



Peak 6,410m (Liligo Peak), Attempt and Tragedy

Pakistan, Karakoram, Baltoro Muztagh

Peak 6,410m from the west-southwest. The two Chinese attempting the first ascent appear to have fallen from the horizontal rocky section of ridge facing the camera, before the final summit pyramid. Photo by: Pakistan Army Aviation High Altitude Squadron

In June a three-member Chinese team planned to make the first ascent of Peak 6,410m at the southeastern head of the Liligo Glacier. This sharp, attractive summit is sometimes called Liligo Peak, although several other peaks above the glacier are also referred to by this name. Success would have meant the first Chinese ascent of a virgin peak in Pakistan. (It is not known if this summit had been attempted prior to 2019.) Unfortunately, the two climbers who attempted the peak never returned.

While Ho Yui Keung remained in camp on the Liligo Glacier, Ng Ka-Kit and Li Haoxin appear to have climbed the north face of Peak 6,410m to reach the west-southwest ridge. They were in contact with base camp on June 14, their last reported position at around 6,000m. The following morning they contacted Ho, who was in advanced base, and that afternoon they were spotted at between 5,800m and 5,900m.

When the two had not returned to base camp by the 17th, an alarm was issued through the Chinese embassy. The following day two Ecureuil helicopters from the Pakistan Army picked up the third climber and flew south up the Liligo Glacier on a SAR mission. Unfortunately, very low cloud cover prevented visibility, and the aircraft retreated. The following day they flew again and spent 90 minutes searching the area without spotting the climbers. However, they did spot a sleeping bag (and possibly part of a tent) on the glacier at around 5,200m, which the third climber confirmed belonged to one of his two friends. The rescue team returned to the site on the 22nd to look for the bodies, the assumption being that they might still be inside the sleeping bags. However, the site had by now been buried by avalanche. Over a two-day period, the Chinese community raised around \$150,000 to cover rescue costs, and \$4,000 was left in Pakistan to encourage another attempt later in the summer.

On July 11, a local guide went to advanced base camp at 5,000m but could see no objects visible in the avalanche debris. A longtime climbing partner of the two stricken climbers, Huang Siyuan, flew to Pakistan in late July with friends, and together with local porters reached advanced base on the 31st. Scanning the area with binoculars and a drone, they were able to see equipment—and rockfall tracks—at 5,200m. The gear was recovered on August 3, but the search for the bodies stopped in early morning due to rockfall danger. Next day the team returned with probes and discovered the bodies, which were taken to Skardu by military helicopter on the 5th.

– Information from Xia Zhongming, Germany, and ShamyI Sharafat Ali, France

Images



Peak 6,410m from the west-southwest. The two Chinese attempting the first ascent appear to have fallen from the horizontal rocky section of ridge facing the camera, before the final summit pyramid.



Helicopter view of part of the west-southwest ridge of Peak 6,410m in poor weather.



Looking southeast from Trango II: The high peak is Masherbrum (7,821m), and Peak 6,410m is the attractive sharp summit toward the right side of the picture, at the head of the Liligo Glacier.

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