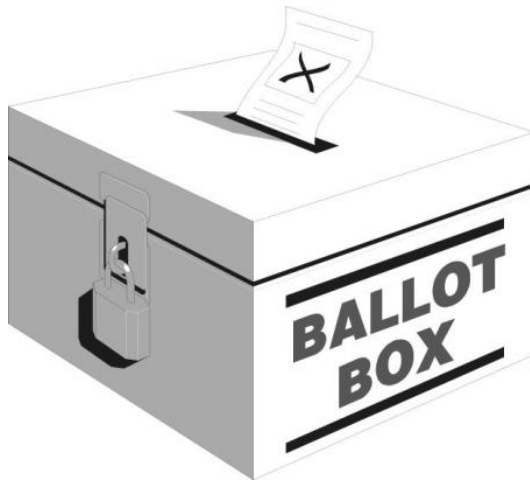




The DXer

June 2010

The Official Publication Of The Northern California DX Club



JUNE MEETING
Elections for 2010-2011
Officers and Directors

“Modern Satellite DXing” by
Sawson Taheri, KG6NUB:
Hardware/Software, Tracking
and Technology for Working
These Birds in the Sky

Thursday June 17
6pm – 7:15pm Dinner/Social
7:15pm Club Meeting
at Holder’s Country Inn
998 S. De Anza Boulevard
San Jose, CA

Note the Early Meeting Time

President’s Message

By Craig Bradley, AE6RR

Hello Everyone,

As I sit down to write my final message as President for the June DXer I am reflecting on the past two years and the accomplishments of the NCDXC Board. Quite a bit has changed in this time and the time has gone by fast. To name a few of the changes; the Procedures and Bylaws Manual has been recovered from a hard copy (the original soft copy had been lost). The Procedures have been updated and revised to reflect that way that the club has been operating for several years. The Board of Directors (BoD) now meets on a regular basis and has established guidelines for contributions to DXpeditions. Regular board meetings have enabled the BoD to start working on planning and to establish some long term goals for the club.

During these two years we have been able to substantially increase our donations to the NCDXF and become a major supporter of the Foundation and through it, major DXpeditions. The club was also a major sponsor of the recent YI9PSE expedition to Northern Iraq. This was a first for the “new” NCDXC.

None of these contributions would have been possible without all of the hard work of those behind the scenes that make the IDXC at Visalia a great success during the NCDXC years. The raffle at Visalia is the major source of the club’s revenue and the support of the DX community in purchasing raffle tickets is what really makes all of this possible. The last couple of conventions have been very successful which has benefited the club and the DX community.

(continues)

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President's Message, continued:

We now have our own DXCC card checker, Russ Bentson, K6KLY. He has been nominated by the club and approved by the ARRL DXCC desk. This enables us to offer card checking at club meetings. Don't forget that DXCC card checkers can check WAS cards also and although they cannot check WAC cards directly, if you have a card checked and accepted into your DXCC record you can use it for WAC awards. It is time to start organizing those cards and applying for wall paper before the sun spot cycle gets going again and you get busy working new ones! Thanks to Russ for accepting this position and I look forward to seeing the card checking at our meetings.

When I speak of the new NCDXC, I am talking about the new open club where anyone with an interest in DXing is welcome. The old club was limited to those with at least 100 DXCC entities confirmed and was very exclusive. Our new club strives to mentor those that would like to achieve DXCC and other awards. Recently I have heard antidotes that old time hams who are not members are telling prospective members that the club is still the same old club. As this is not true, we should all do our best to correct these perceptions when we hear them and we should all take on a personal goal to promote the club and recruit new members. In addition please welcome all new prospective members to the repeater. This is not a closed repeater and is open to anyone who would like to discuss the club and DX.

The elections for our 2010-2011 officers and directors will be held at the June meeting. For the last couple of years we have had more prospective candidates for the director positions than we have openings. Last year we created an "Ex Officio" director position to resolve this problem. This year we have four very well qualified candidates who have expressed an interest in serving as a director. This could result in a 4 way race for 2 seats which would end up with two members unable to serve the club. I and the board believe that the club will

benefit from the experience and ideas of all of the candidates. If the club is to grow, we need to have a board that considers a broad range of ideas and viewpoints. Currently the Bylaws of the club limit the number of elected directors to two. The past president is also automatically a director so there are three director positions. As there are four officers (president, VP, secretary and treasurer), the board currently has 7 members. The members can change the Bylaws with a vote at a regular club meeting. I am proposing that we increase the number of elected directors from 2 to 4 at the June meeting before the elections are held and I will be asking for a motion from the floor to this effect at the meeting. We will also still have an odd number of board members which will serve to eliminate the possibility of a tie vote on any issue. I believe that this is an important step to ensure the continued growth of our club.

The board's nominee for president for the next year is Richard Crouch, N6RC. Dick will bring many new ideas and extensive ham radio experience to the club. His involvement with the Radio Arcala team also opens up many exciting possibilities. Dick is a very good speaker and the board believes that he will make an excellent president.

Phil Steffora, K6TT will be the board's nominee for re-election as vice president. Phil has done a great job over the last year as VP. He has brought us many excellent speakers for our meetings and has contributed substantially to the growth of the club over the last year. Before that Phil was the DXer editor and produced many great issues. Phil was successful in recruiting another Phil, W6TQG as the DXer editor and this year his goal will be to recruit his replacement VP as he expects to have his time limited by family duties later in the year. If you are interested in being a VP in training, please contact Phil. As a side note, your name does not need to be Phil.

John Eisenberg, K6YP has accepted the

nomination as secretary. John as you know was our last past president and has served on the board for many years. His accomplishments are many and his continued service to the club will be greatly appreciated.

Bob Lanning, W6OPO has stepped forward and has become the board's nominee for Treasurer. Bob has had experience as a Treasurer with other Amateur Radio clubs and will be a great fit in this important job. I also look forward his inputs to the board as he will be bringing in new ideas and viewpoints.

In the director positions, Steve Jones has been nominated for re-election. Steve has been a director for the last year and before that served as treasurer for several terms. Risto Kotlampi, W6RK is the second nominee he was our Ex Officio director last year and Risto served as our last VP. Russ Bentson, K6KLY our current secretary and card checker will be the third candidate and Pete Gabosky, W6OOL with be the fourth. Pete has been the maintainer of the club's repeater since it's inception in the late '70's and he will bring extensive technical experience with repeaters and remote stations to the board.

If this slate of candidates is elected we will have three new faces on the board along with 6 veterans. I think that this will be a good mix of new ideas with current management experience. I highly recommend the election of this entire slate of officers and directors for the 2010-2011 terms.

We will also be presenting the NCDXC 2010 contribution to the NCDXF at the June meeting. NCDXF board members will be on hand to accept the donation and give us a brief update on the beacon project.

The June meeting will again be at Holder's

**Main Raffle Prize:
Model P1 Touch Paddle Keyer
by West Mountain Radio**

Country Inn on DeAnza Blvd in San Jose on June 17th and the speaker will be Sawson Taheri, KG6NUB who will be speaking on "Modern Satellite DXing". He will be covering hardware/software, tracking and technology related to working these birds in the sky.

The June meeting has a very full schedule so please plan in arriving early and get your dinner ordered as I will be trying to get the meeting started early (7:15).

In closing, it has been a great honor and privilege to serve as president of the NCDXC for the last two years. These years have gone by quickly and it has also been a lot of fun. I hope that you have enjoyed all of the meetings. I now look forward to being able to sit back and enjoy the meetings conducted by our new president and actively participate in the board meetings without having to organize them! I might even have time to do some DXing if the sunspots return in force. Thank you all for your faith in electing me and your great support!

Don't miss the annual picnic on July 24th at Shoup Park in Los Altos (details elsewhere in this issue) as I will be officially handing over the gavel to the new president at that time. Of course there will be great food (provided by the club) and card checking too.

For now, 73, and good DX!
- Craig, AE6RR
ae6rr at arrl.net

Life Member

**Charles, W6DPD became a
LIFE member at our May meeting!**

New Members

**The following became members at our
May meeting. Welcome to the NCDXC!**

**William, N6BM
Tony, KM6DA
Teru, W6DHH
Geoffrey, K6ERA**

YI9PSE DXpedition The Operation By N6PSE, Paul Ewing

Due to the limitation of our ten day “tourist” visas, we arranged to have a three person advance team arrive in Erbil, IRAQ on March 31st. They were to receive our equipment which was shipped weeks earlier. The main team was to arrive on April 2nd. On April 1st, the advance team called me from IRAQ. They told me there was a customs hold up and to bring “a lot of money”. I knew that Kurdistan was an all cash society with no credit cards or ATM machines. I’m glad that I brought \$5000 with me.

Upon my arrival, the advance team told me that they had not been able to retrieve our equipment, which was sitting in a warehouse at the airport. The Ministry of Security wanted to see me about our equipment. I had previously made extensive preparations/arrangements with the Ministry of Interior, so this would be our first dealing with the Ministry of Security. This was quite a surprise, as the Ministry of Interior has assured me that all arrangements were in proper order.

Before meeting with the Ministry of Security, I sent an email message to the Minister of Interior, but since our arrival day was on a Friday; all Government offices would be closed until Sunday.

The next day, the advance team of Bob N6OX, David K3LP, Heathem YI1UNH and I went to the Ministry of Security offices at the airport. The Ministry of Security told us via our Arabic translator that radio equipment was not allowed into Kurdistan. They are very fearful of radio equipment getting into the hands of the Kurdish Resistance Movement-The PKK. The Ministry of Security representative asked for a \$2000 USD deposit to guarantee that we would bring our entire equipment home with us.

We reluctantly agreed to pay the \$2000 “deposit” knowing that it may be very difficult to get our money back. We were then invited into the Minister’s office to have Tea. As we would soon learn, in Kurdistan most business transactions



Team Arrives in Erbil

and agreements are made over tea. While having our tea, Heathem YI1UNH received a phone call from Mr. Zero, our Hotel’s General Manager. A rather animated conversation in Arabic then unfolded. Heathem handed his telephone to the Ministry of Security representative. We could tell that there was some colorful conversation taking place. Within moments the Ministry of Security official appeared very concerned.

After the call with Mr. Zero, the Ministry of Security official told us that we now had a choice of paying a “tax” instead of a security deposit. We asked how much is the tax? He replied that the tax was now \$100 USD. I immediately pulled out a nice crisp \$100 bill and tried to give it to the official. He paused, “but first we must have tea”.

Imagine the flood of emotions I am feeling at this point. I’ve spent many hours working in advance of our trip to avoid having any issues like this. I’ve just flown 24 hours to get to IRAQ. Now I find that we have lost two days of set up time over a \$100 “tax” that needs to be paid. I calmly drank my tea. The Ministry of Security official sensed my urgency to get our equipment and get going. He offered us a “special discount” on our tax, for us, today only the tax would now be \$54. We finished our tea, paid the \$54 and were taken to the warehouse for our equipment. As we left

the Ministry of Security, I asked Heathem “what did Mr. Zero say that changed things so dramatically?” Heathem said that Mr. Zero is a very well known man in Kurdistan and that Mr. Zero told the Ministry of Security official that he must “Stop this F&%g\$hi\$ Right Now!” We would soon learn just how powerful Mr. Zero is in Kurdistan.

At the warehouse we found most of our equipment. IRAQ customs had opened all of the crates and inventoried our equipment. Just one BIG problem. Only one of the five ICOM IC-7600 radios was there!

More panic set in. How can we have a successful DXpedition with only one radio! We asked the shipper about our other equipment. More confusion and more pandemonium set in. The shipper did some checking and after about a half hour, the shipper told us that part of our shipment was still in Dubai.

As we stood around, trying to figure out what to do, one of the shipper’s employees told us that a cargo plane from Dubai had just landed. We waited anxiously as the cargo plane was unloaded. The giant skid was brought to the warehouse and we helped tear the packaging off. We were so glad to see the four large black ICOM Pelican cases. There were our other radios!

The shipper sensed our frustration and relief. He agreed to have his truck immediately loaded and deliver our equipment to the hotel within several hours.

After leaving the airport, we made a brief stop in the money district of Erbil. This is an outdoor area of shops and street kiosks that change & exchange money. We changed our American dollars into Iraqi Dinars. We were amazed at the piles of cash seen on the various tables. We also saw merchants carrying large stacks of money up and down the street. While we saw no signs of security or police in this area, we felt safer than we would feel in Detroit or Oakland. We made a brief stroll through the area and met and chatted with some of the local shopkeepers. Right away we sensed that they liked Americans

and were very glad to see signs of Tourists. We would make several more adventures into Erbil during our stay and we were always treated with warmth and respect by the Kurds.

We went back to the hotel and briefed the team. Within several hours the truck arrived and was offloaded. Fortunately the truck had a crane attached as the crates weighed over a thousand pounds each!

Soon we were opening the crates and unloading the equipment. The radios and amps were taken to their respective shacks. Bill N2WB had done some excellent negotiating for our SSB shack accommodations. The CW and RTTY shacks were in the main hotel building. With some desire for separation between SSB and CW, Bill was able to negotiate with the owner of a restaurant that shares the same hilltop and parking lot as our hotel. At first, the restaurateur wanted \$200 per day for a small “shack” located behind his restaurant, perched on the edge of a very steep drop off towards North America. Bill balked at that price. The restaurateur then asked for \$100 per day for the small shack. Bill finally negotiated down to an agreement that the SSB shack would be provided for free and we would buy a case of bottled water each day for \$10 USD. What a deal! I think if the restaurateur ever calculated the amount of power that we consumed with two complete SSB stations on the air 24X7, he lost money in the deal.



SSB Shack

Bob N6OX set about supervising the antenna set ups. Bob's Force-12, C3S would be the primary SSB Yagi. It was mounted on the hillside adjacent to the shack with a very steep 1000' drop off towards North America. The two element SteppIR was mounted on the restaurant roof, facing Europe and Japan on the backside. Al K3VN set up his home brew 80/160 vertical on the down slope of the SSB shack. A 40/80 vertical was set up along with a 540' beverage antenna on the other side of the main Yagi.

Over at the CW shack in the main hotel building, Bob and Dave K3LP supervised the set up of Bob's three element SteppIR Yagi with 30/40 dipole as the primary CW antenna. Several ¼ wave verticals were also set up for 40/80/160 meters. Later a second and third 2 element SteppIR Yagis would be set up for CW and a 2 element 40 meter wire beam would be added. A SteppIR BigIR with 80 meter coil was also added to the primary CW shack. A 540' beverage was strung along the hillside by Dave-K3LP.

June JH4RHF set up the RTTY shack and the SteppIR Big IR with 80 meter coil. This would be the main antenna for RTTY. Later we would create a second CW shack in the RTTY room and add a 2 element SteppIR Yagi to the mix.

Over at the SSB shack, the SSB team insisted that I make the first SSB QSO's. At that point I

had been up for about 35 hours, so I was thinking of a nap. I worked about 6-8 European stations and then turned the pile up over to the other SSB operators. At that point, I was so excited that we were finally on the air, that I forgot about sleep for the rest of the day.

Back over at the CW shack, they were experiencing high SWR with the 3 element SteppIR. Bob N6OX got on a ladder and tried to check it. Within the next few days, we would try moving the antenna to minimize and interaction with the hotel building. It took all hands to move this big antenna.

During our first weekend of operation, the bands seemed to be in good shape. I primarily operated at sunrise and again at sunset, looking for Zone 3 on 20 meters. It had been my plan to operate in the General class portions of the bands on our last two days, however on the first weekend, there was a European contest and it seemed that the entire spectrum on 20 meters was taken. I found that I could operate at 14.195 MHZ, but the only clear spot that I found to listen was at 14.240! This made a lot of North American General Class amateurs happy right off the bat! The next morning I got up early and got into the shack at 5AM. There was a Mosque in the village at the bottom of the steep hill below us. I actually enjoyed the daily call to prayer that I heard each morning as I was getting started. It was very enjoyable to watch the sun rise over the mountains that divide Iraq and its neighbor to the east, IRAN.

The first several days of operations went very well. The hotel served as a fantastic venue. Its mountain top location at about 2000' above all other terrain was superb. The accommodations and the meals were fantastic. The hotel was very accommodating for each and every request that we made. Mr. Zero made sure that we were well taken care of.

The only thing that Mr. Zero could not seem to fix was the weather. We soon learned that with respect to weather, all things seem to be an extreme in Iraq. We either had warm days, ex-



CW Antenna

tremely cold and windy nights, we had quite a thunderstorm and we had a sandstorm of sorts with sand being carried high overhead blowing in from Iran.

Towards the middle of the week on April 5th, we noticed that propagation really dropped off. A check of spaceweather.com reported a very strong geomagnetic storm. While we could still work Europe, the JA stations were much weaker and working North America became quite difficult. This lasted for several days before things improved again. During our last weekend, propagation was again very good. I enjoyed working many West Coast/Zone 3 stations, including many members of the Northern California DX Club. The high point was working Reg K6SSJ in his mobile station at his "hot spot". I also worked a big rig trucker who was driving down Hwy 70 in Cheyenne Wyoming. He was so surprised when I told him I was in Iraq!

As we were nearing completion of our DXpedition we were at 48,000 QSO's in the log. We had planned to shut down just before dinner time on our last night and have a team dinner all together, however propagation was so good and the team was motivated to keep operating. Instead of having dinner and drinks and celebrating our success, the team feverishly operated all night long. At 4AM we started tearing down the antennas, one at a time while one CW and one SSB station remained on the air. At 8AM on Monday, April 12th, we went QRT. Everything was packed back in the crates and the shipper's truck and hoist showed up a little past 9AM. A few hours later we were on our way to the Erbil airport for our flight to Vienna where we would say our Goodbyes.

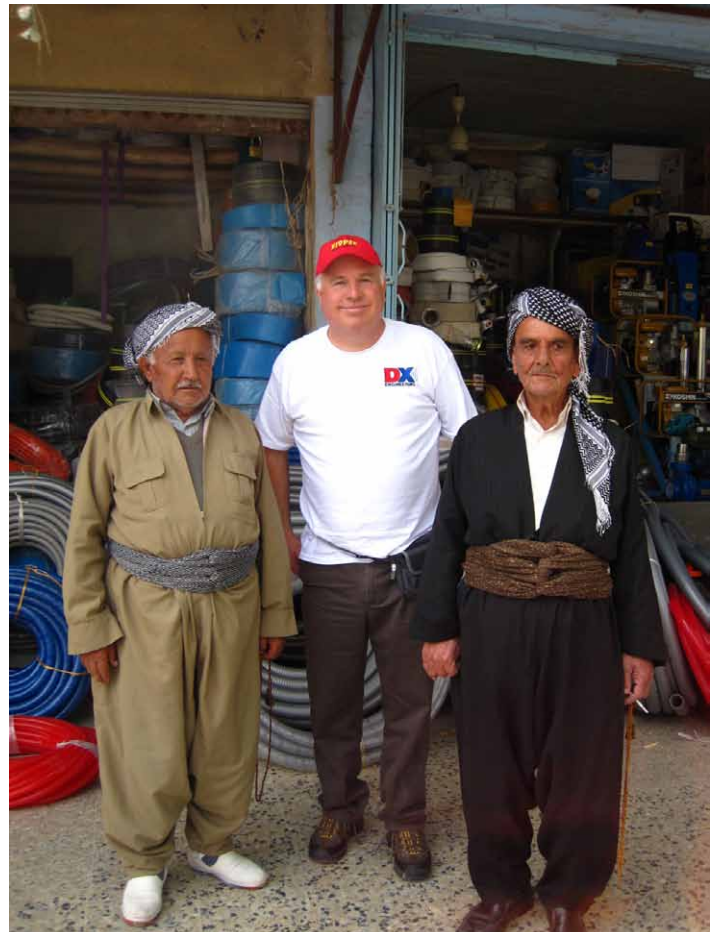
In closing, I have been asked a number of times why the SSB signals were so much stronger to North America than the CW signals. Here is what I can tell you. The SSB antenna was mounted on the edge of a steep drop off with no terrain in front of it. We had planned to have an Acom 1000 Amp in each of the shacks, however for some reason; both of the Acom 1000 Amps were in the SSB shack. This gave us several hundred

more watts of RF power output than the CW stations. After we determined that the 3 element SteppIR antenna was broken, the primary CW antenna became the 2 element SteppIR Yagi.

A final chat with Mr. Zero: Before our departure, Mr. Zero asked several of us to meet with him. He asked us in our view, what could the Kurds do to promote tourism and business in their area. I also asked him if there is anything that he wanted me to convey upon my return to the USA. Mr. Zero said "yes, there is just one thing, please tell America that we need a Home Depot very badly".

I will always cherish my memories of this operation and the experiences in Kurdistan. Kurdistan is indeed a very warm and special place, a place that I will follow and hope to return someday.

This article is dedicated to my Dear friend, Mr. Heathem Sabah-YI1UNH, may you find peace, "my brother from another mother".



N6PSE with local Kurds

2010 NCDXC Summer Picnic Hawaiian Theme

The 2010 NCDXC Summer Picnic will take place Saturday July 24th at the Patriot Corner Group Picnic Area in Shoup Park, Los Altos, CA (400 University Ave) between 10:30am - 2:00pm.

Just bring yourself and enjoy the free food and drinks. We will be having DXCC card checking along with the official handoff to the new board of directors.

Along with the food and drinks, we are planning to have a GOTA station so we can work a little DX while the food is cooking and a best Hawaiian shirt contest. There will be first and second place prizes, so your best Hawaiian shirts and whatever island wear you might have! Can't wait to see everything at the event.

Estate Sale

Contact Dick, W6KM, (408) 267-2624
DLW6KM at AOL.COM

MFJ259B Antenna Analyzer, with case & grid-dip meter adapter, manuals, like new \$200.

Kenwood Station: TS-830S (no CW filters), AT-230 Tuner, SP-230 Matching Speaker, Digital External VFO230, MC-50 Mic, Station Monitor SM-220 (may need some work). Condition of all items = 9 plus. Includes all manuals. \$860.

Hy-Gain Tail Twister (brand new) with control box (box used). \$400.

Hy-Gain HDR300, works perfect, with control box, copy of manual. \$800.

Kenwood TW-4000A, 2m & 70cm, includes MA-4000 Dual Band Duplexer and mobile antenna with mag base. Also in package: brand new Diamond X-30A Dual Band Base Antenna, extra (non-working TW-4000A) and manuals. \$100.

Heathkit Remote Coax Switch (5 antennas) SA-1480. \$75.

Kenwood TS-520 w CW filter & manuals. \$250.

2009-2010 Northern California DX Club Officers:

President: Craig Bradley, AE6RR
Vice President: Phil Steffora, K6TT
Secretary: Russ Bentson, K6KLY
Treasurer: Jose Picazo, WT6X
Ex Officio: Risto Kotalampi, W6RK

Directors:

Jim Abraham, W6EB

Steve Jones, N6SJ

John Eisenberg, K6YP

DXer Editor Phil Verinsky, W6TQG, dxer (at ncdxc.org)

Webmaster Phil Steffora, K6TT

Web Hosting &

Database Admin Risto Kotalampi, W6RK

Club Repeater: W6TI/R

Frequency/offset: 147.360 Mhz +, pl 110.9

Trustee: Bob Vallio, W6RGG

Control Operator: Jim Abraham, W6EB

Maintenance: Peter Grabosky, W6OOL

Club simplex: 147.54 MHz (suggested)

Thurs. Net OTR: 8 pm local time.

Net Manager: Don Anastasia, AA6W

W6TI DX Bulletins:

W6TI Station Trustee Bob Vallio, W6RGG, transmits DX information at 0200 UT every Monday (Sunday evening local time) on both 7.016 and 14.002 MHz.

Club address:

NCDXC

Box 608

Menlo Park, CA 94026-0608

Club URL: <http://www.ncdxc.org>

The DXer is published monthly by the Northern California DX Club and sent to all club members via the web. Please obtain permission from the author to re-publish any article in this publication.

Operation Approved for DXCC Credit

Bill Moore, NC1L, Awards Branch Manager, ARRL, announced the following operation is approved for DXCC credit:

E4X -Palestine, 2010 Operation

T31X DXpedition to Central Kiribati Suspended

MAY, 27th 2010

We apologize to the world radioamateur community - for the reasons independent of us, we are not able to carry out the expedition.

On the 25th of May at 10 p.m. local time the engine of our ship "Southern Cross" fell out, when we were in 120 nm from Kanton island. The captain Paul Green decided to turn the ship and go back to the port of Apia, Samoa under sails. Such decision was determined by the fact that the entry to the Kanton's cove without engines would be impossible and the repair of engine in the ocean is impossible too.

The way to Apia, Samoa will take approximately 8-10 days with favorable wind under sails. The food and water must suffice. Our main task at the moment is to come back safe to Apia.

Request for DXCC Award Information

Please notify the editor, dxer (at ncdxc.org) if you received DXCC awards or endorsements during 2009 or 2010.

WRTC-2010 is July 10-11

www.wrtc2010.ru