UNIT TITLE: Sovereign Citizens

UNIT NUMBER: 1.12.0



Maine Criminal Justice Academy 15 Oak Grove Road Vassalboro, ME 04989

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RESTRICTED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

Goal

Remind the group that Sovereign Citizens is one of the MCJA mandatory training topics for calendar year 2012. The material covered will be addressed towards the patrol officer who will probably be the first individual of authority to make contact with a member of the Sovereign Citizen movement. The basic belief of the Sovereign Citizen is that our government is 'illegal' and they will not respect or adhere to any laws or authority figures, specifically law enforcement officers, judges, taxing agencies, and politically elected officials. The Sovereign Citizens see these individuals as mere agents of a fraudulent and oppressive government.

Performance Objectives

After this unit of instruction the student will be able to accomplish the following objectives as outlined in this lesson:

1.12.1	Define a Sovereign Citizen
1.12.2	List 3 of the 5 other names that refer to Sovereigns
1.12.3	State the 2 reasons why there was a resurgence of the group in 2008
1.12.4	Identify what Sovereigns believe is the highest form of government
1.12.5	Describe the organizational structure of the Sovereign Citizens
1.12.6	List 6 basic illegal activities Sovereigns are involved with
1.12.7	List 2 of the 3 vehicle marking a Sovereign may display
1.12.8	What term would a Sovereign use instead of road or street?
1.12.9	What type of firearms do Sovereigns prefer?
1.12.10	What do you do prior to stopping a suspected Sovereign vehicle?
1.12.11	What might a Sovereign claim if you request a Social Security number?
1.12.12	At a traffic stop its not uncommon for a Sovereign to claim what?
1.12.13	List the 3 items most officers request at a traffic stop
1.12.14	What should be obtained when stopping a Sovereign vehicle?
1.12.15	What is the significance of information not shared?
1.12.16	List 3 of the 4 popular forms used by Sovereigns
1.12.17	How many groups of Sovereigns have formed fictitious police agencies
1.12.18	If you had a bad encounter with a Sovereign, where might you check?
1.12.19	List 2 of the 3 offices you contact after a Sovereign encounter.
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Administrative Information

Estimated Time Range: 2 Hours

Presentation Methods / Media

Methods	Media		
Interactive discussion			
Material & Equipment			
Student outside assignments:			

Lesson Plan Outline

Outline of instructional Unit

Objectives & Notes

I. Introduction

- A. Introduction
- B. Credentials
- C. Goals and Objectives
- D. Attention Grabber

Ask class/audience:

How many of you **really** feel that the government is working in **your** best interest?

Do you really feel that your elected officials do what is best for you and the country?

When you vote, do you **really** think you made a difference?

When asked the above questions, many state 'no'. Many of us will not act out against the government because we feel this way however the Sovereign Citizens are inclined to act out, some violently, because they feel this way. They reject the notion of US Citizenship and the responsibilities associated with being a US citizen.

II. Sovereign Citizen Defined

A person whose belief and actions are anti-government and rejects the notion of U.S. citizenship. They claim to follow only God's laws and the amendments found in the original Bill of Rights. Members have said that by force or by peace, a government overhaul will happen. The FBI considers the sovereign movement one the nation's top domestic terrorist threats.

Bill of Rights

The collective name for the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution.

Look for show of hands.

1.12.1

Definition:

Domestic Terrorism – groups or individuals operating entirely inside the US, attempting to influence the government or population to effect political or social change by engaging in criminal activity.

Outline of instructional Unit	Objectives & Notes
These limit the power of the U.S. Federal government in the areas of:	
Freedom of religion Freedom of speech, or of the press Right of people to assemble peaceably The right to keep and bare arms The right of the people against unreasonable searches, seizures The right against self-incrimination.	
Also Known As	1.12.2
Sovereign Citizens are also known as:	
 "Common Law Citizens" "Freemen" – representing freedom of government control. "Constitutionalists" "Posse Comitatus" "Preamble Citizens" 	
III. History of the Sovereign Citizen Movement	
1970s and 1980's Posse Comitatus – an anti-government, extremist group blended with KKK and other radical, anti-government groups.	
This group existed for well over a decade	
1983 - After a Posse adherent killed two US Marshals, the movement largely faded. The groundwork however for following anti-government groups was laid.	
1990s – (early/mid) Membership in anti-government militias, white supremacist and other radical groups grew.	
1990s – (late) Groups developed "Redemption Theory" A claim that federal government used citizens as collateral against foreign debt	
2008- A resurgence of the movement. Fueled by poor economy	1.12.3

Lesson Plan Outline

Outline of instructional Unit

Objectives & Notes

Efficiency of Internet to spread radical ideas

Cyclical

Anytime the economy is down, you see a resurgence of people blaming the government for what goes wrong.

IV. Sovereign Citizen Beliefs

- 1. An individual is a government unto himself
- 2. No government can control an individual without that person's direct permission.
- 3. A person has a right to reside in country, yet not be under control of the government.
- 4. Income tax is illegal
- 5. The county is the highest form of government
- 6. The Sheriff is the only law enforcement recognized since he is elected by the people.

When a belief system motivates its members to commit violent acts, it becomes a law enforcement problem. The majority of Sovereign Citizens (estimated at 97%) are not dangerous however the other 3 % can be **VERY** violent. They see violence as the only way to bring about the change they believe in. They disconnect from government, they are frustrated with the government not looking out for their best interest and are frustrated with figures of authority. They live and believe this day after day and begin to think – if a law enforcement officer stops me today- today may be the day I'll kill him.

Do NOT underestimate these individuals. They will kill or be killed for what they believe!

V. Threats to Law Enforcement

Physical threats

Since 1990, 51 law enforcement officers have been killed in 38 incidents in which at least one of the suspects was a right-wing criminal extremist. 95% of 38 officer incidents since 1990 involved local or state law enforcement

1.12.4

Outline of instructional Unit	Objectives & Notes
Contact may be associated with normal law enforcement operations:	
1. Traffic stops	
2. Protection orders	
3. Warrant service	
4. Domestic disturbances	
	1.12.5
VI. Organizational Structure of the Sovereign Citizen Movement	
Sovereign Citizens are diffused throughout the country.	
They are a loosely organized collection of groups/individuals	
Estimated membership is between 100,000 and 300,000.	
No one person is known to be the leader of the movement	
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VII Encountaring Soversions	1.12.6
VII. Encountering Sovereigns	1.12.0
Law Enforcement is encountering Sovereigns in every part of	
the country – squatting in abandoned houses, driving with	
strangely worded driver's licenses and fake registrations,	
resisting arrest, creating their own currency, duping clients with	
empty promises of discharging tax debts or fighting	
foreclosures.	
Other Illegal activities use by Sovereign Citizens include:	
1. Hold illegal courts that issue warrants for judges and police	
officers	
2. Clogging up the courts with frivolous lawsuits	
3. File bogus liens against public official to harass them	
4. Commit murder and physical assault	
5. Threaten judges, government personnel, and law	
enforcement officials	
6. Impersonate police officers and diplomats	
7. Print, sell, and use fake currency, passports, license plates and driver's licenses	
8. Engineer various white-collar scams, including mortgage	
frauds	
9. Filing bogus tax returns claiming they are owed money.	
10. Conduct seminars across the country and selling DVDs to	
individuals providing instruction on how to accomplish the	

Lesson Plan Outline

Outline of instructional Unit

Objectives & Notes

above activities.

Vacant/Abandoned Property

In California a group of sovereign citizens simply moved into unoccupied properties and posted notices that declared the seized houses to be a sovereign republic, threatening violence against anyone who entered.

Posted signs read:

"Private Property of sovereign Woman of the republic and California"

"Do Not Disturb Individuals who have possession of the property"

"All federal and state employees attempting to visit will be treated as trespassers and face the wrath of the occupants and their right to 'Self Preservation – Right to repel Force by Force – Self Defense – Justifiable Homicide."

Think of this next time you are checking a building.

VIII. Encountering Sovereigns Citizens at Traffic Stops

Some Sovereign Citizens 'advertise' the fact that they belong to this group.

Bogus vehicle registration plates on a vehicle may have the wording:

- 1. 'Republic of Texas'
- 2. 'Kingdom of Heaven'
- 3. 'Alabama republic'
- 4. 'Motorized Conveyance Registration
- 5. 'Moorish Nation'/ 'Washitaw'
- 6. Sovereign, Christian Citizen'
- 7. 'Sui Juris' (Latin for 'of one's own law')
- 8. 'Ambassador' or 'Diplomat'
- 9. US DOT

Outline of instructional Unit	Objectives & Notes
All of the above registration are well made and may not be detected as bogus with a quick glance. Closer examination will indicate to an officer that they are not legitimate. These registration plates are sold by the Sovereigns as a way to raise money.	1.12.7
Additional Vehicle Markings	
Decals (or homemade signs) are sometimes found on member's vehicles: 1 ' DO NOT STOP, DO NOT DETAIN' 2. An upside-down American flag in the center of the front windshield. 3. "168 to 1" (Oklahoma bombing victims to suspect)	
IX. Sovereign Citizen Statements at Traffic Stops/other Contacts	
A Sovereign citizen may make odd statements during contact such as:	
 "I am a free man traveling upon the land" May cite various UCC codes May question your authority as an officer Use conveyance, machinery, road machine, personal use recreational vehicle (instead of car, vehicle, motor vehicle) Guests, friends, family (instead of passengers) Traveling, journeying, moving (instead of driving, operating, transporting) Public right of way (instead of road or street) Abode, living, domicile (instead of residence) Inhabitant, Non-Resident, Non-Domestic (instead of resident) Non-Commercial (instead of public). 	1.12.8
Weapons	1.12.9
Sovereigns are known to like guns. Especially those that can easily be converted to full-automatic. The rule of thumb is that there at least two in every vehicle. If a sovereign is encountered outside of the vehicle, the rule of thumb is that each is carrying	

Lesson Plan Outline

Outline of instructional Unit

Objectives & Notes

at a minimum one handgun and one edge weapon.

Sovereign citizens are often confused with extremists from the militia movement. But while some sovereign citizens sometimes use or buy weapons, guns are secondary to their anti-government, anti-tax beliefs. On the other hand, guns and paramilitary training are paramount to militia groups.

Backup 1

If you suspect that the vehicle you are about to stop may be operated by a sovereign citizen- **CALL FOR BACKUP!**Do not stop the suspect vehicle until backup is on scene. The backup officer should be positioned at a tactically correct position with long gun at the ready.

- X. Tactics that may indicate affiliation as a Sovereign Citizen at a Traffic Stop:
 - 1. May roll down their window just enough to be heard
 - 2. May refuse to cooperate and exercise right to remain silent
 - 3. When asked for driver's license may ask is that a request or a demand.
 - 4. May provide strange responses to law enforcement questions that do not make sense. Example, when asked to present a license, they may reply, "no, not personally."
 - 5. May claim not to have a driver's license, and may present a homemade form of ID.
 - 6. May claim that it is unconstitutional to require individuals to have a driver's license and obey traffic laws.
 - 7. If an official state driver's license is presented, they may claim that the person in the picture is not them. They may further claim that the person in the picture is not human, but a non-breathing extraterrestrial.
 - 8. If asked to provide a Social Security number for identification, they may claim that the request is an invasion of their privacy and/or a violation of their rights.
 - 9. When signing law enforcement documents, they may write "under duress" beneath their signatures or cite various

1.12.10

Even a 'minor' traffic stop challenges the ideology of the Sovereigns and can escalate to a violent encounter.

1.12.11

Outline of instructional Unit	Objectives & Notes
Uniform Commercial Codes	
XI. Sovereign Tactics at Traffic Stops.	
 Distract the officer with paperwork Claim the officer has no authority or is out of jurisdiction Will claim that the vehicle belongs to a church (RED FLAG) Identify self as an official of the state Being uncooperative 	1.12.12
6. Concealing loaded weapons7. Asserting that the law does not require them to have necessary documentation of license, title and registration	
 8. Film (video or audio record) interaction (may later be posted to the Internet); this may be covertly or overtly done during the stop. 9. Demand official produce an oath of office 10. Rapidly exit vehicle and approach officer in an agitated state. 	
XII. Law Enforcement Request at every Traffic Stop	1.12.13
As a matter of practice, every law enforcement officer, at every traffic stop, request three items of each operator:	1.12.13
 Operator's license (issued by a state governmental entity). The vehicle registration (issued by a state government) A current and active insurance card for that vehicle You, the officer control the stop 	
XIII. Law Enforcement Focus	
 Officer safety. Maintain focus on situational safety Maintain professional bearing Apply enforcement as appropriate Full name, address and dates of birth of all vehicle occupants Record sovereign, national affiliation, if provided Where coming from and where going Any details regarding visible contents of vehicle. Pay close attention to detail. Things are not always as they 	1.12.14

Lesson Plan Outline

Outline of instructional Unit

Objectives & Notes

seem.

- 9. Be thorough. The smallest bit of information can make a difference.
- 10. Know and follow your department policies and procedures
- 11. Conduct searches & seizures falling within your legal authority.
- 12. Advise your supervisor of the contact request to scene if at all possible
 - 13. Avoid legal arguments
 - 14. Prepare detailed notes.
 - 15. Secure your dash-cam recordings
 - 16. Share information. Information not shared is intelligence diminished. (See also section XVII Reporting).

1.12.15

XIV. Paper Terrorism

The following are examples of tactics used by groups to clog the courts and harass their intended victims:

1. Liens

While filing a false document is illegal, once it's discovered it can't simply be torn up and discarded. Every lien, valid or not, becomes part of a property's permanent record. If the filer refuses to withdraw it voluntary, only a subsequent legal document can validate it. This is at a great financial expense. The filing itself usually accomplishes the schemer's goal of making a public official's life miserable to setting up an attempt to extort money in exchange for removing the lien. Once a lien is recorded property cannot be sold even though the lien is bogus.

2. IRS Form 8300

This form is used to report payments over \$10,000.00 in a trade or business transaction. Fraudulent submission of the form by a sovereign citizen can result in an artificial increase in the taxable income of the target being reported to the IRS

1.12.16
Forms of retaliation directed at judges, jurors and law enforcement officials

Lesson Plan Outline

Outline of instructional Unit

Objectives & Notes

3. Lawsuits

Sovereign citizens may file lawsuits against law enforcement or members of the court in their individual capacity seeking civil remedies for alleged violations of their constitutional rights.

4. Currency Transaction Reports (CTR)

Used legitimately by financial institutions in an effort to combat money laundering, sovereigns may improperly use FinCEN form 104 to report a target to trigger an investigation.

XV. Impersonating Law Enforcement Officers

Two Sovereign Citizen groups, the Civil Rights Task Force and the Constitution Rangers have created fictitious law enforcement agencies complete with fake identification cards, badges, and even raid jackets.

The ability to custom order badges and uniforms through mail-order catalogs and on-line make this process very easy.

Other names found on badges/fake ID cards:

- 1. "Investigator Civil Rights Task Force"
- 2. "Agent Civil Rights Task Police"
- 3. "Special United States Marshals"
- 4. "Sovereign Citizen World Guard"
- 5. "Sovereign Cop Watch."

Both the badges and identification cards appear very authentic looking and may intimidate someone not familiar with these groups.

Members of the Civil Rights Task Force have advocated what they term "reverse intimidation," interrogating the spouses of law enforcement officers who have had dealings with the group's members.

1.12.17

Outline of instructional Unit	Objectives & Notes
As law enforcement conducts surveillance of extremists groups, so too do members of these anti-government groups conduct countersurveillance. The following may minimize your exposure to this activity: 1. If you wear a uniform to/from work, cover with a jacket/shirt 2. Be aware of your surroundings at ALL times 3. Be mindful that you may be photographed/videotaped entering/exiting the station, entering/exiting your cruiser, and while on duty 4. Remind family members NEVER to accept a badge as identification of law enforcement. If something doesn't seem right, its probably not! 5. Check frequently with County Clerk to determine if a false lien may have been filed against your property especially if you have had a bad encounter with a Sovereign 6. Act professionally and ethically at all times 7. Minimize self-exposure on social media sites 8. Check your free credit reports annually for accuracy.	1.12.18
 XVII. Reporting Any Maine law enforcement officer having contact with a Sovereign Citizen is requested to pass that information onto The following: 1. FBI Regional Office (Boston) 617-742-5533 2. Maine Information and Analysis Center 207-624-7280 3. Regional Organized Crime Information Center Nashville, TN 1-800-238-7985 	1.12.19

Outline of instructional Unit	Time	Objectives & Notes
Although the Sovereign Citizen movement does not always rise to violence, its members' illegal activities and past violence – including fatal incidents against law enforcement make it a group that should be approached with knowledge and caution. It is important that law enforcement be aware of sovereign citizens' tactics, scams and other illegal activity and understand its potential severity, and be prepared for and against violent behavior or backlash through intimidation and harassment. With high unemployment, foreclosures of homes, the high cost if fuel and the growing consensus that the government is doing nothing to help, membership in the sovereign citizen movement is growing. The preparedness of law enforcement should be not IF I encounter a sovereign citizen but WHEN I encounter a sovereign citizen will I be prepared?		

Criterion Test Questions

1. Define a Sovereign Citizen

A person whose beliefs and actions are anti-government

2. List 3 of the 5 other names Sovereigns are also known as

Freeman

Common Law Citizens

Constitutionalists

Posse Comitatus

Preamble Citizens

3. List the two reasons why there was a resurgence of the anti-government movement in 2008

Rise of poor economy

The Internet

4. A Sovereign believes that the county is the highest form of government

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5. Describe the Organizational structure of the Sovereign Citizen Movement

They are individuals and groups diffused throughout the country.

They number between 100,000 and 300,000

There is no one leader of the movement.

- 6. List 6 basic illegal activities that Sovereign Citizens are involved in
 - 1. Squatting in abandoned houses
 - 2. Displaying fake registrations
 - 3. Displaying bogus licenses
- 4. Resist arrest
- 5. Print their own money
- 6. Filing fraudulent tax returns
- 7. List 2 of the 3 markings which may indicate a Sovereign's vehicle

"Do Not Stop – Do Not Detain" bumper sticker

Upside down American flag on center of windshield

"168 to 1" Reference to Oklahoma City bombing. 168 victims, 1 suspect

8. What term would a Sovereign use instead of road or street?

Public right of way

9. What type of firearms do Sovereign's prefer?

Those that can be converted to full automatic

10. If you suspect you about to stop a Sovereign's vehicle, what do you do?

Request a backup unit prior to initiating the stop

11. If you request a Social Security number from a Sovereign Citizen what will the likely claim be?

That is an invasion of their privacy

12. At a traffic stop it is not uncommon for a Sovereign to claim what about the vehicle?

That it belongs to a (fraudulent) church

13. What are the 3 items requested by an officer of an operator of a vehicle?

Vehicle registration

Operators license

Current/valid insurance card for the vehicle

14. If you stop a vehicle operated by a Sovereign what should you obtain from passengers?

Full names

Current addresses

Dates of birth

15. What is the significance of information not shared?

It is intelligence diminished

16. List 3 of the 4 forms of Paper Terrorism that Sovereigns use to harass their victims

Liens IRS Form 8300

Lawsuits Currency Transaction Reports

17. How many groups of Sovereigns have formed fictitious law enforcement agencies?

Two, the Civil Rights Task Force and the Constitution Rangers

18. An office you will want to check with especially if you had a bad encounter with a Sovereign

County Clerk – to determine if liens have been filed against personal property

19. List 2 of the 3 agencies you report your Sovereign Citizen contact to

Maine Information and Analysis Center

FBI Regional Office

Regional Organized Crime Information Center

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