

## SOMALIA

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**S**omalia is one of Africa's poorest countries. Located in the "Horn of Africa", it separates Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya from the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Since the 1991 collapse of the central Somali Government based in Mogadishu, the country's development has been derailed by the lack of any cohesive government. On May 18, 1991, the former British Protectorate of Somaliland in the north declared itself an autonomous nation, with its capital at Hargeisa, completely independent of the former Italian colony of Somalia in the south, with its capital at Mogadishu. Since that time the self-proclaimed Somaliland Republic has instituted a semblance of democratic order with a central government whereas the southern part has remained the provenance of competing factional (Clan-based) interests. At the national elections of the Somaliland Republic, held in February 1997, the current President of the Somaliland Republic, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal was re-elected for a second five-year term that expires in 2002.

The Somaliland Republic has implemented a ministerial style of government in the northern part of Somalia and this includes a Ministry for Mineral and Water Resources. A new mining code for the Somaliland Republic was promulgated in 1996. This mining code provides for the grant of Exclusive Prospecting Licences (EPL) and includes provision to convert the EPL into a Mining Lease.

The economy is, by world standards, very poorly developed. The cash/export economy is dominated by the export of livestock (60% sheep, 34% goats with camels and cattle making up the remainder) to neighbouring countries. The country has a high ratio of foreign trade to gross domestic product, a low level of monetisation and a dominant informal

trade sector. More than 70% of the population live a nomadic existence and depend on pastoral pursuits for their subsistence.

Prior to the break up of the country in 1991, there was a small mining industry that exploited limestone, gypsum, sepiolite and sea-salt for local markets.

Basement rocks are exposed in two areas. The largest exposure is located almost wholly in the northern Somaliland Republic, while another small inlier, the Bur Complex, is located west of Mogadishu in southern Somalia.

Interest in mineral production within these basement rocks currently resides with the discovery and artisanal production of gemstones such as emerald, aquamarine, sapphire, zircons and amethyst. Also attracting interest is the small-scale production of columbite-tantalite (coltan) from the Henweina Valley and the Bur Mado districts in the Somaliland Republic. Columbite had been discovered previously by the British Geological Survey and exploited in a small way in 1955-58.

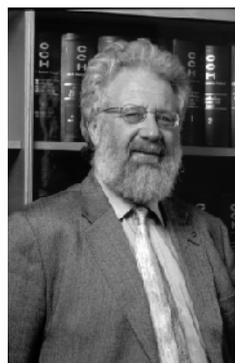
The presence of simpsonite (a high-grade calcic aluminium tantalate) in heavy mineral sands deposits developed along the beaches east of Berbera implies the presence of undiscovered tantalum resources in the adjacent basement rocks.

These areas of basement rocks have significant potential for the discovery of economically important base and precious metal deposits. The northern basement complex consists of a series of high grade metamorphic rocks which enclose at least two "greenstone belts" that are known to contain evidence of volcanogenic gold rich base metal deposits. A number of layered

and zoned mafic/ultramafic intrusive complexes are known and stream sampling has delineated PGM anomalies associated with these igneous complexes. This exploration potential is mirrored by the exploration interest in the similar Pre-Cambrian Pan African terranes located across the Gulf of Aden in the Yemen, where greenstone-belts and younger volcanic-arc sequences are being explored for structurally controlled gold deposits (Medden) and gold rich volcanogenic base metal sulphide deposits.

Other mineral occurrences of potential interest that are known to occur within the Northern Somali Basement include molybdenum and bismuth associated with intrusive syenites, as well as tin deposits previously exploited at Dalan (Somaliland Republic) and the adjoining area of Manja Yihin in Somalia.

In the southern Somalian or Bur Basement complex, located west of Mogadishu, previous exploration has outlined some low-grade iron-ore resources at Bur Galan (indicated resource to 200m depth of 394 Mt at 38.7 % Fe) and Dahimir (indicated resource of about 30 Mt at a similar grade), also a small uranium (carnotite) deposit with a reported indicated resource varying between 10-25 Mt at 0.07-0.08%  $U_3O_8$ . Phosphate (apatite) occurrences are relatively widespread in the calc-silicate rocks of the region. At Modu-Mode grades averaging 24%  $P_2O_5$  have been located.



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Despite the very prospective nature of the basement geology, serious mineral exploration will probably have to wait until the political future of the country has been resolved. Despite the semblance of government achieved in the breakaway northern province as the self declared Somaliland Republic, mineral explorers will probably be reluctant to spend serious funds there until that government achieves more formal widespread international recognition.