



## **Sovereign Citizens**

Issued July 2014

### **Overview**

(U//FOUO) The anti-government **sovereign citizen movement** has been catapulted into the forefront of public attention due to an increase in criminal activity by sovereign citizens nationwide. The movement consists of individuals and small groups throughout the United States, guided and supported by adherents who share the core belief that Federal, state, and local governments are all illegitimate entities.<sup>1</sup>

(U//FOUO) For the most part, the sovereign citizen movement has been nonviolent, and its adherents have engaged in activities that are not illegal, such as renouncing citizenship and self-identifying as sovereign citizens. However, nationwide there have been individual self-identified sovereign citizens who have displayed extreme and sometimes violent behavior. The most notable violent incident between law enforcement and sovereign citizen extremists was the killing of two police officers by Jerry Kane and his son Joseph during a traffic stop in West Memphis, Arkansas, in May 2010. Although no encounters between sovereign citizens and law enforcement in New Jersey have resulted in death, some individuals who have self-identified during traffic stops or during court proceedings have become physical and/or confrontational during their interaction with law enforcement.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sovereign Citizen Activity**

(U//FOUO) Many believers of the ideology conduct illegal activities, such as debt elimination and redemption,\* document fraud (false passports, birth certificates, and driver's licenses), insurance fraud, money laundering, and residing in foreclosed homes. Many of the tactics used by sovereign citizens are common occurrences in New Jersey, with the exception of seizing foreclosed homes. In at least two incidents in New Jersey in the past three years, sovereign citizens either attempted to seize a home or successfully did so.

- In February 2013, a male identifying himself as a Moorish American National harassed a property owner in Aberdeen Township (Monmouth County) and falsely laid claim to the property.<sup>3</sup>
- In July 2011, Jolanda Bordley-Jackson El, age 41, of Vineland (Cumberland County) was arrested and charged with burglary, theft, criminal simulation, and fraud relating to public records, along with other charges, after she filed a fraudulent deed on a foreclosed home and lived there for three months before being discovered. Jackson self-identified as a member of the Moorish Science Temple.<sup>4</sup>

(U//FOUO) The seizing of homes may have an impact on fire personnel, especially those involved in code enforcement, due to the fact that many sovereign citizens who steal homes then place "Private Property" and "No Trespassing" signs on the property and in some cases threaten to shoot anyone who comes onto the property.<sup>5</sup> While there have been no reported incidents of fire service personnel being targeted or coming in contact with confirmed or suspected sovereign citizens, it is important for them to become knowledgeable about the potential indicators of sovereign citizens and how to report them, using the fire safety reporting process.

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\* (U) Redemption schemes: The claim that the United States went bankrupt when it went off the gold standard in 1933, and that to pay the country's debt, the United States used American citizens as collateral, registering their birth certificates as securities. Sovereign citizens claim that to regain control of these securities, individuals can file paperwork and gain access to the money in their accounts.

**(U//FOUO) Indicators of sovereign citizens include, but are not limited to:**

- Fake or strange license plates or driver's license;
- Unusual modifications to their vehicles, such as placards or signs addressed to government officials;
- Use of unusual language regarding self-identity, such as "freemen," state citizens, non-resident aliens, sovereign citizens, or common law citizens;
- Signs on property directed specifically toward law enforcement or government officials, including homemade "No Trespassing" signs;
- Making references to the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) or common law;

**(U//FOUO) Protective measures when encountering violent sovereign citizens, according to Fire Safety protocol:**

- Maintain total focus on your personal safety;
- Avoid arguing;
- If the situation is not safe, back away and request law enforcement assistance, and advise that you are dealing with a sovereign citizen.

**Reporting Procedures**

(U//FOUO) According to Fire Safety protocol all encounters with Sovereign Citizens should be reported to the Division of Fire Safety at 1 (877)-NJ-FIRE.

(U//FOUO) It is important to note that either career or volunteer members of the fire service may be considered government employees and/or wear uniforms that appear, from a sovereign citizen perspective, to be law enforcement or other local authority. Recognizing the indicators and employing the protective measures will increase your safety, and the safety of other first responders.

(U//FOUO) Any suspicious activity with a possible nexus to terrorism in New Jersey should be reported immediately following existing protocols specific to respective counties. Activity can also be reported to CT Watch, located at the ROIC, at (866) 4SAFENJ (866-472-3365), by dialing 2-1-1, or [Tips@NJHomelandSecurity.gov](mailto:Tips@NJHomelandSecurity.gov).

**PLEASE POST IMMEDIATELY**

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<sup>1</sup> (U//FOUO) OHSP, *New Jersey Terrorism Threat Assessment*, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> (U) New Jersey Suspicious Activity Reporting System

<sup>4</sup> (U) *Press of Atlantic City*, "Women Charged with Stealing House," July 27, 2011. Available at: [http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/press/atlantic/woman-charged-with-forging-deed-to-steal-house-in-mullica/article\\_40d54352-af40-11e0-b540-001cc4c002e0.html](http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/press/atlantic/woman-charged-with-forging-deed-to-steal-house-in-mullica/article_40d54352-af40-11e0-b540-001cc4c002e0.html)

<sup>5</sup> (U) CNN, "FBI: 'Sovereign citizens' fraudulently taking over foreclosed homes," March 8, 2011. Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2011/US/03/08/georgia.sovereign.citizens/>