

NioCorp Applauds White House Executive Order on Critical Minerals; Predicts Initiative May Spark a New Era of Expanded Investment in U.S. Minerals Production

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CENTENNIAL, Colo., Dec. 21, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [NioCorp Developments Ltd.](#) (“NioCorp” or the "Company”) (TSX:NB) (OTCQX:NIOBF) (FSE:BR3) today applauded the leadership of the White House in issuing an Executive Order yesterday aimed at accelerating U.S. production of critical minerals upon which the U.S. is largely import dependent.

“The Executive Order signed this week by President Donald J. Trump marks a significant departure from U.S. Executive Branch policy priorities of recent years because of its focus on actively and aggressively supporting increased mining and processing in the U.S. of critical minerals,” said NioCorp Executive Chairman and CEO Mark Smith. “It goes further in this regard than any other such Presidential directive I have seen in my more than 36 years in this industry.”

“First and foremost, it establishes some very important policy directives to all federal agencies,” Mr. Smith said. “For example, it dictates that it is now ‘the policy of the Federal Government to reduce the Nation’s vulnerability to disruptions in the supply of critical minerals, which constitutes a strategic vulnerability for the security and prosperity of the United States.’ It calls for ‘increasing activity at all levels of the supply chain, including exploration, mining, concentration, separation, alloying, recycling, and reprocessing critical minerals.’ It directs federal agencies to ‘promote streamlining leasing and permitting processes to expedite exploration, production, processing, reprocessing, recycling, and domestic refining of critical minerals.’”

“Further, it sets a timeline of only 60 days for Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Defense Secretary James Mattis to identify a list of critical minerals that will become the focus of federal efforts under the Executive Order,” Mr. Smith said. “This is an aggressive timeline for action that signals to me that the President intends to place a high priority on this effort.”

“In my estimation, this Executive Order may provide the spark that launches a new era of expanded investment and growth in the environmentally responsible production of critical minerals in the U.S.,” said Mr. Smith. “We very much welcome such a forceful statement of Administrative policy, and we applaud President Trump’s and Secretary’s Zinke’s leadership in this regard.”

Mr. Smith noted: “Critical minerals are defined in yesterday’s Executive Order as ‘(i) a non-fuel mineral or mineral material essential to the economic and national security of the United States, (ii) the supply chain of which is vulnerable to disruption, and (iii) that serves an essential function in the manufacturing of a product, the absence of which would have significant consequences for our economy or our national security.’ Under these definitions, all three of the superalloy metals – niobium, scandium, and titanium – planned for production by NioCorp at its Nebraska-based Elk Creek Project should qualify. In fact, I believe that the Elk Creek Project may land in the sweet spot of criticality under this Executive Order.”

“We look forward to working closely with the Trump Administration, the Congress, and state and local leaders in Nebraska as the policies and initiatives of this Executive Order are further refined and implemented,” Mr. Smith concluded.

On Behalf of the Board of Directors,

"Mark Smith"

Mark Smith
Executive Chairman, CEO, and Director

Source: [NioCorp Developments Ltd.](#)
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About NioCorp

NioCorp is developing a superalloy materials project in Southeast Nebraska that will produce Niobium, Scandium, and Titanium. Niobium is used to produce superalloys as well as High Strength, Low Alloy ("HSLA") steel, which is a lighter, stronger steel used in automotive, structural, and pipeline applications. Scandium is a superalloy material that can be combined with Aluminum to make alloys with increased strength and improved corrosion resistance. Scandium also is a critical component of advanced solid oxide fuel cells. Titanium is used in various superalloys and is a key component of pigments used in paper, paint and plastics and is also used for aerospace applications, armor and medical implants.

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