

# ENGAGEMENT WITH SO-CALLED “SOVEREIGN CITIZENS”

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*The “sovereign citizen” movement is a loosely organized collection of groups and individuals who have adopted a right-wing anarchist ideology originating in the theories of a group called the Posse Comitatus. Its adherents believe that virtually all existing government in the United States is illegitimate and they seek to “restore” an idealized, minimalist government that never actually existed. To this end, sovereign citizens wage war against the government and other forms of authority using “paper terrorism” harassment and intimidation tactics.*

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER A SUSPECTED SO-CALLED SOVEREIGN CITIZEN

- 1. Don't get distracted by bizarre behavior, language or unfamiliar documents.**  
Do not get into a “battle of wits” with them. Most of their rhetoric is meant to distract you from your duties or create an opportunity for a physical attack.
- 2. Make every effort to identify the subject.** Keep in mind they will typically produce fraudulent documents for identification.
- 3. Accept any materials they hand to you (intelligence purposes).**  
Be knowledgeable about the laws and department policies that are relevant when dealing with so-called “Sovereign Citizens”.
- 4. Disengage, call for and wait for back up.** The risk of spontaneous violence from self-proclaimed sovereign citizens against law enforcement officials is well known.
- 5. Try to humanize yourself to the extremist (not just an “agent of the state”).**  
Avoid heightening tensions. Your intention may just be a citation; however, they may think they are in a life and death situation.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER A SUSPECTED SO-CALLED SOVEREIGN CITIZEN, *cont.*

6. If the extremist is pushing his point of view or argument, advise him that his position should be held until a later date.
7. Prepare detailed notes and secure the camera recordings.
8. Contact your CID/CIS, prepare an Intelligence Bulletin and contact your state fusion center.

## THE SOVEREIGN CITIZEN BELIEF SYSTEM & IDEOLOGY

- **Belief System:** The sovereign belief system is based on a conspiracy theory which states that at some point, the American government, which was set up by our founding fathers (referred to as “common law”), was secretly replaced by a new government system based on admiralty law, the law of the sea and international commerce. Sovereign’s point to flags with gold trim as proving their beliefs in a corrupt system of government. Sovereign’s believe that by passage of certain amendments to the Constitution (most referenced are the 13th, 14th and 16th), as well as removing the US from the gold standard, the US government has secretly enslaved its citizens and is thereby illegitimate.
- **Ideology:** Sovereign Citizen/Posse ideology places a far different meaning and reliance on common law. Though there are many different strains and theories of Posse common law, a common thread that runs through most of them is that the common law is a separate, parallel legal/judicial system, one independent from and not subordinate to statutory or written law.
- **Paper Terrorism:** Paper terrorism involves the use of fraudulent legal documents and filings, as well as the misuse of legitimate documents and filings, in order to harass, intimidate and coerce public officials, law enforcement and private citizens. These filings also clog up the court system, which the sovereigns believe is illegitimate.
- **Red Ink:** Sovereigns believe that red represents a blood-oath and that a red signature or thumbprint symbolizes a flesh and blood person as opposed to their government created corporate shell identity.

*These visor cards are intended as guidelines only. Regulations of the appropriate local and national law enforcement agencies should also be consulted. © 2020 American Military University*

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