



## **Gasherbrum I (8,068m), Winter Tragedy**

Asia, Pakistan, Baltoro Muztagh

At 10:30 a.m. on March 9, 2012, as Polish climbers Bielecki and Golab were descending from the summit of Gasherbrum I, having made the first winter ascent, Austrian Gerfreid Goeschl contacted his home country by satellite phone to say that he, Cedric Hahlen (Switzerland), and the accomplished Pakistani mountaineer Nisar Hussain Sadpara were 450m from the summit. They were close to completing a partially new line via the west-southwest face and southeast ridge. Three and a half hours later another expedition member, Alex Txikon (Spain), who was at Camp 2 (thought to be ca 6,800m), spotted them high on the peak, maybe as within 250m of the top. They have not been seen since.

With Txikon and Canadian Louis Rousseau, Goeschl attempted a winter ascent of Gasherbrum I in February and March 2011. Their planned route was partially new, following the couloir and ridge close to the right edge of the triangular rock face that forms the left side of the west-southwest face of Hidden Sud (Gasherbrum South, 7,069m, see [AAJ 2011](#), with route-line photo). They were stopped by bullet-hard ice at 6,650m after climbing 1,500m of new ground.

Goeschl returned in the summer and climbed the mountain by the Normal Route. In winter 2012 the team completed the 2011 line, which reaches the top of the triangle at 6,800m. From there they continued to the upper section of the southeast ridge, joining the original American Route at 7,500m. Given the conditions experienced by the Poles during their descent, it is surmised that when the bad weather struck, Goeschl, Hahlen, and Sadpara were caught by strong winds and blown off the mountain.

Although a rescue helicopter was called in immediately, continuing poor weather meant flights were repeatedly canceled, and it wasn't until the 15th that a weather window in the upper Baltoro allowed Askari Aviation to look for the missing climbers. A helicopter flew to 7,000m, studying the line of ascent, and later the Normal Route up the Japanese Couloir. There was no trace of the three, and after discussions with Wolfgang Goeschl, the brother of Gerfreid, who had arrived in Skardu that day, further searches were abandoned. The helicopter landed at base camp and evacuated the two frostbitten Polish climbers.

Goeschl came from a mountaineering family, his father having made the first ascent, in 1968, of the well-known 7,257m Karakoram peak Diran. Gerfreid had climbed seven 8,000ers, including Everest without supplementary oxygen, and in 2009 completed a partially new route on Nanga Parbat.

Hahlen, an aspirant guide, had climbed K2, Broad Peak (foresummit), and Kangchenjunga, and in 2006 made the first ascent of the north (Chinese) face of Gasherbrum II East (7,772m), with Hans Mitterer and Ueli Steck. Sadpara was one of three professional Pakistani mountaineers to have climbed all five 8,000m peaks in the country.

## Images

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