

US Mobilizes Deep-Sea Mining to Break China's Mineral Grip

The United States is now aggressively pursuing deep-sea mining to counter China's dominance in critical minerals. A Trump executive order expedites permits and supports American companies in developing seabed extraction operations, under the banner of national security and economic sovereignty.

President Trump's April 24 executive order, *Unleashing America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources*, directs federal agencies to quickly approve deep-sea mining projects in both U.S. and international waters. The goal is to secure vital minerals, nickel, cobalt, copper, manganese, titanium and rare earths, from polymetallic nodules on the ocean floor, particularly in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone between Hawaii and Mexico.

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This initiative is aimed squarely at weakening China's strategic advantage. China controls approximately 90 %–96 % of global refining capacity for rare earth elements, a chokehold on essential materials for electronics, electric vehicles, and defense systems. The U.S. hopes deep-sea deposits will diversify supply chains and reduce dependency on Chinese-dominated sources.

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Several American companies, including The Metals Company, Impossible Metals, and others, are moving forward. The

Interior Department has begun taking public comment on seabed lease sales off American Samoa—the first U.S. deep-sea mining lease process in decades. Industry supporters claim U.S. efforts could pose less environmental harm than traditional mining methods. Yet critics warn of major ecological risks—disturbing fragile marine ecosystems, destroying biodiversity, and creating sediment plumes—while bypassing the International Seabed Authority’s regulations.

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Oklahoma is emerging as a domestic processing hub, with new refineries and recycling facilities targeting minerals like lithium, nickel, and rare earths. Companies such as USA Rare Earth in Oklahoma and Lynas in Texas are advancing projects aimed at relocalizing mineral supply chains.

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