

26 November 2024

D Clampett Trust
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Tēnā koe D Clampett Trust

Request for information

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request of 4 October 2024. You asked for information regarding training, operations, legislation, and policy information.

I note that your request refers to “operations about how to deal with...” The wording implies you consider operations to be a form of training activity, which is not how Police would typically employ that word. The response therefore focuses on the training component of your request.

A response to each part of your request can be found below.

1. *Any training or operations by New Zealand Police on how to deal with Sovereign Citizens?*
2. *Any training or operations about how to deal with members of the public who use common law or natural law?*

Sovereign Citizens’ are widely understood to be members of an international movement that questions the legitimacy of existing legal systems and share a distrust of modern governments.

Police does not receive formal training on how to engage with sovereign citizens, however general guidance is available through Police’s internal staff intranet to increase knowledge and awareness of the sovereign citizen movement.

Please refer to Appendix One for guidance material. Some information has been withheld under section 6(c) of the OIA, as release of this information would likely prejudice the maintenance of the law.

Police recognises the common law which has been developed through judicial decisions.

Common or natural law as generally used/cited by sovereign citizens is not recognised by Police and is not the subject of training at RNZPC therefore your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

3. *Any training or operations about how to deal with members of the public under the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Act 2021 legislation?*

Police does not have specific training created following the enactment of Counter-Terrorism Legislation Act 2021. This Act made significant changes to the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 and the Search and Surveillance Act 2012. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

However, Police has a 30-minute e-Learning module available called "Terrorism and Violent Extremism – Prevention First". This module increases general awareness around terrorism and violent extremism. Staff learn about the definitions, risk and behaviours for radicalisation, terrorism, and violent extremism, how to report, where to go for help and what advice to give to keep our communities safe.

Police is informed by Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 and related legislation, standard prevention, investigation, and prosecution policies and the Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all decision making when preventing, responding to, and investigating terrorism and violent extremism.

4. *If any of those trainings are Police policy, how many are being currently rolled out currently or in the past?*
5. *If any of those trainings or operations are being run, where are these being run and by whom?*
6. *Are any of these trainings or operations a standard of the police college training?*
7. *Have NZ Police adopted policies related to all of the above?*

As per the answers to your questions 1, 2 and 3, Police does not have specific trainings, nor a specific policy on sovereign citizens therefore your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

However, Police does have a policy on Counter Terrorism – investigation and prevention. Staff complete the compulsory e-Learning module Terrorism and Violent Extremism – Prevention First at the commencement of their employment. The e-Learning module was launched on 19 April 2018.

8. *If this training is implemented in policy, who signed this off?*

This policy on Counter Terrorism – investigation and prevention is authorised by the Strategic Tasking and Coordination Governance Group.

Please note that as part of its commitment to openness and transparency, Police proactively releases some information and documents that may be of interest to the public. An anonymised version of this response may be publicly released on the New Zealand Police website.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Inspector Bernadette Boyle-Tiatia
Director - Training
New Zealand Police

Sovereign Citizens

'Sovereign Citizens' (SOVCIT) are members of an international movement that questions the legitimacy of modern governments. SOVCITs try to opt of any obligations to government by claiming that everyday people are 'born free' with natural or 'common law' rights, but give up these rights by entering into contracts with governments. 'Contracts' can include what most citizens consider ordinary items such as driver's licences, but can extend to ignoring rules and laws with which they disagree.

Other SOVCIT adhere to conspiracy theories that recent laws are not valid and will weave elaborate webs of argument about real and fake laws to justify their position.

SOVCIT ideology is not inherently violent, but some SOVCIT will hold other extremist views. In a worst-case scenario SOVCIT could become violent towards NZ Police or other authorities and could be referred to the National Security Persons of Interest (NATSEC POI) team.

Beliefs

SOVCITs tend to adopt a range of complex and overlapping narratives, not all of which are rational. What most SOVCITs have in common is a belief that government and bureaucratic structures are 'corporations'. From this viewpoint 'corporations' are imposter business entities that impose on everyday people, and SOVCITs will create elaborate justifications to avoid participation in them. SOVCITs can often be identified by use of key language and references such as:

- "I am a real person" or "I am a living person/being"
- "I am a freeman of the land"
- "I do not consent to contract"
- "Admiralty Law"
- "Magna Carta" and "Suri Juis"
- "Postmaster General"

SOVCIT documentation is often a blur of "legalese", language and illogical claims to bogus legal status based in SOVCIT narratives.

Organisation

The SOVCIT movement has been active in New Zealand for two decades or more, but has existed in various forms in the US since at least the 1970s.

SOVCITs don't usually form permanent groups or organisations, but can group together around specific interests, concerns, and/or perceived threats. In the worst cases government officials or others can experience ongoing harassment and bullying from SOVCITs via what has been described as "paper terrorism" (where a SOVCIT or group of SOVCITs bombard a target with fake legal or similar documentation). In the worst cases this can severely impact the ability of the official to perform their role or can badly affect the personal life of others.

Adoption of SOVCIT narratives are especially popular among individuals and groups who already feel isolated or oppressed by the government or the actions of its agents (in New Zealand this is especially the case in regard to courts, Police, or the taxation system). In the worst cases vulnerable people, especially the mentally unwell, can adopt or select ideological snippets from the movement to justify a very wide range of irrational and at times criminal behaviour.

National Security Threats?

Because SOVCITs commonly deploy fake information to confuse and misinform, and can use opposition to 'corporations' to justify extreme behaviour, adherents frequently present a danger to themselves or others. Note that while information might be fake, the SOVCIT might genuinely believe it to be true.

Not all SOVCITs are a threat to national security, themselves, or others. Some however will hold attitudes or beliefs that require the individual to be referred to the NATSEC POI team. If you believe this to be the case, please contact [NATSEC POI](mailto:NATSEC_POI) via email at NatSecCT@police.govt.nz

In the US, the Federal Bureau of Investigation classifies "sovereign citizen extremists" as domestic terrorists (for example, Terry Nichols, one of the perpetrators of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, subscribed to a variation of sovereign citizen ideology). In surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015, representatives of US law enforcement ranked the risk of terrorism from the sovereign citizen movement higher than the risk from any other group, including Islamic extremists, militias, racists, and neo-Nazis. The New South Wales Police Force in Australia has also identified sovereign citizens as a potential terrorist threat.

To date no NZ-based SOVCITs have presented as significant a risk as is occurring in the US.

Available Products

SITG have a range of products available if you're wanting or needing to know more about SOVCITS. If you're interested, please contact the team via NIC.SITG@police.govt.nz

- NIC – IN – Extremist Profile for Sovereign Citizens in New Zealand
- NIC – IN – 240411 – Home Guard Global
- NIC – IN – 230530 Update – Sovereign Citizens in New Zealand
- NIC-KP-220505 Sovereign Citizen activity followup
- NIC-IN-220225-Maori and Sovereign Citizens
- NIC-IN-220413 Emerging Sovereign Citizen Events
- NIC-IN-210618 Recent Allodial Law Claims REDACTED

Products that relate to *likely* inactive Sovereign Citizen groups:

- NIC-IN-202009010 Sovereign Citizens - the Māori Ranger Security Division
- NIC-IN-201224 The Mauri Nation

Alerts for Sovereign Citizens

The Security Intelligence and Threats groups has established a NIA alert to help warn staff when they're likely to be dealing with a SOVCIT. Further details on what to look for and the process can be found [here](#).

Security Intelligence and Threats Group

The Sovereign Citizen (SOVCIT) movement is gaining traction in New Zealand. It's been around for a long time, but recently we're seeing growing numbers of New Zealanders who claim fake "common law" rights to avoid government authority and everyday legal obligations.

Security Intelligence and Threats Group

(SITG) have established a NIA alert to help warn staff when they're likely to be dealing with a SOVCIT. This alert warns a NIA user that a person has been identified as a SOVCIT, and links back to this page.

A big part of SOVCIT behaviour can be described as 'harmless but annoying', and there is the possibility that you've encountered them without realising. These are the drivers who present a bogus "sea pass", or "travel pass" (example above) instead of a driver's licence, or others who mail pretend legal documentation to government agencies, city councils, or Stations and insist that it is genuine.

If you think you've been dealing with a SOVCIT, add relevant details to a NIA record and let SITG know. We'll assess your information, and where appropriate add an alert that will hopefully make things easier for the next staff member who deals with the person.

The sort of information we'd need in the NIA record is simple: indications that the person is providing documents containing SOVCIT 'legalese', refusal to comply with lawful orders and instead producing bogus documentation, or making specific claims about being a 'freeman of the land/'Living being/man/woman' or similar.

Some key notes:

- Only some SOVCIT are violent, most are simply annoying
- There is no legal basis whatsoever for the vast majority of SOVCIT claims such "diplomatic immunity"
- While SOVCIT documentation presents as gibberish, it has its own internal logic, and they often include key details such as their real name and date of birth, so are worth scanning.



Te Kara o Te Whakaminenga o Nga Hapu o Nu Tireni, often called He Whakaputanga

- *Te Kara o Te Whakaminenga o Nga Hapu o Nu Tireni*, the 1835 flag, is extremely popular with SOVCITs, but there is no real link between the SOVCITs and the Māori Sovereignty/Tino Rangatiratanga movement.

Last modified: 11/07/2024