



2012 Minerals Yearbook

KYRGYZSTAN

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF KYRGYZSTAN

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Kyrgyzstan was a major world producer of mercury and uranium in 2012, and gold was the primary mineral (in terms of value) mined in the country. Other minerals being mined included antimony, clay, coal, fluorspar, gypsum, limestone, natural gas, petroleum, sand and gravel, silica, and silver. Kyrgyzstan has deposits of other minerals that were not being mined. They include arsenic, bauxite, copper, iron ore, lead, rare-earth metals, sulfur, tin, tungsten, and zinc (Russian American Chamber of Commerce in the USA, 2007; Chunuev, 2013; Polyak, 2013; U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2013; Virta, 2013; Welcome.kg, 2013).

Minerals in the National Economy

In 2012, Kyrgyzstan's real gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by 0.9%; nominal GDP was \$6.47 billion.¹ Industrial production decreased by 20% to \$3.51 billion and contributed 44% to the total value of the GDP. In 2012, the country had 1,929 industrial enterprises that employed 158,000 workers. The value of Kyrgyzstan's exports decreased in 2012 by 15.5% to \$1.89 billion, and the value of the country's imports increased by 26.1% to \$5.37 billion. The ratio of exports to imports decreased to 35.2% from 52.6% in 2011 (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2012, 2013; U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

The main export commodities included cotton, electricity, garments, gold, machinery, meat, mercury, shoes, tobacco, uranium, and wool. Kyrgyzstan's leading export partners (by volume) were Uzbekistan, which received 28.8% of Kyrgyzstan's exports, Kazakhstan (22.0%), Russia (14.6%), China (7.0%), the United Arab Emirates (6.3%), and Afghanistan (5.7%). The main import commodities were chemicals, foodstuffs, oil and gas, and machinery and equipment. The country's primary import partners were China, which supplied 55.9% of Kyrgyzstan's imports, Russia (17.7%), and Kazakhstan (6.4%) (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2013; U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

Government Policies and Programs

In the past decade, the Government actively worked on attracting investments in its mineral industry. As of the beginning of 2012, Kyrgyzstan had 1,001 active licenses for exploration, development, and mining of mineral resources. Out of this total, 370 licenses were for mineral exploration and development and 631 were for mining. Only a few projects, however, resulted in mineral production. Corruption in the previous Government administrations, which had issued most of the licenses, led to the practice of giving licenses to mining companies that were not qualified to conduct efficient

development and mining operations. Many residents in Kyrgyzstan expressed concern that, despite the high number of licenses, the country was not mining minerals on a large scale and therefore was not getting the full benefits from its natural resources. To address these concerns, the State Agency on Geology and Mineral Resources (Gosgeolagenstvo) revoked 550 licenses in 2010 and 292 licenses in 2011. In 2012, the Agency revoked 13 licenses (Chunuev, 2013).

In 2012, multiple disagreements arose between prospecting and mining companies and the local population. On many occasions, locals blocked roads leading to mining properties, seized vehicles and equipment used for mining, conducted demonstrations, and engaged in fights with miners. The most common complaints of the local population were related to environmental concerns, violations of license agreements and of safety regulations, and the lack of financial contribution to localities where the mining companies operated. In addition, several Government officials were accused of corruption. At yearend, eight criminal cases were under investigation. The charges involved stealing of large amounts of gold-containing concentrates; the organization of a black market for issuing licenses for prospecting, development, and mining; and unreported smuggling from the country of large amounts of mined minerals. One of the alleged criminals was the previous head of the Gosgeolagenstvo, who was accused of using his position for illegal licensing (Chunuev, 2013).

In July, the Gosgeolagenstvo announced an auction for 12 deposits. Of the 12 deposits, 6 contained alluvial gold, another 5 contained gold and other metals; and one contained coal. The sites included the Pereval'noye, the Terek, the Terekhan, and the Togolok gold deposits. Gosgeolagenstvo developed a list of 16 criteria for selecting investors, including the speed of processing plant construction, the hiring of Kyrgyz nationals, the use of safe development and production technologies, and the size of investment. To adhere to the principles of transparency, the 12 deposits were to be auctioned on August 28, and the auction was to be translated on state television; prior to the auction date, 49 companies submitted applications for the auction. On the day of the auction, however, the auction was halted by a group of people who, introducing themselves as "people's activists," took over the television transmission, chanting "The Fatherland is not for sale." The auction was halted and was rescheduled for a later date. Because of the changes in the mining code and adoption of new procedures for scheduling and conducting auctions and tenders, the auction was expected to be held sometime in 2013; all applications submitted for the previous auction were annulled (Mineral.ru, 2012a; MinerJob.ru, 2012c).

In September, the President of Kyrgyzstan signed into law a new mining code that was adopted by the country's Parliament in June. The main principles of the new code are the protection of investments as a type of private property, noninvolvement of

¹Where necessary, values have been converted from Kyrgyzstani soms (KGS) to U.S. dollars (US\$) at the average annual exchange rate of KGS47.01=US\$1.00 for 2012 and KGS46.14=US\$1.00 for 2011.

national and local authorities in the management decisions of private enterprises; protection of the rights of mining companies to make mining decisions; and provision of exclusive rights for transition of licenses from exploration to mining. The new code specifies the “single window” principle for mineral rights; that is, licenses specify the plot of land and mineral rights as a part of a single package. The new code also describes how mining contributes to the socio-economic development of localities, outlines the “social packet” that should be included in the application for exploration and mining licenses; establishes renewal fees for continued holding of licenses, and specifies the responsibilities of the Government, mining companies, and the local authorities. The new code provides for environmental protection of both the localities where particular mining entities operate and of the entire country. Overall, the new mining code is intended to improve the investment climate in the country and to clearly specify a set of fees that mining companies are obligated to pay to the central and local governments for the use of natural resources (Knews.kg, 2012).

In addition to the mining code, relevant changes were made to the tax code. Starting on January 1, 2013, gold-mining companies are levied a tax on revenue, instead of a tax on profits; the tax rate is linked to the world gold price. For example, at the world gold price of \$1,724.8 per troy ounce (the price as of November 13, 2012), the enterprises’ revenues were to be taxed at the rate of 11%. The Mining and Metallurgy workers’ Union of Kyrgyzstan was concerned that this taxation change was likely to hit hardest less profitable enterprises, such as OAO Kyrgyzaltyn, which was the country’s second-ranked gold producer.

In November, the Parliament approved a bill that would impose customs duties on ore exports that contain precious metals. The bill was intended to encourage the construction of ore-processing plants in Kyrgyzstan. The bill assumed that the initial customs duty rate would be 5% in 2013 and would gradually be increased to 30% by 2017. The reason for the introduction of a customs duty was a sharp increase in ore exports in the recent years—in 2010, exports of ores containing precious metals totaled only 300 metric tons (t), whereas in 2011, 41,000 t of ores containing precious metals was exported (Mineral.ru, 2012c).

Production

In 2012, coal production increased by 41.1%, the estimated production of lime increased by 15.4%, and production of salt increased by 12.5%. Production of gold decreased by 44.6%; that of mercury, by 33.7%; and natural gas, by 30.5%. The estimated mine output of antimony decreased by 20%, and that of uranium, by 10%. These and other data on mineral production are in table 1.

Commodity Review

Metals

Gold.—As of November 2012, Kyrgyzstan had 60 known gold deposits with combined resources of 448 t of gold. Only a few of the deposits, however, were mined. The largest of

the existing mines, the Kumtor gold mine, was located about 350 kilometers (km) southeast of Bishkek and about 60 km north of the border with China. The Kumtor Mine was operated by Centerra Gold Inc. of Canada. In 2012, Centerra Gold produced 315,000 troy ounces (9.8 t) of gold from the mine, which was a sharp (46%) reduction compared with its output in 2011. The reason for the reduction was an unexpected movement of ice from a glacier into the mine’s open pit. In 2013, Centerra was planning to return to its previous production level of between 17.1 and 18.9 metric tons per year (t/yr). In 2012, output from the Kumtor Mine contributed 5.5% to the GDP of Kyrgyzstan and accounted for 18.9% of the country’s total industrial production, and Centerra Gold paid \$103.2 million in taxes and customs duties to the Government on the output from the mine. Mining operations at Kumtor were carried out by traditional open pit mining methods (Centerra Gold Inc., 2013a–c; Lazenby, 2013).

In November, Centerra announced the expansion of the open pit at Kumtor, which resulted in a significant increase in the resources of the Kumtor deposit and included a 58% increase in proven and probable reserves to a total of 9.7 million troy ounces (302 t) of contained reserves. Accordingly, the company extended the expected life of the Kumtor Mine by 5 years, including the term of open pit mining through 2023 and the term of ore processing at the gold extracting plant through 2026. The company was expecting to produce an average of 20 t/yr of gold from the mine in the next 10 years and to increase the volume processed at the gold extracting plant by 18% by 2016 (Lazenby, 2013).

The relations between Centerra, the local population, and the Government, however, were complicated. In February, Kumtor’s workers were on strike to demand a wage increase, and the strike lasted 10 days. According to some accounts, it was the 10-day idle period at the mine that led to the excessive ice accumulation that ultimately drastically reduced the mine’s annual output. At the end of May, residents of Issyk-Kul Oblast, where the Kumtor Mine is located, blocked the highway leading to the mine and held a protest demonstration with about 600 participants. The protest participants handed their demands to the company’s administration. The list of demands contained 13 points, ranging from the company’s contribution to social needs of the population, such as orphanages, kindergartens, sports halls, and medical and veterinary care, to environmental demands and demands to contribute to infrastructure projects in the region. The blockage was ultimately removed in early June when, after negotiations with Government representatives, the company agreed to meet some of the demands (Mineral.ru, 2012d; MinerJob.ru, 2012b; Centerra Gold Inc., 2013d).

In June, some members of the Parliament called for nationalization of the Kumtor Mine. Although no voting on the matter took place and although many other Parliament members responded that Kyrgyzstan could not afford to nationalize the mine, the shares of Centerra lost about one-third of their value on June 25. By August, international banks reportedly increased the interest rates charged to businesses working in Kyrgyzstan. During the fall of 2012, both Centerra and the Government hired commissions of independent experts to evaluate the environmental damage, if any, inflicted by the

company because of its operation of the Kumtor Mine. In December, the leadership of Kumtor Operating Co. announced that the Government had submitted to them the list of damages amounting to \$152 million, which included damages from mine construction, the location of waste material and tailings, emission of harmful materials, damages to land resources, and use of water resources. At yearend, the outstanding issues between the Government and Kumtor Operating Co. were still not resolved (MinerJob.ru, 2012a).

Industrial Minerals

Rare Earths.—The Kutessai I, II, and III deposits in Chuy Valley contain rare-earth elements. During the Soviet times, 15 of the elements were mined by open pit method at Kutessai II. In 2009, Kutessai Mining Co. (Kutessai), whose parent company was Stans Energy Corp. of Canada, had obtained a 3-year license for mining Kutessai II from the Gosgeolagenstvo. During the next 3 years, the company was unable to start production because of a combination of technical difficulties and administrative delays, but gave 5.8 million soms (\$126,000) as a charitable donation to the local government of Ak-Tyuz. In 2012, the original license was extended (Dudka, 2012).

In June, the committee on economic sector development of the Parliament recommended to the Gosgeolagenstvo that the extended license be annulled on the grounds that the company did not fulfill its obligations as specified by the original and the extended licenses. Also, the committee stated that the licenses were given to the company in violation of the laws in place at the time the licenses were issued, including the mining code. The Gosgeolagenstvo did not annul the license but was conducting negotiations with the company about a transfer of about 20% of the shares of the company to the Government. In August, the Gosgeolagenstvo confirmed the company's compliance with the licensing agreement. Also, Stans Energy filed a lawsuit against the Parliament's committee, and in November, the Inter-District Court of Bishkek ruled in favor of the company. It was not clear, however, if other attempts to annul the licenses would be initiated in the future (Mineral.ru, 2012b; Stans Energy Corp., 2012a, b).

Mineral Fuels

Coal.—In 2012, Kyrgyzstan produced 1,184,000 t of coal, which was a 41% increase compared with production in 2011. In Kyrgyzstan, coal appeared to be a cheaper and more reliable energy source compared with natural gas, which had to be imported. According to the Ministry of Energy, the country had about 70 deposits with a total resource potential of 2,260 million metric tons (Mt). In addition to bituminous coal and lignite, the country had about 260 Mt in proven and probable reserves of coking coal that was not being mined in 2012 (Xinhuanet.com, 2013).

Oil and Natural Gas.—In 2012, Kyrgyzstan was in the process of constructing two new oil refineries. The first of the refineries was being built in the city of Kara-Balta in Chuyskaya Oblast. By the original plan of 2009, the refinery was supposed to have a production capacity of only 100,000 t/yr

(about 677,000 barrels per year) of petroleum. In 2010, however, when Jund China Petroleum Co. became a partner in the project, the planned capacity increased to about 800,000 t/yr [5.4 million barrels per year (Mbbbl)]. The petroleum for the plant was planned to be exported from Kazakhstan. The total investment in the project was expected to be \$250 million, and the costs were expected to be recouped in 6 years. The refinery was planned to produce gasoline (40%), diesel fuel (40%), liquefied gas, and lubricants. The depth of refining (the percentage of petroleum processed into usable substances) was planned to reach 94%, which is very high, especially for Central Asia. The refinery was expected to start operations in August 2013 (CentralAsiaOnline.com, 2012; Vasilivetskiy, 2012).

Another refinery was planned to be built by the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR). The preliminary cost projected for the project was \$150 million with a planned capacity of 2 million metric tons per year (Mt/yr) (15.7 Mbbbl). The new refinery was expected to start production in 2014 (CentralAsiaOnline.com, 2012).

Outlook

Kyrgyzstan is actively trying to attract foreign investment into its mineral industry and to start production at new deposits. In 2012, the country was trying to improve transparency in the process of issuing licenses for exploration, prospecting, development, and mining of its natural resources. Its adoption of a new mining code is intended to provide a balance between the interests of mining companies, local populations, and the Government.

In the next 5 to 10 years, Kyrgyzstan is expected to start full-scale production at some of its gold deposits that were in preliminary stages of development during the past decade. When this happens, the tensions around the largest producing gold mine in the country, Kumtor, could subside and pave the way to increased exploitation of the natural resources of the country.

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TABLE 1
KYRGYZSTAN: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES^{1,2}

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
METALS					
Antimony:					
Mine output, Sb content ^c	700	700	700	1,500	1,200
Metal and compounds	-- ^r	918	842	892 ^r	924
Gold, mine output, Au content kilograms	18,144 ^r	16,978 ^r	18,072 ^r	18,648 ^r	10,333
Mercury, metal do.	-- ^r	140,000 ^r	98,700 ^r	112,700 ^r	74,700
INDUSTRIAL MINERALS					
Cement, hydraulic	1,218,100	579,400	759,700	1,016,600 ^r	900,000 ^e
Gypsum	55	50	51	57	59
Lime	8,700	4,700	6,500	2,600	3,000 ^e
Salt ^c	900 ^r	900 ^r	900 ^r	800 ^r	900
Sands ^c cubic meters	836,200 ³	800,000	850,000	850,000	800,000
MINERAL FUELS AND RELATED MATERIALS					
Coal:					
Bituminous	55,338	68,800	65,000	94,000	132,600
Lignite	437,263	538,100	510,000	745,000	1,051,400
Total	492,601	606,900	575,000	839,000	1,184,000
Natural gas thousand cubic meters	19,800 ^r	15,400	22,800	26,600 ^r	18,500
Petroleum, crude:					
In gravimetric units	69,300 ^r	75,100 ^r	70,700 ^r	77,000 ^r	77,100
In volumetric units ^c 42-gallon barrels	516,000	562,000	602,000 ^r	656,000 ^r	657,000
Uranium, processed:					
U content	1,097	2,574	2,000	2,000 ^e	1,800 ^e
U ₃ O ₈ content	1,309	3,071	2,385	2,385	2,150 ^e

^cEstimated; estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown. ^rRevised. do. Ditto. -- Zero.

¹Table includes data available through July 25, 2013.

²In addition to the commodities listed, Kyrgyzstan is thought to produce a number of other mineral commodities, including clays, copper, fluorspar, kaolin, mined mercury, molybdenum, gravel, silver, tin, and tungsten, but available information is not adequate to make reliable estimates of production.

³Reported figure.

TABLE 2
KYRGYZSTAN: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 2012¹

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	Major operating companies, main facilities, or deposits	Location or deposit names	Annual capacity ^c
Antimony:			
Sb content of ore	Kadamzhay mining and metallurgical complex (OAO KyrgyzAlty, 100%), which included the Kadamzhay Mine and the Terek-Sayskiy Mine	Batkenskaya Oblast'	2,400 ²
	Khaydarkan mining and metallurgical complex	Khaydarkan region	
Metal and compounds	Kadamzhay metallurgical facility (ATF Invest, a subsidiary of ATF Bank of Kazakhstan, 70.4%)	Kadamzhayskiy Rayon	28,000
Cement	Kantskiy cement plant	Kant	1,500,000
Coal	Seven underground mines and five open pits among the following deposits: Almalyk, Dzhergalan, Kara-Kiche-Kok-Yangak, Kyzyl-Kiya, Sulyukta, and Tashkumyr	Southwestern, central, and northeastern parts of the country	2,200,000 ²
Copper	Talas Copper Gold Co.	Talasskaya Oblast'	NA
Fluorspar, concentrate	Khaydarkan mining and metallurgical complex	Khaydarkan deposit	5,000
Gold:			
Au content of ore	Kumtor Gold Co. (Centerra Gold Inc., 100%)	Kumtor deposit	22
Do.	OAO KyrgyzAlty (Government, 100%)	Makmal deposit	3
Do.	kilograms Solton-Sary Mine	Naryn	500
Do.	Talas Gold	Jerooy-Bashi, Pereval; Talasskaya Oblast'	NA
Do.	Taldy-Bulak Levoberezhny deposit (Summer Gold Co., 40%, and Zijin Mining Group, 60%)	NA	NA
Do.	Ishtamberdy deposit (Lingbao Gold Co. Ltd.)	Chatkal region	NA
Do.	Unkurtash gold deposit (Highland Gold Mining Ltd.)	NA	NA
Do.	Bozymchak gold deposit (OcOO Kazakhmys Gold Kyrgyzstan)	Dzhalal-Abadskaya Oblast'	NA
Refined	Kara-Balta refinery	Chuyskaya Oblast'	NA
Mercury:			
Hg content of ore	Khaydarkan mining and metallurgical complex	Khaydarkan and Novoye deposits	700 ²
Metal	do.	Khaydarkan deposit	1,000
Molybdenum, for nonmetallurgical uses	Kara-Balta mining and metallurgical complex	Chuyskaya Oblast'	NA
Do.	Molibden Joint Stock Co.	do.	NA
Natural gas	million cubic meters Kyrgyzzmunayzat	Approximately 300 wells; Changyr-Tash, Chigirchik Pereval, Izbaskentskoye, Kara-Agach, Mayлуу-Suu, Susahoye, and Togap-Beshkenskoye deposits	100 ²
Petroleum	do.	do.	150,000
Do.	Kyrgyz Petroleum Co.	Dzhalal-Abadskaya Oblast'	NA
Silver	Karagoyskoye deposit	Oshskaya Oblast'	NA
Do.	Kumyshtag deposit	Talasskaya Oblast'	NA
Tin	Novosibirsk Integrated Tin Works	Atdzhaylau deposit	150
Do.	do.	Trudovoye deposit	350
Do.	Tyanshanolovo mining and beneficiation complex	Sary-Dzhas field	NA
Do.	Uchkoshkon deposit	do.	NA
Tungsten	Enil'chek JSC mining enterprise	Atdzhaylau deposit	90
Do.	do.	Trudovoye deposit	95,600
Uranium, processed	Kara-Balta mining complex (GK Renova)	Zarechnoye deposit, Chuyskaya Oblast'	3,600
Do.	Linia Prava (LPU) (Nimrodel Resources, 90%)	Batken Leases, Southern Fergana Valley, Batkenskaya Oblast'	NA

^cEstimated; estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits. Do., do. Ditto. NA Not available.

¹Many location names have changed since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Many enterprises, however, are still named or commonly referred to based on the former location name, which accounts for discrepancies in the names of enterprises and that of locations.

²Capacity estimates are totals for all enterprises that produce that commodity.