



International Amateur Radio Union Region 1

Europe, Middle East, Africa and Northern Asia

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SUBJECT	Deliberate QRM		
Society	RSGB	Country:	U.K.
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The occurrence of deliberate QRM, particularly on the transmit frequency of DXpeditions, has increased to the point where the future of some aspects of the hobby is under threat. The occurrence is not thought to be restricted to one or a few countries, so consideration and action needs to be taken at an international level.

Discussion

To identify effective solutions the reasons that drive people to cause deliberate QRM needs to be identified. These are thought to include:

- General decline in the standards of social behaviour coupled with the visible outcome of deliberate QRM;
- In-experience and/or poorly trained operators becoming frustrated;
- Ease of transmitting on a DXpedition transmit frequency using DX Cluster information and transceiver control software together with the availability of high-powered amplifiers and high-gain aerials.

It may be over simplistic to suggest that a general decline in social behaviour crosses over to our hobby. However, the decline in home construction, or modification of commercial or military equipment, and the mentoring that many Amateurs experienced 25 years ago may have led to a reduction in the mutual respect between fellow Amateurs. This will be difficult to reverse, but the reinforcement of shared values in the Radio Amateurs Code (Chapter 7.1 of Version 6 of the IARU Region 1 HF Manager's Handbook) and development of fellowships through social interaction in clubs and special interest groups should be encouraged. This approach may also help to instil appropriate respect, especially for those who have stations that are capable of transmitting high ERPs.

National Societies have already made good efforts to provide material aimed at sharing knowledge of operating techniques for mastering pileup operation, contesting and for setting appropriate expectations as to whether and when a particular DXpedition or contest station might be workable. This expectation management is perhaps more important now that the DXCluster gives the impression that a specific DX or contest station is workable. The frustration may be worse when, because of the skip, the operator senses the impossibility of him or her getting through on account of being able to hear all those Amateurs who are also trying to make the contact within the pile-up.

One cannot really over-communicate in terms of training and education. Not only should National Societies continue to encourage our more experienced operators to share their knowledge through books, articles in magazines and webpages, but also they should consider a wider use of Internet technologies to enhance learning. For example experienced operators could disseminate through a blog their experience and techniques whilst high-profile operations are ongoing. This would need to be done in a non-adversarial and carefully managed way else the outcome might

be counter-productive. Having downloadable videos, with a commentary, would provide a learning experience that would be quite different from the written word. In essence, the concept is to expand the content that is available and provide it through a wider variety of learning methods, so that Amateurs relatively inexperienced with the HF band characteristics have a more realistic expectation of whether contact with a specific DXpedition or contest station is possible.

DXpeditions already pay considerable attention to their stations, the operating skill of their operators, and of the techniques for managing pileups. Experience has shown that a combination of low ERP and poor operating tends to mean that the DXpedition operator may fail to manage the pileup, which in turn can lead to deliberate QRM. National Societies can only play a collective role in supporting publication of best practice for designing and operating DXpedition stations. Again, the range of facilities for doing this has broadened – books, magazine articles and Internet multimedia. This is an important aspect of the hobby – with recent demographic and social changes more people and travelling to more parts of the globe than was the case in previous sunspot cycles. We need to take advantage of this change and ensure that we are able to step up our abilities to control pileups and also pass on that knowledge and experience to operators new to experiencing operating from DX locations.

The RSGB is not aware of the extent to which the culprits causing deliberate QRM are known or indeed the size of the problem. However, where there are known offenders we must assert what peer pressure we can bring to bear in the first instance. Whilst the RSGB has been concerned about the problem for sometime (reference the RSGB HF Band Abuse information paper for the 2002 Conference) it is more convinced than ever that apart from addressing the more obvious forms of abuse through better training, mentoring, etc, it is necessary to make an example of those who are found to be deliberately causing interference. To do this we will need to set up a group that could be tasked with monitoring deliberate QRM. Such a group need not be that large, but sufficient in number and geographically dispersed such that the offender's location could be approximated to a country. It would then fall upon the National Society to confirm that deliberate interference is coming from a station within their country and work to identify the exact location and to take further action.

The enormous success of the DX Cluster network, its access through the Internet and the integration of its data with logging programs that control the transceiver may be a contributory factor by making it easy to jam DXpedition transmit frequencies. It would be unpopular to ask the Cluster system designers and sysops to change the functionality of the system, but some are suggesting that DXpedition spots ought to be made more general so that the precise frequency isn't published. Others consider that some form of authenticated logon would deny access to the precise spot frequency to those likely to cause deliberate QRM. Whilst it appears an attractive solution to seek to restrict the Cluster functionality in some way to remove possible undesirable usage by a few, it is unrealistic to think that this is going to happen.

Recommendation that Conference takes a firm stance against deliberate QRM and that National Societies will actively seek to address it through:

- a) Putting peer pressure to bear on known offenders and ultimately seek prosecution through monitoring, and by giving publicity to such prosecutions;
- b) Setting up a small group to undertake coordinated monitoring;
- c) Publicising best-practice guidelines on operating practice to both DX hunters, DX stations and contesters, etc, using a wider range of media by supplementing books, articles and webpages with blogs, Internet video clips, etc;
- d) Encouraging and supporting clubs and activities that fosters mentoring of newcomers to the hobby.