

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 15, 2024

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Secretaries Haaland and Mayorkas,

The Committee on Homeland Security (Homeland Security Committee), the Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on Oversight and Accountability (Committees) write to express our concern regarding the increasing influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Arctic region and its potential impact on U.S. national security and economic interests.

The U.S. government must comprehensively address the PRC's activities in the North American Arctic—where the PRC has systematically sought to gain footholds in rare earth mining operations and purchase strategically significant land.¹ To ensure the long-term welfare of our national security interests, the Committees request a briefing to determine how your agencies are actively mitigating foreign threats to our Arctic communities.

Although not an Arctic state, China has prioritized the Arctic region as a foreign policy interest as it seeks to achieve certain economic and geopolitical objectives. The importance of the Arctic region was first directly introduced as part of China's 14th Five-Year plan—released in 2021—where it announced it would “build the ‘Polar Silk Road.’”² Indeed, there are significant economic, geopolitical, and trade opportunities in the Arctic region as polar ice recedes.

We are specifically concerned with the PRC's activities in and around Alaska, which is home to vast deposits of critical minerals.³ The United States is currently 100 percent net import reliant on 15 critical minerals and at least 50 percent import reliant on the PRC for 24 mineral commodities.⁴ Proven Alaskan reserves include multiple minerals on which the United States is 100 percent import-reliant and should not be surrendered to nefarious foreign entities, including those from the PRC. The Chinese Communist Party already weaponizes supply chain

¹ Doug Irving, *What Does China's Arctic Presence Mean to the United States?*, RAND CORPORATION, Dec. 29, 2022, available at www.rand.org/pubs/articles/2022/what-does-chinas-arctic-presence-mean-to-the-us.html.

² Trym Eiterjord, *What the 14th Five-Year Plan says about China's Arctic Interests*, THE ARCTIC INSTITUTE (Nov. 23, 2023) available at www.thearcticinstitute.org/14th-five-year-plan-chinas-arctic-interests/.

³ Alaska Science Center, *Alaska Critical Mineral Resource Assessments*, U.S. Geological Survey, Dec. 21, 2023, available at <https://www.usgs.gov/centers/alaska-science-center/science/alaska-critical-mineral-resource-assessments#overview>.

⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Mineral Commodity Summaries 2024*, U.S. Geological Survey, Jan 31, 2024, available at www.efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfndmkaj/https://pubs.usgs.gov/periodicals/mcs2024/mcs2024.pdf.

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
The Honorable Deb Haaland
March 15, 2024
Page 2

chokepoints in its markets, technology, and control over critical minerals to pressure the United States and our allies.⁵

Last year, the PRC imposed export restrictions on gallium, germanium, and graphite, three elements critical to the defense and new energy sectors.⁶ Allowing the PRC to gain a foothold in Alaskan mining operations would further increase U.S. reliance on PRC-controlled minerals. We also understand that many of these critical mineral deposits are located on Alaska Native lands that currently fall outside the purview of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.⁷ This regulatory gap poses a potential risk to U.S. national security and economic interests, particularly considering the PRC's prioritization of these resources.

On November 30, 2023, the Homeland Security Committee held a hearing that highlighted challenges in the Arctic region and underscored Congress's continuing need to comprehensively address the PRC's escalating presence there.⁸ The Committees would like to understand the Departments' plans to mitigate potential threats to U.S. sovereignty, including ongoing efforts to engage Alaska Native tribes and raise awareness about the potential risks of conducting business with entities domiciled in the PRC.

The implications of PRC influence in the Arctic are far-reaching, and it is incumbent upon us to work collaboratively to safeguard U.S. prosperity in the region. To ensure that China is not gaining a foothold in the North American Arctic and that tribal communities are well-informed and empowered to safeguard their interests, we request a briefing as soon as possible but no later than March 29, 2024. If you have questions, or to schedule this briefing, contact Homeland Security Committee staff at 202-226-8417. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

⁵ Mark Burton, *Why the Fight for 'Critical Minerals' Is Heating Up*, BLOOMBERG, Nov. 20, 2023, available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-11-20/critical-minerals-china-s-dominance-as-supplier-is-a-problem-for-the-west>.

⁶ Siyi Liu & Dominique Patton, *China, World's Top Graphite Producer, Tightens Exports of Key Battery Material*, REUTERS, Oct. 20, 2023, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-require-export-permits-some-graphite-products-dec-1-2023-10-20/>

⁷ 31 C.F.R. § 802.216(g) (2024); see also John P. Parker et al., *CFIUS Finalizes FIRRMA Real Estate Transaction Rules*, ARNOLD & PORTER, Jan. 17, 2020, available at www.arnoldporter.com/en/perspectives/advisories/2020/01/cfius-finalizes-firma-real-estate-rules.

⁸ H. Comm. on Homeland Security, *Hearing on The High North: How U.S. Arctic Strategy Impacts Homeland Security*, 118th Cong. (Nov. 30, 2023).

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
The Honorable Deb Haaland
March 15, 2024
Page 3

Sincerely,



MARK E. GREEN, MD
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



MIKE GALLAGHER
Chairman
Select Committee on China



JAMES COMER
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability



BRUCE WESTERMAN
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi
Ranking Member
Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources