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After Deadly Weekend, Senator Gittens Renews Call for Increased Police Presence and VIPD Redeployment Plan

Following a weekend of deadly violence, Senator Kenneth Gittens is calling for immediate law enforcement redeployment, a new VIPD strategy, and greater community accountability, warning that current resource allocation leaves critical coverage gaps.

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VIPD Units on the Melvin Evans Highway on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

In response to a violent weekend that left three Virgin Islanders dead and three others wounded, Senator Kenneth Gittens is again urging immediate action to strengthen public safety across the territory. Gittens is specifically calling for a reallocation of law enforcement resources and the

development of a formal redeployment strategy for the V.I. Police Department.

“The violence that erupted across our territory over the weekend is nothing short of tragic and unacceptable,” Gittens said. “Three lives lost, three others wounded, this level of bloodshed is simply mind-boggling. These are not just statistics; these are members of our community, our neighbors, our loved ones, our future.”

Gittens, who serves on the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety and a former law enforcement officer, said that law enforcement visibility should be heightened immediately—particularly as the territory prepares for upcoming festivities on St. John.

“I am calling on the Bryan-Roach Administration to take decisive action now by reassigning a majority of peace officers from other law enforcement agencies and positioning them within the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) for dedicated, community-based policing operations,” Gittens said.

He added that public safety must be seen as a shared responsibility. “Right now, I want to remind the community that public safety is a shared responsibility. While law enforcement remains committed to doing their part, members of the public must also do theirs — by respecting the law, policing their own behavior, and looking out for one another.”

Senator Gittens stressed the importance of parental oversight, especially during nighttime hours. “I always particularly emphasize the role of parents and guardians in ensuring that all minors are accounted for and under supervision, especially during nighttime hours,” he said. “According to Virgin Islands law, minors must be at home or in the custody of a responsible adult after 10:00 p.m. This law is in place for their protection and to help prevent situations that could put young people or others at risk.”

Gittens issued what he described as a “renewed public and urgent plea” for the VIPD to develop and implement a redeployment strategy plan. He said the current model, which centralizes a limited number of officers, is placing dangerous levels of stress on already overworked personnel and leaves significant gaps in community coverage.

“We must act swiftly to redistribute resources more effectively, not only for the safety of the public but also to safeguard the well-being of the very officers who put their lives on the line every day,” Senator Gittens said.

He closed by reinforcing the need for cooperation between government branches. “Enough is enough. Our residents deserve to live in safe neighborhoods, and our law enforcement deserves the tools, support, and staffing necessary to do their jobs well and go home safely at the end of each shift. I remain committed to working with my colleagues in the Legislature and all branches of government to restore peace and accountability in our streets.”