

Technology Metals Report (03.14.2025): Trump Plans to Appoint a Critical Minerals “Czar” as China Deepens Hold of Africa’s Mineral Wealth

written by Tracy Hughes | March 14, 2025

This week in the Technology Metals Report, covering Sunday, March 9th through today, March 14th, 2025, the top stories in the critical minerals sector, as selected by the [Critical Minerals Institute](#) (CMI), include the U.S. [rejecting](#) Australia’s offer of guaranteed critical minerals access in exchange for tariff exemptions on steel and aluminum, though Australian negotiations continue; the resumption of critical minerals exploration [collaboration](#) between Brazil and the U.S., focusing on rare earths, lithium, and tin, aimed at reducing dependency on China; and Ukraine’s efforts to attract U.S. investment with a proposed graphite-focused critical minerals [deal](#) offering 50% profit-sharing, intended to strengthen ties amidst geopolitical tensions.

China continues to [dominate](#) the critical minerals race, particularly in Africa, significantly outpacing the U.S. by investing over \$10 billion in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Botswana, and Zimbabwe, to secure critical mineral supplies essential for renewable energy and high-tech manufacturing. The U.S. struggles to keep pace, exemplified by Syrah Resources Limited (ASX: SYR), whose Mozambique graphite mine faced market pressures and operational disruptions due to Chinese competition, policy inconsistencies,

and local protests. In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) notably downgraded Vietnam's rare earth reserves from 22 million to 3.5 million metric tons, significantly altering its global ranking, though Vietnam continues to strengthen its trade relationship with the U.S.

The Trump administration is pushing forward initiatives to boost domestic critical minerals production, including plans for Pentagon-managed refining [facilities](#) on military bases and appointing a critical minerals "czar." Concurrently, Freeport-McMoRan Inc. (NYSE: FCX) anticipates the potential designation of copper as a critical mineral, seeking significant tax credits to enhance production, as Goldman Sachs forecasts substantial increases in U.S. copper imports ahead of potential tariffs. Revex Technologies Inc. secured a substantial \$145 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to produce nickel and other critical minerals sustainably in northern Michigan, reinforcing U.S. efforts towards securing critical mineral independence.

Geopolitical instability continues to affect critical minerals supply chains, as demonstrated by the M23 rebel group's significant revenue from coltan mining in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, [amounting](#) to \$800,000 monthly. While the U.S. expresses openness toward new partnerships with the DRC, particularly in minerals-for-security deals, the challenges of instability and existing Chinese dominance remain significant. Uzbekistan also announced a \$2.6-billion initiative targeting strategic minerals like lithium and vanadium, presenting further opportunities for U.S. collaboration. Additionally, leading technology firms including Amazon, Google, Meta, and Dow publicly endorsed tripling global nuclear capacity by 2050 to address future energy demands sustainably, aligning industry interests with broader international energy security goals.

CMI Critical Minerals Institute							
Purity			13.Mar.25	Month % Change	28.Feb.25	Year to Date % Change	Year End 31.Dec.24
99.65% fob China	ALUMINUM (Al)	\$ USD/ lb.	\$1.23	2.9%	\$1.19	6.0%	\$1.16
	ANTIMONY (Sb)	\$ USD/ tn	\$42,177	9.5%	\$38,518	16.5%	\$36,190
	COBALT (Co)	\$ USD/ lb.	\$15.91	36.6%	\$11.65	42.2%	\$11.19
>99.99%	COPPER (Cu)	\$ USD/ lb.	\$7.45	75.0%	\$4.26	89.8%	\$3.92
	GALLIUM (Ga)	\$ USD/ lb.	\$134.2	0.0%	\$134.2	0.0%	\$134.2
	GOLD (Au)	\$ USD/ oz.	\$2,983.3	4.7%	\$2,848.2	13.7%	\$2,624.6
	NATURAL GRAPHITE North America (C)	\$ USD/ lb.	\$0.57	0.0%	\$0.57	0.0%	\$0.57
>99%	LITHIUM METAL (Li)	\$ USD/ lb.	\$4.90	0.4%	\$4.89	-0.7%	\$4.94
>99%	PRAESODYMIUM (Pr)	\$ USD/ kg.	\$87.52	0.5%	\$87.09	10.8%	\$78.98
>99.5%	NEODYMIUM (Nd)	\$ USD/ kg.	\$81.30	0.0%	\$81.30	13.1%	\$71.90
	NICKEL (Ni)	\$ USD/ lb.	\$1.33	-81.2%	\$7.10	-80.5%	\$6.85
0.999	NIوبيUM PENTOXIDE (Nb ₂ O ₅)	\$ USD/ kg.	\$45.00	0.0%	\$45.00	0.0%	\$45.00
	PLATINUM (Pt)	\$ USD/ oz.	\$964.60	4.9%	\$919.71	6.4%	\$906.76
	SILVER (Ag)	\$ USD/ oz.	\$33.78	8.8%	\$31.06	16.9%	\$28.89

The critical minerals pricing chart is supplied by the CMI Partners – MineralPrices.com

The Technology Metals Report (TMR) is a weekly compilation of the top stories selected by the Critical Minerals Institute (CMI) Board of Directors. For access to this board, [click here](#), or to become a Critical Minerals Institute (CMI) Member and have the TMR emailed to you weekly, [click here](#)

US rejected Australia's critical minerals offer, but Labor to persist (March 13, 2025, [Source](#)) The Trump administration rejected Australia's offer of guaranteed access to critical minerals in exchange for tariff exemptions on steel and aluminum exports. Despite this, the Australian government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, continues to use these resources as leverage in ongoing negotiations to prevent further tariffs on products like meat and pharmaceuticals. Foreign Minister Penny Wong confirmed the proposal involved secure supply arrangements for the U.S. The Australian government remains committed to strengthening supply chains and attracting U.S. investment in critical minerals, maintaining it as a key negotiation point.

U.S. agency slashes its estimate of Vietnam's rare earth reserves in major revision (March 12, 2025, [Source](#)) The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) drastically reduced its estimate of Vietnam's rare earth reserves from 22 million to 3.5 million

metric tons, dropping the country's global ranking from second to sixth behind China, Brazil, India, Australia, and Russia. This revision, based on new government information, could impact Vietnam's technological ambitions. Despite highlighting its rare earth potential, Vietnam's actual production remains limited, with only 300 tons extracted last year. Meanwhile, Vietnam continues strengthening ties with the U.S., expecting to sign new agreements on trade and critical minerals during Trade Minister Nguyen Hong Dien's upcoming visit.

Rebel group M23 hits mining jackpot in DRC, generating \$800 000 per month (March 12, 2025, [Source](#)) The M23 rebel group has gained control of significant territories in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, including the region's largest coltan mine in North Kivu province. Since their resurgence in 2021, the group has established its own administrative structures in these areas, imposing high taxes on natural resources and trade. With the Rubaya mine as a focal point, M23 generates approximately \$800,000 monthly from coltan mining. They also tax each truck traveling to Rwanda and have initiated recruitment efforts to strengthen their forces. The region remains economically dependent on both imports from and exports to Rwanda. Despite M23 providing some security improvements, they have also enforced unpaid community service, sparking mixed reactions among the locals.

China still leads the pack in Africa's critical minerals race as US struggles to keep up (March 12, 2025, [Source](#)) China has effectively capitalized on its early investments in Africa's critical minerals sector, significantly outpacing the United States in the race for resources essential for high-tech and renewable energy industries. From the Democratic Republic of Congo to Botswana and Zimbabwe, Chinese companies have committed over \$10 billion since 2023 in acquiring mines and processing facilities. This strategic positioning, aimed at securing a

steady supply chain and enhancing its manufacturing capabilities, particularly in electric vehicles and solar panels, has heightened geopolitical and economic competition, particularly as the U.S. attempts to formulate a coherent strategy to counter China's dominance.

Amazon, Google, Meta and Dow back goal to triple nuclear capacity (March 12, 2025, [Source](#)) At CERAWeek 2025 in Houston, Texas, major technology companies and energy users, including Amazon, Google, Meta, and Dow, endorsed a pledge to support the tripling of global nuclear capacity by 2050. This commitment, dubbed the Large Energy Users Pledge, aligns with earlier commitments from countries, nuclear industry players, and global financial institutions. The pledge acknowledges the anticipated increase in energy demand across various industries due to economic growth, emphasizing nuclear energy's role in providing reliable, clean power irrespective of environmental conditions. The signatories advocate for equitable financing for nuclear projects to facilitate global deployment and urge other large energy consumers to join the initiative.

Brazil, U.S. reignite critical mineral exploration efforts (March 11, 2025, [Source](#)) Brazil and the U.S. are resuming joint efforts to explore critical minerals like rare earths, lithium, tin, and cassiterite within Brazil, across three specified regions. This collaboration, reinitiated at the PDAC 2025 in Toronto, continues under a previously signed agreement, despite a temporary suspension by the Trump administration which was later overturned by a U.S. Supreme Court decision. The project includes fieldwork, sample analysis, and training initiatives, with a focus on scientific cooperation and future large-scale projects. The partnership emphasizes reducing U.S. reliance on foreign critical minerals, particularly from China, enhancing strategic resource security.

Why the U.S. Keeps Losing to China in the Battle Over Critical Minerals (March 11, 2025, [Source](#)) Syrah Resources Limited (ASX: SYR), an Australian mining firm, launched a graphite mine in Mozambique and a processing plant in Louisiana with the aim of reducing U.S. reliance on China, which dominates the global supply of critical battery-grade graphite. Despite significant U.S. government support and a deal with Tesla, Syrah struggled when China increased graphite production, flooding the market and reducing prices. Additionally, U.S. policy delays and rule changes undermined Syrah's efforts by allowing continued imports of cheaper Chinese graphite. Local protests in Mozambique further disrupted operations. These challenges reflect broader issues faced by Western mining companies, such as policy inconsistencies, competitive disadvantages in high-risk regions, and the difficulty in competing with China's price control and rapid production capabilities.

Goldman Sachs anticipates surge in US copper net imports (March 11, 2025, [Source](#)) Goldman Sachs predicts a significant increase in U.S. net copper imports, ranging from 50% to 100%, in response to anticipated higher domestic prices and before potential tariffs from the Trump administration. Currently, May 2025 U.S. copper prices are \$756 per metric ton higher than the London Metal Exchange (LME) global benchmark. Although no specific tariffs have been proposed yet, Goldman Sachs expects a 25% duty on copper imports by the end of the year. This anticipation is likely to cause a surge in imports and a boost in U.S. copper inventories from 95,000 tons to 300,000-400,000 tons by the end of Q3, representing up to 60% of global inventories. Additionally, a global copper deficit of 180,000 tons is forecasted for 2025 due to increased demand and slow mine supply growth.

USGS projects world production capacity for 7 critical minerals and helium from 2025 to 2029 (March 11, 2025, [Source](#)) The USGS

has released the first World Minerals Outlook, forecasting global production capacity for seven critical minerals and helium from 2025 to 2029. The report highlights a projected doubling in the production capacity for lithium and cobalt, crucial for battery technology, while expecting stable production for gallium, palladium, platinum, and helium. This outlook is part of a broader initiative under the Energy Act of 2020 to analyze production, consumption, and recycling trends for critical minerals. The methodology includes analyzing new and ending projects, accounting for idled capacities, and using conservative estimates when data is sparse. The outlook aims to guide U.S. policy and industry responses to supply chain vulnerabilities and market demands.

Why Ukraine hopes Trump minerals deal will win back US support (March 11, 2025, [Source](#)) Senior Ukrainian and US officials are meeting in Saudi Arabia to discuss a ceasefire framework for Ukraine, with Kyiv aiming to restore strained relations with Washington. Ukraine seeks US investment through a proposed critical minerals deal, offering 50% profit-sharing to attract American companies. This initiative, centered around Ukraine's graphite reserves, aims to strengthen economic ties and potentially deter future Russian aggression. However, the US, under President Trump, has withheld military assurances, urging Ukrainians to compromise. Kyiv hopes the economic partnership will revitalize industries disrupted by war and secure US political and economic support.

Trump seeks minerals refining on Pentagon bases to boost US output, sources say (March 10, 2025, [Source](#)) President Donald Trump seeks to boost domestic production of critical minerals by ordering the Pentagon to build refining facilities on military bases, sources say. The plan, part of an upcoming executive order, addresses concerns about China's dominance in minerals processing essential for weapons production. Trump also plans to

appoint a critical minerals “czar” and expand the FAST-41 permitting process for mines. The initiative, however, does not involve creating a strategic mineral stockpile, imposing a “Buy American” mandate, or significantly reforming federal mine permitting processes, although minor expansions to expedite permitting are considered.

Uzbekistan launches drive to develop minerals & mining sector
(March 10, 2025, [Source](#)) Uzbekistan recently announced a \$2.6-billion initiative aimed at expanding its mineral and mining sector, potentially offering new opportunities for U.S. companies seeking access to critical minerals. The plan, introduced by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, covers 76 projects involving 28 strategic elements such as tungsten, lithium, titanium, and vanadium. Goals include increased geological prospecting, creation of technology hubs, and domestic manufacturing of high-tech products. U.S. officials previously emphasized collaboration through dialogues and agreements, including a 2024 memorandum of understanding. The initiative aligns with ongoing American interests to diversify rare-earth supplies and reduce dependency on China.

Freeport-McMoRan hopes Trump declares copper a critical mineral
(March 10, 2025, [Source](#)) Freeport-McMoRan Inc. (NYSE: FCX) CEO Kathleen Quirk expressed hope that U.S. President Donald Trump will designate copper as a critical mineral, which would enable significant tax credits under the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act, enhancing American copper production. Trump recently hinted at expanding critical mineral production, although details remain unspecified. Copper, extensively used in various industries, is not currently on the U.S. critical minerals list, which includes 50 other minerals. Designation as a critical mineral would financially benefit Freeport, potentially increasing its tax credits by over \$500 million annually. Additionally, Trump is considering new tariffs on copper imports to bolster U.S.

production.

Revex Technologies Received \$145 Million Contracted Grant Award from The U.S. Department of Energy for the Production of Critical Minerals (March 10, 2025, [Source](#)) Revex Technologies Inc. has been awarded a \$145 million grant by the U.S. Department of Energy to support the REV Nickel Project in northern Michigan, in partnership with Eagle Mine. This funding is part of the U.S. government's efforts under Executive Orders 14156 and 14154 to enhance national energy and critical minerals production. The project aims to produce sustainable nickel concentrate and other critical minerals using innovative processing solutions from waste sources like mine tailings and spent lithium-ion batteries. Additionally, the project will create new clean-tech jobs and engage in community and environmental benefit programs. The first product is expected within 20 months, contributing significantly to the domestic supply of nickel for electric vehicle batteries.

US open to minerals partnerships with Democratic Republic of Congo (March 9, 2025, [Source](#)) The United States is open to forming critical minerals partnerships with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), following outreach from Congolese officials proposing a minerals-for-security deal amid regional instability caused by Rwanda-backed rebels. The DRC, rich in cobalt, lithium, and uranium, seeks diversified partnerships and increased U.S. investment. Informal discussions have begun, though no detailed proposals have been publicly shared. Experts note U.S. private sector involvement would differ significantly from China's current dominance, requiring creative approaches since the U.S. lacks state-owned mining firms and currently has no active mining companies in Congo.

Investor.News Media Highlights

- March 14, 2025 – Where will the metals for the robot revolution come from? <https://bit.ly/4bQlfhe>
- March 12, 2025 – Notes/thoughts from PDAC 2025: Goldbug lives matter, everything else is just a critical mineral <https://bit.ly/4218LjA>

Investor.News Video Highlights

- March 14, 2025 – Mark Chalmers of Energy Fuels Highlights Strategy for U.S. Leadership in the Uranium and Critical Mineral Market https://youtu.be/xir_lBJc9Lo
- March 14, 2025 – Rare Element Resources' Jaye Pickarts on Driving American Rare Earths Independence with Wyoming's Bear Lodge Project and Innovative Proprietary Processing Technology <https://youtu.be/fqSXstmCM54>
- March 14, 2025 – WEALTH (WCPD Inc.) Celebrates Record-Breaking Year in Flow-Through Financings at PDAC 2025 <https://youtu.be/5pJ3nrJe4AA>
- March 13, 2025 – American Rare Earths Positioned to Lead U.S. Critical Minerals Independence with Strong Government Partnerships and Strategic Wyoming Asset <https://youtu.be/jJFJodcNnoY>
- March 13, 2025 – CBLT Inc. CEO Peter Clausi Emphasizes Strategic Deal-Making and High-Grade Gold Potential at PDAC 2025 https://youtu.be/s_399XM9FMU
- March 13, 2025 – Terra Balcanica CEO Aleksandar Mišković on Critical Minerals Exploration “in the Backyard of the European Union” – PDAC 2025 <https://youtu.be/WpMHrl2nJ80>
- March 13, 2025 – Scandium Canada's Guy Bourassa on Global Scandium Resource and Revolutionary Alloys for 3D Printing

<https://youtu.be/3HyEm0Rcmvc>

- March 11, 2025 – Anthony Milewski Urges Investor Focus on Gold Juniors, Critical Minerals, and Highlights Uranium at PDAC 2025 <https://youtu.be/DzGnrY1WwfA>
- March 11, 2025 – PearTree's Ron Bernbaum on Why the Structured Flow Through Tax Model is a Game-Changer for Canadian Critical Minerals https://youtu.be/YZlsYL_WkAA
- March 11, 2025 – CMI Director Alastair Neill Reveals the Top Critical Minerals at PDAC 2025 https://youtu.be/cUBNxKLh_XU
- March 11, 2025 – Nations Royalty's Derrick Pattenden Discusses Canada's Largest Majority Indigenous-Owned Public Mining Royalty Company <https://youtu.be/szWF3kvTxjY>
- March 10, 2025 – Jack Lifton Warns Tariffs Could Devastate Auto Sector, Urges Immediate U.S.-Canada Partnership on Critical Minerals <https://youtu.be/jli3crjHSHo>
- March 10, 2025 – American Rare Earths CEO Chris Gibbs Highlights "Generational Opportunity" for U.S. Rare Earth Independence at PDAC 2025 <https://youtu.be/tS0b5NLU-XU>

Investor.News Member News

- March 12, 2025 – Appia Announces That Stephen Burega is Leaving the Company <https://bit.ly/3Dpd92x>
- March 12, 2025 – Meteoric Resources NL: Mineral Resources Increased to 1.1 Billion Tonnes <https://bit.ly/43L0cZA>
- March 11, 2025 – Coniagas Exploration Plan: Defining New Drill Targets and Optimizing Infill Holes <https://bit.ly/3DGYxLN>
- March 10, 2025 – Appia Announces Exceptional Overlimit Total Rare Earth Oxide (TREO) Results From Its Diamond Drilling Program at PCH Project in Goias, Brazil <https://bit.ly/3Fkbrjt>

The upcoming **CMI Summit IV**, themed *The War for Critical Minerals and Capital Resources*, is scheduled to take place in Toronto, Ontario, on May 13-14, 2025. This event aims to unite industry leaders to tackle pressing issues in the global critical minerals market. To learn more about the **CMI Summit IV**, [click here](#) – or to secure a **CMI Summit IV** 2-day Delegates Pass, [click here](#)

