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## **Altus Strategies explorer joins the Mali gold rush**

LONDON, Oct 11 (Reuters) - British explorer Altus Strategies on Wednesday signed an outline 3.4 million pound (\$4.5 million) deal to buy Legend Gold Corp and said it was aiming to make the most of a subdued market to grow the newly-listed company further.

The smallcap mining sector is taking longer to recover from the commodity price crash of 2015-16 than the majors.

But the juniors have been increasingly active in Mali, regarded as a relatively stable jurisdiction, where Legend has a portfolio of gold projects and licences covering nearly 400 square kilometres.

Altus Strategies, which has signed a letter of intent to buy Toronto-listed Legend Gold, valuing it at 3.4 million pounds, said it was offering a 130 percent premium to Legend's market close on Tuesday, but given low levels of liquidity for small miners that could still be cheap.

"Hopefully our timing is good. Some companies can go up 25 percent in a day in a highly illiquid market where price is not necessarily the same as value," Steven Poulton, CEO of Altus Strategies, said in an interview.

The letter of intent should be followed by a firm all-equity deal by the end of the month.

Nervousness about Africa risk revived by an upsurge in resource nationalism, especially in Tanzania, has rattled the sector, but Mali's gold is viewed as a relatively safe haven.

On Monday, another small miner Cora Gold listed on London's AIM to raise cash to fund its mining project in Mali.

Altus Strategies listed in August to raise funds for its vocation as an African-focused project generator, which aspires to sell on its assets once they are established or find venture partners to develop them.

It has projects in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Morocco and Liberia, covering a range of commodities, in addition to its anticipated purchases in Mali.

Poulton said until now Altus had been "underweight gold" and was still in acquisition mode.

"We're restless in the sense we want to create value. Once this transaction is done, we will have grown the business, but we are constantly on the look out for accretive opportunities," he said.

Michael Winn, CEO of Legend who will join the Altus board as a non-executive director, said in a statement the deal would be "positive and transformative" for Legend shareholders.

(\$1 = 0.7583 pounds)

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