

# PRESS RELEASE

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## NIOBIUM-TANTALUM – SMART METALS FOR PHONES AND BONES

**A new guide to niobium and tantalum has been published by the British Geological Survey (BGS) on its [www.MineralsUK.com](http://www.MineralsUK.com) website. These little-known metals have some unique properties which make them essential ingredients in a wide range of products, from mobile phones to artificial hips.**

As commodity prices rise and access to some raw materials becomes more difficult, a small group of so-called 'critical metals' is causing particular concern. Niobium and tantalum are two of the most widely used metals on this critical list. Because of their unique properties and their essential role in the manufacture of steel and electronic capacitors, they are hard to substitute. Supply concerns surrounding these metals have been heightened because illegal mining of niobium-tantalum ore (sometimes known as 'Coltan') has been linked to conflict in some parts of Africa.



**Dark coloured tantalite with pale albite, Minas Gerais, Brazil**  
(Attribution: Rob Lavinsky, irocks.com (<http://irocks.com/>)-CC-BY-SA-3.0)

The newly-published Niobium-Tantalum Commodity Profile from the BGS provides a concise, authoritative and easy to understand guide to the origins, production and trade of these important metals.



Andrew Bloodworth, Head of Minerals and Waste at the BGS said:

“Our profile on niobium and tantalum is the latest in a much-respected series from the BGS on critical metals, including rare earths, platinum and tungsten. Its publication is timely as it follows the recent release of the report of the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee inquiry into Strategically Important Metals which calls for more understanding of the role of these metals in our economy”.

The Niobium-Tantalum Commodity Profile is available here:

[www.bgs.ac.uk/downloads/start.cfm?id=2033](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/downloads/start.cfm?id=2033)

**\*Ends\***

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### **Notes for Editors**

The following are available for interview:

- Andrew Bloodworth, Head of Minerals and Waste, British Geological Survey

For additional information go to: [www.bgs.ac.uk/mineralsuk/home.html](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/mineralsuk/home.html)

Photographs are available from our ftp server:

[ftp://ftp.bgs.ac.uk/pubload/cjmi/Niobium-Tantalum\\_Commodity\\_Profile](ftp://ftp.bgs.ac.uk/pubload/cjmi/Niobium-Tantalum_Commodity_Profile)

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House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report “Strategically Important Metals”:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmsctech/726/72602.htm>

### **The British Geological Survey**

The British Geological Survey (BGS), a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), is the nation's principal supplier of objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise and information for decision making for governmental, commercial and individual users. The BGS maintains and develops the nation's understanding of its geology to improve policy making, enhance national wealth and reduce risk. It also collaborates with the national and international scientific community in carrying out research in strategic areas, including energy and natural resources, our vulnerability to environmental change and hazards, and our general knowledge of the Earth system. More about the BGS can be found at [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk).