

NioCorp's Entire Proposed Product Suite at its Elk Creek Superalloy Metals Mine Proposed as "Critical Minerals" Under President Trump Initiative

written by Raj Shah | February 17, 2018
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- The Trump Administration has proposed including the superalloy metals niobium, scandium, and titanium among 35 "Critical Minerals" that are to be considered "vital to the Nation's security and economic prosperity."
- With its entire planned product suite now proposed as strategically vital by the U.S. Government, NioCorp's Elk Creek Project is emerging as a highly unique "Critical Minerals Mine" that can significantly reduce U.S. dependence on foreign producers of several critical and strategic metals.
- Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts and the Nebraska Congressional delegation – and Congressmen Don Bacon (NE-2) and Adrian Smith (NE-3) in particular – are praised for their advocacy the Elk Creek Project.

NioCorp Developments Ltd. ("**NioCorp**" or the "**Company**") (TSX:NB) (OTCQX:NIQBF) (FSE:BR3) today praised the Trump Administration for proposing that NioCorp's entire planned product suite of three superalloy metals – niobium, scandium, and titanium – be considered as "Critical Minerals" under President Trump's

December 20, 2017 Executive Order aimed at encouraging greater domestic production of materials that are “vital to the Nation’s security and economic prosperity.”

In a [Federal Register notice](#) published today, the Trump Administration included niobium, scandium, and titanium on a list of 35 materials proposed as “Critical Minerals.”

The Company believes that the proposed listing significantly elevates the strategic importance of the Elk Creek Project, particularly given that it is the only proposed mine in the U.S. that is expected to produce both niobium and scandium, two superalloy metals that have significant uses in national defense technologies and upon which the U.S. is currently 100% dependent on foreign nations such as Russia and China.

“In many ways, our Elk Creek Superalloy Project is emerging as an increasingly unique and valuable ‘critical minerals mine’ in terms of its strategic importance to the United States and to other Western nations,” said Mark A. Smith, Executive Chairman and CEO of NioCorp. “We are very pleased with the increasing attention that is being paid to the superalloy metals we intend to produce, and we look forward to moving this project to construction and commercial operation as rapidly as we can.”

The two Nebraska Congressmen wrote a letter recently to the Trump Administration advocating for scandium’s inclusion in the “Critical Materials” list. In their letter, [which can be seen here](#), the Congressman noted the following:

“Scandium is used in a variety of defense and civil applications including lasers, electronics, and high-performance lighting. When added to aluminum, scandium makes an extraordinarily light and strong alloy for use in bulkheads, heat shields, fuel and exhaust systems, aircraft fuselage and landing gear assemblies, mobile bridges, missiles, and other defense systems. In the

commercial sector, scandium alloys are poised to drive major advances in commercial aircraft and surface transportation systems through greater fuel efficiency and reduced emissions. Scandium is also a critical component of Solid Oxide Fuel Cells which provide highly efficient and reliable power generation for DoD, NASA, and companies such as Home Depot, Walmart, Apple, Google, and Verizon,” they wrote.

“Despite these strategic uses, today our nation is 100% dependent on imported scandium, primarily from China and Russia. We share the concerns of many of our colleagues in Congress who consider this a significant national security vulnerability for the United States. For this reason, the FY2018 National Defense Authorization Act included language that specifically mentions scandium and the need to develop domestic sources of this strategic material. We also note that the European Union added scandium to its 2017 list of Critical Raw Materials, further illustrating its growing importance in global commodity supply chains,” they wrote.

Nebraska stands to emerge as a major global producer of scandium once the Elk Creek Project comes online. As currently planned, the Project is estimated to produce more than 100 tonnes of scandium oxide product annually when brought to full-scale production. Current global production of scandium oxide is estimated by the U.S. Geologic Survey at only 10-15 tonnes per year.

The Administration’s priority list also included 15 of the rare earth elements, which were grouped as a single entry on the list. NioCorp’s Elk Creek ore body in southeast Nebraska is known to contain rare earth elements as well, although the Company has no current plans to produce rare earth commercial products.

The proposed “Critical Minerals” list published in the Federal Register was developed in response to President Trump’s Executive Order of December 20 entitled “[Presidential Executive Order on a Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals.](#)”

On Behalf of the Board of Directors,

“Mark Smith”

Mark Smith
Executive Chairman, CEO, and Director

Qualified Persons: Scott Honan, M.Sc., SME-RM, of NioCorp Developments Ltd., a Qualified Person as defined by National Instrument 43-101, has read and approved the technical information contained in this news release.

Source: NioCorp Developments Ltd.

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About NioCorp

NioCorp is developing a superalloy materials project in Southeast Nebraska that will produce Niobium, Scandium, and Titanium. Niobium is used to produce superalloys as well as High Strength, Low Alloy (“HSLA”) steel, which is a lighter, stronger steel used in automotive, structural, and pipeline applications. Scandium is a superalloy material that can be combined with Aluminum to make alloys with increased strength and improved corrosion resistance. Scandium also is a critical component of advanced solid oxide fuel cells. Titanium is used in various superalloys and is a key component of pigments used in paper, paint and plastics and is also used for aerospace applications, armor and medical implants.

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