

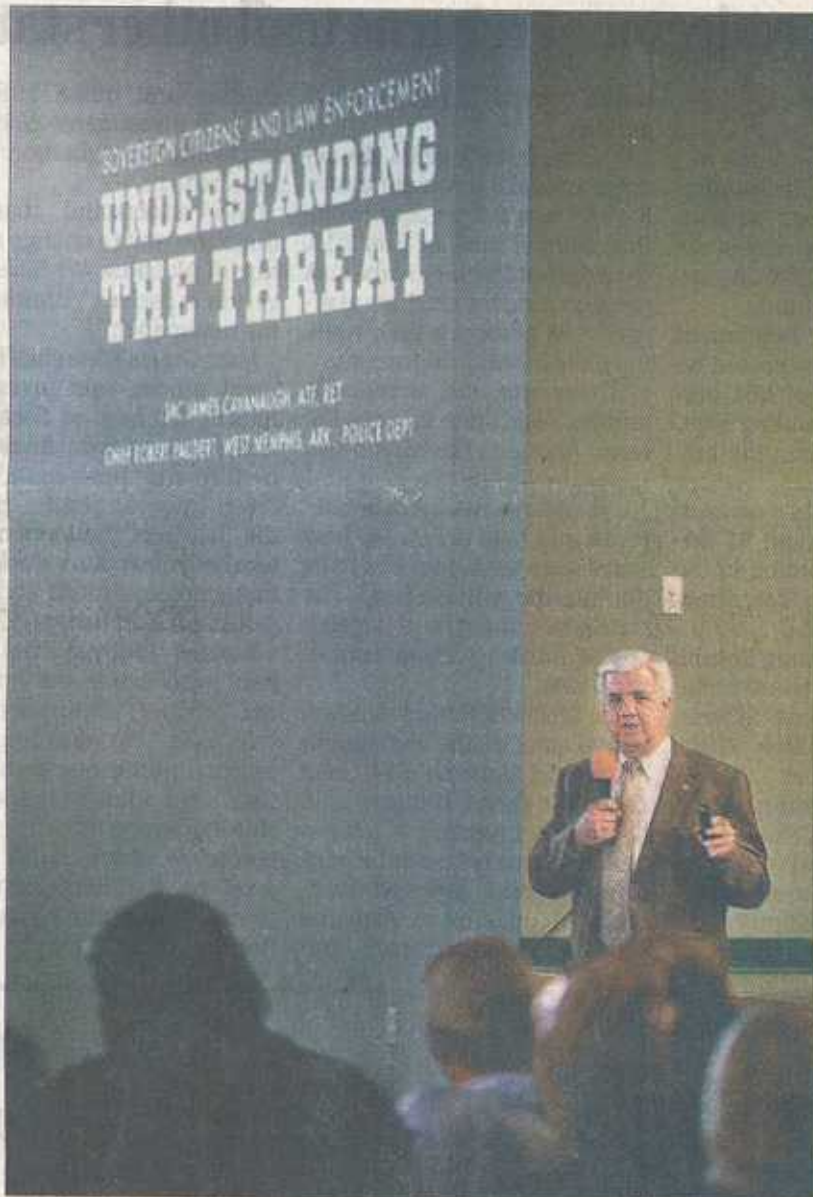
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# DOTHMAN EAGLE

## Law Enforcement Seminar

# Former police chief addresses threat of sovereign citizens



Bob Paudert, retired police chief of West Memphis, Ark., speaks to a group of local law enforcement officers about how to deal with sovereign citizens during a patrol stop at a seminar inside the Maple Avenue Baptist Church fellowship hall in Geneva on Friday afternoon.

'They've become a serious problem in our country'

BY GREG PHILLIPS  
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When West Memphis, Ark., police officer Bill Evans pulled over what looked to be a church van with a father and son in the front seat, he didn't have a reason to be concerned for his safety.

Just minutes later, Evans and fellow officer Brandon Paudert lay dead, gunned down by the passenger, 16-year-old Joe Kane, after a brief skirmish with his father, Jerry, who identified himself as a sovereign citizen.

Brandon's father, former West Memphis Police Chief Bob Paudert, has watched the dashboard video of the incident over and over again since that day in May of last year.

Now he tours the country advising law enforcement officers how to deal with people who claim to be sovereign citizens.

"They've become a serious problem in our country," Paudert said at Friday's Wiregrass Law Enforcement Seminar in Geneva. "What I tell officers is these sovereigns are just as dangerous as international terrorists."

Paudert said there is little difference between the sovereigns, who he deemed radical Christian terrorists, and radical Islamic terrorists.

"These people combine their beliefs with religion," he said. "They believe it's OK to kill a police officer, not to pay taxes, to give your mortgage up, to not register your vehicle. And then they'll quote scriptures from the Bible. That is a dangerous combination, and most law enforcement officers are still unaware of the dangers."

Such was the case for Paudert's son on the

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# Seminar

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day he was gunned down. "Brandon was shot 14 times and Bill was shot 11 times by a 16-year-old kid," Paudert said. "How does this kid get a drop on two veteran officers? The trick they used is they were in a church van with a Bible in the front seat. They mixed religion with their beliefs, just like international terrorists. When Brandon and Bill saw they

had a church van stopped, a father and son connected with this church in Ohio, being killed was the last thing in their minds. They produce documents that aren't worth the paper they're printed on. The van in this particular case was registered to "The Kingdom of Heaven."

The problem is a growing one locally, according to Wiregrass law enforcement agencies.

"We didn't realize it, but they are right under our nose," said Houston County Sheriff's Chief

Deputy Donald Valenza. "We really didn't have any idea what sovereigns were. When Chief Paudert's son and the other officer were killed, it sort of opened everyone's eyes. In Houston, Dale, Coffee, Geneva, Covington and Pike (counties), we have approximately 70. Are all of them violent? I'm not going to say they are. But from the past, I think history and the statistics show some of that. I think there have been 32 officers killed through acts similar to aggressions

of the sovereigns." Valenza said agencies are working to document the sovereign citizens to identify them as possible threats.

"It's a group that doesn't believe in the government, so Sheriff Hughes wanted us to build a databank so if we ever encounter any we will have intel and we'll be advised before you really have to deal with it," Valenza said. "We're trying to get a better idea how to protect these officers from having to face off with these people and

not knowing who they are. We're not targeting them, but we're paying attention to who they are."

Paudert said knowledge is power when it comes to dealing with sovereigns.

"If somebody in law enforcement were to stop (a sovereign), that puts their life at risk," he said. "(Joe Kane) was never involved in any dialogue with the officers at all until he jumped out, and I think it was planned. That's what's so dangerous. An officer at night in these rural areas,

they do not need to stop a sovereign by themselves. They need backup in every single case."

Paudert said he actually agrees with some of the beliefs of sovereign citizens, but they take those beliefs too far.

"I think the government is too involved in our business," he said. "I think our taxes are too high. But I don't go and withdraw my citizenship from this country, and I don't advocate going around killing police officers. They are extremists."

## FROM THE FRONT & LOCAL