

MIKE COFFMAN
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ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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April 22, 2010

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman
The Honorable Howard "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Skelton and Ranking Member McKeon:

I write to respectfully request that a House Armed Services Committee hearing be scheduled as soon as possible to address the critical issue of rare earth metals and their importance to our nation's defense industrial base and national security. I know you share my concern that the longer we delay examining this looming rare earth crisis, the more pressing it becomes.

There is no doubt that China's dominant position in the production of rare earth minerals (they currently produce over 95 percent of the world's supply) has long-reaching implications for the U.S. Department of Defense. There is widespread use of rare earth materials in defense systems, including precision-guided munitions, lasers, communication systems, radar systems, avionics, night vision equipment, satellites and more, yet China has decreased output and is increasing export taxes.

As you are aware, due to my concern over this critical security issue, last year I requested a Government Accountability Office (GAO) study on rare earth materials in the defense supply chain as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010. Released on April 14, 2010, the recent GAO Report on Rare Earth Metals in the Defense Supply Chain has highlighted the need for a sustainable supply chain of heavy rare earths in the U.S., both for critical American national defense and industrial applications.

Though the Department of Defense is doing an internal report on this issue that will not be released until September, 2010, a near-term House Armed Services Committee hearing is critical to addressing the results of GAO's report. A timely hearing will allow the Committee to gather testimony from the Government Accountability Office, the Department of Defense, and industry to draw attention to this national security threat. Much of America is simply not aware that rare earth metals play an essential role in key national security systems and protecting our warfighters.

Due to his work on the Government Accountability report on rare earths, I respectfully request that Mr. John Neumann of GAO's Office of Acquisition and Sourcing Management be invited to testify at this important hearing.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you on this vital concern. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Jennifer Shirley of my staff should you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Coffman", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mike Coffman

Member of Congress