THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

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The Central African Republic's mining industry remained dominated by the production and export of alluvial diamond and gold. The mining sector of the Central African Republic historically contributed about 4% of the nation's gross domestic product and accounted for 40% to 50% of export earnings. However, multiple military mutinies adversely affected the industry in 1996 and resulted in decreased mineral production.

Mining legislation in the country was based on the Mining Code, law No. 61/208, of April 11, 1961. Permission of the Ministry of Mines was required for mining and purchasing of precious stones and minerals. Hydrocarbon legislation was based on the Petroleum Code, Ordinance No. 73/016, of February 10, 1973. The Investment Code of 1990 encouraged foreign investment through guarantees against nationalization, expropriation, and freedom from political or economic interference under certain circumstances. The National Action Plan in Favor of the Environment was proposed during the year to minimize the adverse effects of illegal alluvial mining.

The export market of the country was dominated by diamond. However, actual production and export figures for both diamond and gold were unavailable because of widespread smuggling. (See table 1.)

Gold was recovered primarily by artisanal miners. United Reef Ltd. of Canada assigned its Roandji concession, approximately 300 kilometers (km) northeast of Bangui, to a joint venture with Asquith Resources Inc. of Canada in return for exploration financing. The joint venture completed the initial geochemical, geologic, and geophysical surveys of the property. After delineating six prospects on the concession, United Reef began drilling the Agoudou Manga prospect in November 1996.

Diamond production supported an artisanal labor force estimated at about 40,000. Diamond mining cooperatives were active as well as Howe Centrafrique Ltd. and Radisson Centrafrique S.A.

United Reef Ltd. of Canada (52%), Trans Hex Group Ltd. of South Africa (28%), and local nationals (20%) established a joint venture on the Bamingui and Boungou diamond concessions. The Trans Hex Group subsequently transferred its

interest in the joint venture to its Canadian subsidiary, Trans Hex International Ltd. The Bamingui concession, 650 km northeast of Bangui, included the Bamingui and Bangoran River systems and the 30-ton-of-gravel-per-hour-capacity diamond and gold recovery plant at Mbala. The Boungou concession was 150 km south of Bamingui. Howe Centrafrique, the local subsidiary of United Reef, was trenching along the Bangoran River, 8 km north of Mbala.

Radisson Centrafrique, a subsidiary of Radisson Mining Resources Inc. of Canada, put two diver-operated dredges into service on the Lobaye River. PR Mining & Explorations Ltd. of South Africa retained an option to acquire 25% interest in the diamond concession.

The diamond exchange in Bangui was reopened in November 1996 after closing in May because of the military unrest.

Other mineral occurrences reported in the Central African Republic by the Direction Générale des Ressources Minérales in 1995 included clay, copper, iron ore, lignite, limestone, manganese, rutile, tin, and uranium (Ministère des Ressources Energétiques et Minérales, 1995). However, the lack of adequate transportation and industrial infrastructure, including the absence of a railway system, hindered the nation's mineral industry development.

Reference Cited

Central African Republic, Ministère des Ressources Energétiques et Minérales, Direction Générale des Ressources Minérales, 1995, The mineral sector of the Central African Republic—An introduction: Bangui, Central African Republic, 38 p.

Major Sources of Information

Ministère des Ressources Energétiques et Minérales Direction Générale des Ressources Minérales Bangui, Central African Republic Telephone: (236) 61-20-54

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 ${\bf TABLE~1}$ CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/

(Carats unless otherwise specified)

Commodity 2/	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996 e/
Diamond:					
Gem e/	307,442 3/	369,923	400,940 r/	400,000	350,000
Industrial e/	106,522 3/	125,000	131,000	130,000	120,000
Total	413,964	494,923	531,940	530,000 e/	470,000
Gold kilogr	rams 155	153 r/	138 r/	120 r/e/	90

e/ Estimated. r/ Revised.

 $^{1/\}operatorname{Includes}$ data available through Mar. 18, 1997.

^{2/} In addition to the commodities listed, modest quantities of unlisted varieties of crude construction materials (clays, gravel, sand, and stone) presumably are produced, but output is not reported, and available information is inadequate to make estimates of output levels.

^{3/} Reported figure.