

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF SOMALIA

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Somalia is an East African country located on the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean that produced small quantities of gemstones, gypsum, salt, and sepiolite (meerschaum) in 2004. The country also had deposits of feldspar, iron ore, kaolin, limestone, natural gas, quartz, silica sand, tantalum, tin, and uranium. The mineral industry made a small contribution to Somalia's exports and to the economy in general.

Officially reported mineral and trade data continued to be unavailable because of the lack of a functioning central Government since 1991 and the conflict that pervaded most of Somalia. Somaliland (a region in northern Somalia) declared its independence in 1991, and Puntland (which was to the east of Somaliland) declared autonomy in 1998 (United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2004a). Neither of the declarations of independence were internationally recognized. Somalia's civil war has had considerable adverse consequences for the economy, which included the minerals sector. The war forced the closure of Somalia's cement plant and oil refinery, and halted most exploration for mineral resources.

In February 2004, the Transitional National Assembly endorsed an agreement between the Transitional National Government and various political factions regarding the selection of a future interim parliament. Signatories included the Rahanwayn Resistance Army, which had declared independence from Somalia in 2002. Sporadic conflict continued in some areas in Somalia in 2004, including Bulo Hawa and Mogadishu in May and Kismayo in September. Puntland and Somaliland were in conflict in the disputed Sool region (United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2004a-d).

Such gemstones as aquamarine, emerald, garnet, opal, red spinel, ruby, sapphire, and tourmaline were produced in Somaliland. Mining of Somaliland's gemstones was limited by civil strife, damaged infrastructure, and a lack of modern equipment. Garnet and opal accounted for the largest shares of gemstone production.

Since the closure of Somalia's oil refinery in 1991, all the country's demand for petroleum products has been met

through imports. The energy sector also faced the problem of deforestation. Charcoal was the primary domestic source of energy and one of the country's leading exports. Somalia's installed electricity-generating capacity amounted to 70 megawatts, all of which was diesel fired. Ente Nazionale Energia Elettrica of Italy was responsible for the generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2003¹).

The transportation network comprised about 22,000 kilometers (km) of roads, of which 2,600 km was paved. Oil pipelines totaled 15 km. Ports and harbors were Bender Cassim (Boosaaso), Berbera, Chisimayu (Kismayo), Merca, and Mogadishu.

The outlook for Somalia's mineral industry is for little change in the short run. Barriers to development included continuing civil unrest, weak infrastructure, and a domestic market limited by severe poverty.

References Cited

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- U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2003 (August), Horn of Africa, Country Analysis Brief, accessed April 20, 2004, at URL <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/hornofafrica.html>.

¹A reference that includes a section mark (§) is found in the Internet Reference Cited section.

TABLE 1
SOMALIA: ESTIMATED PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES^{1,2}

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

| Commodity ³ | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Gypsum | 1,500 | 1,500 | 1,500 | 1,500 | 1,500 |
| Salt, marine | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| Sepiolite, meerschaum | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |

¹Estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

²Table includes data available through March 28, 2005.

³In addition to the commodities listed, precious and semiprecious gemstones were reportedly produced, and various crude construction materials (for example, clays, sand and gravel, crushed and dimension stone) and lime are presumably produced, but information is inadequate to estimate output.