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On Wednesday, December 20, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to reduce America's dependence on foreign sources of critical minerals. The order requires the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Defense, and Energy to submit a report that includes a strategy to accomplish this goal, an assessment of progress toward developing recycling technologies and alternatives to critical minerals, a plan to improve the topographic, geologic, and geophysical mapping of the United States, and recommendations to streamline permitting, enhancing access, and increasing discovery, production, and domestic refining of critical minerals.

Shortly after President Trump's executive order, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke released a secretarial order on Thursday, December 21 directing the initial steps to producing a nationwide geological and topographical survey of the U.S. In particular, the Secretary directs the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to ensure that U.S. miners and producers have electronic access to the most advanced topographic, geologic, and geophysical data, with appropriate limitations to protect critical infrastructure data such as those related to national security areas. Secretary Ryan Zinke explains, "Drafting a complete topographical and geographic survey of the United States is exactly the kind of task the USGS was created to do." The order also directs Interior bureaus to begin identifying domestic sources for critical minerals, and, upon finalization of a critical minerals list, to provide recommendations for streamlining review processes and access for developing critical minerals.

The executive and secretarial orders follow the release of a USGS report on 23 mineral commodities that are critical for the U.S. economy and security. The new volume, entitled *Critical Mineral Resources of the United States*, updates a previous USGS report that was published in 1973. The new report finds that the U.S. relies on overseas supplies for at least 50 percent of all but two of critical minerals – beryllium and titanium – and that most of those are sourced from China.

Sources: Department of the Interior, U.S. Geologic Survey, The White House
