

Hurricane Floyd threatens Florida

MIAMI (AP) — More than 1 million people were told to evacuate the Atlantic coast yesterday and NASA all but abandoned Cape Canaveral as Hurricane Floyd — one of the most powerful storms ever to threaten the United States — charged toward Florida with potentially catastrophic 155 mph winds.

Floyd was much larger than Hurricane Andrew, which smashed into South Florida in 1992, causing \$25 billion in damage, killing 26 people and leaving 160,000 homeless.

Forecasters said Floyd would brush past the Bahamas overnight and could hit land in the next couple of days between central Florida and South Carolina. They predicted it was capable of causing enormous damage.

"It's scary. It's very scary," Gov. Jeb Bush said. "Andrew hit Miami in the middle of the night and it was haunting. This is as strong and ... three times bigger."

Bush declared a state of emergency yesterday, giving him the authority to activate the National Guard and allowing the state to order evacuations and suspend tolls on the highways.

The storm could be dangerous even if it does not come ashore. Floyd's hurricane-force winds — at least 74 mph — extended for 125 miles. Andrew's hurricane-force winds extended about 25 or 30 miles.

With a hurricane warning in effect yesterday from Florida City, south of Miami, to Brunswick, Ga., residents along 400 miles of

coastline packed stores to stock up on canned food, bottled water, plywood and aluminum shutters. Navy ships left port to ride out the storm at sea, and aircraft were sent inland.

"This is as strong [as Andrew] and ... three times bigger."

— JEB BUSH

GOVERNOR OF FLORIDA



Officials said 1 million people were urged to evacuate in Florida, including 272,000 in Miami-Dade County alone.

Georgia was under a hurricane watch from Brunswick to Savannah, a 70-mile span, and forecasters said that likely would be extended into South Carolina last night. Coastal residents in the Brunswick and Savannah areas were urged to evacuate.

"This is probably the most serious threat we've had to the Georgia coast this century," said Gary McConnell, director of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency.

At Kennedy Space Center, which is just 9 feet above sea level, almost all of the 12,500 workers were leaving. A skeleton crew remained behind, but they, too, will evacuate if the wind is

as fierce as predicted. That would complete evacuation of the space

Three of NASA's space shuttle hangar that was designed to withstand only up to 105 mph. A fourth was designed to stand winds of up to 150 mph. Multimillion-dollar rockets were launched pads and could not be moved.

"We're concerned, and we're putting things up," said NASA spokesman Diller. "We're putting sandbags where we're starting to secure the flight

The storm has consistently been stronger than predicted, said Jerry Jarrell, National Hurricane Center. Forecasters predicted it to turn northward, posing the danger to Florida. But by noon, there was no sign that the storm was being influenced by weather systems. Forecasters hoped would steer it away from the state.

"It's controlling its own destiny. That's a bad sign."

At 5 p.m. EDT, Floyd was centered 150 miles east-southeast of Miami, 100 miles east of San Salvador in the Caribbean where panicked residents abandoned front homes for hurricane shelters. The hurricane was moving westward at 15 mph with top winds near 155 mph, low Category 5 strength, the highest for hurricanes.

Judge refuses to grant new trial for Nichols

DENVER (AP) — A federal judge refused to grant Terry Nichols a new trial in the Oklahoma bombing yesterday, rejecting arguments that Nichols was unfairly denied the opportunity to follow up leads developed by the FBI.

"There are reasonable limits to the search for possible leads to evidence and the defense requests exceeded those limits," U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch said. He said the defense "failed to show prejudice from the failure of the government to produce these lead sheets before trial."

A spokesperson at defense attorney Michael Tigar's law firm said the attorney was unavailable for comment.

Tigar told Matsch at a July

hearing that the government has refused to turn over about 43,000 documents to the defense that he believed could contain enough information to justify a new trial for Nichols.

Prosecutors countered that they turned over 12,000 pertinent FBI files and that the other information would not have changed the verdict.

Nichols, 44, was convicted in 1997 of conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter in the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that killed 168 people. He is serving a life sentence.

Nichols faces a state trial in Oklahoma City on 160 state murder counts. He could get the death penalty.

Company admits to aiding missile tests

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A Pennsylvania company agreed yesterday to plead guilty to illegally giving China technology that could help improve the accuracy of missiles.

Orbit/FR, headquartered in Hershamp, about 15 miles north of Philadelphia, planned to plead guilty in U.S. District Court to violating the Arms Export Control Act, according to papers filed in court yesterday.

Orbit will be fined \$600,000 and could be banned from exporting products for up to 10 years, U.S. Attorney Michael R. Stiles said. Charges against at least one company official are likely to follow, he said.

Orbit/FR had agreed to a \$1 million deal with Chinese North Industries Corp., a major military systems manufacturer for the Chinese army.

The software and equipment sold to China were designed to measure

the effectiveness of antinose cones of missiles. It was capable of measuring within 10 feet over a distance of 100 miles, Joe Alkus, a case supervisor, said.

No money changed hands, though the Chinese government officials would not say whether any damaged security was caused.

William A. Torzolini, Stiles' chief financial officer, said the company is owned by Orbit-Alchut Technology, an Israeli company. The company was originally developed by an Israeli arms dealer, Stiles said.

Stiles said he was not aware of any connections between Orbit/FR sale and any other technology sold to China.

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