

HAITI

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Haiti's problems have been called intractable and its economy remains inert. On February 7, this year, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was sworn in as President. He was elected last November, six months after local and parliamentary elections which had seen much delay and some fraud after months of intimidation and violence. The opposition parties boycotted the presidential election and have formed a 15-party coalition, the Convergence for Democracy. The UN has packed up its latest mission and its one year mandate has not been extended. Last August the UN transport chief was killed by a mob and the UN Secretary-General recommended closing the mission. The Haitian Government does not seem to mind. Foreign donors have suspended the aid, which sustains the feeble economy: Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas with a GDP per head of US\$1,379 measured by purchasing-power parity.

Last year economic growth plummeted to 1%-down from 4.5% the year US troops arrived. Haiti's currency, the gourde, has lost more than half its value, while the minimum daily wage has stayed the same for six years and is now worth just US\$1.45 a day. Two thirds of the population are jobless and steady population growth stresses ailing infrastructure. About US\$500 million, or 14% of GDP, in aid and loans is unspent. The US has given US\$2.3 billion in aid since 1994. Most donors agree that Haiti must establish a new electoral council that includes opposition members as well as hold run-off elections for disputed Senate seats. Popular with the masses, President Aristide has made promises about political inclusion, economic reforms, and fighting the burgeoning drug trade, but donors are sceptical and waiting to see if Haiti is viable.

The country's modest mineral industry has traditionally been involved in the production of cement and consequently the mining of clays and limestone, the quarrying of some marble (100 m³), the production of marine salt, and the dredging for sand (250,000 m³) and gravel (750,000 m³) and other minerals used in the construction industry. In the north there are small undeveloped deposits of chromite, copper, gold, iron, ore, lead, manganese, silver, sulphur, tin, and zinc. Auriferous ores have long been noted and some alluvial gold deposits have been worked on a small scale. Base-metal ores occur in the Cretaceous acid volcanic belt stretching across the island and Haiti's Massifs du Nord contains porphyry copper orebodies of the Pueblo Viejo type famous in the Dominican Republic, which enjoys a comparatively active minerals sector.

Montreal-based KWG Resources and St. Genevieve Resources have tested the Morne Bossa gold prospect in the north, and confirmed UNDP results. KWG has reported that the resource at Grand Bois, based on systematic drilling, is established at 4.6 Mt grading 1.9 g/t Au. The company also owns an interest in the Morne Bossa deposit which is very similar to Grand Bois but smaller, with an estimated resource of 2.24 Mt grading 1.84 g/t Au. In addition, the Douvray deposits coincide with a strong soil geochemical anomaly and are part of a linear continuous, 15 km long, copper anomaly. North-east of Douvray, grab samples from trenches in the Blondin prospect returned values as high as 17.0% Cu. Nevertheless, KWG has not been active in Haiti for the past two years in view of financial considerations and political instability which makes title uncertain.