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Book Review: Groundbreaking!

America's New Quest for Mineral Independence

By Ned Mamula with Contributions from Ann Bridges

Editorial Comments by Mickey the Mercenary Geologist

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After posting a musing entitled, **America's Metals, Minerals, and Materials Misery** last year, I was contacted by Ned Mamula, a PhD geologist who worked at the United States Geological Survey, the Department of Energy, and the Central Intelligence Agency investigating supply and demand, resource development, and geopolitics of energy and minerals.

Ned now studies and writes about these subjects for D.C. based think-tanks such as the Cato Institute, American Resources Network, and the Heritage Foundation. He recently published a book on the vulnerability of America's dependence on foreign sources for a significant number of metals and minerals.

Silicon Valley businesswoman and author Ann Bridges is a collaborator and provided boxed inserts from her previous writings on the worldwide impact of technology, the emergence of China, mining, and individual and marketplace freedom. She is now associated with the Heartland Foundation.

The book's subjects are the minerals and metals indispensable for America's current standard of living. But unlike energy for which we are now nearly self-sufficient, the United States is chronically import-reliant on other nations for the metals, minerals, and materials required for our country's economic health, infrastructure, and defense.

Mineral imports have steadily increased over the past three decades because land withdrawals, draconian permitting requirements, bureaucratic delays, and blanket environmental opposition have made it nearly impossible to access known deposits and explore for new resources within our own country. Strategic stockpile sales by unconcerned executive branches have exacerbated the potentially dire situation.

Now there is nowhere near enough domestic mining to meet our robust and growing demand not only for traditional consumer industries but even more so if a transition to the so-called "green economy" transpires.

As I pointed out in the above musing and as referenced in Mamula's book, the United States of America is 25-100% dependent on foreign sources for 64 of the 97 minerals, metals, and materials analyzed on an annual basis by the USGS.

Americans should be concerned not only because of our dependence on other countries for the majority of essential industrial commodities but also because of the countries that we are most dependent on.

Let's look specifically at the foreign governments that are unfriendly, unstable, and/or corrupt and the number of materials for which we import a quarter or more (25%) of annual demand:

- China is our primary, secondary or tertiary source for 31 commodities, mainly specialty metals and industrial minerals with small world markets.

- Russia is an important source for 12 commodities, including five major metals and one major agricultural mineral.

- South Africa is the largest supplier of six major metals and a significant supplier of two industrial minerals.

- Other countries with high geopolitical risk that supply significant percentages of one or more minerals include Bolivia, Gabon, Georgia, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, and Ukraine.

Folks, this is not exactly a who's who list of the countries you would like to visit on your next overseas vacation.

The nation's vulnerability to a mineral embargo is similar to or even worse than the oil embargos of the 1970s. But our situation has only belatedly become of serious concern.

After Bush Sr., Clinton, Bush Jr., and Obama initiated, accelerated, ignored, and exacerbated our mineral dependence respectively, it took a political disruptor, President Donald J. Trump, to address this monumental problem. In December 2017, he issued an Executive Order designed to ensure security and reliability of critical domestic mineral supplies for America's future.

Here's another sad but true statistic: Of the 64 mineral commodities for which America depends significantly on foreign governments, we hold strategic stockpiles of only 14.

Moreover, the US government is presently selling two stockpiled metals imported from the following regimes: chromium at 69%, sourced from South Africa, Russia, and Kazakhstan; and manganese at 100%, sourced from South Africa, Gabon, and Georgia, plus Australia.

In a series of chapters, Ned and Ann's book documents and assesses various issues from this to that, including:

- Minerals as the new "oil" and the real threat of a critical minerals embargo;

- The USA's vast, under assessed, and untapped mineral bounty;

- Our massive imports of minerals and metals from both friends and enemies;

- The critical rare earth element supply chain, our abundant resources, and our failure to recover them from the waste streams of many domestic mining operations;

- Our country's uranium resources and the debacles that have caused us to import 98% of our annual nuclear fuel requirements;

- A rogue Obama-era EPA that politicized and criminally faked data to stop Alaska's Pebble copper project from even undergoing the environmental impact statement required by law;

- Decades of the undermining of versus mining of America's mineral wealth via land withdrawals, permitting delays, and unregulated or simply ignored foreign direct investment.

Any good work not only points out problems but also provides suggested solutions and the authors do that in the final three chapters:

- Make mining our own business by following peer country models, updating environmental assessment processes, reversing blanket mineral withdrawals, and lobbying politicians in Congress.

- Steps designed to provide federal support for responsible mineral development, production, and stockpiling.

- Recommendations on mineral policy that will defend America's national security, revamp the federal role, conserve the environment, reach the populace beyond the D.C. beltway, and regain our independence.

This 276-page book is well-written, researched, and organized. It is replete with a short appendix of the Presidential Executive and Department of Interior Orders, numerous references arranged by chapter, and an index. My sole complaint is that many of the figures are small black and white reproductions and are hard to decipher.

I would also suggest that it is the three branches of the United States federal government that have thrown us into the quagmire. For this reason, I do not wholly subscribe to some of the authors' ideas that the involvement of a largely unresponsive and often antagonistic federal bureaucracy is the solution.

I simply favor that the government reset to reasonable access, policy, and regulation for mineral exploration, development, and production, streamline the permitting process with less bureaucracy, and let free enterprise operate without delays and unnecessary restrictions.

In my opinion, appropriating more funds for committees, studies, grants, credits, and subsidies will not accomplish the goal and only deepen the already unmanageable debt of our country.

I say let's keep the D.C. swamp, the Deep State, and the forever-warring agenda of the military-industrial complex out of this if we really and truly want to make American mining great again.

Nevertheless, Mamula and Bridges are to be heartily congratulated for their ongoing efforts to educate the public, policy-making bureaucrats, and politicians on the real threat of mineral dependence facing our country.

That said, we are faced with a daunting though not impossible task going forward that is made more difficult now that the-do-nothing-but-oppose-the-President Dems control the US House of Representatives. We can only hope that politicians on both sides choose to work together *now* on this issue and for the benefit of all Americans, their progeny, and generations to come.

If not, I guess we must toss out the current cabal of crooks in the next election and try again via the old wash, rinse, and repeat cycle.

The authors advise that *Groundbreaking! America's New Quest for Mineral Independence* is available in print ($29.99) and e-book ($19.99) wherever books are sold, including Amazon, Apple iTunes, Kobo, and more. I have a copy and urge that you get one, too.

Ciao for now,

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The **Mercenary Geologist Michael S. "Mickey" Fulp** is a Certified Professional Geologist with a B.Sc. Earth Sciences with honor from the University of Tulsa, and M.Sc. Geology from the University of New Mexico. Mickey has 35 years experience as an exploration geologist and analyst searching for economic deposits of base and precious metals, industrial minerals, uranium, coal, oil and gas, and water in North and South America, Europe, and Asia.

Mickey worked for junior explorers, major mining companies, private companies, and investors as a consulting economic geologist for over 20 years, specializing in geological mapping, property evaluation, and business development. In addition to Mickey's professional credentials and experience, he is high-altitude proficient, and is bilingual in English and Spanish. From 2003 to 2006, he made four outcrop ore discoveries in Peru, Nevada, Chile, and British Columbia.

Mickey is well-known and highly respected throughout the mining and exploration community due to his ongoing work as an analyst, writer, and speaker.

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