

The Critical Minerals Report (7.25.2025): White House Increase Spending for “Mineral Independence” while Bezos and Gates Score Lithium in the DRC

written by Tracy Hughes | July 25, 2025

The Trump administration sharpened its focus on critical minerals this week, rolling out measures to extract metals from mine waste and adding a mining expert to its national security ranks. On Thursday, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum ordered regulators to streamline permits and funding for projects recovering minerals like rare earth elements, lithium, and cobalt from millions of tons of U.S. mine tailings, coal ash and even abandoned uranium mines. The goal, officials say, is to turn environmental liabilities into assets and achieve American “mineral independence” amid China’s long-held dominance of these resources. “This initiative reflects our unwavering commitment to achieving mineral independence and ensuring that America leads the way in advanced technologies that power our future,” Burgum said, framing the waste-recovery push as a way to both boost industry and reduce reliance on foreign suppliers. The order directs the U.S. Geological Survey to map federal mine waste sites nationwide and makes it easier for companies to tap federal funds for extracting valuable metals from mine waste piles. Industry has already shown interest: **Freeport-McMoRan Inc. (NYSE: FCX)**, for example, plans to produce 800 million pounds of copper per year by 2027 by leaching it from ore left for dead in its old waste dumps.

At the same time, the White House quietly tapped David Copley – a former mining executive and Navy Reserve intelligence officer – to lead a new office at the National Security Council devoted to securing supply chains for minerals vital to advanced military technologies. **Copley's appointment underscores how Washington increasingly views access to elements like nickel, cobalt and rare earths as a national security priority,** following Beijing's recent use of export curbs as strategic leverage. U.S. officials described recent disruptions to magnet shipments from China as having upended global markets and forced emergency supply chain responses. In his new NSC role, Copley will focus on **strengthening U.S. supply chains and boosting U.S. access to the critical minerals that underpin EV batteries, missiles and other high-tech defense systems.** The decision to put a mining expert in a top NSC post illustrates how national security priorities have shifted under President Trump. Other NSC units have been downsized, but **the drive to obtain critical minerals has never waned,** particularly given China's near-total control of mineral processing.

Those strategic concerns have also driven **unprecedented U.S. support for domestic rare earth producers.** This month the Pentagon announced a major deal with **MP Materials Corp. (NYSE: MP),** the only U.S. rare earth mining firm, to bolster its refining capacity – including a guaranteed price of \$110 per kilogram for certain magnet-grade **rare earth oxides.** **That floor price is nearly double the current Chinese market level and is backed by decade-long U.S. government purchase commitments.** Amanda Lacaze, Chief Executive Officer of **Lynas Rare Earths Ltd. (ASX: LYC),** said the move signals Washington's determination to break Beijing's dominance in **rare metals** supply chains and could spur a further rally in non-Chinese **rare earth** prices. Investors appeared to agree: Lynas Rare Earths Ltd. shares jumped after the announcement, and the company just reported a 42% surge in

average selling price for its **rare earth** products last quarter to A\$60.2 per kg, the highest in three years. That, alongside rising volumes, lifted Lynas's quarterly revenue to A\$170.2 million (~\$112 million), about 10% above analyst expectations. Notably, Lynas's output of **neodymium** and **praseodymium (NdPr)** – key elements for powerful magnets – hit 2,080 tonnes in the quarter, an all-time high for the company.

Lynas Rare Earths Ltd. is responding with record production and new partnerships geared toward a post-China supply chain. This week the company announced a deal with JS Link Co. Ltd. of South Korea to develop a 3,000-tonne-per-year facility for **Neodymium-Iron-Boron** magnets near Lynas's plant in Kuantan, Malaysia. Under a non-binding memorandum, Lynas will supply both light and heavy **rare earth** feedstock, and JS Link Co. Ltd. will manufacture finished sintered magnets used in electric vehicle motors and other technologies. The planned Malaysian magnet factory is aimed at serving surging global EV demand without relying on Chinese magnet makers. Japanese magnet manufacturers significantly increased output last quarter amid China's export squeeze, and Lynas Rare Earths Ltd. has been working with them to find new automotive customers abroad. **The company's expansion into magnet production – alongside record output of NdPr oxide and the first-time production of heavy rare earth oxides like terbium – underscores how non-Chinese players are racing to plug gaps in the supply chain.**

While Western firms scale up, China has been quietly tightening its grip at home. Beijing issued its first batch of 2025 **rare earth** mining and smelting quotas last month with no public announcement, instructing state-owned producers not to disclose the figures for security reasons, according to sources. The volumes weren't leaked, but the stealth rollout itself is telling. It comes after an unusual delay and amid internal debates in Beijing over whether to count imported ore against

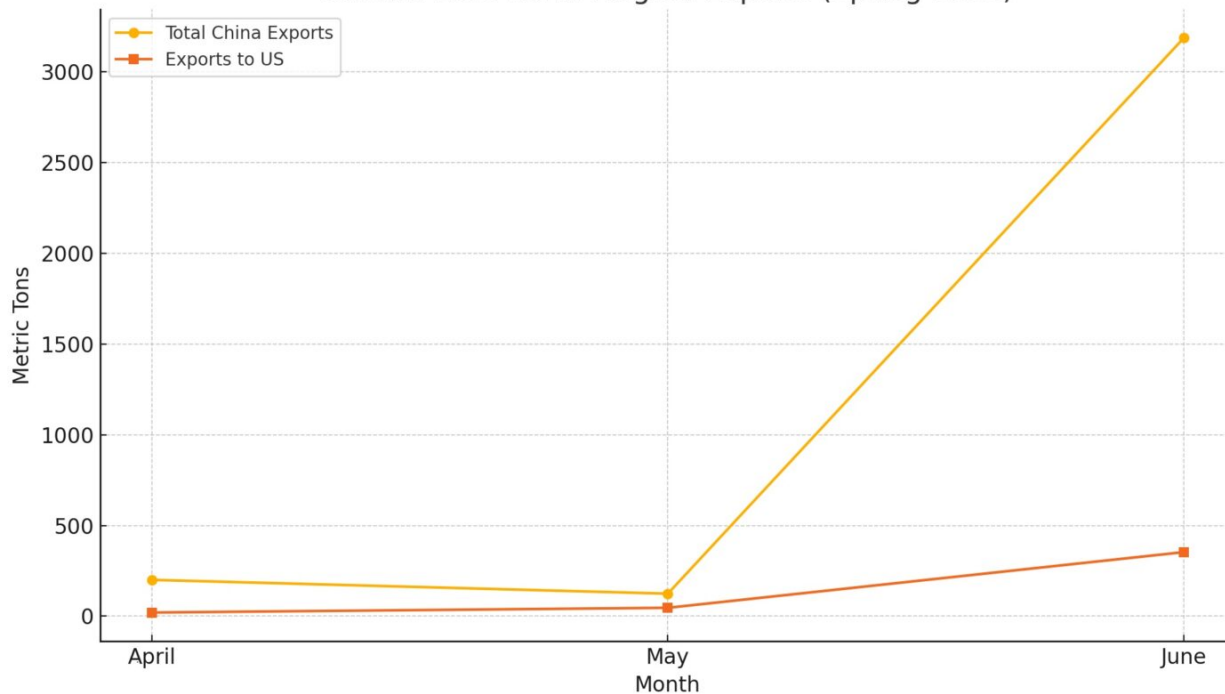
domestic mining limits. **What is clear is that access to China's rare earth output is more restricted than ever.** Last year only two giant state-run groups—China Rare Earth Group and **Northern Rare Earth Group (SHSE: 600111)**—were eligible to receive quotas, down from six firms previously, as Beijing consolidates control over the sector. This quota system, in place since 2006, is a key barometer of global **rare earth** availability. **The secretive approach this year underscores how sensitive rare earths have become in U.S.-China relations.** In April, China added several **rare earth alloys** (including samarium-cobalt, neodymium-iron-boron, and dysprosium-containing alloys) and magnets to its export restriction list—a retaliatory move after U.S. tariff hikes—and the resulting bureaucratic licensing delays caused a sharp drop in shipments. Certain U.S. and European automakers had to pause production lines for lack of magnets.

After China's new export permit rules precipitated a collapse in **rare earth** magnet exports this spring, a tentative thaw in trade tensions has allowed some flow to resume. Chinese shipments of **rare earth permanent magnets** to the United States soared 660% in June from the prior month, reaching about 353 metric tons, after Washington and Beijing struck agreements in late June to resolve the licensing logjam. That one-month spike marked a sharp recovery from April–May, when China's added paperwork and 45-day approval times strangled exports. In total, China exported 3,188 tons of **rare earth magnets** worldwide in June, up 157% from May's level—though still 38% lower than June 2024, reflecting how far trade had fallen during the dispute. Analysts expect shipments to continue rebounding in July as more Chinese exporters obtain licenses under the new system. Even so, the first half of 2025 saw China's magnet exports down almost 19% year-on-year. The United States was a major beneficiary of the June rebound, becoming the second-largest destination after Germany by volume. **The episode has reinforced U.S. industry's sense of**

vulnerability and its incentive to diversify sources or recycle rare earths domestically.



China's Rare Earth Magnet Exports (Spring 2025)



Total China exports surged from 124 tons in May to 3,188 tons in June after Washington and Beijing reached a licensing resolution.

U.S. imports skyrocketed 660% month-over-month, jumping from 46 to 353 tons in June.

Another avenue for U.S. strategy is forging new trade frameworks with mineral-rich allies. **Indonesia—one of the world's top sources of nickel, tin and copper—is negotiating a strategic trade management pact with Washington** to monitor exports of **critical minerals** that have dual civilian and military uses. The timing is significant: Jakarta recently became one of the few countries to secure a tariff deal with the Trump administration, staving off steep import duties. As part of an interim agreement ahead of an August 1 deadline, the U.S. lowered tariffs on Indonesian goods to 19% from a threatened 32%, and further reductions are on the table. Now, Indonesia's government wants to ensure its valuable mineral exports are properly tracked and

controlled under the new arrangement. **“Strategic trade management is important to ensure transparency... so that imports and exports of dual-function commodities with strategic value can be monitored,”** Indonesia’s chief economic minister Airlangga Hartarto said Thursday. He noted that strategic materials include those used in **AI infrastructure, data centers, aviation and spaceflight**—sectors where advanced metals and oxides can be repurposed for weapons or surveillance tech. **“They (the U.S.) want to ensure these strategic components do not fall into the hands of certain parties, including for use in terrorism or other purposes,”** Airlangga explained. In practical terms, the talks involve setting rules of origin and limits on re-export via third countries. The U.S. side has also signaled it may cut some tariffs to near zero on specific Indonesian-origin **minerals** that America cannot produce itself, as an incentive for closer **critical mineral** ties. For Indonesia—which holds large reserves of **rare earth elements** and is the world’s largest **nickel** producer—the partnership could bring investment and ensure its strategic exports aren’t caught up in geopolitical crossfire. For the U.S., it’s another step toward building a China-free supply network for materials needed in **semiconductors, EV batteries** and **defense hardware**.

In Africa, meanwhile, a major **lithium** prize is changing hands in favor of U.S.-linked investors. **KoBold Metals**, a California-based mining firm backed by investors including Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates, signed an agreement with the Democratic Republic of Congo that positions it to acquire and develop the contested Manono **lithium** deposit—one of the world’s largest known **lithium** resources, crucial for electric vehicle batteries. The deal, announced Friday, effectively names KoBold Metals as the Congolese government’s preferred partner to resolve a long-running ownership dispute at Manono and jump-start the project’s development. Australian miner **AVZ Minerals Ltd.** had previously

held rights to Manono, but after little progress and legal wrangling, including arbitration, Kinshasa revoked AVZ's permit in 2023 and has been seeking a new path forward. Under the new agreement, KoBold Metals must apply for exploration licenses by July 31 covering over 1,600 square kilometers around Manono, and the DRC will appoint an envoy to facilitate KoBold's acquisition of the deposit on the same timeline. In return, KoBold has pledged a large-scale **mineral exploration** program using its cutting-edge AI technology to scour the region for additional **critical minerals**. KoBold specializes in data-crunching algorithms to locate buried metal deposits; it is already hunting for **copper, cobalt and nickel** in Zambia and elsewhere. **The Manono breakthrough dovetails with U.S. efforts to secure diversified sources of lithium and other battery metals.** In June, President Trump brokered a truce in mineral-rich eastern Congo as part of a deal exchanging a ceasefire for Western investment commitments. That accord explicitly supports the U.S.-led **Lobito Corridor** plan to develop transport links for Congolese minerals to Atlantic ports, aiming to create secure supply chains that lessen the region's dependence on Chinese miners and traders. The KoBold deal—with two prominent American tech investors behind it—is a tangible example of that strategy in action. **It also signals to other African nations that the U.S. and its partners are willing to challenge China's dominance by backing big, complex mining projects with capital and technology.**

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US prioritizes recovery of critical minerals from mine waste (July 24, 2025, [Source](#)) – The U.S. Interior Department announced new measures to prioritize the recovery of critical minerals—such as rare earths, lithium, and cobalt—from mine waste, coal refuse, tailings, and abandoned uranium mines. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum directed regulatory updates to streamline funding eligibility and accelerate project reviews. The U.S. Geological Survey will map federal mine waste sites to identify mineral-rich locations. This effort, part of President Trump’s broader push for mineral independence, aims to reduce U.S. reliance on China. Companies like Freeport-McMoRan (NYSE: FCX) are already pursuing recovery from waste piles, though environmental and legal challenges remain.

US, Indonesia discussing strategic management of critical minerals trade, minister says (July 24, 2025, [Source](#)) – The United States and Indonesia are in talks to enhance strategic trade management for critical minerals, aiming to monitor and regulate exports of dual-use commodities vital to sectors like AI, aerospace, and defense. Indonesia, a major global supplier of nickel, tin, and copper, recently secured a deal with Washington lowering U.S. tariffs on some products from 32% to 19%, with further reductions under discussion. The negotiations include rules of origin and third-party involvement eligibility. The U.S. seeks to ensure these materials do not reach unauthorized entities, amid concerns over their potential misuse in sensitive technologies or terrorism.

Lynas sees higher rare earths prices after US backs MP Materials (July 24, 2025, [Source](#)) – Lynas Rare Earths Ltd. (ASX: LYC) expects higher rare earth prices following a U.S. Department of Defense deal with MP Materials Corp. (NYSE: MP), which includes a \$110/kg floor price for key rare earths—nearly double China’s

rate. Lynas CEO Amanda Lacaze said the agreement signals strong U.S. commitment to reducing reliance on China. The company reported Q4 revenue of A\$170.2 million (\$112.3 million), beating estimates by 10%, with prices rising to A\$60.20/kg. Output rose to 3,212 metric tons. Lynas also announced a magnet manufacturing deal with South Korea's JS Link, targeting a 3,000-ton plant in Malaysia to support global automotive demand.

Tesla Braces for 'Rough' Quarters as US Ends EV Incentives (July 24, 2025, [Source](#)) – Tesla CEO Elon Musk warned of challenging quarters ahead as the company navigates a transition period marked by the end of U.S. electric vehicle tax credits and delays in launching autonomous vehicles. The recently signed tax bill by President Trump eliminates \$7,500 EV incentives and federal fuel-economy standards, reducing key revenue streams. Tesla reported a 12% drop in revenue to \$22.5 billion, with lower vehicle deliveries and prices. Shares fell over 9%. Musk emphasized future gains from autonomy but offered few near-term details. Tesla is also expanding its robotaxi service, while rising tariffs added \$300 million in costs last quarter.

Lynas bolstered by rare earths deal and record production (July 24, 2025, [Source](#)) – Lynas Rare Earths has signed a non-binding MoU with South Korea's JS Link to establish a 3,000-tonne neodymium iron boron (NdFeB) magnet manufacturing facility near Lynas' plant in Kuantan, Malaysia. Lynas will supply both light and heavy rare earth materials for the production of sintered magnets. The announcement coincides with Lynas achieving record quarterly production of 2,080 tonnes of neodymium and praseodymium (NdPr) and 3,212 tonnes of total rare earth oxides. Lynas also began producing dysprosium and separated terbium oxides in Malaysia and made progress on its Mt Weld expansion and hybrid power station projects in Australia.

White House taps mining expert to head national security office,

sources say (July 23, 2025, [Source](#)) – The White House has appointed David Copley, a former mining executive and intelligence officer, to a senior position at the National Security Council (NSC), according to sources. Copley is expected to focus on strengthening U.S. supply chains and securing access to critical minerals vital for military technologies. This move reflects the Trump administration's emphasis on reducing dependence on China, which controls much of the global rare earths market. Copley previously served at the U.S. National Energy Dominance Council and held roles at U.S. Silica, Newmont, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. His role at the NSC will reportedly cover international economics and geostrategic affairs.

US moves decisively to avoid dependence on China's rare earths (July 22, 2025, [Source](#)) – On July 10, the Pentagon announced a major support package for MP Materials to reduce U.S. reliance on Chinese rare earth supply chains. The deal includes a decade-long government-backed floor price of \$110/lb for neodymium and dysprosium—double current Chinese market prices—and customer guarantees for MP's entire magnet output. Apple also signed a \$500 million offtake agreement. The move follows China's rare earth export restrictions and mirrors Japan's 2010 support for Lynas. The U.S. is emphasizing domestic refining and production, even as Australian efforts to attract U.S. investment face setbacks amid continued tariffs and U.S.-first policy priorities.

Japan power firm plans to build first new nuclear reactor since Fukushima (July 22, 2025, [Source](#)) – Kansai Electric Power announced plans to construct a new nuclear reactor at its Mihama power station in Fukui Prefecture, marking Japan's first new reactor project since the 2011 Fukushima disaster. The company will begin geological and environmental surveys, with public engagement, to support development of the SRZ-1200 advanced

light water reactor, designed with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. The reactor would replace the decommissioned Mihama No.1 and No.2 units. Japan aims to boost nuclear power to enhance energy security amid reliance on fossil fuel imports. Funding will come from bonds and loans, with no equity issuance currently planned.

UK Inks Investment Deals on £38 Billion Nuclear Plant (July 22, 2025, [Source](#)) – The UK has finalized approval for the £38 billion (\$51 billion) Sizewell C nuclear power plant, securing over £3 billion in private investment, including from Centrica Plc, Quebec's CDPQ, and France's EDF. The British government will retain a 44.9% stake. Sizewell C is expected to power six million homes for 60 years and play a key role in meeting energy and climate goals. Construction costs are structured to minimize consumer impact, averaging £1/month. The project mirrors Hinkley Point C but is expected to be built more efficiently, with delivery targeted for the mid-2030s. EDF and France's export credit agency are major financial backers.

Chinese exports of two critical minerals plunge even as rare earths rebound (July 21, 2025, [Source](#)) – China's exports of antimony and germanium—critical minerals used in defense, telecom, and solar technologies—have sharply declined, falling 88% and 95%, respectively, from January to June, following Beijing's stricter export controls and anti-smuggling efforts. While rare earth exports rebounded due to a recent U.S.-China agreement, germanium and antimony shipments remained near historic lows. The decrease coincides with China's intensified crackdown on transshipment activities, with notable drops in exports to Thailand and Mexico. Consequently, market prices for these minerals have surged, with germanium prices doubling and antimony prices nearly quadrupling since export restrictions began in mid-2023.

U.S. firms scramble to secure rare-earth magnets – imports from

China surge 660% (July 21, 2025, [Source](#)) – U.S. imports of rare-earth permanent magnets from China surged 660% in June, reaching approximately 353 metric tons, amid easing trade tensions following a preliminary U.S.-China agreement. China, which controls around 90% of global rare-earth magnet production and refining, had imposed export license requirements in April as retaliation for U.S. tariffs. Total Chinese exports of rare-earth magnets rose nearly 160% from May, though still down 38% year-over-year. The U.S. was the second-largest destination after Germany. The spike comes as American firms face supply shortages, prompting efforts to boost domestic production and recycling.

Nuclear energy firms see \$1.2B following Trump's executive orders (July 21, 2025, [Source](#)) – Following a series of executive orders signed by President Donald Trump in May 2025 to promote domestic nuclear energy, U.S. nuclear companies have secured over \$1.2 billion in new investments. TerraPower, co-founded by Bill Gates, announced a \$650 million investment with NVIDIA's venture arm NVentures, supporting plans for the nation's first commercial advanced nuclear plant. Oklo raised \$460 million, while Radiant secured an additional \$165 million to develop microreactors for remote and military applications. The Trump administration emphasized deregulation and supply chain support as key to accelerating nuclear innovation and strengthening national energy security.

China quietly issues 2025 rare earth quotas, sources say (July 18, 2025, [Source](#)) – China has quietly issued its first rare earth mining and smelting quotas for 2025 without a public announcement, according to sources familiar with the matter. These quotas, typically released twice a year, are key indicators of global rare earth supply, crucial for U.S. sectors such as defense, electric vehicles, and clean energy. Beijing reportedly instructed state-owned firms not to disclose the

figures for security reasons. The delay follows internal debate over including imported ore in the system. China continues to tighten control, reducing eligible companies and restricting exports in response to U.S. tariff hikes. No quota volumes were disclosed.

China pledges to crack down on illicit exports of rare earths, urges US to lift more trade controls (July 18, 2025, [Source](#)) – China has announced a crackdown on illicit rare earth exports, citing national security concerns and foreign intelligence involvement in smuggling operations. This comes shortly after the U.S. and China agreed to ease access for American companies to Chinese rare earths. Chinese authorities allege rare earths were hidden in mislabeled shipments and smuggled to the U.S. via third countries like Thailand and Mexico. The action follows new Chinese export permit rules causing delays. While China maintains permitting flexibility, U.S.-China trade tensions persist over tariffs and semiconductor restrictions, with negotiations continuing ahead of an August 12 deadline for a broader trade agreement.

KoBold Metals, backed by Bezos and Gates, secures deal for disputed Congo lithium deposit (July 18, 2025, [Source](#)) – KoBold Metals, a U.S.-based mining firm backed by Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates, has signed a deal with the Democratic Republic of Congo to acquire and develop the disputed Manono lithium deposit, one of the world's largest. This agreement positions KoBold as the Congolese government's preferred partner over Australian firm AVZ Minerals Limited, which has been in a legal dispute over the rights. The deal requires KoBold to apply for exploration licenses by July 31 and initiate large-scale exploration using AI. It also aligns with U.S. efforts to secure critical mineral supply chains and reduce reliance on China.

InvestorNews.com Media Highlights

- July 24, 2025 – Critical Minerals Institute Announces Masterclass “Command Capital & Military Metals” – July 24, 2025 <https://bit.ly/4m3NGw1>
- July 23, 2025 – A Sturdy Buckle: An Overview of China’s Belt and Road Initiative and its Global Implications <https://bit.ly/44RQ3ek>
- July 21, 2025 – Hallgarten Initiates Coverage of Rockland Resources, a New Source of American Beryllium <https://bit.ly/44Zq30Y>

InvestorNews.com Video Highlights

- July 24, 2025 – The Naskapi Nation Backs the World’s Leading Primary Source of Scandium <https://youtu.be/DH21ZJv-4Es>
- July 21, 2025 – Khozan’s CVMR and Finatrades Plan to Tokenize Critical Minerals, Reshaping Global Trade <https://youtu.be/avdiudGqP5w>

InvestorNews.com Member News

- July 25, 2025 – Quantum Critical Metals Initiates Metallurgical Test Work on Gallium-Rubidium-Cesium Mineralization at NMX East <https://bit.ly/3TYhSN9>
- July 24, 2025 – Homerun Resources Inc. Files for Approval of \$3 Million Financing; Updates \$6 Million Institutional Financing <https://bit.ly/3H00zZh>
- July 24, 2025 – Energy Fuels Announces Call Details for Q2-2025 Earnings <https://bit.ly/440jL5i>
- July 24, 2025 – American Rare Earths Advances Halleck Creek Demonstration Plant With A\$15M Placement <https://bit.ly/474dZ0K>
- July 24, 2025 – Antimony Resources Corp. (ATMY) (K8J0)

Closes Financing with Strategic Mining Investor
<https://bit.ly/4lJK1D0>

- July 24, 2025 – American Tungsten Corp. Announces Closing of Upsized \$7m Financing <https://bit.ly/3TRz0Jo>
- July 24, 2025 – ASM Share Purchase Plan – Issue Price and Allocation of Shares <https://bit.ly/457dPTT>
- July 23, 2025 – Appia Rare Earths & Uranium Corp. Receives \$98,355.52 Saskatchewan TMEI Grant & \$126,542.57 Deficiency Deposit Refund <https://bit.ly/4kZgPHT>
- July 23, 2025 – Panther Metals PLC – Winston Project: Advisory Board Appointment <https://bit.ly/4kPL4RD>
- July 23, 2025 – Volta Strengthens Team with Strategic Advisors and Announces Grant of Stock Options, DSUs, and RSUs <https://bit.ly/3TQG8Rp>
- July 23, 2025 – Power Metallic Demonstrates Positive Initial Mineralogy Results – PGE Enrichment Associated with Chalcopyrite and Cubanite <https://bit.ly/4ma5x4B>
- July 23, 2025 – Australian Strategic Materials Limited Quarterly Activities Report to 30 June 2025 <https://bit.ly/4m8yFJh>
- July 22, 2025 – Coniagas Announces Revocation of MCT0 <https://bit.ly/46qr1pm>
- July 22, 2025 – Nord Announces Revocation of MCT0 <https://bit.ly/4nYv6aF>
- July 22, 2025 – Media Advisory – Neo Performance Materials Inc. Second Quarter 2025 Earnings Release & Webcast <https://bit.ly/44Uh80x>
- July 21, 2025 – Resignation of Managing Director and CEO <https://bit.ly/44TMjZW>
- July 21, 2025 – Share Purchase Plan closes substantially oversubscribed <https://bit.ly/4lB4TwZ>