

From the Editor

As I write this, the World Radio-sport Team Championship (WRTC) Organizing Committee is investigating "...a number of discrepancies contained within log files from competing stations at this year's event." If this is news to you, you can catch up by looking at www.groups.io/g/wrtc2026-discuss/topics.

To summarize, log analysis found that a malicious actor, or actors, pirated the call signs of rare multipliers and made bogus contacts with WRTC stations — and these discrepancies appeared to favor just a few of the 50 WRTC teams. Subsequent analysis discovered that three teams disclosed their WRTC team identity to outside parties at the beginning of the event and benefited from false multiplier contacts from external actors using pirated calls. A fourth WRTC team was also detected logging multiplier contacts that were not found on audio recordings. On September 1, 2026, the WRTC Sanctioning Committee issued a report that included disqualifications and re-scoring, along with details on the full extent of the cheating and how it was determined. The full report can be viewed at www.wrtc2026.org.

The WRTC mission to minimize geographic limitations and enable operators to compete based on team skills in a common setting — *and* to hold a winners' ceremony within 24 hours — has always been ambitious, and several previous iterations have faced issues. But the 2026 version threw in a few new wrinkles, such as more near-real-time log adjudication and reporting and automated SSB spotting.

Many contests are trying to reduce the time between contest end and posting the official adjudicated results.

However, there is an old project management axiom: "You have to choose two of three: having it fast, having it right, having it cheap." Having it right is and should be non-negotiable, but faster publishing of accurate results when top scores are separated by small margins is a tough task, and it is made even tougher when external actors try to influence the results.

Radio contesting is unique across competitive events, in that "spectators" can participate directly in the competition without even sending logs. But "absentee QSOs" also make it easier for bad actors to launch attacks against the integrity of a contest.

One proposed solution is for WRTC final scoring to be based only on contacts from logs submitted to the IARU HF Contest that the WRTC piggybacks on. Doing so would make future attacks of this kind easier to spot and provide a better audit trail for detecting suspected fraud — some contests have taken this approach for years. Since the IARU HF contest currently allows log submission up to 7 days after the end of the contest, this would require changes to either the IARU HF Championship rules or the WRTC winners' ceremony, or both. But how would those changes affect the WRTC experience for competitors?

Tree, N6TR, provided some data — overall, 5,605 IARU HF contest logs were received, with 12,005 different call signs, and 95% of the QSOs could be verified from other submitted logs. That means that, of the total population of contacts found in the 5,605 submitted logs, 5% involved contacts where one of the two parties did *not* submit a log. However, that doesn't necessarily

mean every WRTC team would just see a 5% score reduction. While most "absentee" logs probably only contain a few contacts, some have more. Some WRTC teams that did not benefit from the malicious interference may have randomly worked more large "absentee log" ops than other teams, and automatically eliminating all of these logs could punish these teams unfairly. The WRTC ops have no way of knowing if a given station will submit a log, and it doesn't seem right to punish them for working every station they could.

I asked Bud, AA3B, for similar data from the recent CQ WPX CW Contest (see www.cqwpw.com/results/results_2026_wpx_cw_article.pdf) showing that the 2026 WPX CW had 5,711 logs submitted, 11,979 unique calls, and 95.2% of contacts cross-checked across submitted logs. John, K1AR, provided summary information for CQ WW CW — with 8,429 logs submitted, there were even more unique call signs, but again, 95.6% of contacts were crosschecked.

For most contests, rather than just ignore absentee QSOs, sponsors could accept all contacts but amend the scoring rules to state that analysis of unverified contacts may be used to remove suspect QSOs. For WRTC, a quadrennial event that is dedicated to leveling the playing field to celebrate the skills of top contesters, it may be necessary to have final results come out *after* the closing ceremony.

How to balance staying true to the nature of radio contesting while balancing accuracy and timely results is up to contest managers to decide — with input from active contesters.