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11/27

British Eren Habirga Expedition

2011



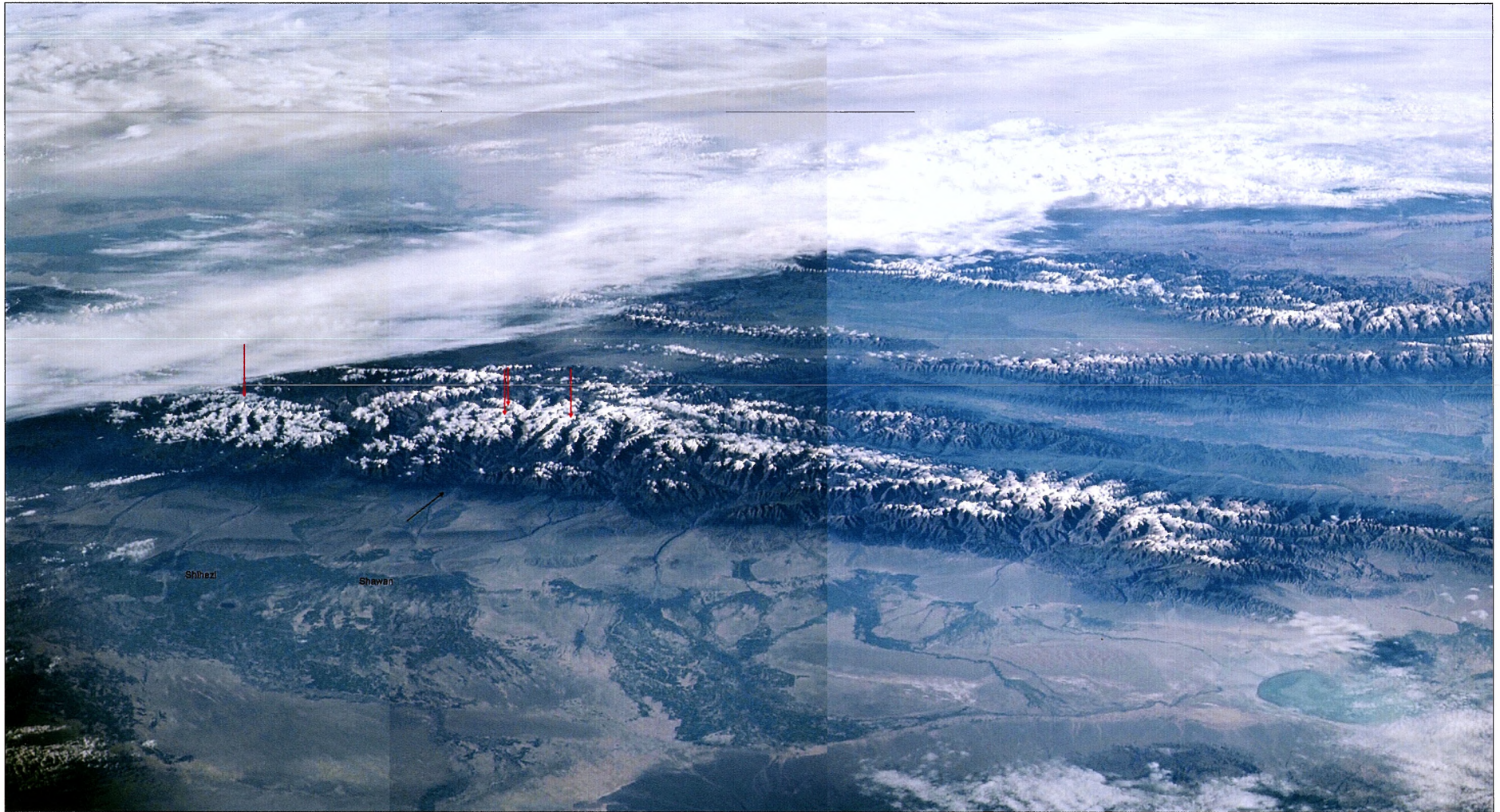
Supported by the Mount Everest Foundation

Ref: 11/27

Members:

John Town, Jerry Lovatt, Iwonna Hudowska,
Tadeusz Hudowski, Richard Wojtaszewski





The Eren Habirga (higher part on left) and Borokhoru (right) ranges seen looking southeast from the Space Shuttle, with the Dzungarian Plain in the foreground and the cities of Shihezi and Shawan on the left. From edge to edge of the picture, in the line of the ranges, is about 300 miles. Three of the major peaks are marked, with the highest, Borgora, 5248m, which lay above our base camp, on the right. Every other peak in the picture is unclimbed.

GRANT APPLICATION FORM

1. Name of Expedition: **BRITISH EREN HABIRGA EXPEDITION**

Leader's details.

Name: John Town
Address: 146 Melton Road,
West Bridgford,
Nottingham NG2 6ER

Telephone number (day): 01509 222223
Telephone number (evening): 0115 923 3421
FAX:
Email: j.m.town@mac.com

2. Country and region to be visited: CHINA, Xinjiang, Tien Shan, Eren Habirga Range

Objectives: First ascent of multiple un-named peaks between 4800m and 5200m from a base camp in the Ak-Tash valley.

Duration (from-to): 13th August – 11th September 2011

3. Expedition Members. Give name, age, nationality, occupation and relevant experience of each member. Please refer to section 5 in the Guidelines.

John Town, 58, British, University Administrator. Alpine Club. Climbing experience in the Alps; Himalayas; Caucasus; USA; Bolivia; Siberian Altai - first Brit. asc. highest pk., Bielukha 4506m; Tibet - led first British Expedition to Amne Machin incl. first ascent of Amne Machin IX, 5690m; - first West. attempt Jomo Gangtse 7048m; - first ascent Machag 6000m; - exploration of Wortse and Nye valleys, Upper Kong-po – first ascent Beutse 6350m – led exp making first ascent Nganglong Kangri 6710m; Mongolia - first West. asc. Mukhairkhan 4204m; Kamchatka - first Brit. asc. highest pk., Kliuchevskaya 4800m. Yulong Shan, Yunnan - attempt on Satseto. Represented BMC on International Meet, Ararat, Winter 86

Jerry Lovatt, 68, British, Retired, Hon. Librarian, Alpine Club.
Climbing experience in the Alps – Cassin route, Badile – Cengalo N Pillar – Zinal Rothorn E Face Direct; USA – Yosemite; Bhutan – AC Expedition; Iran – Alam Kuh; Karakoram – Swat – Chogolisa.

Iwonna Hudowska, 60, British, Administrator, Alpine Club.
Many summer and winter seasons of mixed, aided and rock-climbing (to 6A) in the Alps and Tatra. Also visits to the Atlas and Peruvian Andes (Huascaran). Alpine Club member.

Tadeusz Hudowski, 63, British, Librarian, Alpine Club.
Many summer and winter seasons of mixed, aided and rock-climbing (to 6A) in the Alps and Tatra. Also visits to the Atlas and Peruvian Andes (Huascaran). Alpine Club member.

Richard Wojtaszewski, 43, British, Outdoors Pursuits Instructor, Alpine Club.
Climbing experience in the Alps, Peru, Ladakh, Mongolia, Tibet, Caucasus, & Himalayas (Ama Dablam). Alpine Club member.

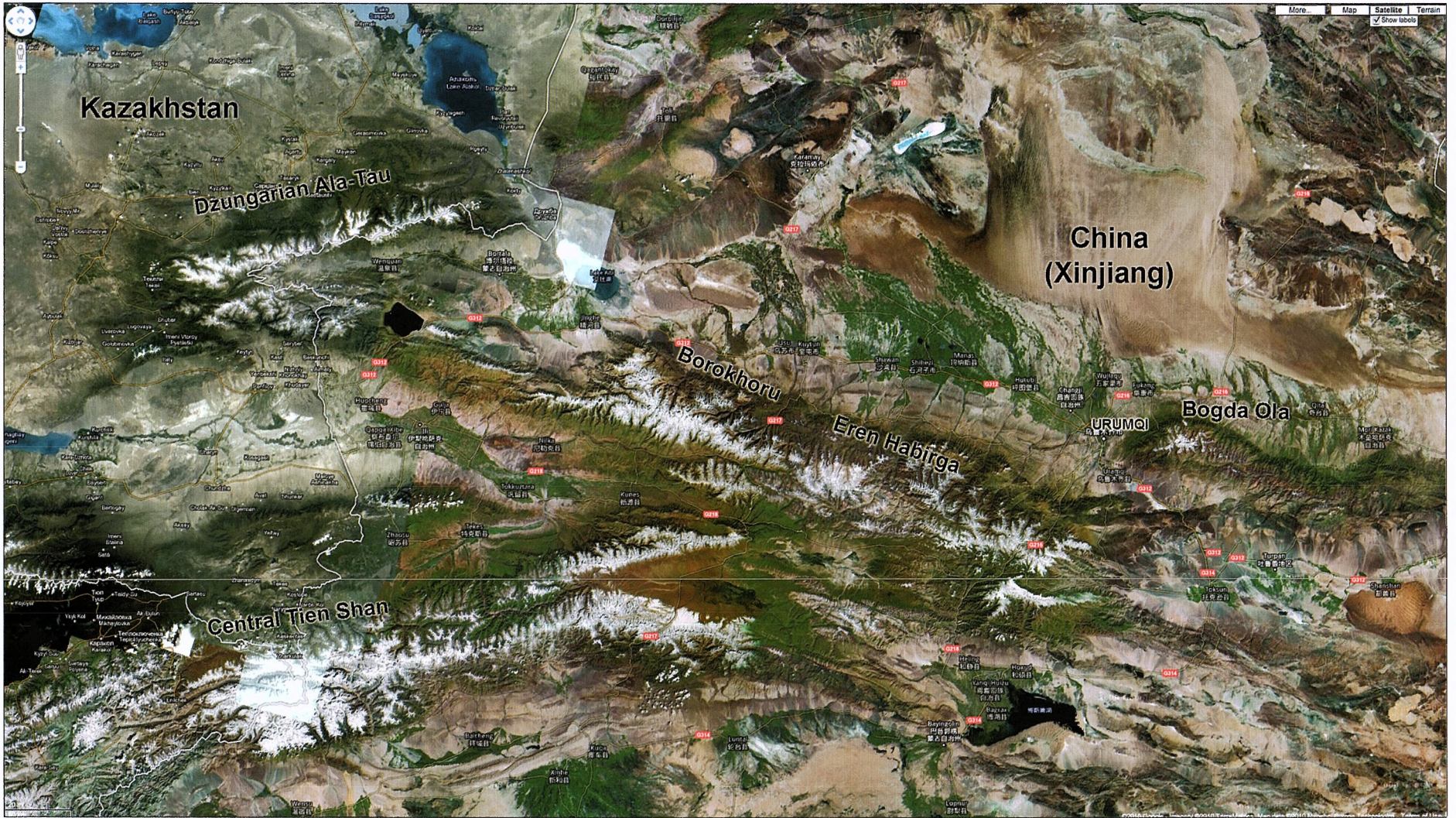
4. Budget

| Expedition Costs: | | Expedition Income: | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Travel - | £3,200 | Number of Members - | 4 |
| Food and Stores -) | | Amount of Personal Contributions - | £11,300 |
| Peak Fees and Liaison Officer -) | £10,300 | Please give details of grants | |
| Hire of Labour -) | | already approved - | none |
| Insurance - | £250 | Other sources - | none |
| Other and contingency - | £500 | | |
| TOTAL: | £14,250 | TOTAL: | £11,000 |

5. To what other organisations or sponsors have you applied for grants and with what results so far? None

If you wish to be considered for a BMC grant or are applying for MC of S or SCW funding, place a cross in the appropriate box (see section 2 in Guidelines)

BMC MC of S SC for W



Tien Shan, showing location of Eren Habirga and Borokhoru ranges.

6. Permits.

To whom have you applied? Our agent will apply for the necessary permits

When do you expect a decision? 3 months in advance of departure

7. Whom have you consulted about the expedition?

The leader consulted with local people on a reconnaissance expedition to the base camp area in September 2010 and has also been in correspondence with the leader of the Japanese 1998 expedition to the region.

8. Give names, addresses and Email addresses if available of two referees who can supply details concerning the general standing and objectives of the expedition and its members (questionnaire proforma follows). Referees should not be members of either the MEF Screening or Management Committees.

Glynn Hughes, 73 Church Street, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1HY

Hywel Lloyd, Church Cottage, Sulgrave, Banbury, Oxon OX17 2RP

9. Name of the bank account to which the grant should be paid: Mr. John M. Town

Grant cheques will be sent direct to the leader once the conditions under which the grant was offered have been accepted and a copy of the permit provided to the MEF.

10. Grants are awarded on the understanding that you have obtained and will comply with the latest regulations of the country to be visited. Information on expedition fees and regulations can be obtained directly from the MEF website <http://www.mef.org.uk>. (Scientific expeditions must also complete Section C of the Appendix.)

Which Ministry, Embassy or Tourist Department have you contacted? Xinjiang Mountaineering Association

What arrangements are being made for local employees and have you provided for their compensation in case of mishap? All local employees will be employed by our agent, who will deal with this aspect.

The MEF cannot provide assistance for expeditions that run in to financial difficulty and you should therefore consider what support you could call upon in an emergency, since financial insolvency could damage the reputation of British mountaineering and harm future expeditions. Can you call on financial reserves in case of an emergency?

YES

Where applicable, have allowances been made for the deposit of money with (1) the customs authorities against import of equipment and (2) the Ministry against rescue expenses and an environmental bond?

Not necessary

11. State what plans and experience you have to enable you to cope in the event of an accident or illness during the trip.

The leader has had expedition medical training and other members first aid training. All have training in crevasse rescue. We will carry a comprehensive medical kit, radios for contact with Base Camp, a SPOT emergency rescue beacon and a satellite phone. Helicopter rescue in Xinjiang is unlikely and any local rescue would be on an ad hoc basis, using horses from base camp.

12. What steps have been made to research the area to be visited, in particular its geography, political situation and previous exploratory mountaineering or scientific work in your chosen field? For primarily scientific expeditions, list up to 4 key publications, maps or other materials used to develop your scientific objectives.

I have conducted a comprehensive search of US, UK and Japanese Journals, and Chinese publications, for evidence of previous expeditions. The area has only been visited once, by a Japanese expedition, with whom I have corresponded at some length. I made a reconnaissance visit to the area in September 2010 and was able to take hundred of photos documenting a wealth of unclimbed peaks. The reconnaissance also clarified the best means of access.

Eren Habirga Central

Showing route in
with camps and
passes.

Google Maps
satellite image.



Have your plans been discussed with any relevant scientific bodies?

No

Apart from the Expedition Report, what plans do you have to disseminate and/or publish the results of the expedition?

We will write an article for the Alpine Journal, as in the past, and send reports to the AAJ and Japanese Alpine Journal.

13. Please give details of how you plan to minimise your impact on the environment and in particular your strategy for Waste Management during the expedition.

We will ensure that all waste is either burnt and buried or, preferably, carried out. Kazakh assistants will be given strict instructions at the start of the expedition since those not accustomed to working with conscientious expeditions are often lax. I will also make it known that the size of the 'tip' is dependent on suitably enthusiastic waste management and clear up. The team used for the reconnaissance were very good and I hope we can do as well this time.

14. Please describe your project as fully as possible, in particular outlining any innovative features. Please provide at least one map and photograph of your objective. The Screening Committee will want to see additional maps and photographs if or when you come for interview.

The Eren Habirga and Borohoru mountains, part of the Tien Shan, stretch in a NW direction from just SW of the city of Urumchi to the border with Kazakhstan, a distance of about 300 miles. The range is heavily glaciated and has at least 20 peaks over 5,000m and several hundred over 4,000m. The range has been visited only once by mountaineers and only one of the high peaks has been climbed. Most of the peaks appear to be unnamed.

The Eren Habirga form the higher and more easterly part of the range, with the highest peaks situated in the Borgora area, whose glaciers feed the headwaters of the Khorgos river. I made a reconnaissance of the area in September 2010, finding that access to the high peaks is particularly difficult - the Khorgos and its main tributaries run through gorges which are impassable other than in winter, when the river is frozen. The local Kazakhs circumvent this problem by using elevated routes which cross a series of passes of up to 4000m, eventually giving access to the high valleys below the main peaks. By this means I was successful in entering the Ak-Tash valley, which lies below the Borgora Peaks. The highest of these, which is probably the highest peak in the range, was climbed by the Japanese in 1998 from the next valley to the west. My journey took five days going in from the roadhead at Wenquan and four days on the return. Wenquan is a day's drive from Urumchi, which can be reached by air via Moscow or Beijing.

A base camp at Ak-Tash gives direct access to about ten unclimbed peaks, at least four of which are above 5000m, which should provide routes at a variety of difficulties. There are primitive bathing facilities at hot springs which can be reached from the camp by a bridge across the river. An easy 3,500m pass gives access in half a day to the extensive valley system to the east. This system holds seven different glaciers and the area is called 'Koskur Makan' by the locals, translated as 'Home of the Wolf'. There are about 20 to 30 unclimbed peaks accessible from here, ranging from 4600m to 5192m.

The weather is reasonably stable and precipitation limited, but the mountains do cloud in from time to time. It can snow at any time but it rarely stays on the ground for long given the dryness of the air and the strength of the sun.

It is our aim to climb as many as possible of the unclimbed peaks in the area and to document local names for the peaks, glaciers and valleys, where they exist. It is very unusual to be the first outsiders to explore an area of such beauty and to be the first to set foot on its mountains.

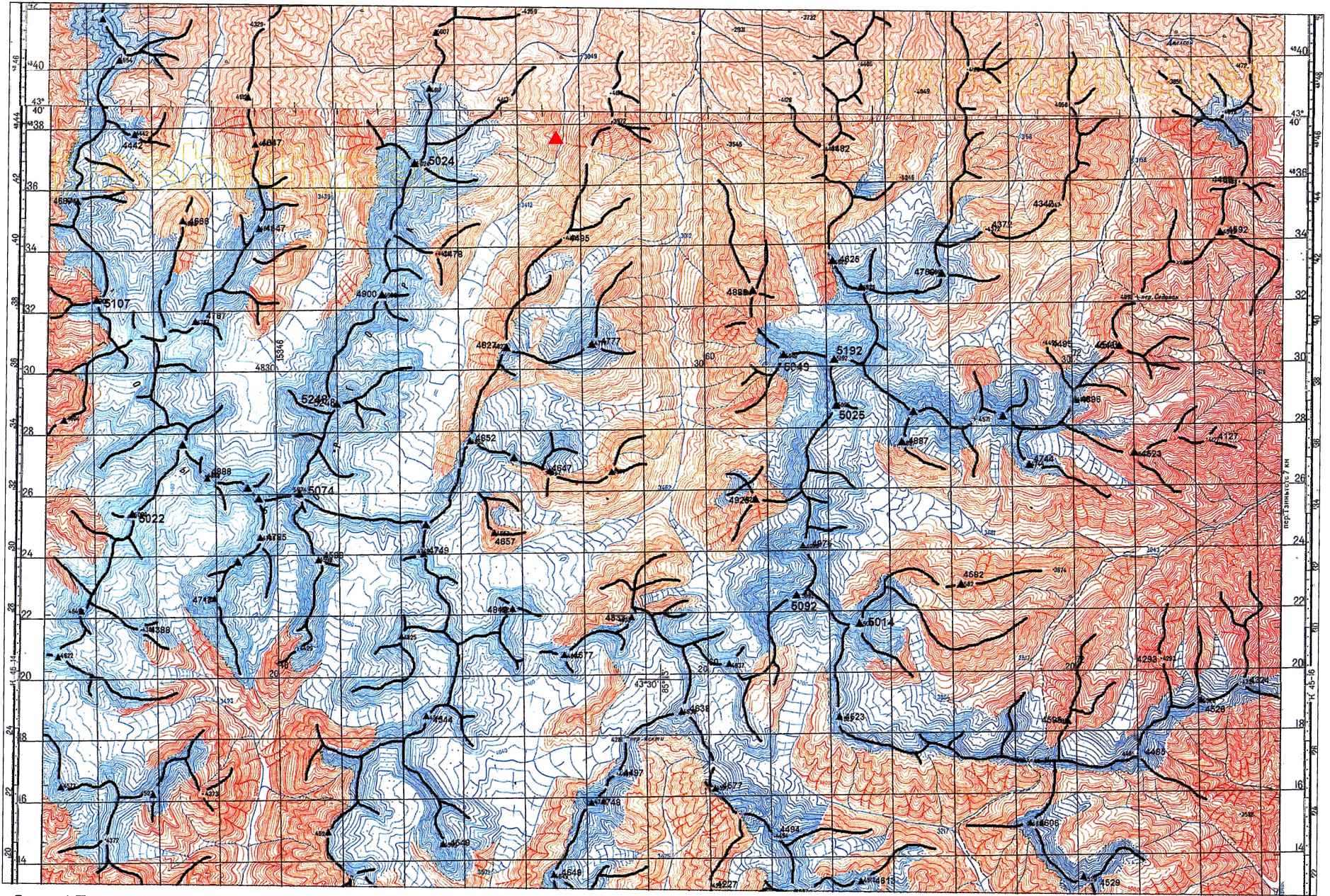
15. Declaration

The information submitted in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct at the time this application was made. Should any significant developments arise after this application is made, such as change of team members or official permits being refused, I will keep the MEF informed of such developments. I have informed my two referees that their statements should be returned directly to the MEF. Should this expedition be cancelled or postponed subsequent to receiving support from the MEF, I will return the grant awarded.

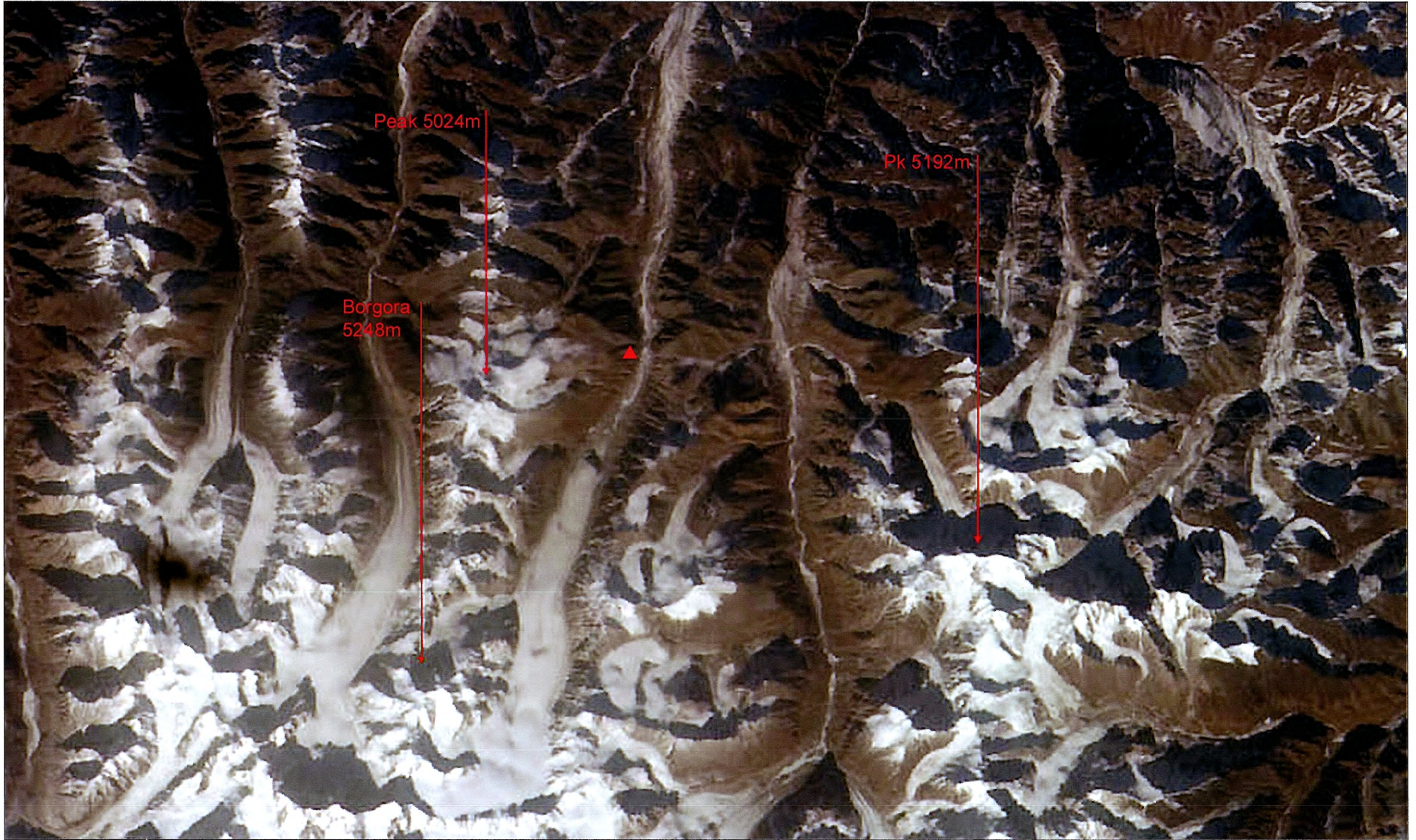
I also acknowledge that:

1. Expedition members are not seeking advice from the MEF or BMC regarding their approach to and choice of mountain venue.
2. All discussion with MEF/BMC personnel is in the context of those bodies making an assessment of the merits of the expedition and suitability for grant aid.
3. Any information regarding the expedition venue provided by the MEF/BMC personnel in the course of discussion, is historical and derived either from personal observation or anecdotal evidence and is not definitive.
4. Expedition members will rely upon their own judgement at all times whilst on or approaching the mountain venue.

Signed..... Date 29th January 2011



Central Eren Habirga. Soviet Military Map with added ridgelines, showing Base Camp.



Central Eren Habirga, North. International Space Station Image, showing Base Camp and selected peaks.



Borgora 5248m, the highest peak in the Eren Habirga, seen from the NE near Base Camp. The mountain was climbed from the W by a Japanese expedition from Shizuoka University in 1997, the only ascent to date in the range



Peak c5000m from NE



Peak 4996m from NE



Peaks 4886m and 5049m from NW



Peak 4923m from NW



Borgora 5248m from E



Peak 5007m from E



Peaks 4482m to 4625m from NW



Peak 4827m and 4852m from NNW

The Expedition

The Eren-Habirga and Borohoru ranges are part of the Tien Shan and stretch over 300 miles, forming the southern edge of the Dzungarian basin. They were pretty much unexplored by mountaineers until last year, though a Japanese party did climb the highest peak in 1997. In 2010 the leader of the current expedition explored the route leading into the Ak-Tash valley. The valley holds several 5000m peaks, including the NE approaches to the highest peak, Borgora, 5248m, via the Ak-Tash glacier. Our team was composed of John Town, Jerry Lovatt, Iwonna Hudowska, Tadeusz Hudowski and Richard Wojtaszewski

On 16th August we drove to the roadhead at Wen Chuan, a spa-resort village about 4-5 hours drive SW of Urumqi. There we hired horses and



Peak 5192m from Sirgdavan Pass



late the next day set off up the Sirgdavan valley. Progress was slow, probably due to deliberate delaying tactics by the horsemen, and it took 3 days to cross the Sirgdavan Pass. (see right for view)

The route normally takes 5 days and involves crossing three big passes between 3400m and 3800m. A further day was lost through bad weather before we reached Base Camp. This was located about a kilometer below the snout of the Ak-Tash glacier and across the river from a steep scree slope. This led to a col which gave access to the next valley

to the E.

The 5024m snow peak (above) which rose above the camp to the east was chosen as the first objective. We climbed steep slopes above the Base Camp and established a camp high up in the shallow valley on the NE side of the peak, about 80m below the snow line. In the afternoon Iwonna and Tad climbed the rocky 4300m peak to the north. The next day we all climbed onto the snow fields of the upper peak at about 4000m (right) and were immediately faced with repeated and ominous cracking, resulting from a layer of 'ball bearings' below the upper few cms of crust. We retreated as the weather, which had never been good, started to deteriorate.

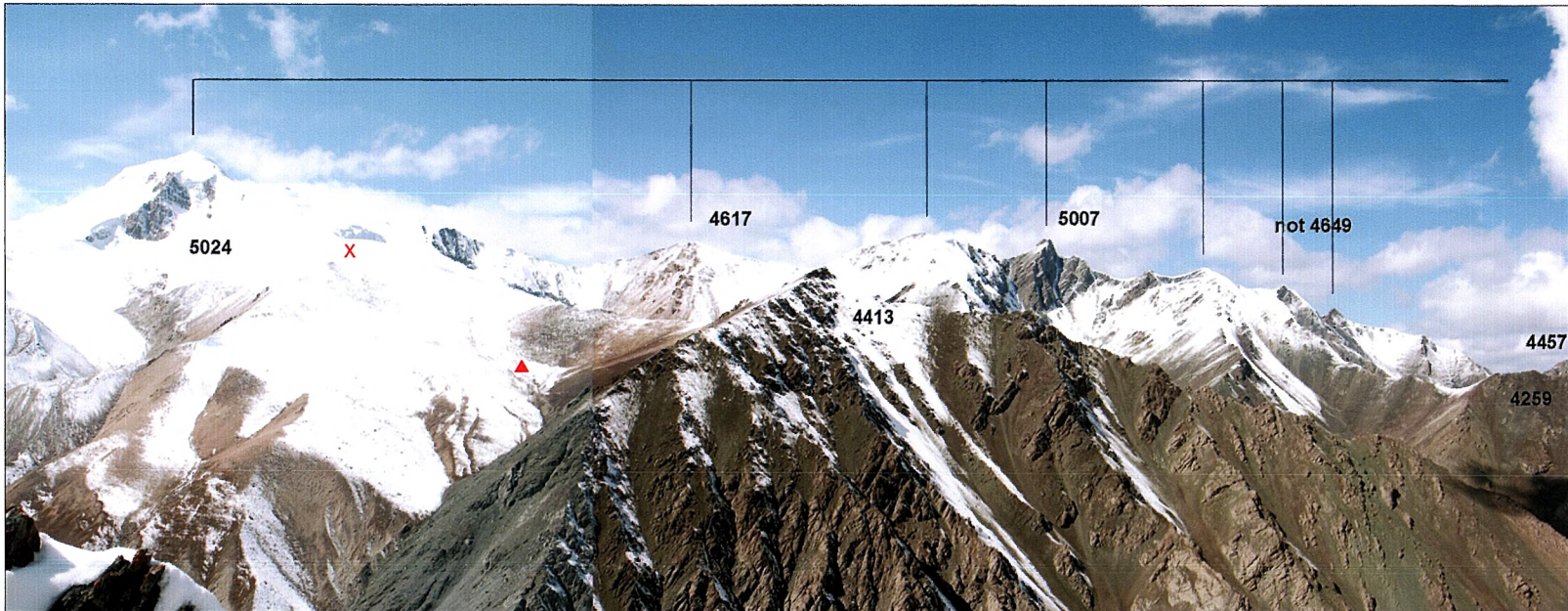




Panorama from 100m below high point showing peaks running south from Pk 5024 (right): Pk 4996 (left) and Pk c5000m (centre).

Jerry Lovatt

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Panorama of western side of Ak-tash valley above Base Camp (left, out of sight). Camp and high point (cross) of attempt on Peak 5024 shown in red. Peak 4413 (centre) climbed by the Hudowskis.



Camp on N Ridge of Peak 4495

Richard Wojtaszewski

From then on we were at the mercy of the weather, which put on a mercurial performance of bewildering variations in visibility and temperature (see below).

Unsettled weather was characterised by temperature inversions, with warm air from the plains to the north driving thick banks of cloud up the valleys from below. The Base Camp was often in thick mist, while it was clear higher up. Strangely the air was often warmer 500m above Base than at the camp itself, which is not characteristic of an inversion and made us even more worried about snow conditions.



Richard Wojtaszewski

Storm clouds and inversion



Jerry Lovatt

Peak 4495m (right) with its long N Ridge running down to the left.

An attempt on the 4495m peak to the SE of the Base Camp (above, seen from NW) was eventually made on 1st September by its North Ridge, via the col to the east of the camp. Three of the team climbed in 'zero' visibility and gently falling snow for 3 kilometers along and around a series of loose granite towers. Jerry and Rick remained to place a camp at c3900m, a few hundred meters below the point where the North Ridge joins the summit dome of the mountain. After an initial sortie the next day, they too retreated, in the face of a 10cm of new snow over tottering granite blocks.



Richard Wojtaszewski

High point lies in dip between rocky ridge and snow.

The weather was beautiful that day, and remained so for the 5 day journey back to the roadhead, where we arrived on the 7th September.

Itinerary

| day | date | | overnight | activity |
|-----------|--------|--|---------------|-----------------|
| Saturday | 13-Aug | | flight | flight |
| Sunday | 14-Aug | | Urumqi | flight |
| Monday | 15-Aug | | Urumqi | preparations |
| Tuesday | 16-Aug | | Wenchuan | drive in |
| Wednesday | 17-Aug | | Sirgdavan | walk in day 1 |
| Thursday | 18-Aug | | Valley 2 | walk in day 2 |
| Friday | 19-Aug | | Paradise | walk in day 3 |
| Saturday | 20-Aug | | Lower Ak-Tash | walk in day 4 |
| Sunday | 21-Aug | | Lower Ak-Tash | bad weather |
| Monday | 22-Aug | | Base Camp | walk in day 5 |
| Tuesday | 23-Aug | | Base Camp | rest day |
| Wednesday | 24-Aug | | Base Camp | bad weather |
| Thursday | 25-Aug | | Base Camp | bad weather |
| Friday | 26-Aug | | Upper Camp | attempt Pk 5024 |
| Saturday | 27-Aug | | Base Camp | attempt Pk 5024 |
| Sunday | 28-Aug | | Base Camp | bad weather |
| Monday | 29-Aug | | Base Camp | bad weather |
| Tuesday | 30-Aug | | Base Camp | bad weather |
| Wednesday | 31-Aug | | Base Camp | bad weather |
| Thursday | 1-Sep | | Camp 3900 | attempt Pk 4495 |
| Friday | 2-Sep | | Base Camp | attempt Pk 4495 |
| Saturday | 3-Sep | | Lower Ak-Tash | walk out day 1 |
| Sunday | 4-Sep | | Paradise | walk out day 2 |
| Monday | 5-Sep | | Valley 2 | walk out day 3 |
| Tuesday | 6-Sep | | Sirgdavan | walk out day 4 |
| Wednesday | 7-Sep | | Wenchuan | walk out day 5 |
| Thursday | 8-Sep | | Urumqi | drive out |
| Friday | 9-Sep | | Urumqi | spare day |
| Saturday | 10-Sep | | flight | flight |
| Sunday | 11-Sep | | home | |