

H40GC DXpedition 2017

by Stanislav Vatev, LZ1GC

Temotu Province, Santa Cruz Islands group (H40)in Pacific area is a very sought-after destination by many radio amateurs around the world! In 2016 and early 2017, Temoto Province (H40) occupied 30th place in the CLUBLOG list for the most wanted countries. It is currently in 46th place and is still needed by many radio amateurs in worldwide, especially on SSB.

The H40GC DXpedition 2017 was my second activation on this rare country. My first activation of this country was from Lata, Nendo Island (IOTA OC – 100) - between October 4 and October 17, 2016. It is already known to me destination - the organization of the expedition H40GC 2017 was related to less unknowns! On the other hand, this time I had a serious commitment - besides the HF activation of this country, I had to carry out a humanitarian mission under the auspices of INDEXA and with the generous participation of CDXA & CDXF, Kontrax Ltd - Bulgaria and Andy, LZ2HM. Here I would like to point out that all individual and corporate sponsors, as well as all amateur clubs, associations and organizations that sponsored me before the expedition in practice are also participants in this humanitarian mission, for which I thank them.

In October 2016, during the H40GC DXpedition 2016, I had meetings with teachers and students from the only high school in Temoto Province - JCP College, located on Nendo Island. About 400 students are learning in this school. So on the spot I got to know their problems and their needs. As early as 2016 I was convinced that the best way to help these guys and girls is by being helped with 1 or 2 laptops and other school supplies such as notebooks, pencils and pens.

Here I want to make it clear that unemployment in this province covers 90 percent of the working population. You understand that because of this fact, the students there are having difficulty buying even simple school supplies. The school had no computer available! I think that helping young people and investing in them is the best thing that can be done for one country, one people, because our future belongs to the younger generation!

Also in October 2016, I had meetings with the boss and officers of the local provincial office for disasters and accidents. They also did not have then a laptop computer, but at the same time their work was related to the protection of the population living on the various islands belonging to Temoto Province.

So, I was aware of what we, radio amateurs could do to help the people of Temotu Province, the Solomon Islands. My view of helping people from Temoto met the understanding and support of INDEXA, under whose patronage this humanitarian mission was finally accomplished!

I write about all of this because my understanding is that it is not enough just to travel and activate radio amateur bands to various rare destinations around the world, but we have to leave something of us there, doing something good that the locals can remember! This will also popularize our wonderful hobby!

The organization and preparation of the H40GC DXpedition 2017 took me about 6 months. During these six months, I purchased the required airline tickets, I received a renewal of the H40GC and H44GC licenses (27 June 2017 - 26 June 2018), booked a room for my stay at Lata Motel on Nendo Island, prepared the antennas and the technical equipment necessary for the expedition. Every day, during these six months, I was doing something in preparation. Even when I was at work or on weekends I was walking in the nearby mountain - my thoughts were what I had to do for the expedition so I would not miss something!

On 24 September 2017, my trip to Nendo Island, Temotu Province in the Pacific began with a 3-hour flight from Sofia (Bulgaria) to Heathrow, London (England). I had 20kg of hand baggage and 2 check in baggage- every one of 23kg. After a 5-hour stay at Heathrow Airport, a 13-hour flight from London to Changi Airport, Singapore, followed. In Singapore, the same plane was loaded with fuel and the trip continued (8 hours flight) to Sydney, Australia. From there immediately - domestic flight operated by QANTAS Airways continued for Brisbane (Australia) and at 09:30 on 26 September 2017 local time, I was already at the International Airport in Brisbane.



Next my flight - from Brisbane, Australia to Honiara, Solomon Islands (H44) were on the next day - 27th of September 2017. Brisbane hotels are very expensive (over 100 EUR per a night), at least for people with my budget, so I decided to stay at the airport. I was just going to pack up my luggage because of the different baggage limits permitted between different airlines.

The airport in Brisbane is equipped with many luggage weights testers and this has helped me to refill my luggage so I can pay for less excess baggage. I packed my bags and paper boxes all night. All of my pockets were full of cables and different of things, which I needed for the expedition.

On 27 September 2017, after a 4-hour flight with Solomon Airlines from Brisbane to Honiara, I was already on Solomon Islands. The following two days in Honiara, I used to get the originals of the H40GC and H44GC licenses. I was honored to visit the local telecom (TCSI), to meet and talk with Mr. Aaron Hopa Manager of the local TCSI and get my license.



Considering Mr. Aaron Hopa as a good friend I surprised him with a wonderful gift for his wife - Bulgarian perfume of oil rose! The meeting with Mr. Aaron Hopa was very useful because Mr. Aaron Hopa helped me to buy two laptops (the donation to Temotu Province), pointing me to the best local computer shop.

On September 29, 2017, the day before my flight to Lata, Temoto Province, I visited the management of Solomon Airlines. It occurred to me to talk to someone of the leadership to allow me to carry the luggage (30kg) that was for donation free of charge. Having explained to them what is the goal of my visit, a nice girl told me that I should talk about this with Mr. Colin Sigi-manu- Manager Commercial of Solomon Airlines.

So I did - I met Mr. Colin - a respectful and strict man. After a brief discussion - a conversation in which I explained to him what it was about, briefly introducing him to our hobby, he responded to my request, assuring me that he would take the matter. On leaving, he gave

me his business card and said, "If you have any problems with Solomon Airlines employees - show this business card. It will help you !"

It may have seemed exaggerated, but really this business card opened doors. Without being abused twice, I had to show this card and use it and everything was decided for my benefit at the moment!

On 30 September 2017 at 12:30 local time, the small Airplan (36 seats) of Solomon Airlines , after 1 hour and 40 minutes flight (Honiara - Latta, Nendo Island), landed at the airport in Lata, Temotu province. I was very happy because I was again on Temotu (H40) and only a few hours later H40GC would be on the air!



The Chief of the Provincial Disaster Management Office of Temotu Province - Mr. George Tego expected me at the local "airport" with a service car and I was quickly taken with my baggage to Lata Motel, where I had a reservation.

Mr. Tego had secured 3-4 local people with the foresight, and we immediately picked up the 160/80/40 m bands vertical antenna. There followed installation of the radio shack and testing the antenna. After several adjustments to the tuning box I started working at 40 m CW.

On 30 September 2017, at 08:38 GMT - H40GC was already on the air. The first contact was with VK3GA. After 2-3 minutes the PILE UP got big, which is normal - on the air was H40GC - Temotu Province, which does not happen so often! On the second day of the start of H40GC, I installed also the Multi band GP antenna for the 40 - 6 meter bands including WARC bands.

In the following days until the end of the H40GC activity, despite the extremely poor propagation, I was trying to maintain a good rate and I think I managed to do it! I was trying to spend as much time as possible on the air - till 18 -20 hours a day. During the night hours I worked at 160/80/40 and 30m, and during the day at high bands - 20/17/15/12/10 . I alternated the types of work - CW, RTTY and SSB. So with minimal pauses for a sleep, food, internet and some antenna repairs, the

H40GC has made nearly 18,000 QSOs for the period from 08:30 GMT on September 30th to 12:00 GMT on October 25th, 2017! Unfortunately, a fault of linear amplifier, only 30 meters, on the 10th day since the beginning of the H40GC DXpedition 2017, deprived me of the opportunity to work and realize at least other 1,500 QSOs on this band.



A few words about the propagation during H40GC activity - extremely poor propagation! I think I nevertheless managed to use the small windows of better propagation for different bands, so that I can give many radio amateurs the chance to get contact with Temotu (H40) on one or more bands.

Of course, more QSOs could have been made, but I was also engaged with humanitarian mission during this expedition, and that also cost me time and effort!

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned that I had a vision of what a humanitarian mission could be accomplished, coupled with the H40GC DXpedition 2017, so that it would remain a lasting memory of the local population and help them effectively.

On October 6, 2017, visiting the local Provincial Disaster Management Office of Temotu Province, I donated them 1 new HP laptop, equipped with a computer bag, flash RAM and extended mouse.

Mr. George Tego, who led the work of this office with great excitement and gratitude, accepted this donation and only minutes later began working with the new computer.



I want to highlight the fact that the 3 employees working for this important and responsible unit are daily among the people of Temotu Province, observing and working on the normal order and environment in the province. Their work is often connected with trips to Reef Island and other islands of Temotu Province, so I am sure that this donation will help them carry out their daily and responsible work!



The main humanitarian activity during the H40GC DXpedition 2017 was intended for the local and only high school with 400 students - JCP College. At this school are study children from 1-7 grade according to local education system. In order to study in this school they must first have completed a primary school of grades 1-4. There is such a primary school in Lata on Nendo Island.

The students from JCP - College are from families living on different islands in Temotu Province.

The College is located at the other end of Nendo Island. The only way to get to this part of the island is by water - by motorboat. The journey from Lata to there is 40 minutes in one direction.



The JCP-College visit was planned and coordinated with the College's management for 11:00 on October 12, 2017. In order to be safely transported to college, I came in contact with the Chairman and the Mayor of Nendo Island. I told them that I needed his help and cooperation. It turned out that the Mayor is the custodian of JCP College and he is also the chairman of his council! He ordered and I was allowed to use a motor boat owned by the municipality. The Chairman and the Mayor of the island was fascinated from the upcoming donation to JCP College and said that they are impressed by this humanitarian action, which I explained that was under the auspices of INDEXA, CDXA & CDXF and Kontrax Ltd - Karlovo, Bulgaria.



The donation to JCP-College consisted of 1 new HP laptop including accessories: laptop bag, extended mouse, flash RAM, 400 notebooks, 400 pens, 400 pencils, folders, markers, sharpeners and other school supplies.

The trip with motorboat to the JCP College was successful, although the ocean was not very quiet this day. After I arrived at JCP College a meeting was held with students and college teachers of the local church. The meeting began with the performance of Temoto's anthem by college students. I will remember this moment forever - the students standing up and singing the hymn,

I and the teachers standing up also, standing still and listening to this brilliant performance! It was really impressive!



Having introduced the students to the purpose of my visit, the college director gave me the floor.

In my address to college students and teachers, I briefly explained what the donation is and that it is done under the auspices of INDEXA, with the generous participation of CDXA & CDXF, Kontrax Ltd - Karlovo, Bulgaria and Andy (LZ2HM) with the help also of all the clubs and organizations which sponsored my expedition to Temotu Province.



I explained to them what our hobby is and what the purpose of radio amateur organizations and clubs is that many of them, like the above mentioned, not only support radio amateurs but also humanitarian activities in different parts of the world.

At this meeting I was asked many questions concerning our hobby, life and work in Bulgaria. I saw that my responses were interesting to those youngsters and students from JCP College. They asked me where Bulgaria is, what I have studied, have I a family what is my job, and many other things.

Keeping in mind that most of Temotu residents spending their lives without visiting another country, I answered their questions to the fullest. At the same time,

I firmly told them that they must believe in success and struggle to achieve more. I told them that it all depends on them that they also have to study in higher education to have a good profession and find a job, to be able to work and visit other countries. I will remember forever those youngsters and girls with their interest in how other people and peoples live.

The meeting at JCP College lasted about 3 hours. When I left with the boat back to Lata, there followed an unforgettable friendly sending. With the voices - “ Stan, come again here “, the students did not hide their satisfaction and sympathy for me. Getting off with the boat, I heard their voices for a long time - saying me good-bye!

Returning to Lata Motel, I continued to work on air. There was no time for a rest and the meeting in college was a nice experience for me!



By preliminary plan H40GC DXpedition 2017 had to finish on 20 October 2017. My return to Bulgaria had to take place after a series of 5 flights starting with a flight from Lata, Temotu Province to Honiara, Solomon Islands. This first flight had to be at 13 PM local time on 21 October 2017.

The night before the flight, I worked 160 meters, my last QSO was at 14:20 GMT with WL7E.

Going in QRT all night, I dismantled the antennas and packed the luggage for my upcoming trip.

On the morning, expecting the taxi to take me to Lata Airport, I realized that because a eruption of the volcano Tinakula, my flight to Honniara was canceled!

At this point, the uncertainty was before me - when there would be a flight, also there was a danger of missing the other four flights to Europe and Bulgaria. I was worried about my work, about my family, about my limited budget in end of the expedition. There were no Banks and ATMs on the island! I was relieved to be among friends, people I knew from the previous year and I believed they would not leave me in trouble! I was most worried for my job. I have this work for 38 years, and I understood that a delay of more than 10 days will

not be good for me. I managed to get in touch with my relatives, my colleague at the work, and continue my leave.

I was more relaxed now! My only concern remains - when there will be a flight to Honniara. The first two days after canceling the flight, I visited Solomon Airlines local office 3-4 times a day hoping to find out that there would be a flight on the next day!

Alas, because of the continued eruption of the Tinakula volcano, flights were impossible!

Not knowing when there will be a flight, I decided to pick up the 160/80/40 m antenna again and continue to work on these three ranges. So I continued H40GC activity until 12:00 GMT on October 25, 2017. Just a few hours before my flight to Honiara on October 26, 2017 I dismantled the antenna again and packed my luggage. Finally! On October 26, 2017, little be after 15 hours, the plane of Solomon Airlines from Lata, Nendo Island, Temotu Province to Honiara, Solomon Islands landed at Honiara Airport. I was more relaxed now, realizing that the nightmare after the eruption of the volcano and the canceled flights was over!

I immediately decided to visit Mr. Colin Sigimanu – Manager Commercial of Solomon Airlines, with whom I already met before my trip to Lata, Temoto Province. My idea was that he helps me with the missed out flight Honiara-Brisbane by Solomon Airlines.

It turned out that Mr. Colin remembered me! After explaining to him that the humanitarian mission had been successful, I briefly introduced him to the problem of my missed 5 flights back to Bulgaria. I will remember this man with good! Understanding my problem, Mr. Colin ordered his subordinates immediately to included me in the list of passengers traveling the next day from Honniara, Solomon Islands to Brisbane, Australia. He told me that a first class hotel at the account of Solomon Airlines will be provided for me in Brisbane.

Thanks to Mr. Colin for goodness and humanity. We parted like good friends. Immediately after my meeting with Mr. Colin, I took a taxi to S. S. E. C. Guesthouse Honiara, where I had to spend the night and meet Bernard (H44MS) and Mrs Serah in charge of the accommodation there.

My meeting with the two was very friendly - like a meeting between old friends! It was an honor for me to meet personally with Bernard (H44MS). I want to point out the fact that this is the man who since 1990, visit yearly for several months the Solomon Islands and during these more than 25 years has activated in the IOTA program the very rare islands belonging to the H44 and H40 DXCC entities!

We with Bernard quickly found a common language. On the next morning, with his help, I contacted via mobile phone with the British Airways representative and I rebook my return tickets from Brisbane, Australia to Sydney, Singapore, London and Sofia (Bulgaria)!

Finally, after a long and tiring trip on October 30, 2017, I arrived successfully in Bulgaria, and on 31 October 2017 I was in my home - "my fortress"!

At the end of this article, I would like to thank all the individual sponsors before and after the expedition that helped for the success of this expedition!

I thank all the members of the GDXF for my dedication and their individual financial support after the Tinakula Volcano eruption on Nendo Island!

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Up to new meetings on the air!

73! Stan, LZ1GC (H40GC)

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