

VU7T

A sequel to VU7MS

Out of the blue if something beautiful emerges and makes its presence felt all over the globe, how awesome it would be!. Such was our story of VU7T, a DXpedition to Kavaratti,



Lakshadweep Islands.

A bunch of DX crazy hams who set their foot on activating #56 DXCC entity. Though in recent years Lakshadweep had seen many activations including most famous VU7AG, it nevertheless remains sought after by many hams across the globe. VU2CPL Manoj, spearhead of this activation had done a recce on the islands in November 2016 with VU3NXI Siddhu and found that Paradise Hut resort area as suitable for the team operation. Their two day activation - VU7MS had received appreciation for simple but efficient operation and racking up more than 3000 contacts.

As with many DXpeditions, knowing the geography and people goes long way. So this operation was planned as Sequel second half of VU7MS. VU2WH Sangeeth(A45TT), VU3HPF Gopan(M0XUU), VU2XE Kiran and A65DR Paul were invited by Manoj to join the operation by

fixing the dates in October 2017. But that was just the start of our suspense thriller moments to follow. Lakshadweep remains restricted to tourists and all visitors including main landers require permit to land and stay. The process for WPC permission is more streamlined these days, but paper work is paperwork- with all its uncertainties. Fingers crossed the team submitted all paperwork and waited for the permission along with Paul's reciprocal license permissions.

Meanwhile, Paul had taken up the major work of antenna and station planning. With our intention to do serious operations, we planned VDAs for 20 to 10 mtrs, Phased arrays for 30/40 and vertical for 80mtr. By around 3rd week of September, Manoj received WPC permission for the team including Paul's reciprocal permits. We could not rejoice at this moment as most critical for our operation was permission to operate from the Island and it had to be issued from Island Administrator's office. Manoj had to constantly follow up with the island administration through poor phone lines and an almost non existent internet connectivity! Manoj's close personal acquaintances and friends helped bridge most of these gaps. Though they conveyed that we will get permit, paperwork was getting delayed and complicated due to presence of a foreign national.

Lakshadweep is an Union Territory coming directly under control of Central Government and it is frequented by high ranking officials from the government. The resort which is one of the few places in Kavaratti to stay had 6 rooms and mostly was reserved for visiting officers. This added another dimension to the uncertainty. Team was undergoing anxious moments and even accessories required to procure such as 750mtrs of LMR 400 had to be deferred due to its cost. This uncertainty also forced us to keep our plans within our circle. A week prior to planned activation we decided to take a risk and get our Coax ordered from a supplier in New Delhi who promised to get it delivered to Kochi before 10th of October. That sounded OK as Cargo Ship which will carry majority of our luggage would leave Kochi sea port on 10th afternoon. VU3NXI Siddhu did a road trip to Kochi from Bangalore to transport the heavy luggage items such as Amplifiers, spare Coaxes plucked from our own stations, Spider poles etc. Days went by very fast and on 9th we came to know that Paul will not be issued a permit in time. This was big blow to us. He was instrumental in planning this operation, was our one of our key SSB/ RTTY operator and antenna man!. We had to go forward and salvage the situation with the tough to get permission. Team decided to go public with news of VU7T going on air with 5 operators and Paul as technical support from UAE.

Team had to scramble for the operation plan, alternate antenna plans etc. Also there was a request from the island to familiarise the islanders about this hobby. Happily we obliged their request and planned some demonstrations during our visit.

Gopan and Sangeeth had already flown to India, Kiran preponed his plans to travel with team itself on 11th. Kiran and Siddhu did last minute huddle at Manoj's QTH for taking alternative antennas on the islands and stick to classic single verticals for lower bands.

Due to runway size on Agatti airport, an ATR72 belonging to Air India is the only Airliner to fly there once a day. Manoj, Kiran and Siddhu boarded the plane at Bangalore where they carefully balanced the allowed luggage weight of 15kg each. They were then joined by Gopan and Sangeeth at Kochi Airport. The next one hour flight to Agatti was the most mesmerising!. Small islands with coral reefs, greenish blue lagoons kept us rubber necked most part of the flight.



From the airport after completing the landing permit check formality, we proceeded to Jetty where a small shift boat was awaiting us to carry to the speedboat . These speedboats run between the islands in tune with Agatti airport schedule and that is the only time one can transit across islands. We were told that if we miss that slot, we would have to hire small fishing boat and travel for 4-5 hrs to reach Kavaratti which is 60kms from Agatti.



Speedboat ride on rough sea seemed to be never ending. Sea sickness caught us and by the time we reached Kavaratti, we finally felt a big relief but dehydrated. Short ride on three wheeler reached the resort. Resort was complete with all basic needs and also rooms were equipped with AC !. We were given one large suite with two rooms for our team. That was good enough for our type of stay. We were quickly told that there is group of tourists visiting the next day. So the beach access remained a challenge for us. The tourism department organises package tours form

mainland and groups of 50-200 members reach different islands and they are engaged in water sports and sight seeing along with good food and other entertainment like traditional songs and dances of the island. This not only provides much needed revenue, but opens up the island life to main landers.

After an hour in the resort, we got the message that the Cargo ship has arrived and our luggage will shortly be delivered to resort. A great news for us but we also came to know that much needed Coax cables did not make it to Kochi on time, so it is not in our shipment. So, we had to work with whatever we had in hand and that just enough for the spiderbeam and two verticals on the beach. We focused quickly on assembling Spiderbeam and then 17mtr vertical to be placed on terrace of the resort.



We went on the air at 14:50 UTC on 11 Oct 2017. First QSO was YL2BR on 17m SSB. We continued on 17m SSB and thereafter QSYed to 20m CW. We had plans to put 40m and 30m verticals for the night, but everyone was tired after day long journey and felt it is better to take rest and continue with the antennas the next day.

Next day, there was group of tourists arriving on a cruise ship and occupying the beach area. As it is controlled tourism, they have fixed schedule and no overnight stay for them in Kavaratti. Till 5PM local, their activity continued and with a local folk dance show they all returned to the ship. With no time to waste, we made our way to place verticals for 30 and 40 mtrs. We immediately Noticed that there is some random noise on verticals during the peak NA prop times in the evening. This situation



continued for the rest of the operation times and only after around 11PM local i.e 17:30 UTC we could observe some quite moments. This was in stark contrast from VU7MS when Manoj and Siddhu had a very quiet band to work. The team went about investigating the source and found out that there is a major drive by local administration to change all lights to LEDs and this was confirmed to be the source of noise and continued to wreak havoc on most of the low bands through out our stay.

We had planned an operation roster, but due to last minute scramble, operation then turned to be dynamic. We tried to keep two stations ON at night time and tried to listen to NA/SA whenever path opening were sensed. VU7MS experience was that there was lack of JA path, but that was not the case this time as we found plenty of JA on all bands we operated. We also erected 20mtr vertical on the beach on 3rd day which gave us better opportunity to work NA/SA. Also we did erect 80mtr vertical to have some CW operation on this band, but without a proper Rx antenna, this was not a very fruitful move, but we are happy we could give out some much sought after band fills.



Team went for demonstration at local administration office where the young high ranking officials received our presentation with open mind. On subsequent days we had them visit our operating conditions. We also had demonstration for a group of school children. We were happy with the very positive response from all and are hoping that we will have some native ham on the island in near future. We spent a good amount of time educating Island locals who came to our site about amateur radio as a hobby and also its part during natural

calamities. Some of the islanders even recollected past radio activations.

We did not have any expectations about food, but it was far exceeded by resident chef of the resort. Though for fish eaters it was paradise, for vegetarians like Kiran, Gopan and Siddhu, it was a nice surprise as well. They served awesome meals and staff was friendly extending any help we needed.

Lakshadweep being one of the most beautiful destination for Coral reef scuba diving, and our resort having PADI certified Suba instructors and dive masters, we could see some adventure seekers taking diving lessons in the lagoon.



Some of the instructors tinkered us to come along for diving as well. We left them with their oxygen tanks as we had our oxygen somewhere else Hi!.

Then one day our friend Abdu could not resist but insisted us to get on to the sea to check the bounty of this lagoon. We all got onto the glass bottom boat for a slow lagoon ride and man... he was not wrong. We were missing this awesomeness of nature. Various coral

formations, shy and gentle moving colorful fishes were welcoming us in the reef. Shallow waters 10-15feet were crystal clear and showing its dazzle that day, our hour long ride left us wondering about its abundance and heart full of joy.

As we continued the days, we started seeing many dupes in the log. We could not upload log regularly from the island. The internet used to appear abruptly after midnight and then no signs later on. We thank DXers who listened to the instructions while we looked for OC, AF, NA/SA. Still there were some jammers following our course most probably via modern SDR waterfalls, they gave a hard time when we asked for weaker stations. We slowed down time to time when signals were weaker or local QRM was there. This being tail end of Monsoon season, we did not expect major storms, but few days on the island was rough as it poured heavily and we could see lightning bolts around. These were the times we had to disconnect all our rigs.



Overall we could not fully achieve our target of 30K QSOs, but for sure with limited resources we did our best. Probably with directional antennas such as VDA we could have done better.. With Sangeeth and Siddhu leaving on 19th, we dismantled spiderbeam on 18th evening working that night only on beach verticals. On 19th we dismantled 80m, 20m and 17m verticals leaving 30 and 40mtr for the last day. When we wound up all our ops, there was question again on what next... With still ringing ears, we said bye to lovely islanders to our way back to Agatti. Met few more friendly people on the way, people who want to welcome us back, making us think about these unique "Dweep" (island) and its awesome people!

73s. VU7T team



Some statistics.....

Band	DXCC	CQ	QSOs	Dupes	Total
160m:	0	0	0	0	0
80m:	59	18	509	5	514
40m:	101	28	2,959	117	3,076
30m:	96	31	2,532	121	2,653
20m:	113	35	4,387	117	4,504
17m:	95	29	2,491	66	2,557
15m:	95	30	4,058	127	4,185
12m:	51	17	468	15	483
10m:	12	7	37	0	37
6m:	0	0	0	0	0
2m:	0	0	0	0	0
70cm:	0	0	0	0	0
Total:	142	38			
Sum	622	195	17,441	568	18,009

Our sincere thanks to VU Contest Group and DXers who supported us during this operation, Lakshadweep Administration and SPORTS for inviting us and providing opportunity to make presentations about Amateur Radio to a varied audience.

Thanks a million to Abdu and team - SPORTS who helped us going out of their way, Thanks to all DXers who had patience to work us and understood our constraints.

Continent By Band

Band	80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	Total	Total %
AF	5	27	28	52	28	31	3	9	183	1.0%
AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
AS	34	368	282	636	664	1193	199	10	3386	18.8%
EU	469	2318	2073	3518	1816	2869	277	18	13358	74.2%
NA	0	230	183	209	18	46	1	0	687	3.8%
OC	1	7	14	38	15	27	2	0	104	0.6%
SA	4	128	74	50	15	15	0	0	286	1.6%
Totals	513	3078	2654	4503	2556	4181	482	37	18004	

This table on left shows QSOs by continent- by band. Europe was leading the list with Asia at second place. North America settled at 3.8%. We still lacked good openings to VK. ZL and AF. Most of Asia was Japan, Russia and Ukraine.

Expedition Impact On Users' Totals (info)

We are happy to give many ATNOs. But band fills and slots dominated the list.

Band	160	80	60	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	6	Total	Total %
New Band	0	66	0	149	267	236	200	183	71	5	0	1177	44.3%
New Mode	0	0	0	19	3	89	19	54	0	0	0	184	6.9%
New Band + New Mode	0	2	0	18	43	61	37	33	3	0	0	197	7.4%
New Slot	0	3	0	107	24	194	140	140	12	1	0	621	23.4%
New DXCC	0	2	0	63	79	148	45	139	2	2	0	480	18.1%
Totals	0	73	0	356	416	728	441	549	88	8	0	2659	

DXCC	QSOs	160m	80m	40m	30m	20m	17m	15m	12m	10m	6m	2m	70cm	Calls
I:	2,268		54	353	302	573	387	542	57					938
JA:	2,090		2	119	195	270	475	872	153	4				933
UA:	2,432		130	421	321	673	309	508	60	10				909
DL:	1,079		33	202	222	275	122	217	8					549
UR:	1,061		38	187	158	264	129	263	21	1				417
K:	613			207	164	180	17	44	1					410
SP:	812		26	154	147	213	93	156	23					334
EA:	773		15	136	98	180	114	208	17	5				295
F:	612		13	79	96	178	96	138	12					241
UAO:	436		9	60	33	152	52	122	8					209
OK:	411		27	65	85	92	56	84	2					173
OH:	354		3	57	44	98	58	80	14					145
G:	212			24	48	65	26	43	6					133
ON:	283		1	45	54	81	46	55	1					112
SV:	288		8	48	38	70	39	79	6					111
VU:	179		3	112	4	41	10	5	4					109
PA:	191		4	28	32	79	18	25	5					105
SM:	194		8	32	34	56	25	33	6					103
OE:	200		7	46	28	56	26	32	5					83

We had experienced low JA QSOs during VU7MS, but happy to see lot of JAs this time. Italy and UA stations came up in good numbers as was expected. We are pleasantly delighted by response from VU hams. We had 179 QSOs with more than 100 unique calls from VU. We hope more and more VUs get interested in hunting rare DX.