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"Don Edwards is currently a Junior at UC Merced with a major in Political Science and a minor in Psychology. He is highly passionate with international relations and it is rooted in his chosen career field as a United States Marine. Once he graduates from UC Merced he will be commissioned an officer in the United States Marine Corps and follow the path to become a Marine Corps fighter pilot. After his career in the United States Marine Corps would like to run for US Congress."



“On the Brink of War”: The options that the United States faces when confronting North Korea’s aggression.

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**Abstract**

The recent outbreak of violence on the Korean Peninsula has prompted me to explore the different options that the United States of America has when dealing with the threat of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) aspirations to obtain weapons of mass destruction. These weapons give the DPRK the offensive capability to use and launch nuclear weapons against the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Current threats from the DPRK towards the United States, ROK, and Japan should be taken very seriously due to the amount of life that could be lost. The end result of DPRK's mission is to reunify Korea. The explored options include: 1) staying the current course of increased sanctions so that the DPRK will abandon its quest to create weaponized nuclear capability and adopt a friendly or neutral stance towards the DPRK's neighbors, Republic of Korea and Japan; 2) a more extreme stance and complete blockade of all goods entering and leaving the DPRK to collapse the current regime in power; and 3) the feasibility of the removal of the current regime of the DPRK through direct military methods used by the United States of America, Japan and the Republic of Korea. This theoretical paper looks into the assets that the United States, Japan, ROK, DPRK, and China have available to conduct military operations; also it looks into each parties sustainability and logistical capability to complete such military operations. The paper also discusses continued hostilities against ROK and Japan. Due to the amount of civilian casualties that would be inflicted upon the ROK's capital, Seoul, Japan, and possibly mainland US the thought of preemptive invasion into the DPRK would be an extreme risk. Current warnings from the DPRK suggests that a blockade would be seen as an act of open aggression and will require a military response towards the US, ROK and Japan. Staying the current course and further developing the current relationship with China to increase the pressure placed on to the DPRK to disarm and dismantle weaponized nuclear armaments would be the best option for the United States of America.