

# US says to take action to ensure rare earths supply

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Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has said the Trump administration will take 'unprecedented action' to ensure the United States is not cut off from vital minerals

The United States says it will take "unprecedented actions" to ensure the

supply of strategic elements and rare earths, as China mulls possible export controls for materials that are critical to modern technology.

China is a major supplier of the resources—which power today's digital lives, from smartphones to military hardware—and as the trade conflict with Washington has escalated, Beijing has dangled a threat of cutting exports of [rare earths](#) as a counter-strike to US tariffs.

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said Tuesday that a new report designates 35 elements and compounds as "critical to the economic and [national security](#)" of America, including uranium, titanium, and rare earths needed for smartphones, computers, aircraft and GPS devices, among other uses.

"These [critical minerals](#) are often overlooked but modern life without them would be impossible," Ross said.

"Through the recommendations detailed in this report, the Federal government will take unprecedented action to ensure that the United States will not be cut off from these vital [materials](#)."

China's top economic planner Tuesday said it had discussed "possible export controls" for rare earths at a symposium of industry experts.

"According to expert suggestions... We must strengthen [export](#) controls and establish a traceability and review mechanism for the entire process of rare earth exports," the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said in a report.

The measures are aimed at reducing unlicensed mining and smuggling of the critical materials and to help China's rare [earth](#) industry move up the value chain, the NDRC added.

President Donald Trump has ramped up his aggressive stance towards China in a bid to pressure Beijing to change its objectionable trade practices but the latest round of talks broke down and tensions flared up again.

In December 2017, Trump called on the Department of Commerce and other US agencies to develop new sources of critical materials to reduce vulnerabilities to supply disruptions, especially from foreign sources.

The US report calls for improving supplies "through investment and trade with America's allies," while streamlining the issuance of permits for mining in the United States, including on federal lands.

It also lists a plan to improve mapping and data collection to promote domestic exploration.

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