September 14, 1950

The Honorable Joseph C. O'Mahoney
Chairman, Committee on Interior and
Insular Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator O'Mahoney:

I have discussed with you several times during the past couple of years the importance of the Central and South American countries as a source of strategic and critical minerals and materials. As you know, most of the minerals and materials, of which we do not produce enough for domestic consumption, are classified in that manner.

My experience in the industrial engineering business has always led me to believe that the Western Hemisphere could become practically self-sufficient in all of such strategic and critical minerals and materials if the sources were properly recognized and development encouraged. Take rubber, for example. As you know, with our synthetic plants a relatively small amount of natural rubber is required. Natural rubber might cost a little more per pound in Brazil, but a large part of our supply could come from that source if dependable long-range contracts were made with producers at a very small additional price, if any, above Far Eastern sources. Then, in case of national emergency, we could defend and step up the Brazilian sources of production and keep the sea lanes open much easier than we could in the Far East.

The same is true of tin from Bolivia; platinum from Colombia; tanning materials from the Argentine and Paraguay; vanadium from Peru; wool from the Argentine and Uruguay; hides from the Argentine and Brazil; graphite from Mexico, antimony from Bolivia, Peru and Chile; mica from the Argentine, Brazil and Bolivia; asbestos from Brazil, bauxite from Brazil; quartz-crystal from Brazil; manila fiber from Central America, tin and tungsten from Bolivia, and manganese from Brazil.

Our Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs is the only Senate Committee having to do with such raw materials. Otherwise, we are dependent entirely upon the Bureau of Mines, the Munitions Board, and other scattered sources, for this information.

This is not to say that such information is not reliable. The Bureau is very accurate to the extent of their investigations, but I venture the suggestion that the attitude of our Committee toward making the Western Hemisphere as self-sufficient as possible in the event of a general national emergency might be very important, since the World War II
record of shipping such materials from South Africa and other foreign sources showed a record of submarine casualties of from 70 to 90 percent.

I believe that a subcommittee from our Interior and Insular Affairs Committee could be very helpful and constructive through furnishing personal contact with the officials of these countries and through original sources gathering additional information, and in correlating the available information for the Committee.

Naturally, to visit as many of the countries as possible, the trip would have to be made by plane, and practically every minute utilized in the work, and I estimate a fair job could be done in that manner in about 60 to 70 days. The Committee might leave either just before or just following the election, and return very early in January, or at any time determined by the Committee.

Speaking as one member of the Committee, I think it is worth while and would like to be a member of such a subcommittee delegated to the task of presenting to our committee a preliminary report, including existing data on the subject of the possibility of enlarging our supply of strategic and critical minerals from Central and South American sources in the interests of national safety of the Western Hemisphere.

I am enclosing a copy of the report on Strategic and Critical Materials made by a Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs during the 77th Congress. This committee was headed by Senator Thomas of Utah, but since he was very busy on other work, Senator Johnson of Colorado acted as Chairman most of the time. I acted as their special consultant on strategic and critical minerals and materials.

You will note the nature of the report. It was just prior to World War II when everyone had begun to suspect we were due to take a part in the European war, and it was suddenly realized that we were dangerously short of all such materials.

If such a subcommittee were to be appointed, it would be a continuation of my work with the Senate Military Affairs Committee during World War II. I was also Special Consultant to the Secretary of War in 1941.

I would appreciate it if you would take the matter up at the next meeting of the Committee.

Sincerely,

George W. Malone

Enclosure