

## RAKAPOSHI RANGE

*Spantik, new route on northwest face.* Koreans Kim Hyung-il, Kim Pal-bong, and Min Jun-young completed a new route on the northwest face of Spantik (7,027m) in mid-July. The Korean route, which they graded VI WI4 M8, ascends steep snow to a difficult band of rock and mixed climbing near the top of the face, right of the famed Golden Pillar. The climbers spent five days on the face, from July 8 to 12, and needed another two days to climb to the summit via the gentle southwest ridge and descend to base camp.

This is believed to be the first alpine-style new route by Koreans on a peak taller than 7,000m; the climbers carried just two 100m ropes and left only two snow pickets on the mountain. A full report on their ascent may be found earlier in this *Journal*.

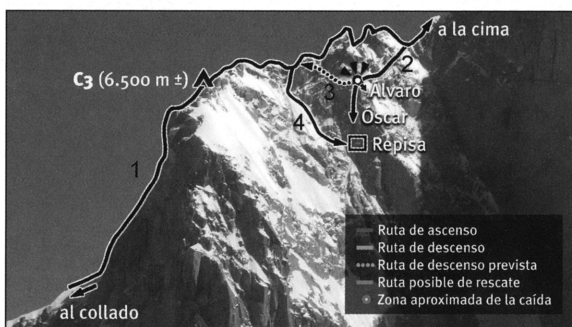
Japanese climbers Kazuaki Amano, Fumitaka Ichimura, and Yusuke Sato repeated the British route (Fowler-Saunders, 1987) on the Golden Pillar of Spantik, reaching the summit on July 12, one day before the Koreans. Both parties descended via the prominent snow and ice buttress far to the right of the pillar.

## PANMAH MUZTAGH

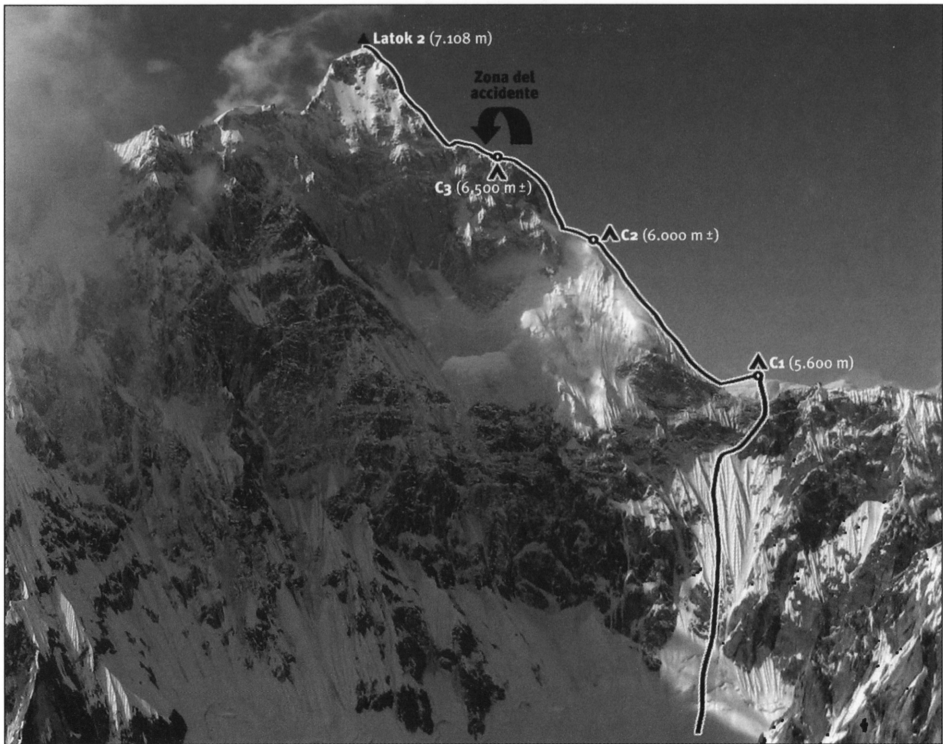
*Latok II, northwest ridge, first integral ascent and tragedy.* In early August, Spanish climbers Álvaro Novellón and Óscar Pérez did the first complete ascent of the northwest ridge of Latok II (7,108m). This remarkable climb ended in tragedy, however, when a fall during the descent severely injured Pérez. With his partner unable to move, Novellón descended alone and called for help; an international rescue mobilized, but rescuers were unable to reach Pérez's position.

The pair first attempted the north ridge of Latok I, reaching only about 5,800m in very poor snow conditions. After switching

objectives to Latok II, on August 2 they began climbing on the northeast side of the ridge. They bivied that night on the 5,600m col between Latok II and Ogre II (Peak 6,950m). Climbing alpine-style directly up the ridge, they bivied again at 6,000m and 6,500m, where they left their tent and sleeping bags. Slow going forced an open bivy at 7,000m, before they reached the top on August 6.



(1) The northwest ridge of Latok II. (2) The line taken by Novellón and Pérez during their descent from the summit in order to avoid the complex ridgcrest. After they fell, Novellón lowered Pérez to a ledge (box labeled "Repisa") and traversed to Camp 3 for supplies. The next day he returned to Pérez with their sleeping bags and food, and then traversed back to the ridge and descended alone over one and a half days. (3) The pair's planned traverse route back to Camp 3. (4) The line rescuers hoped to follow to reach Pérez. Sebastian Alvaro, courtesy of Desnivel



Latok II from the northeast, showing the line of the first complete ascent of the northwest ridge, by Álvaro Novellón and Óscar Pérez. Previous attempts had approached the saddle on the right from the south, on the opposite side. In 1997 two Germans ascended the west face to reach the ridge at ca 6,600m and followed it to the summit. The black arrow points to the site of the accident that cost Pérez his life during the descent in 2009. *Sebastian Alvaro, courtesy of Desnivel*

The accident occurred as they descended toward their Camp 3. To avoid a complicated passage on the ridgcrest, they deviated onto the southwest face. While traversing unstable snow, Pérez fell and pulled them both off. The rope snagged on a ridge of snow and caught them, but Pérez could not move. After lowering his partner to a ledge, Novellón climbed to Camp 3 to recover their sleeping bags, food, and fuel; however, a storm forced him to spend the night there before returning to his partner. Unable to lower Pérez any farther, Novellón descended alone, using a cut rope to make dozens of 30m rappels down more than 1,600m of complicated terrain. This took a day and a half.

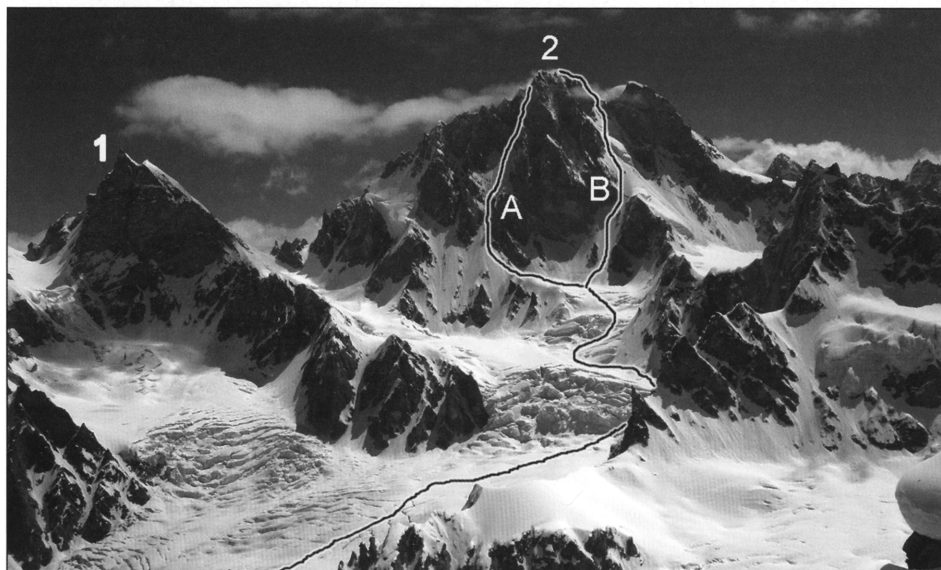
When Novellón reached base camp on August 8, he called his climbing club in Spain, El Pena Guara de Huesca, which began organizing a rescue. By August 14 a group of experienced climbers, including Spanish ace Jordi Corominas and American Fabrizio Zangrilli, plus a number of high-altitude porters, had set up a base camp on the Biafo Glacier, on the opposite side of the mountain from Novellón's camp. By the 15th the rescuers had fixed ropes to the col from the south, hoping to continue up the northwest ridge and reach Pérez. However, the weather turned bad on the 16th, making climbing and helicopter flights too dangerous. Given the length of time Pérez had been alone on the mountain, the rescue was called off.

Starting in the mid-1970s, several British teams had attempted the northwest ridge, approaching it from the south, and in 1987 a party led by Joe Brown reached a high point of about 6,800m. In 1997 Germans Franz Fendt and Christian Schlesener climbed the west face to 6,000m and then diagonaled left up a snow and ice couloir to reach the northwest ridge at 6,600m. From here, they continued to the summit, completing the third ascent of Latok II. However, no team had climbed the full ridge nor attempted the ridge from the north. Novellón said the northwest ridge was 2,400m high, with about 3,000m of climbing distance; the difficulties were VI 6a M6.

DOUGALD MACDONALD, *from information compiled by Desnivel*

*Editor's note: An interview with Álvaro Novellón about this climb, the accident, and his difficult descent can be found at [aaj.AmericanAlpineClub.org](http://aaj.AmericanAlpineClub.org).*

*Latok IV, new route to just below northwest summit.* Ondrej Mandula and I climbed a new route on the southwest side of Latok IV (6,456m) in July. We established advanced base camp four or five hours up the Baintha Lukpar Glacier from our base camp by the Biafo Glacier. The next day we crossed the heavily crevassed glacier under the southwest face of Latok IV and bivouacked without a tent on a small ridge at about 5,600m. We began climbing at 3 a.m. in the obvious gully system splitting the left side of the face. The first 200m was easy 50° snow, which we simul-climbed. We belayed as it got steeper (60°–70°) and icier. About 100m below the top, an overhanging chimney blocked the way. To bypass this we climbed rock on the right (crux), followed by a pitch with a 5m vertical ice chimney and then a nice mixed pitch to the summit



(1) Latok V (6,190m) and (2) Latok IV (6,456m), above the east arm of the Baintha Lukpar Glacier. (A) Czech Route (2009); (B) Japanese Route (Okano-Omiya, 1980). During the latter climb, Motomu Omiya made the first ascent of both the northwest (main) and southeast summits of Latok IV. The northwest peak has not been climbed again. *Martin Horak*