Examining convective signatures in scatterometer data

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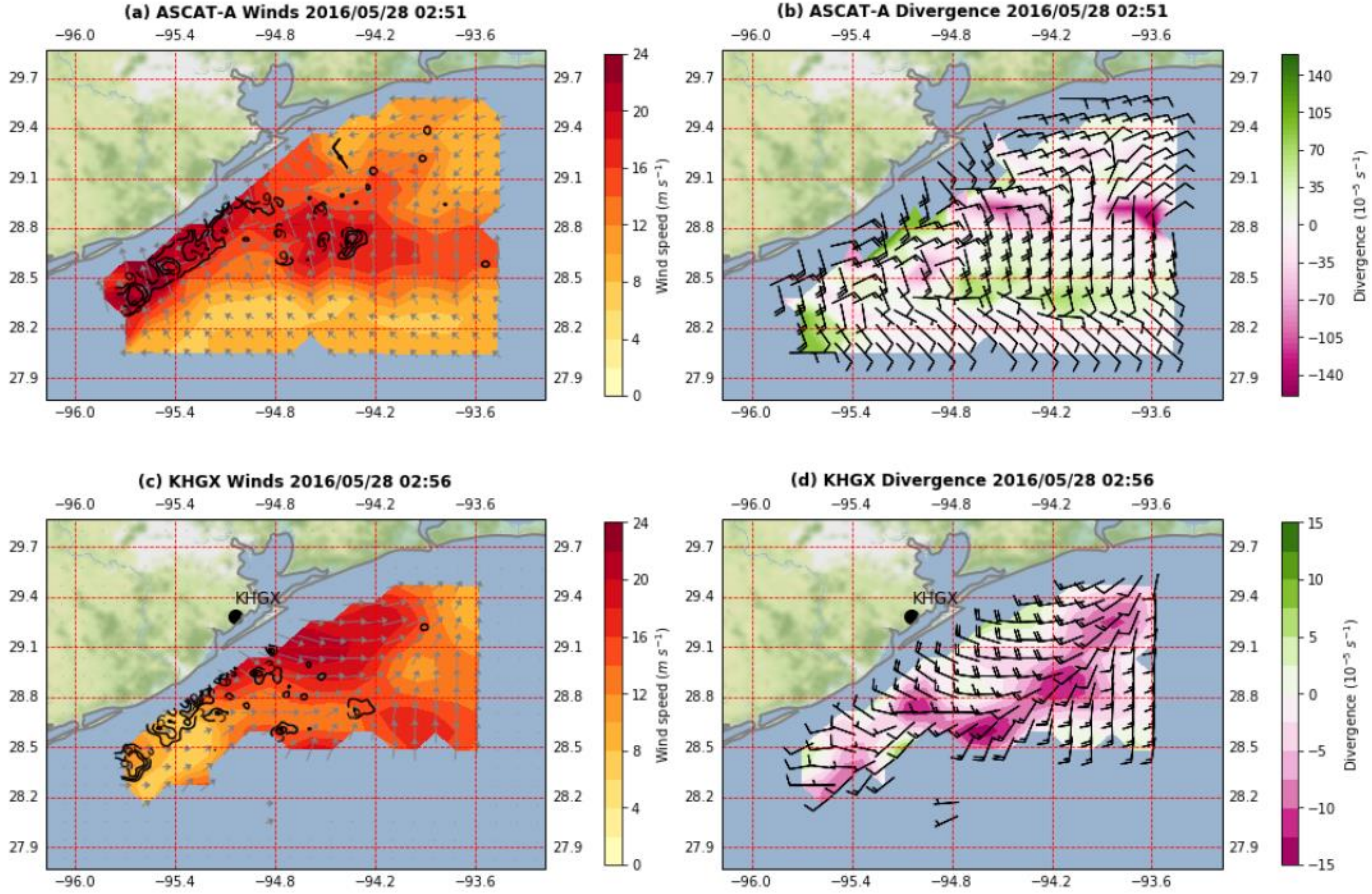
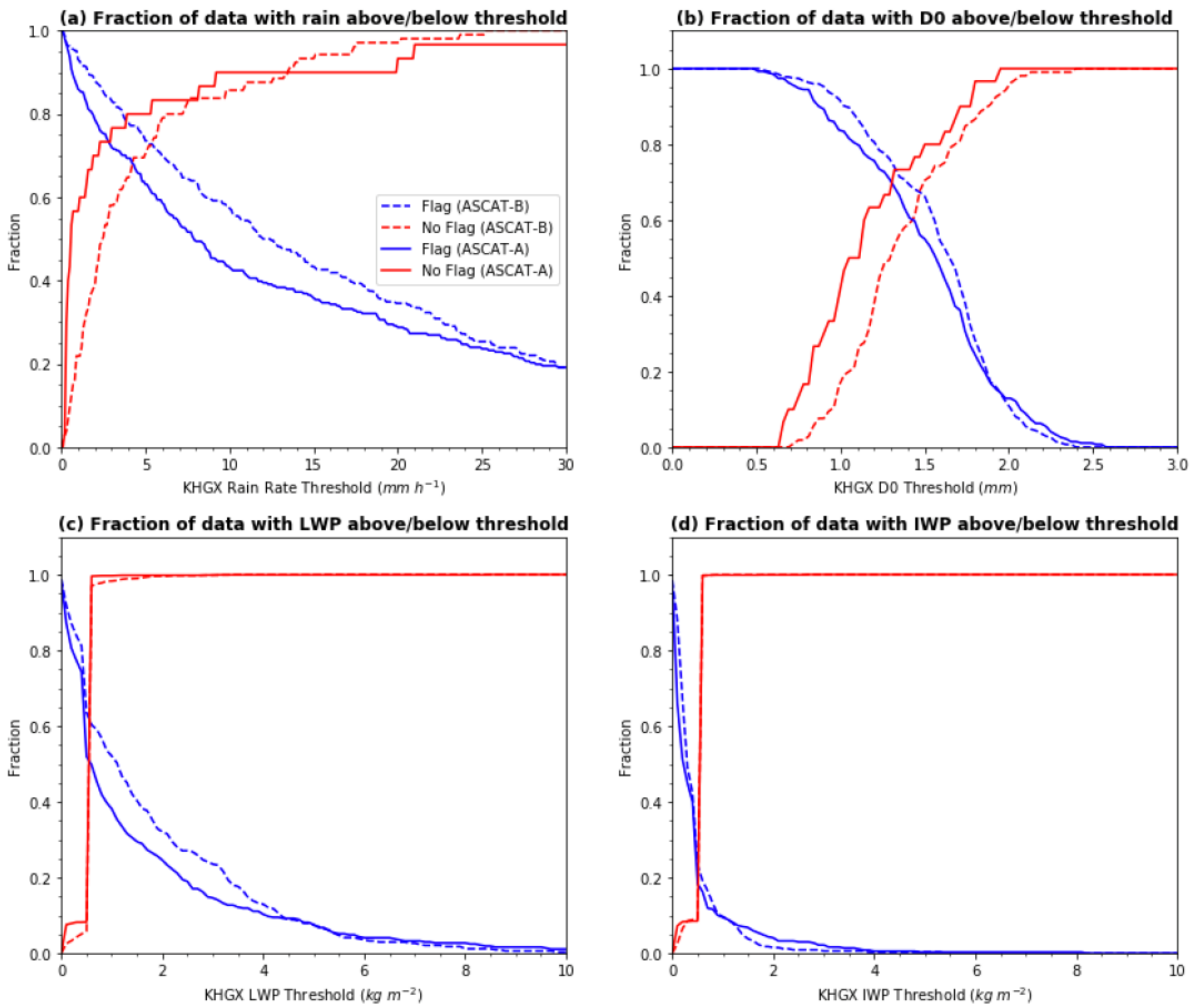
Background

- Scatterometers have been used repeatedly to examine convectively driven winds near precipitation
- Recent work (e.g., Portabella et al. 2012, Elsaesser and Kummerow 2013, Kilpatrick and Xie 2015) has indicated that real signatures are observed despite confounding issue of rain contamination
- OVWST-funded work culminating in Priftis et al. (2018) demonstrated value of using ground-based polarimetric Doppler radar in concert with scatterometers to understand low-level winds near mesoscale convection
- OVWST-funded work culminating in Garg et al. (2018) introduced a novel technique for identifying cold pools with scatterometers



Doppler comparison

- Resample NEXRAD 2D winds to ASCAT 12.5-km resolution
- ASCAT low-level divergence associated with leading edge of precipitation system
- Doppler radar shows low-level convergence and turning of winds out in front of storm

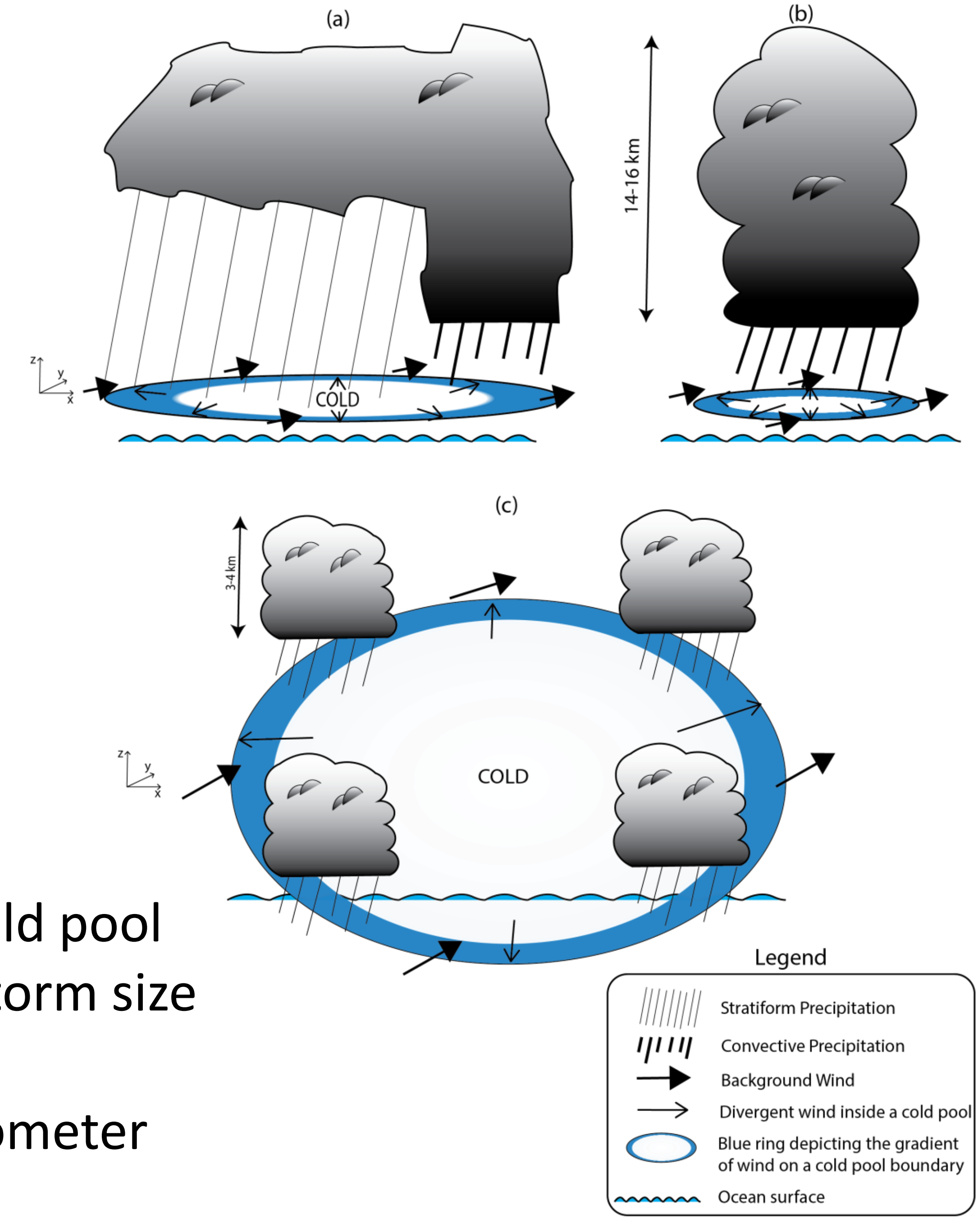


Polarimetric radar comparison

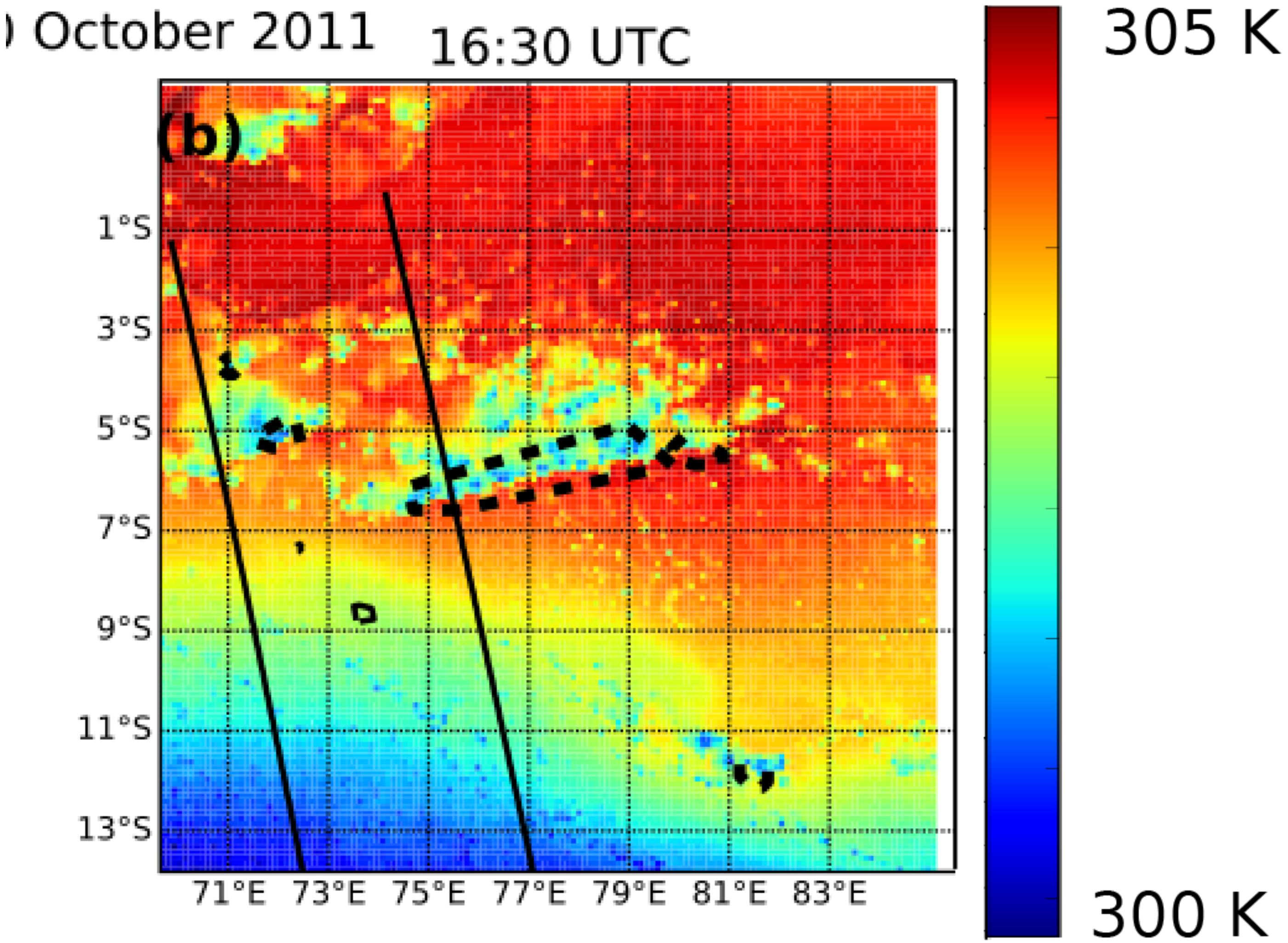
- Resample NEXRAD to ASCAT 12.5-km resolution
- Rain rate and median volume diameter thresholds that lead to triggering of ASCAT QC flags vary by case/overpass
- However, ice and liquid water paths for unflagged ASCAT obs are nearly always < 0.5 kg m^{-2}.

- We hypothesize that an approach based on closed areas of wind gradients (or gradient features – GFs) can be used to identify the cold pools over tropical oceans.
- Cold pools form a gust front boundary, thus creating an area of steep gradients in horizontal winds.
- We identify the areas of increased scalar gradients in the horizontal wind using:

$$|\nabla\vec{V}| = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\partial u}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial v}{\partial x} \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial v}{\partial y} \end{bmatrix}$$

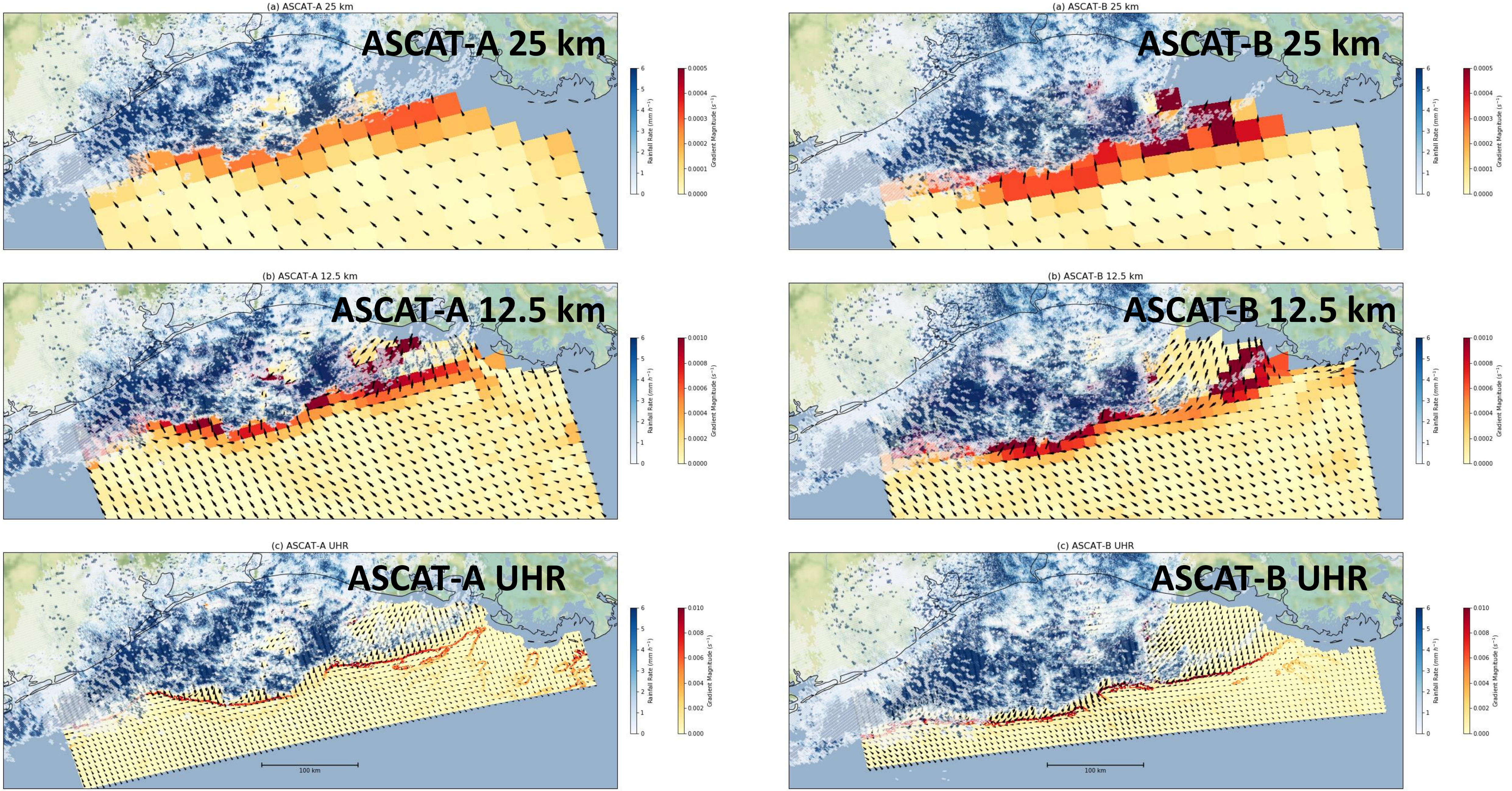


- Wind gradients will surround a cold pool
- Cold pool size related to parent storm size and organization
- Ostensibly detectable via scatterometer

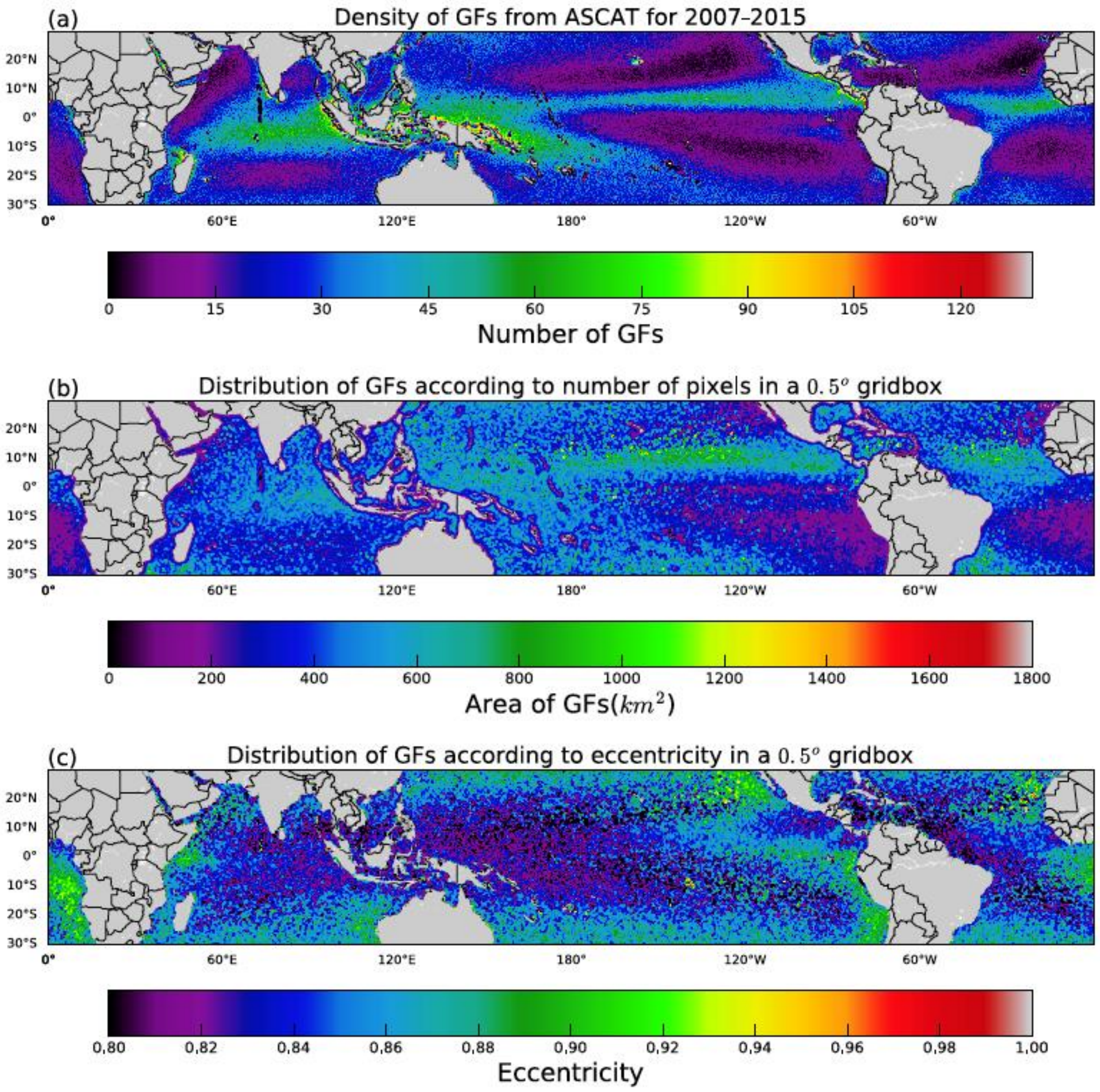


Example from WRF simulation

- Calculate gradient wind magnitude in resampled output from WRF simulation of DYNAMO convection
- Identify gradient features (GFs) using standard image processing and edge detection analysis
- GFs correspond well to simulated T_v depressions (i.e., cold pools)

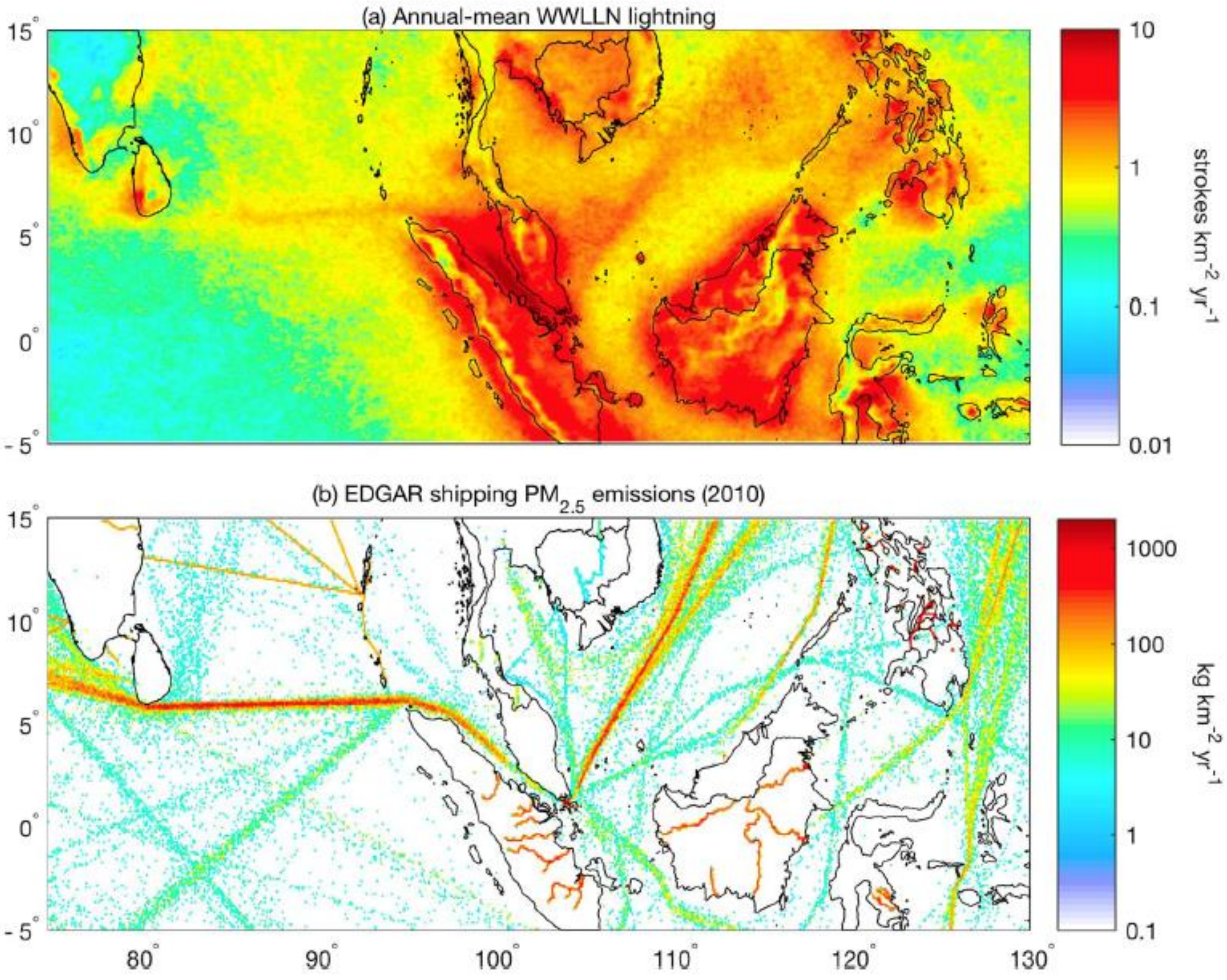


Wind gradients become more sharply defined as product resolution improves



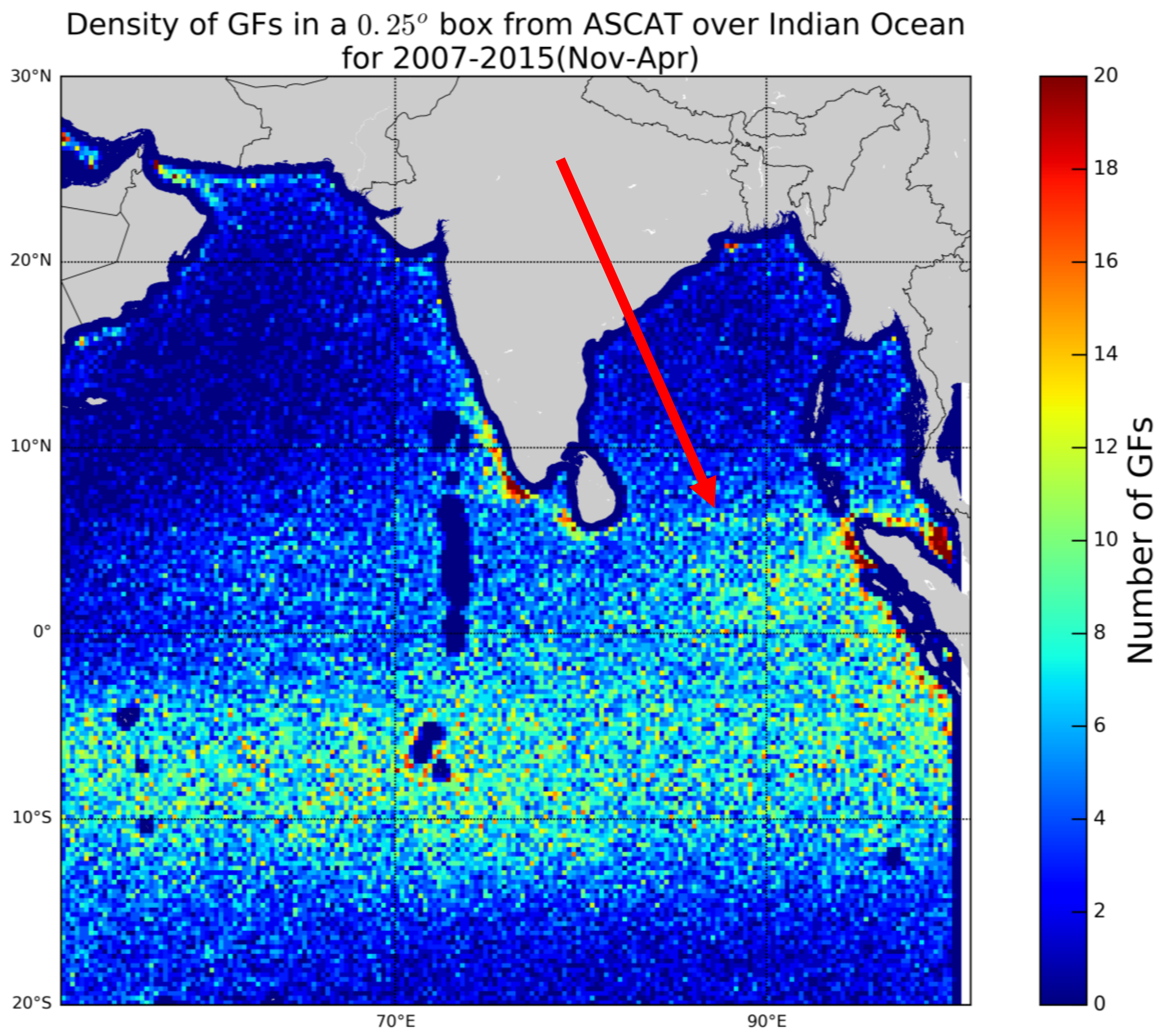
Gradient Feature Global Analysis

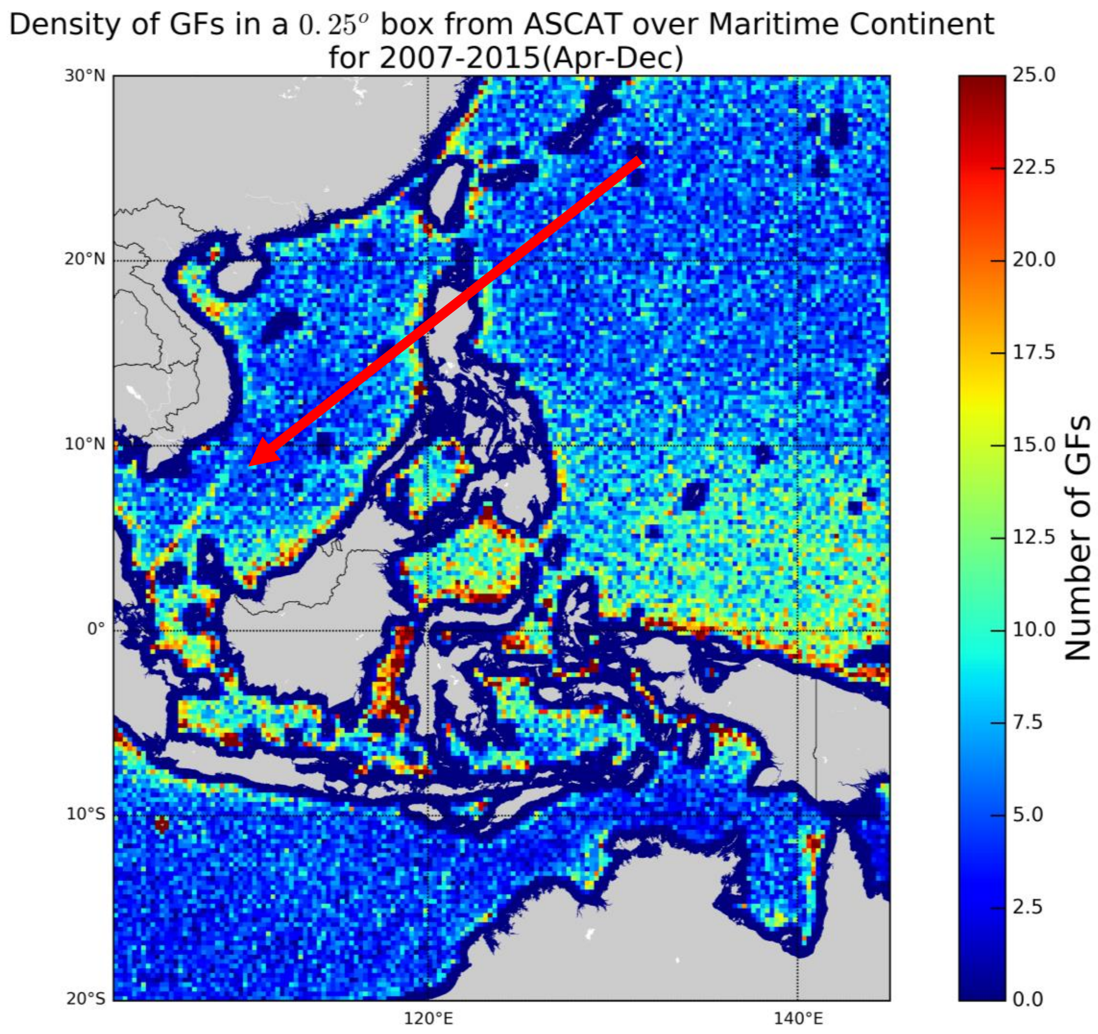
- Rain-flagged data removed from consideration
- Density corresponds well to known global distribution of tropical rainfall
- Largest GFs in/near ITCZ
- Increased eccentricity (i.e., more linear) in higher latitudes, eastern Pacific, and near coastlines



Thornton et al. (2017; GRL)

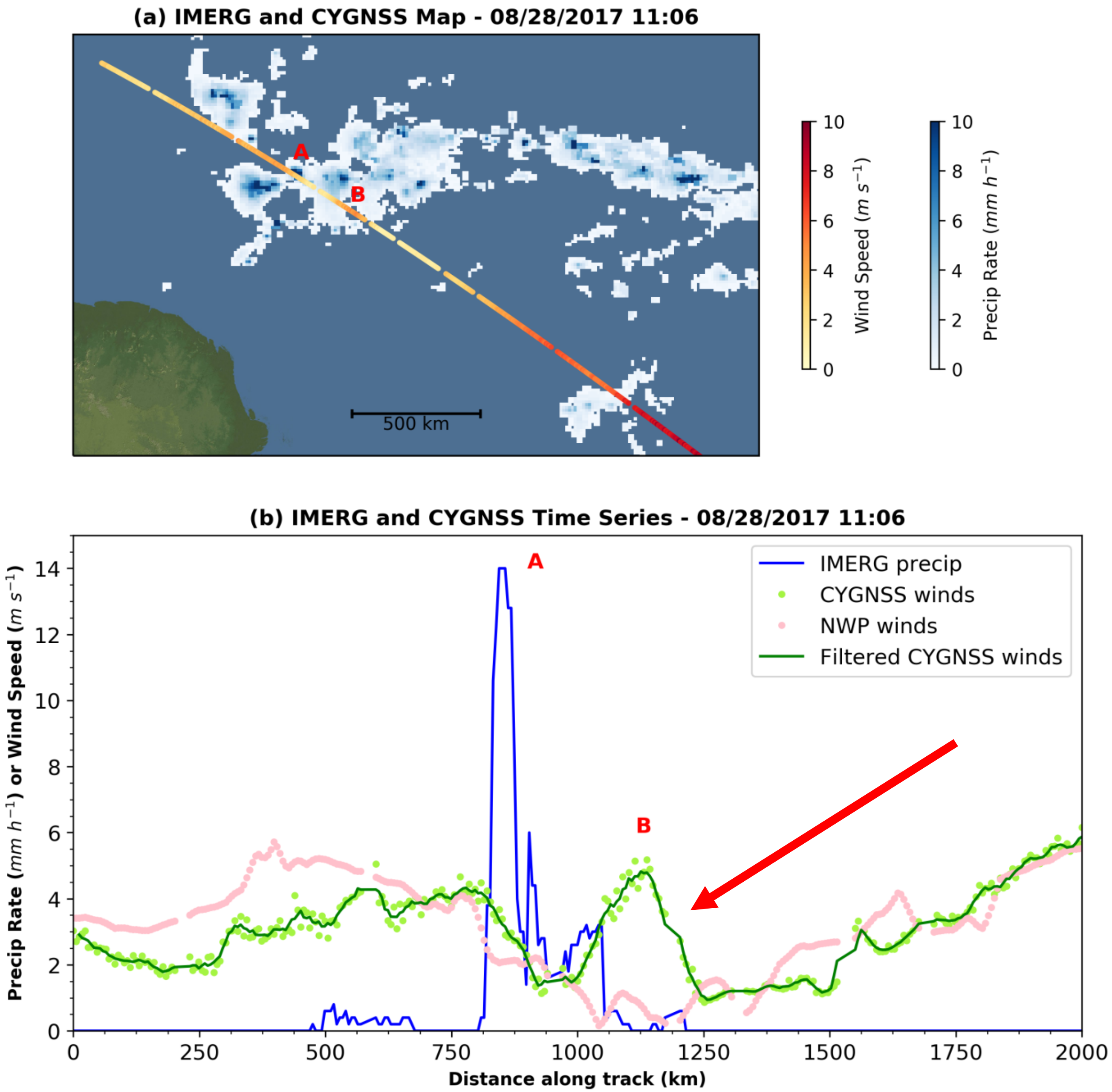
- Lightning enhanced by about a factor of ~2 directly over two of the busiest shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea
- Environmental factors do not explain the enhancement
- Study hypothesizes that ship exhaust particles change storm cloud microphysics, causing enhanced condensate in mixed-phase region and thus lightning





Ship track signatures also observed in ASCAT GF dataset

- Consistent with presence of more intense convection – more gust fronts expected!
- Or related to ship reflections from busy shipping lanes?



Ruf et al. (2018)

Convective Signatures in CYGNSS Data

- Combine CYGNSS specular point tracks with IMERG precipitation
- Have found numerous examples of wind gradients (B) in/near significant convective precipitation (A)
- Gradients not always observed in NWP analyses

Conclusions

- Convective signatures are evident in scatterometer data
- Polarimetric and Doppler radar is useful to help cross-check winds and rain flags and thus help distinguish between good/corrupted patterns
- GF technique shows excellent promise, particularly when applied to higher-resolution data
- Potential corroboration of enhanced convection in busy shipping lanes (or evidence that ships do provide significant scatterometer signature)
- CYGNSS provides a new avenue for cross-checking scatterometer-detected convective signatures