

## Afghanistan's Wealth of Raw Materials and Minerals

Public awareness and U. N. statistics regard Afghanistan as a desperately poor country. This is certainly true of the greater part of the Afghan peasant population – but not the rich drug dealers, among them the family of President Karzai. Nor does this assessment apply to the gas reserves along the River Amu Darya in the north of the country. These were recklessly exploited by the Soviet Union during its occupation in the 1980's. The existence of these reserves, together with those of other raw materials and minerals, was recognized already in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the general public worldwide has deliberately not been informed so far, of the wealth of raw materials and minerals.

Last year international print media reported that a Chinese company, after making offers which included the building of a railway line in Afghanistan, was awarded the contract to exploit a copper mine near Aynak. Suddenly it is now possible to access reports such as those of the U.S. Geological Survey of 2007 concerning the discovery of reserves of raw materials and minerals in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> In addition to copper, Afghanistan has huge reserves of minerals such as iron, sulphur, talc, chrome, magnesium, salt, mica, marble, rubies, emeralds, lapis lazuli, asbestos, nickel, quicksilver, gold, silver, lead, zinc, fluor spar, bauxite, beryllium and lithium. In addition there are significant reserves of phosphorus, uranium and thorium. There could also be in Afghanistan rare metals hitherto known to exist only in China, which are important for the electronic industry. All these reserves were recorded by the U.S. Geological Survey between 2005 and 2007.

According to the map in which minerals are sited by the U.S. Geological Survey the most important reserves are located in the east and southeast of Afghanistan. The U.S. forces have their most important bases in these provinces. The reason given for this regional concentration of bases is the resistance of the Taliban and the attacks on their logistics, their fighters and their helpers in the Pakistani tribal areas. But it could well be that the true reason for these bases and the military campaign of the U.S.A. is a different one altogether. With these bases, has the U.S.A. not taken over these mineral reserves, which are later to be exploited by American companies? If this hypothesis is correct, the European states whose troops are not stationed in the above-mentioned regions are being misled by the war and the nation building of Afghanistan. It is possible that certain states are colluding with the U.S.A. and will take part in the future exploitation. If this is so, Nato's Afghanistan war is nothing other than theft on a geopolitical scale.

Article by Prof. Dr. Albert Stahel, Institute of Strategic Studies, Wädenswil, Switzerland  
(<http://www.zeit-fragen.ch./ausgaben/2010/nr7-om-172-2010/afghanistan-ist-reich-an-rohstoffen-und-mineralien/>)

[The above article appeared in 'Symptomatologische Illustrationen', Basel, No. 74, April/May 2010 and was translated by G. Rickett, 12 Tynings Road, Nailsworth, Glos. GL60EJ, Tel. 01453 886468]

---

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary Assessment of Non-Fuel Mineral Resources of Afghanistan, 2007, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC, October 2007.