

Pretext

The GMHM (High Military Mountaineering Group)

IN **INFLEXIONS 2006/2 No 3**, PAGES 27 TO 31

PUBLISHER **ARMÉE DE TERRE**

ISSN 1772-3760

ISBN 9782110061386

DOI 10.3917/infle.003.0027

Uploaded: 06/21/2019

Article available online at

<https://shs.cairn.info/journal-inflexions-2006-2-page-27?lang=en>



Discover the contents of this issue, follow the journal by email, subscribe...
Scan this QR code to access the page for this issue on Cairn.info.



Electronic distribution Cairn.info for Armée de terre.

You are authorized to reproduce this article within the limits of the terms of use of Cairn.info or, where applicable, the terms and conditions of the license subscribed to by your institution. Details and conditions can be found at cairn.info/copyright.

Unless otherwise provided by law, the digital use of these resources for educational purposes is subject to authorization by the Publisher or, where applicable, by the collective management organization authorized for this purpose. This is particularly the case in France with the CFC, which is the approved organization in this area.



PRETEXT

THE GMHM (MILITARY MOUNTAINEERING GROUP)

English translation

THE CONGRESS ON "EXCEPTIONAL SITUATIONS" HELD IN GRENOBLE WAS IN LINE WITH EVENTS MARKING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GMHM.

GMHM's mission is to fill the niche, on behalf of the army, of mastering extreme physical and climatic conditions in mountainous areas (steep topography in all latitudes and high altitude glaciers) and cold regions, in particular the Arctic and Antarctica. This includes:

- < Research, development and experimenting with equipment, techniques and required expertise with a view to possible applications in the field
- < Creating a breeding ground of experts in extreme conditions for specialist missions
- < Contributing towards the army's renown. In this respect, the GMHM is like the "army's Patrol of France".

To fulfil this mission, the GMHM, which consists of around ten men—officers, non-commissioned-officers and ranked soldiers—attached to the Military School of Mountaineering in Chamonix, performs all kinds of mountaineering, including its 3-D extensions (hang-gliding, paragliding and base jumping, for example).

Since its creation in 1976 by General Pierre Laurens, commander of the 27th alpine division, the GMHM has been at the forefront of advances in French and international mountaineering.

The first ten years of its existence were greatly influenced by Captain then Battalion leader and Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Claude Marmier, who played a leading role in the profound changes to French mountaineering brought about in the 70s. At his dynamic instigation, the GMHM became a breeding ground for pioneers in extreme mountaineering. During this

period, all the major alpine routes were climbed, with the first climbers conquering the last major winter routes on the Mont-Blanc massif and new horizons explored in Greenland, the Himalayas from the Chinese side, India, Sikkim and Nepal, Canada's Far North and Alaska.

With Captain Alain Estève who took over the helm in 1986, the Group's activities expanded to include high-altitude paragliding; the GMHM is one of the main contributors to the growth of this sport, establishing a number of records in the Himalayas and Andes.

On 9 October 1993, the Group conquered Everest with 5 men reaching the summit while also managing a solo climb of Lhotse, the 4th highest peak on Earth.

On 25 April 1996, following a 55-day expedition in complete autonomy from the North coast of Siberia, 4 men from the Group reached the North Pole.

On 9 January 1999, 5 men reached the South Pole, after 50 days crossing the Antarctic continent, once again in complete autonomy.

Three members of the Group were thereby able to meet the challenge of the "3 poles".

Battalion leader Alain Estève, who initiated this challenge, would not see it through to the end: on 10 March 1997, the race to the summit which had been the race of his life, came to an abrupt end in a Scandinavian ice cascade. His name remains tied to this exceptional decade.

Captain Thierry Bolo, who took over the reins, would be among those to reach the South Pole.

Besides the exploits outlined above, the GMHM has continued to explore the mountains of the world, always looking to take up new challenges, symbolic of courage, selflessness, love of exertion, style, will to win, solidarity and the ability to master extreme situations, virtues which the army holds dear.

While we have been successful most of the time, cruel fate has sometimes struck to remind us that you don't overstep limits with impunity.

Since 2005 and until 2009, the GMHM has been on a round-the-world tour, organising an expedition on each

continent to illustrate a different style of mountaineering. With this project – “7 continents for 7 types of mountaineering” challenge – the Group pits itself against new difficulties every time, requiring new technologies.

Under Captain Thomas Faucheur, the leader since 2003, the GMHM continues to take part in an exceptional human adventure. ▀