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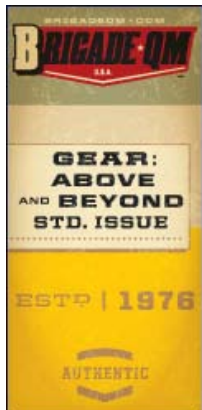
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RAT H.E.S.T. Knife

1 December 2009

From the team of [RAT Cutlery](#) and [DPx Gear](#) comes the H.E.S.T. knife. HEST is the acronym for "Hostile Environment Survival Tool". RAT stands for "Randall's Adventure & Training". DPx alludes to the knife serving best in the world's most "Dangerous Places". I'm not quite sure why the X was added, but I THINK it means "extreme". All that laid out, I was slightly surprised to get such a small knife designed as a survival tool. Of course, I had to test it, learn about it and so on. What I've learned is interesting and I'll share it with you.



According to the information disseminated about it and available online, the knife is manufactured from 1095 steel hardened to a measurement of 57-58Rc. The entire length of steel, with the exception of the sharpened edge, is powder coated black and it's one of the most evenly applied, fine finished powder coating jobs I've ever experienced. On the left side is laser engraved the DPX Gear logo and on the right side are the initials of the designer, Robert Young Pelton (RYP). The scroll is fancy, as if he'd written them on there himself. Near the pommel on one side is "RAT - USA" and on the other, "H-E-S-T".

As I measure it the overall length of the knife is 7.625". Blade width (all but the front 1.25" of the knife) is a full 3/16ths of an inch. The blade accounts for 3" of the overall length leaving the handle at just over four and a half inches. The grip is fairly ergonomic with a nicely integrated finger groove near the hilt. The sharp projection you can see at the pommel is an intentional design feature put there to serve as a pry bar. In my case, due to my medium sized hands, as I hold the knife I can just feel that pry bar pommel projection on the side of my pinky.

Look carefully and you can see that what there is of a hilt is just slightly off perpendicular with the line of the knife, leaned forward at the spine. This is very common in modern knives and RAT/DPX took advantage of the slant to put ridges in the spine. The ridges indicate thumb placement so you can index your grip to press into cuts. Immediately forward of the hilt in the spine is a bottle opener. (*I have to say, this is one of the coolest "church keys" I've ever seen*) At the base of the sharpened edge is what we would normally take for a choil but in this case it was designed deep to serve as a wire break notch as well. There are three lashing holes designed into the knife: one centered just behind the hilt and two at the pommel.

Author's Note: In the past I've had email exchanges with folks about using a survival knife as a spear point. As this is something I've always wanted to at least have as an option, most of those I've communicated with felt it was a





potential way to lose the knife. Instead, they suggested just sharpening to a point whatever stick I'd be using as the spear handle. Their argument has merit, but I still appreciate having the option, so this is a design feature I especially appreciate.

The handles feel like linen micarta, and thanks to the texture they look both OD Green (or close to it) and khaki or tan at the same time. The "high points" in the texture look green... the grooves or weave appears tan. The grip slaps are just thick enough to feel comfortable in my hand and, when combined with the shape of the handle, provided a secure grip even as I tested it under wet conditions. The grip slabs can be removed with a regular screw driver and there is a hollow space between them to store emergency supplies as shown in the top picture (not included with the knife kit). We will circle back to this farther down in a moment.

The knife is delivered with a kit that includes:

- ★ HEST Knife
- ★ Kydex Sheath
- ★ Paracord and Cord Lock
- ★ MOLLE Lock Kit

The knife speaks for itself. The kydex sheath is a minimalist design that covers and captures the knife all the way to the front edge of the micarta grip slaps. Using the instructions available on the [back of the H.E.S.T. instruction sheet](#) (acrobat required) you set the sheath up to carry the knife horizontally or vertically on your belt or on MOLLE webbing. Using those directions you can attain any one of the described carry positions in the photo you see here. Click on it for a larger view.

Now, let's circle back as promised to talk about the grip slabs and the storage within. I think it's a fantastic idea to have storage within the grips. I like that they can be removed easily with a slotted (regular) screw driver. If you keep a relatively small length of strong fishing line inside that space then you also have what you need to tie the knife into a spear handle - and if you have the handle prepared properly you can minimize the chance of losing the blade as discussed above. So, the only thing you need that isn't provided in this kit / system is a slotted screw driver.

Sure, plenty of folks have a multi-tool with them when they're out in the field, but I'm going to try to find a way to attach a piece of a properly sized screw driver to this sheath kit, even if I have to duct tape it on. I'd prefer for the kit to be independent of the need for a non-attached tool to take full advantage of the benefits it offers.

That out of the way, let's look at performance. Out back I went... string, twine, fishing line, 1/2" cotton rope, 1/2" ugly yellow nylon rope, pieces of an old 5-gallon plastic construction bucket, some nylong webbing and more. The H.E.S.T.'s edge was delivered sharp and it held the edge well. Because of the 3" length of the blade



there's not as much room to "pull through" a cut as you have with longer blades, so the edge itself has to do the cutting work with more pull, less slice. The H.E.S.T. performed well, cutting through everything with a single pull (the ugly yellow nylon rope took a HARD pull, but it still did it).

Because of the size and balance of the knife it's not a good tool for chopping but I had no issues shaving off decent size chunks of the plastic bucket. Just as a matter of curiosity fulfilled by doing, I used the knife to prep some branches and limbs that had fallen off my trees in recent storms. I shaved some tinder and cut some smaller kindling to build a fire. No problems there at all. After cleaning the knife I used it to cut up my lunch (leftover turkey from Thanksgiving) and to butter my biscuits. After that I washed it again and it's tucked safely back into its sheath.

Overall, out of ten, I'd give it a rating of 8.5. It's at a disadvantage where survival tools are concerned because of its size. That said, it's smaller size and lighter weight are also strengths because a person would be more likely to carry it constantly and have it with them than a comparable knife with a 6" or 7" blade. For design, finish and utility I give it high marks. For sheath versatility more high marks. In all, it's a knife I'm glad to be adding to my kit.

Pricetag on the [DPx Gear](#) website is \$139.98 and it shows the knives SOLD OUT. A quick Google search found me the knife elsewhere for \$88.50. As always, search around and you can find a good deal. The knife is worth it's retail price of about \$140, but save the few bucks if you can.

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