



2009 Minerals Yearbook

SOMALIA

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF SOMALIA

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

Civil war continued in Somalia in 2009. Ethiopian military forces withdrew from the country in January. Various anti-Government forces engaged in combat with each other in southern Somalia and with the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu. In northern Somalia, the semi-autonomous region of Puntland and the self-declared Republic of Somaliland (which maintains a separate regional governing authority) engaged in armed conflict over an unresolved border dispute in April. Somaliland's declaration of independence in 1991 and Puntland's declaration of autonomy in 1998 had not been internationally recognized (Integrated Regional Information Network, 2009; Somaliland Times, 2009).

Production

Mineral production data continued to be unavailable because of the lack of a functioning central Government since 1991 and the conflict that pervaded most of the country. In 2006, a dimension stone operation that produced granite, marble, and sandstone started production in Somaliland. In 2008, niobium and tantalum mining operations started; it is unclear if production continued after a labor dispute in April 2009. The war forced the closure of Somalia's oil refinery and cement plant in 1991 and 1996, respectively.

Structure of the Mineral Industry

Private companies produced granite, marble, niobium, sandstone, and tantalum. Gemstone and salt mining operations appear to have been artisanal and small scale in nature. The cement plant and refinery were operated by parastatal companies before their closure. The collapse of the central Government in 1991 led to ambiguity over mineral rights.

Commodity Review

Metals

Niobium (Columbium) and Tantalum.—In August 2008, Green African Development AB (GAD) of Sweden started

mining niobium and tantalum at Dalow near Berbera. About 120 miners produced 18 metric tons of columbite-tantalite in 8 months. In April 2009, the miners reportedly refused to deliver the columbite-tantalite to GAD because of nonpayment of wages. The governing authorities of Somaliland had not awarded a mining license to GAD as of April (Indian Ocean Newsletter, 2009).

Mineral Fuels

Natural Gas and Petroleum.—Africa Oil Ltd. of Canada and Range Resources Ltd. of Australia explored for crude petroleum at the Dharoor and the Nogal onshore blocks in Puntland. In December 2009, the governing authorities of Puntland approved an agreement to extend Africa Oil's and Range Resources' exploration rights until January 2011 in return for relinquishing 25% of the blocks in January 2010. Africa Oil planned to drill wells in Dharoor in 2010 (Africa Energy Intelligence, 2010).

In October 2009, the governing authorities of Somaliland announced plans to start a new licensing round for nine natural gas and petroleum exploration blocks. Exploration rights for the blocks were expected to be awarded in March 2010 (Somaliland Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources, 2009).

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