

ERITREA

By Philip M. Mobbs

In 1999, the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia continued and eliminated most mineral exploration and production activity in southern Eritrea. The war was a significant factor in mineral exploration companies' inability to raise funding for projects in potential battle zones.

In 1999, Dragon Mining NL of Australia bought out Genesis Resources NL of Australia's 33.3% interest in the Zara gold exploration project. Dragon (66.7%) and Africa Wide Resources Ltd. of Hong Kong (33.3%) continued stream sediment sampling and satellite imagery interpretation of the Zara prospect (Dragon Mining/Generis Mining, August 16, 1999, Mining and exploration—Australia and New Guinea, Company News, accessed August 18, 1999, at URL <http://www.reflections.com.au/MiningandExploration/Companies/News.html>). Eritrean Minerals Corp., which was a joint venture of Marchmont Gold Corp. of Canada (75%) and African Minerals Inc. of Eritrea (25%), reviewed remote sensing imagery of the Harab Suit, the Mattie, the Seroa Area, and the Seroa Hill licenses (Adulis Minerals Corp., June 7, 2000, Annual information form, accessed October 2, 2000, via URL http://www.sedar.com/dynamic_pages/assoc_docs_e/d00004592.htm).

In May 1999, LaSource Développement SAS of France agreed to option the Adi Nefas gold and massive sulfide concession to Eritrean-Timmins Resource Ventures Plc., which was a subsidiary of Rift Resources Ltd. of Canada. Although drilling began in September, operations were suspended because of the war; this caused Eritrean-Timmins to miss the spending requirements of the option agreement (Rift Resources Ltd., July 21, 2000, British Columbia Securities Commission quarterly report—Form 61 [for quarter ended December 31, 1999], accessed October 2, 2000, via URL http://www.sedar.com/dynamic_pages/assoc_docs_e/d00002167.htm). The Augaro gold property in western Eritrea of Anglo American Prospecting Services (Proprietary) Ltd. of South Africa and Rift Resources was occupied by Ethiopian military forces. Rift Resources retained its interest in the Eritrean concessions but wrote off its share of acquisition and exploration costs of the Adi Nefas, the Augaro, the Ketina, the Nefasit-Mount Subub, and the Tekeze

exploration licenses as of December 31, 1999.

Nevsun Resources (Eritrea) Ltd. of Barbados, which was a subsidiary of Nevsun Resources Ltd. of Canada, suspended operations on its gold exploration prospects. Tan Range Exploration Corp. of Canada abandoned the Asmat, the Erota, and the Melebsc concessions.

In 1999, the joint venture that included Anadarko Eritrea Co., which was a subsidiary of Anadarko Petroleum Corp. of the United States; Azienda Generali Italiana Petroli S.p.A. of Italy; and Burlington Resources Inc. of the United States drilled a third exploration well on the offshore Zula block. On the basis of the three dry holes, Anadarko terminated operations on the block.

Reported mineral occurrences in Eritrea included asbestos, barite, copper, feldspar, gold, iron deposits, kaolin, lead, marble, nickel, potash, sylvite, and zinc (Ministry of Energy and Mines, 1997, p. 3-7, 14, 15).

For more extensive coverage of the mineral industry of Eritrea, see the 1998 Minerals Yearbook, volume III, Mineral Industries of Africa and the Middle East.

Reference Cited

Ministry of Energy and Mines, 1997, Mineral prospects of the state of Eritrea: Ministry of Energy and Mines, 16 p.

Other Sources of Information

Department of Mines

P.O. Box 272

Asmara, Eritrea

Telephone: (291) (1) 117-766

Fax: (291) (1) 117-626

Ministry of Energy and Mines

P.O. Box 5285

Asmara, Eritrea

Telephone: (291) (1) 116-872

Fax: (291) (1) 127-652

TABLE 1
ERITREA: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 e/
Basalt	233,555	509,300	489,686	403,219	300,000
Cement	49,947	47,031	60,000 e/	50,000 r/ e/	45,000
Clays:					
Common	88,676	81,600	80,000 e/	80,000 e/	50,000
Kaolin	3,200	2,620	4,670	3,809	2,000
Coral	78,603	69,269	96,535	245,112	250,000
Gold kilograms	59	98	612	573	500
Granite	82,007	130,000	111,062	249,829	200,000
Gravel	1,172,500	1,715,000	798,055	941,129 r/	500,000
Gypsum	20	23	27 r/	56 r/	50
Lime e/	6,955 2/	7,000	7,000	6,000	3,000
Limestone 3/	8,218	4,552	5,585	4,077	4,000
Marble 4/	292,400	218,300	220,000 e/	200,000 e/	100,000
Pumice	233	300 e/	754	391	200
Quartz	276	870	604	731	600
Salt	254,700	200,412	252,073	114,137	100,000
Sand e/	911,508 2/	1,000,000	2,000,000	1,000,000	2,000,000
Silica sand	966,200	1,481,100	1,500,000 e/	1,500,000 e/	1,000,000
Petroleum products thousand 42-gallon barrels	4,336	4,500	3,000	--	--

e/ Estimated. r/ Revised. -- Zero.

1/ Includes data available through October 2, 2000.

2/ Reported figure.

3/ For other than cement.

4/ In addition to tonnage listed in this table, 108,545 square meters of marble were produced for the construction industry in 1995.