

Bottle neck in global tantalite concentrates production favors the development of tantalite resources of the EMAG mining concessions in eastern Bolivia

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Columbite/Tantalite concentrate of bulk sample N°. 64662, Eastern Bolivia

The annual world tantalite concentrate production totals only 2,000 t coming mostly from few large mineral deposits. Small mines produce approximately 35 % of the annual mining output. These are located often in politically unstable regions as for example in Central Africa. The main part of the production is used in the electronic industry which grew in the last years dramatically. Australia hosts 65 % of the world resources and was until December 2008 the most important producer of tantalite concentrate.

The Wofgina mine in West Australia produced in the past alone nearly 30 % of the global supply of tantalite ore. The operation was put on care and maintenance status in December 2008 because of high production costs. Similar mining sources of that size which could replace the shortfall of concentrates do actually not exist. And the production from Central Africa has been banned by United Nations Security Council since 2001, because of illegal and inhuman mining practice, and the use of revenues for financing civil war in the region.

In the future it will be quite difficult to purchase tantalite concentrate from "clean" sources. You can find more details on that subject in the very informative publication http://www.ttiinc.com/object/me_zogbi_20081208.html

Under these circumstances the mining concessions of Empresa Minera (Bergbau) A.G. in eastern Bolivia are getting very important, because they are located within a Precambrian columbite/tantalite province, show positive indications for tantalite resources related to pegmatite host rocks, are easily accessible and could be developed quickly. The current exploration data indicate so far the existence of a significant columbite/tantalite resource.

Exploration work carried out in the Johannes-Colonia concessions in the 2008 season delineated a several tenths kilometer long shear zone with numerous lens shaped pegmatite occurrences. Cross cutting trenches were excavated in 50 to 100 m distance over a strike length of 3.5 km. The sampling showed that the structures are consistent and contain columbite/tantalite. The field crew took in total 362 channel samples from the weathered pegmatite. The heavy minerals were separated last month by hand panning, are actually being inspected for the presence of columbite/tantalite and will be sent subsequently to a laboratory for assaying. The manual processing of a bulk sample of 360 kg weight gave a columbite/tantalite concentrate of 242 g in the +0.6 mm to 2.0 cm size range. This corresponds to a concentrate content of 671 g/t (wet) in the outcropping weathered pegmatite.

The company plans to accelerate the exploration activities in the next coming months. The goal is to conclude the evaluation of resources and install a small pilot gravity washing plant with a concentrate production capacity of 2.0 t per month. The unit could be hopefully being expanded later according to the size of the mineral resource.

Empresa Minera Bergbau A.G. holds three further mining claims which are located also in eastern Bolivia with positive indications for tantalite bearing pegmatite structures. It is programmed to start detailed exploration during the current year. The company has already received the environmental permit for that work from the Bolivian authorities.