

T2GC – DXpedition 2015 (Tuvalu Islands)

BY STAN VATEV (LZ1GC) / LUBO (OM5ZW) – PHOTOS BY T2GC TEAM

Within twenty days, beginning from SEP 24th, 2015 till OCT 14th, 2015, after 8 months long hardworking preparation, Stan (LZ1GC) and Lubo (OM5ZW) executed T2GC DXpedition on Tuvalu Island! The announcement and the preparation period for this expedition matched and stayed under the shadow of the announcement and preparation for three other long awaited DXpeditions as TX3X (Chesterfield Is.), K5P (Palmira & Jarvis Is.), VP8STI & VP8SGI (South Sandwich Is and South Georgia Is).

The idea about possible expedition to Tuvalu Island in 2015 came to my mind during the C21GC DXpedition back in 2014. I am 58 and I know that when somebody wants something too much, it becomes a reality! In the beginning I thought to make it alone, but Lubo (OM5ZW) called me to say he is keen on making bigger expedition together. I agreed, having in mind two operators means more time on the radio, more QSOs and more fun for the HAMS worldwide. Now, I can say he is excellent operator!

Based on the previous DXpeditions experience, I made solid Internet research about Tuvalu Island! I wrote e-mail with some questions to Clive (GM3POI) – member of T2GM 2013 team. He kindly gave me details about accommodation, local noise level and main power. Since Vaiaku Lagi Hotel was the only hotel in Funafuti, I decided to make a reservation there. I saw some photos of the hotel uploaded in Internet. Although the hotel was oceanfront, it looked like there was not enough room for sufficient antenna farm. I was a bit afraid about



that, having in mind we intended to install two wide-band, prism-shaped verticals (40 m to 10 m inc. WARC) and one combined 80 m/160 m GP.

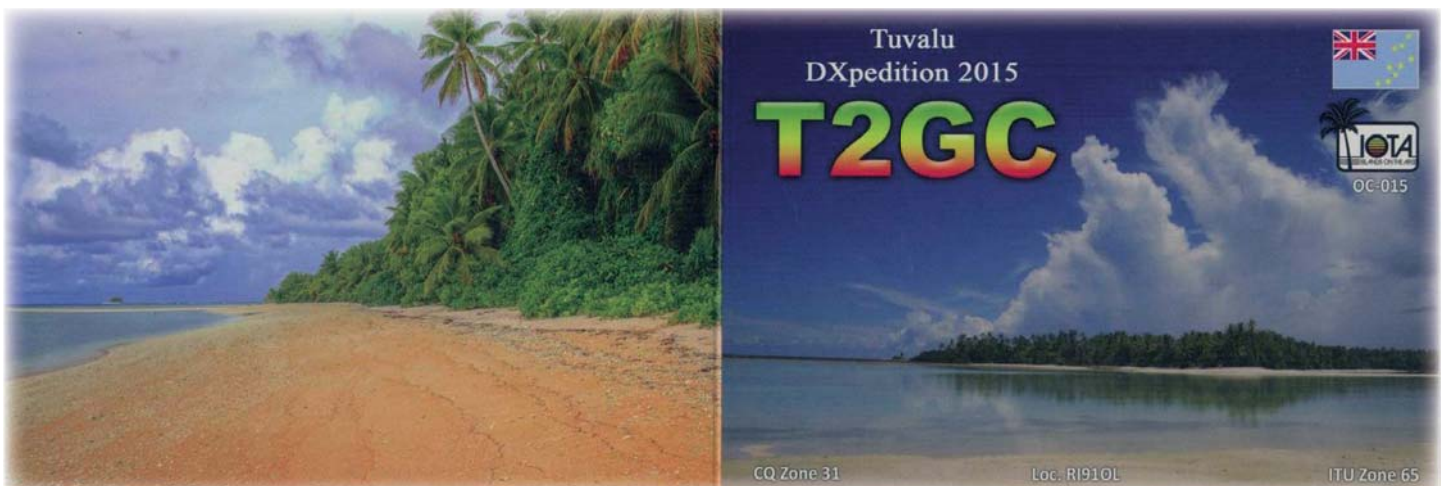
The essential part of DXpedition planning actually was the travel planning to Tuvalu and back. It took about ten days to specify the route - Frankfurt, Germany – Seoul, South Korea – Nadi, Fiji – Suva, Fiji – Funafuti, Tuvalu. Regardless of possible customs problems in Fiji (I already have bad experience with them) I decided to use this route. Once the trip was organized, I contacted with Mr. Atufenua Maui – Acting Director ICT, who was person in charge for license issuing, and send him all required documents in order to receive T2 license. Mr. Maui replied quickly, informing me

that all about the documents is fine and we can get the license immediately after our arrival and payment. I am amazed and surprised at the quick reaction of Tuvalu authorities' administration.

We reserved a room in Vaiaku Lagi Hotel easily with a clause we can change it in case of inconvenient exposure.

The most important things were already organized, so Lubo (OM5ZW) and I arranged a meeting at Frankfurt airport on SEP 21st, 2015 just 2 hours before our flight to Seoul, South Korea.

Technical preparation took up much of the preparation months. I built the two wide-band verticals and tested 80 m/160 m vertical. More than





80 m/160 m vertical



160 m vertical

700 m wires were cut out, soldered and transformed into antennas and radials. It was difficult, having in mind I did not have too much spare time. Sometimes, I did not have day off at work!

In April 2015 I was invited to introduce a brief presentation related to my previous DXpedition as C21GC on Norwegian HAM meeting. I remember that most of the questions were relat-

ed to the technical preparation. They were amazed how I've managed to prepare alone everything necessary for DXpedition like this! I answered I have used only my spare time for that! For instance, today I make 2 radials, tomorrow another two radials and so...

It was important to provide sufficient equipment for this expedition. Lubo provided one Elekraft K3, kindly

endowed by OM3JW, two microHAM interfaces and WIN test software. I received a brand new Kenwood TS-480SAT provided by Ted (LZ3CB)! Thanks a lot, Ted! The two amplifiers were kindly provided by ACOM Ltd. I like ACOM! I feel so calm with ACOM amplifiers regardless of the location I am all over the world! We purchased telescopic fiberglass poles for our antennas with a discount from Spider-beam!

Due to our financial shortage, it was very important to find sponsors! Frankly speaking, it was the most unpleasant part of the organization! I requested 33 clubs all over the World for sponsorship, but only few of them replied - GDXF, EUDXF, SDXF, LA DX Group, GM DX Group, CDXC (U.K.), Clipperton DX Club, Oklahoma DX Association, Araucaria DX Group (Mr. Oms - PY5EG)! Thank you so much, guys! Many clubs answered us and explained why they are not able to help us! Thanks also, guys! We do understand that some organizations have exact rules and requirements about giving sponsorship. However, I cannot understand these guys, who even didn't reply us! Probably they really demonstrate lordliness and



Exp. GP antenna

have dual standards. Never mind!!!

Finally, step by step we fully completed the preparation for this DXpedition. It took long time!

On SEP 19th, 2015 at 18:30 local Emil DL8JJ and his family met me at Frankfurt airport. We had a dinner and take a rest. On the next day we relaxed and checked the weight of my baggage. On SEP 21st Lubo and I met each other at the airport. We had voluminous check in baggage – two large double boxed amplifiers and one long box with three Spider fiberglass poles. The transceivers and most of the technical equipment like power supplies, cables, filters, and about 120 m coax cable were placed in small notebook bags and carry-on luggage. I remember when custom servant asked us about Spider fiberglass poles, we explained that we are fisherman and we're going for fishing in the Pacific ocean (hi)! Later on, when the customs checked our carry-on luggage, we were already radio amateurs on the way for expedition (hi)! It was really funny, because we carried connectors, cables and even radials in our pockets (hi). Finally, we checked in smoothly and later on we already were flying to Seoul with Korean Air.

On SEP 22nd, 2015 at 13:05 local, after almost 11 hour flight we arrived at Incheon airport, Seoul. There was an emotional meeting with Aves Kang (DS2AGH). I am impressed by this man. To meet us he had left his business for several hours. We had to wait six hours for our next flight to Fiji. Aves Kang and his partner give us a ride to DS2AGH station located in one of Aves' factories. Talking about amateur radio, the time was running

quickly and it was time for our next flight. Sending us, Aves told that he will be waiting us when we return back. Thank you, Aves Kang. You are a true friend!

In a few minutes, we already were flying to Fiji. We were faced with another 11 hours long flight. Lubo and I were talking about the upcoming expedition during the entire flight and we had very surprising meeting with Kazu (JA8ECS). He joined us after he had heard our conversation. It is amazing! How small is the world! Kazu was traveling to visit Antoine 3D2AG and he intended to be active as 3D2YJ.

On SEP 23rd, 2015 at 08:45 local we arrived at Nadi airport and Kazu wished us success. We hoped to meet him on the air. On SEP 25th, 2015 we worked Kazu on 20 m SSB! The radio is really amazing!!!

Our next flight to Funafuti, Tuvalu was on the next day - SEP 24th, 2015 at 6:30 local time. In accordance with the Fiji Airways requirements we had to be at check-in desk three hours in advance. We stayed overnight at local hotel and at 3:15 we were at the airport again. We flew to Suva, Fiji and after that to Funafuti. On SEP 24th, 2015 at 12:30 local time we finally arrived to our end point. Passed through the customs smoothly and immediately moved to our hotel which is located very close to the airport. We found appropriate room, faced to the ocean. Lubo started to set-up the equipment; I decided to go to the governmental building located near by the hotel. I met Mr. Atu at his office. I received the license for T2GC and requested him for 60 m approval. Getting the license were very impres-

sive moment for me! Two days later we received annex to our license for 60 m activity.

Returning to the hotel Lubo and me started to install the antennas. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough place for all antennas. A dose of radials were into the ocean. We had a local assistant – the son of T2TK joined us. This day was tough! It was 40 degrees Celsius. Around 4 p.m. local time, we started to set the first working place – K3 + ACOM 1011. After the equipment testing and antenna SWR, at 5:44 p.m. local (5.44 a.m. GMT) Lubo started CQ on 30m. Our first contact was with Gary - ZL2IFB. In a few minutes Lubo already was under big pile-up! After few hours on the radio Lubo was impressed by the antenna capabilities. I said, I have solid experience with this antenna on DXpeditions and I have never had any failures! While Lubo was working on the radio I unpacked the rest of the equipment and started to set the second radio up (TS-480SAT + ACOM 600S). In an hour I managed to set the equipment up, but unfortunately we had only one antenna. During the night we split up the time on the radio. On the next day morning, I left Lubo running on the radio and started to prepare 80 m/160 m vertical. Later on the antenna was ready to be installed and together with Lubo raised the low bands vertical. After the tuning the result was pretty good – SWR 1,3:1 on 80 m and 1:1 on 160 m. We continued to work with the first antenna, waiting for the sunset and low bands opening. Due to lack of enough place, we weren't able to install the third antenna. That was the reason to use the second set-up



Aves Kang (DS2AGH)



Stan (LZ1GC) as guest of DS2AGH

only on the low bands! From SEP 25th, 2015 to OCT 7th, 2015 we worked on the both radios. Due to business engagements Lubo had to travel back to Slovakia on OCT 8th, 2015. We already had 29,000 QSOs. I send Lubo at the airport and he said me that it will be difficult for me alone! I promised him I will do my best to make at least 35,000 contacts. Thanks a lot Lubo! You are great operator!

Returning back from the airport I kept on working on RTTY that day... I am enjoying RTTY! The rate was good, about 100 QSOs/h. I worked on all bands CW, SSB and RTTY the last week with good rates. 3 days before the end of the expedition, a big cyclone hit us on the Island! There was heavy rain, strong wind and mountain ocean waves. On the next day all my antennas have been broken! Having in mind that many HAMS are listening for me, I decided to recover the antennas although I was totally exhausted.

One of supporting rope of 160 m vertical was broken, the radials were also broken... Fortunately, I had radials from the third antenna. In spite of the strong winds and waves, I managed to recover all antennas for 2 hours. Absolutely wet, I returned to the hotel room, where I found out that all antennas work well. I was worn out and decided to take a rest for several hours. Four hours later, I was on the radio again! The antennas worked well, the rate was good! A day before the end of the expedition, I took to pieces the low band antenna. The last night I worked and during the short breaks I prepared my baggage. Actually, I was still active 6 hours before leaving the Island. I logged my last contact at 16:58 GMT (04:58 local) on OCT 14th, 2015.

I would like to tell a bit about locals... I think local people are very warm-hearted, temperamental and smiling! They are happy! They rejoice at the simple things... I am impressed

by these people!

On OCT 15th, 2015 at 12:30 local I took-off with flight FJ-280 of Fiji Airways. I was faced again to long flights back to Europe with five hops. On OCT 20th, 2015 I finally returned back home in Bulgaria! Thanks again to Emil - DL8JJ and his family, Aves Kang - DS2AGH for their hospitality! I am so grateful for the time I've spent with them!!! I appreciate your efforts, guys!

Lubo and I traveled more than 35,000 kilometers round trip. It was very tiresome journey!

T2GC completed the operation with 35,308 QSOs on all HF bands CW, SSB and RTTY, having in mind the propagations in the beginning of October were very poor. We are satisfied by the end state of this operation! Nothing compares with the joy of well done job! We are glad to give you All Time New One and a New Band Slots. You can see all statistics of CLUBLOG as following:

Band/Mode breakdown

Band	CW	PH	RTTY	Total	Total %
160	1,073	0	0	1,073	3.04 %
80	2,949	7	4	2,960	8.38 %
60	25	0	0	25	0.07 %
40	3,758	76	399	4,233	11.99 %
30	2,817	0	531	3,348	9.48 %
20	3,771	1,098	625	5,494	15.56 %
17	4,191	1,138	1,137	6,466	18.31 %
15	3,454	1,291	1,305	6,050	17.13 %
12	2,352	551	572	3,475	9.84 %
10	1,432	307	445	2,184	6.19 %
Totals	25,822	4,468	5,018	35,308	100,00 %

DXCC by Band/Mode breakdown

Band	CW	PH	RTTY	Total
160	32	0	0	32
80	75	5	3	75
60	4	0	0	4
40	95	18	32	96
30	91	0	51	93
20	103	74	47	113
17	94	58	57	106
15	95	74	59	107
12	70	16	21	71
10	53	12	22	57
Totals	132	99	79	141

Continent by Band

CONTINENT/BAND	160 m	80 m	60 m	40 m	30 m	20 m	17 m	15 m	12 m	10 m	TOTAL	TOTAL %
AFRICA	1	3	0	11	14	24	12	6	0	2	73	0.21 %
ANTARTICA	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	4	0.01 %
ASIA	493	1,056	0	1,963	1,269	1,853	2,212	2,903	2,340	1,694	15,783	44.70 %
EUROPE	93	916	4	1,527	1,585	2,194	2,468	1,278	600	190	10,855	30.74 %
NORTH AMERICA	449	878	20	577	360	1,028	1,538	1,539	419	206	7,014	19.87 %
OCEANIA	35	92	1	132	94	221	171	177	85	65	1,073	3.04 %
SOUTH AMERICA	2	15	0	22	25	173	65	146	31	27	506	1.43 %
TOTAL	1,073	2,960	25	4,233	3,348	5,494	6,466	6,050	3,475	2,184	35,308	100.00 %

Unfortunately, we didn't have as much funds and technical resources as some major expeditions, but now, writing this article, four months after the end of T2GC, I can proudly say that Lubo and me did good job. We did our best and I can even say we worked as four persons! GDXF an-

nounced T2GC as MEGA DXpedition with its 35308 QSOs on all HF bands and which is recognition for us! We are very grateful to the boards of GDXF, SDXF, EUDXF, LA DX GROUP, GM DX GROUP, CDXC / U. K. /, OKLAHOMA DX ASSOCIATION, CLIPPERTON DX CLUB, ARAUCARIA DX GROUP (per-

sonally to Mr. Oms PY2EG), for their understanding and financial support! Many thanks also to all clubs and their members for the support!

Our thanks personally to Jan - DG2AT, Kip - W6SZN, Toshi - JG1UKW, Franz - DJ9ZB, Jan - DJ8NK, Hans - SM6CVX, Rudy - OM3PC, Miro -

OM5RW, Mike - S58N, Victor - LZ3NN, Ivan - LZ1IK and all others sponsors who sponsored us in advance and after the expedition. We are glad and thankful that we had been fostered by more than 70 individual sponsors which indicated the high interest to the upcoming DX-pedition. This enforced us additionally, in order to deal with all challenges during the preparation and when we were on the ter-

rain! We felt, we are not alone! There were many HAMS all over the world, behind us!

Special thanks to ACOM Ltd. for their technical support with ACOM 600S & ACOM 1011!

Special thanks to Emil - LZ3HI (GOLD PRINT SERVICE), for the fast printing of QSL cards and the perfect Webpage design of www.c21gc.com

Special thanks to Emil - DL8JJ and

his xyl Verjy - DL9JJ as well as to Aves Kang - DS2AGH for their hospitality! Thanks guys that you again spent a lot of your precious time, to meet us and send towards Tuvalu and back. That's amazing!

Thanks guys for your patience and contacts! See you soon on the air from H44GC & H40GC!

73! T2GC Team

Stan, LZ1GC & Lubo, OM5ZW.

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