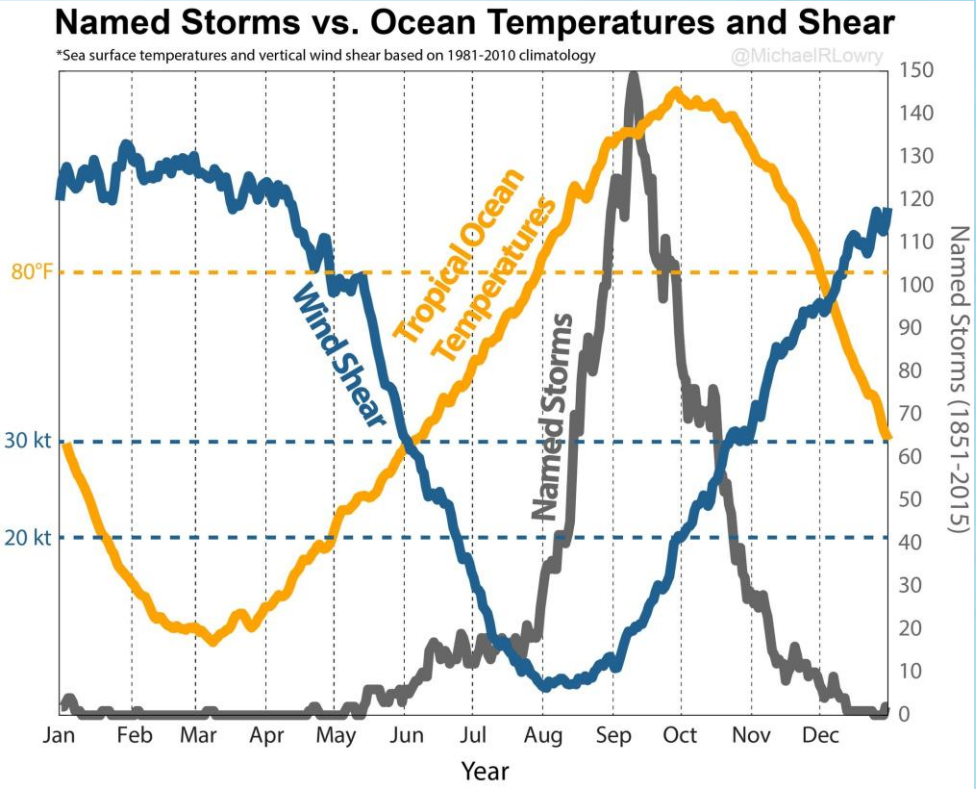
The accuracy of CIMH's 2025 Forecasts

Could we make useful predictions of parts of the season?

- The **peak of the season** is from August to October

➔ what will this period bring?

➔ What could the **first half** (June to August) and **second half** (September to November) of the season look like?



Source: Michael Lowry/FEMA

How good were the CIMH 2025 forecasts?

Activity well forecasted through August, but below the forecast range after that.

Period	Observed	Mid-May 2025		Early August 2025	
		Forecast	Range	**Forecast**	Range
Number of Named Storms					
2025 (entire season)	**13**	**19**	13-25	**20**	16-24
Jun.-Aug. (1st half)	**6**	**7**	3-10		
Aug.-Oct. (peak)	**10**	**12**	8-17		
Sep.-Nov. (2nd half)	**7**	**10**	7-13		
Aug.-Dec.	**10**			**17**	13-21
Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE)					
2024 (entire season)	**133**	**145**	83-225		

What to learn from the 2025 Season?

Overall activity normal during second half of 2025 Season.

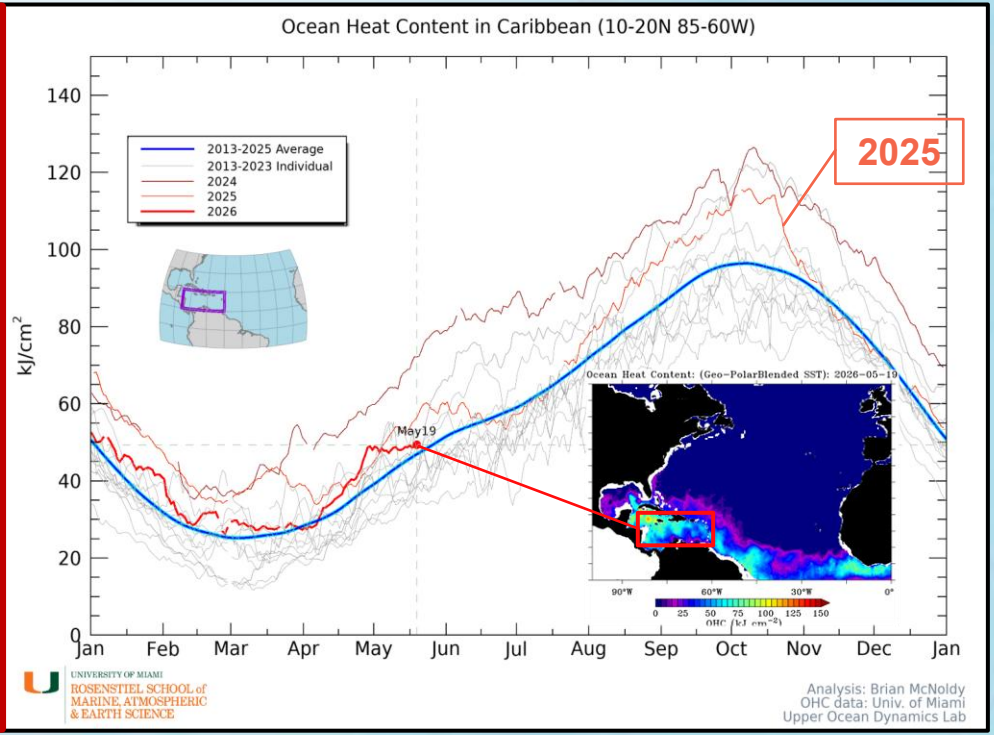
⇔ **BUT: explosively intensifying & record-strong Cat 5 Melissa in October.**

EXCESS HEAT in the ocean

- better measured by **Ocean Heat Content** (**OHC**) than by Sea Surface Temperatures (SST)

  ➔ **Could OHC inform better forecasts?**

- increases chance of intense tropical cyclone activity **IF & WHEN** the atmosphere is conducive…



CIMH's 2026 forecasts

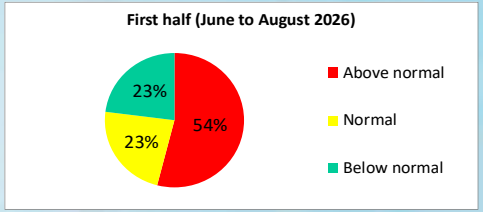
2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season Activity

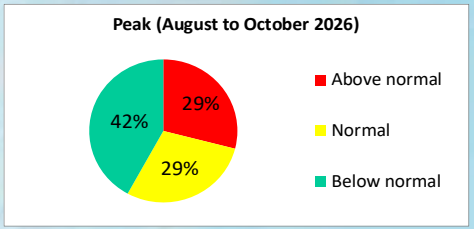
CIMH forecasts as of May 27th, 2025

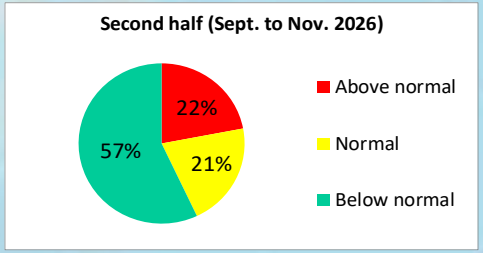
(Note: These forecasts of hurricane season activity are only driven by ocean temperatures)

Period		1991-2020	Forecast	Range*	*Confidence level*
Entire season					
Named storms		**14**	**12**	6-18	*High*
Hurricanes		**7**	**5**	3-8	*Medium*
Major Hurricanes		**3.2**	**2**	0-4	*Medium*
ACE		**123**	**85**	37-157	*Medium*
1st half (JJA), **peak** (ASO) & **2nd half** (SON) of the season					
Named storms	1st half	**5**	**6**	3-10	*Medium*
	Peak	**11**	**8**	4-13	*Medium*
	2nd half	**7.8**	**6**	3-9	*Medium*
ACE	1st half	**29**	**30**	10-70	*Low*
	Peak	**114**	**75**	31-147	*Low*
	2nd half	**87**	**50**	20-116	*Medium*

*70% confidence range, i.e. the observed number has a 70% chance of falling in this range







NOTE

- Authorities and interests are advised to **constantly monitor and abide by official weather advisories** issued by the **National Meteorological Services … and …**
- … they should also **constantly monitor** other information provided by the **Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (http://cdema.org/)** and the **US National Hurricane Center (https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/).**

DISCLAIMER

- CIMH provides special weather and climate interpretation of the current and forecasted tropical weather and climate conditions affecting the Caribbean region.
- CIMH is not an official forecasting authority.

For climate monitoring information, climate outlooks and climate bulletins, please visit:

rcc.cimh.edu.bb

Additional early warning tools are found at

www.cimh.edu.bb

Thank you