

## U.S. NEWS

## U.S. Is Pressed to Ratify Sea Convention

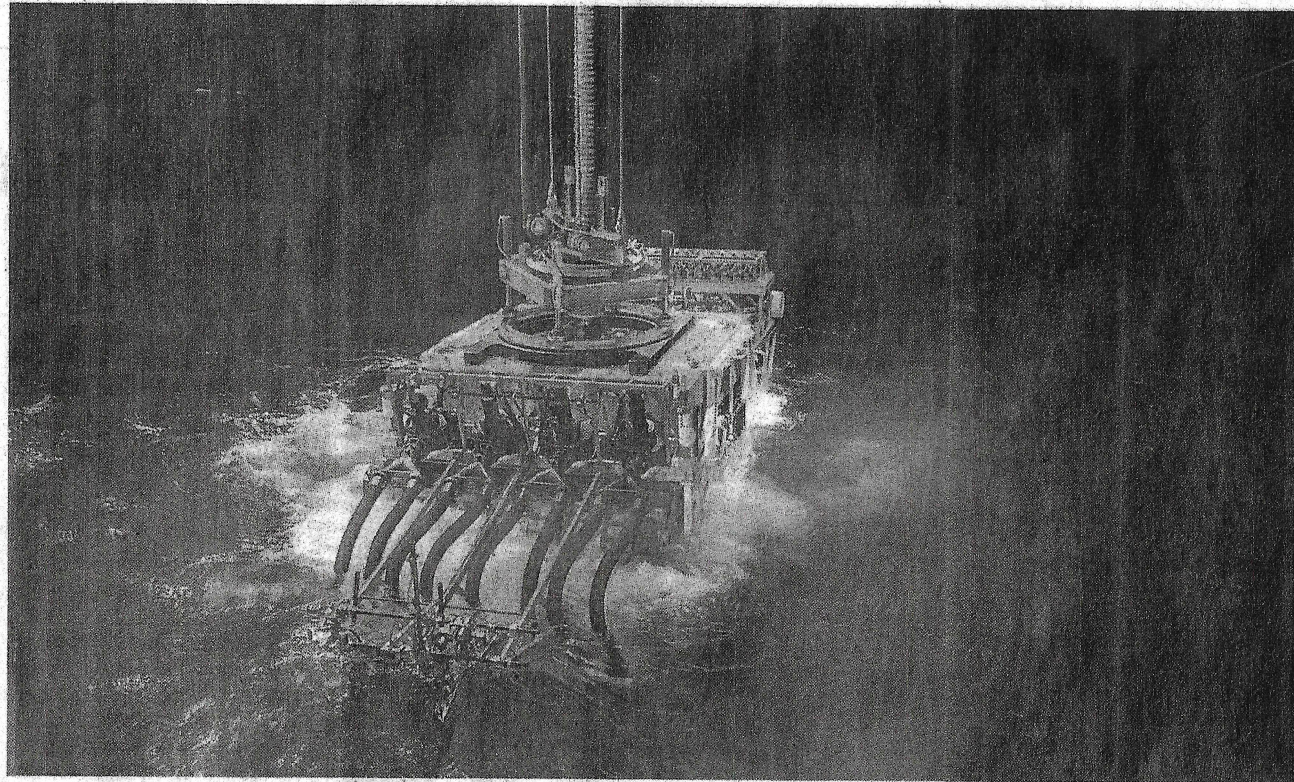
Ex-officials aim to spur seabed mining as country faces China competition

By YUSUF KHAN

An influential group of former military and political leaders are calling for the U.S. to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, in an effort to spur the country's interest in deep-sea mining amid competition with China for critical minerals.

In a draft letter seen by The Wall Street Journal, former U.S. statesmen and women and retired U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps and intelligence personnel—including former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and former Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte—are calling on Senate leaders to ratify the treaty in a bid for the country to stake its claim over areas of international waters where minerals such as cobalt and nickel, considered critical for the energy transition and in defense applications, can be sourced.

"We have already lost two of our four 'USA' designated deep seabed mine sites, each containing a trillion dollars in value of the strategic minerals of copper, nickel, cobalt, manganese and rare earths; miner-



A seabed-mining robot is lowered into the Pacific Ocean. Political support in the U.S. for deep-sea mining has been ramping up.

als critical both for United States security dominance as well as the transition to a greener twenty-first Century," the letter, addressed to Sen. Ben Cardin (D., Md.) and Sen. Jim Risch (R., Idaho), said.

"Continued inaction on the Treaty means a likely quick loss of our remaining two 'USA' designated sites. More-

over, China has moved forward to obtain five sites and the Russian Federation three and they are also moving to obtain a monopoly on refining of these strategic minerals," the letter added.

The Law of the Sea Treaty, which came into effect in 1994, is an international agreement establishing the le-

gal framework for maritime and marine activities. The U.S. recognizes the treaty but never ratified it.

In terms of mining the seabed, that means the country is not a voting member of the International Seabed Authority, the governing body for seabed activities in international waters. As a nonvoting member

the U.S. has no say on laws pertaining to the seabed and can't be awarded exploration contracts to mine the seafloor in international waters. China currently has five.

The ISA and its members are due to meet next week at its headquarters in Kingston, Jamaica, where they will be hashing out the final parts of the

mining code—the set of laws and regulations that will eventually govern seabed mining.

Deep-sea mining remains controversial but its proponents argue that mining the seafloor for minerals avoids the kind of harm associated with land-based mining, both environmentally and socially. Its critics say, however, that it would be damaging an environment that is largely untouched by humans.

The letter itself has 331 initial signatories, including Adm. Dennis Blair, former director of national intelligence and former commander in chief, U.S. Pacific Command, and Adm. Jonathan Greenert, former chief of naval operations.

Political support in the U.S. for deep-sea mining has been ramping up. On Tuesday, Rep. Carol Miller (R., W.Va.) and Rep. John Joyce (R., Pa.) introduced a bill to Congress pushing for fiscal and policy support for deep-sea mining. Other, largely Republican politicians have also been calling for support for the industry.

"Over the last two decades, the Chinese Communist Party has strategically invested in putting a stranglehold on global critical mineral supply chains," said Joyce on Tuesday. "It's vital to our security and economic interests that the CCP controlled monopoly on these materials is broken."