



RADIO TAINO
La Tuz-emisora de Cuba

F91-12

Calle 23 No. 258. Vedado, Ciudad de La Habana, Cuba



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"Welcome to Cuba, our Caribbean Island in the sun, its soothing seas and tropical good times are just what you've been waiting for. This is Radio Taino, Tour Radio from Havana, yours for the listening..."

That is the standard English ID heard on Radio Taino's medium wave 'Travel Radio' stations. Radio Taino is a somewhat absurd Cuban network in which the format is supposedly geared to appeal to tourists and visitors to Cuba. The service boasts music, news & information, features, 'commercials', and commentaries of interest to these tourists and visitors; in doing so with their superpowered transmitters they also serve up plenty of QRM to domestic broadcasters here in the States. As a matter of fact, some of our own MW stations were so affected by the QRM when Radio Taino started up in 1986 that much of their secondary nighttime coverage areas were badly stricken - even primary coverage areas have become threatened during more favorable southern (widely known as Auroral conditions) propagation conditions. From time to time upon FCC request some domestic broadcasters temporarily left the air for \pm 5-minutes at scheduled intervals enabling the Field Operations Bureau to take field measurements of the Cuban signals. A prime example (and QRM target most likely) was WFO-1040, one time employer of the US's President Reagan. 1040's output power was calculated to approximately 300,000 watts; 1160's value was also measured at 300kW¹. The newest frequency of 830 kHz, coming into use late summer/early fall of '88 is said to be "of greater threat than that of 1040 or 1160" per sources. Only an estimate is available at present - possibly exceeding 300kW, perhaps even half a million watts! It was Shawn Axelrod of the IRCA who, in July of 1988 reported Taino "...totally destroying WCCO-830 with an S9+7dB..."². Axelrod's listening post is in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, some two thousand miles from the suspected transmitting site west of Havana! The 830 does indeed present an interesting Cuban DX target, especially to those DX'er's of the Northwest or overseas still desiring to hear Cuba on MW. The high powers used are said to be "...intended to ensure complete coverage of the island country for tourists, travelers and visitors to [our] country". While the 'travel radio' concept may well be legitimate these super-powered Cuban "domestic service" transmitters are likely an obvious disguise to further interfere with US broadcasting as well, perhaps in response to our own "Radio Marti" service³. After Marti's start-up Cuba stated that they viewed the Spanish programming as relatively harmless to the morale of the Cuban population in general⁴, but Fidel Castro vowed retaliation nonetheless⁵.

At present, R. Taino's program is the only MW service from Cuba that offers a bilingual English/Spanish format oriented to English-speaking visitors⁶. With Taino (applicable to Cuban radio in general) the old adage 'the more something changes the more it stays the same' can be said. Radio Taino originally began on 1160 kHz in late 1986, ultimately with the 300 kW superpower (then estimated by the US's FCC as 175 kW with capability of 300kW),

Castro Hates But Needs Tourists

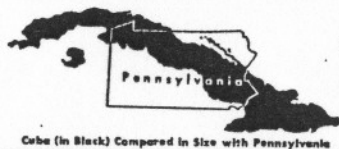
Cuba's President Fidel Castro hates tourism with a vengeance. He remembers it as a bitter, demeaning, capitalist evil and equates it with prostitution, gambling and drugs. He's desperate for hard currency, however, and currently has no way—except through selling sugar—of getting a substantial amount. Thus, for several months now, Castro has been encouraging his countrymen to attract tourists by remodeling old

hotels and building new ones. He hopes the picturesque white-sand beaches of his island will draw tourists from Canada, Europe and Latin America—as many as 800,000 by 1990, which is about 300,000 more than are expected this year. Among Cuba's leading tourism troubles are the lack of trained hotel workers, the poor service accorded tourists, and the restrictions that segregate and prevent visitors from touring the island and enjoying themselves.



Castro chats with Cuban bathers: He hopes to attract more visitors to his island

but harmlessly signing off or reducing power around 2300 hrs. UTC/GMT. This was somewhat of a curious compliance with international broadcast treaties, until more regular use of the full transmitting capacity was later used, especially when Castro would speak. Then the 1040 outlet was opened (relaying 1160 mostly) with an intimidating 300,000 watts. Programming was divided between Radio Taino and the shortwave services of Radio Moscow World Service (USSR) and Radio Havana Cuba, and into the evening/morning hours DXer's were reporting everything from the Radio Moscow DX Program to the vehement propaganda news programs these Communist shortwave broadcasters are well known for. Most recently, 830 was opened, relaying 1160 with a transmitter power of ridiculously high proportions, enough to take the channel from WCCO-830 Minneapolis, Minnesota even in non-Auroral conditions. In the East, it was WCCO who usually "owned" the frequency, unless it was auroral leaving the channel open for YVLT-R, Sensacion in Caracas, Venezuela, HJDM-R, Viston in Medellin, Colombia, Radio One from Belize City, HIJB-Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, or whatever else you were lucky enough to hear. When 830 is on chances to hear these or others are nil. Unlike 1040 and 1160 who are daily, the 830 in late '88 has been randomly signing on UTC mornings around 01 or 02 hours with full power relay of 1160. All frequency announcements over the air are for "eleven-sixty kilohertz 'onda media'" — no acknowledgement is made of either 830 or 1040. Such is the rule and not the exception with much in Cuban MW activities. Note that the 1040 transmitter is not the same one as used for the 1kW Radio Victoria outlet in Puerto Padre (CMLQ). Curiously, 1040 has been heard several times recently non-parallel 1160 [& 830], instead still running the various shortwave features from Radio Moscow/Radio Havana. Additionally, it was recently the BDXC that reported Radio Taino was also heard on 640 kHz #, but that was probably a one-time op. as Radio Progreso mainly occupied the frequency through late 1988. At the time this article was prepared, full power seems to be used on all three channels (1040 is possibly now less than 300 kW, although still in a 'superpower' category with reports from several DXer's that the signal there is still great, perhaps 175 kW) until nightly sign off at 0500 UTC, when Taino leaves the air after the trademark rumba tune. At sign off no particulars are given such as transmitter locations/powers/etc. Call signs are not available for two, those being 830 and 1040 — chances are nothing is even registered with the IFRB in Geneva with Cuba just building and operating these transmitters without registering call assignments, if any. 1160 is CMBV or CMCV, and location is listed as operating from La Julia⁷, specifics are not made known to IFRB.



Next to the 500 kW PJB-800 at Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles, Tour Radio uses some of the highest-powered MW xmtxs in the Western Hemisphere at 300 kW.

It is ironic that Taino really actually offers any tourists et al. little practical travel information regarding seeing the sights or traveling about the "tropical paradise". Other than using the English language in portions of the daily programme, compared with the strictly travel-oriented "TIS's" found in the United States and Canada Radio Taino is nothing more than an evening concert at the Karl Marx Theatre in La Habana, at best. Starting with opinionated and often propagandistic news, views and commentaries heard earlier in the evening (or UTC mornings), Taino airs

several peculiar "magazine" style music programs featuring a wide variety of musical arts and artists, including everything from rumbas, calypso, and Caribbean reggae, dances of Cuba such as habanera, guaracha, conga, danzón, and the mambo, all of the rhythmic folk variety so enjoyed in Cuba, Afro-Cuban instrumental, classical, orchestral and jazz music, and even features on obscure instruments or instrumentalists, such as ankle bells, bongo drums, gourds, bottles, hard sticks, earthenware jars and castanets, or trombonists or keyboardists. Interviews are also included on occasion with composers, performers or other artists, as are histories of musics, etc. of a cultural nature. It seems likely that Radio Taino, aside from scheduling English language broadcasts and news, would appeal more to the peasant sector of the population since all programming matter is essentially of a Cuban-only cultural nature. Other things heard scattered throughout the hourly programs are TC's: "La Hora en Cuba" with YL and accompanied by three chimes, and "Radio Taino News in English", a condensed transcription of the slanted Radio Habana or Radio Moscow world news. Programming of this nature is readily available (although in the Spanish language only unless [you] tune to SW) from the many other National Networks such as Radio Progreso (Progress Radio), Radio Rebelde (Rebel Radio), Radio Musical Nacional (National

Music Radio), or from Radio Habana or Radio Moscow. Or for some real variety for news and accurate time checks one can tune into Radio Reloj (the ICRT's official time standard, National Time Radio) for an evening of news, commentaries, TC's, and endless clock-like pulses.

Some of the English language programs heard include an actually somewhat entertaining Cuban instrumental/jazz show, heard after 0200 UTC, a Latin music magazine called "From Havana", heard after 0400 usually, and at 0430 "Vibrations—Music of the Americas". Also heard at 0430 sometimes is "Tour Radio Taino's Treasure Island" which carries various types of Latin music styles and occasional interviews or salutes to music greats. Hosts of Taino's Treasure Island proudly announce "Coming to you in English from the heart of Havana with the music of yesterday and forever". At 0500 UTC the giant sleeps: "Thankyou for tuning in to this special service for visitors in Cuba" is announced regularly at sign off, followed by a catchy rumba vocal. As previously detailed, specific information is left as a mystery — DXers can only rely on the published call signs, powers and transmitter sites of WRTH or FCC to maintain a complete log. Such is the accepted way of DXing Cuban MW stations, usually.

In late '87 I sent a report in Spanish to Radio Taino's Box 3040 in Havana only to have it returned nearly a full year later in Sept. 88. My mailer was stamped in SS "Post Office Box Closed—Undeliverable". The same report was mailed out again that month to the same address and a short reply (see below left) was had within the usual three month waiting period. I had expected more than just a short note from "the Director", perhaps promotional materials or similar. Also, an offer to do an interview with station personnel or representatives, or a more detailed feature article (hoped for submitting to Popular Communications or Monitoring Times magazines) received no mention. I did try disguising this effort by saying "This would be a terrific opportunity to receive much publicity of Radio Taino to the American Public..." "H. Alas, it is true what some say about attempting to QSL Latin America — ... But sending DX reports to these places now is a waste of time and money, for they don't like Uncle Sam down that way—I wonder why, hi" were the words of MW verification king Ernest Cooper of MA. But I personally have enjoyed a 100% return on verifying Cuban MW stations; somehow this is surprising since most government-owned Cuban stations are in noncompliance with the former broadcast treaties with the United States and shouldn't usually be expected to accommodate any American, DXer or other.

Any way you look at it, Radio Taino does present an interesting DX target to at least some DXers of the mediumwave's, and presents another challenge to those wanting to verify and "QSL" the island country. Good luck hearing these stations; or good luck tolerating the QRM, depending on your DXing location — Jim Hall/DX Worldwide-East.

1. FCC Cuban Standard Broadcast List, accuracy exceeding 97% as of NOV/88.
2. 9/31/88 DX Monitor - DXWW-W
3. VOA-1180 broadcasts Free World information beamed to Cuba from the Marathon Key, FL VOA site using 50kW U3 Specified Hours due to economic factors.
4. Area Handbook for Cuba-FAS/American University, USGPO-Washington D.C. Lib. of Congress
5. Current Developments in A.M. Broadcasting—Greg Monti (1983 IRCA Almanac).
6. Excepting the 250-watt 24-hour U.S. Navy AFRTS station on 1340 at the naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Programs are in English & are directed at base personnel.
7. WRTH/1988
8. 11/5/88 DX Monitor - DXWWII

RADIO TAINO
La Transmision de Cuba

Ciudad Habana, 1988
Lunes 24 de octubre.

Sr: James R Hall
240 Byron Road
Pittsburgh, PA
15237-4015
U.S.A

Estimado oyente :

Tengo mucho gusto en confirmar su reporte a través de estas líneas, con lo que le doy las más expresivas gracias por la gentileza de su sintonía y la atención de -- escribimos.

Reciba el más efusivo saludo de todos --- cuantos laboramos en esta Emisora de Cuba.

Saludos,

