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A recent Department of Defense (DOD) report finds that for the foreseeable future, the global supply of rare earth elements (REEs) should be sufficient to meet U.S. defense needs. Despite concerns about availability and price of REEs, DOD finds an 11.8 percent decline in global REE demand from 2010 to 2013. During that period, REE demand and prices declined while available supplies increased.

Global REE prices soared in 2010 in the wake of new Chinese export controls, prompting decision makers and companies to examine alternatives, including mining REEs outside China and exploring substitute materials. Rare earth advocates point out the potential negative impacts of relying on foreign nations to provide critical defense supplies. They suggest promoting domestic production of REEs where possible and developing methods of recycling and remediating REEs. DOD responded that recycling has proved infeasible due to financial, regulatory, and technical challenges. However, the Administration will continue pursuing a strategy of diversifying supply, exploring substitutes, and recycling waste.

Sources: Department of Defense, E&E News
