



Thunderhawk provides plenty of light for map reading or finding gear in the bottom of your pack in the dark.

TACTICAL AND SURVIVAL TIMEPIECES

» BY JEFF RANDALL



Special Ops Watch Titanium Thunderhawk (shown with factory band) is every bit as tough as its name implies.

We've all seen the full-page ads with the cool-looking watches that are supposedly the latest, greatest attire for the special operations community.

And while the ads are cool, the ultimate question is whether the product is worth all the ink that's being dedicated to it?

For the past year, based on reader requests, *S.W.A.T.* Magazine has been testing two watches: the MTM Special Ops Titanium Thunderhawk and the Nite MX10-201. Both watches were tested extensively in the jungle of Peru during two separate survival-training classes, during law enforcement operations and on the firing range through thousands of rounds of recoil.

MTM TITANIUM THUNDERHAWK

The MTM Thunderhawk is billed as being the world's first electromagnetic watch with two LED lighting systems. The first push of the button gives the user a soft blue glow for dial illumination, and the second push provides external illumination for distress signaling, map reading, and mini-flashlight use. It also

features a proprietary quartz movement with luminous numbers; a tempered, scratch-resistant, anti-reflective crystal; and a carbon fiber dial. Both the watch band and case are built from Titanium with almost zero magnetic reactivity, so using your compass close to the watch produces no problems.

Probably the coolest feature of the Thunderhawk (besides its looks) is the way it recharges. Once the watch lets you know it's time to recharge, all you have to do is plug the charger into the wall and lay the watch on top of the electromagnetic charger pad. Since there is nothing to take apart on the case or batteries to replace, the integrity of the 100-meter water resistance is always maintained. The manufacturer states that each recharge will last about a month, but the one I tested averaged about five to six weeks before needing a boost—and that was using the light at least once a day.

The unidirectional ratcheting bezel



Thunderhawk on its charging pad with map lights burning.

stays in place when using it as a timer. Maybe this shows my ignorance, but I didn't particularly care for the fact that the bezel is a "count-up" timer instead of a "count-down." With that said, after I got used to it, I found myself using it a lot. I now like a mechanical bezel timer better than a digital timer for what I do. This particular bezel never jammed up



▶▶ Jungle survival expert Mike Perrin wearing Nite MX10 watch during survival training class in Peru.

▶▶ Shot at night with a 17-second shutter on the camera, the Nite MX10's Tritium numbers and sweep second hand glow brightly.



▶▶ U.K. Special Forces issue Nite MX10-201 watch is great analog timepiece for military, law enforcement and outdoor duty.

from grit and grime like past experiences I've had with rotating bezels.

The only real "out of the box" complaint I had was with the watchband. Even after adjusting it as much as it would adjust, it was either too tight or too loose. If I got the correct tension around my arm, then it was too small to remove over my hand. But that's more of a deformity in my own makeup, since my hand has always been too big for my forearm size, and slipover watch bands just don't work for me. I simply put a different band on the watch. Problem solved.

In actual use, the MTM has been used for more than six months on my arm and then for another period of time on my survival-training partner's arm. As previously stated, it has gone through two jungle survival schools and numerous law enforcement details. I have to say it's probably one of the best watches I have ever owned. The Thunderhawk is analog and that's the only type of watch I will own, not only for its expedient field navigation use, but when you reach my age, you get "old age" eyes. When you wake up in the middle of the night without your glasses on and need to see what time it is, small digital numbers don't cut it. The Thunderhawk's large numbers and soft blue illumination work well for night-time use.

The map lighting is a tool I found myself using more and more. I typically carry a small LED light for finding gear

in the bottom of a dark pack or searching for the door keyhole in the middle of the night. With the Thunderhawk, you can throw your small key-chain LED lights away, since it emits plenty of useable light.

The Thunderhawk is just plain tough. Wet weather and being submerged for hours at a time in dirty Amazon River water resulted in no ill effects. Since I started wearing the Thunderhawk, it's been smashed up against trees while cutting firewood, run over by a farm tractor after leaving it on a front-end loader I was working on, and subjected to numerous rounds of recoil from pistol and rifle fire. It's as accurate today as it was a year ago. It's on my arm as I type this review, and I expect to get many more years of service out of it. In my opinion, you may be able to buy a cheaper watch, but you won't find a better one. The Thunderhawk ships in a waterproof storage case with induction battery charger, band adjustment tools, warranty card and instructions. Suggested retail is \$550.

NITE MX10-201

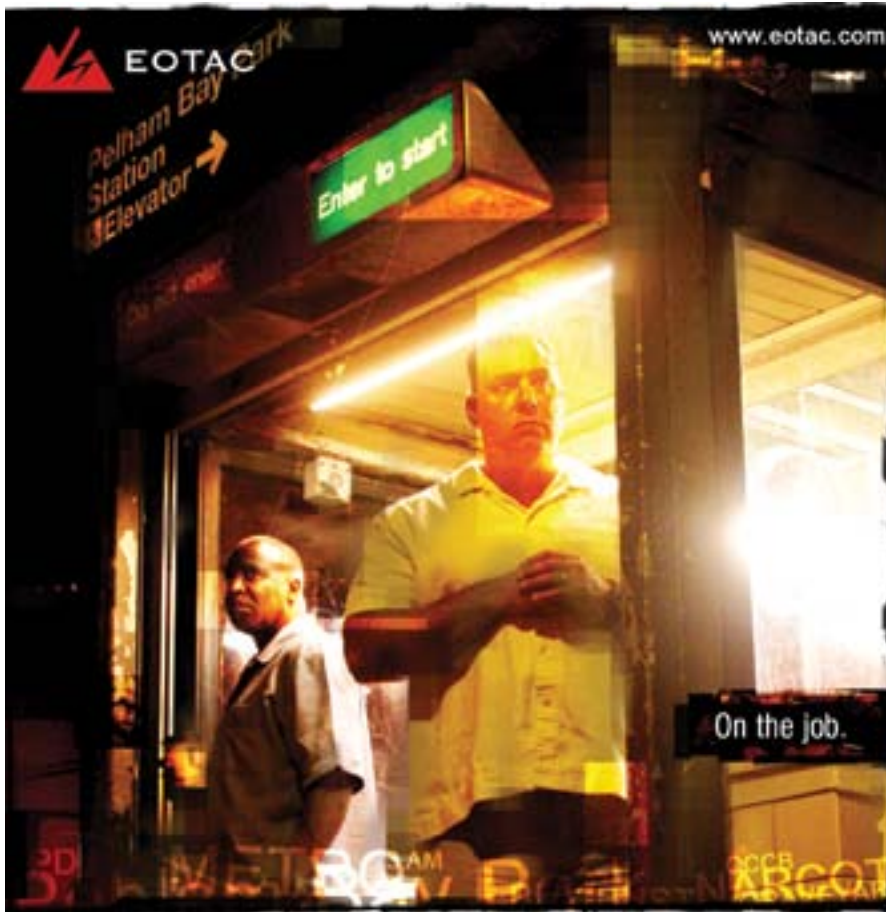
The Nite MX10 is every bit as good as the Special Ops watch, but it's in a different class. While the Thunderhawk has a lot of value-added features, the MX10 is a basic, no-frills watch that's tough as nails—exactly what most of the survival trainers and tactical instructors like. The MX10 features a hard armor exterior with classic military style. According

to the literature, it's the issue watch of Britain's Special Forces and even has its own NSN: 6645-99-133-5227. The MX10 is water resistant to 100 meters, features a Ronda 505.6 Swiss Movement, black polymer strap and battery life of approximately 45 months. Another feature is that the dial face has the 24-hour time marked on it. Now, for most folks who use military time, that's not too important, since once you know the system it becomes second nature, but I suppose it has its merits for new recruits learning military time.

I suppose the very first thing that stood out to me was the watchband. While simple, it's easy to secure and has a unique keeper for the tail of the band. Of course, all watches have a keeper, but almost all of them end up sliding down the band toward the buckle, thus allowing the tail of the band to flop around and catch on everything. The Nite's keeper locks in place wherever you want it to along the band and stays there—a well thought-out addition, in my opinion.

The Tritium lighting is another excellent feature. Unlike the Special Ops watch, the numbers and hands of the Nite watch are always lit up. It's extremely easy to read this watch in the middle of the night without glasses. In fact, the radioactive Tritium is so bright that you may want to buy a watch cover if you're using this watch during night operations.

The accuracy of the Swiss movement



is dead on. When I first got the watch, I set it by the Atomic clock, and since then it's been extremely accurate, with not enough waiver from the original setting to even worry about resetting. The watch is also extremely tough and waterproof. Just like the Special Ops watch, we've put it through our jungle survival school twice, and no amount of dirt, grime, water or impact seems to bother it.

As with the Special Ops watch, the MX10 would make a great watch for law enforcement, military or outdoor use. It's a lot slimmer than the Thunderhawk, so it could also double as a dress watch, in my opinion. Suggested retail is \$320.

In closing, I have to say that I am very impressed with the quality found in both of these products. While a lot of us have become numb to hype advertising, it's refreshing to review a product and find out that it does exactly what the manufacturer claims it will. Are these watches worth the price tag? That's for the individual to decide, but if I was in need of a good watch that was absolutely "steel ball" tough and could be trusted regardless of the climate or environment, these two would definitely be on the short list.



[Jeff Randall has worked and traveled in China, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Switzerland, and nearly every Latin American country. He is the co-author of the book Adventure Travel in the Third World and is also an accomplished photographer. He considers the Amazon jungle his second home. He can be contacted through www.junglentraining.com]

SOURCES:

(Special Ops Watch Thunderhawk)
 MTM/American Watch Co.
 Dept. S.W.A.T.
 1225 South Grand Ave.
 Los Angeles, CA 90015
 (800) 862-8772
www.specialopswatch.com

(Nite MX10)
 Proforce Equipment, Inc.
 Dept. S.W.A.T.
 2201 NW 102nd Place, Unit 1
 Miami, FL 33172
 (800) 259-5962
www.nitewatchshop.co.uk

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