

# An SWLing Safari

## *Past and Present, Voices On the Airwaves from Africa Are As Vast As the Continent Itself*

By Gerry Dexter

**T**Early in my teenage years, I acquired a copy of John Gunther's 1955 book *Inside Africa* <<http://tinyurl.com/7ydj5gj>>. I was fascinated by the book and probably read this huge volume at least three times over the next few years.

I was already into shortwave by then, so I knew the countries involved, but I had much trouble with all of those confusing, hard-to-spell names — not to mention keeping track of who was king, president or prime minister of what! I rather wish I still owned that book, even though nearly all of the country names and governments have changed and a dozen or two new ones have been created in the several decades since.

A few countries in Africa have largely managed to retain their traditional names: Egypt still has its, as does Algeria, Morocco, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa and Zambia — all managing to survive revolutions, assassinations, rebellions, revolutions, mass starvation and every other kind of disaster imaginable.

Other countries changed names around 1960, when Africa caught independence fever and European capitals granted them freedom left and right. French Equatorial Africa and French West Africa, two giant areas, had several smaller countries carved out of their territories. This may have kept the cartographers at the *National Geographic* up nights, but on the plus side, it created numerous fascinating DX targets in the process and really juiced up the North American Shortwave Association's country list: <<http://www.naswa.net>>.

We SWBC DX'ers had it made in the 1960s and '70s. Then by the 1980s and '90s it all began to go downhill, as one by one,

*“Put on your pith helmet, grab some mosquito netting and come along on our SWLing Safari.”*

political changes, a tribal war here and there, and ill-maintenance of broadcast equipment succumbed to Africa's inhospitable climate.

Time and other negative elements ate away a good portion of the *World Radio-TV Handbook* (WRTH) table of contents: <<http://www.wrth.com>>.

(The 2012 edition of WRTH is available from the CQ Communications online bookstore: <<http://bit.ly/s7PKfJ>>. — Ed)

That all-too-sad tale gives way to a look at what you can log — or try to — these days. Here's a country-by-country rundown of how things currently stand. Included, as well, is a station list you can use to check them off as you get them.

So put on your pith helmet, grab some mosquito netting and we'll be off on our safari.

(NOTE: Stations in these listings designated with an asterisk — \* — are not included in the accompanying chart: “Your Africa Station and Country Check Off List.” Also, the Web addresses listed with the following entries are subject to change.



Back in the John Gunther era, Radio Brazzaville from French Equatorial Africa was an afternoon regular for me on 11970.



Across the river in the Belgian Congo, Radio Congo Belge was heard almost daily on 31 meters.



August 4, 2005

Richard A D'Angelo  
2216 Burkey Drive  
Wyomissing PA 19610  
U S A.

Dear Richard,

**CONFIRMATION/ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I write to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of verification dated 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2005. We are quite delighted with your report on the reception of Radio Nigeria Abuja 7275 KHz in your city.

I therefore wish to confirm to you that your report in your observation were quite in order.

Please note:

0530 hours Nigerian time	Transmission commences on 0430 utc.
2230 hours Nigerian time	Transmission closes

Once again accept our best wishes.

*Ben Obeta*  
**Ben Obeta**  
For: Executive Director



From the old days of Senegal, in French West Africa, used 4 kW on 4890.

المركز العام للإذاعات الموجبية  
الإذاعة صوت إفريقيا  
أفريقيا للأفريقيين ولأحلف لأفريقيا الإمع نفسها  
THE GREAT SOCIALST PEOPLE LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIA  
VOICE OF AFRICA

Dear friends :- DAVID .W. WERONKA.  
We have received your letter.

After Kadaffi, Libyan Radio discontinued its Voice of Africa slogan.

0300 almost any evening. There are a few hours in Shona and Ndebele, but those are programmed during our daylight hours and, thus, are out of our reach.

**BURKINA FASO**—Radio Burkina <<http://www.rtb.bf>>, **Website B**, from Ouagadougou operates on from 0530 until 0800 and then again from 1700 to 0000. That schedule allows you to have shots at it at sign-on and sign-off. But its 50 kW isn't much of a performer, as it seems to be rarely received and you are more than likely to be disappointed in your attempts.

**BURUNDI**—Radio Television Nationale de Burundi <<http://www.rtnb.bi>> uses a hard-to-believe power of 100 kW to operate on 6140 daily in French and Swahili from 0300 through to 2100. If it really used the listed power, people would actually hear the signal! But getting a signal from Burundi is about as rare as attending a wedding reception between a Tutsi and a Hutu!

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**—Radio Centrafrique <<http://tinyurl.com/6mjapjb>> from Bangui uses 5035 with 20 kW. If that information didn't cast a pall over your hearing hopes, the hours probably will. Sign on is at 0600 and broadcasts are in French or Sango run until our early afternoons (1905). This, again, does not fill a person with hope!

**CHAD**—ORNT Radio Nationale Tchadienne operates one of the few *big fella* transmitters on the continent — 250 kW puts 6165 on the map from 0425-0730 and is also on in our afternoon hours usually until 2300 close. In use in French is 7120 from 1500 to 2130. Shown as a standby, as well, is its traditionally used 4905.

**CONGO (Democratic Republic)**—This one represents one of the really sad broadcast situations. I can easily remember regular — almost daily — tune-ins of Radio Congo Belge on 31 meters when the coun-

Radio Nigeria from Abuja on 7275.

*If the link provided is incorrect, please perform an Internet search for the radio station listed to obtain an updated URL. — Ed.)*

**ALGERIA**—Radio Algerienne <<http://www.radioalgerie.dz>>, **Website A**, operates from studios in Algiers but its programming departs from antennas at Issoudun (France), and operates daily on 7295 in Arabic from 0400 to 0558. Also listed is 11955 from 1800-1958 in Arabic. Both frequencies carry the Holy Qur'an Service.

**ANGOLA**—This former Portuguese colony, once had many private stations to seek out. But over the years they're down to just the government's Radio Nacional de Angola <<http://www.rna.ao>>. It's very occasionally heard on 4950 using 25 kW operating around the clock. Despite the passable power level, reception is largely dependent on seasonal changes. Much less likely is the lower-powered Radio Nacional outlet that operates on 7217 for most of the day. It's running 15 kW. The few off hours involved would not in any way work for us. Late afternoons or evening hours are best shots but — to be blunt — I've only seen one or two reports of this one in the hobby press in several years past.

**ASCENSION ISLAND**—This is home to the BBC's Atlantic Relay at English Bay operated by Babcock International. Relays, typically, are twice-a-year hopscotch players, so you never know where they'll light. Let's pick 11810 in English between 1800-2100. Several other broadcasters use the Ascension facility for relays, as well. We can't get into those complex relationships here. Similar difficulties exist in the cases of Meyerton, South Africa; and Kigali, Rwanda.\*

**BENIN**—Office de Radiodiffusion et Television Radio Parakou <<http://www.ortb.bj>>, Radio Parakou is buried under Cuba's Radio Rebelde on 5025, broadcasting from 0500 to 2300 in French and local dialects. Does Rebelde ever go silent? If that should happen would propagation from Africa cooperate?

**BOTSWANA**—Voice of America's IBB Relay at Mopeng Hill is available on many frequencies. But when and where to find transmissions changes with the broadcast seasons. The one reliable is 4930, airing the usual VOA programming which is usually heard from about