GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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BVI Robotics Team Heads to Panama for 2025 FIRST Global Challenge

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Five young Virgin Islanders are set to proudly raise the Territory's flag on the global stage as they compete in the 2025 FIRST Global Challenge in Panama City from October 29 to November 1.

This year's team — Eleazar Brooks, Keyara Smith, Jayron Gibson, Judiah Case, and Denae Scatliffe-Chalwell will compete with their robot, Artemis, marking the Virgin Islands' third consecutive year on the international robotics stage. Since their debut in Singapore in 2023, followed by Greece in 2024, the team has steadily climbed the global rankings, moving from 143rd out of 191 to 111th out of 180 teams worldwide.

Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Hon. Sharie B. de Castro, extended heartfelt congratulations to the students ahead of their departure.

“As Team BVI proudly represents the Virgin Islands at the 2025 FIRST Global Challenge in Panama, I extend my highest commendation to our students for their dedication, innovation, and unwavering pursuit of excellence. Robotics is far more than the assembly of parts or the writing of code. It is the cultivation of critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and innovators who are prepared to design, adapt, and lead. By integrating robotics into our national curriculum, we are not only developing technical proficiency but also nurturing the creativity, resilience, and analytical thinking that will empower our young people to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving world. The skills they are mastering today will resonate throughout their professional journeys — strengthening our industries, inspiring entrepreneurship, and shaping a generation of Virgin Islanders ready to build, programme, and innovate solutions for the future.”

The robotics programme has since evolved into a structured component of the national curriculum. Students are introduced to robotics and chess through S.T.E.A.M. Innovations in Grade 7, with opportunities to continue in Grades 8 and 9, and advance into Robotics and Coding in Grades 10 and 11 to further develop their technical and problem-solving skills.

This growing interest has been made possible through key public-private partnerships including major contributions from Exness and Unite BVI. These

collaborations have helped strengthen the robotics programme, enhance classroom delivery and expand opportunities for students across the Territory.

These investments have yielded tangible classroom impact, enabling students to discover new skills and passions through robotics. Mentors, Ms. Careen Cuffy and Mr. Andre Roberts highlighted the enthusiasm they witness daily as students immerse themselves in the programme.

“The interest has been huge,” Ms. Cuffy shared. “The students show up excited every day. Robotics is something that needs to stay.”

Mr. Roberts added, “I’ve seen students who struggle academically thrive here. They get so immersed in building and problem-solving that they don’t even realise how quickly the time goes by.”

The team’s participation has also been strengthened through community and corporate support. Harneys and NAGICO have each contributed $5,000 in sponsorship to assist with travel and competition expenses.

The 2025 FIRST Global Challenge will bring together teams from more than 190 countries under the theme “Eco-Equilibrium”, challenging students to design innovative solutions to pressing environmental issues.

As Team BVI heads to Panama, their journey stands as a powerful reflection of the Territory’s growing investment in S.T.E.A.M. education, the strength of public-private partnerships, and the limitless potential of Virgin Islands youth.

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