



Real World CARRY GEAR

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BLACKHAWK, SUREFIRE, KERSHAW & THREAT SOLUTIONS

The market for concealed carry related gear has exploded in the last few years with the proliferation of concealed carry legislation across the United States. We are bombarded with a constant barrage of sales pitches and marketing—some for new products and some for perennial favorites. If you are like me, you have learned a lot of costly lessons by buying products and using them, sometimes with good results, but often with severe disappointment.

Every gun magazine has a “new products” column devoted to, in essence, publishing press releases for every product that comes along. This column is different. I will give you my “regular guy” perspective on concealed carry related gear that I have actually used and tested in everyday life—from knives, to holsters, to flashlights and other “gun stuff.” And not just the latest and greatest, but some old favorites too. The photos you see are not glossy press release photos from the manufacturer; they are photos of the gear after my evaluation, showing how each has held up to daily use. If you want to see more of this type of column, e-mail me and let me know!

BLACKHAWK NIGHT-OPS GLADIUS

Everyone needs a compact, high quality flashlight. Many well known companies are now churning out the standard tactical flashlight, a tough, durable, two 123A lithium cell powered light, with tailcap switching and both momentary and constant on functionality. This has become the generic standard for “tactical lights.” The Gladius has now raised the bar by adding new features never before seen on this class of flashlight.

At first glance, the Gladius seems to fit the standard mold for these types of lights, with a strong aluminum body and a shape to accommodate a variety of handgun/

flashlight holds. However, the real genius of this light is inside. The Gladius is controlled by a smart computer chip—a flashlight with a brain. The tailcap of the light actually rotates into four different “channels,” each selecting a different mode of operation. Channel 1 is the standard tactical mode, with momentary switching and a blinding 100 lumens from its single LED light source. Channel 2 is an ingenious “strobe” feature for tactical use that is intended to blind and disorient attackers with an optimized strobe pattern of 100 lumens of flashing light. This is an innovative idea and it seems to work very well to disorient an attacker, while still providing useful illumination for the user. Channel 3 is another innovation, a constant on light with user adjustable output “on-the-fly” from 5 to 100 lumens. While there are some lights on the market with two intensity levels (usually one incandescent bulb for bright output and LEDs for lesser output), this light actually regulates the output electronically and is infinitely

adjustable. This feature makes the Gladius truly stand out. The ability to regulate the output turns your ultra-bright, tactical light into an all-purpose light that is suitable for much more mundane tasks when not pressed into defensive use. Some tasks just don’t require 100 lumens of blazing white light. Cranking down the output also saves on battery usage. Finally, Channel 4 is a lock-out mode that prevents accidental activation of the light for storage or carry.

BlackHawk Night-Ops Gladius	
Length	6.23 in.
Weight	6.63 oz.
Light Output	5-100 Lumens
Batteries	Two-123A Lithium
Est. Battery Life	1.5-400 Hours
MSRP	\$250.00





Battery life will vary, but the industry standard two 123A lithium cells will run the Gladius for about 90 minutes at full output, and up to 400 hours at its lowest setting.

The digital control of this flashlight provides other very useful benefits. Lithium batteries, by their nature, quit with no warning. The Gladius monitors battery status and pulses in short intervals when the batteries are nearly depleted, warning you in time to make a battery change. The Gladius also has smart temperature management, gradually dimming the flashlight if an overheating condition threatens to melt the lens or damage the unit.

Of course, all of this whiz-bang technology comes at a price. M.S.R.P. for the Gladius is \$250, and discounts are hard to find. A good street price is still over \$200. That is, without a doubt, a lot of money for a flashlight, but if you want the most advanced and versatile personal tactical light on the market, you won't be disappointed with the Gladius. I use mine for everything from concealed carry to camping, and I love it. BlackHawk has undoubtedly raised the bar in the high-end flashlight market.

SUREFIRE ALPHA KNIFE

SureFire, well known for high quality illumination tools, has entered the knife business with its new Edged Weapons Division. In collaboration with renowned custom knife designer, Steve Ryan, SureFire is currently offering two folding knives, with at least two more coming

in the near future. I have recently had an opportunity to evaluate their flagship model, the "Alpha."

The Alpha is a very large, tactical folding knife with a four inch blade carved from high performance S30V steel. This monster blade is coated with a slick, tungsten carbide, black coating and mated

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SureFire Alpha Knife	
Blade Length	4.17 in.
Length Open	9.25 in.
Length Closed	5.60 in.
Weight	6.6 oz.
MSRP	\$300.00

Advertisement
Receiving Dec. 6th, 2005



Kershaw Tactical Blur Knife	
Blade Length	3.375 in.
Length Open	7.875 in.
Length Closed	4.50 in.
Weight	4.2 oz.
MSRP	\$99.95

to a 7075 T6 aluminum frame with tough G-10 scales.

One-handed opening is possible by starting the blade moving with a flipper type device, then following through with pressure on one of the dual thumb studs. This takes a bit of practice if you are not used to such a set-up, but the blade opens smoothly and locks securely with a liner lock. Once locked open, the flipper serves as a guard to keep any part of your hand from running up onto the blade during severe use.

Everything about this knife is large. The theme carries over to the dual pocket clips that adorn both sides. The clips allow you to carry on either side, but only point down. If you demand a thinner package, one clip can be removed, but the result is not very cosmetically appealing.

SureFire quality comes at a price. This knife retails for \$300, and street prices are pretty close to full retail due to the limited distribution channels. However, for this \$300 you get the assurance of SureFire's top-notch customer service and lifetime guarantee. As with SureFire flashlights, the strength of the guarantee adds a lot of value to this product.

Even I am hesitant to beat up or torture test an expensive knife, but my use of the knife convinced me that this large, tactical folder will take any reasonable abuse you have in mind. If you want a high quality, large knife from a well known designer, I

can definitely recommend this knife. Keep in mind, however, that this knife carries like a big knife, and it is likely to scare any "non-knife people" who see you use it. In my opinion, it is not a knife you would want to use to carve an apple in the break room at work. But if you want a do-anything and tough-as-nails tactical folder, this Alpha could be for you.

KERSHAW TACTICAL BLUR KNIFE

Kershaw Knives is a leader in producing innovative knives at very reasonable prices. Well known knife designer, Ken Onion, has partnered with Kershaw to produce a large line of production folding knives, from small utility knives to larger tactical knives.

The Tactical Blur incorporates a 3-3/8 inch tanto style, partially serrated blade, fashioned from 440A stainless steel with a black, Tungsten DLC coating. This functional blade folds into a nicely contoured, aluminum handle with Kershaw's "Trac-Tek" inserts. The "Trac-Tek" inserts are one of the unique features of the Blur series, and they give this knife a grippy, textured surface, not unlike skateboard tape. It is hard to imagine how you could lose a grip on this knife, even in the most adverse conditions. The Blur also sports a pocket clip that can be positioned for tip-up or tip-down carry.

The most unusual feature of this knife, however, is the Ken Onion designed "Speed Safe" technology. Speed Safe is an assisted opening technology that allows the knife to spring open quickly, once the blade opening has been started manually. In the Blur configuration, you merely have to press on the thumb studs to start the blade opening and the spring assist takes over and snaps the knife smartly into its

locked open position. This is a practical feature that makes for a very quick opening, and it is just a lot of fun. Kershaw makes no representations about the legality of this mechanism in all jurisdictions, but it certainly is not a "switchblade" in the normal legal sense, since the blade is opened by movement of the blade, not by a button. Check your local laws if you think it could be an issue in your state.

The Tactical Blur retails for \$99.95, but is available from many sources for around \$60, sometimes even less. This is a lot of knife for the money. Some knife snobs would prefer a higher performance steel, but the price would have to be considerably higher. There are also other Blur configurations and colors available, including a "Rescue Blur" with a rounded safety tip and integrated glass breaker.

I have really enjoyed my Tactical Blur and I carry it daily. This knife is up to any reasonable task, from opening boxes to defending yourself if necessary. The knife is large enough for a working knife, but not so large that it scares people, although the Speed Safe opening just might! Sometimes if using the knife in a crowd, I will chose to pull it open in the traditional manner, rather than draw attention by snapping it open with the assisted opening. I find this to be a great everyday carry knife that has held up exceptionally well to the rigors of daily use. The Kershaw Tactical Blur has my vote for a practical, tactical and affordable folder.

THREAT SOLUTIONS UCR HOLSTER

I have tried a lot of inside-the-waistband (IWB) holsters. I keep coming back to the Threat Solutions UCR (Ultra Concealment Rig) made by Dave Vaughn. Unlike a lot of IWB holsters on the market,

the UCR does not have adjustable or interchangeable belt loops or an adjustable cant. The holster is very simple in that respect; there are no adjustments. The holster either fits your needs or it doesn't. In my experience, the holster fits great, and it's the most comfortable kydex IWB I have found.

The use of kydex materials makes for a tough holster that will probably never wear out. The kydex won't absorb or retain moisture and will not collapse, allowing for easy one-handed reholstering. By moving the belt attachment points away from the gun itself, the whole rig is thin and stable, with less rocking and belt sag.

The UCR is reasonably priced at \$59.95 and is available for Glocks, 1911s, Kahrs, Springfield XDs, S&W J-frames and the CZ-75. Barrel length doesn't matter, since this is an open muzzle slide-type design, giving you some versatility to use the holster with various sizes of the same gun platform. The holster shown is Dave's first UCR for the Ruger SP-101. He made it by special request for me, and now that he has a proper mold, the SP will become a regular offering. Sometimes the simplest solution is the best, and I believe that the Threat Solutions UCR holster is likely to become one of your favorites too.

For More Information on these Products

www.surefire.com

www.kershawknives.com

www.blackhawk.com

www.threatsolutions.com

Duane A. Daiker is a Contributing Editor for CCM, but is otherwise a regular guy—not much different from you. Duane has been a life-long shooter and goes about his life as an armed, responsible, and somewhat opinionated citizen. Duane can be reached at: Duane@Daiker.net



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