

EP6T 2015

By ON4IA -- For the ROCKALL DX GROUP

This story begins somewhere in 2012 when Patrick, ON4HIL, made the first contacts with some radio amateurs in Iran. The question was raised whether there was a possibility to organize a DXpedition.

Three years later, after countless phone calls, many discussions, days of preparation and a visit to Tehran and Kish Island, the Rockall Dx group team were packed and ready to leave in Brussels.

The cheapest way to travel with 700 kg of luggage - especially radio equipment and antennas - would be to go to Kish through Tehran with a stopover in Moscow. Finally we had a date set, Thursday January 15th. Everything was listed and packed in 30 suitcases and large packages.

The license for all operators was delivered only a few weeks beforehand and the permission to make radio contacts on the agreed address was settled. However, our biggest obstacle was to get our transmitters, associated masts and antennas past customs.



Tehran airport with local hams and Dr. Fard

Our flight landed in the middle of the night in Tehran where Dr. Fard, director General of the CRA (Communications Regulatory Authority) was waiting for us to give us his indispensable assistance. Several hours later, the team was relieved to leave the airport to board a domestic flight to Kish Island, about 50 km's away. We were accompanied by Mohammad, EP3MIR, and Ali. Both proved crucial to the further success of our adventure!

Our planning was to have most of our antenna's set-up by Friday evening so we could already be active on the lower frequencies later that night. Unfortunately, local authorities decided that we were not allowed to use the area next to our bungalows without permis-

sion. Since no one was working on Friday, we weren't able to contact anyone to get us up and started.



Antennapark

Time for plan B: set-up a hex beam beside our bungalows resulting in an unbelievably high white noise level. After we had managed to contact our befriended government official in Tehran, it still took us until noon the next day before we could proceed with the preparation of the antennas on the adjacent property.

3 Hex beams, inverted L for 160m, quarter wave vertical for 80m, 4 square for 40m, a 2 el vertical for 30m, a beverage to EU / NA and a few loops for RX on the low frequencies that could be used on the 80 and 160 meter stations were set-up fast as we used the time we lost earlier on to prepare.



30m phased verticals

Meanwhile, we were able to determine that the white noise level on all shortwave frequencies was awfully high. With the help of a small Medium-wave receiver, we discovered a noise source in the bungalow next door. The owner appeared to be off for a few days so there was only one alternative... A 220 V power point

on the terrace was disconnected and by creating a short circuit, the bungalow was put without voltage. The level of noise only declined by 15 dB, but it was better than nothing at all.



Mohamad EP3MIR

On the lower frequencies especially it was very difficult to hear the European pile up. Occasionally there was a station that was picked up and able to be heard from above the noise. It also proved to be even more difficult on 40 meters to pick out American stations from in the noise.

During the first days of our expedition we were trying to find solutions left and right during our free time to create alternative listening antennas to try and improve our RX, but alas to no avail. The noise level on a simple K9AY antenna remained S7 to S9.



Ronald PA3EWP

We took a trip to explore the area and to our surprise we saw a large numbers of electric scooters that could be hired. Scooters which of course required batteries to be charged and it seemed the closest place to do so was only a hundred meters from where we were based. The thought arose that we might be able to approach the charging centre to ask if we could rent his shop to us for a few days. But it seemed the next rental shop was only 500 meters up the road, and then came another, and another, and so on, and so forth. We had found the main cause of our noise disturb-

ances and were now almost convinced we would not be able to overcome it.

On the other hand perhaps we had an opportunity to hear better in the direction of EU / NA during the 10 hours of which half the city was powerless. But in that case we would have needed an emergency generator; just the thing we did not end up taking with us!

In the direction of Asia the pileups were easier because our antennas looked towards the Persian Gulf. Unlike Europe / NA, where our antennas were aimed right over the city centre which in addition was crammed with brightly lit shopping malls.



160m vertical

Our 10 operators were divided into two teams to man all 5 stations, in shifts of 4 hours. The hours rest were used to sleep, eat and shower. This consistent rhythm was extremely exhausting coming up to the end of the DXpedition. At times the power outages were considered as a "gift". Luckily Mohammad EP3MIR and Mr. Ali were always at our disposal to provide us with food and drinks.



Patrick ON4HIL

The 40 m 4 square was instrumental to make contacts with North American west coast stations on the long path at their Sun Rise. As you can imagine we were very satisfied every time we were able to put a station in the log. We were aware that for some of them this was the only way to make a QSO with Iran. Usually we QSYed from the 15 m band when it was closed to

North American east coast since we only had 5 stations available. Due to our high QRM level, the QSO rate was very low at times. However, we preferred this over the higher runs that we could get on the higher frequencies to EU seeing the demand for EP in NA was extremely high.



CRA employers testing our equipment

After several days of activity we were visited by a delegation of government officials from Tehran. Some of them did tests with our radio stations on frequencies that were heard in Tehran to evaluate the listening capabilities of their own stations near the capital. We were pleasantly surprised by their interest in our hobby. Some of our operators also gave up their shift to accompany the 30+ visitors, providing them with explanations on setting up our five stations. The technical aspect to set up and operate 5 high power stations on such a limited moving space, without significant interference in any form did not go unnoticed.

The visit from the TV crew that casted us on the news for 85 million + viewers a few days later, definitely put us in the spotlight & ensured that many knew that the Rockall DX GROUP were in town.



Interview for Iran television

By the end of our expedition and after 9 days of immense pile ups we were coming to think that things would start to minimize, but that was not the case. There was barely any difference between the first and last day of EP6T.

Frank, ON7RU, gave up his last precious hours of sleep to activate 40 m, and just after sunrise the last QSO was logged. All antennas were disassembled in a short amount of time and at midday we were again packed and ready to start the long journey back home. At Khomeini airport, Dr. Fard was there once again to assist us to straighten out all customs formalities. The departure via the arrival hall of the airport made everything very smooth. On top of that, all operators received a parting gift from the CRA.

We said goodbye to our friends Mohammad EP3MIR and Ali (who by the way is finalizing the translation of our amateur radio course as we speak), and touched down 14 hours later in wet and cold Brussels.

The ROCKALL DX Group is very proud of the outcome and what we have achieved out of this expedition.

Proud of the 68.000 QSO's that we made under difficult circumstances of which we did not always have control over. Proud of the opportunity we have created for DXpeditions in the future.

And especially for the future of amateur radio in Iran, which with this project we have been able to give a new start.

Special thanks to EP3MIR and Dr. FARD.



Kostas, Wim, Carlo, Frank, Marc, Henk, Luc, Ronald, Marc, Patrick, Mohamad

For more information on the ROCKALL DX GROUP please visit www.rockall.be

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