

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF FRENCH GUIANA

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French Guiana's (Guyane's) mineral sector was dominated by gold mining in 2001; fishing and forestry, however, were the leading industries. Besides gold, Guyane also produced cement, clays, columbite and tantalite, sand, and stone (crushed). The gross domestic product, which was based on purchasing power parity, was estimated to be \$1 billion in 1998 (the latest year for which data are available). Exports, which were led by shrimp, timber, and gold, were estimated to be \$155 million in 1997 (the latest year for which data are available). According to the French Constitution of September 28, 1958, Guyane is closely tied to France as an Overseas Department of France. France, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States were Guyane's leading trading partners in 2001. The population of Guyane as of July 2000 was estimated to be 170,000 (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2001§¹).

The minerals sector is administered according to French law. The granting of permits and concessions for minerals is administered by the Direction Régionale de l'Industrie, de la Recherche et de l'Environnement (DRIRE), which is a branch of the Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Industrie of France. To acquire a mining title through the DRIRE, a company must first obtain an Autorisation Personnelle Minière (APM). An APM requires that a company be incorporated under French law, to have an office and address in Guyane, and to have a board of directors that comprises European Union nationals. An APM grants a company the right to hold permits and concessions for minerals exploration and production, respectively. Producers may sell their gold in the open market (Mining Journal, 1997).

Denver-based Golden Star Resources Ltd. (GSRL) owned about 73% of Guyanor Resources S.A. of France. Both companies focused on the prospecting, exploration, and development of mineral resources in Guyane. Gold was their first priority followed by diamond. They held interests in the Dorlin, the Paul-Isnard, the St. Elie, and the Yaou gold properties, as well as the Dachine diamond property. In October 2001, Cambior, Inc., of Canada transferred its 50% interest in the Dorlin and the Yaou properties and its 100% interest in the Bois Canon property to GSRL (Golden Star Resources Ltd., 2001).

In January 2001, Guyanor Resources entered into a joint-venture agreement with Rio Tinto Mining and Exploration Ltd. of the United Kingdom whereby Rio Tinto would fund more than \$2.25 million in exploration and feasibility studies at the Paul-Isnard gold property during the next 3 years to earn up to 40% interest in the gold project; Rio Tinto could earn an additional 30% interest if it invested an additional \$6.75 million

within 5 years at the project (Golden Star Resources Ltd., 2001§). Later in 2001, Rio Tinto announced that results of the exploration program conducted in August 2001 on Paul-Isnard did not meet the company's target resource requirements and it had, therefore, decided to withdraw from the option agreement (Mining Journal, 2001a).

In February 2001, the Hope Bay Gold Corp. of Canada signed an agreement with Cambior whereby it agreed to purchase CBJ-France S.A.R.L. (a wholly owned subsidiary of Cambior). Included in the purchase were permits to explore at the Maripa and the Montagnes Tortue properties, which were located less than 100 kilometers from the capital of Cayenne (Hope Bay Gold Corp., 2001§).

In 2000, Rio Tinto and GSRL reported results of tests from the Dachine diamond property. They noted that although diamonds were found in the sampled material, the amount was not sufficient to justify additional work. Despite Rio Tinto's decision to withdraw from the joint venture, GSRL would maintain an interest in the property and would pursue other joint-venture opportunities for the project; it also noted that it would continue to evaluate other areas where it has found diamonds in Guyane, notably at the Palofini and Vitoria properties (Golden Star Resources Ltd., 2000§).

Alluvial deposits continued to be the main sources of, in order of importance, gold, columbite, and tantalite. Sand was dredged from the major rivers in the western region of the country, primarily the Mahury and the Maroni. Stone was quarried at Cayenne and to the southeast of Kourou (table 1). Sand and stone continued to be consumed by the domestic construction industry. The country, however, depended on imports for its other mineral requirements, especially fuels, which were shipped through the port at Cayenne.

In June 2001, Hardman Resources NL of Australia reported that Planet Oil Ltd. (its wholly owned subsidiary) was awarded an Exclusive Exploration License on a 65,000-square-kilometer area that covers the major part of the offshore basin of Guyane (Hardman Resources NL, 2001§). Hardman Resources noted that its interest in offshore Guyane stemmed from the fact that it considered the area to be largely underexplored with respect to hydrocarbon potential and owing to developments in Guyane's western neighbor, Suriname, which has oil production and an active offshore exploration program in progress (Hardman Resources NL, 2000§).

Lack of adequate infrastructure continued to be a major problem for economic development in Guyane in 2001. Much of the country is covered by rainforests with much of the interior only accessible by river and a few small airports (Mining Journal, 2001b).

¹References that include a section twist (§) are found in the Internet References Cited section.

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Major Sources of Information

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TABLE 1
FRENCH GUIANA: ESTIMATED PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/ 2/

Commodity		1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Cement	metric tons	51,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Clays	do.	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Columbite and tantalite	kilograms	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,500
Gold, mine output, Au content	do.	3,183 3/	2,673 3/	2,819 3/	3,376 3/	3,000
Sand	thousand tons	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Stone, crushed	do.	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500

1/ Includes data available through May 14, 2002.

2/ Estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

3/ Reported figure.

Source: Direction Regionale de l'Industrie, de la Recherche et de l'Environnement.