

Japan 'rare earth' haul sparks hopes of cutting China reliance

Notes & Cues:	<p>Article:</p> <p>The discovery of potentially millions of tons of valuable "rare earth" elements in sea sludge off Japan has raised hopes that Asia's number-two economy can reduce its dependence on Chinese supply. But experts warn that extracting the minerals—used in technology ranging from mobile phones to electric vehicles—is both costly and difficult, especially when buried miles deep in the ocean.</p> <p>The news made headlines internationally and in Japan, which is the world's second-largest consumer of these minerals but relies heavily on imports from China, which controls 90 percent of the highly strategic market.</p> <p>China extracted around 150, 000 tons of rare earths in 2016, according to experts, but has in the past restricted the supply amid political tensions.</p> <p>Japanese firms are working on recycling products containing rare earths to re-use the elements, developing technology without rare earths and investing in foreign mining projects in exchange for the minerals.</p> <p>Japan is not alone in trying to diversify away from China—there are currently 38 projects outside China at various stages of development, according to Adamas Intelligence, a metal and minerals research firm.</p> <p>In addition to wanting to cut reliance on China, the price of rare earths is rising due to a Chinese crackdown on illegal mining and surging demand for electric vehicles.</p>
Summary:	