

Jerry Glenn was a real estate agent when he made a big donation to Sheriff Tom Spangler's 2018 campaign. In September 2021, Glenn appears in a video clad in body armor and brandishing a handgun during a sting operation. He's not state certified to do police work, and other officers say his participation in a high-risk operation is dangerous. *PAGE 10A*

# PLAYING THE ROLE OF COP



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### PLAYING THE ROLE OF COP



Officer body camera footage shows Knox County Sheriff's Office fire investigator Jerry Glenn during a 2021 raid on what law enforcement agencies allege was a catalytic converter theft operation. PROVIDED

# Campaign donor ends up on force

## Sheriff's office conducts armed raid with member who isn't state certified

**Tyler Whetstone** Knoxville News Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

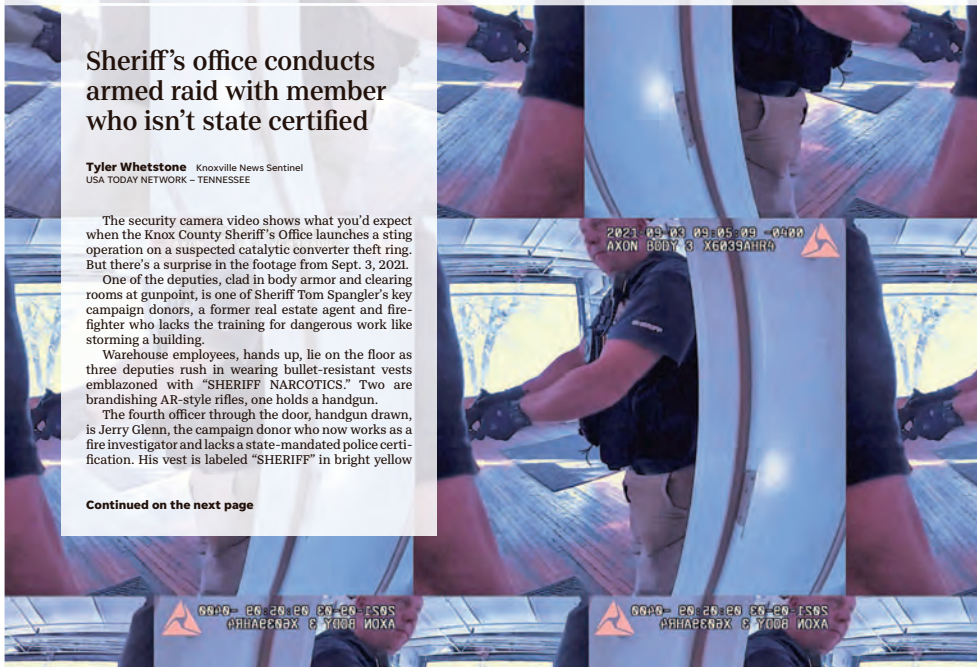
The security camera video shows what you'd expect when the Knox County Sheriff's Office launches a sting operation on a suspected catalytic converter theft ring. But there's a surprise in the footage from Sept. 3, 2021.

One of the deputies, clad in body armor and clearing rooms at gunpoint, is one of Sheriff Tom Spangler's key campaign donors, a former real estate agent and firefighter who lacks the training for dangerous work like storming a building.

Warehouse employees, hands up, lie on the floor as three deputies rush in wearing bullet-resistant vests emblazoned with "SHERIFF NARCOTICS." Two are brandishing AR-style rifles, one holds a handgun.

The fourth officer through the door, handgun drawn, is Jerry Glenn, the campaign donor who now works as a fire investigator and lacks a state-mandated police certification. His vest is labeled "SHERIFF" in bright yellow

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# PLAYING THE ROLE OF COP



Members of the Knox County Sheriff's Office raid a building in 2021 looking for evidence of a catalytic converter theft operation. PROVIDED PHOTOS



An officer's body camera shows members of the Knox County Sheriff's Office at a 2021 raid.



Security camera footage from the owner of a building shows members of the Knox County Sheriff's Office during a raid sparked by an investigation into stolen catalytic converters. One member of the raid was fire investigator Jerry Glenn, who is not a certified officer.



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lettering on the back. Glenn points his gun into nooks and crannies of warehouse space, helping to clear the building.

His participation startled former and current sheriff's office employees who told Knox News it's an insult to the men and women who have earned the proper certifications to allow a person like Glenn on a scene like this.

Most important, they say, it's dangerous to the community and other deputies.

## Glenn is not state certified

Glenn is not a certified police officer, according to state records, meaning he lacks credentials from the Tennessee Post Officer Standards and Training 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 was deputized by newly elected Sheriff Tom Spangler in February 2019. 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.

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.

Spangler named Jerry's wife, Kimberly Glenn, the sheriff's office spokesperson after she successfully helped steer his first campaign. She also worked in real estate before joining the sheriff's office.

The Glens donated nearly \$5,000 to Spangler for his 2018 run for sheriff, or roughly 2% of Spangler's total campaign chest, according to campaign finance records.

As a fire investigator deputized by Spangler, Jerry Glenn was given a badge and a gun without going through the sheriff's office training academy or attaining POST certification. Kimberly Glenn, who fielded questions about her husband's qualification in her role as sheriff's office spokesperson, told Knox News that fire investigators are part of the property crime unit that led the raid that day.

## Glenn lacks all sorts of training

As a fire investigator, 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 program a 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 par-

Officer body camera footage shows Knox County Sheriff's Office fire investigator Jerry Glenn during a 2021 raid on what the agency suspects is a catalytic converter theft operation.

ticipating 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 the law 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 way 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 worked well over 100 hours that month, according to a copy of his attendance record.

It's noteworthy that Glenn wasn't promoted to a full-time role at the sheriff's office until December 2021, but had been working 40 hours a week since at least February, according to his attendance record.

Walters declined to answer questions about whether an armed raid would be considered "law enforcement capacity" or whether an individual would have to surpass 20 hours a week of "law enforcement capacity" work before they are required to be POST certified or just have to work more than 20 hours total.

"This individual's role in this raid was established by his employer at KCISO, not POST," Walters wrote. "Therefore, the proper source for information about this matter is the sheriff's office."

The sheriff's office declined to make Jerry Glenn or Spangler available for comment. Kimberly Glenn declined to answer a list of questions from Knox News, citing ongoing litigation involving the raid.

Those questions include the following:

- Can you make Jerry Glenn and/or Sheriff Tom Spangler available for an interview about the September 2021 sheriff's office raid on the catalytic converter theft ring and Glenn's qualifications to participate in it?
- State law permits fire investigators to carry firearms to "protect their own lives" and to help with "investigating cases of arson or suspected arson." The raid on the catalytic converter theft ring in September 2021 did not regard suspected arson. Why did Jerry Glenn participate in the raid?
- Can you provide the state statutes that show Jerry Glenn is allowed to participate in an armed raid like the one on the catalytic converter theft ring in September 2021?
- Deputies who spoke with me told me they are unsafe and the community is unsafe when noncertified officers participate in law enforcement functions like armed raids. Does the sheriff agree? Why or why not? Does Jerry Glenn agree? Why or why not?

## Deputies: Glenn shouldn't have been there

Gabe Mullinax worked at the Knox County Sheriff's Office for nearly 25 years when he left for a position at George Washington University's Police Department in 2022. He was a lieutenant on scene at the September 2021 theft ring but did not participate in the raid itself. He told Knox News it was unsafe to allow Glenn to participate in the raid.

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An undated photo of the warehouse on Valgro Road in South Knox County that was the site of a Knox County Sheriff's Office raid in September 2021.



## PLAYING THE ROLE OF COP

### Force

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The training officers receive in academy classes, he said, is wide-ranging, including crisis intervention, use of force guidelines, firearms usage, communications and legal standards.

"When officers are put on the streets without these POST requirements and the proper understanding of the laws they are expected to enforce, rights are violated and the community ultimately pays the price.

"At a minimum," he continued, "it's an insult to officers who have done the training, suffered through the blood, sweat, tears and taken the time away from their families to earn the right to wear the badge."

Mullinax is not the only law enforcement officer who questioned Glenn's role in the raid. A current Knox County Sheriff's Office deputy with nearly two decades of experience said Glenn is a liability to everyone involved when he participates in police work.

"Anyone that has not attended a POST certified academy with the minimum training that they receive in building clearing and weapons tactics, to include defensive tactics and arrest procedures is a danger not only to the community but for the people we're attempting to take into custody as well as their fellow officers," the deputy said. Knox News is not naming the person because they fear retaliation for talking publicly about one of Spangler's close associates.

### What was Glenn doing there?

Jerry previously worked for Rural Metro as a firefighter and paramedic. He left in 2002 due to medical reasons, according to his sheriff's office personnel file.

The sheriff's office declined to provide body camera footage of the raid, but in a collection of videos obtained by Knox News shows Glenn is the only fire investigator who came through the door of the

warehouse, gun drawn.

Knox News obtained a roster of employees who were on scene. The sheriff's office's other fire investigator, Aaron Allen, is listed, though he did not participate in the raid itself, according to video footage we reviewed.

Three members of the Knoxville Fire Department also are listed on the roster. The three men showed up two hours after the raid began as hazmat handlers at the request of the sheriff's office due to some unknown chemicals found at the warehouse, fire department spokesperson Mark Wilbanks told Knox News.

### Glenn did not have body camera turned on during raid

The roster of employees obtained by Knox News also includes notations for provided body cam video from the raid. Jerry Glenn is listed as creating one body cam video.

Security footage and other body camera footage obtained by Knox News of the raid shows Glenn clearly wearing a body camera while inside the warehouse. The only footage from a camera likely to be Glenn's, however, shows events only after the armed portion of the raid was complete.

The video is from 30 minutes after the raid began as the person is on the periphery of a conversation another deputy is having with a woman in handcuffs.

The sheriff's office general order governing body cameras says the devices are to remain powered on and that deputies could be subject to disciplinary action for failing to activate the cameras.

**Security footage and other body camera footage obtained by Knox News of the raid shows Glenn clearly wearing a body camera while inside the warehouse. The only footage from a camera likely to be Glenn's, however, shows events only after the armed portion of the raid was complete.**

### Glenn's previous reprimand

Jerry Glenn was previously reprimanded for his role in an incident involving two off-duty detectives who got into fight after drinking in the Old City. The scuffle happened in April 2019, two months after Glenn was appointed by Spangler.

Brad Hall was a captain when he drove an unmarked sheriff's office Chevrolet Tahoe to go drinking with Lt. Denver Scalf III. Later, as the two were leaving, they got into a scuffle when Scalf tried to stop Hall from driving home.

Hall's wife called Kimberly Glenn for help to get him home safely. The Glenns and David Amburn, a captain in the narcotics division at the time, kept quiet about the incident for months instead of reporting the misconduct to their bosses as required by sheriff's office policy.

Hall, who is currently running as a Republican for an open Knox County Commission seat, was demoted. The Glenns and Amburn received reprimands.

### About the raid

The raid was the compilation of a monthslong probe – codenamed "Converter Crush" – that investigated stolen catalytic converters. It concentrated on a warehouse on Chapman Highway in South Knox County suspected as the site of many of the purchases of the catalytic converters.

In all, eight people were arrested at multiple addresses and charged with a range of felonies dealing with money laundering and theft. Over two years later, most of the men have reached plea agreements on the bulk of their charges.

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## National effort is helping to preserve Black churches

**Tamia Fowlkes**

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee's Mount Carmel Missionary Baptist Church is one of 31 historically Black churches selected for a Preserving Black Churches grant by the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.

The \$4 million investment seeks to maintain the cultural history of Black churches across the United States by equipping them with funding to address urgent and ongoing threats to facility preservation. Each church will receive \$50,000 to \$200,000.

Recognizing Black churches' role as sacred community landmarks and areas of refuge for poor and vulnerable populations, the Preserving Black Churches initiative has offered funds to address deferred maintenance, water filtration, mold contamination and other issues since 2022. Since its establishment, the fund has provided more than \$9.8 million in grants to 80 Black churches.

"Black churches have been at the forefront of meaningful democratic reform since this nation's founding. They're a living testament to the resilience of our ancestors in the face of unimaginably daunting challenges," said Henry Louis Gates Jr., historian and adviser to the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. "The heart of our spiritual world is the Black church. These places of worship, these sacred cultural centers, must exist for future generations to understand who we were as a people."

Mount Carmel Missionary Baptist Church broke ground on its sanctuary in 1973. Built with the architectural guidance of Alonzo Robinson Jr., Wisconsin's first registered Black architect, the church was established as a welcoming space for Milwaukee residents to embark on their faith journey.

For five decades, the church has welcomed parishioners for weekly services, Bible study and holiday celebrations while serving as a beacon of light for Milwaukeeans by providing local residents with community and prayer.