

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

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The economy of the Solomon Islands is small and predominantly agrarian. Mineral production during 1998 included small quantities of clays, crushed stone, sand and gravel, and gold with minor amounts of contained silver. Though the Solomon Archipelago was named in the 16th century for the legendary gold mines of King Solomon in the Middle East, the Melanesian state produced only trivial amounts of gold until mid-1998 (Islands Business, 1998).

On August 12, 1998, Gold Ridge Mining Ltd., a subsidiary of Australia's Ross Mining NL, poured the first gold from the Gold Ridge Mine, the first large-scale mine ever to be developed in the country. The pour was part of the commissioning of the 2-million-metric-ton-per-year ore processing plant that will produce about 3,100 kilograms per year of gold (Mining Journal, 1998). With reserves of 42,300 kilograms of gold, the mine life is about 13 years (Australian Mining Journal, 1998). The doré produced from Gold Ridge is refined by Metal Refining Operations in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (South Sea Digest, 1998).

References Cited

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South Sea Digest, 1998, Ross Mining tipped to expand: South Sea Digest, v. 18, no. 15, October 9, p. 4.

Major Source of Information

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The Geological Survey is part of the Ministry of Lands.

TABLE 1
SOLOMON ISLANDS: ESTIMATED PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/

(Kilograms)

Commodity 2/	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Gold, mine output, Au content	31	25	25	25	1,035 3/
Silver, mine output, Ag content	9	10	10	10	10

1/ Table includes data available through June 2, 1999.

2/ In addition to the commodities listed, crude construction materials (common clays, sand and gravel, and stone) are produced, but output is not reported quantitatively, and available general information is inadequate to make reliable estimates of output levels.

3/ Reported figure.