

STREET SMARTS: NECK KNIVES—YOUR LIFE-SAVER BACK-UP!

www.tacticalknives.com

TACTICAL KNIVES

THE CUTTING EDGE OF SURVIVAL

JAN 2004

FIRST LOOK!

MERCWORX 'SNIPER' BATTLE BLADE

**TAKING DEAD AIM
AT TACTICAL DUTY!**

**Ontario's TAK
Survival Blade**

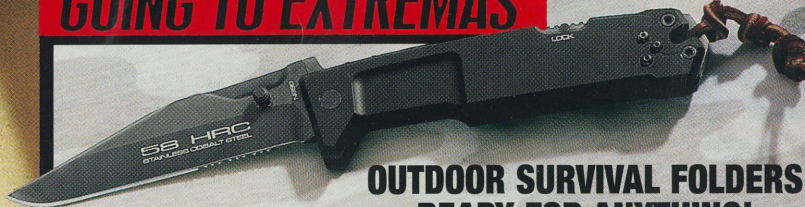
**IT'LL BRING
YOU BACK
ALIVE!**

**NEW SPYDERCO
POLICE MODEL
IS BEST YET!**

**DIGGING INTO
DANGER!
Fallkniven MC1
Clears Afgan
Mines**

**New! TIM WEGNER
FOLDING
HUNTER
FOR PROS!**

GOING TO EXTREMAS



Extrema M.P.C.

**OUTDOOR SURVIVAL FOLDERS
READY FOR ANYTHING!**

BIG BLADES FOR THE TRAIL
Backcountry Expert Says 'No'
To Small And Thin

HAWK-BILLED KARAMBITS INVADE U.S.!
Why These Asian Blades Are Hot Now



\$6.95 \$8.95 CAN

Display Until December 1, 2003

ON THE COVER
ON THE COVER

Mercworx

THE SNIPER & FRIENDS

Led by names like Sniper, Equatorian & Vorax, the Mercworx line of tactical knives consists of serious blades for serious tasks.

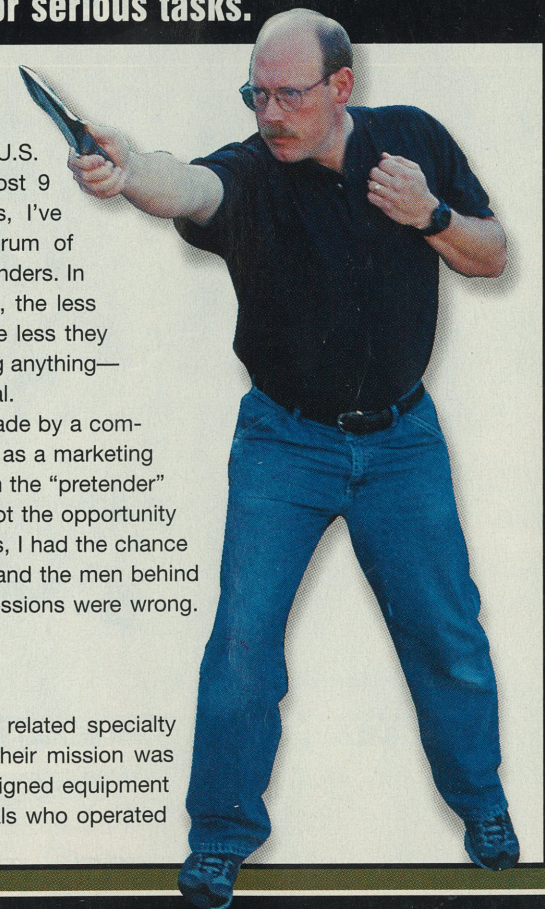
BY MICHAEL JANICH

After 15 years of service in the U.S. intelligence community and almost 9 years working for Paladin Press, I've been exposed to a wide spectrum of spooks, kooks, players and pretenders. In the process, I've learned that in general, the less people say about what they do—and the less they emphasize the fact that they're not saying anything—the more likely they are to be the real deal.

When I first saw the ads for knives made by a company called Mercworx, I dismissed them as a marketing ploy and mentally logged the company in the "pretender" category. Several months later, when I got the opportunity to review their product for Tactical Knives, I had the chance to learn a lot more about their products and the men behind them. I also realized that my initial impressions were wrong. These guys, and their knives, are for real.

18 Years in The Business

Mercworx began making knives and related specialty gear about 18 years ago. At that time their mission was simple—to provide reliable, purpose-designed equipment to a select group of security professionals who operated



The Mercworx Chile Pepper-handled Sniper is an outstanding all-around field knife for the combat soldier.

The large and the small of it. Top knife, the Mercworx Equatorian. Bottom, the Vorax. Both feature the new Chili Pepper handle.



The Mercworx Sniper breezed through field chores like chopping through this seasoned maple branch.



The broad blade profile of the Sniper is intended to create a large wound channel. To evaluate this, the author performed thrusting tests on a dense foam mannequin torso.

primarily in Central Africa. Based on their extensive field experience, these guys knew what they needed in a field knife. They also knew that the features and uncompromising quality they required were not available in any standard production knives. The only solution was to combine their experience-based design requirements with the skills of custom craftsmen to create the knives they needed. The result was the birth of Mercworx.

For the first 17 years of its existence, Mercworx was content to cater exclusively to its specialized clientele. Inquiries from outside their exclusive community were

politely referred elsewhere. However, good news—or at least news of good equipment—travels fast. It wasn't long before other armed professionals got the word and wanted to add Mercworx products to their kits. As the number of "good guys" inquiring about their products grew, Mercworx decided it was time to make their knives publicly available. Company policy still dictates that serious users have priority over collectors, but the good news is that Mercworx knives are now available to everyone.

Six Standard Fixed Blades

The Mercworx line currently consists of six standard models. The massive Equatorian and smaller Sniper and Vorax are all spearpoint designs that boast partial hollow grinds, thick spines, and long, sharp false edges. The Shiva is a broad, stout dagger, and the Seraphym is a slick little double-edged push dirk. According to the Mercworx representative I interviewed, a seventh fixed blade design and three folders called "The Three Fates" are also in the works and will be released shortly.

If you're already familiar with the Mercworx line, you may be wondering why I did not mention their well-known Archangel design. The reason is that the Archangel has been renamed the Vorax. Vorax was the call

sign of a Mercworx associate who was recently killed in action and the knife was renamed in honor of their fallen comrade.

All Mercworx knives are handmade by one of the five talented craftsmen that currently comprise the Mercworx production team. Each maker is fully capable of producing every knife in the Mercworx line, and to ensure the highest quality control, each knife is made start to finish by a single craftsman. All blades are meticulously hand-ground from either 154CM or S30V stainless and professionally heat-treated to a Rockwell 58C. All Mercworx models are full-tang designs with slab handles of smoothly finished canvas Micarta. The handle pieces are attached with flared tubular steel "rivets" and a special silicon-based adhesive instead of epoxy. The tubular rivets can serve as lanyard holes and allow the knife to be lashed to a branch or pole to serve as an improvised spear. The silicon-based adhesive was chosen because of its ability to expand and contract with the materials it joins. This guarantees a permanent bond, even during operations involving extreme temperature fluctuations—such as the transition from the below-freezing upper atmosphere temperatures at the

For the purposes of this evaluation, Mercworx provided one of their popular Sniper models with the optional chili pepper handle. Measuring an imposing 13 inches overall and weighing a hefty 16-7/8 ounces, the Sniper is, in a word, stout. Ground from .250-inch-thick stock—in this case S30V—this knife design retains its full thickness throughout the entire handle area, ricasso, and spine. Despite its massive construction, the Sniper balances perfectly right behind the guard at the index finger and feels amazingly light in the hand.

The craftsmanship of the Sniper is equal to some of the finest handmade knives I've seen, featuring clean, precise grind lines and an attractive satin finish. Although some might scoff at the idea of a brightly finished combat blade, as correctly pointed out on the Mercworx website, polished blades are actually easier to maintain than coated or bead-blasted ones and therefore make a better field knife. More importantly, despite all the hype to the contrary, very few soldiers these days "remove" sentries with knives and there are no documented cases where a bright blade spoiled an op due to reflected light (when you consider the number of bright-

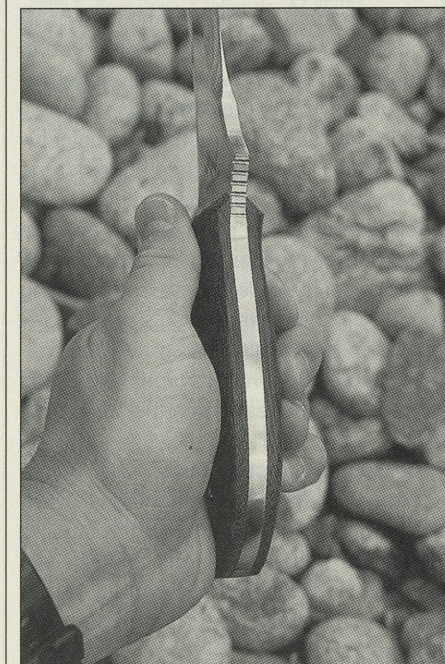
“Despite its massive construction, the Sniper balances perfectly right behind the guard at the index finger and feels amazingly light in the hand.”

beginning of a HALO op to the blazing desert heat at the end of the op.

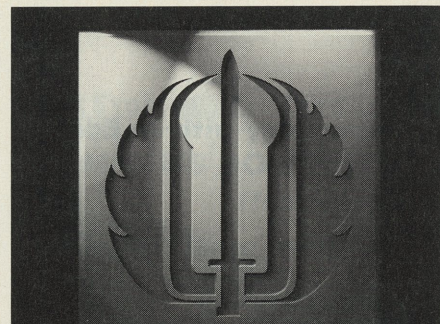
In addition to their standard handle designs, most Mercworx knives are also available with an optional "chili pepper" handle. This sinuous handle shape features a tapered butt and a pronounced palm swell that shifts the balance of the knife back toward the hand, providing a more "alive" feel in the hand.

Tactical Tools Sheaths

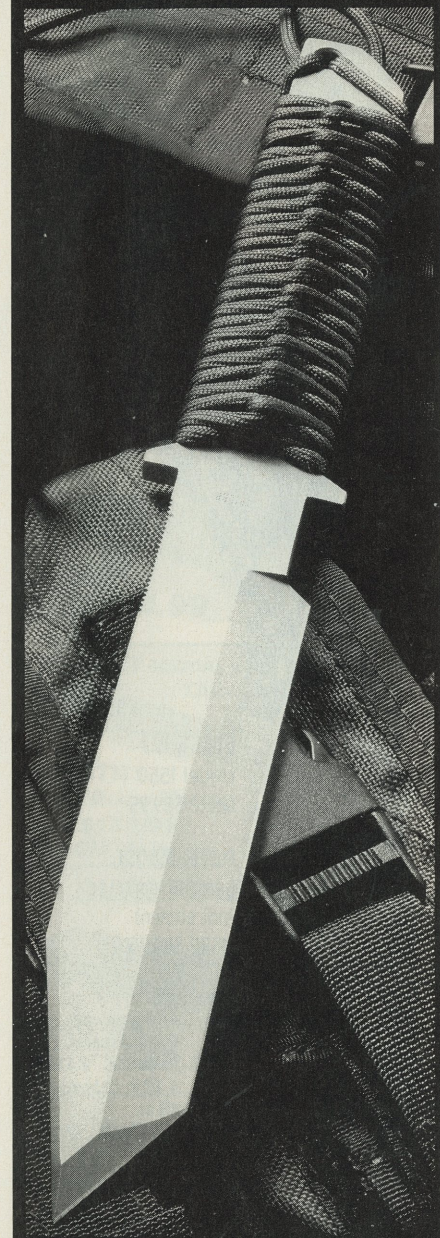
Serious tools require a serious home when not in use; therefore all Mercworx knives are supplied with custom-designed sheaths from Tactical Tools. These hand-crafted sheaths are made from an outer shell of black ballistic nylon and feature an inner liner of molded Kydex. Adaptable for either high- or low-ride carry on the belt, these excellent sheaths can also be mounted to load-bearing equipment and feature a handy outside pocket to carry a sharpening stone, multi-tool, or even a pistol magazine.



All Mercworx designs are overbuilt to be extremely strong and feature full-tang construction.



**HIGH SPEED TOOLS
FOR hardcore
INDIVIDUALS**



TEL: (760) 471-8275
STRIDERGUYS@STRIDERKNIVES.COM
WWW.STRIDERKNIVES.COM

PHOTO BY: ICHIRO NAGATA

NEMESIS



MODEL: NEMESIS
DESTINATION: multipurpose
TOTAL LENGTH: 260 mm (10,23")
BLADE: 115 mm (4,52")
WEIGHT: 225 gr (7,93 oz.)
BL. THICKNESS: 6 mm (0,23")
BL. MATERIAL: Stainless cobalt steel N690
HANDLE: Anticorodal

EXTREMA RATIO
DIVISION KNIVES
MADE IN ITALY

V.le Montegrappa, 298 59100 - PRATO (PD) ITALY - TEL. ++39 +574 584639 - FAX ++39 +574 581312 - www.extremaratio.com

Technology with an Edge

The Technology. Kershaw's Ken Onion Blackout

- The Edge**.....
- Speed-Safe assisted-opening mechanism
 - Sleek, black ti-nitride coating
 - Ergonomic design
 - Kershaw's "shaving-sharp" edge
 - Lifetime guarantee



Blackout
ti-nitride
coating
1999
Best-Buy
of the
Year



BLACKOUT
Model 1550
MSRP \$89.95

Model 1550SST
partially serrated
(not shown)
MSRP \$89.95

Blade.....3 1/4 in. (8.4 cm.)
Steel.....440A stainless,
ti-nitride-coated
Handle...Polyamide
Closed....4 1/2 in. (11.3 cm.)
Weight...3.5 oz.

kershaw
Ken/Onion USA

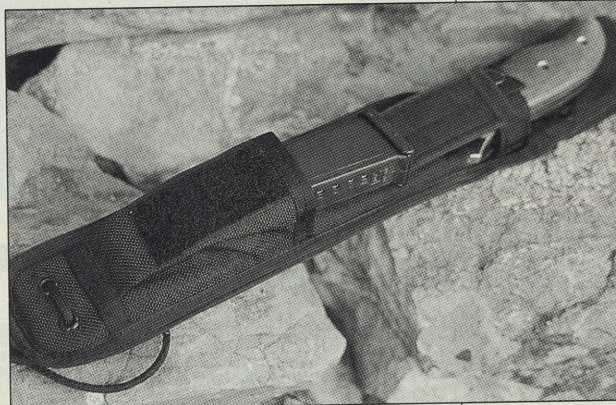
For information or a dealer near you, call:
1-800-325-2891
www.kershawknives.com

bladed Randalls that have gone to war over the years, this makes sense). On the contrary, the large flat "land" area of the Sniper makes a very effective signal mirror—a function that has proven effective and valuable in the field.

Since the Sniper is touted as a fighting knife as well as an all-purpose field knife, I first tested it with that application in mind. Against denim-covered cutting targets made of rolled closed-cell foam and newspaper, the Sniper cut very well with both its primary and false edges. Because of its hefty weight, it was most effective with power strokes and snap cuts, but with practice, it also back cut very well.

The Flared Blade Tip

One of the distinctive features of Mercworx designs is the inclusion of a broad, flared tip. Its purpose is to create a larger, more devastating wound channel when the knife is used to thrust. To evaluate this, I tried the Sniper out on a dense foam



Mercworx knives are supplied with Kydex-lined sheaths from Tactical Tools. The author found that the outer pocket of the sheath makes a handy place to store an extra pistol magazine.

mannequin torso donated to me by a good friend and Martial Blade Craft student. Although firmer than living flesh, the resistance of the torso provided an extremely realistic simulation of thrusting into an actual adversary. The dual cutting edges of the Sniper did their job exceedingly well, enabling the knife to penetrate an average of six inches into the target with a close-range, uppercut-style thrust. The resulting wound cavities were as advertised—impressive. For more realism, I also covered the torso with various types of clothing and repeated the tests, with the same devastating results.

During my thrusting tests, I also noted that the nicely radiused integral guard surfaces of the Sniper, along with the tapered butt of the handle, provided an excellent purchase for the hand, allowing full-power commitment without fear of the hand sliding onto the blade.

Satisfied with its function as a weapon, I then set about testing the Sniper on a variety of utilitarian tasks, including cutting

rope, nylon webbing, canvas, and cardboard. Its shaving-sharp out-of-the-box edges performed very well and maintained their sharpness throughout the tests.

Next up was some wood chopping and splitting, both with the primary edge and the false edge. While not balanced as a pure chopper, the Sniper did an excellent job, quickly powering through thick maple branches without binding or sticking. It was also during this test that I developed a real appreciation for the one design feature I didn't initially like about the Sniper—its hefty, oversized grip. Although at first it felt too big for my hand, once I got involved in some heavy chopping, I realized that the large surface area of the handle helped spread the impact of the blows across my hand, much like a good revolver grip. This meant that I could work longer with less fatigue and no soreness. The smooth handle surface also meant no roughness and no abrasions, even during full-power cutting.

My evaluation of the Sniper also included a close look at its Tactical Tools sheath. Overall, I found that it provided an excellent combination of security, versatility, and comfort; however, when the knife is inserted in the sheath about an inch of the bright ricasso is still visible. Reshaping the mouth of the sheath would let the knife ride lower and eliminate this potential light discipline issue.

In summary, I found the Mercworx Sniper to be an excellent reflection of the company and the men who made it. It is a solid, well-conceived, no-nonsense design that boasts first-class craftsmanship and performance that speaks for itself. And at a suggested retail price of \$400.00, the Sniper is some of the best life insurance you'll ever buy.

TK

For More Information

MERCWORX
235 Main Street, #287
Madison, NJ 07940; (908) 619-1013
www.mercworx.com