Primarily an agrarian economy, Côte d'Ivoire's mineral industry was a modest factor in determining the nation's gross domestic product. However, the country's Birimian greenstones have attracted considerable attention from international gold exploration companies. More significantly, renewed interest in the hydrocarbon potential of the West African offshore basin by international petroleum companies will significantly increase the mineral fuels sector importance to the economy. Côte d'Ivoire progressed rapidly from being wholly dependent on imported fuels at the start of 1995 to energy self-sufficiency at the end of 1996 (Adams, 1996). Other mineral production was relatively meager. (See table 1.)

The Government actively encouraged the responsible development of the country's mineral resources and the variety of mineral resources in Côte d'Ivoire was noteworthy. The state mining company, Société pour le Développement Minier (SODEMI) had documented numerous mineral deposits, including bauxite, brick clay, ilmenite, iron ore, manganese, lateritic nickel, rutile, glass sand, dimension stone, and tantalite (République de Côte d'Ivoire, Ministère des Mines et de l’Énergie, 1994). Law No. 95-553 of July 18, 1995, the new Mining Code, replaced Law No. 64-249 of July 3, 1964. The 1996 Hydrocarbon Code replaced the Petroleum Code (Law No. 70-849 of August 3, 1970).

The Ministère des Mines et de l'Énergie held the primary role of mineral development in Côte d'Ivoire through its ownership of SODEMI. SODEMI promoted and participated in the exploration and development of nonhydrocarbon mineral resources. La Société Nationale d'Opérations Pétrolières de la Côte d'Ivoire (Petroci) was the state-owned company charged with managing the hydrocarbons sector. Petroci maintained a minimum 10% interest in all petroleum operations.

The Société des Mines d'Ity, a joint venture of LaSource Group of France (40%) and SODEMI (60%), operated the open pit Ity gold mine, 90 kilometers (km) southwest of Man in the west of the country. The Government initiated privatization of its interests in the company during 1996. However, unexpected lower ore grades, crusher-related problems, and problems with artisanal miners reduced output at Ity during the year.

The Société des Mines d'Afema (Somiaf) operated the Afema Mine, a three-pit heap-leach operation, 120 km east of Abidjan. Eden Roc Mineral Corp. of Canada held 68% of Somiaf, and SODEMI held the remaining 32%. Gold production at Afema decreased in 1996 to 622 kilograms (kg) from 766 kg in 1995 (The Northern Miner, 1997). The decreased output was attributed to heavy rainfall adversely affecting pit and heap-leach operations and continued agglomeration problems. Production was expected to rebound in 1997 because Somiaf was doubling the capacity of the absorption-desorption recovery plant and it reportedly had solved the agglomeration problems.

A number of international companies were engaged in exploration for gold on exploration permits in Côte d'Ivoire including: Anmercoca, the local subsidiary of Anglo American Corp. of South Africa; Cie. Mi nière d’Afrique, the local subsidiary of LaSource Group of France; Cluff Mining Ltd. of the United Kingdom; Eden Roc; Equigold NL of Australia; GATRO-CI, the local subsidiary of Gencor Ltd. of South Africa; Goldivoire; Leo Shield Resources Ltd. of Australia; Oxford Resources Inc. of Canada; Pan African Resources Corp.—Côte d'Ivoire, a subsidiary of Golden Star Resources Ltd. of Canada; Randgold Resources of the United Kingdom, a Jersey subsidiary of Randgold & Exploration of South Africa; Stanley Mining Services Ltd. of Australia; Trillion Resources Ltd. of Canada; Western Mining Corp. of Australia; and Winslow Gold Corp. of Canada. Artisanal gold activity exists in Côte d'Ivoire, but production was clandestine and unreported.

Falconbridge International (Investments) Ltd. of Canada continued its multiyear drilling program on the Touba-Biankouma nickel prospect. Touba-Biankouma, approximately 500 km northwest of Abidjan, consisted of several lateritic nickel deposits, including the Sipilou deposits. Trillion Resources Ltd. of Canada, a partner in the project (Falconbridge, 60%; Government, 25%; and Trillion, 15%) reported total indicated and inferred resources of approximately 225 million metric tons grading 1.5% nickel and 0.1% cobalt (Trillion Resources Ltd. News Release, 1996/97 Field Program Underway—Touba-Biankouma Nickel Project - Côte d'Ivoire, October 11, 1996). Diamond mining at Tortiya and Séguéla was primarily artisanal.

Côte d'Ivoire's petroleum production had ceased in 1992 when the Bélier Field was abandoned. Production resumed during 1995 when United Meridian Corp. (UMC) of the United States, began flowing oil from the Lion Field, approximately 13 km offshore. UMC operated the Lion Field and Panthere Gasfield on block CI-11. Partners include Petroci; the International Finance Corp., an affiliate of the World Bank; Global Natural Resources Inc., which during October 1996 merged with and subsequently became a subsidiary of Seagull Energy Corp. of the United States; and Pluspetrol S.A. of Argentina. Partnership interest varied from well to well in the fields. UMC drilled four wells on block CI-11 and the Leopard #1 Well on block CI-12 during 1996. UMC also drilled the Kudu #1 on block CI-01. During the year, UMC and Shell Exploration Africa BV of the Netherlands obtained a
production-sharing concession for the deep-water block CI-105.

Santa Fe Energy Resources of the United States obtained a contract to explore block CI-24 during October 1996. Addax Petroleum Ltd., a Swiss oil trader, continued looking for an operating partner to redevelop the Espoir Field on block CI-26. Apache International (a subsidiary of Apache Corp. of the United States), Petroci, and Electricité de France-SAUR of France drilled a confirmation well in the undeveloped Foxtrot prospect on block CI-27. ELF of France secured short-term options on blocks CI-40, CI-101, CI-102, and CI-103 during 1996. The Government and Seagull Energy entered into a production-sharing contract on block CI-104.

Cie. de Production d'Electricité de Côte d'Ivoire (CIPREL) purchased natural gas from the UMC consortium for its Vridi powerplant. CIPREL could become an electrical energy exporter as both its generating capacity and natural gas supply from Panthère Field were projected to be increased. CIPREL's fuel supply could be further augmented by the proposed gas production from the Foxtrot prospect. Natural gas has supplanted imported fuel for the powerplant of the Société Ivoirienne de Raffinage petroleum refinery and has been proposed as a power source and feedstock for the fertilizer plant.

References Cited
Adams, P., 1996, Deep-water hopes buoy UMC shares: Financial Times

Other Sources of Information
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Fax: (225) 21-68-24
TABLE 1
COTE D’IVOIRE: ESTIMATED PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/

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<tr>
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<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
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<td>Diamond</td>
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<td>Natural gas</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crude</td>
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<td>Refinery products</td>
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<td>18,300</td>
<td>19,300 r/</td>
<td>19,300 r/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tantalite</td>
<td>kilograms</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

r/ Revised.

1/ Includes data available through May 1997.
2/ In addition to the commodities listed, Côte d'Ivoire produced clays, crushed granite, sand and gravel, and stone for the local construction industry.
3/ Information is inadequate to make reliable estimates of output levels.
3/ Reported figure.