



Committee: House Ways & Means Committee

Event: [Full Committee Hearing on Strategic Partnerships to Secure Critical Resources & Supply Chains](#)

Date: September 2, 2026

Executive Summary:

On September 2, 2026, the House Ways & Means Committee hosted a hearing on strategic mining partnerships, examining opportunities within Central Asia and Africa to further diversify U.S. supply chains. Democrats expressed concern at the lack of transparency and risk of corruption with ongoing critical minerals project deals and agreements. Republicans, conversely, were more concerned about reliance on China and related national security risks. There was also discussion of frayed trade relations with Canada and related impact on critical mineral supply chains.

Member Toplines:

[Chair Jason Smith \(R-MO-08\)](#): Smith identified China's critical mineral supply chain dominance as a national security risk. He emphasized the need to diversify U.S. sourcing, attesting to Uzbekistan's uranium production, Mongolia's copper and gold deposits, and emphasized the need to revisit the Jackson-Vanik amendment. Turning to Africa, Smith highlighted the recent extension of the *African Growth & Opportunity Act* (AGOA) through 2028, and emphasized the need to compete with both Russia and China. Smith reported that the U.S. has 47 out of the 60 designated critical minerals, yet is only producing 35 and continues to face hurdles to development. He flagged the value of Missouri cobalt deposits and rare earths, including dysprosium, terbium, and holmium, within the Pea Ridge Iron Mine. He commended the administration for streamlining permitting for mineral projects and empowering the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to negotiate critical mineral trade agreements.

[Rep. Linda Sánchez \(D-CA-38\)](#): Sánchez highlighted mounting inflation due to the ongoing war with Iran and tariffs, asserting that President Donald Trump has started a "self-defeating trade war with Canada." She expressed concern for the administration's potential corruption and self-enrichment, highlighting conflicts-of-interest with Vulcan Elements and USA Rare Earths. She noted that the administration has also weakened oversight at institutions like the Export-Import Bank (EXIM) and Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and stressed that competition with China is no excuse for abandoning safeguards.

Witness Toplines:

[Ambassador John Herbst, Senior Director, Eurasia Center, Atlantic Council](#): Herbst emphasized the importance of Central Asia in diversifying critical mineral supply chains, touting reserves of uranium, manganese, titanium, copper, lithium, tungsten, and antimony. Herbst touted the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), which offers economic incentives

for peace and encourages relationship building between Armenia with Azerbaijan and Turkey. He emphasized that TRIPP could further unlock the Caucasus by facilitating a transit corridor. He concluded by advocating for the repeal of the Jackson-Vanik amendment.

Dr. Gracelin Baskaran, Director, Critical Minerals Security Program, Center for Strategic & International Studies: Baskaran attested to the value of Africa in diversifying the critical minerals supply chain, emphasizing that China has long invested in the continent's mining ecosystem. She stressed the importance of the U.S.-Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the need for anti-corruption and judicial reform commitments. Baskaran advocated for AGOA renewal. She also encouraged congressional involvement in the ongoing critical minerals agreements, which she emphasized currently "rest on executive authority alone," and are at risk in a new administration. She suggested prioritizing formal tariff reductions within agreements, noting that copper from Zambia and the DRC enter with a minimal tariff, but if converted into rod, wire, or sheet, the products then face a 50 percent tariff, dissuading those two countries from investing in processing.

Daniel Runde, Author of "The American Imperative: Reclaiming Global Leadership through Soft Power": Runde reiterated the need for a revision of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, citing the value of critical mineral access, leveraging TRIPP, better utilization of the Trans-Caspian Route, and a potential Trans-Caspian Gas Connection.

Dr. Morgan Bazilian, Professor, Payne Institute, Colorado School of Mines: Bazilian stressed the need for mineral processing and emphasized that critical minerals agreements should consider the full value chain, not just raw materials. She recommended implementing normal trade relations with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, adding a critical minerals chapter into AGOA reauthorization, statutory requirements for the proposed Agreement on Trade in Critical Minerals, and the institution of a government-wide mine-to-mission resilience assessment. On the latter, she recommended that Congress pair new trade agreements with technical training and condition DFC and EXIM financing on binding arbitration and stabilization clauses.

Melinda St. Louis, Director, Global Trade Watch, Public Citizen: St. Louis raised concerns regarding the lack of transparency and ongoing corruption with the administration's recent critical minerals deals, as well as lack of insight into USTR's development of a plurilateral critical minerals agreement.

Major Takeaways:

Mining Abroad: Central Asia & Africa

- Chair Smith stated that Congress granting Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) to China was a mistake, and asked Herbst about applying lessons learned when making PNTR status decisions for countries like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.
 - Herbst replied that there are almost "no downside[s]" to removing the Jackson-Vanik restrictions and asserted that the two countries have made "major reforms."
 - Rep. **Carol Miller** (R-WV-01) had Herbst elaborate on the positive impact of repealing the amendment.

- Chair Smith asked Baskaran and Runde about the importance of a long-term, potentially decade-long, reauthorization of AGOA.
 - Baskaran replied that AGOA is “the bedrock of U.S.-Africa commercial diplomacy.” She noted that manufacturing and agriculture sectors would benefit from AGOA and that a long-term agreement is key to investment certainty.
 - Runde replied that Africa is “an enormous business opportunity,” citing population growth.
- Rep. **Adrian Smith** (R-NE-03) had Baskaran speak to how AGOA can be leveraged to achieve a better minerals supply chain. Baskaran attested to pairing government funding via DFC and EXIM with private capital to support processing hubs and manufacturer offtake agreements. She stressed that smelting is energy intensive and that Africa already has an energy shortage, so investing in the full “ecosystem” is critical to diversifying away from China.
 - Runde reiterated the need to help countries move up the value chain and attested to the value of a 10- or 20-year AGOA reauthorization.
- Rep. **Ron Estes** (R-KS-04) asked how partnerships with countries in Central Asia and Africa can prioritize processing and certification. Baskaran stressed the importance of pre-logistics and offtake agreements.
- Rep. **Terri Sewell** (D-AL-07) asked Baskaran for her thoughts on modernizing AGOA. Baskaran advocated for a sourcing credit or a reduced tariff/tariff free import pathway to encourage U.S. manufacturing to buy African minerals, citing cobalt from the DRC and palladium from South Africa as examples.
- Rep. **David Kustoff** (R-TN-08) asked Baskaran which minerals Congress should prioritize within AGOA. Baskaran recommended prioritizing absolute advantage sourcing, noting that 80 percent of platinum group metals sit in Africa. She noted the importance of platinum, palladium, military-grade vanadium, and rare earths.
- Rep. **Mike Carey** (R-OH-15) raised concerns regarding forced labor within AGOA supply chains, citing cobalt mining. Baskaran replied that avoiding the DRC’s cobalt sector will not generate solutions, as China will merely continue cobalt mining. She noted that AGOA and the DRC SPA have a forced labor and human rights provision, respectively, and advocated for improving governance.
 - Carey then expressed support for Rep. **Blake Moore** (R-UT-01)’s Critical Mineral Extraction Tax Parity Act ([H.R. 8780](#)).
 - Rep. **Steven Horsford** (D-NV-04) later expressed interest in collaboration on the aforementioned bill and shared that he is working to introduce a domestic mining bill to leverage the tax code and invest in the mining workforce.
- Rep. **Nathaniel Moran** (R-TX-01) asked how China and Russia are expanding their influence over Central Asian economies and how successful the U.S. is in currently building their own in-region partnerships. Runde acknowledged that China and Russia have a geographic advantage and reiterated the need to remove Jackson-Vanik restrictions and invest via DFC and EXIM.

China Concerns

- Rep. **Darin LaHood** (R-IL-16) flagged that China is still importing Nvidia’s H200 chips to advance artificial intelligence buildout, and that the U.S. is constrained on export controls because it is still dependent on Chinese critical minerals imports. Baskaran

noted that chip manufacturing is dependent on gallium, germanium, palladium, and polysilicon, of which are still predominantly sourced from China and Russia.

- Rep. **Lloyd Smucker** (R-PA-11) had Baskaran elaborate on vulnerabilities associated with reliance on China. Baskaran noted that China's past export restrictions on gallium and germanium impacted domestic manufacturing and led to inflation.
 - Smucker then asked about Chinese transshipment through African and Central Asian countries. Baskaran noted that as long as China retains its processing monopoly, it doesn't matter where minerals are sourced from, as they all will be processed in China. She acknowledged the need for future traceability mechanisms once processing alternatives exist.
- Rep. **Jodey Arrington** (R-TX-19) asked how Congress can encourage refining capacity when Chinese refiners are dumping product below market price. Bazilian stressed focusing on building supply chains with allied countries.
- Rep. **Kevin Hern** (R-OK-01) raised concerns regarding Chinese dumping of subsidized germanium and asked how the U.S. can leverage domestic capacity to address supply chain vulnerabilities. Bazilian acknowledged that supply chain challenges need to be addressed on a mineral by mineral basis.
- Rep. **Greg Murphy** (R-NC-03) had Baskaran elaborate on how critical minerals supply is key to data center development.
- Rep. **Claudia Tenney** (R-NY-24) asked how the U.S. can develop greater bauxite refining capacity outside of China. She shared that Novelis, which recently reopened their secondary aluminum smelter, is struggling with aluminum scrap being exported to China. She asked if export restrictions on aluminum scrap would benefit secondary aluminum producers in the U.S.
 - Bazilian agreed that recycling is important. She flagged that batteries and photovoltaics are commonly recycled in China and Southeast Asia, where the bulk of the original manufacturing also occurs, and stressed the need for further advanced manufacturing in the U.S. Bazilian declined to comment on export restrictions.
- Rep. **Mike Kelly** (R-PA-16) emphasized the need for an allied critical minerals supply chain and had Bazilian elaborate on the risk associated with China's dominance of the global critical minerals markets.

Critical Mineral Deals & Domestic Capacity

- Sánchez and Rep. **Don Beyer** (D-VA-08) raised concerns regarding lack of transparency into ongoing bilateral critical minerals deals. St. Louis shared that of the 38 agreements, only two memoranda of understanding and three frameworks have been released by the U.S. government. She expressed concern that the intent is to sidestep Congress and the American public.
 - St. Louis later flagged that the DFC increased its contingency liability cap by threefold in the Fiscal Year 2026 *National Defense Authorization Act*, and expressed concern that if these projects fail, taxpayers will suffer.
- Rep. **Lloyd Doggett** (D-TX-37) flagged concerns about human rights violations and lack of worker protections as the administration continues to pursue critical minerals agreements.

- Rep. **David Schweikert** (R-AZ-01) asked Bazilian how the U.S. can scale up production and refinement of critical minerals. Bazilian acknowledged that mining is time and capital intensive and that advanced manufacturing offtake agreements are key to driving midstream processing. She stressed investment incentives for processing.
- Rep. **Judy Chu** (D-CA-28) flagged corruption concerns pertaining to recent federally backed critical minerals projects.

Canada

- Rep. **Mike Thompson** (D-CA-04) expressed concern at the administration's hostile approach to trade relations with Canada and the current status of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement renegotiations. He requested further information for the record on how America's damaged relationship with Canada impacts the U.S.' ability to work with allies to confront China.
- Democrats, including Reps. **Danny Davis** (D-IL-07) and **Suzan DelBene** (D-WA-01) had St. Louis and Baskaran elaborate on how a damaged relationship with Canada impacts building a resilient North American critical mineral supply chain. St. Louis affirmed that partnering with Canada on a "mutually beneficial minerals policy" is strategic given location and worker and environmental protections. She agreed that President Trump's hostility towards Canada has jeopardized that option. Baskaran noted that there was a nine percent decline in mineral imports from Canada between 2024 and 2025, despite Canada being one of the U.S.' most important mineral partners.
 - Baskaran added that offtake agreements outlast administrations and that Canada is pursuing an aggressive trade diversion program, so U.S. loss is "everyone else's gain."
- Rep. **Brad Schneider** (D-IL-10) requested that the Committee schedule a hearing on repairing the U.S. trade relationship with Canada, citing the value of critical minerals and overall regional supply chain stability.

Tax Credits

- Moore highlighted his visit to Utah County with USTR **Jamieson Greer** to meet with Ionic Mineral Technologies, which hosts a deposit of 19 critical minerals. He shared that his Protect Domestic Mining Act of 2025 ([H.R. 1501](#)), which amends the FAST Act to ensure that mining and refining projects benefit from a more efficient federal permitting process, will be considered on the floor today. He then submitted a letter from the National Mining Association in favor of his Critical Mineral and Extraction Tax Parity Act.
- Rep. **Aaron Bean** (R-FL-04) asked the panel what they would each prioritize.
 - Baskaran and Bazilian advocated for extending the Section 45X processing tax credit. Bazilian also flagged building partnerships with Latin American countries.
 - Herbst recommended restoring trade relations with allies like Canada.
 - Runde reiterated the need to remove the Jackson-Vanik label for the four Central Asian countries and to strengthen domestic mineral production.