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26-Year-Old U.S. Air Force Pilot and St. Croix Native Guides Hundreds of Students Through Educational Aircraft Tour

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Ernice Gilbert **September 08, 2023**

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Captain Orchydia Sackey, far left, holds a St. Croix Educational Complex picture frame on Thursday, Sept. 7 at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

It all began with a Facebook post: "If you're an educator in St. Croix and you believe your students would be inspired by visiting me and exploring my jet, the KC-135, come to Henry E. Rohlsen Airport this Thursday between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Reach out for more details!"

With those words, U.S. Air Force Pilot Orchydia Sackey ignited a spark of possibility for hundreds of young lives.

In a pioneering journey of empowerment, 26-year-old Capt. Orchydia Sackey, a native of St. Croix and an alumna of the 2014 St. Croix Complex High School, orchestrated an awe-inspiring event alongside fellow islander Kishima Garcia, a strategic human capital executive and U.S. Air Force veteran. Their mission? To offer the youth of St. Croix a day they would never forget.

A wave of students from both private and public schools descended upon Henry E. Rohlsen Airport for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Filling their minds and hearts were the intricate details of the KC-135 Stratotanker and a wealth of information about the U.S. Air Force. The impressionable young attendees were visibly captivated by the machinery and the prospect of infinite possibilities. Capt. Sackey and Garcia had successfully laid the foundation for dreams that could stand the test of time.



KC-135 Pilot give students a tour. (Credit: V.I. Consortium)

This event encapsulated Capt. Sackey's lifelong vision. In a candid interview, she expressed her desire to instill in the youth of the Virgin Islands—both girls and boys—an unshakeable belief that no goal is beyond reach. "Never take 'no' for an answer when chasing your dreams," she urged during an interview with the Consortium, embodying a tenacity that seeks to dismantle the very obstacles that often hinder the growth of young potentials.

Her own dreams of aviation were set soaring in her formative years—as early as second grade, according to her mother, Avonelle Sackey. During a family trip to Florida, she witnessed an airplane ascending into the sky and felt an inexplicable calling. "This runway here was where it began for me," Capt. Sackey recounted, gesturing towards the expansive airstrip at Henry E. Rohlsen Airport. "'I was on the runway and we were taking off, and I said this is what I want to do... And so it took me a long time to figure out how I was going to get there,'" she continued, but after diligent research, she discovered the gateway through military aviation.



KC-135 Pilot give students a tour. (Credit: V.I. Consortium)

Her educational journey led her to the prestigious U.S. Air Force Academy, where she secured admission through a nomination by former U.S. Virgin Islands Congresswoman Donna M. Christensen. Known for its stringent selection criteria, which assesses not just academic and athletic prowess but also qualities of character and leadership, the academy stands as one of the elite institutions in the nation.

In crafting this unforgettable event, Capt. Orchydia Sackey and Kishima Garcia did more than just showcase an airplane; they set the wheels of inspiration in motion, inviting the next generation to take flight on the wings of their dreams.

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