Critical Minerals Report (06.07.2026): The Next Phase of the Critical Minerals Economy

written by Tracy Hughes | June 7, 2026

Two weeks rarely change the trajectory of an industry. Yet the past fortnight may ultimately be remembered as the period when the critical minerals sector stopped behaving like a commodity business and started behaving like a competition between industrial systems.

Across Washington, Beijing, New Delhi, Canberra, Paris, Brasília, Seoul and Harare, governments and corporations made decisions that collectively point toward a single conclusion: the race is no longer about who owns the minerals. It is about who controls the processing plants, the metallurgical expertise, the intellectual property, the magnet factories, the financing mechanisms and, ultimately, the industrial ecosystems that transform minerals into economic and geopolitical power.

No country understands this distinction better than China.

The most significant development of the past two weeks received surprisingly little attention outside specialist circles. Beijing selected China Mineral Resources Group Co., Ltd. (“CMRG”) to help coordinate overseas mining acquisitions and strategic resource investments. On the surface, the announcement appeared bureaucratic. In reality, it may prove to be one of the most consequential critical minerals developments of 2026 (Source).

Established in 2022 to centralize China's purchasing power in global iron ore markets, CMRG now appears poised to play a broader role across strategic mineral supply chains. Historically, Chinese mining companies, provincial entities and state-owned enterprises often competed against one another for overseas assets. By placing greater coordination authority within a centrally directed vehicle, Beijing appears to be pursuing a more disciplined approach to securing critical mineral resources abroad.

We should not dismiss this as bureaucratic housekeeping.

The Western model remains largely project-by-project. Individual companies raise capital, acquire assets, build mines and negotiate supply agreements. China increasingly appears to be operating under a different model altogether. By empowering a state-directed entity to help coordinate overseas mineral acquisitions, Beijing is aligning resource security with industrial policy. This is not merely about buying more mines. It is about reducing internal competition among Chinese buyers, improving access to strategic assets, securing feedstock for domestic processors and ensuring that downstream manufacturers—from electric vehicle producers to defense contractors—have access to the materials they require.

In practical terms, China is behaving less like a commodity consumer and more like a portfolio manager overseeing a global inventory of strategic resources.

As Critical Minerals Institute Co-Chair Jack Lifton observed this week, "China worked out what it takes to become a world-class manufacturing nation and then built the systems necessary to maintain that position indefinitely."

The observation helps explain why Beijing's advantage today appears increasingly institutional rather than geological.

Strategic reserves, overseas acquisitions, educational programs, processing infrastructure and downstream manufacturing capacity are increasingly being managed as components of a coordinated industrial system rather than as isolated commercial opportunities.

That reality framed nearly every major critical minerals headline of the week.

The United States continues to focus heavily on building domestic supply chains, yet the contrast between two announcements involving USA Rare Earth, Inc. (NASDAQ: USAR) highlights both the opportunities and the challenges facing Western industrial policy.

The company's decision to invest approximately US$204 million into France's Carester project may ultimately prove more strategically significant than its headline-grabbing announcement of a proposed US$1.2 billion magnet manufacturing complex in South Carolina (Source).

The French investment builds upon existing rare earth separation expertise, technical capabilities and industrial infrastructure. The South Carolina project seeks to create an integrated rare earth manufacturing ecosystem largely from scratch (Source).

Both initiatives are important. One, however, builds upon an existing industrial base while the other must first create one.

This distinction matters because rare earth supply chains are not built with capital alone. Investors evaluating rare earth projects increasingly need to ask difficult questions. Where will the separated oxides originate? Who will produce the metals and alloys? Where will the trained workforce come from? Which customers will absorb production? Capital expenditure announcements alone do not answer these questions.

The challenge confronting the United States is not a shortage of deposits. It is a shortage of industrial infrastructure.

This is where much of the public discussion surrounding critical minerals continues to miss the mark.

The most important misconception in Western policy circles remains the belief that critical minerals are primarily a mining problem.

They are not.

China solved the mining problem years ago.

What Beijing built instead was a processing problem for everyone else.

International Energy Agency data indicate that China controls between approximately 47% and 87% of global refining capacity across many critical mineral supply chains. More importantly, China is estimated to control approximately 94% of global rare earth magnet manufacturing capacity.

While investors continue focusing on mine announcements, the real strategic bottlenecks remain separation, metallization, alloy production, magnet manufacturing and recycling.

A tonne of rare earth concentrate is economically interesting.

A tonne of finished magnets is strategically significant.

This is the point that continues to escape much of the public discussion. Critical minerals are often presented as a mining challenge. Increasingly, they are a processing challenge. The strategic bottlenecks are no longer located primarily in the ground. They are found between the mine and the factory.

That distinction was reinforced by the Department of Energy’s

recent US$67 million award to Colorado School of Mines and ElementUSA for the construction of a rare earth processing facility in Louisiana (Source). Notably, the funding was not directed toward opening another mine. It was directed toward processing. The facility is designed to recover rare earth elements from alumina tailings, separate rare earth oxides and refine them into rare earth metals—precisely the type of midstream capability Western supply chains have long lacked. Policymakers increasingly appear to recognize that processing, not mining, represents the true strategic bottleneck.

The same lesson appears throughout the critical minerals market.

One of the week's most discussed stories involved reports that Chinese buyers have been aggressively purchasing tungsten scrap in the United States, in some cases paying substantial premiums to secure material (Source).

In reality, the more important story may be that Chinese buyers understood the strategic value of scrap decades ago.

Industry veterans have watched Chinese buyers dominate technology-metal scrap markets for more than twenty years. American scrap dealers often favor Chinese buyers because they consistently pay the highest prices and offer the most reliable market.

The real question is not why China is buying tungsten scrap.

The real question is why the United States continues exporting strategic scrap streams that could otherwise contribute to domestic supply security.

Every tonne of tungsten scrap exported represents a tonne of already-mined tungsten removed from future North American supply.

To Beijing, scrap is not waste.

It is inventory.

China increasingly treats scrap as strategic feedstock. The West largely continues to treat it as a by-product of industrial activity. That difference in mindset may ultimately prove as important as any mine currently under development.

In effect, China is competing not only for future mine production, but also for the secondary resource stream already embedded within Western economies.

The broader geopolitical backdrop only reinforces the point.

The same convergence is increasingly visible in technology policy.

The United States has moved to further restrict advanced artificial intelligence chip shipments to Chinese-linked entities operating outside mainland China. China, meanwhile, continues strengthening export controls on critical minerals while tightening oversight of technology transfers and overseas investment.

What began as separate disputes over semiconductors, batteries, rare earths and advanced manufacturing is increasingly merging into a single contest over industrial capacity.

The technology war and the critical minerals war are becoming one and the same.

Artificial intelligence data centers require copper. Semiconductor manufacturing requires gallium and germanium. Defense systems require rare earth magnets, tungsten and antimony. Nuclear power expansion requires uranium. Every major strategic technology ultimately rests upon a foundation of

mineral supply chains.

Increasingly, access to critical minerals is becoming a matter of strategic cooperation among allied nations.

The United States and India signed a Strategic Critical Minerals Cooperation Framework focused on securing supply through mining, processing and recycling. At the same time, the Quad nations advanced new cooperation initiatives involving critical minerals, energy security and infrastructure development (Source).

Defense Metals Corp. (TSXV: DEFN | OTCQB: DFMTF) signed a memorandum of understanding with Hanwha Corporation and Hanwha Ocean regarding future rare earth supply from the Wicheeda Project in British Columbia. The agreement reflects a broader trend in which downstream manufacturers increasingly seek direct relationships with upstream mineral suppliers in trusted jurisdictions (Source).

What would once have been viewed as trade policy is increasingly national security policy.

At the same time, resource-rich nations continue moving to capture greater value from their mineral endowments.

Zimbabwe expanded its critical minerals framework while introducing state participation requirements. Similar trends are emerging throughout Africa and Latin America as governments seek ownership positions, local processing and domestic industrial development.

Viridis Mining and Minerals Limited (ASX: VMM) indicated that future rare earth production from Brazil is expected to target American and European customers rather than China. Only a decade ago, such a statement would have been commercially unusual.

Today, it reflects a broader geopolitical realignment of global supply chains (Source).

Yet perhaps the most revealing story of the week did not involve a mine, a processing plant or a government subsidy.

It involved a university.

Reuters reported that China has developed a specialized rare earth education ecosystem that includes dedicated degree programs, technical colleges, research institutes and industry partnerships designed to train the next generation of engineers, metallurgists and processing specialists. More than 40 specialized rare earth laboratories and at least 11 universities now contribute to this talent pipeline (Source).

While Western governments continue announcing billions of dollars of support for projects that may take years to reach production, Beijing is investing in the human capital that will operate those projects for decades.

The contrast is striking.

One side is financing facilities.

The other is financing expertise.

Industrial leadership has rarely been determined by access to resources alone. It has more often been determined by the ability to cultivate and retain expertise.

The price action reported this week by Critical Minerals Platform offers an interesting lens through which to view these developments. NdPr oxide recovered from US$88.93/kg in May to US$91.90/kg in June while physical supply risk remains rated Critical. Iridium continued its steady ascent from US$6,617 per troy ounce in April to US$6,884 in June, with supply risk rated

High.

What stands out is not the increase.

It is the restraint.

Despite export controls, supply-chain realignment, defense procurement initiatives, geopolitical tensions and increasingly interventionist industrial policies, critical mineral prices remain relatively subdued. Markets appear to be pricing future scarcity rather than immediate shortages.

That may prove to be one of the most important signals of all.

Governments are moving faster than markets.

Investors are moving faster than manufacturers.

Policymakers are preparing for shortages that industrial consumers have not yet fully experienced.

What emerged over the past two weeks was not evidence that China is losing its position within critical minerals. Rather, it was evidence that the rest of the world has finally accepted the scale of the challenge.

From Washington’s billion-dollar financing packages to India’s strategic partnerships, from France’s processing ambitions to South Korea’s pursuit of secure rare earth supply, governments are beginning to build the institutions required to compete.

Yet the uncomfortable reality remains that China spent more than three decades constructing the industrial architecture that we are now attempting to replicate in only a few years.

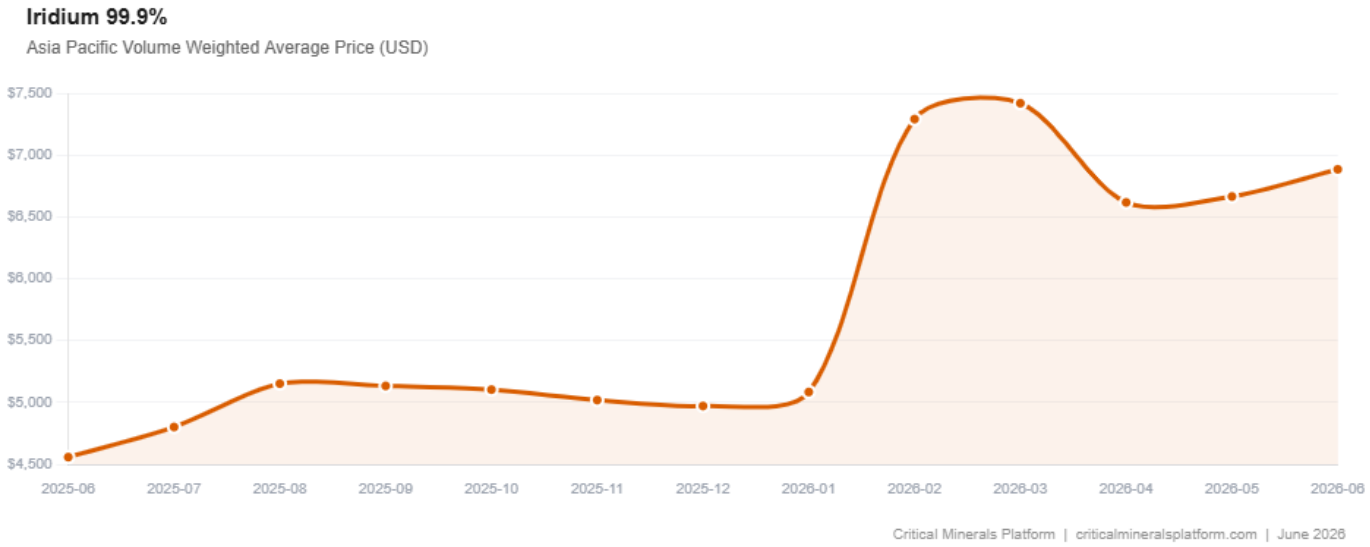
Investors should pay close attention to that distinction.

The next phase of the critical minerals economy will not be won

by the jurisdictions with the largest deposits. It will be won by those capable of converting geology into industrial capability faster than their competitors.

Increasingly, that is no longer a mining story.

It may prove to be the defining industrial story of the twenty-first century.



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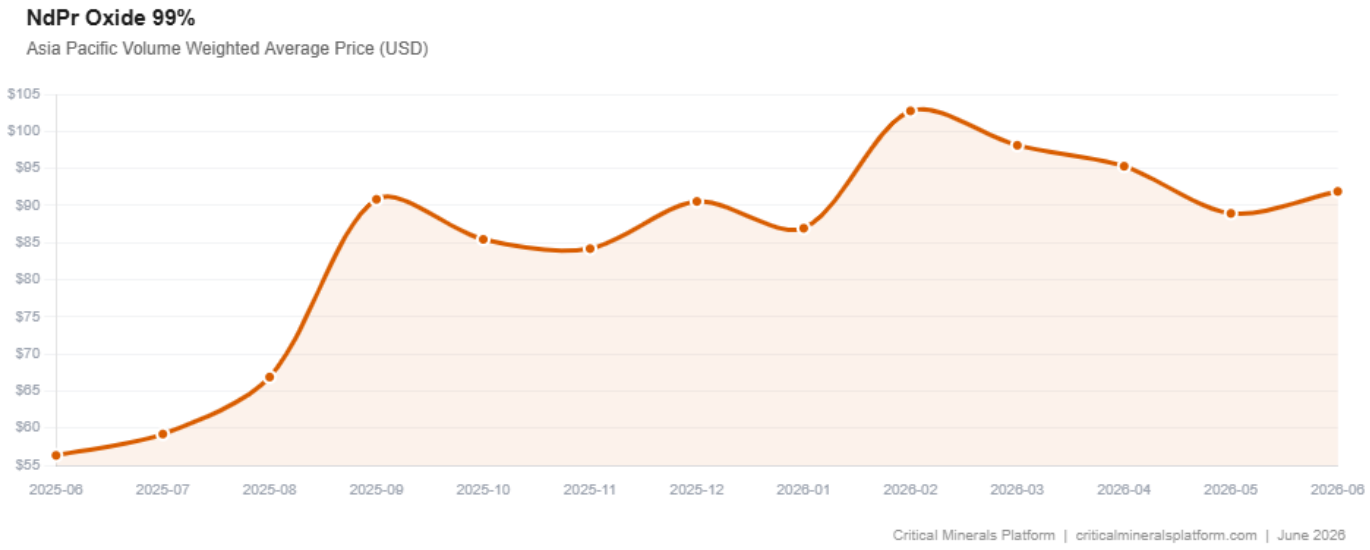

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InvestorNews Critical Minerals Institute (CMI) Directorial Headline Picks for the Past Week:

- June 04, 2026 – China's Rare Earth Playbook: Status-Quo Stability, Crisis-Driven Leverage, and the Global Race to Respond (Source)
- June 03, 2026 – China Picks State Firm to Help Coordinate Mining Deals Abroad (Source)
- June 03, 2026 – The Strategic Value of USA Rare Earth Investing in France's Carester (Source)
- June 03, 2026 – US nuclear fuel enricher scales up to offset Russia uranium ban (Source)
- June 02, 2026 – Colorado School of Mines and ElementUSA awarded $67M by DOE for construction of rare earth processing plant (Source)
- June 02, 2026 – The China-US tech truce is fragile (Source)
- June 02, 2026 – China's hunt for US tungsten escalates global critical minerals race (Source)
- Jun 02, 2026 – USA Rare Earth Selects Cherokee County, South Carolina for New Rare Earth Metal and Magnet Manufacturing Operation (Source)
- June 1, 2026 – Rebuilding the American Rare Earth Industrial Base (Source)
- May 31, 2026 – U.S. takes step to halt Nvidia AI chip shipments to Chinese firms outside China (Source)
- May 31, 2026 – A bachelor's in rare earths? In China, there are schools for that (Source)
- May 29, 2026 – China Steps Up Enforcement of Critical Mineral Export Controls (Source)
- May 28, 2026 – Brazil rare earths miner Viridis to sell to US, European buyers, not China, CEO says (Source)

- May 28, 2026 – REalloys Announces MOU with Ramaco Resources to Advance Rare Earth Production from U.S. Coal-Hosted Resources (Source)
- May 28, 2026 – Zimbabwe lists 14 minerals, including lithium and nickel, as critical minerals and mandates state equity participation. (Source)
- May 27, 2026 – US-backed rare earth rivals clash over alleged technology theft (Source)
- May 27, 2026 – Defense Metals and Hanwha Corporation Sign Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding To Advance Domestic Rare Earth Supply Chain (Source)
- May 27, 2026 – Defence-driven demand powers surge in US listings by mining firms (Source)
- May 26, 2026 – United States and India Sign Strategic Critical Minerals Cooperation Framework (Source)
- May 25, 2026 – Australia punts on pushing China out of rare-earths projects (Source)
- May 25, 2026 – Australia-India-Japan-US Quad to build a port, unveil pact on critical minerals (Source)
- May 25, 2026 – Myanmar military steps up fight for rare earth area and border routes (Source)

InvestorNews.com Media Updates:

- June 05, 2026 – The Rare Earth Permanent Magnet Industry Will Be Built by Evolution, Not Revolution https://bit.ly/43dowDY
- June 04, 2026 – China's Rare Earth Playbook: Status-Quo Stability, Crisis-Driven Leverage, and the Global Race to Respond https://bit.ly/3QhDmGy
- June 03, 2026 – Jack-in-the-Stox: Defense Metals' Wicheeda deposit emerges as Canada's Most Technically Advanced Rare Earths Project https://bit.ly/3PSBxQj
- June 03, 2026 – The Strategic Value of USA Rare Earth

Investing in France's Carester https://bit.ly/4dVP9nb

- June 01, 2026 – Rebuilding the American Rare Earth Industrial Base https://bit.ly/4uSLvQP
- May 31, 2026 – MP Materials and USA Rare Earth Clash in Texas Trade Secrets Lawsuit as Race for U.S. Rare Earth Magnet Supply Chain Intensifies https://bit.ly/4vqC9Md
- May 29, 2026 – The Critical Minerals Platform (CMP) Report: The Chokepoints Nobody Sees Until They Matter https://bit.ly/4wYV1mP
- May 27, 2026 – Jack-in-the-Stox: Why Energy Fuels' ASM Acquisition Matters Beyond Rare Earths https://bit.ly/4vhje6s
- May 26, 2026 – China's Mine-to-Magnet Architecture and Global Strategic Leverage https://bit.ly/43Cg6WF
- May 25, 2026 – The Chemistry of Reality and the Rise of Rare Earth Wish Factories https://bit.ly/3PkjqTa

InvestorNews (YouTube) Interview Updates:

- June 05, 2026 – Tom Drivas on Why Appia Rare Earths Has Positioned Itself Across Three of the World's Most Strategic Rare Earths and Uranium Jurisdictions https://youtu.be/WCRQ3Li7qe8
- June 05, 2026 – Christopher Berlet on Stakeholder's Gold and Copper Drill Program in Yukon's White Gold District https://youtu.be/m3bdMMovor4
- June 04, 2026 – West High Yield's Barry Baim on Bringing Magnesium Production Back to North America https://youtu.be/-4ARGVtMda0
- June 03, 2026 – American Rare Earths' Mark Wall on Wyoming's Halleck Creek, America's Largest Rare Earths Deposit https://youtu.be/xaTw6X6TKns
- June 03, 2026 – Scandium's Supply Problem May Finally Be Getting Solved https://youtu.be/pxen5Se_LnY

- June 03, 2026 – Resolution Minerals' Craig Lindsay on the Three-Legged Stool of Antimony, Tungsten and Gold https://youtu.be/G1e563N6Ge0
- June 02, 2026 – Voyageur's Brent Willis on the Critical Minerals Behind Modern Healthcare https://youtu.be/de40iuYnBSI

InvestorNews.com News Release Updates:

- June 4, 2026 – Greenland Mines Completes Site Visit to Sarfartoq Nd-Pr Rare Earth Magnet Project in Greenland; Prepares 2026 Field Program https://bit.ly/4vrXkNJ
- June 4, 2026 – Homerun Resources Inc. Delivery of First Order of High-Purity Industrial Silica Sand from Santa Maria Eterna Under Distribution Agreement with Cristal Sand Group https://bit.ly/49EbgvE
- June 4, 2026 – Appia Mobilizes for 3,300-Meter Summer Drill Program at the Alces Lake Rare Earth Elements Property https://bit.ly/4freiXW
- June 4, 2026 – Antimony Resources Corp. (ATMY) (ATMYF) (K8J0) New Brunswick Minister of Natural Resources Visits Bald Hill Antimony Project https://bit.ly/4o6ZqQF
- June 2, 2026 – Nord Precious Metals Extends Castle East High-Grade Silver Robinson Zone With An Intersection of 6.65m Returning 2,848 g/t Ag Including 61,389 g/t (1,790.8 oz/ton) Silver Over 0.30 Metres https://bit.ly/4e0jiAq
- June 2, 2026 – Stakeholder Provides Ballarat Exploration Update https://bit.ly/3QjMLgN
- June 2, 2026 – Greenland Mines Appoints WSP Denmark to Continue Environmental Baseline Work at the Sarfartoq Rare Earth Project https://bit.ly/49Uo5Cn
- June 2, 2026 – American Tungsten Reports Results from Historical Tailings Drill Program https://bit.ly/4fEchI7
- June 2, 2026 – Resouro Strategic Metals Inc. (ASX:RAU)

Executes Binding Mining and Processing Agreement for Novo Mundo https://bit.ly/3RHdowC

- June 1, 2026 – Scandium Canada Signs NDA with University of Waterloo's MSAM Laboratory to Explore Additive Manufacturing of Aluminum-Scandium Alloys https://bit.ly/4oaC2ll
- June 1, 2026 – Deep Sea Minerals Corp. Achieves Substantial Compliance Determination from NOAA Under DSHMRA for Seabed Mineral Concessions https://bit.ly/4nZktET
- June 1, 2026 – Ucore Advances NRCan CMRDD Program and Hosts Ottawa Dignitaries https://bit.ly/433gQnI
- June 1, 2026 – Appia Announces Closing of Share Exchange with Ultra Rare Earth Inc. https://bit.ly/4fSVmkV
- June 1, 2026 – Volta Delivers Positive Initial Metallurgical Results at Springer https://bit.ly/4anKk3x
- June 1, 2026 – DMG Blockchain Solutions Inc. Announces 50-Megawatt AI Data Center Letter of Intent https://bit.ly/4o3YDjx
- May 29, 2026 – Power Metallic Mines Announces Upsize of Brokered LIFE Offering for Gross Proceeds of up to C$30 Million https://bit.ly/3Q5spI5
- May 29, 2026 – Deep Sea Minerals Corp. Announces Application to List on the Nasdaq Capital Market https://bit.ly/4uCZvxQ
- May 29, 2026 – Oreterra Receives Conditional Approval to Sell Option to Buy Down Newmont Lake Royalty to Enduro Metals https://bit.ly/42ZxzbB
- May 28, 2026 – Voyageur Announces Filing Of Amended And Restated Offering Document https://bit.ly/433Ckkg
- May 28, 2026 – Power Metallic Mines Announces Brokered LIFE Offering for Gross Proceeds of up to C$25 Million https://bit.ly/4dPuyQ5
- May 28, 2026 – Quantum Reports Zinc at Prophecy Property

in Northern B.C. https://bit.ly/4uE0oq7

- May 28, 2026 – Ucore Engineering Report Drives Optimized Commercial Deployment Plan for Louisiana Strategic Metals Complex https://bit.ly/42Wg0ZX
- May 28, 2026 – Neo Performance Materials Announces Completion of C$115 Million Bought Deal Treasury Offering of Common Shares https://bit.ly/4uFxKF8
- May 28, 2026 – Homerun Resources Inc. Advances Phase 2 of Its Three-Phase Purification Platform https://bit.ly/3Q7Lj0X
- May 27, 2026 – Critical Minerals Americas Inc. Announces Updated NI 43-101 Technical Report for the SBH Project, Alberta, which Highlights Historical Metallurgical Recoveries and Historical Mineral Resource Estimates https://bit.ly/4ubMeeY
- May 27, 2026 – American Rare Earths Commences 2026 Drilling at Halleck Creek to Underpin Feasibility Study https://bit.ly/4dOB7m0
- May 27, 2026 – Power Metallic Mines Expands Exploration Arsenal with Cutting-Edge Geophysical Surveys at Nisk Project https://bit.ly/3RwVsok
- May 27, 2026 – American Tungsten Corp. Announces Listing on the TSX Venture Exchange, Filing of Revised Technical Report and Related Matters https://bit.ly/4dI2NsA
- May 27, 2026 – Defense Metals and Hanwha Corporation Sign Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding To Advance Domestic Rare Earth Supply Chain https://bit.ly/4tWWIys
- May 26, 2026 – Quantum Critical Metals Initiates Rubidium Recovery Program to Advance North American Critical Minerals Supply https://bit.ly/4nR0mbS
- May 26, 2026 – Lion Delivers High-Grade Copper Intercepts and Positive Metallurgy on Low-Low Grade Mineralization https://bit.ly/4wMdwLr
- May 26, 2026 – American Tungsten Ramps-up Exploration

Operations; Initiates 35,000 ft Surface and Underground Drilling Program at Ima Mine https://bit.ly/4dyPUlW

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