

Search Called off for 2 Missing American Climbers

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This undated photo shows climber Scott Adamson. Two well-known Utah climbers are missing in Pakistan where they were attempting to make a treacherous ascent up an icy mountain. Alpinists Kyle Dempster and Adamson were due back at base camp on Friday, Aug. 26, 2016, after they left five days earlier to begin an ascent up the north face of a place called “Ogre II” off the Choktoi Glacier in northern Pakistan, said Jonathan Thesenga of Black Diamond Equipment. Snowy and cloudy conditions are hindering rescue efforts that began Sunday, he said. (Nathan Smith/Pull Photography via AP)

The families of two well-known Utah climbers who went missing on an icy mountain peak in Pakistan called off the search for them Saturday.

Jonathan Thesenga, a representative for one of the climber’s sponsors, said the families of Kyle Dempster and Scott Adamson made the “extremely difficult decision” based on how much time had passed and the continuously stormy weather.

Search team members as well as expert observers agreed the chances of finding any sign of the two were extremely slim, said Thesenga, global sports marketing manager for Utah-based Black Diamond Equipment, which was sponsoring Dempster.

According to Thesenga, the Pakistani military conducted exhaustive sweeps over the men’s likely descent route with two helicopters. The aircraft also flew over where they were last seen. Saturday was the first day that the weather was clear enough for flyovers.

A rescue effort was launched last Sunday near northern Pakistan’s Choktoi Glacier after the men failed to return Aug. 26 to base camp.

Thesenga says the two left base camp Aug. 21 to begin their ascent. Their cook, at base camp, spotted their head lamps about halfway up the peak on the second day. On the third day, though, snowy and cloudy temperatures rolled in that have socked in the area, he said.

Dempster, 33, and Adamson, 34, both of Utah, are two of the most accomplished alpinists of their generation. Dempster is a two-time winner of the coveted climbing award, Pioletts d’Or. He last won in 2013 for a climb he did with others in the same area in Pakistan.

They were attempting a climb never before done on the north face of a peak known as Ogre II. It is part of a grouping of mountains called Baintha Brakk.

The peak has only been reached once before, by a Korean team in the 1980s via a less difficult route, Thesenga said.

Last year, Dempster and Adamson nearly died trying the same climb. Adamson broke his leg after a 100-foot fall and the two fell again 400 feet while trying to get down the mountain. He said the duo hoped they had learned from their mistakes during the near-death experience to make it this time, Thesenga said.

Dempster and Adamson have made careers of climbing peaks from Pakistan to Alaska. In a video posted on the Black Diamond website, Dempster talks about the risk of his daring sport.

“It’s a journey to something that inspires you,” Dempster said. “On that journey, you go through the feeling of fear and to an eventual outcome. You use your pool of experience and common sense and intuition to help make decisions and mitigate the dangers.”