

# Conclusion

The amphibious assault at Inchon showed how the skillful use of naval force enables theater commanders to bring decisive power to bear on enemy nations touched by the sea. The cruisers, destroyers, frigates and carriers, along with UN air forces, first secured control of the Yellow Sea, the Sea of Japan and the air spaces over these waters. This unexpected display of strength led North Korea's international Communist supporters to reconsider their policies regarding the Korean peninsula.

After eliminating the North Korean air force, UN ship- and land-based air power battered military facilities in North Korea and logistical lines to

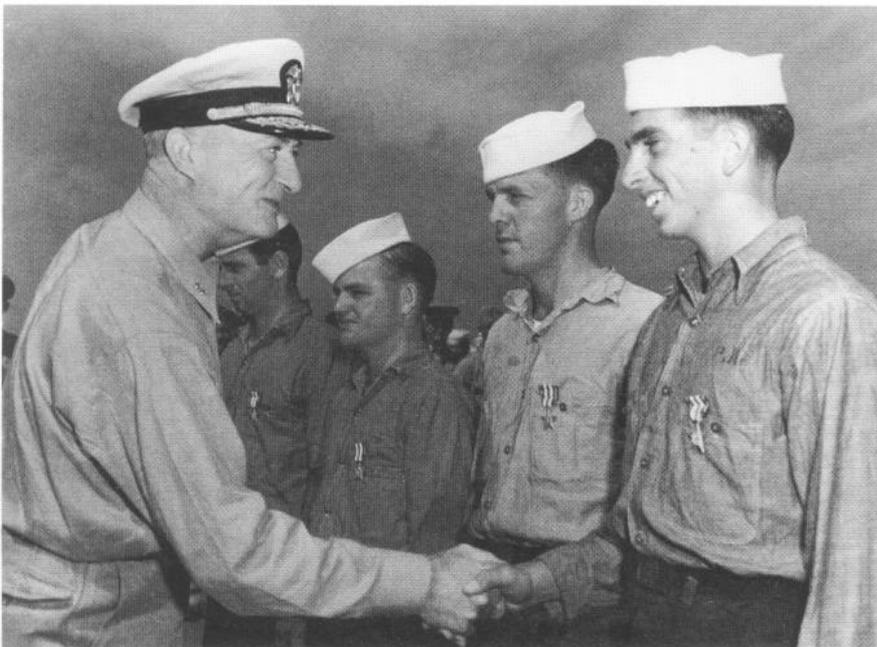
the Communist troops in South Korea. At the same time, U.S. and Royal Navy warships bombarded NKPA front-line troops and supply routes near the coasts, providing vital support to the U.S. and ROK ground units. Because of post-World War II defense cutbacks, however, the lack of ships, aircraft and material ready for combat almost doomed the UN cause in Korea in July and August 1950.

Control of the sea and the ability to assemble and organize enough merchantmen, transports and cargo ships allowed the UN command to move reinforcements to the Far East from all parts of the world. General MacArthur, the theater commander and

an experienced practitioner of amphibious warfare, knew that he now possessed a clear advantage over his enemy. He was able to choose the best time and place to strike the rear of the North Korean army. If success crowned his efforts, he would liberate South Korea.

The naval forces in the Far East, under the command of Admirals Joy, Struble and Doyle, then worked to execute MacArthur's concept. Despite the difficulties in gathering relevant intelligence and assembling the variety of units needed, these veteran commanders and their expert staffs quickly planned the assault of a site that presented many physical problems. They then coordinated the necessary naval, air and ground force for the complex operation.

Almost every type of naval unit contributed to the victory at Inchon. Carrier-based Navy and Marine planes and surface combatants prepared the battlefield and, in conjunction with the Air Force, helped to deceive the enemy about the actual invasion area. Continued attacks by naval air and surface forces throughout the landing, consolidation and breakout phases of Chromite added considerably to the woes of the North Korean defenders. Other naval units cleared Inchon's approach waters of mines. Most importantly, the sailors manning the assault ships and craft and the Marines storming the enemy's positions exhib-



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Rear Admiral James H. Doyle, who one Marine general regarded as "the best amphibious naval officer I have ever met," awards Silver Star medals for bravery to landing craft sailors (left to right) Seaman Chantey H. Vogt, Seaman William H. Tagan, Engineman Fireman Richard P. Vinson and Seaman Apprentice Paul J. Gregory.

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ited the skill and bravery necessary to the success of any opposed landing. Once ashore, the 1st Marine Division soundly defeated their foes and secured the objectives with typical courage and professional skill.

The Navy, particularly its often forgotten support services, remained critical to the success of the operation. Corpsmen, surgeons and chaplains were on hand to treat the wounded and comfort the dying. The ungainly LSTs provided essential materials and services for the beachhead. The Naval Beach Group's Seabees, UDTs, beachmasters and boat units

and the Marine Shore Party kept vehicles, equipment and supplies flowing across the beach. Transports and cargo ships brought in additional U.S. and ROK soldiers and Marines. Oilers, tenders and stores ships supplied combatants on station, enabling the fleet to remain off Inchon and to provide the ground forces with continued naval air and gunfire support.

Often in war, good intelligence, careful planning and bold execution favor one side with relatively light casualties, and this was the case at Inchon. During the first seven days of Chromite, the joint task force counted

approximately 70 killed, 470 wounded and five missing. Because of the bloody fighting for Seoul, the toll rose to 600 killed, 2,750 wounded and 65 missing. At the same time, UN forces killed 14,000 North Korean soldiers and captured another 7,000.

Of greater importance, Admiral Struble's joint task force carried out the theater commander's directive to strike the NKPA a lethal blow and drive the aggressors from the Republic of Korea. To General MacArthur, "the Navy and Marines . . . never shone more brightly" than at Inchon.

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## Suggested Reading List and Sources

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