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Somalia 6070

by Ken Opskar ~ LA7GIA

When I visited Somalia in 2018 with my friend Adrian KO8SCA I thought we never made a real low band effort, due to reasons that were out of our control. This time I wanted to focus on the low bands as this is where Somalia is really needed. Last time we had problems with local people moving, cutting and stealing the beverage wire at night. This time I put even more time into careful planning of the DXpedition. I have a good friend and a local contact person that lives in Somalia who truly assists me in any matter. Without this local contact it would simply not be possible to do the planning properly, or even obtain all permissions needed. As last time I decided to go to Garowe in Puntland, which is an autonomous region in north eastern Somalia. This is a relatively quieter part of Somalia, even though ISIS linked terrorist groups control some parts. Terrorists use their relative freedom of movement to obtain resources, recruit fighters, and plan and mount operations within the whole part of Somalia, so careful planning security wise is needed.

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I started ramping up the planning in February 2019 as my friend visited some potential QTHs in Puntland, to see if they were suitable for a low band trip. We looked at a couple of ones and decided to continue with a guest house. The management was positive, and there was space for my antennas. But I needed to obtain a permit to install some of the antennas on the neighboring property as well on public ground. In addition to assisting with the guest house, my friend also sorted out the 6070 license application. This was an easy task this time due to the Ministry's previous knowledge about my 2018 operation. I also received an official written letter of invitation from the Ministry to come and do amateur radio operation in Garowe. To obtain a VISA, a letter of invitation is needed either from a governmental office or from a private company. It is not possible to obtain a VISA in Puntland at the airports. This makes it even more difficult to access this region of Somalia as you need an invitation. Because of my visits to Somalia I had to attend an interview at the US Embassy in Oslo explaining the purpose of the trips as my US ESTA application had been refused. For the rest of my life I must apply for a regular VISA to enter the US. Each time I enter a US port of entry they now take me out of the line and take me into a room together with other suspicious people, where they check my VISA and ask me questions about Somalia. That is the benefit of going on DXpeditions to rare locations.



I planned to take with me an extensive list of equipment to Somalia, in total about 225 pounds. I brought with me about 4300 feet of antenna wire, 1200 feet of coax – and only 5 ½ pounds of clothing. I had a good setup of TX and RX antennas for the low bands, as well my favorite Mosley mini 32 beam for 20-10m. Low band antennas consisted of a 22m top loaded 160m vertical and a full-size 80/40m vertical. All connected to a homemade relay switch and a common radial net consisting of 25 radials each 25m long. The RX antenna was a 230m long beverage to NA/EU. I would be using my Elecraft K3 and Juma 1 kW amplifier, as well having the KX3 as backup. Never had any sort of problem with the Juma as many others. I also added some additional African backup dipoles, and a QRM eliminator. Not to mention all the different spare parts and tools needed!



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The neighborhood where the guesthouse was located was not that populated. There were some houses around, but based on the 30 photos and videos the local contact provided upfront, I could see there were not many streetlights or lights on any of the buildings around. My local contact made in total 3 site visits to this QTH. The 1st visit was to check the QTH and plan the permits. The 2nd visit was to complete the agreements. The 3rd and final visit just prior to my arrival, was to confirm that all was ok. All this over a 7-month period. My local contact prepared and settled the agreement with the neighbors so that I could use their property to install the TX vertical antennas. This agreement was crucial to be able to install a proper TX antenna. I had also reserved some smaller space inside the guesthouse property in case this plan failed. In addition, the local contact settled an agreement with the local government that I could install a beverage on public ground.



This permit also allowed me to dig a trench across a public street for my RX coax. The beverage would be installed about 800 feet away from the guest house, all using DX-Engineering sponsored RG 75 quad shield coax and Remote QTH hardware, the same as I have at home. The local contact further provided local craftsmen who dug the 4" trench for my coax, as well as craftsmen to assist with antenna installation. In addition, he dealt with the security company. As in all parts of Somalia, staying outside and moving around as a

white man should be done with careful consideration. I used a professional and costly security company to bring me to/from the airport. That would be a transport with 4 armed soldiers. In addition, the guest house manned up, and I paid for an additional two armed guards that also would serve as a guard for the beverage and a guard for me when being outside. The guards would protect the beverage 24/7, two men 12 hours shift each. The beverage would be located so far away that without the guards I would have no control of this, and it would not work.

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Arriving in Somalia I was welcomed by the local contact and we headed for the guest house with the secure transport. I was pleased to see that the trench for the RX coax was already done. I started installing the antennas, and after 4-5 hours all verticals, the beam and the beverage was up. It was very



hot, and I also had some trouble tuning the 160/80/40m vertical. Although this was pre-tuned at home, some cutting and tweaking of the impedance was necessary as final adjustment. This was not so easy with the top loaded antenna with guy wires on the rooftop, as my assistant did not speak English and I did not speak Somali. With the additional armed security in place, the tuning process was slowed down. As we approached sunset the first day, I realized I had to complete the tuning of verticals into the next morning. I was then planning to do 20m to NA. However, when I started to call CQ I realized that the propagation was bad and not as predicted. There was absolutely no propagation on 20m. I could only work OK2PAY on 20m. That was the only station I heard; very weak! This turned out to be an early warning how bad the propagation was going to be on many bands during my stay. The following days my schedule was the same:

Field day in Africa

DXpedition VACATION schedule (local time):

0700-1000: sleeping
 1000-1200: maintenance, repair or try to work EU/Asia even bad conds
 1200-1230: lunch
 1230-1900: DXing. Bad conds.
 1400 Asia. 40m is good!
 1600 low band antenna system inspection.
 Check beverage and verticals with armed guard.
 1700 LP to W6. SS W6. Beam VK
 1800 SP W6
 1900-1930: dinner. Chicken or pasta?
 1930-2230: EU/Asia. 30m is good!
 2240-2350: Japan SR
 0100: NA 20m. No conds!
 0200-0700: NA low band. Poor or good conds?
 0500: try to stay awake even if you are tired.
 0550: sunrise
 0600-0700: 40m
 0700: go to bed, no breakfast!



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During the DXpedition I encountered some failures but managed to deal with all of them. After a few days an error message from the K3 showed up. This took some time to resolve. It turned out to be a problem with the SUB receiver making TX impossible. The spider pole also fell due to heavy wind gusts the first night, but most of all because the sections was not properly clamped. That was lesson learned. After I clamped the sections, the spider pole was ok. After a week the driven element of the Mosley beam broke. Luckily, I had a spare plastic part, so I managed to fix it on site. However, this also showed the necessity of having additional African dipoles as backup.



Another night what I thought was bad propagation, turned out to be some goats that had cut the beverage wire. Despite the guard protecting the antenna, he did not observe the goats before it was too late (nighttime). He also thought I was sleeping during nights, so he did not want to “wake me up.” The next morning, we once again went through the procedures what they should do if anything happened. Their boss had some fun with the guard, teasing that even with his AK47, he was not able to protect the beverage. They also learned that I do not sleep during the nighttime. I was able to fix the beverage, but later in the week the beverage was once again taken out by some children on their way to school who played with the wire. From the rooftop during daytime I could see the guard was doing a great job and taking it seriously, as he often walked the 230m wire to check it. He would instruct people not to walk on the part of the coax that was on the rock or ask them to walk around. Each day I also went with the guard to check the low bands antenna. Even though we could only communicate very little, we had much fun and got along very well. I also had to do one inspection during the nighttime to fix the beverage, even though I tried to avoid going out after sunset.



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As the days went along pretty much the same, I realized that propagation was not the best. The high rate bands to EU was useless. On 20/17m most days the EU stations would be very weak during daytime at the noise level or just above. In the afternoon the signals would improve, and I could have some hours of strong signals on higher bands. 20m to NA was a disaster, there was simply no reliable openings there. Despite that, I checked the conditions every day. I also tried to focus on giving Asia a chance to work Somalia. The predicted openings to east, however, did not occur on higher bands as predicted. The most stable band to Asia was 40m that opened very well prior to my Sunset. As we approached my sunset the target was low bands 160/80 and 40/30. The propagation on 160/80 was sometimes very good to EU.



While people spend years to improve their station, on a DXpedition you have to setup an African style field day station in hours. My beverage would work well towards EU, but the weaker NA stations would be more difficult from this part of the world, especially on 160m. From my home station I know there can be a big difference in RX capability of a beverage compared to a RX array. Using a single directional beverage has its limitations but can still work very well. But you can't change the ground or installing conditions, nor can you change the propagation. In addition, the beverage was located on very rocky ground, making it extremely difficult to put any ground stake in the ground and take advantage of the F/B ratio. The best band to NA was the 40m band. I also had a couple of LP openings to west coast (W6/W7) and put some effort into calling that area specifically. I made some very memorable Qs to NA, even though I worked the big guns and not the small stations. I especially enjoyed the openings shortly after my sunrise where the biggest challenge would be to keep the EU stations quiet. My 40m vertical and 1 kW really performed well, and I could put many NA stations in the log.

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During this DXpedition I also took notice and wrote down all those stations that called out of turn and clearly violated the DX Code of Conduct rules. This was mostly the strong EU stations that called out of turn when I called for NA/Asia. The countries that violated the rules, sorted from high to low:

I 18 %, UA 13%, DL 7%, UT 5%, EA 5%, F 5%, JA 5%. When logging the stations, there was no doubt that they should know I was calling for an area they did not belong to. None of these stations donated to the

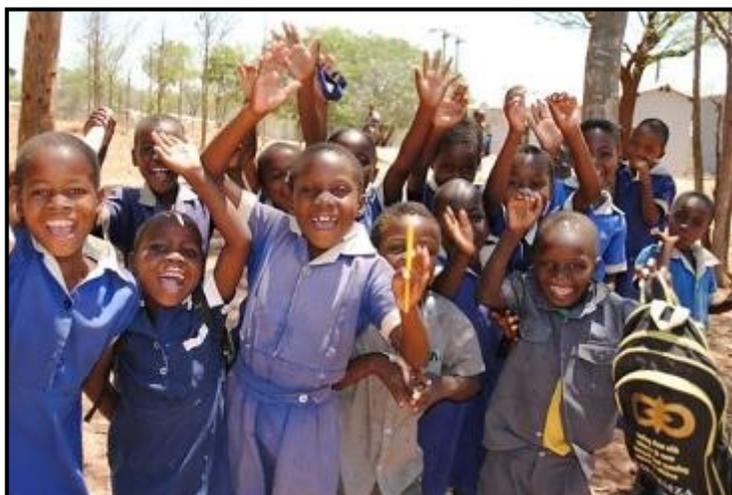


DXpedition expenses, and none of the stations that donated was on the list! In total those stations calling out of turn accounted for 5% of the unique number of stations worked! The dupe statistics also show I worked 6% dupes! All this while I had a LIVE ONLINE log on Clublog livestream. It is simply amazing – all these online features don't seem to have any effect on most operators. In my opinion these online features can create even more confusion. The Clublog livestream worked very well for me, and it is a great tool to visualize the propa-

gation. Another increasing issue these days is all the social media. Lots of people would contact me on messenger, WhatsApp, email, Facebook etc. and regularly update me on THEIR TX frequency, hoping that I would tune and work them.

As part of this DXpedition I also setup a small charity fundraiser for a Norwegian organization that helps children in Africa. It ended on \$6,130 USD in total. That equals 40 children getting education and a free meal at school for 1 schoolyear! The expense in Z2 is far less than 1 USD per day for this. The donation will specifically go to a project in Zimbabwe. I want to thank everybody who donated to this fundraiser, as well as the INDEXA Hams with Hearts contribution.

Ken Opskar LA7GIA



Somalia 6070 Stats

Operating Time

First QSO: 2019-09-14 18:35:22

Last QSO: 2019-09-28 03:12:46

Band/Mode breakdown

Band	CW	SSB	Total	Total %
160	461	0	461	5.4%
80	1112	0	1112	13.0%
40	1908	0	1908	22.2%
30	975	0	975	11.4%
20	1990	96	2086	24.3%
17	1476	0	1476	17.2%
15	295	0	295	3.4%
12	269	0	269	3.1%
Totals	8486	96	8582	

Expedition Impact On Users' Totals *(info)*

Band	160	80	60	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	6	Total	Total %
New Band	104	179	0	158	113	118	86	18	42	0	0	818	74.8%
New Mode	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	6	0.5%
New Band + New Mode	0	2	0	1	1	8	1	1	0	0	0	14	1.3%
New Slot	0	0	0	0	0	11	5	1	2	0	0	19	1.7%
New DXCC	4	21	0	64	17	87	36	2	6	0	0	237	21.7%
Totals	108	202	0	223	131	228	129	23	50	0	0	1094	

INDEXA Leadership Changes

After your votes, we are pleased to announce the following changes to the board:

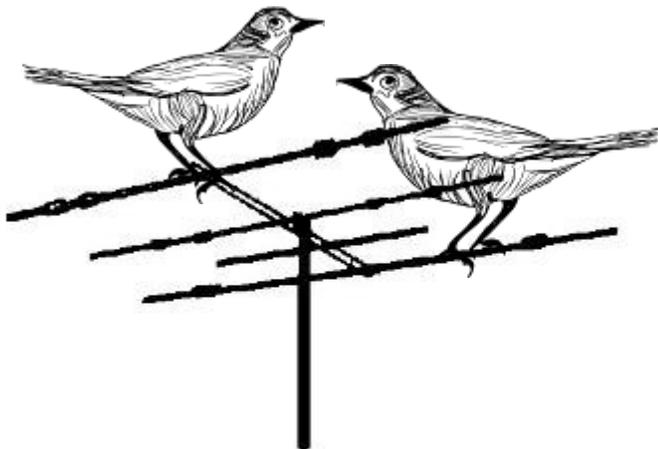


John Scott K8YC has stepped down as your vice-president and newsletter editor. But don't worry, he's still a part of the leadership team, now as a Director. Jerry Rosalius WB9Z is now your new Vice-President and no longer a Director. I, Valerie Hotzfeld NV9L, was elected into the newly created 9th Director position. I am also replacing John Scott as the Newsletter editor. I would like to personally thank John Scott for all his years of volunteering as Vice-President along with creating the INDEXA Newsletter. As I create my 1st INDEXA Newsletter, I can say that this job takes a lot more time than folks may realize. So, next time you see John, please thank him for all his hard work.

As the new editor, I welcome your ideas and opinions for the newsletter. Please email me any topics you'd like to see or any ideas for the newsletter at vhotzfeld (at) Gmail (dot) com.

Valerie Hotzfeld ~ NV9L

Careful. It's a trap



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INDEXA

Editor & Publisher Valerie Hotzfeld NV9L PO Box 83
Crescent City, IL 60928 USA vhotzfeld (at) Gmail. com

Distribution & Circulation Dick Williams, W3OA 3
98 Lakeview Shores Loop Mooresville, NC 28117 USA
Secretary (at) indexa.org

Membership applications are available at:
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Address general correspondence to President Bob Schenck, N200
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Pictured here is Franz Langner A52ZB and Martti Laine A52BH when they were in Bhutan in October 2018. Both are members of your INDEXA leadership team.





Below is a nice update received from Michael at Clublog on November 11th.

Hi guys

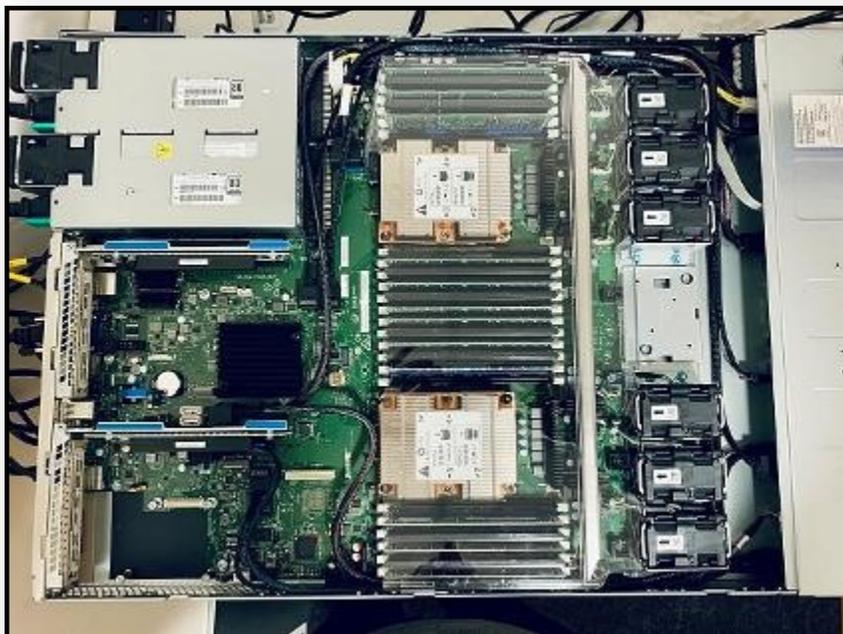
The new server is heading to the data center Tomorrow, where I will begin the process of commissioning it for the world to use, hopefully going live this year now. As this is the last time I'll have a chance to photograph the kit (as the data center has a policy against cameras), here is a picture for INDEXA's records!



I received the server on Friday, and spent the whole weekend benchmarking and testing it out. The final expense was £8399. What you can't see in the picture is the ultra-high-end storage array hiding in the front. The new server is brilliantly fast, and with every part being brand new I feel very pleased that it will be a solid and reliable service from 2020 onwards, as hoped.

Thanks for all your kindness and for backing this investment!

vy 73
Michael G7VJR



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