

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Gittens Calls For Increased Maritime Safety And Enforcement Patrol Following Deadly Boat Accident

VIC News / **Published On November 17, 2015 11:09 AM /**

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Kenneth Gittens, vice-chairman of the Legislature's Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, on Monday said he was emotionally torn between being outraged and being saddened upon hearing of yet another boating accident that took place in St. Thomas, near the docking facility located at the Crown Bay Marina.

The accident, which occurred on Sunday at about 7:00 p.m., left two individuals dead and three more injured, who were said to be in serious but non life-threatening condition.

According to the senator, the accident comes two days shy of a month since several passengers were injured when two vessels collided in waters north of St. Thomas.

“I have been looking at the increasing frequency of these types of accidents and realized having some personnel and a vessel in the water and on patrol would limit the response time and increase the possibility of saving lives,” he said.

Mr. Gittens pledged to continue encouraging action from the responsible departments, renewing his call for increased patrol in the waters around the territory.

“I have had discussions with commissioners of both Virgin Islands Police Department and Planning and Natural Resources Department, explaining my concern. If this last accident has not shed light on the high marine traffic between the islands and the need for our emergency first responding agencies to always stand ready for these types of emergencies, I don’t know what will,” Mr. Gittens, a former law enforcement officer, added.

The senator concluded that the time is now to pool resources and to better protect the residents and visitors traversing the seas by pleasure vessels or daily passenger ferries.

“It would certainly behoove us to launch initiatives for increased patrol and heightened safety initiatives. Increased cost should never be a deterrent if it means the difference in saving lives,” Senator Gittens concluded.