

5J0R San Andres 2013

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After returning from Roma during the summer of 2012 where we carried out a short but intense operation as 1AØC, I had been working on different options towards what would be our next 2013 expedition.

Finally Giorgio IZ4AKS, suggested we try San Andrés, an island which was not ranked high on the DX most wanted listings but a destination from where there hadn't been a large expedition in years.

I thought the proposal was interesting and after a few enquiries, we set the ball rolling to what would take us to this small 26 square km. Colombian island in the Caribbean, at no less than 200 kms from eastern Nicaragua.

My first step was to contact Roberto, HK3CW, President of the Colombian Amateur Society (LCRA), who quickly began to help us obtain licensing. Roberto had operated from San Andres a few years back and suggested we operate from the same apartments they had used, the Red Crab Inn; if nothing had changed it clearly met the conditions we needed in our plans. When you intend to set up five radio stations with four directional antennas, locating a place which will enable installation our complete antenna farm may become a daunting task.

The operator team would be the regular operators from previous expeditions: EA2RY, EA7AJR, EA7KW, F6ENO, F9IE, IN3ZNR, RG8K and EA5RM, with the addition, for the first time of EA1SA and F8ATS. Due to a family issue, Alain F6ENO dropped out and we had to substitute him at the last minute with RU1WM. Finally we also decided to invite two Colombian colleagues, HK3CW and HK6F, Faber, one of the "Fantastic Four" from the HK1NA Malpelo Dxpediton.

Following suggestions from other expeditions which had previously travelled to the Caribbean, we set the first days of November for our expedition.

After leasing the apartments, buying air tickets and all the material and logistics ready to depart, mid- October, we were still waiting for the Ministry of Communications to issue our licenses. After five months, our personal licenses were finally issued and thanks to string pulling from HK3CW, the group license 5J0R was granted in just a week, almost without time needed to announce our plans to all the DX bulletins of our official callsign.

On October 30th the European 5J0R team met in Madrid at the facilities of Proyecto4. In just a few hours and with assistance from EA4CWW and EA5HPX, who was also headed to the Easter Island

XR0YY expedition, all the material was checked and ready for shipping the next day.

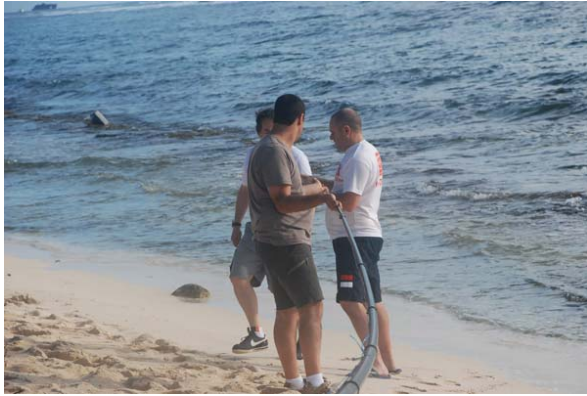
After a long trip from Madrid to Bogota, after hours of waiting and a delayed flight towards San Andres, we finally made it to the island; very tired but in good spirits. All our material, 435 Kilos distributed amongst 19 cases had arrived safely with us. This was like a miracle for me. Almost at midnight we arrived at our theater of operations on the southeast portion of the island. Due to a dark moonless night we called it a night without any possibility to engage in any kind of work, which awaited us the next morning.

HK6F, who we met in Bogota, travelled with us on the same aircraft. Faber immediately integrated into the team. HK3CW who would come in later that evening also needed just a moment to become one of the team.

The next morning at the break of day on November 1th we began installing our antenna farm. In record time we had already installed three HF directional antennas and two verticals for 30 and 40 meters. At 13:20 UTC , F9IE began the operation on CW 17 meters, the show had begun!



The remaining antennas, a 7 element 6 meter antenna, a quarter wave vertical for 80 meters, an inverted L for 160 and a beverage were installed the following day. The 80 meter vertical was installed on the beach after solving several issues such as passing the coax cable over the road that circles the island and being the most used road, and installing an antenna on a beach very visited by locals. This brought us many issues as it provided us with daily maintenance work repairing radials which people had broken or burned. Inclusive-ly somebody split and stole several meters of coax. Although in any case these issues were worth the work as this antenna worked no less than spectacular. On the other hand these issues made us rethink installing the 160 antenna in the same location.



Our beverage turned into another headache, after installing it very inconspicuously it was torn down by a neighbor, who apparently didn't like its silhouette. So it was relocated on the back part of our location in a hard to get place because it was a swamp. EA1SA had a real workout completing this task.

The people of San Andres are very laid back and friendly. They speak a combination of Spanish and native English called Creole, a sum of legacies left by the first dwellers, amongst others, the English Pirate Henry Morgan. Scenery on the island is surreal with a coral reef which surrounds most of the island turning it into an authentic undersea marvel. The weather is tropical and the presence of the sea makes temperatures very pleasant. During our visit we suffered several lightning storms we made us discontinue our transmissions.



Since a few years back, there are no resident hams on the island. We had the honor of meeting Pedro Abello, ex HKØLSC who we helped solve some technical issues for his VHF boat communications. After our visit he felt the "call" of ham radio and HK3CW offered to help him recover his lost license. Who knows maybe someday we will again see a resident ham in San Andres.

Propagation was generous, all the bands were good, especially the high bands due to a high solar flux. This pointed to a possible F2 opening on the 6 meter band. Daily during afternoons and nights, Trans-Equatorial Propagation (TEP) was present during our whole operation. We worked almost any station on South America who needed San Andrés on this band. The 6

meter filter burned after a band change, making reception a little more difficult due to the proximity of four other HF stations. One afternoon we were alerted via DX-cluster of a F2 opening. Although we arrived late to the opening, twenty US stations from 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 0 call areas made the log. In eight days 5J0R made 328 qso's with 20 different DXCC entities. Most of these contacts were carried out with stations from Argentina and Brazil. FK8CP was our longest and only contact with Oceania. We never heard any African or European stations.

With five active stations and operating shifts according to the amount of operators and particular conditions on each band, we successfully surpassed 80,000 qso's during the 10 days of our adventure. Despite San Andrés not being ranked high on the most-wanted list, pile ups were equally impressive as any most-wanted entity. Given that we were on the air at the same time as other Dxpeditions we tried our best to now coincide on the same frequencies or the same band segments where they had pileups. I can assure that if there were times we overlapped it wasn't our fault.

Finally 5J0R went QRT at 16:03 UTC on November 11. We all left with an unforgettable experience. This island, its people and our cohabitation will stay in our minds for many years.

I would also like to thank our sponsors, donors and especially LCRA, Proyecto4, Clipperton DXC, UFT, **German DX Foundation**, DDXG, Sezione ARI Belluno, N6PSE, JH0BQU, DO2AT and KH6GA for their support.

The online log, photos of our activity as well as information of past and future expeditions are available at www.dxfriends.com

Hope to hear you in the pileups from our next Dxpediton. The best is yet to come.



Translated to english by Roberto Rey HK3CW

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