

VE3LYC/KL7 Little Diomed Island

Cezar Trifu

Little Diomed is a small island of 7.3 km² in the middle of the Bering Strait. It lies 36 km west of mainland Alaska and 3.9 km east of Big Diomed Island, the easternmost point of Russia. The International Date Line passes about 1 km west of the island, whose cliffs rise sharply to 494 m above sea level. These islands were part of a now subsided land bridge, used by humans in their migration from Asia to North America more than 10,000 years ago. They were sighted by the Danish-Russian explorer Vitus Bering on August 16, 1728, St. Diomedes' day.



The village of Diomed on the western shore of the Little Diomed Is.

The island is home to 64 residents, whose village is located on the western shore. The Inupiat are known as the “walrus people”, due to the role played by these mammals in their life and culture. Their community can only be reached year-around by helicopter, from Nome, 230 km away. Little Diomed is part of the IOTA reference NA-150, in demand by 88.6% of the IOTA members.



View of the northern part of the village, with the school in the foreground.

Organizing my trip in March aimed to take advantage of better HF propagation this season, as well as ice pack conditions, possibly allowing for passage

and setting up camp at the northeast edge of the island, in order to avoid the massive rock wall obstructing the propagation path to NA and SA.

The radio station was setup in the mechanical room, on the ground floor of the local school, while my accommodation was on the third floor. Built in two stages, 1975 and 1983, the school enrolls now 17 students. A blizzard began soon after my arrival, lasting for five days. Northern cold winds pummeled the island at 65 km/h and -20°C, bringing more snow on top of the largest amount ever witnessed by locals, 2.5 m high at times.



VE3LYC/KL7, NA-150, operated from the local school.

Since the ice pack wasn't thick and stable enough for passing, once the wind subsided, Rob - one of the school teachers - and I attempted to climb the steep hill instead. Unfortunately, without proper ice climbing boots and picks, we were forced to abandon the try before long. The wind switched from the south for the remainder of my stay, bringing warmer weather. Fog and freezing rain became common, preventing the helicopter landing, which left me stuck on the island for an additional seven days.



View of the southern part of the village.

I used an IC-7000 with a KPA-500 amplifier, and a multi-band wire vertical. The log includes 2667 QSOs between Mar 19 and 31, 2019, with 2456 stations in 58 DXCCs on 5 continents. About 17% of the contacts were on 20 m, 82% on 30 m, and 1% on 40 m. All QSOs were in CW, since the polar flutter and heavy QSB conditions made the use of the SSB less reliable.

The continental distribution of QSOs was EU 59%, AS 38%, NA 2%, OC 1%, and AF <1%. The DL hams made 228 QSOs, ranking #3 among the DXCC, following JA (860) and UA (289), and ahead of I (195) and UR (125). A total of 84 GDXF members made the log, 73 of them from DL (32% of all contacts with DL).



Big Diomedes Is., Russia, 3.9 km west of Little Diomede.



Flying the GDXF flag next to the multi-band vertical antenna.

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