

The Virgin Islands Consortium

As Carnival Draws Near, Gittens Requests Meeting With Governor Mapp and Police Officials To Address Crime

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ST. CROIX -- In light of a steadily increasing number of incidents involving homicides, shootings and other gun crimes across the territory, and on the heels of an incident Saturday night [where four people were injured by gunfire on a public roadway](#), Senator Kenneth Gittens, vice-chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, is speaking out. Above, a sea of revelers tramping to the sounds of Stylee Band during the 2014 J'ouvert Morning festivities in Frederiksted.

Mr. Gittens, through a press release issued this morning, said he continues to decry the violent crimes and condemn those perpetrating the acts, and remains adamant that a unified law enforcement front against the criminal element here is needed.

"For quite some time now, I've been calling for collaboration between the local and federal entities and other local manpower for the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD)," said the second-term senator, who's also a former police officer. "These pleas have seemingly fallen on deaf ears and as a result, the crime wave has continued. We need to get more boots on the ground and heighten the law enforcement presence in our community. The police cannot see all or do all, but having supplemental assistance from other agencies can certainly augment the stressed resources within the VIPD," he added.

The Senator said an obvious lull in traffic initiatives, and more so, routine traffic stops has also contributed to the increase in crime from his vantage point and these are initiatives that have been proven to work as effective crime-fighting tools.

"When these gun-toting criminals know that the probability of a routine traffic stop is highly unlikely at any given time, they drive vehicles from one end of the island to the next with weapons as they plan or carryout their criminal behavior. These routine stops could net illegal firearms and even prevent some of these crimes from happening, but they just are not being done often enough," Mr. Gittens said.

Ahead of the kick-off activities for this year's Crucian Christmas Carnival, Mr. Gittens, a Democrat, has asked for a meeting with Governor Kenneth Mapp, police brass from both districts, director of the Law Enforcement Planning Commission and others to discuss measures that can be put in place to protect the residents and visitors during the upcoming season and moving forward.

"In addition to the governor, police brass and others, I will also request the presence of the attorney general in this meeting. We cannot have our residents living as hostages in their own homes because of fear of falling victim to the criminal element. This violence is crippling the social and economic climate in our community because residents are not even feeling safe anywhere. This cannot continue," Mr. Gittens went on.

The senator concluded by encouraging residents to continue being the eyes and ears of the police and share information on crimes they may know about.

"This has got to be a concerted effort to save our community. If we all step up and be a part of the solution we will see results," he said.