

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Gittens, Longtime Advocate For Fence At Gomez School, Renews Call

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Senator Kenneth Gittens on Tuesday condemned the midday shooting in the area of the Joseph Gomez Elementary School in Estate Tutu on St. Thomas, according to a press release the senator's office issued. Mr. Gittens, who has been advocating for the placement of a wrought iron fence around the perimeter of the school's campus, said he hopes that the incident sheds light on the potential for a very tragic occurrence.

"I have been looking at the vulnerability of that campus and have made calls and held discussions with the Education Department and other government officials to put the fencing in place to protect our children, faculty and staff," Mr. Gittens said. "Around here it seems as though we have become too complacent, thinking that the worst cannot

happen to us, we sit and wait until the inevitable occurs. This should not be, we should be proactive at all times to protect the lives and safety of our children."

The lawmaker added that he received information from police and school officials who described Tuesday's incident as a shootout on the campus. He said the incident involved at least two unknown shooters exchanging gunfire as they ran through the campus. Mr. Gittens said by all accounts, while the students were somewhat emotionally shaken, no one was physically harmed, information corroborated by the V.I.P.D.

"Not only am I upset that these gun-toting individuals see fit to launch attacks on each other and others in our community, but I am also upset, because I am aware that the funds are in place to install a suitable fence to protect our children," Mr. Gittens said. "The school is nestled in between private residential areas and public housing communities. It is no secret the type of criminal activities that occur in some of these areas and until we can weed them out and clean up the areas, we need to keep our children safe while they are at school or in this case, at summer camps."

In his final words, Mr. Gittens concluded that he is once again making a public appeal to Government Officials - namely those at Department of Property and Procurement - to get the ball rolling on the fencing project.