

Expeditionreport

(extract)

Arctic Summits Expedition

East Greenland 2008



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EAST GREENLAND 2008

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Expedition Leader:

Georg Csak

Hauptstr. 37, D-82237 Würthsee

GeorgCsak@ArcticSummits.de

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3.3 Expedition Summary (English)

Greenland, Knud Rasmussens Land Ranges, Watkins Mountains, Gronau Nunatakker, Paul Stern Land. Greenland Top 4 by ski and several first ascents. In April/May 2008 Georg Csak and Dominik Rind, members of the DAV (Deutscher Alpenverein), were the first German expedition to summit the 4 highest peaks in Greenland (up to 3693 m) and the first ever to also descend all four of the highest mountains north of the Arctic Circle on skis. Further, six first ascents in the *Gronau Nunatakker* and *Knud Rasmussens mountain ranges* added to the success of the "Arctic Summits Expedition".



Ski descent from Dome 3683m, *Dominik Rind*

In order to reach Greenland's remote mountain ranges we covered 321 km on skis across the inland ice. We also used snowkites to advance in a speedy manner, but only on a few days, conditions were actually suitable for kiting. Since the expedition was fully self-supported, we pulled all our equipment and food supplies in pulka-sleds, each weighing in excess of 100 kg to start off with.

The starting point of our expedition was Nerlerit Inaat (Constabel Point) in East Greenland. The chartered helicopter dropped us off on the icecap at position N69:30 W028:00. With stable high pressure influence, weather conditions were perfect to start our five-and-a-half-weeks-adventure, during which we were not going to see anybody but ourselves. In the beginning we were advancing quickly on a rock-solid and smooth surface. This was about to change soon. We encountered sastrugis (snowobstacles shaped by the wind) that slowed us down considerably. To make up for the lost time we walked late into the nights and as such were able to reach the first mountain ranges in *Rasmussens Land* after a few days.

As planned we achieved three first ascents in *Rasmussens Land* (names provisional): "Vollmondspitze (Full Moon Peak)" (2793m, N69:17.7 W028:47.3, NW ridge und W flank, PD+), "Peak Leni" (2554m, N69:16.2 W029:08.6, SW flank und NW ridge, AD+), "Geodom Pyramide" (2823m, N69:13.2 W029:09.7, NW ridge, D-). We also climbed the highest mountain in *Rasmussens Land*: unnamed (3073m, N69:13.0 W029:31.1, S flank, F), but believe this to be a second ascent. All ascents comprised ice climbs of mostly 40 degrees with passages of 60 degrees, on one occasion through combined terrain and rocks grade II, with the exposed terrain and numerous covered crevasses requiring the use of extreme caution.



Geodom Pyramide, 2823m, NW ridge, *Georg Csak*



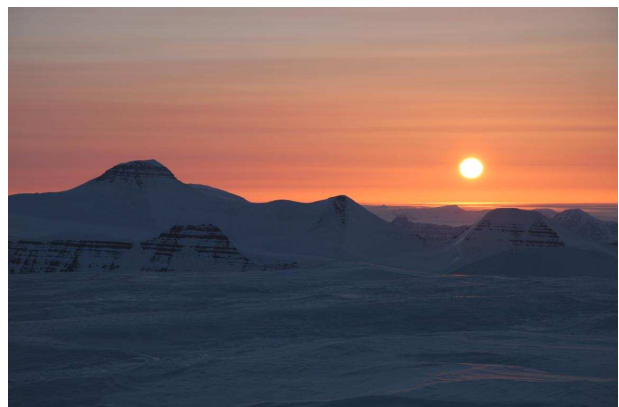
After this first success we continued our route towards the *Watkins Mountains*. We reached the highest range in Greenland on day 14 of our expedition. We climbed the summits of the top three with relative ease: Gunnbjørn Fjeld (3693m), Dome (3683m) and Cone (3669m). Mostly PD, with 40 degree ice climbs, all those ascents however were extremely long and strenuous, ice conditions were poor. Frequently we had to climb very hard blue ice, which is fairly unusual at this altitude in Greenland. This may be due to an extraordinarily warm summer, the year before. Descending on skis right from the summit was rather risky. We therefore ensured, to always carry an ice axe in one hand for safety.

Climbing Paul Emile Victor (3609m) – Greenland's No. 4 – was one of the expedition highlights. PEV had only been climbed five times so far. We chose to climb it via the Western route - a first ascent route, and the most difficult one to summit this mountain to date. We started out from the Dome/Cone base camp (!) by climbing Deception Dome (3526m, PD+). With perfectly blue skies this was a wonderful ascent. Massive seracs, a huge labyrinth through towering ice, and a steep face made it a challenging climb, which was rewarded by breathtaking views across the entire *Watkins Mountains*. From the summit we descended SW to pass over a 5 km long and exposed ridgeline,



Deception Dome, 3526m, summit cornice, *Georg Csak*

which we named „Jubiläumsgrad" (Jubilation Ridge, 3520m) – in remembrance of the famous ridge in the Wetterstein Mountains in the Alps. Climbing off this ridge and traversing to the base of the PEV West face, proved to be the key passage of this trip: an ice climb of 60 degrees, mostly D-, with bad ice conditions and crevasses forcing several detours. The ascent of the PEV W flank itself was AD- and we reached the summit of PEV at 2319 local time. We enjoyed watching a magnificent midnight sun, before skiing down the W flank. On our way back across "Jubilation Ridge" however the weather deteriorated severely – we had never experienced anything like that! Within one hour around 0200 o'clock the visibility decreased immensely, a storm broke loose and it started to snow – total white out. We were hardly able to see each other at the other end of the rope. Without contours even widely open crevasses could hardly be recognized one meter in front of our feet! Centimeter by centimeter we advanced downhill from Deception Dome, for 1300 meters in altitude, trying to locate crevasses with our poles and axes. Our compass, the climb gradient and our memories of the ascent were the only available navigation tools. The serac zone we had to traverse took forever. We were extremely tired and exhausted by that time. During the ascent in fine weather we neither considered to take GPS fixes and save the key positions, nor did we use marking flags in order to find our way back through the serac labyrinth. Reaching the valley we were very



Gunnbjørn Fjeld (3693m) with midnight sun, seen from PEV (3609m), *Georg Csak*



happy that we had at least saved the GPS position of our tent, saving us from having to dig a snow cave for shelter. The bad weather continued for one and a half days, which we used to recover inside the tent. The climb of the fourth highest mountain north of the polar circle took us 28 hours!

Our primary expedition aims were now achieved. We left the *Watkins Mountains*, feeling very happy, setting off for the long march towards *Paul Stern Land*. With another 200 km to go, for sure a few more surprises would be awaiting us. We had to cross one of Greenland's biggest glaciers, *Christian IV*, which took us several days.

On the other side the Mountain range of the *Gronau Nunatak* was waiting for us. These mountains were discovered by the German pilot Wolfgang von Gronau in 1930 and have since been visited only four times by humans. It was hard work hauling the still heavy pulks 1000 meters up into our next base camp. But again we were rewarded: In the *Gronau Nunatak* we completed three first



Approaching the Gronau Nunatak across *Christian IV* glacier. 1st from left: *Wörthseespitze*, 3rd from left: *Pilotsbjerg*, *Georg Csak*

ascents to very prominent peaks (names provisional): "*Pilotsbjerg*" (2805m, N69.26.2 W030:13.0, N flank, PD), "*Wörthseespitze* (Mt. *Woerthsee*)" (2762m, N69:28.7 W030:18.2, E ridge, AD), "*Kirchl* (*Chappel Mountain*)" (2772m, N69:28.5 W030:15.4, W ridge, F).

On the route further up north we encountered changing weather all the time. Strong westerly winds enabled us to finally use our snowkites. At the rim of the icecap we had to be very careful, because of the huge crevasses, that are hard to discover in time while kiting at high speed. Most of the time it was a rough ride over uneven surface and fields of sastrugis. But we were very happy about our fast advance. One time the already strong wind changed into a *Pitera*q (extreme wind at high speed falling down from the icecap towards the coast) surprising us while kiting along at nighttime. Despite of all difficulties, we covered 80 km in only two days and reached *Paul Stern Land* earlier than expected.

In *Paul Stern Land* we placed the first cairn on what we named "*Tiger Nunatak*" (2048m, N70:24.8 W030:07.3). Whereas this is a steep rocky mountain seen from the East it was only a walk from our position on the inland ice, not worth being called a first ascent. Unfortunately bad weather prevented us from attempting further first ascents. Snowfall, storm and whiteouts forced us to stay inside the tent. The day of the planned pick-up came, but weather conditions made an aircraft landing impossible. The pick-up had to be postponed and we started to live on our emergency rations. After one full week the sky finally cleared and enabled the landing of a *Twin Otter* ski plane, which brought us back to *Nerlerit Inaat* .

For more pictures and details on our greenland mountain climbs see our expedition website www.ArcticSummits.de.

GEORG CSAK, *Deutscher Alpenverein*



3.4 Our Summit Climbs in Greenland

Gunnbjørn Fjeld (Hvitserk), 3693m

Watkins Mountains, N68:55.2 W029:53.9

Highest mountain in Greenland and the Arctic
(highest mountain North of the Arctic Circle)

First ascent 1935: A. Courtauld

Our ascent: 29.04.2008

Route: SW ridge (PD)

Ski descent (Csak)



Dome (Qaqqaq Johnson), 3683m

Watkins Mountains, N68:50.4 W029:55.4

Second-highest in Greenland

First ascent 1988: I. Olsson

Our ascent: 04.05.2008

Route: Crossing via E ridge (PD-)

Ski descent W ridge und S flank



Cone (Qaqqaq Kershaw), 3669m

Watkins Mountains, N68:52.3 W029:57.0

Third-highest in Greenland

First ascent 1988: I. Olsson

Our ascent: 05.05.2008

Route: Crossing via S flank (PD+)

Ski descent SW flank



PEV (Paul-Emile-Victor, Mound), 3609m

Watkins Mountains, N68:48.6 W029:33.1

Fourth-highest in Greenland

First Ascent 1988: J. Lowther (unconfirmed)

Second Ascent 1996: P. Grossman

Our ascent: 01.05.2008 (6th ascent in history)

Route: first via Deception Dome (PD+) und

Jubilation Ridge (D-)

First Ascent of W flank (AD-) and Ski descent





Deception Dome, 3526m

Watkins Mountains, N68:51.0 W29:37.5

Seventh-highest in Greenland

First Ascent 1988: J. Lowther (unconfirmed)

Second Ascent 2004: E. Nordahl

Our ascent: 01. and 02.05.2008 (3rd ascent in history)

Route: 2 crossings (PD+) on the way to and from PEV



Jubiläumsgrat (Jubilation Ridge), 3520m

Watkins Mountains

First crossing 01.05.2008: Csak/Rind

Route: 2 crossings (up to D-) on the way to and from PEV



Vollmondspitze (Full Moon Peak), 2793m

Rasmussens Bjerger, N69:17.7 W028:47.3

First Ascent 20.04.2008: Csak/Rind

Route: NW ridge und W flank (PD+)



Peak Leni, 2554m

Rasmussens Bjerger, N69:16.2 W029:08.6

First Ascent 21.04.2008: Csak/Rind

Route: SW flank und NW ridge (AD+)





Geodom Pyramide, 2823m

Rasmussens Bjerge, N69:13.2 W029:09.7

First Ascent 23.04.2008: Csak/Rind

Route: NW ridge (D-)



unknown, 3073m

Rasmussens Bjerge, N69:13.0 W029:31.1

highest mountain in Rasmussens Bjerge

First Ascent: unknown (possibly 1988: J. Lowther)

Second Ascent 25.04.2008: Csak/Rind

Route: S flank (F)



Pilotsbjerg, 2805m

Gronau Nunatakker, N69.26.2 W030:13.0

First Ascent 11.05.2008: Csak/Rind

Route: N flank (PD)



Wörthseespitze (Mt. Woerthsee), 2762m

Gronau Nunatakker, N69:28.7 W030:18.2

First Ascent 11.05.2008: Csak

Route: E ridge (AD)





Kirchl (Chappel Mountain), 2772m
Gronau Nunatakker, N69:28.5 W030:15.4

First Ascent 13.05.2008: Csak/Rind
Route: W ridge (F)
Ski descent (Csak)



Tiger Nunatak, 2048m
Paul Stern Land, N70:24.8 W030:07.3

20.05.2008: Csak
Route: from W (walk)

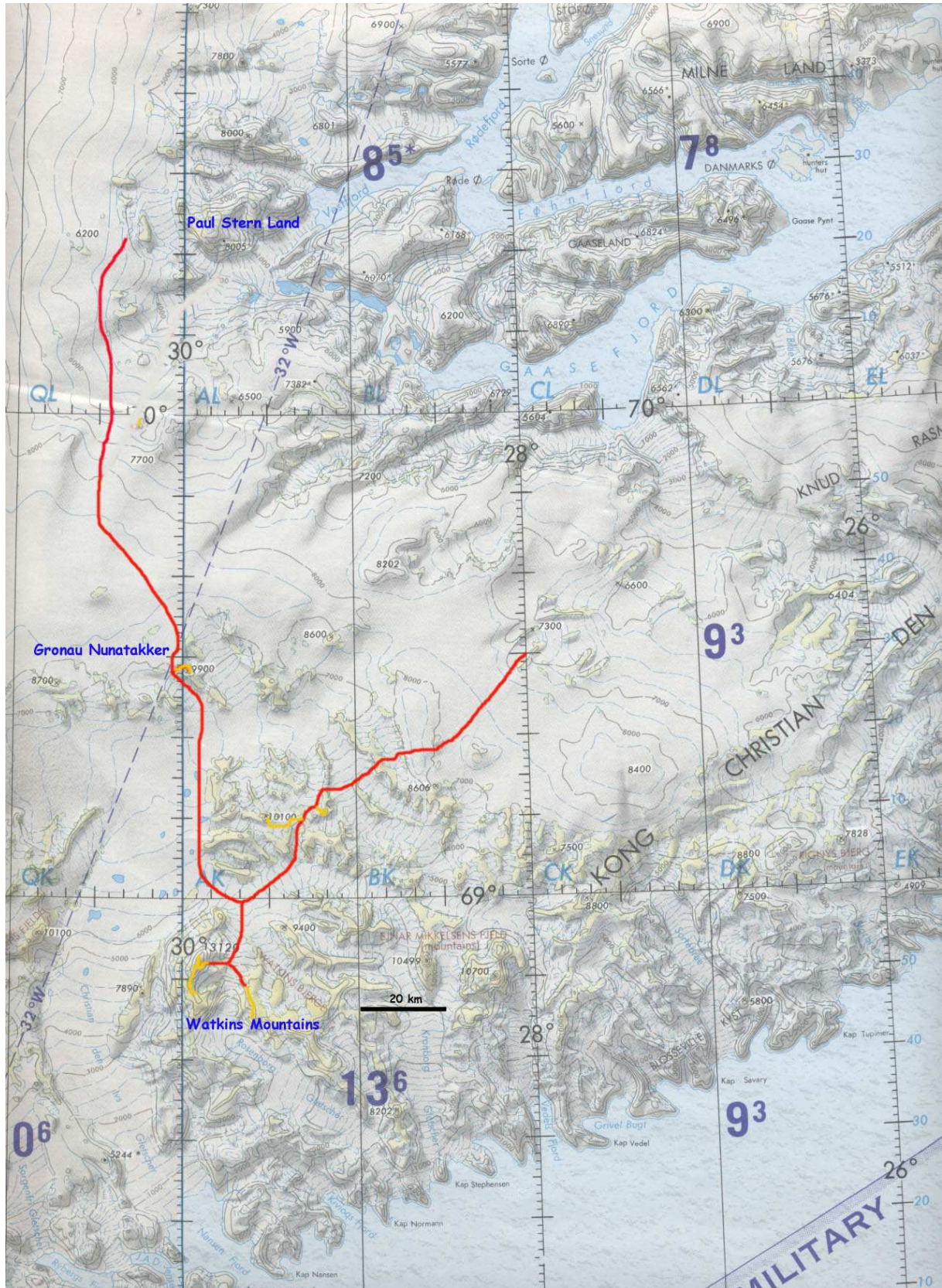


Mountain Coordinates					
Date	Mountain	Position	Height	Range	
20. April 2008	Vollmondspitze (Full Moon Peak)	69:17.7N 28:47.3W	2793m	Rasmussens Land	*
21. April 2008	Peak Leni	69:16.2N 29:08.6W	2554m	Rasmussens Land	*
23. April 2008	Geodom Pyramide	69:13.2N 29:09.7W	2823m	Rasmussens Land	*
25. April 2008	unknown	69:13.0N 29:31.1W	3073m	Rasmussens Land	
29. April 2008	Gunnbjørn Fjeld (Hvitserk)	68:55.2N 29:53.9W	3693m	Watkins Mountains	
01. Mai 2008	Deception Dome	68:51.0N 29:37.5W	3526m	Watkins Mountains	
01. Mai 2008	Jubiläumsglat (Jubilation Ridge)		3520m	Watkins Mountains	*
01. Mai 2008	PEV (Paul-Emile-Victor, Mound)	68:48.6N 29:33.1W	3609m	Watkins Mountains	
04. Mai 2008	Dome (Qaqqaq Johnson)	68:50.4N 29:55.4W	3683m	Watkins Mountains	
05. Mai 2008	Cone (Qaqqaq Kershaw)	68:52.3N 29:57.0W	3669m	Watkins Mountains	
11. Mai 2008	Pilotsbjerg	69:26.2N 30:13.0W	2805m	Gronau Nunatakker	*
11. Mai 2008	Wörthseespitze (Mt. Woerthsee)	69:28.7N 30:18.2W	2762m	Gronau Nunatakker	*
13. Mai 2008	Kirchl (Chappel Mountain)	69:28.5N 30:15.4W	2772m	Gronau Nunatakker	*
20. Mai 2008	Tiger Nunatakker	70:24.8N 30:07.3W	2048m	Paul Stern Land	*

* = First Ascent



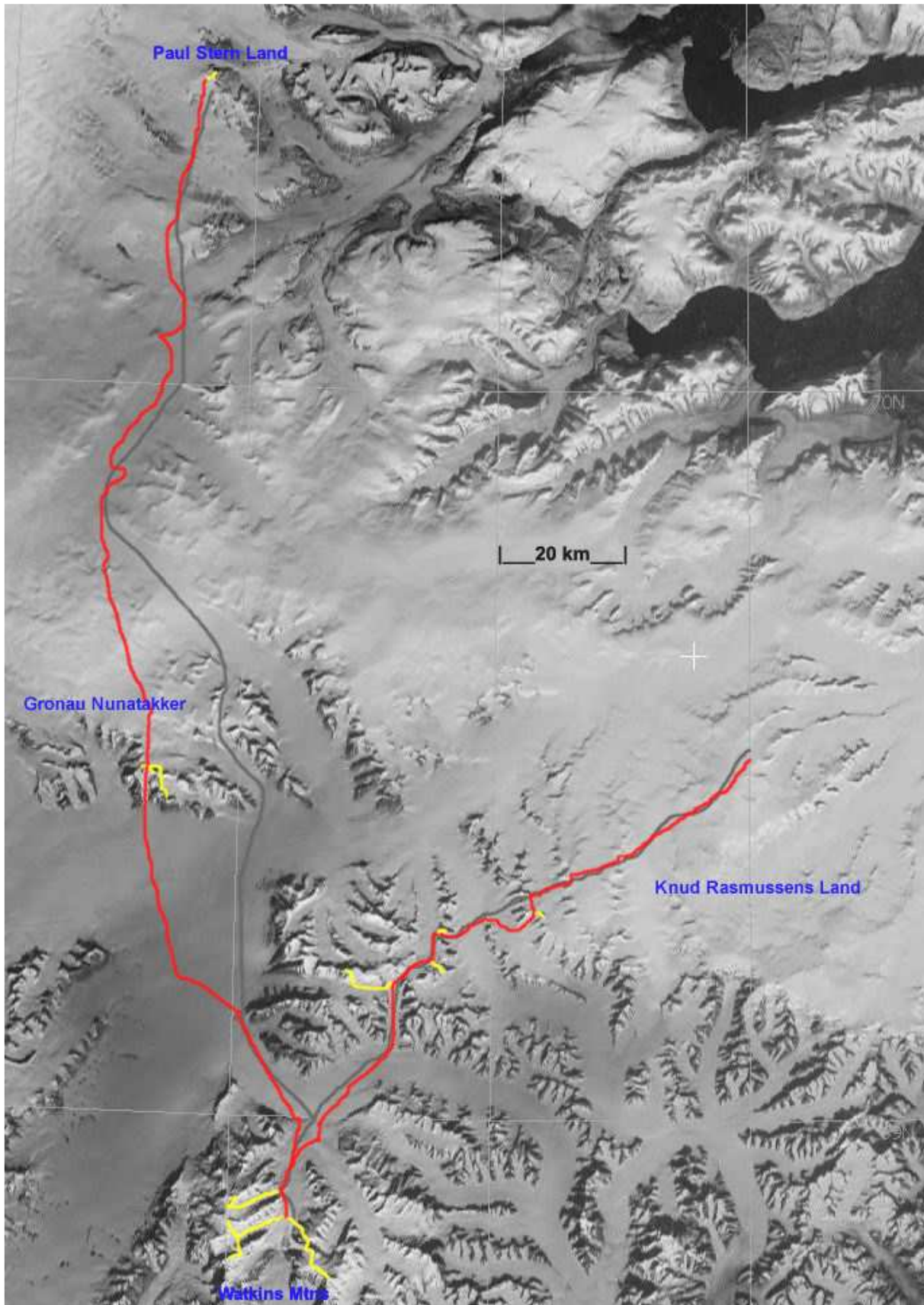
Appendix 5: Map - Planned Route 2008



ONC 1:1.000.000



Appendix 6: Satellite Picture - Actual Route 2008

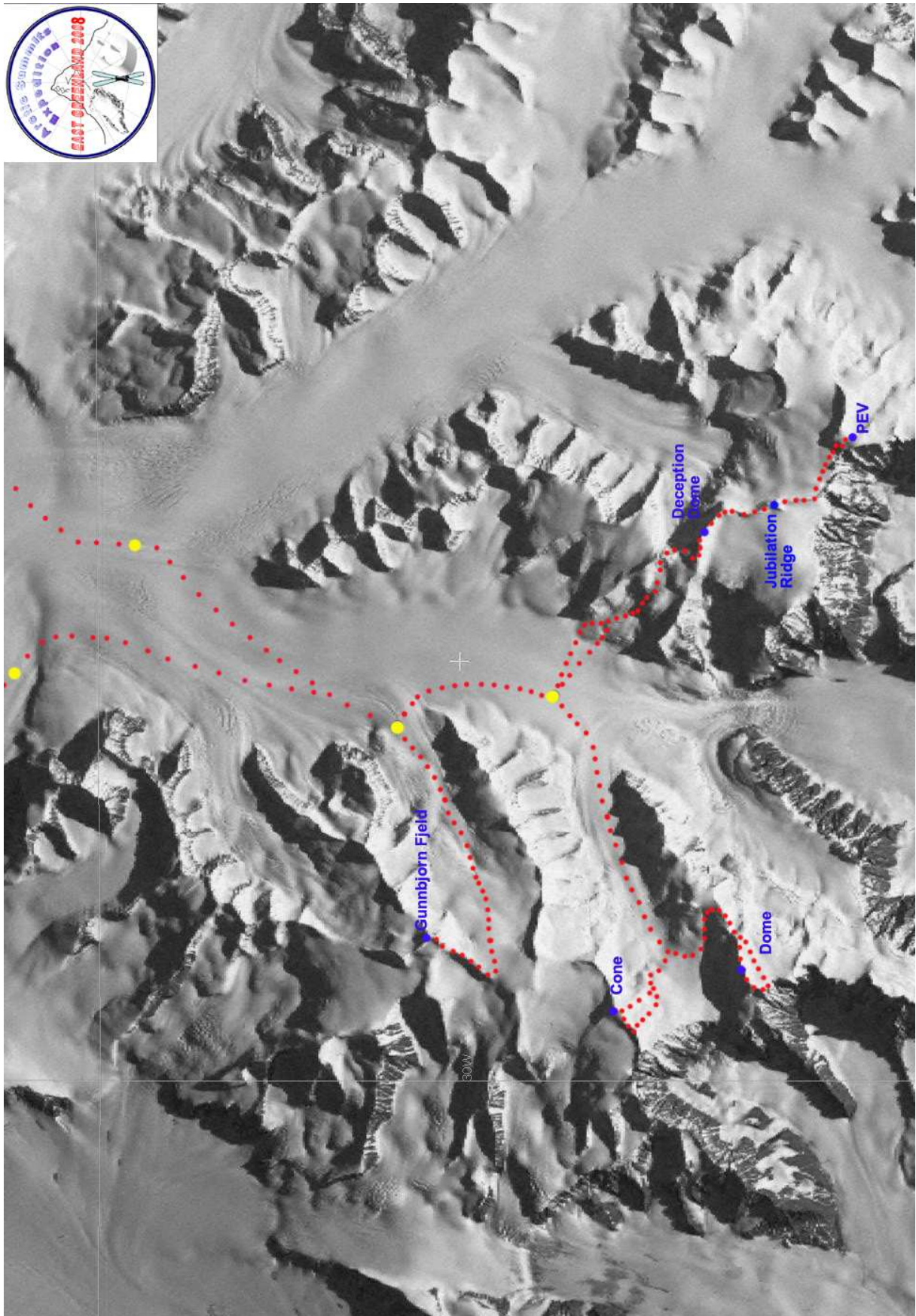


Landsat7 from NASA WorldWind

grey/red: planned/actual route
yellow: summit climbs



Appendix 7: Satellite Picture – Watkins Mountains Routes



Landsat7 aus NASA WorldWind



Appendix 8: Expedition Log Data Summary

Expedition Log Data Summary													
Date	ExpDay	Day Description	Clouds, Precip.	Temp °C Hi Low	Wind	Travel Distance km + m - m	Kite km	Mtn Climbs km +/- m	Time UTC Start Stop	Time Enroute	Camp Position	Height	Camp Description
Tu. 15. Apr	1	Expedition Start, MUC-REK									Reykjavik		
We. 16. Apr	2	REK-CNP	SCT	-9 -14					13:30 20:30	7:00	Constabel Point		
Th. 17. Apr	3	Set-out	SCT	-5 -16 S, light		12 200 0			12:30 21:15	8:45	69:27.0N 28:08.1W	2600	Ice Field plateau
Fr. 18. Apr	4	Crossing Camp Icefield	OVC->CLR	-2 -20 NW, light		15 190 235 1			11:15 21:30	10:15	69:22.4N 28:28.3W	2515	Prior high plateau
Sa. 19. Apr	5	Crossing Rasmussens Plateau	CLR	-2 -25		15 200 215			11:30 21:15	9:45	69:18.8N 28:49.2W	2500	Full Moon base camp
So. 20. Apr	6	Vollmondspitze first ascent	SCT->OVC	-2 -20		15 0 200			10:30 22:30	10:30	69:17.0N 28:55.9W	2300	Great Pyramide glacier
Mo. 21. Apr	7	Glacier crossing, Peak Leni f.a.	CLR	-0 -18		11 150 200			13:30 19:30	6:00	69:16.0N 29:09.4W	2250	Peak Leni base camp
Tu. 22. Apr	8	Lazy day	CLR	-5 -18		6 165 0			10:15 22:30	12:15	69:14.2N 29:11.3W	2415	Pyramide base camp
We. 23. Apr	9	Geodorm first ascent	CLR	-5 -21		8 100 315					69:12.2N 29:20.3W	2200	Kalfoch
Th. 24. Apr	10	Stormday in tent	Whiteout, +SN	0 -11 Var, light					13:00 22:30	9:30			
Fr. 25. Apr	11	Highest Mtn. in Rasmussens	SCT->CLR	-10 -27 N, storm				15 1100	14:00 21:30	7:30	69:05.3N 29:26.7W	1850	Glacier N of Watkins
Sa. 26. Apr	12	Leave Rasmussens Land	CLR	-11 -28 N, storm->calm		16 0 350			13:30 22:30	9:00	68:59.6N 29:38.3W	1950	Watkins Entrance
So. 27. Apr	13	Into the Watkins	SCT	-11 -28 W, light		15 100 0			13:30 21:15	7:45	68:55.3N 29:44.1W	2250	GBF base camp
Mo. 28. Apr	14	Dreadfull pulking to GBF base	SCT	-6 -24 W, light		12 300 0			10:15 21:45	11:30			
Tu. 29. Apr	15	Gurmbjorn Field	SCT	-11 -22 W, light			20 1450		14:00 15:15	1:15	68:53.4N 29:44.3W	2350	Watkins base camp 2
We. 30. Apr	16	Move base camp	CLR	-11 -19		4 100 0			9:00	28:00			
Th. 01. Mai	17	DecDome, PEV	CLR->SCT	-11 -18				28 1800					
Fr. 02. Mai	18	Stormday in tent	Whiteout, SN	-5 -15 N, strong					10:00 22:00	12:00			
Sa. 03. Mai	19	Stormday in tent	Whiteout, -SN	-5 -15 N, strong					14:00 24:00	11:00			
So. 04. Mai	20	Dome	SCT	-8 -18					15:30 24:00	8:30	69:01.1N 29:42.2W	1750	Ice Lake
Mo. 05. Mai	21	Come	OVC->SCT	-5 -18					13:00 22:00	9:00	69:09.6N 29:55.6W	1570	Christian IV
Tu. 06. Mai	22	Leaving the Watkins	CLR	-6 -20 S, light		16 0 600 2			15:00 22:30	7:30	69:14.9N 30:12.0W	1600	Christian IV middle
We. 07. Mai	23	Onto Christian IV	SCT	0 -11		19 0 180			14:00 22:15	8:15	69:22.9N 30:16.3W	1690	Christian IV bef. Gronau
Th. 08. Mai	24	Kite Christian IV	OVC->CLR	-11 -25 N, storm		16 30 0 11			13:30 22:15	8:45	69:28.9N 30:16.8W	2510	Devils Wind Pass
Fr. 09. Mai	25	2nd day Christian IV	CLR	-17 -31 N, mod		16 90 0			12:00 24:00	12:00			
Sa. 10. Mai	26	Ascend into Gronau Nunatakker	SCT	-13 -24 N, strong		12 820 0			10:30 23:30	13:00	69:44.7N 30:26.4W	2240	Glacier Hwy
So. 11. Mai	27	Pilotsbjerg, Woerthseesp. f.a.	OVC	-8 -16			18 850		15:00 09:00	12:00	70:07.6N 30:16.2W	1540	Vestford Glacier
Mo. 12. Mai	28	Stormday in tent	Whiteout, -SN	-3 -10 Var, light					18:30 22:45	4:15	70:12.2N 30:18.4W	1855	Episode Pass
Tu. 13. Mai	29	Kirch/ leave Gronau	OVC, -SN->BKN	-3 -7 W, light->storm		30 150 320 19 3 300			14:30 20:30	6:00	70:19.0N 30:13.7W	1500	Episode Glacier
We. 14. Mai	30	Kite Glacier Hwy	CLR	-8 -17 W, light->strong		48 50 750 34			16:00 21:45	5:45	70:24.8N 30:10.9W	1970	Finish Point
Th. 15. Mai	31	Evening Climb Episode Pass	CLR	-8 -15		9 315 0							
Fr. 16. Mai	32	Last Episode Glacier	SCT->OVC	-6 -8		14 100 450							
Sa. 17. Mai	33	Climb to A26	SCT->OVC, -SN	-7 -17		12 470 0							
So. 18. Mai	34	1st Stormday in tent	OVC, -SN	-8 -18									
Mo. 19. Mai	35	2nd Stormday in tent	OVC, -SN	-8 -18									
Tu. 20. Mai	36	3rd Stormday in tent, Tiger walk	OVC, -SN->SCT	-10 -23									
We. 21. Mai	37	4th Stormday in tent, walk	OVC, -SN->SCT	-11 -20									
Th. 22. Mai	38	5th Stormday in tent	OVC, -SN	-8 -18 NW, mod									
Fr. 23. Mai	39	16th Stormday in tent, walk	OVC, -SN->CLR	-8 -16 NW, mod->storm									
Sa. 24. Mai	40	Fly-out	SCT	-7 -14 NW, mod							Reykjavik		
So. 25. Mai	41	Reykjavik									home		
Mo. 26. Mai	42	REK-MUC											
					Total	321 3490 3815	67	152 10200					