

Planning for Chromite: The Partnership

When American leadership formed Joint Task Force 7 to execute the landings at Inchon, it called upon several friendly nations to contribute ships. Of the 240-ship task force, 180 were American. The United States Navy's resources were depleted due to the post-World War II drawdown, so the contribution of other nations' ships was invaluable.

Commonwealth Forces: The partnership between the United States and Great Britain forged during World War II continued in the Korean War. For Operation Chromite at Inchon, the Royal Navy deployed several of its best ships from its Far East Fleet based in Hong Kong. Leading their contingent was the light aircraft carrier HMS *Triumph* and its squadron of Seafire aircraft. Joining *Triumph* were three light cruisers, including the legendary HMS *Belfast*, ten destroyers, and ten frigates. Along with the British ships, members of the Commonwealth, including New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, all contributed vessels. Other non-Commonwealth nation ships joining the task force were the French destroyer FS *La Grandiere* and the Dutch destroyers HNLMS *Piet Hein* and *Eversten*.

South Korea: As an organized force, South Korea's navy and coast guard were only five years old in 1950 and consisted mainly of second hand American patrol craft and tugs. However, they were a highly professional force and already successfully engaged North Korean forces by the time the landings at Inchon began. The South Korean Navy contributed eleven patrol craft at the landings. They also provided liaisons that had local knowledge of Inchon to American and British ships and advised their allies where to bomb and land.

Japan: Among the most curious contributions to the Inchon landing were the offerings of Japan. Officially, Japan was still operating under American rule and did not have any of its own armed forces. However, as a part of the American reconstruction effort, the U.S. Navy handed over several dozen of its landing ship tank (LSTs) amphibious vessels to their former adversary to serve as coastal freighters after World War II ended. When the U.S. Navy realized it did not have enough of its own LSTs, it conscripted 37 Japanese-manned LSTs. To prevent any deep-seated animosity between the Koreans and the Japanese from flaring up, the Japanese LSTs flew the United Nations flag and not the Japanese flag.



(Right) The Japanese manned LST *QO-18* sits high and dry after offloading American ground forces at Inchon five days after the landings. Of the 47 LSTs used in Operation Chromite, 37 were manned by Japanese sailors.

(Left) The patrol craft *ROK Sam Kah San* departs Mare Island for home waters after being recommissioned as a South Korean vessel, June 1950. The gunboat was one of several warships acquired from U.S. Navy inventories. Eleven South Korean ships, including *Sam Kah San*, served at the Inchon landings. South Korean officers also served as valuable navigation and target acquisition advisors to American and British ships.

(Background) Seafire fighter-bombers prepare for a sortie aboard HMS *Triumph* off the coast of Inchon. Commonwealth nations contributed a large number of warships to Operation Chromite. British Commandos also helped distract enemy forces by raiding other ports north and south of Inchon in the days leading up to the landings.

