



Press release

On Independence Day Kazakh mountain climbers planted the state flag on the highest peak in Antarctica

All Kazakhs will be presented a special gift for December 16. On Independence Day, the Kazakh flag will be planted on Mount Vinson, the highest peak in Antarctica (4,892 m), for the first time in the history of the country. Magzhan Sagimbayev and Ilyas Galimbekov, famous mountain climbers and participants of the polar expedition, accomplished speed climbing to the peak Mount Vinson in spite of weather conditions. Before the ascent, when every day counted, the climbers had had to wait out the fog and snow storm for a few days.

Magzhan Sagimbayev, the expedition leader and head of QazaqGeography regional office in Almaty: "It took us six months to get our bodies and minds ready for the climb. Accomplishing the ascent was a huge emotional uplift for us. It is one thing to climb just for the hell of it, but it's quite another one when you do it for your country's sake. I'm proud both of Ilyas and myself that we managed to give such a gift to all Kazakhs on Independence Day".

Ilyas Galimbekov, a participant: "The weather made the ascent hard. Now that I'm standing on top of Mount Vinson, I'm grateful to me and my partner that we finally made it. We thank everyone who supported us all the time!"

Readers should recall that the expedition consists of two parts.

The first part which included the ascent and planting the flags is done. Its geographic location makes Mount Vinson one of the hardest to climb within the 7 Summits program. This year will be the 50th anniversary of the first climb to Mound Vinson. The successful climb of Magzhan Sagimbayev and Ilyas Galimbekov added yet another peak to our collection that already can boast the ascents of Elbrus and Aconcagua. The second stage begins in a few days. Athletes Magzhan Sagimbayev, Ilyas Galimbekov, Yury

Yushin, and researcher Daulet Sharipov, acting as a doctor, will start on the South Pole ski expedition. The athletes will complete a long distance march of 217 km.

Kanat Baigarin, Chairman of QazaqGeography Managing Council, vice president for science and innovation of Nazarbayev University: "QazaqGeography is one of the Pole of Independence organizers, which is a unique expedition in every sense. First, it is an eco-friendly expedition because its participants were skiing and not driving, which pollutes the environment. Second, the data collected during the expedition will establish a basis for forthcoming polar research. It will also allow Kazakhstan to initiate a proposal for the first Kazakh research station in Antarctica".

In the meantime, the Kazakh researchers have completed data collection in the Union Glacier Camp and are coming back to Kazakhstan now. Research will be continued in the labs of Nazarbayev University, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University.

Nurlan Abduov, QazaqGeography vice president for Tourism, Travelling, and Local History: "We had long been dreaming of planting the flag of Kazakhstan in Antarctica on Independence Day as part of our expedition. In 2011, after we had completed our first South Pole expedition, we made a promise to come back after 5 years, on the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence. We express gratitude to our partners for their support and belief, special thanks to Karim Masimov, Chairman of QazaqGeography Guardian Council, and the management of Baiterek National Managing Holding.

Readers should recall that the Pole of Independence expedition consists of Magzhan Sagimbaev, leader of the group, climbers Ilyas Galimbekov and Yuri Yushin, researchers Aliya Ernazarova, Arman Baimukhamedov, and Daulet Sharipov. The expedition consists of 25 persons, thus symbolizing the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan's Independence. Since 2010, Nurlan Abduov has been coordinating the Arctic and Antarctic programs. This has been our third expedition over the six years. The first one entered the Guinness Book of Records as being the shortest; in 2014 following its results and the cooperation with the state authorities, the President signed an executive order joining Kazakhstan to the Antarctic Treaty (1959). Fifteen Kazakhs have visited the Arctic and Antarctica, six of them visited the North and South Poles.

It is expected that, following the expedition, Kazakhstan will propose establishing an automated research station in Antarctica.

The Pole of Independence expedition is held under the auspices of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, with support from the Republican Public Association Kazakhstan National Geographic Society (QazaqGeography). Baiterek National Managing Holding is the general partner of the project, whereas among its partners there are Nazarbayev University, Al-Farabi Kazakhstan National University, and Asfendiyarov Kazakhstan National Medical University. The research expedition is organized by Kazakh Geographic Society (QazaqGeography), a public association.

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