

Welcome to TimesPeople  
Get Started

TimesPeople recommended: [This Is Your Brain on Metaphors](#)

5:33 PM

Recommend

HOME PAGE TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS

Subscribe to The Times | Log In | Register Now

The New York Times

# Asia Pacific

Search All NYTimes.com

Go

ING DIRECT

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS  
AFRICA AMERICAS ASIA PACIFIC EUROPE MIDDLE EAST



www.MoneyandMarkets.com

## The \$3 Trillion Lie:

How to protect your wealth and profit from the Fed's new money-printing scheme with the approach that could have turned every \$25,000 you invested into \$644,500!

▶ Watch the Video

Ads by Google  
Advertise on NYTimes.com

## U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan



Tyler Hicks/The New York Times

A bleak Ghazni Province seems to offer little, but a Pentagon study says it may have among the world's largest deposits of lithium.

By JAMES RISEN  
Published: June 13, 2010

WASHINGTON — The United States has discovered nearly \$1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits in [Afghanistan](#), far beyond any previously known reserves and enough to fundamentally alter the Afghan economy and perhaps the Afghan war itself, according to senior American government officials.

### At War

Notes from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and other areas of conflict in the post-9/11 era.

[Go to the Blog »](#)

### Multimedia



Graphic

[Minerals in Afghanistan](#)

### Readers' Comments

Readers shared their thoughts on this article.

The previously unknown deposits — including huge veins of iron, copper, cobalt, gold and critical industrial metals like [lithium](#) — are so big and include so many minerals that are essential to modern industry that Afghanistan could eventually be transformed into one of the most important mining centers in the world, the United States officials believe.

An internal Pentagon memo, for example, states that Afghanistan could become the “Saudi Arabia of lithium,” a key raw material in the manufacture of batteries for laptops and BlackBerrys.

The vast scale of Afghanistan’s mineral wealth was discovered by a small team of Pentagon officials and American geologists. The Afghan government and

Log in to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com.  
[Privacy Policy](#) | [What's This?](#)

Log In With Facebook

### What's Popular Now

A Conversation With Jane Goodall: 50 Years of Chimpanzees



The Day Facebook Changed - Messages to Become Public by Default



**The \$3 Trillion Lie:**  
How to protect your wealth and profit from the Fed's new money-printing scheme with the approach that could have turned every \$25,000 you invested into \$644,500!



www.MoneyandMarkets.com

Ads by Google

### MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED VIEWED

1. Digital Domain: Should You Be Snuggling With Your Cellphone?
2. Investors Put Money on Lawsuits to Get Payouts
3. Paul Krugman: The World as He Finds It
4. The Stone: This Is Your Brain on Metaphors
5. Top 10 Must-Have Apps for the iPhone, and Some Runners-Up
6. Frank Rich: Who Will Stand Up to the Superrich?
7. Budget Puzzle: You Fix the Budget
8. Even Reusable Bags Carry Environmental Risk
9. For Cats, a Big Gulp With a Touch of the Tongue
10. Well's Vegetarian Thanksgiving

[Go to Complete List »](#)

RECOMMEND

TWITTER

COMMENTS (1460)

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT

SINGLE PAGE

REPRINTS

SHARE

In Theaters Now

[Read All Comments \(1460\)](#) »

President [Hamid Karzai](#) were recently briefed, American officials said.

While it could take many years to develop a mining industry, the potential is so great that officials and executives in the industry believe it could attract heavy investment even before mines are profitable, providing the possibility of jobs that could distract from generations of war.

“There is stunning potential here,” Gen. [David H. Petraeus](#), commander of the United States Central Command, said in an interview on Saturday. “There are a lot of ifs, of course, but I think potentially it is hugely significant.”

The value of the newly discovered mineral deposits dwarfs the size of Afghanistan’s existing war-bedraggled economy, which is based largely on opium production and narcotics trafficking as well as aid from the United States and other industrialized countries. Afghanistan’s gross domestic product is only about \$12 billion.

“This will become the backbone of the Afghan economy,” said Jalil Jumriany, an adviser to the Afghan minister of mines.

American and Afghan officials agreed to discuss the mineral discoveries at a difficult moment in the war in Afghanistan. The American-led offensive in Marja in southern Afghanistan has achieved only limited gains. Meanwhile, charges of corruption and favoritism continue to plague the Karzai government, and Mr. Karzai seems increasingly embittered toward the White House.

So the Obama administration is hungry for some positive news to come out of Afghanistan. Yet the American officials also recognize that the mineral discoveries will almost certainly have a double-edged impact.

Instead of bringing peace, the newfound mineral wealth could lead the [Taliban](#) to battle even more fiercely to regain control of the country.

The corruption that is already rampant in the Karzai government could also be amplified by the new wealth, particularly if a handful of well-connected oligarchs, some with personal ties to the president, gain control of the resources. Just last year, Afghanistan’s minister of mines was accused by American officials of accepting a \$30 million bribe to award China the rights to develop its copper mine. The minister has since been replaced.

Endless fights could erupt between the central government in Kabul and provincial and tribal leaders in mineral-rich districts. Afghanistan has a national mining law, written with the help of advisers from the [World Bank](#), but it has never faced a serious challenge.

“No one has tested that law; no one knows how it will stand up in a fight between the central government and the provinces,” observed [Paul A. Brinkley](#), deputy undersecretary of defense for business and leader of the Pentagon team that discovered the deposits.

At the same time, American officials fear resource-hungry China will try to dominate the development of Afghanistan’s mineral wealth, which could upset the United States, given its heavy investment in the region. After winning the bid for its Aynak copper mine in Logar Province, China clearly wants more, American officials said.

Another complication is that because Afghanistan has never had much heavy industry before, it has little or no history of environmental protection either. “The big question is, can this be developed in a responsible way, in a way that is environmentally and socially responsible?” Mr. Brinkley said. “No one knows how this will work.”

With virtually no mining industry or infrastructure in place today, it will take decades for Afghanistan to exploit its mineral wealth fully. “This is a country that has no mining culture,” said Jack Medlin, a geologist in the [United States Geological Survey](#)’s international affairs program. “They’ve had some small artisanal mines, but now there could be some very, very large mines that will require more than just a gold pan.”



## Renée Zellweger's big deal

ALSO IN REAL ESTATE »

[Exclusive Connecticut vacation homes](#)  
[Vacation rentals in Alabama](#)

**nytimes.com**

REAL ESTATE

ADVERTISEMENTS

Find your dream home with  
The New York Times Real Estate



Fan The New York Times on Facebook

The new issue of T is here

See the news in the making. Watch  
TimesCast, a daily news video.



**The Opinion Pages**  
REFRESH YOUR PERSPECTIVE  
[VISIT TODAY](#) [nytimes.com/opinion](http://nytimes.com/opinion)

Ads by Google

what's this?

### [Sea Mineral Buy SEA-90](#)

Organic! Fertilize Soil/Foliar Feed  
Offer to Livestock. Great Results..  
[www.SeaAgri.com](http://www.SeaAgri.com)

### [Lubricants & Mineral Oils](#)

Lubriplate Loctite CRC LPS 3M Dow  
Compressor Fluids Silicones Grease  
[www.industrialchemicalonline.com](http://www.industrialchemicalonline.com)

### [We Buy Mineral Rights](#)

Cash Upfront, Fast Closings, Free  
Consultations, Call Us 888-916-0220  
[www.UniRoyalties.com/MineralRights](http://www.UniRoyalties.com/MineralRights)

The mineral deposits are scattered throughout the country, including in the southern and eastern regions along the border with Pakistan that have had some of the most intense combat in the American-led war against the Taliban insurgency.

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



1 | **2** | [NEXT PAGE »](#)

A version of this article appeared in print on June 14, 2010, on page A1 of the New York edition.

[Start your day with the Today's Headlines e-mail newsletter.](#)

- [COMMENTS](#)
- [SIGN IN TO E-MAIL](#)
- [PRINT](#)
- [SINGLE PAGE](#)
- [REPRINTS](#)

Ads by Google

what's this?







- [Cheap Kabul Hotels](#)**  
Compare Room Rates, Find Deals & More. Make Decisions w/Bing™ Travel  
[bing.com/travel](http://bing.com/travel)
- [Rare Earth Elements](#)**  
Leverage to Uranium & REE Prices  
TSX Venture Symbol: GEM  
[www.pelemountain.com](http://www.pelemountain.com)
- [Afghanistan Minerals](#)**  
Will investors be able to profit From Afghanistan's new wealth?  
[MoneyMorning.com/Afghanistan\\_Mine](http://MoneyMorning.com/Afghanistan_Mine)

**Past Coverage**

- [UNEASY ENGAGEMENT; China Is Willing to Spend Big In Afghanistan, on Commerce \(December 30, 2009\)](#)
- [Pakistan Marble Helps Taliban Stay in Business \(July 14, 2008\)](#)

**Related Searches**

- [Afghanistan](#) [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [Metals and Minerals](#) [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [Gold](#) [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [Lithium \(Metal\)](#) [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

<p>MOVIES »</p>  <p><b>The Older Side of Hollywood Gets Its Due</b></p>	<p>OPINION »</p>  <p><b>Room for Debate: 16 Ways to Cut the Deficit</b></p>	<p>U.S. »</p>  <p><b>How Smoky Plume Drew the Eyes of the World</b></p>	<p>SPORTS »</p>  <p><b>Wrestling Pendulum Swings Farther East</b></p>	<p>OPINION »</p>  <p><b>Editorial: Grand Disillusion</b> Grand Central gets grander, Penn Station stays penal: That is a rule of New York City, writes Lawrence Downes.</p>	<p>N.Y. / REGION »</p>  <p><b>Even Reusable Bags Can Carry Risk</b></p>
--	--	--	---	--	--