

6070 Somalia DXped Sep 2019

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 was 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 during nighttime. This time I put even more time into careful planning of the DXped. I have a good friend and a local contact person that lives in Somalia who truly assist 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.

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 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, which was an easy task this time due to the Ministry 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 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 have 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 DXped to rare locations.



Figure 1 Mosley beam mini 32AW



Figure 2 Spiderpole - rooftop extension - sloping wires to ground level

I planned to take with me an extensive list of equipment to Somalia, in total about 102 kg. I brought with me about 4300 feet of antenna wire, 1200 feet of coax – and only 2,5 kg of clothing. I had a good setup of TX and RX antennas for low band, as well my favorite Mosley mini 32 beam for 20-10m. Lowband 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!

The neighborhood where the guesthouse was located were 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 was not much streetlights or lights on any building around. My local contact made in total 3 site visits to this QTH. The first visit was to check the QTH and plan the permits. The 2nd visit was to complete the agreements, and the third 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 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 RG6 75 ohm quad shield coax and RemoteQTH hardware, the same as I have at home. The local contact further provided local craftsmen who dug the trench for my coax 4" deep, as well 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. Nevertheless, I never felt unsafe one moment during the trip! Going to Puntland was almost like going to some other country. Tourists are rare though, most foreigners that visit Somalia are businessmen, and there is a growing economy. A lot of new constructions projects being developed in Puntland!



Figure 3 Trench dug by local craftsmen. 4" deep!

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 on the rooftop with guy wires as my assistant did not speak English nor did I speak Somali. With the additional armed security in place, the tuning process was slowed down. As we approached the sunset the first day, I realized I had to complete the tuning of verticals until 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, but that was the only station I heard



Figure 4 African style 160/80/40 m vertical

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:

During the DXped I encountered some failures but managed to deal with all of them. After a few days an error message from K3 showed up, this took some time to resolve, but 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 learnt. 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

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
- 0500: try to stay av
- 0550: sunrise
- 0600-0700: 40m
- 0700: go to bed, no



Figure 5 Mosley beam failed!

through the procedures what they should do if anything happened. Their boss had some fun with the guard that even with his AK47 he was not able to protect the beverage. They also learnt that I do not sleep during nighttime. I was able to fix the beverage, but later in the week the beverage was once again taken 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 only could communicate very little we had much fun and went along very well. I also had to do one inspection during nighttime to fix the beverage, even though I would avoid going out after sunset.

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 I checked conditions every day. I also tried to focus on giving Asia a chance to work Somalia. However, the predicted openings to east 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



Figure 6 Armed beverage guard 24/7

sometimes very good to EU. While people spend years to improve their station, a DXped have to setup their 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 or change the propagation. In addition, the beverage was located on a 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



Figure 7 RX coax for Beverage crossing a public street

EU stations quiet. My 40m vertical and 1 kW really performed well, and I could put many NA stations in the log.

During this DXped 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 would be mostly 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 were no doubt, they should know I was calling for an area they did not belong to. 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 at club log 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 club log livestream worked very well for me, and it is a great tool to visualize the propagation. 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 DXped I also setup a small charity fundraiser for a Norwegian organization that helps children in Africa. **It ended on 6200 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 pr day for this. The donation will specifically go to a project in Zimbabwe. I want to thank everybody who donated to this fundraiser!

73 Ken

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Figure 8 Sabona Norway www.sabona.no

Humanitaria Aid Project