

VOODOO CONTEST GROUP with Ned Stearns – AA7A



"A unique contesting concept began in 1986 when Vince (K5VT), Mike (KC7V) and Tony (W4OI aka HK1AR/7) were operating in CQWW DX CW in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Following their herculean effort with modest results in 1986, they deduced that operating from West Africa would give a contest team a number of distinct advantages over more easily accessible locations, such as the Caribbean. However, there are few, if any, contest stations in West Africa that could host a major contest effort. What followed was an effort that has taken years to perfect that has resulted in the creation of a unique contesting, DXing and world traveling team known as the VooDoo Contest Group. This team has operated in the CQWW DX CW contest in West Africa for 16 consecutive years. The team consists of mix of operators from the US (mostly AZ) and from the UK who bring centuries of contesting and general ham radio experience to the annual event. The normal routine of this group is to operate in a country in West Africa for a few years and then move their operation to a nearby country, and on and on. This basic plan results in a lot of interesting travel through some very exotic locations. It also requires the development of solutions for countless challenges in logistics. The results have been both significant in the contest domain as well as personally satisfying for every member of this team.

In 2008, the VooDudes posted a 3rd place finish in the Multi/Multi category of CQWW DX CW from Conakry, Guinea using the call sign 3X5A. The plan following the 2008 DX Contest was to find a location in the neighboring country of Sierra Leone and move their stuff and their contesting high wire act to Freetown in 2009. While all Africa trips are an adventure, what happened in 2009 was a scary/bizarre/fulfilling experience unlike any other VooDoo Contest Group operation.

Ned Stearns (AA7A), a five-year VooDude veteran, was a member of the 2009 CQWW DX CW operation in Sierra Leone. His story will either spark an interest in DXpeditioning or will make you glad to leave this crazy business to the VooDudes."