

**Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Woodard**  
**Testimony for Subcommittee on Africa & Global Health Policy**  
**on the United States' Critical Minerals Strategy**  
**July 30, 2025**

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Booker, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today on the Administration's approach to securing critical minerals supply chains, including the role African states can play in enhancing the security of these supply chains for the United States.

Simply put, we face a two-pronged challenge. To achieve the re-industrialization of the United States that this Administration has put at the center of its economic policy, we need to encourage more mining and more processing of the critical materials that form the backbone of any modern, prosperous economy. Second, we need to diversify the supply chains of these materials away from China.

The importance of a wide range of critical minerals to our national security and economic well-being cannot be overstated. Clearly these minerals and the challenges associated with their supply chains have received significant attention lately, both here in Washington and around the world – and rightly so. China has gone to great lengths to dominate key parts of these supply chains, making it imperative that we do more to reduce the threat to U.S. security and prosperity.

The team I lead at the State Department has been driving these issues for several years, previously within the Bureau of Energy Resources, and now as part of the Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs after the recent reorganization at State. We have collaborated closely with the State Department's regional bureaus, including the Bureau of African Affairs, with our embassy personnel stationed overseas, and with other involved agencies across the U.S. government to tackle the challenges China has imposed on this sector. We have worked to identify and marshal support for projects across the globe that help secure our supply chains of these minerals and ensure that American producers and consumers have the supplies they require.

We all understand how dependent the United States, alongside its allies and partners around the world, has become on China for the mining and processing of critical minerals. That dependence exposes our national security, our industries, and ultimately our consumers to the effects of economic coercion and supply chain disruptions that China has proven all too willing to exploit. China's refined minerals and components containing them are the product of heavily subsidized, vertically integrated supply chains that benefit from Beijing's willingness to ignore labor, environmental, and other protections for local workers and communities, resulting in artificially low prices. Erratic Chinese export controls and price manipulation also contribute to a warped and difficult market for minerals and the products derived from them.

China's recent export controls have been particularly concerning. Controls imposed on rare earth elements essential for permanent magnets, and on minerals such as antimony, tungsten, gallium, and germanium have wide-ranging impacts on defense-related and commercial products, including the automotive sector.

All of this makes the economically viable development of any mining or processing projects outside of Chinese control challenging at best. It reduces the appetite among western operators to invest. It discourages potential private sector investors from backing these projects around the world.

### **Domestic and Foreign Production Needed**

The Administration has devoted a great deal of attention to critical minerals since January, including issuing Executive Order 14156, *Declaring a National Energy Emergency*, and Executive Order 14241, *Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production*. A major focus of that attention has been on the need to increase domestic mining, extraction, and refining of these minerals whenever possible. As we engage with countries on a bilateral basis and through various regional groupings, we have emphasized to them the opportunities that exist for investment in projects based here in the United States.

Even with the vast resources of the United States, however, there will be minerals and metals our economy needs that we do not have – particularly in the short- to medium-term. The President’s executive orders recognize the importance of working with like-minded allies and others, another important element of my team’s work. Critical minerals projects often come up in our regular bilateral discussions with many countries. Often these countries have ongoing relationships with Chinese-controlled companies, but they are looking for a better deal that ensures more stable, dependable relationships with companies and investors that are more willing to ensure that local economies benefit.

### **State’s Tools**

Our embassies and personnel on the ground in these countries serve as a valuable resource for American companies looking to invest and participate in these projects overseas and bring these minerals back to the United States. Our embassies connect them with key officials in the host country governments and help them navigate business environments that can be very difficult. We often find these foreign governments are eager to work with American companies – these foreign governments want non-Chinese options.

We work to facilitate conversations between critical minerals project operators and potential sources of finance including Ex-Im Bank, the International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and a range of private sector financial institutions. We have also approached these challenges from a regional perspective, including through such groupings as the Quad, joining with Australia, India, and Japan to support projects that will meet our shared needs.

Africa is central to our efforts due to its vast mineral reserves, and my team has worked side-by-side with our colleagues in the African Affairs Bureau in pursuit of projects that will benefit our own supply chains and support the Administration’s approach of building up trade with our African partners, rather than leaving them shackled to a dependence on aid. Supporting these projects, building up these supply chains, and investing our time and effort into these relationships will benefit us all, and bring greater security and prosperity to the United States.

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Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to discussing these efforts more with the Subcommittee.