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Domestic Terrorism The Sovereign Citizen Movement

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Some examples of illegal license plates used by so-called sovereign citizens.

Domestic terrorism—Americans attacking Americans because of U.S.-based extremist ideologies—comes in many forms in our post 9/11 world.

To help educate the public, we've previously outlined two separate domestic terror threats—eco-terrorists/animal rights extremists and lone offenders.

Today, we look at a third threat—the “sovereign citizen” extremist movement. Sovereign citizens are anti-government extremists who believe that even though they physically reside in this country, they are separate or “sovereign” from the United States. As a result, they believe they don't have to

answer to any government authority, including courts, taxing entities, motor vehicle departments, or law enforcement.

This causes all kinds of problems—and crimes. For example, many sovereign citizens don't pay their taxes. They hold illegal courts that issue warrants for judges and police officers. They clog up the court system with frivolous lawsuits and liens against public officials to harass them. And they use fake money orders, personal checks, and the like at government agencies, banks, and businesses.

That's just the beginning. Not every action taken in the name of the sovereign citizen ideology is a crime, but the list of illegal actions committed by these groups, cells, and individuals is extensive (and puts them squarely on our radar). In addition to the above, sovereign citizens:

- Commit murder and physical assault;
- Threaten judges, law enforcement professionals, and government personnel;
- Impersonate police officers and diplomats;
- Use fake currency, passports, license plates, and driver's licenses; and
- Engineer various white-collar scams, including mortgage fraud and so-called “redemption” schemes.

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

During the past year, we've had a number of investigative successes involving sovereign citizens. A few recent cases:

- In Sacramento, two sovereign citizens were convicted of running a fraudulent insurance scheme. Operating outside state insurance regulatory guidelines, the men set up their own company and sold “lifetime memberships” to customers, promising to pay any accident claims against their “members.” The company collected millions of dollars, but paid out very few claims. [More](#)
- In Kansas City, three sovereign citizens were convicted of taking part in a conspiracy using phony diplomatic credentials. They charged customers between \$450 and \$2,000 for a diplomatic identification card, which would bestow upon the holder “sovereign” status—meaning they would enjoy diplomatic immunity from paying taxes and from being stopped or arrested by law enforcement. [More](#)
- In Las Vegas, four men affiliated with the sovereign citizen movement were arrested by the Nevada Joint Terrorism Task Force on federal money laundering, tax evasion, and weapons charges. The investigation involved an undercover operation, with two of the suspects allegedly laundering more than a million dollars from what they believed was a bank fraud scheme. [More](#)

You can help. First, “be crime smart”—don't fall for the bogus claims and scams of sovereign citizens. And second, if you have information on any suspicious activities or crimes, please contact us.

Resources:

- Lone Offenders
- Eco-terrorists and animal rights extremists

- Anarchist extremism

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Domestic Terrorism

- Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration: Fact Sheet on Sovereign Citizen Movement

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