

**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 markings 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 it's 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.

## Administrative Information

Estimated Time Range:

### Presentation Methods / Media

#### Methods

Interactive discussion

#### Media

#### Material & Equipment

#### Student outside assignments:





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## Lesson Plan Outline

Outline of instructional Unit	Objectives & Notes
<p style="text-align: center;">Efficiency of Internet to spread radical ideas</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cyclical</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Anytime the economy is down, you see a resurgence of people blaming the government for what goes wrong.</p> <p>IV. Sovereign Citizen Beliefs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. An individual is a government unto himself</li><li>2. No government can control an individual without that person's direct permission.</li><li>3. A person has a right to reside in country, yet not be under control of the government.</li><li>4. Income tax is illegal</li><li>5. The county is the highest form of government</li><li>6. The Sheriff is the only law enforcement recognized since he is elected by the people.</li></ol> <p>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 <b>VERY</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Do NOT underestimate these individuals. They will kill or be killed for what they believe!</b></p> <p>V. Threats to Law Enforcement</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Physical threats</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1.12.4</p>

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Outline of instructional Unit	Objectives & Notes
<p>Contact may be associated with normal law enforcement operations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Traffic stops</li> <li>2. Protection orders</li> <li>3. Warrant service</li> <li>4. Domestic disturbances</li> </ol> <p>VI. Organizational Structure of the Sovereign Citizen Movement</p> <p>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</p> <p>VII. Encountering Sovereigns</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Other Illegal activities use by Sovereign Citizens include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hold illegal courts that issue warrants for judges and police officers</li> <li>2. Clogging up the courts with frivolous lawsuits</li> <li>3. File bogus liens against public official to harass them</li> <li>4. Commit murder and physical assault</li> <li>5. Threaten judges, government personnel, and law enforcement officials</li> <li>6. Impersonate police officers and diplomats</li> <li>7. Print, sell, and use fake currency, passports, license plates and driver’s licenses</li> <li>8. Engineer various white-collar scams, including mortgage frauds</li> <li>9. Filing bogus tax returns claiming they are owed money.</li> <li>10. Conduct seminars across the country and selling DVDs to individuals providing instruction on how to accomplish the</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: right;">1.12.5</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1.12.6</p>

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<p>above activities.</p> <p><u>Vacant/Abandoned Property</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Posted signs read:</p> <p>“Private Property of sovereign Woman of the republic and California”</p> <p>“Do Not Disturb Individuals who have possession of the property”</p> <p>“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.”</p> <p>VIII. Encountering Sovereigns Citizens at Traffic Stops</p> <p>Some Sovereign Citizens ‘advertise’ the fact that they belong to this group. Bogus vehicle registration plates on a vehicle may have the wording:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ‘Republic of Texas’</li> <li>2. ‘Kingdom of Heaven’</li> <li>3. ‘Alabama republic’</li> <li>4. ‘Motorized Conveyance Registration</li> <li>5. ‘Moorish Nation’/ ‘Washitaw’</li> <li>6. Sovereign, Christian Citizen’</li> <li>7. ‘Sui Juris’ (Latin for ‘of one’s own law’)</li> <li>8. ‘Ambassador’ or ‘Diplomat’</li> <li>9. US DOT</li> </ol>	<p>Think of this next time you are checking a building.</p>



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<p>at a minimum one handgun and one edge weapon.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>Backup</u></p> <p>If you suspect that the vehicle you are about to stop may be operated by a sovereign citizen- <b>CALL FOR BACKUP!</b> 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.</p> <p>X. Tactics that may indicate affiliation as a Sovereign Citizen at a Traffic Stop:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. May roll down their window just enough to be heard</li> <li>2. May refuse to cooperate and exercise right to remain silent</li> <li>3. When asked for driver's license may ask is that a request or a demand.</li> <li>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."</li> <li>5. May claim not to have a driver's license, and may present a homemade form of ID.</li> <li>6. May claim that it is unconstitutional to require individuals to have a driver's license and obey traffic laws.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>9. When signing law enforcement documents, they may write "under duress" beneath their signatures or cite various</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: right;">1.12.10</p> <p>Even a 'minor' traffic stop challenges the ideology of the Sovereigns and can escalate to a violent encounter.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1.12.11</p>

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<p style="text-align: center;">Uniform Commercial Codes</p> <p>XI. Sovereign Tactics at Traffic Stops.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distract the officer with paperwork</li> <li>2. Claim the officer has no authority or is out of jurisdiction</li> <li>3. Will claim that the vehicle belongs to a church (RED FLAG)</li> <li>4. Identify self as an official of the state</li> <li>5. Being uncooperative</li> <li>6. Concealing loaded weapons</li> <li>7. Asserting that the law does not require them to have necessary documentation of license, title and registration</li> <li>8. Film (video or audio record) interaction (may later be posted to the Internet); this may be covertly or overtly done during the stop.</li> <li>9. Demand official produce an oath of office</li> <li>10. Rapidly exit vehicle and approach officer in an agitated state.</li> </ol> <p>XII. Law Enforcement Request at every Traffic Stop</p> <p>As a matter of practice, every law enforcement officer, at every traffic stop, request three items of each operator:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Operator's license (issued by a state governmental entity).</li> <li>2. The vehicle registration (issued by a state government)</li> <li>3. A current and active insurance card for that vehicle</li> <li>4. You, the officer control the stop</li> </ol> <p>XIII. Law Enforcement Focus</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Officer safety. Maintain focus on situational safety</li> <li>2. Maintain professional bearing</li> <li>3. Apply enforcement as appropriate</li> <li>4. Full name, address and dates of birth of all vehicle occupants</li> <li>5. Record sovereign, national affiliation, if provided</li> <li>6. Where coming from and where going</li> <li>7. Any details regarding visible contents of vehicle.</li> <li>8. Pay close attention to detail. Things are not always as they</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: right;">1.12.12</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1.12.13</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1.12.14</p>



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<p>3. Lawsuits</p> <p>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.</p> <p>4. Currency Transaction Reports (CTR)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>XV. Impersonating Law Enforcement Officers</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The ability to custom order badges and uniforms through mail-order catalogs and on-line make this process very easy.</p> <p>Other names found on badges/fake ID cards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. "Investigator – Civil Rights Task Force"</li><li>2. "Agent – Civil Rights Task Police"</li><li>3. "Special United States Marshals"</li><li>4. "Sovereign Citizen World Guard"</li><li>5. "Sovereign Cop Watch."</li></ol> <p>Both the badges and identification cards appear very authentic looking and may intimidate someone not familiar with these groups.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>1.12.17</p>

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<p>XVI. Protecting Yourself and Your Family</p> <p>As law enforcement conducts surveillance of extremists groups, so too do members of these anti-government groups conduct counter-surveillance. The following may minimize your exposure to this activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If you wear a uniform to/from work, cover with a jacket/shirt</li> <li>2. Be aware of your surroundings at <b>ALL</b> times</li> <li>3. Be mindful that you may be photographed/videotaped entering/exiting the station, entering/exiting your cruiser, and while on duty</li> <li>4. Remind family members <b>NEVER</b> to accept a badge as identification of law enforcement. If something doesn't seem right, its probably not!</li> <li>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</li> <li>6. Act professionally and ethically at all times</li> <li>7 Minimize self-exposure on social media sites</li> <li>8. Check your free credit reports annually for accuracy.</li> </ol> <p>XVII. Reporting</p> <p>Any Maine law enforcement officer having contact with a Sovereign Citizen is requested to pass that information onto The following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FBI Regional Office (Boston) 617-742-5533</li> <li>2. Maine Information and Analysis Center 207-624-7280</li> <li>3. Regional Organized Crime Information Center Nashville, TN 1-800-238-7985</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: right;">1.12.18</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1.12.19</p>

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Outline of instructional Unit	Time	Objectives & Notes
<p>XVIII. Conclusion</p> <p>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.</p> <p>With high unemployment, foreclosures of homes, the high cost of 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 <b>IF</b> I encounter a sovereign citizen but <b>WHEN</b> I encounter a sovereign citizen will I be prepared?</p>		

## 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  
  
**T**     **F**
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

## **Bibliography**

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