



# Tajikistan

It was October 2011 and I had been planning this trip to Tajikistan for a long time. I was determined and equipped but I felt that I was lacking in the skill department for taking game such as ibex and Marco Polo rams at longer ranges. These game species frequent large open plains in sub zero temperatures and are extremely hard to stalk in such territory. A large hard hitting round is not the only thing needed to secure a trophy in this league. A little skill in longer range shots is also required. Over the years I have taken such shots but they have only been achieved through mostly luck using hold-over techniques after a quick range 'guesstimation'. When thousands of dollars are at stake for an international high class trophy hunt, short cuts should not be taken.

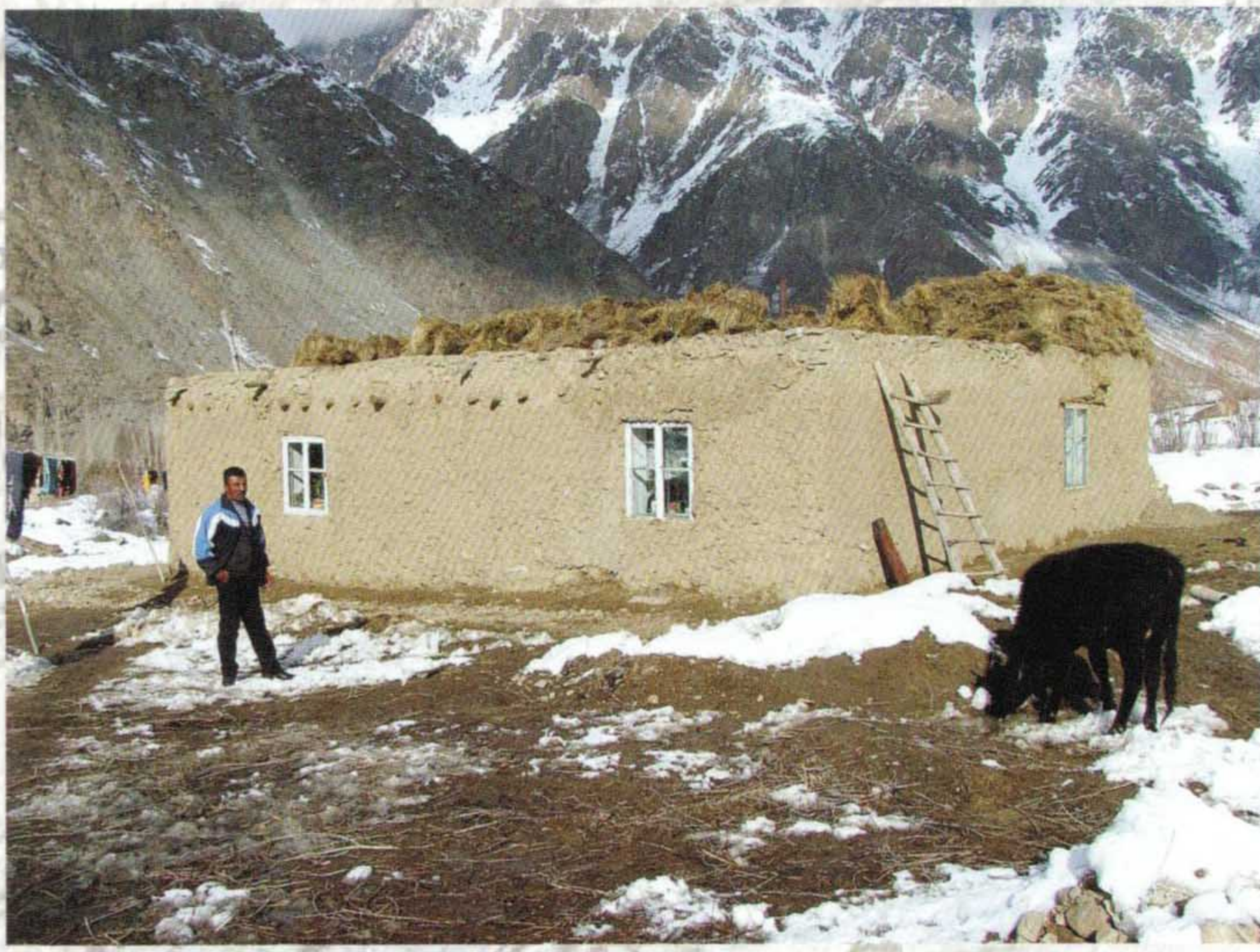
One night while surfing the net I Goggled 'Rifle Training' in Australia and to my surprise, I found a company that did just that. Precision shooting Australia came up on top and I inquired within. This company appeared to suit my needs

But as anybody would, I was reserved. So after sifting through the site I phoned the messaging service and left my details requesting some information on training for my hunt. About ten minutes later, Glen the Director of Precision shooting called me back and we discussed the matter. Glen's attitude and manner over the phone had me hooked on training with him so after some email tennis, I made my way over to Perth, Western

Australia, where the company is based, to commence the preparation for my overseas trip.

The day was fine and sunny in Perth when I landed and Glen was there to pick me up from the Domestic Airport. After he dropped me off at my accommodation not far from the airport, I settled in, called my wife and began to go through the next few days as to what I thought was going to happen.

Seven o'clock sharp the next morning I was picked up and driven to Glen's residence where we were about to commence the reloading part of the



course. In the previous discussions I had with him, it was ascertained that the ammunition I had, although good, was not the best for accuracy from my Blaser R8 in 300 Winchester Magnum. He was suitably impressed with the rifle and the Schmidt & Bender Zenith 2.5-10x50 on top, but the ammo let me down. He said, "Simon, for longer range work you cannot go wrong with the Berger 210gn Hunting VLD's. I have used them for a while and the energy they impart at longer range cannot be beaten." Anyhow the rest of the day was spent in his little workshop showing me the do's and don'ts for precision hand loading of ammunition and finally by the end of the day we churned out 150 rounds of his best. These were Norma Brass holding 71 grains of ADFI 2213SC behind a 210gn Berger Hunting VLD with a Federal 215 Primer.



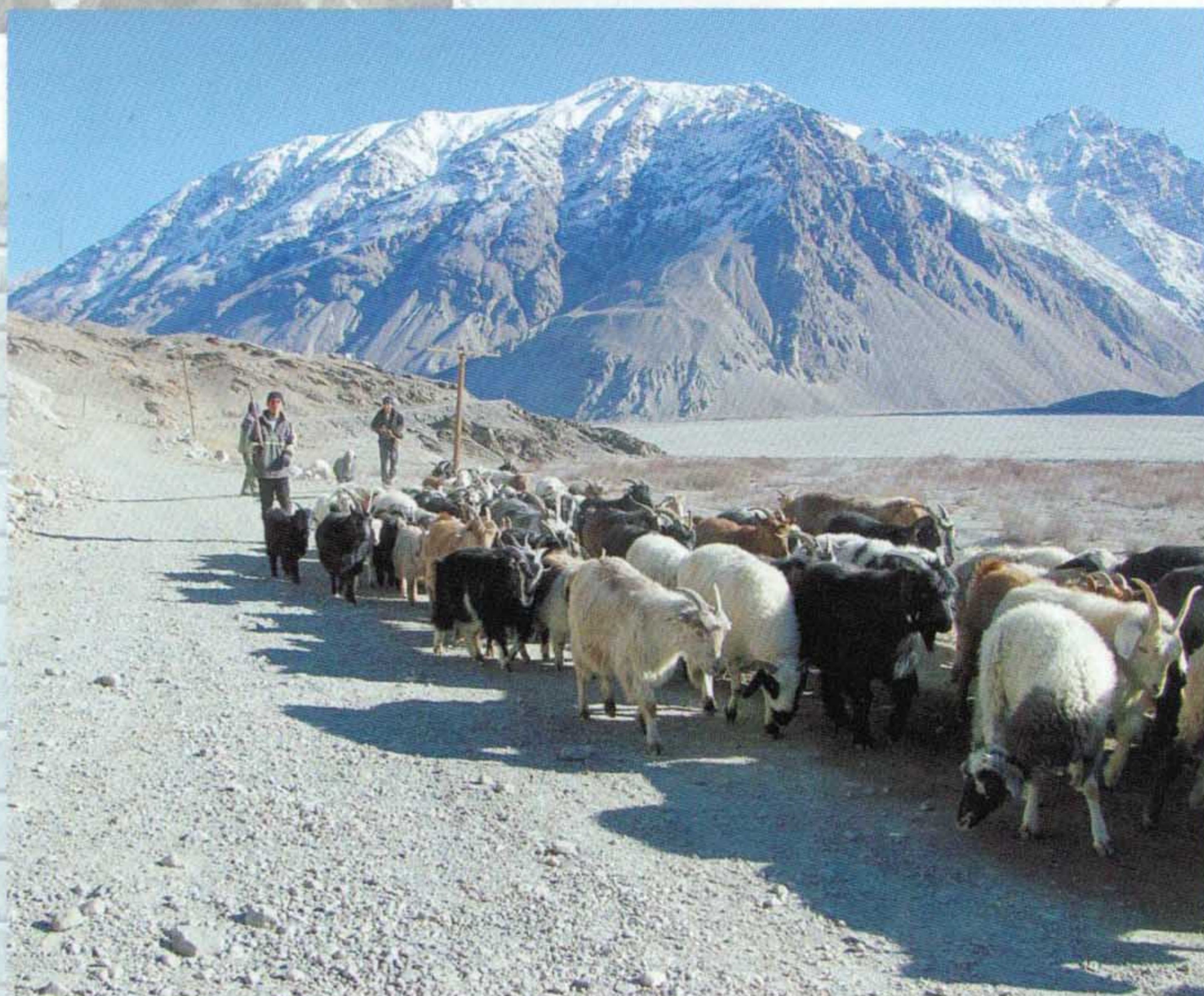
down to a temperature of 9 deg Celsius and the other 7 rounds were placed in another small plastic bag into a similar sized esky containing hot water at around 45 deg Celsius. He explained to me that we needed to measure the powder burning rate so that we could extrapolate the velocity reading to determine the muzzle velocity in Tajikistan at those sub zero temperatures. With an accurate muzzle velocity overseas I could then utilise accurate drop charts at altitude for a guaranteed first round hit.

Well the next day at the range proved fruitful and these loads were perfect. Somehow Glen just knew the best load for these out of the Blaser R8. They were on the money. That morning we put these through the very expensive Chronograph he used at two different temperatures. Yes that's right, two different temperatures. He placed 7 rounds in a plastic bag in a small esky containing melting ice to bring them



Over the next two days Glen showed me the best possible method of shooting my rifle from various shooting positions that I may encounter on my hunt. Coupled with the laminated range cards (drop charts) he supplied. These two days on the range were something to behold. I was consistently hitting a 6" steel plate at 580m with the first round in mild winds. This was me, I was now set.

On the last day, Glen presented me with drop charts for the elevation I was to encounter on my hunt which were set for an elevation of around 11,000 feet. The trajectory of course was a little flatter but he said "now with these Simon, all you have to blame is yourself now, not the gun."





## The Hunt

The adventure in Tajikistan starts at the airport and a day walking the streets of Dushanbe is assurance that you are a long way from home. Early next morning it was off to Khorog, a 16 hour Land cruiser trip along the Afghan border for many miles winding up and up into sheep country. Then stocking up with supplies and picking up our guides, six hours more climbing and we arrive at base camp, a crude but welcome hut. Smiles all round felt good and everybody was keen to hunt. Sighting in was done within an hour and I used around 20 rounds to really test the loads at 4000 metres, also letting the guides have a few cracks was interesting. So all tuned in and happy and ready for the morning.

Up before dawn with headlamps and heaps of layers on we took off on foot and begin climbing the mountain directly behind the hut. No surprise but the cold thin air took its toll and it really took some effort to pace myself to these conditions. Reaching the first summit, we sat down and began glassing, this is huge open rocky snow dusted country with not one tree

in sight. WOW, a large mob of sheep were spotted on another range and we decided to head back to base and go for them next morning, all good.

Pre dawn again up a different mountain only today were faced with snow falling worrying the guides about visibility. Conditions got worse and by the time we had reached our glassing vantage point, we were frozen and had no real vantage due to the snow storm so we retreated again to base. I was starting to see why I was told this place can be humbling.

Another snow storm greeted us next day and we decided to take a jeep and drive to a basin that is known to hold sheep in these stormy conditions. Sure enough the surrounding rocky hills held bands of sheep and one band in the open held two big boys. You could tell from around 4km that they were big damn horns. We decided to stalk in to get to within 500 metres and a small ledge to peek over was our goal so we crawled off. With many eyes on us from sheep in this huge basin we had to be really careful not to alert our mob. Anyway, we finally peeked over the ledge to see the mob spread out and scattering away through the boulders, gone no chance to chase these sheep, we retreat again to the jeep for some tea. Relocating to another good vantage point, my eagle eyed guide locates a small band of rams and the hunt is on again. Small hillocks provided us with good cover and soon we were down to 300 metres prone position eyeing off three lone rams. I quickly decided to shoot one so lasering to 270 metres, four clicks of adjustment and a shot straight through the back of this now edgy ram's neck and it was all over. The big boys are there and haunt me. My trophy is beautiful and the experience of hunting in the Pamirs is awesome, challenging and a true adventure. The training I received from Glen stays with me and is always worth it no matter where you hunt. Knowing more about your gear always helps.

Not long after returning to my home state, I sent Glen the images of the ibex and the Marco Polo ram. To say the least he was stoked that I had achieved my goal. He also said, "You lucky Bastard, I wish I was there."

