

Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation



# **Sovereign Citizen Extremism: A Primer**

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## (U) PART I: IDEOLOGY AND COMMON CLAIMS

### (U) Introduction

(U) Sovereign citizen ideology is a belief system that leads adherents to reject their US citizenship and government authority. The ideology is based upon a conspiracy-laden view of the past and interpretation of historical documents fundamental to American history such as the Declaration of Independence, US Constitution, Bill of Rights, Articles of Confederation, various treaties and Supreme Court decisions. This primer identifies basic ideological beliefs and common claims made by sovereign citizens, understanding these differ by individual and change over time. Sovereign citizen claims thus often appear nonsensical, incomplete, and at times, contradictory.

(U) Many assertions made by sovereign citizens today are adopted from the Sheriff's Posse Comitatus, a militant anti-government, anti-tax group active in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily in the west and mid-west sections of the country. Sovereign citizens claim to possess secret "truths" about the US financial system, hidden conspiracies, or knowledge about supposed government-suppressed technologies. They purport special understanding about legal procedure, common law, and the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC). Others may convene special courts, which purport to operate under common law, or file legal documents that appear legitimate. Some claims are drawn from white supremacy, anti-government, or separatist extremist ideologies.

(U) It is not illegal to advocate sovereign citizen beliefs. Individual indicators of sovereign citizen activity may comprise lawful conduct or non-sovereign citizen criminal activity. No single indicator should be the sole basis for a determination of sovereign citizen activity. The FBI is concerned, however, about individuals who commit crimes in furtherance of the ideology, specifically:

- (U//FOUO) Sovereign citizen **extremists**, who seek to advance their views through force or violence; and
- (U//FOUO) Sovereign citizen **criminals**, who seek to advance their views through non-violent criminal activity.

### (U) Declaring Sovereignty

(U) Sovereign citizen ideology fundamentally rejects the concept of US citizenship. Consequently sovereigns often, but not always, feel compelled to declare their separation from the United States. Declarations of sovereignty commonly include two general statements: what the individual is not (a US citizen), and what he or she claims to be (a "freeman," "human being," "flesh-and blood person," "sovereign," etc.). Sovereign citizens frequently make such

#### (U) What is a sovereign citizen?

*(U) The term "sovereign citizen" is used mainly by law enforcement; adherents tend to self-identify as sovereign, freemen, flesh-and blood persons, diplomats, indigenous Americans, living beings, etc. Sovereign citizens make up a diverse, nationwide movement, as opposed to comprising a single organized, homogenous group. Because it is not illegal to advocate sovereign beliefs, the FBI does not maintain a count of sovereign citizens. The movement, which has its origins in the United States, has appeared in Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and mainland Europe.*



(U) Fraudulent law enforcement badge.

declarations in writing through various documents filed with various government agencies, such as an “Affidavit of Truth.” Regardless of the form in which these declarations are made, they carry no legal authority per Title 8 USC§1481, which outlines the conditions under which one may renounce citizenship. A list of some common documents sovereigns use as part of the declaration process is available in the FBI publication: *Sovereign Citizen Use of Documents to Further Fraudulent Schemes: A Reference Guide*.<sup>a</sup>

### (U) Citizenship and Identity

(U) Sovereign citizen ideology generally recognizes two categories of citizenship:

- (U) Original state “Citizens” who allegedly existed prior to the Civil War;
- (U) Fictional US “citizens” who are an artificial consequence of the 14th Amendment.

(U) Sovereign citizens prefer original or true state “Citizenship” over fictional US/Federal/14th Amendment citizenship status (the three terms are often used interchangeably) which they view as a form of servitude. Sovereign ideology points to grammatical differences to support assertions that two classes of citizens exist, specifically, that the “C” in “Citizens” is capitalized in Articles I-III of the US Constitution, whereas the word “citizen” appears only lower case in the 14th Amendment. Sovereign ideology posits that US citizens are part of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, a corporation controlled by foreign financiers and led by a puppet President and Congress.<sup>b</sup> Further, they claim that the corporation has jurisdiction only in the District of Columbia, US territories and military reservations. Sovereigns claim US “citizens” have no inalienable rights, only privileges granted by—and which can be revoked by—the US Congress.

(U) Some sovereign citizens claim to have a special indigenous heritage that predates the founding of the United States, which renders them immune from government regulatory authority and most laws.

They may claim membership in fictitious nations, states, or tribes and attempt to attest the validity of such associations by presenting official-looking identity documents, licenses, badges, certificates or credentials. Such claims are frequently advanced by Moorish sovereign citizens who have broken away from the original Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA).

(U) Moorish sovereign citizens claim special status as non-citizen protectees of the US Government due to a Treaty of Friendship between the United States and Morocco (1787, 1836) or through alleged membership in Indian tribes. Not all self-identified Moors are sovereign citizens and not all Moorish sovereigns are engaged in illegal activity. MSTA rejects any connection with the sovereign citizen movement.

### (U) Public and Private Spheres

(U) Sovereign citizens view the world in terms of opposing halves, sometimes referred to as public and private spheres. The “public” sphere is embodied by the corporate UNITED STATES and concomitant privileges granted to US citizens. In the “private” sphere, however, individuals



(U) Moorish sovereign citizen credential.

<sup>a</sup>(U) Contact any FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) for copies of this publication.

<sup>b</sup>(U) Succeeding references to US/federal/14th Amendment citizenship will be identified by the single term US citizen.



enjoy unalienable rights and live free of government intrusion. Sovereign citizens assume most Americans are unaware they have been duped into accepting US citizenship, literally from birth, when the government required unsuspecting parents to apply for birth certificates.

(U) Sovereign citizens believe that as adults these same individuals unwittingly bind themselves to the government further by initiating “adhesion contracts”<sup>c</sup> through driver and marriage licenses, passports, social security cards, naturalization papers, etc. These contracts are believed to keep individuals—who could be free—in a state of virtual slavery. It is for these reasons that newly-declared sovereigns sometimes refuse to carry government-issued identity documents and take certain, definite steps to remove themselves from the public sphere.

#### **(U) The Birth Certificate**

*(U) Birth certificates and naturalization papers hold significance in sovereign citizen ideology and sovereigns commonly request original copies of these documents. Adherents claim:*

*(U) 1. Birth certificates and naturalization papers serve as adhesion contracts that bind sovereign people to the US Government;*

*(U) 2. The Federal Government generates revenue by trading these documents on financial markets;*

*(U) 3. These documents are necessary to certify one's sovereignty as a part of the redemption process.*

#### **(U) Remedies**

(U) Sovereign citizen ideology offers a series of remedies for adherents who become mired in debt or run afoul of the government or law enforcement. These promises—which are false—are a major reason for the ideology's broad appeal. These remedies include filing real or made-up documents with government agencies, attempting to misuse the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), convening common law grand juries, and filing illegitimate, frivolous lawsuits and liens.

#### *(U) Fraudulent Filings*

(U) Sovereign citizens express their intentions and beliefs primarily through documents which, they claim, gain legitimacy upon being filed with a government agency. Filings serve as a first step to certify status, address legal problems, or take on financial challenges. Sovereigns are known for filing voluminous documentation such as affidavits, directives, and forms with government agencies—particularly county recorders and court clerks—in an attempt to overwhelm recipients with dense, pseudo-legal documents written in incomprehensible language.

(U) Sovereign citizens attempt to make bogus documents appear legitimate by obtaining an Apostille certificate<sup>d</sup> or the services of a Notary Public. Both processes authenticate signatures only, but sovereigns use the stamps and certificates to make it appear that a government agency or representative has certified document content.



(U) Sovereigns use stamps to falsely create contractual relationships or attempt to compel the US government to pay debts.

<sup>c</sup>(U) An adhesion contract is a standard-form contract prepared by one party, to be signed by the party in a weaker position, usually a consumer, who has little choice about the terms. Source: *Blacks' Law Dictionary*.

<sup>d</sup>(U) Apostille certificates are issued by officials at the state level to authenticate the filing and signatures of documents for use in foreign countries. Apostilles do not certify the validity or veracity of the contents of the document.

*(U) Uniform Commercial Code*

(U) Sovereigns view the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) as a remedy for “free” people who seek to “engage in commerce” with US citizens and government agencies. The UCC is a uniform law that governs commercial transactions, including sales of goods, secured transactions, and negotiable instruments. It has been adopted in some form by every state. Sovereign citizens look to the Code as a sort of bridge between the private and public spheres that protects the sovereignty of free people. For this reason sovereigns include UCC references—most commonly UCC 1-308 or the earlier 1-207—on documents, or annotate UCC references to forms, bills, and traffic citations.

**(U) Uniform Commercial Code****(U) § 1-308. Performance or Acceptance Under Reservation of Rights**

*(U) (a) A party that with explicit reservation of rights performs or promises performance or assents to performance in a manner demanded or offered by the other party does not thereby prejudice the rights reserved. Such words as “without prejudice,” “under protest,” or the like are sufficient.*

*(U) Common Law*

(U) Sovereigns look to what they refer to as “common law” to remedy the legal problems they inevitably encounter. Common law is a body of law derived from judicial decisions rather than from statutes or constitutions. It is historically part of both the British and American legal traditions.

(U) Sovereign citizens interpret common law as an alternative legal remedy based on the concept of a jury of peers, which can bypass legitimate legal processes. As a result, they may convene special “common law courts” or “grand juries,” which hear “cases” and render decisions. Although these bodies claim legitimacy, such actions lack real legal standing or force of law.

(U) Sovereigns conduct court business in homes, restaurants, public libraries, and in at least one instance, a senior center. They hear complaints regarding civil and criminal matters ranging from child custody to mortgage delinquency to zoning. They dismiss traffic tickets and reconsider decisions already resolved by legitimate courts. They may attempt to call public officials to testify, or issue punitive writs, true bills, fines, indictments, and—rarely—arrest warrants. It is unusual for common law courts to enforce their decisions but some will issue threatening letters urging compliance or attempt to compel the county sheriff or US Marshals Service to act on their behalf.

*(U) Frivolous Lawsuits*

(U) It is not illegal for sovereign citizens or other individuals to file lawsuits, but sovereign citizens turn to frivolous lawsuits as a remedy to prevent police, corrections officers, court personnel, and other government officials from performing official duties. Frivolous lawsuits are identifiable because they contain sovereign language and baseless arguments—such as the plaintiff is not a US citizen (because he or she is sovereign), or the court has no jurisdiction over a sovereign individual. Sovereign citizens sometimes sue public officials for abuse of power under “color of law,” a process they may refer to as “Title 42 lawsuits.”<sup>e</sup> A third tactic involves filing financial documents against a judge as a means to force his or her recusal, by falsely attempting to demonstrate a financial interest in the outcome of a case.

<sup>e</sup>(U) 42 USC § 1983 Civil Action for Deprivation of Rights.

(U) Sovereign citizen criminals sometimes file certain forms to trigger investigations of persons engaged in legitimate legal actions such as police officers, court, or government officials. These include IRS Form 8300, which reports additional untaxed income to the IRS, and FinCEN Currency Transaction (CTR) and Suspicious Activity (SAR) Reports, which document notable financial transactions. The abuse of official forms is detailed in the FBI publication *Sovereign Citizen Use of Documents to Further Fraudulent Schemes: A Reference Guide*.

**(U) Liens**

(U) A lien secures an interest in real or personal property. Sovereign citizens file fraudulent liens as part of the redemption process, but also view liens as a form of ultimate remedy against perceived enemies, by targeting their assets.

(U) Whether a lien generates a financial repercussion depends on the type of lien and state in which it is filed. As debtors are not automatically notified, they may not be aware of their target status until they attempt to obtain credit. The process for removing or voiding liens varies by state.

(U) Individuals who file frivolous liens against federal law enforcement, including federal court personnel, are subject to prosecution under Title 18 USC §1521. For a list of Federal Statutes see Appendix A.

(U) State and local officials are protected under an increasing number of state-specific statutes regarding liens and UCC filings. For a comprehensive guide of state efforts regarding fraudulent

**(U) Retaliating against a Federal judge or Federal law enforcement officer by false claim or slander of title (18 USC §1521)**

*(U) Whoever files, attempts to file, or conspires to file, in any public record or in any private record which is generally available to the public, any false lien or encumbrance against the real or personal property of an individual described in section 1114, on account of the performance of official duties by that individual, knowing or having reason to know that such lien or encumbrance is false or contains any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned for not more than 10 years, or both. (Added Pub. L. 110-177, title II, §201(a), Jan. 7, 2008, 121 Stat. 2535.)*

UCC filings, see *State Strategies to Subvert Fraudulent Uniform Commercial Code UCC Filings*, National Association of Secretaries of State, April 2014.

**(U) PART II: IDEOLOGICALLY-DRIVEN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY**

**(U) Financial Fraud**

(U) A core tenet of sovereign citizen ideology is that “free” people are not responsible for debts accrued while in US citizen status, a likely reason many find the belief system attractive. Sovereign citizen frauds range from issuing fictional checks, minting currency, and, most often, engaging in various debt elimination schemes.



(U) Fraudulent 100 billion dollar bond.



(U) Self-proclaimed experts in the debt-related aspects of the ideology frequently hold instructional seminars. These fee-based proceedings target debtors, most recently individuals facing the effects of financial judgments, bankruptcy, or foreclosure. Seminar leaders provide guidance and learning materials, including books, forms, and electronic resources in an environment that appears legitimate, such as a hotel conference center. At the conclusion they may offer – for a fee – to sell access to internet resources and consultant services.

*(U) Fictitious Financial Instruments*

(U) Sovereign citizens sometimes attempt to pay debts with phony bonds, false “bills of exchange,” promissory notes, checks, warrants or other fictitious financial instruments. These documents are recognizable in that they often contain odd notations, such as the same name spelled in both regular case and all capital letters, serial numbers that resemble social security numbers, phony routing numbers, out-of-place language such as the phrase “without prejudice,” and references to the UCC. These documents are sometimes produced on high-quality paper to give the appearance of legal tender when they are, in reality, worthless and possibly illegal.

*(U) Redemption Scheme*

(U) Redemption is the effort to gain control (literally to redeem) the contents of a supposed secret bank account containing \$1 million or more with a goal of using account funds to discharge debts including mortgages, student, personal, or automobile loans, utility bills, etc. It is also popular among incarcerated sovereigns who seek to “monetize” their sentences and then discharge the debt.

**(U) What is a strawman?**

*(U) According to sovereign ideology, when an individual is born or naturalized, the US Government creates a fictitious identity—a strawman—in their name. The strawman is easily distinguished from the “real” person in that its name is spelled in all capital letters.*

*(U) Sovereign citizens claim documents issued by government entities (letters, licenses, bills, legal documents), in which the name is spelled in all capital letters, refer to the strawman.*

(U) The redemption concept emerged in the late 1990s. It is based on an older conspiratorial belief that the corporate entity known to sovereign citizens as the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA fell into bankruptcy during the Great Depression. Although the US Government never declared bankruptcy, according to the belief, in order to continue operations during the crisis, the bankrupt US Government was forced to borrow funds from foreign investors and lacking other assets, it offered its citizens—US citizens—as collateral. Currently, the US Treasury deposits these borrowed funds into special “Treasury Direct Accounts,” which it opens for every US citizen upon receipt of a birth certificate. Sovereigns refer to the account holder as a “strawman,” who holds a “strawman account.”

(U) Redemption involves taking control of the strawman account. The process one undergoes to do this varies by individual; however there are some essential steps:

- (U) The sovereign citizen files a UCC Financing Statement (Form 1) against the strawman in order to establish a first lien position against the strawman’s assets.

(U) The individual mails the following documents to the US Treasury Department:

- (U) A birth certificate or naturalization papers, which indicates the individual has severed any obligations with the US Government;



- (U) An affidavit to serve as the individual's declaration of sovereignty;
- (U) IRS Form 56 or specific instructions directing the Treasury Secretary to act in a fiduciary capacity;
- (U) Copies of various bills or other financial obligations with instructions for the Treasury to pay the obligations with funds from the (fictitious) strawman account.

*(U) Accepted for Value*

(U) Some sovereign citizens annotate bills, traffic tickets, or other official documents with the phrase Accepted for Value (A4V), printed at a 45 degree angle, often in red ink. A4V means the recipient interprets the document as an offer by a creditor to engage in commerce with a free person who retains his or her rights. An A4V reference is a hallmark of the redemption scheme.

*(U) Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Scheme*

(U) The Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) scheme is designed to trick creditors into accepting payment through fraudulent checks written from closed or zero-balance accounts. The checks contain simple, specific language derived from the UCC. Scheme proponents claim this language requires the US Government to set off or discharge the debt from funds it has already reserved to service consumer debt.

- (U) Memo line: "EFT Only for Discharge of Debt" and "Not for Deposit for EFT Only for Discharge of Debt."
- (U) Reverse: "Do Not Deposit; EFT Only; For Discharge of Debt" or "Authorized Representative without Recourse."

**(U) Tax Schemes**

(U) Sovereign citizens consistently deny responsibility for paying taxes. Past schemes have involved 1099-OID fraud, in which the filer indicates he/she paid too much tax and is due a large return, or 1040 fraud, in which the filer provides false income information, but many sovereigns simply choose not to file. Sovereign ideology provides numerous justifications for such anti-tax beliefs including:

- (U) Only US citizens are responsible for taxes;
- (U) The strawman is responsible for tax obligations;
- (U) The 16th Amendment to the Constitution was not properly ratified;<sup>f</sup>
- (U) There is no law mandating payment of taxes.

(U) These arguments persist even after having been repeatedly deemed frivolous by the courts. Investigation of possible federal tax violations are handled by the IRS Criminal Investigative Division and prosecuted by the Tax Division of the US Department of Justice.

**(U) Crimes Against Real Property**

(U) Sovereign citizen ideology lays claim to sovereign, indigenous, and common law rights of ownership to real property, such as declarations that individuals—but not corporations—can own real estate. Sovereign citizen property crimes range from acts of squatting and false or forged claims of ownership to fraudulent mortgage elimination and foreclosure rescue schemes.

<sup>f</sup>(U) This argument is presented in the two volume treatise *The Law that Never Was* (1985) that examines the ratification procedure for each state in regard to the 16th Amendment.

(U) Sovereign citizen property crimes defraud and victimize property owners as well as unwitting buyers or tenants caught up in real estate and mortgage schemes. Losses can include property damage, loss of property access, sales, mortgage or rental income, and court, legal, and law enforcement costs.

*(U) Mortgage and Foreclosure Fraud*

(U) While some sovereign citizens take physical possession of properties through squatting, others rely on fraudulent mortgage elimination or foreclosure rescue schemes to acquire the rights to property. Mortgage elimination schemes involve the filing of fictitious paperwork by sovereign citizens or illegitimate limited liability corporations (LLCs), that claims to eliminate a legitimate mortgage. Sometimes homeowners stop making payments altogether or make payments directly to the perpetrator, who pockets the cash. In a foreclosure rescue scenario, sovereign citizen criminals claim the ability to remove properties from the public sphere through trusts or other means. Such schemes generally involve transferring the property to the sovereign entity. Ultimately such schemes fail, resulting in foreclosure. Common fraudulent real property schemes include the following:

- (U) Adverse Possession Claims

(U) Adverse possession is a process to claim title to property on the basis of long term occupancy and maintenance. Sovereign citizens claim adverse possession by filing affidavits or liens against the property. Such actions almost never follow state procedures and reference adverse possession in name only. A perception exists, however, that the process is a valid, if well-kept secret.

- (U) Allodial Title Claim

(U) Sovereign citizens claim allodial or “ancient” rights to possess real property through an affidavit that also purports to eliminate current encumbrances and future liabilities. For example, a self-proclaimed sovereign citizen “Indian” tribe may claim title to millions of acres of land solely on the claim that their ancestors settled the area before the establishment of state or federal government.

- (U) Land Patent Fraud

(U) A land patent records the transfer of property from an original owner, such as a regent or government. Sovereign citizens sometimes file documents purporting to “update” original land patents so that the conveyance appears to take place directly from the original owner to current (sovereign citizen) owner. Consequently, the sovereign citizen claims the patent eliminates mortgages, back taxes, and other encumbrances.

- (U) Quiet Title Schemes

(U) Quiet title is a legal action taken to clear a defective property claim or title. Sovereign citizens attempt to leverage this process by fraudulently challenging the owner’s right to title, often through a classified advertisement in a local newspaper that demands the owner produce original lien documents.

- (U) Quitclaim Fraud

(U) A quitclaim deed passes interest a grantor may have in real property without the promise of valid title. Sovereign citizens use quitclaim deeds illicitly in two ways: filing forged deed documents to illegitimately acquire title to a property and filing legitimate quitclaim documents as part of a scheme to fraudulently transfer mortgage debt and cloud ownership.

**(U) Identity Document Fraud**

(U) Sovereign citizens destroy, discard, or stop using official government-issued identification to avoid unwitting adherence contracts with institutions they no longer recognize. When asked to present official identification, these individuals will often claim to have none, or may present documents of their own design and function, such as badges, credentials, identity cards, passports, or right-to-travel documents, etc. These documents range from simple to complex, and may contain realistic looking seals or emblems or even holographic images.



(U) Fraudulent sovereign citizen license plate.

(U) Sovereign citizens occasionally affix fraudulent license plates to vehicles. These may appear to have been sanctioned by unfamiliar republics, tribes, or groups, or may claim diplomatic affiliation. They may reference court cases or the UCC. Some sovereigns affix Department of Transportation (DOT) numbers to their vehicles in lieu of state-issued license plates.

**(U) PART III: RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING****(U) County Sheriffs**

(U) Sheriffs are a top priority for recruitment to sovereign citizen ideology. Extremists draw from the earlier Posse Comitatus tradition that sheriffs hold extraordinary powers due to the fact that elected officials are accountable to the electorate. This is one reason why some sovereign citizens refuse to recognize the authority of unelected local, state, or federal law enforcement officials. Sovereigns may seek out sheriffs to deliver legal notices, participate in common law court proceedings, attend seminars, meetings or otherwise show support.

(U) In practical terms, sovereigns' regard for individual sheriffs breaks down when sheriffs refuse sovereigns' overtures or appear to act against them. On occasion, some sheriffs have been threatened, targeted by common law courts, or been the recipients of vindictive liens.

**(U) Other Law Enforcement and Military Personnel**

(U) Some sovereign citizens view the military with suspicion and claim that military installations are actually staging areas for foreign invasion forces, or that military leaders are behind secret experiments to contaminate the environment with chemicals dispersed from commercial aircraft.

(U) Despite strong anti-government sentiments, they may seek out military personnel in hope of benefiting from their leadership and tactical skills for protection against perceived threats or actions by the government. For example, some sovereigns believe certain authorities, such as the Provost Marshal, will intercede on their behalf during arrest or prosecution by municipal authorities. Others hope that potentially willing military personnel will teach or provide self-defense or combat skills to those in the movement.

(U) Sovereign citizens claim de facto recognition from military authorities by sending affidavits or other documents in the mail, or by presenting sovereign identity documents to facility personnel.



## (U) PART IV: ENCOUNTERS

### (U) Violence

(U) Sovereign citizen ideology does not openly advocate violence; however extremists can choose to interpret their status as sufficient to justify force or violence. According to FBI information, the majority of violent incidents are unplanned and reactive, taking place primarily during traffic stops or during a law enforcement action at a residence.

### (U) Law Enforcement Encounters

(U) Sovereign citizens are characteristically argumentative and uncooperative during traffic stops. They may present odd-looking identification from non-existent states or republics, or claim jurisdictional or diplomatic immunity due to their citizenship status. They may attempt to debate with police officers about “traveling” versus “driving,” or claim they were engaged in a private, non-commercial activity, or that they prefer not to engage in a contractual relationship with the officer. They may quote arcane court decisions as a means to support these opinions or they may ask officers for a copy of their oath of office or request they complete a lengthy questionnaire. Sovereigns sometimes call 911 and request assistance from the sheriff or even military police. They sometimes film encounters or call associates to act in a “witness” capacity. These types of responses are ideologically-based and occur in an effort to confuse or intimidate officials.

(U) When it is apparent such delay tactics have failed, some individuals become confrontational. Although physical altercations and violence are rare, during the period 2002-2014 there were seven incidents involving sovereign citizens and traffic stops in which the subject discharged a weapon or an officer was injured or killed. Upon arrest, sovereign citizens may claim to have been kidnapped and may subsequently mail documentation detailing enormous fines and fictitious charges against arresting officers.

### (U) Sovereign Citizens in the Courtroom

(U) Sovereign citizens have been known to aggressively disrupt courtroom proceedings, reasoning that as non-US citizens such legal actions fail to apply to them, while simultaneously acknowledging that proceedings might apply to their ‘straw’ identities. This is done to sow confusion and doubt – with an ultimate goal of delaying legitimate legal processes.

(U) Common sovereign citizen courtroom tactics include failure to answer to true names and refusing to stand or face the judge. Sovereigns may challenge the authority of the proceedings by claiming that as “flesh-and-blood” or sovereign entities they exist beyond the jurisdiction of the court. Or they may point to the presence of yellow fringe on any United States flag on display as evidence that the court’s powers are limited to maritime jurisdictions only.



(U) Sovereign citizens killed two South Carolina law enforcement officers in December 2003.



(U) Sovereigns claim a US flag with yellow fringe represents maritime law.

(U) Indicators of sovereign citizens in the courtroom include:

- (U) Refusing legal representation by claiming that attorneys are un-versed in the law and therefore demanding the right of self-representation.
- (U) Frivolous attempts by the individual to apply the Uniform Commercial Code to his or her situation.
- (U) Speaking about themselves in the third person, or attempting to explain that they speak only to represent the strawman, who has no voice, but whose name appears—in capital letters—on the indictment or other official paperwork.
- (U) Utilizing frivolous or nonsensical language or arguments, quoting arcane court decisions or making seemingly out-of-place references to fundamental documents such as the Magna Carta or Declaration of Independence.

(U) Contact by a sovereign citizen often begins with documents mailed to the court, which attempt to challenge the legitimacy of charges or proceedings. Mailings may include implicit threats of fines or other actions, including lawsuits, if proceedings are not terminated.

(U) Although instances of violence by sovereign citizens in the courtroom are rare, they sometimes attempt to intimidate court personnel by photographing or recording proceedings in an aggressive manner, by shouting at or questioning court personnel in an menacing manner, or by arriving at court with large numbers of supporters who engage in similar disruptive activities. These actions may result in additional charges such as contempt of court, or physical ejection from the courtroom.



**APPENDIX A – FEDERAL STATUTES**

(U) The following statutes have been used to prosecute sovereign citizen criminals and extremists.

18 USC § 2 (Aiding and abetting)

18 USC § 111 (Assaulting federal officer)

18 USC § 115 (Threats against a federal official)

18 USC § 119 (Criminal Offense for making publicly available “restricted personal information” on a “covered individual” with intent to threaten, intimidate or incite a crime of violence)

18 USC § 371 (Conspiracy)

18 USC § 372 (Conspiracy to impede or injure an officer)

18 USC § 373 (Solicitation to commit a crime of violence)

18 USC § 485 (Similitude to US currency)

18 USC § 486 (Uttering gold and silver coins)

18 USC § 513 (Securities of the state and private entities)

18 USC § 514 (Fictitious obligations)

18 USC § 713 (Use of likeness of the great seal of the United States)

18 USC § 876 (Mailing threatening communication with intent to extort)

18 USC § 912 (False personation of an officer)

18 USC § 915 (False personation of a diplomat)

18 USC § 924 (Carrying & possession of a firearm in connection with a crime of violence)

18 USC § 1017 (Government seal/instruments wrongfully used)

18 USC § 1028 (Fraud and related activity in connection with identification documents, authentication features and information)

18 USC § 1117 (Conspiracy to commit murder)

18 USC § 1341 (Mail fraud)

18 USC § 1343 (Wire fraud)

18 USC § 1344 (Bank fraud)

18 USC § 1521 (Retaliating against a Federal judge or Federal law enforcement officer by false claim or slander of title)

18 USC § 1956 (Money laundering)

18 USC § 1957 (Engaging in monetary transactions in property derived from specified unlawful activity)

18 USC § 2261 (Interstate stalking)

18 USC § 2385 (Felonious police killings)

26 USC § 53 (Machine guns, destructive devices and certain other firearms)

26 USC § 5812 (Illegal transfer of a weapon)

26 USC § 5845 (Possession of a silencer)

26 USC § 5861 (NFA violations)

26 USC § 7201 (Attempt to evade or defeat tax)

26 USC § 7202 (Willful failure to collect or pay over tax)

26 USC § 7206 (Filing false returns)

26 USC § 7212 (Obstructing IRS)

49 USC § 46314 (Entering Aircraft or airport area in violation of security requirements)



