



Two amendments aimed at boosting domestic reserves of rare earth elements have been included in the National Defense Authorization Act passed by the US House of Representatives on Wednesday, according to the Colorado congressman who authored the amendments.

Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., first introduced his legislation to shift reliance away from China and rebuild a competitive supply chain for rare earth elements in 2009.

One of the amendments adopted this week requires the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Strategic Materials (formerly known as the Defense National Stockpile Center) to develop a plan to establish an inventory of rare earth oxides, metals, alloys and magnets for defense purposes. The Secretary of Defense would have the ultimate discretion on whether or not to execute the plan.

The DLA would be required by the law to identify steps necessary to develop or maintain a competitive, multi-source supply chain which would avoid reliance on a single source of supply. China currently accounts for more than 95% of global rare earth supply.

A second amendment passed by the House would require the Defense secretary to report back to Congress on the feasibility of recycling, recovering and reprocessing rare earth elements from defense facility fluorescent lighting, weapons systems neodymium iron boron magnets and commercial off-the-shelf items like computer hard drives

“I am glad that we have started to work on a solution that will lessen our dependence on China for rare earth elements,” Coffman said. “Rare earth elements are critical to our defense capabilities and there is simply no reason to be almost 100 percent reliant on China, especially when we have untapped resources here at home.”

The other amendment requires the Secretary of Defense to report back to Congress on the feasibility of recycling, recovering, and reprocessing rare earth elements. The report includes fluorescent lighting in Department of Defense facilities, neodymium iron boron magnets used in weapon systems and commercial off-the-shelf items such as computer hard drives among products to be included in the report.

The Obama administration, after earlier threatening to veto the massive \$662 billion defense bill because of other provisions in the legislation, announced Wednesday it would support the bill. The bill is expected to pass the Senate and go to President Obama's by the weekend.

By Philip Burgert  
[Resource Investor](#)  
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