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Rare Earths More Common

By The Moscow Times

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TOKYO — Vast deposits of rare earth minerals, crucial in the electronics industry, have been found on the floor of the Pacific Ocean and can be readily extracted, Japanese scientists said Monday.

"Just one square kilometer of deposits will be able to provide one-fifth of the current global annual consumption," said University of Tokyo associate professor of earth science Yasuhiro Kato, who made the discovery with a team that included researchers from the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology.

They found the minerals in sea mud extracted from depths of 3,500 to 6,000 meters below the ocean surface at 78 locations in international waters east and west of Hawaii, as well as east of Tahiti in French Polynesia. Kato estimated the deposits contained 80 billion to 100 billion tons of rare earths, compared with global reserves currently confirmed by the U.S. Geological Survey of just 110 million tons, found mainly in China, Russia and other former Soviet countries, and the United States.

(Reuters)

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