

State opens inquiry into fire investigator deputized by Spangler

Tyler Whetstone

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A state agency that enforces training standards for Tennessee law enforcement officers is investigating the Knox County Sheriff's Office, Knox News has learned.

Investigators have requested the dispatch logs of Knox County Sheriff's officer "U521," which is the radio call sign used by fire investigator Jerry Glenn.

The request comes after a Knox News investigation published in January revealed Glenn participated in an armed raid on a business in September 2021 without the required certification.

A member of the Tennessee Post Officer Standards and Training Commission requested the records from Knox County 911. Glenn's dispatch record would show which calls he has responded to.

Kevin Walters, spokesperson for the state Department Commerce and Insurance, confirmed the investigation in an email to Knox News.

"The POST Commission is investigating the information it received as part of a media inquiry and the subsequent published information, including a video posted

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online,” he wrote. “Upon conclusion of the investigation, staff will present their report to commissioners in a public meeting of the POST Commission.”

Glenn is not a certified police officer, according to state records, meaning he lacks credentials from the POST Commission, which develops and enforces training for officers statewide. The training is commonly referred to as POST certification, and requires graduation from an accredited police academy.

Glenn wore a bulletproof vest labeled with “SHERIFF” in bright yellow lettering on the back during the 2021 raid. Video obtained by Knox News shows him pointing his gun into nooks and crannies of the warehouse space, helping to clear the building.

His participation startled former and current sheriff’s office employees. They told Knox News it’s an insult to the men and women who have earned the proper certifications to allow an unqualified person like Glenn in that type of law enforcement action. Most important, they say, it’s dangerous to the community and other deputies.

Glenn was deputized by the newly elected Sheriff Tom Spangler in February 2019. Before he was appointed to the sheriff’s office, Glenn worked nearly two decades in real estate. Prior to that he was a paramedic and firefighter for Rural Metro. He and his wife, sheriff’s office spokesperson Kimberly Glenn, donated nearly \$5,000 to Spangler’s 2018 campaign, which she helped run.

Spangler is deeply familiar with the requirements of POST certification: he’s been a member of the POST commission board since shortly after he was elected.

Kimberly Glenn, in her role as spokesperson for the sheriff’s office, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Jerry Glenn lacks all sorts of policing training

Jerry Glenn is permitted by state law to carry a firearm. Additionally, the sheriff may allow any deputized employee to carry a handgun so long as that person has completed at least eight hours’ worth of a firearm training pro-

gram each year.

Those deputized employees do not have to be POST certified, meaning they don’t have to go through a police academy, as long as they are not participating in “law enforcement work.”

This is the issue for Glenn. He’s permitted to carry a firearm as a fire investigator and a deputized employee. But he lacks the POST certification required to participate in what state statutes describes as “law enforcement work,” such as participating in armed raids.

Knox News examined Glenn’s training file. It contains records of continued firearm training, noted by his annual firearm qualification form, though he had to retake the exam in 2023 because he failed on his first try, according to his file.

Further, the state statute that allows fire investigators to carry a firearm explains the purpose: so fire investigators can “protect their own lives” and to help with “investigating cases of arson or suspected arson.”

Glenn was not using his weapon in a defensive manner during the raid and the sting had nothing to do with suspected arson.

“If an individual is working as fire inspector/marshal/arson investigator, an individual would not have to POST certification,” Kevin Walters, spokesperson for the state Department of Commerce and Insurance, explained to Knox News in an email.

“If the individual is working in a law-enforcement capacity (i.e. prevention, detection of crime and apprehension of offenders) an individual is required to be certified if the person is working more than 20 hours a week/100 hours a month.”

Glenn worked 40 hours the week of the raid and had been working 40 hours a week since at least February, according to his attendance record. He wasn’t promoted to a full-time role until December 2021 despite the full-time hours he was logging.

Tyler Whetstone is an investigative reporter focused on accountability journalism. Connect with Tyler by emailing him at tyler.whetstone@knoxnews.com. Follow him on X, formerly known as Twitter, @tyler_whetstone.

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