

# Will these never end? – Kathy – Belize?

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**\*\*YET AGAIN ANOTHER NATURAL EVENT CAUSING DAMAGE, CHAOS AND HEARTACHE.\***

TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS (NOV. 20) – TROPICAL STORM GAMMA WEAKENED SUNDAY, A DAY AFTER IT DELUGED THE COAST OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND KILLED AT LEAST SIX PEOPLE \_ THREE IN FLOODING IN HONDURAS AND THREE IN THE CRASH OF A SMALL PLANE BELONGING TO A BELIZE LODGE OWNED BY FILMMAKER FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA.

FORECASTERS SAID THE SLOW-MOVING GAMMA, THE 24TH NAMED STORM OF AN ALREADY RECORD-BREAKING ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON, WAS LIKELY TO MISS FLORIDA. THE STORM'S TOP SUSTAINED WINDS WEAKENED OVERNIGHT TO NEAR 40 MPH. GAMMA WAS EXPECTED TO STAY WELL BELOW HURRICANE STRENGTH OF 74 MPH AND COULD BE DOWNGRADED TO A TROPICAL DEPRESSION WITHIN A DAY, THE NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER SAID IN MIAMI.

EARLY SUNDAY, GAMMA WAS DRIFTING SLOWLY NORTHWARD TOWARD CUBA, FORECASTERS SAID.

EARLIER FORECASTS SHOWED GAMMA FOLLOWING A COURSE SIMILAR TO THE ONE TAKEN BY HURRICANE WILMA, WHICH BARRELED ACROSS SOUTH FLORIDA ON OCT. 24, CAUSING 21 DEATHS, DAMAGING HOMES AND BRINGING WIDESPREAD POWER OUTAGES. BUT IT WAS NOW EXPECTED TO SKIRT FLORIDA.

AT 4 A.M. EST SUNDAY, THE STORM WAS ABOUT 220 MILES EAST-SOUTHEAST OF BELIZE CITY AND ABOUT 75 MILES NORTH-NORTHEAST OF LIMON, HONDURAS. IT WAS DRIFTING NORTHWARD AT ABOUT 2 MPH.

THE HURRICANE CENTER SAID GAMMA WAS EXPECTED TO DUMP 3 TO 6 INCHES OF RAIN ACROSS THE SOUTHERN HALF OF CUBA AND OVER THE CAYMAN ISLANDS.

ON SATURDAY, GAMMA BROUGHT TORRENTIAL RAINS TO MUCH OF CENTRAL AMERICA, ESPECIALLY HONDURAS, WHERE FLASH FLOODS SLOWED THE FLOW OF EMERGENCY AID, SAID LUIS GOMEZ, THE COUNTRY'S EMERGENCY COORDINATOR.

"PEOPLE WHO ARE CUT OFF OR AFFECTED BY THE RAINS SHOULD RATION WATER AND FOOD ON THEIR OWN BECAUSE WE WON'T GET TO THEM UNTIL WEATHER CONDITIONS IMPROVE," GOMEZ SAID.

HE SAID AT LEAST THREE HONDURANS HAD DIED AND 13 MORE WERE MISSING, BUT HAD NO FURTHER DETAILS.

<!-- PARAGRAPH OBJECT --><!-- TYPE: HTMLBLOCK --><!-- ID: 19877  
--><!-- ALIGNMENT/WRAP: LEFT/1 --> GOMEZ SAID FIVE MAJOR RIVERS  
OVERFLOWED THEIR BANKS, WASHING OUT BRIDGES AND HIGHWAYS. OFFICIALS  
EVACUATED MORE THAN 5,000 PEOPLE, SOME OF THOSE FROM AREAS IN SAN PEDRO  
SULA, THE COUNTRY'S SECOND-LARGEST CITY.  
HEAVY WINDS AND RAINS ALSO POUNDED THE BAY ISLANDS, OFF THE HONDURAN  
COAST, SAID HUGO AREVALO, COORDINATOR OF A NATIONAL DISASTER-RESPONSE  
COMMITTEE.

\\"THE DAMAGE IS TERRIBLE ALONG ALL THE NORTHERN COAST OF THE COUNTRY,\"  
HE SAID. \\"MANY OF OUR COUNTRYMEN ARE SUFFERING, BUT WE ARE DOING ALL WE  
CAN TO BRING THEM FOOD, MEDICINE AND CLOTHING.\\"

IN WESTERN BELIZE, THE PRIVATE PLANE BELONGING TO COPPOLA'S RESORT,  
BLANCANEUX LODGE, CRASHED SATURDAY MORNING, KILLING THE BELIZEAN PILOT  
RENE RAM AND TWO GUESTS, SAID KATHLEEN TALBERT, A SPOKESWOMAN FOR THE  
FILMMAKER. TALBERT, WHO DECLINED TO RELEASE THE NAMES OF THE GUESTS,  
SAID THE WRECKAGE WAS FOUND ON THE PROPERTY OF A NEIGHBORING RESORT.

WHEN THE TWIN-ENGINE PLANE TOOK OFF, THERE WERE NO TROPICAL STORM  
WARNINGS, TALBERT SAID. \\"MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THE BAD WEATHER  
CROPPED UP QUITE SUDDENLY,\" SHE ADDED.

COPPOLA, WHO OWNS ONE OTHER RESORT IN BELIZE AND ONE IN GUATEMALA, DID  
NOT KNOW THE PASSENGERS WHO DIED, TALBERT SAID.

RESCUERS WERE STILL SEARCHING FOR FIVE BELIZEAN FISHERMEN WHO  
DISAPPEARED FRIDAY WHEN THEIR VESSEL CAPSIZED.

GAMMA EXTENDED THE ATLANTIC'S RECORD-BREAKING STORM SEASON. THE  
PREVIOUS RECORD OF 21 NAMED STORMS HAD STOOD SINCE 1933.

-ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER DENISE KALETTE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT FROM  
MIAMI.-

11/20/2005 05:46:38

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KATH

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- **Follow-Ups:**
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