

RADIO HARGEISA

VOICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOMALILAND

The first radio broadcasts from Hargeisa were initiated by the British Army when an experimental service began operating in 1941. This was shortly after British Somaliland had been recaptured by British and Commonwealth forces during "Operation Appearance", which drove the Italian occupying force out of the country. Tests continued through to late 1942 when Radio Kudu (after the Kudu antelope then common in Northern Somalia) was launched with a 100 watt transmitter. Its programmes consisted little more than BBC news rebroadcasts in Somali, Arabic and English. In 1944 the British military administration took over the operation. The broadcast range was increased by the installation of a 600 watt until (at which time the station was renamed Radio Somali); this was replaced a year later by a 1 kW transmitter.

In the 1954, the British secession of the Haud, a region which includes the northeastern part of the Ogaden territory of Ethiopia, as well the adjacent parts of Somalia, to the Ethiopian Emperor stirred deep resentment throughout the Somali territories, especially in British Somaliland. At this time, Egypt was beginning to extend its influence in Africa, particularly through national liberation movements opposed to colonial administrations. As far as the Somali territories were concerned, Radio Cairo, the voice of the Nasser-led Egyptian government, introduced broadcasts in Somali which gave support to those seeking independence in the Somali territories by whatever means was possible. For the British administration in Somaliland, the influential programmes from Cairo could not be left unchallenged.



An old photograph of Radio Hargeisa found at www.dm.unipi.it/~jama/mypage. Apparently this building was located on the top of a hill to the north of the town, ilaacadda Hargeisa. Unfortunately this beautiful tower was completely destroyed during the Hargeisa aerial bombardment in 1988. It is historical place for all Af-Somali speakers, as it hosted the first radio station in Somaliland. The regular broadcasting in Hargeisa begin in 1943, the KUDU radio, but this new installation was completed in the mid 1955.

Throughout the 1950's, new initiatives were introduced to counter Cairo's growing influence, as well as those of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. New studios and departmental headquarters were built under the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme and new programming was introduced to try to appease the Somali public in the face of the increasing support for independence from Nasser and the Soviet-bloc. Programmes were extended to include, in addition to news, presentations of Somali classical and modern poetry, music, and other cultural items. Materials and information on Great Britain were also regular parts of the broadcasts. The British colonial administration, which had assumed control of operations in 1948, permitted substantial freedom to the Somali broadcasters in handling programmes. It also endeavoured to increase the listening public by establishing community listening centres in the principal towns and by distributing battery sets to district offices, police posts and village leaders. The community centres drew large audiences, and enterprising coffee shop owners soon installed radios as a customer draw; during the late afternoon local programme broadcasts most of the male population of the northern towns could be found either in coffee shops or at listener's centres. To further extend the range, a new 5 kW transmitter was installed in 1957.

But despite all of this, independence got closer and closer and in July 1960, Italian and British Somaliland were merged to form the new Somali Republic. In 1960 broadcasting facilities at Hargeisa were expanded by the addition of a 10 kW shortwave transmitter provided through British funds. This began operation in 1961. The addition was apparently the result of British interest in improving favourable broadcasting in the east African area to counter increasing programming to Africa by countries of the Eastern European communist-bloc. British activity at Hargeisa ceased, however, with the breaking of relations by Somalia in 1963 (when the British withdrew, they also dismantled a powerful radio facility at Berbera).

Throughout the 1960's and into the 1970's, Radio Somali as it was still known, continued to operate with its 5 kW and later 10 kW shortwave transmitters. As well as its regional programmes in Somali, the station also rebroadcast Somali and Amharic transmissions from Mogadishu.

From this point we can take the story of Radio Hargeisa further by looking at news and reports that have appeared in "Communication" from when the Twickenham DX Club/British DX Club was founded in the mid-1970's. The following items have appeared over the years in "DX News" or "East African Report" (the latter edited by Chris Greenway during his time in Nairobi).

August 1976: Hargeisa transmits from 1500-1630 on 11645 kHz. Weak at first, but improves. A good marker is Radio Peking in English on 11650 kHz. (Mike Barraclough)

April 1982: Radio Hargeisa has been observed on 7120 kHz on 11 March opening with a news bulletin. At 1530 there was regional news and at 1700 it relayed news and commentary from Radio Mogadishu. Transmission ended 1800. (BBCM)

May 1983: Radio Hargeisa has been reported on 11639 kHz (ex-7120) at 0958-1230 and 1500-1800. (Radio Netherlands Media Network)

Mid-1988: From the mid-1988, rival factions throughout Somalia started to gather momentum in a bid to oust the President of Somalia, Siad Barre, which was eventually achieved in early 1991. In the northwest of the country, it was the Somali National Movement that eventually routed the Somali government forces and took control of the region, leading to the Republic of Somaliland being proclaimed in June 1991. Radio SNM was inaugurated in May 1989 to support the SNM, and this station was symbolically renamed Radio Hargeisa in early 1991.

July 1988: Radio Hargeisa not heard on 7120 kHz since 30 May due to war activity. (BBCM)

December 1988: Radio Hargeisa has recommenced broadcasts in Somali between 1500-1800 on 7120 kHz. (BBCM)

February 1989: Radio Hargeisa heard on its second harmonic of 14240 kHz at 1300-1435v, also on third harmonic of 21360 kHz. (Cosier/AWR)

March 1989: Radio Hargeisa is back again on 7120 kHz; harmonics on 14240 and 21360 are regularly audible between 1200-1700. (Weerakoon/SCDX)

August 1989: According to witnesses the situation in Hargeisa is terrible, with the town nearly levelled by bombs, and the area in chaos. The radio station is destroyed. (Numero Uno/AWR)

November 1989: Radio SNM - Voice of the Somali National Movement announced that from 3 September they would move to the 25 mb for their 1500-1700 broadcast, but they were still heard on 6321 kHz on 4 September. (BBCM)

March 1990: The Somali National Movement's Radio SNM operates on 6250v kHz from 1500-1700. (via Glenn Hauser/SWL Digest)

February 1991: Somali rebel station Radio SNM has moved from 6524 kHz to variable 6303-6330 kHz for its daily broadcast starting at 1600. (Chris Greenway)

March 1991: Since the coup, former clandestine Radio SNM has been identifying itself as Radio Hargeisa, Voice of the Somali People. The station is observed in Somali at 1600-1700 on or around 6320 kHz. (Chris Greenway/BBCM)

June 1991: The station at Hargeisa has been heard on 7121.9 kHz since late April, 1000-1230 and 1500-1700. Initially calling itself Radio Somali, it then changed its name to Radio Hargeisa, the Voice of the Republic of Somaliland. Announcers are recognised as those previously heard on clandestine Radio SNM. (Chris Greenway/BBCM)

September 1991: Radio Hargeisa, which describes itself as "the Voice of the Republic of Somaliland", was traced on 3 September at 1620-1700 on 6390 kHz. The radio was last heard on 29 June on 7122 kHz. (BBCM)

October 1991: Radio Hargeisa broadcasts in Somali at 1000-1230 and 1500-1700 on 6390 kHz (alternative is 7122 kHz) (BBCM); BBCM confirm that the station identifies as "Radio Hargeisa, the Voice of the Republic of Somaliland". The independent Republic of Somaliland was declared by the SNM in May 1991, covering an area what used to be known as British Somaliland prior to it joining the Italian territory on independence in 1960 and becoming the Republic of Somalia. This recent secession is not recognised by the government in Mogadishu.

November 1993: Radio Hargeisa broadcasts in Somali on 7120v kHz between 1000-1230 and 1500-1700. Following the declaration in May 1991 of an independent Republic of Somaliland by the SNM in the north of Somalia, this station has been identifying itself as "Radio Hargeisa, the voice of the Republic of Somaliland" (Somali: Halkani wa Radio Hargeisa, Codka Jamhuriyada Somaliland"). Radio Hargeisa is believed to operate from a 1 kW mobile transmitter. (BBCM)

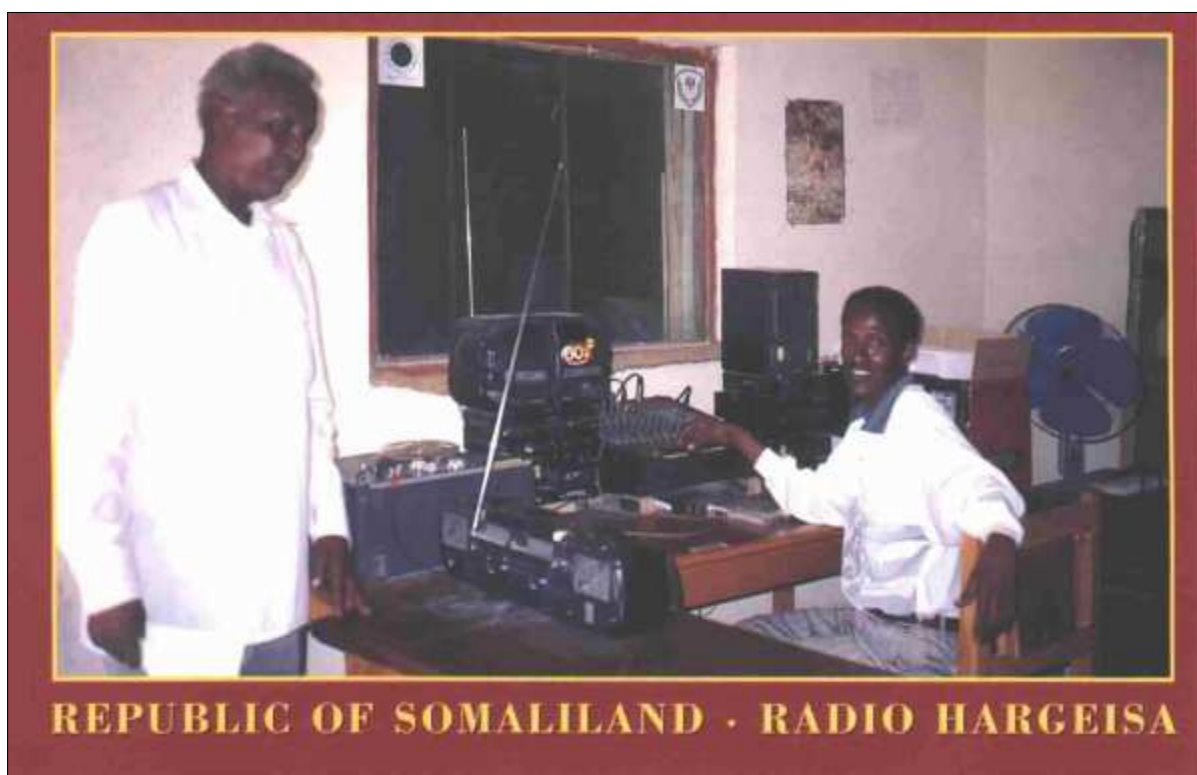
September 1995: Radio Hargeisa: a report has been sent c/o Sam Voron in the hope that he could verify Hargeisa. Says he is going back to Africa as soon as he raises the money and will try to get report verified via Radio Free Somalia at Galkayo. Voron says the director at RFS was part of the Hargeisa staff (journalist) and confirms that Radio Hargeisa has gone, the main equipment (studio/transmitter/van) having been sold to Ethiopia. (Kusalik/Numero Uno)

April 1997: Radio Hargeisa, Voice of the Republic of Somaliland was heard in February on a new shortwave frequency of 7534.7v kHz. The radio has been observed in the UK from fade-in around 1700 until sign-off at either 1800 or 1900. A news bulletin is at 1745. (BBCM)

January 1998: Radio Hargeisa in Somali: 0330-0530 incl. news at 0400-0410 and 1500-1800 on 7071v (7061-7071v). Address: PO Box 14, Hargeisa. (BBCM)

June 1998: Radio Hargeisa on 6961 kHz has moved here, good signal at 1845, 1 May, went off at 1957. Checked the next day and found chime at 1557, an alarm clock sound at 1600, programme opened at 1605 with recital of Koran. Talk and prayer until 1620, then talk by man and Somali songs. (Mahendra Vaghjee/Mauritius via Numero Uno)

December 1998: Radio Hargeisa on 6643 kHz heard from 1819-1900, 16 October, repetitive Horn of Africa style music, male announcer, Koran just before sign-off at 1900; weak, but mainly copyable; tnx to Mahendra Vaghjee for corroborating the ID on this one! (Burnell/Fisher on Newfoundland DXpedition)



Radio Hargeisa QSL Card

February 1999: Radio Hargeisa heard on new freq 11204 kHz, 1400-1630 on 24 January in Somali. Fair and distorted audio, not heard on 7071. (Mahendra Vaghjee/Mauritius, Numero Uno)

October 1999: During a monitoring survey by BBCM in October, Radio Hargeisa was unconfirmed on its shortwave frequency of 7070v kHz (last heard in August 1999). It was only heard on mediumwave 693 kHz. (BBCM)

February 2000: Radio Hargeisa heard on 7530 kHz, apparently ex-7071, reactivated after being off for a long period. Fair at 1748 on 28 February with Somali songs and talk at 1815 mentioning "Somaliland," then music programme and a clear ID at 1830 as Radio Hargeisa. Then talk on Somaliland and Hargeisa, many IDs interspersed, 1850 news bulletin, 1900 sign-off after a nice song, probably a signature tune. Heard again at 1605 on 29 February, Koran, so apparently sign-on 1600, sign-off 1900. (Mahendra Vaghjee/Mauritius)

March/April 2000: Walter Salmaniw, on holiday in Maui-Hawaii, posted the following observations on HCDX: 7530 kHz - Radio Hargeisa. Heard initially at 1635 on 22 March. Did not seem to be daily, though propagation may have accounted for this. Frequently covered by a Chinese station, but this is also irregular. Clear with fair signal with mild hum. Signal improved when rechecked at 1652. Lots of talk interspersed with Horn of Africa music. Better yet at 1726. Barely audible by 1802. Following day heard at 1559 with IS and ID, but obliterated Chinese station at 1600. Didn't hear them again for a few days, but found them again on 1 April at 1508 on 7530.02 USB. Poor signal. Better at 1515. Possible ID at 1526. Monotonous long songs, mainly instrumental or accompanied by a lone female voice. Again obliterated by Chinese station at 1600:30, but in clear again when rechecked at 1700. At this time it is stronger than the other Somali stations. At 1702 "Somaliland" clearly heard. Almost totally faded out by 1725. Nothing heard on 2 April.

August 2000: Radio Hargeisa is heard on 7530 at 1800 sign-on on 18 August and 0400 sign-on 19 August using USB + carrier. The modulation is very low, however. (Sam Voron via Cumbre)

September 2000: Radio Hargeisa on 7530 at sign-on 1500 noted at this time in Sydney. (Sam Voron 19-21 September via Cumbre DX)

October 2000: Radio Hargeisa tell Cumbre DX that their latest schedule is as follows:
0300-0600 on 7120 or 6843
0930-1200 on 6843 7120 or 7530
1400-1800 on 6843 7120 or 7530 (via Hans Johnson/Cumbre DX)

November 2000: R Hargeisa (pres) 7530/USB, 1620-1650, very slow signal, male voice in local language, chants, instrumental mx, at 1645 stopped by exteme utility tx, SIO 122. (D Canonica)

August 2001: Radio Hargeisa. The official station of the Republic of Somaliland and operational since Somaliland declared its independence in 1991. It is observed on 7530 kHz shortwave. It is also believed to broadcast in Hargeisa on mediumwave. (Chris Greenway/BBCM, 9 Aug, DXLD)

October 2001: Somali station to try for: Radio Hargeisa in the self-declared "Republic of Somaliland" on 7530 kHz. (Chris Greenway/East African Report)

February 2002: Stations heard in Nairobi include: 7530 kHz - Radio Hargeisa in Somaliland. (Chris Greenway/East African Report)

July 2002: Some additional information can be added that has been found on the web, reflecting how things were in July 2002 (see <http://www.somali-jna.org/downloads/Media%20and%20Politics%20APD%20Report%2002.doc>):

While the premises of Radio Hargeisa were entirely destroyed during the course of the war, its archives were rescued and survived largely intact. Being the oldest Somali radio, Radio Hargeisa has acquired one of the richest recording archives, and has long served as a source of songs, literary works and music for other Somali radio stations. Rehabilitation of the Radio Hargeisa premises, begun in 1991, received a major boost in 1998 through a publicly supported self-help programme, and broadcasting activities resumed there on 9 November 1999.

Since 1999 Radio Hargeisa has operated on the 41-meter SW band and the 639 medium wave, using a transmitter donated by the government of Yemen. An FM transmitter, supplied by the BBC, was installed on 12 July, 2001 so as to enhance the reception of the BBC programmes in Hargeisa. At the same time, Radio Hargeisa began broadcasting on the Internet for one and a half hours each day for the Somaliland community in the diaspora.

Improvement in the quality of programmes has kept pace with the improved infrastructure and broadcasting capacity. Radio Hargeisa's recording library, an unrivalled asset, has help to attract a broader audience through entertainment programmes. English, Arabic and Amharic news programmes have been added, and technical standards have been enhanced thanks to successive training courses offered by the BBC. However, the radio's audience remains relatively limited: the AM broadcasts can be heard only in the immediate vicinity of Hargeisa; short-wave broadcasts can occasionally be heard further afield but most Somalilanders lack the equipment to receive them.

September 2002: TDP website now lists Radio Hargeisa as a programmer. Nothing on their schedule page indicating if this is a relay and when it airs if so. (Hans Johnson/Cumbre DX 11 September 2002); TDP-brokered relays are usually via transmitters in Russia/CIS-ed. *Nothing came of this report and Radio Hargeisa was not heard from a TDP-brokered transmitter site.*

November 2002: Logs of Radio Hargeisa from the Chamberlain (Maine) DXpedition in 2002: see www.dxing.info/dxpeditions/chamberlain2002.dx

June 2003: Radio Hargeisa must have replaced its transmitter over the past few months. Earlier this year it was more-or-less on channel (7530) and operating USB with a carrier, so OK to listen to in AM mode. Now it is on 7530.6 or so and the carrier is so heavily suppressed that listening in AM mode is impossible. Even in USB mode the audio sounds very rough. A pity, as the signal strength is reasonable. (Chris Greenway/Nairobi, 18 June 2003)

July 2003: The audio on Radio Hargeisa on shortwave 7530 kHz has become more-or-less worthless. (Chris Greenway in Nairobi)

And with that observation by Chris, it appears that Radio Hargeisa's shortwave transmitter left the air soon afterwards. The website (www.radiohargeysa.com) that had offered an online stream of their daily programmes, including English, also ceased.

March 2008: Radio Hargeisa has acquired a new 25 kW shortwave transmitter and is reportedly back on its old 41 metre-band frequency of 7120 kHz.



Although DXers around the world have been carefully monitoring 7120 kHz (see Spotlight on a Frequency in this month's edition of Communication), it has proved to be something of a difficult catch so far.

The photograph on the left is a studio shot of Radio Hargeisa from the Somlandnor website at <http://somlandnor.wordpress.com/2008/03/15/radio-hargeysa-oo-maanta-si-tijaabo-ah-hawada-u-s-oo-galay/> and accompanied an article in Somali presumably about the new transmitter.