



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 26, 2019

U.S. Getting Back Into Rare Earth Processing to Break China's Monopoly

As far back as 2011, [The New American reported](#) that U.S. environmental laws and regulations had closed down mining operations for “rare earth elements” (REE) in this country, making us almost completely dependent on the communist government of China, which then produced 97 percent of the world’s supply of these important minerals.



The 17 rare-earth elements are not particularly rare, but they are important to technological production, including technology used for military applications.

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Thanks to directives issued by the Trump administration, the United States is getting back into the REE production business. A press release issued by the Department of the Interior on November 18 stated: “Under Executive Order 13817 signed by President Trump, ‘critical minerals’ are non-fuel mineral or mineral materials that are essential to the economic and national security of the United States, that have a supply chain vulnerable to disruption, and that serve an essential function in the manufacturing of a product, the absence of which would have significant consequences for the economy or national security.”

That same day, The United States and Australia formalized their cooperation in the field of critical minerals — agreeing to collaborate on research and to increase critical mineral capacity for both countries.

“We are working with our close international partners and allies to carry out President Trump’s blueprint to position the United States as a leader in the critical minerals sector and ensure economic prosperity,” said Secretary of the Interior, David Bernhardt. “This is an important milestone in reducing the Nation’s susceptibility to critical mineral supply disruptions.”

A Reuters report on December 22 noted that an American company, USA Rare Earth, had signed an agreement with an Australian rare earths miner, Arafura Resources Ltd., to process Arafura’s high purity mixed middle-heavy rare earths in the United States.

Another report from PRNewswire stated that USA Rare Earth LLC, the funding and development partner of the Round Top Heavy Rare Earth and Critical Minerals Project with Texas Mineral Resources Corp., had announced the opening of a pilot plant facility in Wheat Ridge, Colorado.

Graphic: Rawf8/iStock/Getty Images Plus

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at



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