

Technology Metals Report (05.03.2024): Surge in Copper Exports from China and the US Senate Votes to Ban Uranium Imports

written by Tracy Hughes | May 3, 2024

Welcome to the latest issue of the Technology Metals Report (TMR), brought to you by the [Critical Minerals Institute](#) (CMI). In this edition, we compile the most impactful stories shared by our CMI Director's over the past week, reflecting the dynamic and evolving nature of the critical minerals and technology metals industry. Among the key stories featured in this report are the [significant surge](#) in Chinese copper exports in response to near-record high LME prices, and the U.S. Senate's unanimous [approval to ban](#) Russian uranium imports, a strategic move to disrupt economic aid for the conflict in Ukraine. These stories, presented in chronological order, showcase the ongoing shifts in global trade dynamics and legislative actions that are reshaping our industry.

This week's TMR Report also highlights various developments across the globe, including the U.S. government's consideration of [a levy](#) on Chinese-sourced materials for electric vehicles, advocated by North American graphite miners. The implications of such policies could redefine trade relationships and influence global supply chains in the technology metals sector. Additionally, we cover Australia's tightened controls on [foreign investments](#) in critical minerals, reflecting a broader trend towards securing national interests in the face of growing

geopolitical tensions. Each story underscores the critical role minerals play in our everyday technology and the global economy, as nations navigate the complexities of resource security and economic strategy. To stay updated and become a member of the CMI, click [[here](#)]

Near-record high LME prices a magnet for Chinese copper exports: (May 1, 2024, [Source](#)) – Chinese copper producers are poised to export up to 100,000 metric tons of metal, the highest volume in 12 years, to counter soaring prices, reaching near-record highs. Fueled by speculative trading, London Metal Exchange (LME) prices surged close to their 2022 peak, prompting China's move. Despite logistical challenges, bonded warehouses in Shanghai are expected to facilitate exports. This effort aims to alleviate pressure on domestic markets and stimulate demand by lowering prices. However, the export volume, although significant, represents a fraction of China's annual consumption. Excess inventory and sluggish demand domestically contrast with global market surpluses projected by the International Copper Study Group. The arbitrage between LME and Shanghai Futures Exchange prices incentivizes exports, as Chinese producers explore cost-effective logistics to capitalize on the price differential.

US Senate approves bill to ban Russian uranium imports: (April 30, 2024, [Source](#)) – The U.S. Senate unanimously passed a bill to prohibit Russian uranium imports, aiming to disrupt Russia's support for Ukraine's war. This legislation, following the House's approval in December, targets uranium used in nuclear reactors. The ban, effective 90 days post-enactment, includes waivers for domestic reactor supply concerns and unlocks \$2.7 billion for domestic uranium processing. This move echoes the 2022 ban on Russian oil imports after Ukraine's invasion. With U.S. nuclear plants importing 12% of their uranium from Russia in 2022, Senator John Barrasso advocates Wyoming's uranium potential. The bipartisan bill intends to starve Russia's war

efforts, revitalize American uranium production, and fortify the nuclear fuel supply chain. President Biden is anticipated to endorse the legislation, responding to calls for a secure nuclear fuel supply chain.

Graphite miners lobby US govt to impose levy on China-sourced EV material: (April 30, 2024, [Source](#)) – North American graphite miners advocate for a 25% tariff on three Chinese graphite products to counter China's monopoly on battery materials, supported by the U.S. government's potential decision in May. This move would clash with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and escalate tensions with China. Graphite, critical for electric vehicle batteries, was initially exempt from tariffs due to China's 70% global output share. Miners rely on OEM agreements for capital but fear OEMs opting for cheaper Chinese graphite. OEMs oppose tariffs, citing dependence on China. The United States Trade Representative's silence on the issue is noted. Miners warn of financing difficulties without tariffs. Critical minerals' geopolitical significance grows as nations seek to reduce reliance on China. Japan, the U.S., India, and South Korea are major graphite importers from China. North American Graphite Alliance emphasizes the need for trade protections against China's market control.

How LPO Can Support All Stages of the Critical Minerals Supply Chain: (April 30, 2024, [Source](#)) – The U.S. Department of Energy's Loan Programs Office (LPO) is actively enhancing its role in supporting the critical minerals supply chain, crucial for the nation's clean transportation and energy security future. Enabled by President Biden's Investing in America agenda and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the LPO can now fund mining and extraction activities as part of the Title 17 Clean Energy Financing Program. This initiative aims to reduce dependency on foreign mineral sources, notably China, and mitigate associated economic and security risks. LPO's efforts

include funding projects that advance mineral processing, battery materials recycling, and now explicitly mining and extraction, all while ensuring environmental protection, community respect, and adherence to federal responsibilities. These projects must meet rigorous environmental and community engagement standards, embodying a comprehensive approach to fostering a sustainable and secure clean energy economy.

Australia Cracks Down on Foreign Cash in Critical Minerals: (April 30, 2024, [Source](#)) – Australia is intensifying its scrutiny over foreign investments in the mining and refining of critical minerals, aligning with an overall overhaul of its national investment regime. Announced by Treasurer Jim Chalmers during a speech at the Lowy Institute, the new policy framework aims to ensure that international investments align with Australia's national interests. This revision comes in response to concerns over economic and national security, particularly focusing on sectors like critical infrastructure and technology. Although Chalmers emphasized a non-discriminatory, non-country-specific approach, the backdrop includes heightened control by state-owned enterprises, notably from China. Concurrently, Australia plans to expedite the approval process for trusted investors and low-risk sectors, aiming for a more efficient processing timeline by 2025. These strategic shifts reflect Australia's ongoing efforts to balance economic growth with security imperatives, especially given the critical role of minerals like lithium and rare earths in global supply chains.

Saudi Ma'aden, US fertiliser giant Mosaic enter into share purchase and subscription agreement: (April 30, 2024, [Source](#)) – Saudi Arabian mining company Ma'aden and U.S. fertilizer giant Mosaic have announced a share purchase and subscription agreement where Mosaic will sell its shares in Ma'aden Wa'ad Al Shamal Phosphate Co. (MWSPC) to Ma'aden. This deal will see Ma'aden's share in MWSPC rise to 85% by acquiring Mosaic's 25%

stake in exchange for approximately 111 million new Ma'aden shares. This transaction will also transfer the marketing rights of Mosaic within MWSPC to Ma'aden, boosting its marketed phosphates by over 750,000 tons annually. The arrangement aims to enhance Ma'aden's global distribution and marketing of phosphate fertilizers. Additionally, Ma'aden and Mosaic will continue their partnership post-transaction, which is set to close in Q3 2024, pending approvals. Ma'aden operates across 17 sites and exports to over 30 countries.

Harnessing Sub-Saharan Africa's Critical Mineral Wealth: (April 29, 2024, [Source](#)) – Sub-Saharan Africa, rich in critical minerals like cobalt, nickel, and lithium, is positioned to benefit significantly from the global shift to clean energy. As demand for these minerals is expected to surge dramatically by 2050, the region could see over 10% of the \$16 trillion estimated global revenue from key minerals, potentially boosting its GDP by 12% or more. Despite these prospects, most minerals are exported unprocessed, yielding lower economic returns. By developing local processing industries, the region could increase value addition, generate higher-skilled jobs, and enhance tax revenues. To achieve this, substantial foreign direct investment and regional cooperation are crucial. Policies encouraging regional market formation, investment-friendly environments, and environmental sustainability will be key. Moreover, domestic reforms to support local industries and financial sectors are essential to capitalize fully on this potential.

China's rare-earth miners suffer profit falls as new supply chains rise: (April 29, 2024, [Source](#)) – China's rare-earth industry, crucial for high-tech products, is facing significant challenges. Despite governmental efforts to support this strategic sector, companies like China Rare Earth Resources and Technology are reporting declines in revenue and profits, with

the latter's net profit plummeting by 45.7% in 2023. This downturn is largely due to falling prices driven by global supply chain diversification and a sluggish domestic economy. Competitors, notably the U.S. and Australia, are actively developing independent rare-earth supply chains, diminishing China's dominance in the market. Additionally, the domestic companies are increasing imports of rare-earth minerals due to loosened regulations. Overall, the industry is under pressure from both increased global competition and internal economic challenges, leading to lower prices and profits.

Saudi Arabia set on securing lithium for EV ambitions: (April 28, 2024, [Source](#)) – Saudi Arabia is actively pursuing lithium resources to bolster its electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing ambitions, as articulated by the Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, Bandar Alkhorayef. Recognizing lithium's critical role in battery production, the nation is exploring both domestic avenues, including extraction from seawater and oil field discharges in collaboration with Aramco, and international investments. However, the feasibility of local extraction remains uncertain, with Alkhorayef citing the need for more evidence regarding deposit size and concentration. Meanwhile, the Public Investment Fund and Ma'aden have initiated Manara Minerals to secure mining assets overseas. Additionally, Saudi Arabia is engaging with Chile to explore potential mining investments, highlighting its strategy to diversify its oil-dependent economy under Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's vision.

Indonesia's nickel sector under scrutiny from graft busters amid rapid expansion, big investments: (April 27, 2024, [Source](#)) – Indonesia's nickel industry, the largest global producer and holder of a quarter of the world's nickel reserves, is facing intense scrutiny due to allegations of corruption involving government officials and the rapid expansion of nickel smelters.

The industry, crucial for electric vehicle batteries, has attracted significant investment, with over US\$30 billion expected by 2026. However, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) is actively investigating cases, including that of former North Maluku governor Abdul Ghani Kasuba, accused of accepting bribes for mining permits. This corruption has caused revenue losses, environmental destruction, and disputes, threatening local livelihoods. Transparency and tighter governance are being urged to tackle these issues effectively.

Production of minerals for clean energy is insufficient, UN report shows: (April 27, 2024, [Source](#)) – A UN report highlighted the insufficient production of key minerals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel—essential for clean energy technologies—to meet global climate goals. The study by the UN Conference on Trade and Development forecasts a rise in demand for lithium by over 1,500% by 2050, along with significant increases for other minerals. These minerals are crucial for manufacturing solar panels, wind turbines, and electric car batteries. Current investments lag behind the surging demand, with production levels inadequate to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius as per the Paris Agreement. To achieve net-zero emissions by 2030, substantial mining expansion and investments, estimated between €360 billion to €450 billion, are necessary. The report also emphasizes opportunities for developing economies, particularly in Africa, which holds substantial reserves of these critical minerals.

UN Secretary-General Appoints Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals: (April 26, 2024, [Source](#)) – UN Secretary-General António Guterres has initiated a Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals to address the rising demand for minerals essential for renewable energy technologies. Co-chaired by Ambassador Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko of South Africa and Director-General for Energy Ditte Juul Jørgensen of the European

Commission, the panel aims to create global, voluntary principles that uphold environmental, social, and justice standards in mineral procurement. Emphasizing the importance of a just transition, Guterres highlighted the opportunity for developing countries to boost their economies through these minerals, provided they are managed correctly. The panel, which includes diverse global stakeholders, is set to build trust and guide equitable and sustainable practices, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.

Investor.News Critical Minerals Media Coverage:

- May 02, 2024 – The Critical Minerals Institute (CMI) Sponsors a Rare Earths and Uranium Stockwatch on InvestorNews.com <https://bit.ly/44oYP0q>

Investor.News Critical Minerals Videos:

- April 30, 2024 – Jack Lifton with Darren Hazelwood on Panther Metals Marking One of the Top Graphite Intercepts Globally <https://bit.ly/3WsqqH0>
- April 29, 2024 – Guy Bourassa on the Armor Strength of Scandium Canada <https://bit.ly/4diHI6P>

Critical Minerals IN8.Pro Member News

Releases :

- May 02, 2024 – Xcite Resources Provide Update on Beaver River Uranium Project <https://bit.ly/3UIASQU>
- May 02, 2024 – F3 Announces Revised Bought Deal Private Placement for Gross Proceeds of C\$9.0 Million <https://bit.ly/3UrCkFU>
- May 02, 2024 – Sage Potash Announces Non-Brokered Private Placement of 13,500,000 shares <https://bit.ly/3Qp8fFS>
- May 02, 2024 – Nano One and Worley Sign License and Alliance Agreements to Jointly Develop, Market and Deploy Cathode Plant Design <https://bit.ly/44nfrrY>
- May 01, 2024 – F3 Announces C\$7.5 Million Bought Deal Private Placement <https://bit.ly/3WlMQRK>
- May 01, 2024 – Neo Announces Succession Plan for Chemicals & Oxides Business Unit <https://bit.ly/4b1Y3vi>
- May 01, 2024 – Neo Performance Materials and Meteoric Resources Sign MOU for offtake of Caldeira Project in Brazil <https://bit.ly/4bfvudm>
- May 01, 2024 – First Phosphate Announces Gold Sponsorship of THE Mining Investment Event of the North in Quebec City on June 4-6, 2024 and Inaugural Indigenous Business Panel <https://bit.ly/3Uq6UQe>
- May 01, 2024 – Power Nickel Engages Global Expert Dr. Steve Beresford to Provide Technical & Strategic Advice <https://bit.ly/3UpDj90>
- April 30, 2024 – Meteoric Resources NL Quarterly Report – March 2024 <https://bit.ly/3xYM1U0>
- April 29, 2024 – Defense Metals Receives Positive Results from Ucore Rare Metals Inc. on its Wicheeda Rare Earth Carbonate Sample <https://bit.ly/4aRvIHW>
- April 29, 2024 – Ucore Qualifies Wicheeda Mixed Rare Earth Carbonate for RapidSX Technology Processing at Commercial-

Scale Facilities <https://bit.ly/4a3fpG0>

- April 29, 2024 – American Rare Earths Quarterly Activities Report for the Period Ending 31 March 2024 <https://bit.ly/3w6kKPU>
- April 29, 2024 – Critical Metals PLC: Commencement of Molulu Project Groundworks and ESG Work Programmes <https://bit.ly/4b6fMkW>
- April 29, 2024 – Australian Strategic Materials Limited Quarterly Activities Report to 31 March 2024 <https://bit.ly/4befEQu>
- April 29, 2024 – ASM opens Entitlement Offer to raise up to ~A\$5.2M following successful completion of Institutional Placement <https://bit.ly/3UmKq2u>