



**Global  
Young  
Leaders**

WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF DALLAS/FORT WORTH

## **JWAC Lesson Plan U.S. Territories**

By: David Janise, November 2017

**Warm-Up Questions:** *What is the definition of a U.S. territory? In terms of international relations, what strategic implications do U.S. territories have from the perspective of the United States and foreign governments?*

**Discussion:** In addition to the 50 states, the U.S. is also in possession of 16 territories throughout the world; five of which are permanently inhabited. For this reason, the westernmost part of the country is not Alaska or California, but Guam. The easternmost part of the country is not Florida or Maine, but it's the U.S. Virgin Islands. Together the five inhabited territories include: American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The territories have long been a part of the U.S. and are considered as part of the U.S. 'geographical extent' in U.S. State Department documents. The territories are similar to the 50 states in that they have national parks, U.S. postal offices, and the inhabitants also are U.S. citizens. In terms of international relations and world affairs, the U.S. territories serve several key roles. For example, from a cultural perspective a territory may serve as a lynchpin in terms of a U.S. strategy to assert influence in an area. When viewed from an economic perspective the territories may have strategic value as well for the U.S. in terms of sovereign rights to resources. Finally, the U.S. may view the territories from the perspective of national security.

**Activity:** *Follow the link below to watch a short 3-minute video from the Center for Strategic & International Studies. The video addresses how, in early August 2017, North Korea threatened to launch four ballistic missiles towards Guam (targeting waters less than 30 kilometers off the island's coast). Commentary is provided regarding how and when U.S. missile defense forces would respond if an attack like this were to take place.*

Video: <http://bit.ly/2xXXn7j>

*After watching the short video, have the students read the following article: "U.S. and Guam Shielded from North Korean Missiles by High-Tech Defenses."*

Link: <http://freebeacon.com/national-security/u-s-guam-shielded-north-korean-missiles-high-tech-defenses/>

**Recap:** The United States' territories play important roles when taken into consideration from cultural, economic, and national security perspectives. *What other scenarios could you see the territories becoming involved in within the future? Think about the locations and the regional issues they represent.*



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**Call to Action:** Given the important roles that the territories play for the United States, and that the people who inhabit the territories are U.S. citizens, one way to help would be to support the recovery efforts of in Puerto Rico following hurricanes Irma and Maria. Puerto Rico currently is facing a humanitarian crisis wherein electricity, food, and clean water are scarce.

Ways to help:

- 1) Puerto Rico's first lady Beatriz Rosello has founded **Unidos por Puerto Rico** which helps to connect the private sector with those who are in need. Donation information and volunteer information can be found here: <http://www.unidosporpuertorico.com/en/>
- 2) The Nonprofit group **El Concilio** also has information on ways to help: <http://www.elconcilio.net/>
- 3) The U.S.-based volunteer disaster relief organization **All Hands** is also helping to rebuild the U.S. Virgin Islands. Link: <https://www.hands.org/projects/usvi-hurricane-response/>

### Works Cited

- Gertz, Bill. "U.S. and Guam Shielded From North Korean Missiles by High-Tech Defenses." *The Washington Free Beacon*, 10 Aug. 2017, [freebeacon.com/national-security/u-s-guam-shielded-north-korean-missiles-high-tech-defenses/](http://freebeacon.com/national-security/u-s-guam-shielded-north-korean-missiles-high-tech-defenses/). Accessed 2 Nov. 2017.
- "How It Works: Detecting a North Korean Missile Strike on Guam." *YouTube*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 28 Aug. 2017, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPgRm2ApspE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPgRm2ApspE).