

China assures Clinton on rare earth exports

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U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, right, meets with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi during the ASEAN summit Saturday, Oct. 30, 2010 in Hanoi, Vietnam. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci, Pool)

(AP) -- U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on Saturday sought and received assurances from China's foreign minister about the country's export of exotic metals key to the global high-tech industry, a U.S. official said.

The official said Clinton raised the matter with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi on the sidelines of a summit of East Asian leaders in Vietnam. Clinton "sought clarification on the Chinese government's policy on the export of [rare earth minerals](#) and received assurances," the official said.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a private

diplomatic conversation, did not specify what the assurances were. But China this week said it would not use the exports of rare earth minerals as a political bargaining chip with other countries.

Recent Chinese restrictions on the sale of rare earths have drawn international concern and prompted calls for nations to diversify the production of the minerals, which are needed to produce items such as cell phones, missiles and solar energy panels,

China now produces 97 percent of the world's supply after most of the industrialized world, including the United States, Japan and Europe, largely abandoned their production in favor of cheaper Chinese exports.

Earlier in Hawaii, Clinton said Chinese export restrictions imposed on Japan in the midst of a deepening territorial dispute were a "wake-up call" for the world to find additional sources of rare earths.

Japanese companies say Beijing has blocked [rare earths](#) shipments to Japan since Sept. 21 after a Chinese fishing boat captain was detained near disputed islands. The captain was later released but Japanese authorities say supplies have yet to resume.

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