



THE TACTICAL EDGE

TEXT AND PHOTO BY JOSHUA SWANAGON

It's only tactical if it gives you an advantage.

Dictionary.com defines tactics as “any mode of procedure for gaining advantage or success” and tactical as “of or relating to a maneuver or plan of action designed as an expedient toward gaining a desired end or temporary advantage.”

To expound on this, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines tactical as “using or being weapons or forces employed at the battlefield.”

By these definitions, we can see that tactical tools or weapons are generally used in an effort to gain an advantage and bring about success.

What generally sets tactical knives apart from most typical knife styles is their intended use. Whereas any knife can be used as a weapon, tactical knives give special emphasis on this.

However, that is not where it ends. Tactical knives need to be able to give the advantage in field-related use, as well, and need to be able to withstand the kind of use that most standard knives would not be subjected to.

In any theater of combat, our forces can come up against myriad scenarios that require the use of their knives—from opening MREs to prying open things that once were tightly shut. Although knife combat does happen, according to all the members of Special Forces I have spoken with over

The C.U.T. 4.0 (Combat Utility Tool)—designed by Knives Illustrated Editor Joshua Swanagon and produced by TOPS Knives—has a focus on combat but utilizes a drop-point profile and saber grind for typical fieldcraft and daily chores.

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the years, it is few and far between. Even so, their knives still need to be designed to deal with that scenario quickly and efficiently, because for them, it's not only their lives on the line but potentially the lives of everyone on their teams.

Our fighting men and women do not have the luxury of going home and getting another knife out of their collections if the one they have on them fails. And they can't select different knives each day based on what they will face. They have the knives they have for daily tasks, fieldcraft, breaching, combat and any number of tasks we just don't face here at home.

With that said, this is why it is so important to us, at *Knives Illustrated*, that we test tactical knives harder than any other knife. Because if someone is going to take a knife into combat—whether it is based on our recommendation or the fact that it has been billed as a “tactical” knife—it had better be able to withstand any abuse that comes its way.

Stay sharp and keep it real. **KI**

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