

HAITI

By J. M. Harris

Peter W. Harben Inc. Mineral Consultancy, Las Cruces, New Mexico 88011, US (peterharben.com)

Haiti is probably Latin America's poorest country and its problems have remained seemingly intractable even after US intervention some seven years ago. Its 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.

There are immense calcium carbonate deposits in the Caribbean and Jamaica dominates this trade, but Haiti as well as Cuba are believed to contain excellent material and are closer to the US, a major consumer. In the north of Haiti, 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 Massif du Nord contains porphyry copper orebodies of the Pueblo Viejo type famous in the Dominican Republic, which enjoys a comparatively active minerals sector.

In the north, Montreal-based KWG Resources and St. Genevieve Resources have tested the Morne Bossa gold prospect and confirmed UNDP results. In the past KWG has reported

that the resource at Grand Bois, based on systematic drilling, is established at 4.6 Mt at a grade of 1.9 g/t Au. The company also owns an interest in the Morne Bossa deposit that is very similar to Grand Bois but smaller, with an estimated resource of 2.24 Mt at 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 have returned values as high as 17.0% Cu.

Political instability has not been encouraging and the one business that seems to be prospering in the country is the drug trade, which is also creating strains within the government itself. A budget has not passed in six years and US\$500 million in foreign aid has been blocked. President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected once more in 2001, but there were two coup attempts in July and December as well as an anti-corruption protest this January in which a Port-au-Prince warehouse was stormed. Opposition voices have been significantly harassed. In March, nearly 1,000 supporters of the embattled opposition rallied at the ruins of their headquarters as their leader, Gerard Gourgue, advised moral resistance. Although a tobacco group is apparently investing US\$40 million in a Hilton franchise by the airport, the economy is stagnating with two-thirds of the 7.8 million people living in poverty and many of the rich emigrating.