

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF FRENCH GUIANA

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French Guiana (Guyane) mineral sector was dominated by gold mining in 2000; fishing and forestry, however, were the leading industries. 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, estimated to be \$155 million in 1997 (the latest year for which data are available). Guyane's population as of July 2000 was estimated to be 170,000 (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2000, French Guiana—economy, World Factbook 2000, accessed August 16, 2001, at URL <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/fg.html>). Besides gold, Guyane also produced clays, columbite and tantalite, sand, and stone (crushed).

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 Ministry of Industry, Finances and Economy. To acquire a mining title through 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, p. 8).

Denver-based Golden Star Resources Ltd. (GSRL) owned about 73% of Guyanor Ressources S.A. of France. Guyanor and GSRL operated exclusively in Guyane and were focused on the prospecting, exploration, and development of mineral resources. Gold was their first priority followed by diamond. They held interests in the Dorlin, the Paul-Isnard, the St. Elie, and the Yaou gold projects, as well as the Dachine diamond property (Golden Star Resources Ltd., 1998; 1999, p. 8).

In January 2001, Guyanor 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 project during the next 3 years to earn up to 40% interest in the gold project; Rio Tinto can earn an additional 30% interest if it invests and additional \$6.75 million within 5 years at the project (Golden Star Resources Ltd., January 10, 2001, Guyanor Ressources S.A. and Golden Star Resources Ltd. announce agreement with Rio Tinto to advance the Paul Isnard gold project in French Guiana and private placement, Press Release, accessed September 27, 2001, at URL <http://www.gsr.com/pr011001.html>).

Toronto-based Franc-Or Resources Corp. owned 100% of

Franc-Or Guyane S.A.R.L., of France. In Guyane, it expected to produce more than 300 kilograms (reported as more than 10,000 ounces) of gold with local small miners as operators from 50-50 joint ventures at Dagobert, Nicole, and Repentir and with additional royalty production at Boneteau, Cajou, Certitude, Fourca, Poteau, Salomon, and Upper Sable properties (Yahoo!Finance, July 10, 2000, accessed July 10, 2000, at URL http://biz.yahoo.com/bw/000710/franc_or.html).

In May 2000, the Hope Bay Gold Corp. of Canada entered into an agreement with Cambior Inc. of Canada whereby it agreed to purchase CBJ-France S.A.R.L. (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cambior). Included in the purchase were the Maripa and the Montagnes Tortue exploration permits, which were located less than 100 kilometers from the capital Cayenne (Hope Bay Gold Corp., May 2000, French Guiana—Montagnes Tortue and Maripa, accessed September 27, 2001, at URL http://www.hbgold.com/english/04_o&d/tortue.htm).

In October 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. Although Rio Tinto decided 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 Palofini and Vitoria (Golden Star Resources Ltd., October 12, 2000, Results of diamond sampling program at Dachine, Press Release, accessed September 28, 2001, at URL <http://www.gsr.com/pr101300.html>).

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 cement and fuels, which were shipped through the port at Cayenne.

In December 2000, Hardman Resources NL of Australia reported that it had acquired a 95% interest in a petroleum application that covers the entire 65,000-square-kilometer basin offshore Guyane. Hardman's interest in the potential license was held by two subsidiary companies—Planet Oil Ltd. and Hardman Petroleum Holdings Ltd. The company noted that its interest in offshore Guyane stemmed from the fact that it considered offshore Guyane to be 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, December 31, 2000, Guyane (French)—South America, Quarterly Report, accessed September 28, 2001, at URL <http://www.hdr.com.au/qtrdec00.htm>).

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Major Sources of Information

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

Commodity		1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Clays	metric tons	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Columbite and tantalite	kilograms	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100
Gold, mine output, Au content	do.	2,949 r/ 3/	3,183 r/ 3/	2,673 r/ 3/	2,819 r/ 3/	3,376 3/
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

r/ Revised.

1/ Includes data available through September 28, 2001.

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.