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Hurricane Hunters Aircraft Visits U.S. Virgin Islands as Part of Awareness Tour

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JROTC students toured a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Hurricane Hunter aircraft on St. Croix on Wed. April 20, 2022. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY/VICONSORTIUM

A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Hurricane Hunters aircraft visited the U.S. Virgin Islands on Wednesday, where invited parties were given tours of the aircraft as part of NOAA's hurricane awareness push.

"Specially equipped NOAA aircraft play an integral role in hurricane forecasting. Data collected during hurricanes by these high-flying meteorological stations help forecasters make accurate predictions during a hurricane and help hurricane researchers achieve a better understanding of

storm processes, improving their forecast models," reads a description of the aircraft on NOAA's website. Tours were scheduled for St. Thomas and St. Croix.

Invited guests during the tour on Wednesday included JROTC students, who held discussions with the aircraft's crew. Senators and Bryan administration cabinet members were also invited to the tour.

Colorado State University hurricane researchers are predicting an active Atlantic hurricane season in 2022, citing the likely absence of El Niño as a primary factor.

The CSU Tropical Meteorology Project team is predicting 19 named storms during the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30. Of those, researchers expect nine to become hurricanes and four to reach major hurricane strength (Saffir/Simpson category 3-4-5) with sustained winds of 111 miles per hour or greater.

So far, the 2022 hurricane season is exhibiting characteristics similar to 1996, 2000, 2001, 2008, 2012 and 2021, CSU said. "Our analog seasons generally exhibited near- to somewhat above-normal Atlantic hurricane activity," said Phil Klotzbach, research scientist in the CSU Department of Atmospheric Science and lead author of the report.