

# THE MOYABI STORY

Compiled by Tony Rogers - for British DX Club journal Communication

---

Since 1979, the powerful transmitter site at Moyabi in Gabon has been used by Africa No 1 for its commercial shortwave service to Africa. In addition, several other international and religious broadcasting services have used the site for relays to Africa and other continents over the past 25 years. In this feature I have gone through the pages of our magazine "Communication" back to the late 1970's and, with the help of other sources, compiled a timeline of events right up to the present date which I hope tells the story of how this powerful transmitting station has become familiar to DXers and shortwave listeners throughout the world.

Gabon is a country in west central Africa, bordering Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and the Republic of Congo. It was the last of the Equatorial Francophone group to obtain its own broadcasting service, which commenced in 1959. By the early 1970's, the Gabonese broadcasting system had undergone considerable expansion with French help and this subsequently led to the decision to set up a powerful transmitting station in the country to cover the whole of the African continent. The site chosen for this project was Moyabi, some 600 km south of the capital, Libreville.

The Moyabi Story starts in 1974 with an item from the Africa No 1 website at [www.africa1.com](http://www.africa1.com), along with a photograph of the Africa No 1 offices and studios in Libreville.

**1974:** The President of the Republic of Gabon, Omar Bongo Ondimba, decides to equip his country with a powerful international shortwave broadcasting station ([www.africa1.com](http://www.africa1.com))



**September 1979:** The power station and installation of four 500 kW transmitters at the Moyabi transmitter complex is completed. However, transmissions from the Africa No 1 cannot be started until further work is undertaken. The Ministry of Finance and Economy indicates that the 1.7 billion francs needed for the completion of the project will not be available until 1980. (WBI/BBCM)

**September/October 1979:** Test transmissions from Moyabi are conducted between 17th September and 27th October 1979. The tests carried ID's as "Africa Number One" with announcements in English and Arabic to the Middle East and in English and French to West Africa. Reports are requested to be sent to: Africa No 1, Mailbox No 1, Libreville, Gabon. Telediffusion de France was participating in these tests (WBI/BBCM)

Schedule of test transmissions for the weeks commencing 8th, 15th & 22nd October 1979:

8-13 October 1979:

1300-1600	East Africa	17820	1600-1800	East Africa	15270
1300-1700	Brazil	21635	1700-2100	Latin America	21635
1300-1800	N Africa/Europe	21635	1800-2100	East Africa	15325
1300-2100	N Africa/Europe	17895	1800-2100	N Africa/Europe	15270

15-20 October 1979:

0400-0500	South Africa	7 MHz	0600-0800	South Africa	15125
0400-0600	CAR/Chad	7 MHz	0600-1200	Zaire	9 MHz
0400-0600	Zaire	7 MHz	0700-1200	CAR/Chad	11945
0500-0600	South Africa	9 MHz	0700-1200	Zaire	15200
0500-0700	Zaire	11945	0800-1200	South Africa	17835
0600-0700	CAR/Chad	9 MHz			

22-27 October 1979:

1300-1600	Zaire	15200 + 9 MHz	1700-1900	South Africa	15270
1300-1700	CAR/Chad	11750	1700-2100	CAR/Chad	11755
1300-1700	South Africa	17820	1900-2100	South Africa	7 MHz
1600-2100	Zaire	11945 + 7 MHz			

Extracts from October 1979 edition of British DX Club "Logbook" - loggings from Gordon Darling.

17th September 1979:

21525 0600-1200 Moyabi, Gabon. First day of test. Strong and very good signal for most of the time. Alternate half-hours in English and Arabic. ID as "Africa One" which is the name of the holding company jointly owned by Gabon & TDF France. Asking for postcard reports to Africa Number One, Mailbox 1, Libreville for participation in prize draw including a Peugeot car as first prize.

18th September 1979:

15200 0600-1200 Moyabi, Gabon. English and French alternate every half-hour. Fair/Poor and parallel to very poor 11945.

19th September 1979

11915 0430-0500 Moyabi, Gabon. Test, French. Poor.

**May 1980:** RTV Gabonaise reports that the President has received the French Minister of Co-operation on 2nd May 1980 and an agreement has been signed on the financing of the "international radio station" at Moyabi (Africa No 1). (WBI/BBCM)

Further tests from Africa No 1 are heard on various shortwave frequencies with continuous music without announcements. (WBI/BBCM and QTH Africa)

**January 1981:** The Director of Sud Radio in Andorra is assigned to get Africa No 1 on air by 1st February 1981 (Glenn Hauser on RCI DX Digest)

**February 1981:** Africa No 1 begins regular transmissions on 7th February 1981. Studios are in Libreville, and the transmitters in Moyabi - 4 x 500 kW, but only one is in use at any one time. The first used frequency is 4808 kHz at 0500-0800 and 1800-2300 but this changes to 4812 kHz on 11th February and then subsequently noted on 4811 kHz. 7200 kHz used between 0800-1800. Programming consists mainly of popular European, American and African music, in French with slick professional DJ's, news bulletins and some advertisements.

**February 1981:** Africa No 1 address is PO Box No 1, Libreville. The Moyabi transmitters are to be rented to RFI for 6½ hours per day and relays of RFI's African service are heard between 1800-2130 on 15345 and 11810 kHz and are thought to emanate from Moyabi. Inaudible in UK 0700-1700. (WBI/BBCM)

**June 1981:** For the J-81 period Radio France Internationale uses the Moyabi relay station for French to Africa at 1800-2130 on 15435 and 7170 kHz. (WBI/BBCM)

**July 1981:** Africa No 1 extends the use of its new 25mb freq 11755 kHz - noted 0600-2300 and presumably longer. // 4812 kHz. Use of 41mb not confirmed. Reception indicates 500 kW on 11755 kHz but reduced power on 4812 kHz. (QTH Africa)

**August 1981:** Further monitoring has established that Africa No 1 is using the 25mb frequency of 11755 kHz daily at 0455-2305. (QTH Africa)



Africa No 1 QSL card from Dave Kenny's collection

**December 1981:** Moyabi seems to be testing all of its 500 kW transmitters simultaneously in the evening GMT. Two of these carry programmes of RFI for Africa while the remaining three are used for Africa No 1. Glenn Hauser reports 7200 kHz being heard in the US with Africa No 1 as late as 2200. Some days parallel to 4811 kHz, some days instead of 4811 but always parallel 11755 kHz during the entire transmission span (to 2300). The Lutheran World Federation announces that it will use transmitters of Africa No 1 for religious programmes in the near future. (QTH Africa)

**May 1982:** Africa No 1 adjusts its 60mb band frequency from 4811 to 4810 kHz. (AWR World DX News); Moyabi heard testing various new frequencies which include 11930 kHz in early evening GMT and 17890 kHz heard around midday GMT. (QTH Africa)

**July 1982:** Africa No 1 latest schedule has 11940 kHz at 0500-0600 and 1700-2300, 15205 kHz at 0600-1700 (RN Media Network); Gabon also heard testing in English, Mon/Wed/Fri on 15200 kHz; also 1700-1745 on 9585 kHz (SCDX)

**May 1983:** In a letter to BDXC member Walter Carmichael, Radio Japan give details of improvements to their external services. These include four 300 kW and for 100 kW transmitters and the future use of overseas relay stations. This would be done by renting airtime, including the 500 kW Moyabi transmitter in Gabon to improve reception in Europe and North Africa. These plans are due to go before the Japanese parliament and the results should be known soon (Walter Carmichael)

**June 1983:** During the OAU Conference in Addis Ababa, Africa No 1 uses additional frequencies of 21475 and 21480 kHz for special conference reports at 0700 and 1600 (Dave Kenny)

**July 1983:** Publicity from Radio Japan says that a team would be in Gabon in early July to hold discussions with regard to the use of the Moyabi station (used by Africa No 1 etc) to relay NHK; they would also attempt to conduct test transmissions on 3rd-5th July at 0700-0730 on 17825, 1000-1030 on 15445, 1725-1755 on 21485, and 7th-8th July at 0500-0530 on 15405, 1725-1755 on 21485 (WBI/BBCM). Confirmed 3rd July with Japanese music interspersed with announcements in several languages identifying simply as "International Transmitter Centre Moyabi, Republic of Gabon" - no mention of Radio Japan (Dave Kenny)

**August 1983:** An extract from "QSL Report" in "Communication" says that a verification letter has been received by Chris Gibbs in 34 days from Voice of the Gospel confirming their relay via Moyabi on 11815.

**September 1983:** NHK states that the Radio Japan tests via Moyabi were very well received in their target areas of Europe and the Middle East. This reinforces their intention to use Moyabi as a regular relay station (WBI/BBCM, SCDX)

**October 1983:** Adventist World Radio begins broadcasting from Moyabi. Programmes in French are broadcast Monday-Saturday from 1700-1800 on 9630 kHz (DX Panorama vi Andrew Guy).

**November 1983:** Swiss Radio International conducts a series of test transmissions 23rd-25th November for listeners in South America from "a relay station in Africa". The results will determine whether SRI takes any further steps towards using relay facilities. The tests, on 15305 and 11715 kHz from 2300-0130, were confirmed by monitoring observations. (RN Media Network & BBCM)

**January 1984:** The full Africa No 1 schedule as monitored by BBCM: 0500-0600 on 11940 & 4810, 0600-0800 on 15200 & 4810, 0800-1800 on 15200 & 7200, 1800-2300 on 11940 & 4810. Main news bulletins in French are at 0630, 0730, 1230, 1900 and 2130 (BBCM)

**January 1984:** NHK, Radio Japan, is to go ahead with plans to set up relay stations in South Asia (probably Sri Lanka or Thailand), Gabon and Panama. Relays from Sines (Portugal) are to continue and may be expanded (SCDX via Ron Cross, Dave Kenny)

**March 1984:** A Radio Japan press release states that the station will start using the 500 kW transmitters of the Africa No 1 relay station during April to relay programmes to Europe and the Middle East. Programmes will be fed from Tokyo to Paris via a communications satellite over the Indian Ocean and then from Paris to Gabon via a satellite over the Atlantic. Two new verification cards are issued for the Gabon relays (WBI/BBCM)

**April 1984:** Radio Japan commences relays via Moyabi on 2nd April with the following schedule:

- 0400-0600 on 15315 kHz - Russian 0400, Swedish 0430, Italian 0445, German 0500, French 0530, beamed to Europe.
- 0600-0800 on 21575 kHz from Gabon (with 17810 & 15300 from Japan) Japanese 0600 and English 0700, beamed to Middle East and Europe.
- 1500-1700 on 21550 kHz from Gabon (with 9580 and 11815 from Japan) English 1500, Japanese 1600, beamed to Middle East and Europe.

Radio Japan specifically requests reception reports on these broadcasts, comparing reception with the transmissions direct from Japan - special verifications are to be issued (Roger Tidy)

**August 1985:** Africa No 1 has news in English at 1500 (weekdays) on 7200 & 15200 kHz (SCDX)

**September 1985:** Africa No 1 moves from 11940 to 15475 at 1700. Although programmes are mostly in French, a pop music programme with a bilingual French/English DJ is sometimes heard around 1930 on weekdays. A short English news bulletin is also heard around 0903 (Edwin Southwell)

**February 1986:** Africa No 1 moves its 250 kW transmitter from 4810 to 4830 kHz. First noted on the new channel on 21st January 1986 and heard with its usual good signal (Alan Pennington); Chris Greenway points out that until a year or so ago 4830 kHz was used by RTV Gabonaise from Franceville.

**January 1987:** Feasibility studies are carried out by Radio Japan with a view to expanding the relay services via Moyabi and Sackville ("Radio Japan News")

**March 1987:** Africa No 1 has news headlines in English at 0903-0906 on 7200 and 15200; 1245-1248 on 15200; 1700-1702 and 1853-1858 on 4830 and 15475 kHz (Brian Murray)

**June 1987:** RFI is now using 4890 kHz via Moyabi for French (AWR via Ron Young); News in English from Africa No 1 is at 0903, 1233 and 1503 on 7200 and 15200 kHz (Nicholas Vaughan-Baker)



**November 1987:** Africa No 1 broadcasts an English programme twice weekly for 25 minutes which is produced in London by an African staff (Media Network via Nicholas Vaughan-Baker)

**December 1987:** Africa No 1 schedule: 0500-0600 and 1700-2300 on 4830 kHz, 0600-1700 on 7200 kHz, 0700-0800 on 11940 kHz, 0800-1700 on 15200 kHz and 1700-2300 on 15475 kHz. Most programming is in French apart from certain bilingual music programmes, and English news summaries at 0900, 1230 and 1500 (SCDX)

**December 1987:** Technical problems at the Moyabi site on 5th December prevented Radio Japan from relaying programmes from the studios in Tokyo. As a result a selection of programmes with announcements in English, French and German were noted at 2245 direct from a studio in Gabon (TR)

**January 1988:** Adventist World Radio is now relaying programmes in English to West Africa via Moyabi on Sundays from 1200-1300 on 17880 kHz (SCDX)

**March 1988:** AWR Africa via Moyabi schedule: Monday-Saturday in French on 9625 kHz from 1700-1800. Beginning 7th February 1988 transmissions in English have also been aired on Sundays at 1200-1300 on 17890 kHz. AWR Africa's address is: BP 1751, Abidjan 08, RCI, Ivory Coast (schedule via Colin Wright)

**March 1988:** Swiss Radio International relays via Moyabi are at 2215-0100 on 11925 kHz (no English during this period) (schedule via Mike Terry)

**1989:** A fifth 500 kW transmitter is added (as per TDP)

**July 1989:** Africa No 1 replaces 4830 with 9580 kHz, // 15475 kHz, 0500-0600 & 1600-2300 (BBCM)

**September 1989:** Africa No 1 schedule: 0500-0700 on 9580 kHz; 0700-0800 on 9580 17630 kHz; 0800-1600 on 17630 kHz; 1600-2100 on 9580 15475 kHz; 2100-2300 on 9580 kHz. Also 94.5 FM is used 0500-2300 (BBCM)

**September 1989:** Radio France International heard on 13th & 14th August at 1900-2100 on 3305 kHz, apparently via Moyabi (BBCM)

**January 1990:** Swiss Radio International have a new relay from Moyabi at 1900-2100 on 12035 kHz (Jim Parker/Edwin Southwell)

**January 1991:** The Voice of America hires airtime over Africa No 1 at 0300-0400 on 15330 and 9655 to replace the Monrovia transmitters which are off air due to the civil war in Liberia (Media Network); an article in PWBR 1999 Edition later reported: "The VOA attempted to make up for the loss of the station (VOA Liberia relay). It purchased time on Africa No 1 in Gabon, but at \$800 per transmitter-hour this was not a long term solution".

**March 1991:** Africa No 1 schedule: 0500-0655 on 9580 kHz, 0655-1600 on 9580 17630 kHz, 1600-1900 on 9580 15475 kHz, 1900-2300 on 9580 kHz. All in French, except for a news summary in English around 1255/1300 (BBCM)



0430-0500	R Japan	Russian	11970	1030-1045	R Japan	Italian	21820
0500-0530	R France Int	English	11685 15605	1045-1100	R Japan	Swedish	21820
0500-0530	R Japan	Spanish	11970	1600-2100	Africa No 1	French	9580 15475
0500-0600	R France Int	French	6175	1700-1800	R France Int	Portuguese	12015
0500-0700	Africa No 1	French	9580	1700-1800	R Japan	English	15355
0530-0545	R Japan	Italian	11970	1800-1900	R France Int	French	9790
0545-0600	R Japan	Swedish	11970	1800-1900	R Japan	Japanese	15355
0600-0630	R Japan	German	11970	1900-2200	R France Int	French	11955
0630-0700	R Japan	French	11970	2100-2300	Africa No 1	French	9580

**January 2006:** Africa No 1 scheduled 0700-1600 on 17630 kHz, but there appears to be a regular break in transmission between 1030-1100 (TR); *it was subsequently found that the transmitter switches to 217820 kHz between 1030-1100 for Radio Japan relay and then back to 17630 kHz.*

**February 2006:** The Libyan opposition Sawt al-Amal (Voice of Hope) can now be heard at 1200-1400 in the range 17660 to 17780 kHz (Observer reports it is from Moldova with 250 kW). Sawt al-Amal is now accompanied by three or more other signals in the same frequency range, presumably being used as jammers: One, which identifies as Libyan Radio (ID "idhaat al jamaheriya til ozma") carries a lot of Arabic music; this signs on just before 1200 with transmitter tones similar to those used by transmitters in the CIS. A second station, usually heard from 1215-1530 UTC on or around 17670-80 kHz, carries continuous West African and French music. Observations indicate that this may be coming from one of Africa No 1's high-power transmitters at Moyabi, Gabon. There are also bubble-jammers and other forms of interference, such as continuous carriers or non-stop Arabic music. Check 17660 to 17680 kHz from 1200-1500 UTC. *Sawt al-Amal previously broadcast via satellite with a UK licence. It is probably linked to the former CIA-backed station Voice of the Libyan People which broadcast during the 1980s.*

The behaviour of one shortwave transmitter at Moyabi in February 2006:

0700-1030 Africa No 1 on 17630  
1030-1100 Radio Japan in Italian/Swedish on 21820  
1100-1130 Africa No 1 on 17630  
1130-1530 Franco-African type music on 17670/75/80  
1530-1600 Africa No 1 on 17630  
1600-1900 Africa No 1 on 15475

Africa No 1's absence from 17630 at any time between 1130 and 1530 seems to be accounted for by the appearance of the non-stop Franco-African type music shadowing the Libyan opposition station Sawt al-Amal on 17670/75/80 until it signs off at 1400, with the music then remaining on air until 1530 when the transmitter switches back to 17630 with Africa No 1 programming. (TR, BDXC e-mail news 19 February); *a second transmitter originating from Moyabi was seemingly added for the music service, leaving Africa No 1's service on 17630 kHz uninterrupted.*

*For the latest schedule from Moyabi, please refer to the Africa on Shortwave document on the BDXC web site - [www.bdx.org.uk](http://www.bdx.org.uk) - Articles Index.*

And finally, what about that car that was offered as a prize by Africa No 1 back in 1979? Well, I came across an old "Sweden Calling DXers" script from 1981 which gave the following information:

Sweden Calling DXers - Bulletin Nr 1659 - 10 November 1981: We asked some time ago if anyone knew who had won the Africa No 1 contest, in which they were to be giving away a Peugeot car. Dr Hansjoerg Biener in Neu Ulm, West Germany has received the following letter from Andre Defrise of Regie Internationale Africa No 1: "The tests on Africa No 1 took place from Sept 17th until Oct 22nd, 1979. The reward was a 504 Peugeot. More than 200,000 postcards have been sent. The Gabonese authorities in Libreville were entrusted with the drawing of lots. The winner, Mr Thomas Egue, an accountant living in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, received his gift on 24 November 1980 in Abidjan."

The Moyabi Story - compiled by Tony Rogers - August 2006. (comments/corrections to [tony@bdxc.org.uk](mailto:tony@bdxc.org.uk))

© British DX Club 2006. This article may only reproduced with full credit to the author and British DX Club - [www.bdx.org.uk](http://www.bdx.org.uk)