

WWII Doolittle Raid

April 18, 1942



**James Harold Doolittle, 0-271885, Lieutenant General, promoted to General in 1985
Pilot Crew 1
Born December 14, 1896, Alameda, California
Died September 27, 1993, Carmel, California**

Tokyo. April 18, 1942. A clear and quiet morning. The one hundred and thirty-third day of Japan's war with the United States. Everything seemed normal in the island empire's sprawling capital. Tokyo staged an air raid drill that Saturday morning, but it bore little realism. No sirens sounded. Air raid wardens gazed at a placid sky. Fire-fighting brigades trundled their equipment through the streets. Barrage balloons rose along the waterfront. It all seemed a matter of going through the motions.

At about noon the drill came to an uneventful end. Because no sirens had announced its beginning, none signaled its conclusion. War workers laid down their tools and began their midday break. Millions of other Tokyo residents went shopping, visited parks and shrines, attended festivals, and watched baseball games.

Although their nation was now engaged in a world war, Tokyo's citizens had reason enough to feel secure. Radio Tokyo had repeatedly assured the people that they, their nation, and, most importantly, Emperor Hirohito, were safe from enemy attack.

Their kamikaze mystique constituted a spiritual fortress around the Japanese homeland. No foreign attacker had seriously threatened Japan's sacred soil since Kublai Khan in 1281. And on that occasion a

violent storm had turned back and devastated the Mongol invader's fleet; the Japanese called the magical occurrence kamikaze—'divine wind.'

Now the nation's defenders had far more tangible forces—antiaircraft guns, warships, and aircraft—with which to shield Japan. These man-wrought defenses, in harmony with Heaven's will, seemed powerful enough to insure the safety of the home islands.

The Japanese, indeed, basked in a sense of euphoria. During the previous four and a half months their armed forces had scored triumph after triumph on the war fronts of the Pacific. 'Victory fever' swept the land.

Minutes after noon, the sense of serenity enveloping the capital suddenly shattered. Here and there on the outskirts of Tokyo, dark-green planes appeared, flying so low that they almost touched the ground. People on beaches, or riding bicycles, or walking along roads paused to glance up at the fleeting shapes. Quite a few waved at the fast-moving, twin-engined aircraft.

A French journalist rushed outside: 'I heard a rugged, powerful sound of airplane engines. A raid at high noon! Explosions. I spotted a dark airplane traveling very fast, at rooftop level. So they've come!'

Now air raid sirens belatedly shrieked. Fighter planes took off. Bursts of antiaircraft fire smudged the sky.

At first the people in the streets did not understand what they were seeing. Then, when they understood, they could not quite believe. High noon in Tokyo. Dark planes with white stars painted on them. Americans!

History would dub it the 'Tokyo Raid' or the 'Doolittle Raid'—after its legendary leader, Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle. A startling attack by American bombers that seemed to appear out of nowhere—only to vanish as suddenly as they had appeared. An assault on Japanese pride that left a firebrand mark. A feat of flying that seemed impossible—yet one that with dash and daring actually had been achieved.

For Americans, still gripped by the shock of Pearl Harbor, the spring of 1942 was a time of testing. Time magazine summed up the mood: 'The Japanese had attacked the great U.S. island-bridge which stretches to the Orient. It was premeditated murder. The nation had taken a heavy blow.'

Japanese troops had smashed into Hong Kong, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies. They had captured Wake and Guam. The fall of the Philippines was at hand. The Hawaiian Islands would soon stand as America's last Pacific outpost. U.S. authorities even feared that Japanese forces might strike the American mainland. Day after day, all of the news was bad.

The Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor had infuriated President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In meeting after meeting with his military chiefs—General George C. Marshall of the U.S. Army, General Henry H. 'Hap' Arnold of the U.S. Army Air Corps and Admiral Ernest J. King of the U.S. Navy—Roosevelt urged that

they find a way to bomb Japan. He sought the means to bring home to Japan some measure of the real meaning of war.

The plan eventually adopted for the daring raid originated not with a flier but with a submarine officer, Captain Francis Low, operations officer for Admiral King. In mid-January, Low had been sent to Norfolk, Virginia, to look over the Navy's newest aircraft carrier, the USS Hornet. While at the naval air station there, he noticed the outline of a flight deck painted on one of the runways. Navy fliers used the depiction to practice carrier landings and takeoffs.

As Low stared, twin-engined Army bombers swept overhead on a mock bombing attack. In a split-second—as the planes' shadows raced along the carrier shape—he had it. What if Army bombers could take off from an aircraft carrier? U.S. commanders dared not attempt a carrier attack against Japan using short-range Navy aircraft, because the enemy's shore-based planes could detect and attack the ships before they arrived at their launch point. But Army bombers could reach much farther. A long-range punch using such planes might catch Japanese defenders with their guard down.

That night, Low tried his idea on Admiral King. 'You may have something,' replied the taciturn admiral. He asked Captain Donald Duncan, his air officer, to turn Low's glimmer into something more concrete. Duncan worked on the scenario for five days. Then, in longhand, he wrote out the plan. The script, envisioning a dramatic surprise attack on Japan's major cities by U.S. Army bombers launched from an aircraft carrier, projected the very sort of dramatic retribution that Roosevelt—and America—so intently desired.

General Arnold selected Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle as the man who would marshal the aircraft and men for the mission. By age 45, 'Jimmy' Doolittle had earned flying fame perhaps second only to that of Charles A. Lindbergh. Doolittle was one of the leather-jacket breed: aviation pioneers who had flown in open cockpits, with goggles pushed up and eyes on the horizon—larger-than-life figures like Eddie Rickenbacker, Billy Mitchell, and Roscoe Turner.

A stunt flier, a test pilot, and an Army Air Corps officer, Doolittle had always been entranced with planes—and with finding out how high, how fast, and how well they could fly. The steel-nerved airman had set aviation speed records. He had won the 'Big Three' air races—the Schneider Cup, the Bendix Trophy, and the Thompson Trophy. He had performed the first outside loop. He had scored a first in 'blind flying.' And beyond these accomplishments, he had earned a doctor of aeronautical science degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. If it had wings and looked like a plane, chances were good that Jimmy Doolittle either had flown or could fly it.

Doolittle accepted the challenge without hesitation. Arnold made it clear, however, that it was Doolittle the planner he wanted for this job, not Doolittle the pilot. Jimmy was twenty years older than many of the new crop of fliers. And he had too much know-how, Arnold felt, to risk on a dangerous combat mission.

In early February, Doolittle dutifully put details on paper. 'The purpose of this special project,' he wrote, 'is to bomb and fire the industrial center of Japan.' Eighteen* Army B-25s carried to within four or five hundred miles of the Japanese home islands by a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier would be launched in predawn

darkness, reaching their military and industrial targets in the Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka-Kobe, and Nagoya sectors at first light. Each plane would carry four five-hundred-pound demolition and incendiary bombs.

Because carrier landings were impossible for the ten-ton aircraft, this would be a one-way mission. Instead of returning to their launch point after the raid, the planes would continue west to the Asian mainland, arriving at fields in China or the Soviet Union. Doolittle estimated the chances for the mission's success at fifty-fifty.

Although Vladivostok was closer to the targets than any available landing fields in China, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin would soon rule out that destination. Already hard-pressed by Germany's invading army, he was not about to risk Japanese enmity by giving aid to Americans who had just bombed Japan's home islands.

Thus thwarted, Washington turned to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Marshall and Arnold asked—forcefully—that he permit American raiders to land in eastern China. The bombers would home in on a radio signal at Chuchow, two hundred miles south of Shanghai. After landing at fields there and refueling, they would continue on another eight hundred miles to Chungking, the wartime capital deep in the heart of China. Although fearful of Japanese reprisals, Chiang Kai-shek reluctantly assented.

Despite Arnold's wishes to the contrary, Doolittle deliberately wrote himself into the script as pathfinder. He would pilot the first B-25 off the carrier. His plane would illuminate Tokyo with incendiaries as a beacon for the fliers following him.

Doolittle and Duncan had concurred that the North American B-25—a twin-engined, high-winged medium bomber—was the only aircraft capable of meeting the mission requirements. The five-man plane could carry a ton of bombs at close to three hundred miles per hour. It had an impressive two-thousand-mile range. Best of all, the plane was compact: 53 feet long with a wingspan a shade wider than 67 feet.

The make-or-break question was whether a B-25 could take off from an aircraft carrier. Duncan arranged to hoist two B-25s, stripped to their lightest weights, aboard the Hornet at Norfolk. Then the big ship put to sea.

In a light snowfall off the Virginia coast, puzzled sailors watched as an Army pilot gunned the first B-25's engines and then, at the launch officer's signal, released the brakes. The bomber rolled forward, the carrier's motion into the wind giving it a running start. The plane became airborne almost immediately, its right wing tip barely missing the ship's 'island' structure. The second B-25 followed suit. Word went to Doolittle. With care and luck, the takeoffs could be accomplished.

Admiral King ordered the Hornet's skipper, Captain Marc Mitscher, to have the carrier ready to sail by March 1. He was to proceed through the Panama Canal to the West Coast.

For his planes and fliers, Doolittle turned to the Seventeenth Bombardment Group, a B-25 unit based at Pendleton, Oregon. He asked for, and got, 24 aircraft and about 140 volunteers—pilots, copilots, navigators, bombardiers, and flight engineer/gunners.

Briefing the volunteers soon after their arrival at Eglin Field on Florida's Gulf Coast, Doolittle warned that this would be a top-secret and extremely hazardous mission. It would take them out of the United States for a few weeks. Beyond that, he could disclose few details. Anyone who wanted to bow out should do so now. No one did.

Throughout March, the B-25 pilots practiced short-field takeoffs. Coached by Lieutenant Henry Miller, a Navy flight instructor, the Army men learned to hang on their props, fighter style. Flags every fifty feet along the runway's edge helped them gauge the minimum distance required to get their planes airborne. 'We practiced, over and over, ramming the engines at full power,' says copilot Jack Sims, 'taking off at 65 miles per hour in a five-hundred-foot run. It could be done, as long as an engine didn't skip a beat.'

Doolittle, at his own say-so, also trained and qualified at the short runs.

Flights over the Gulf of Mexico gave navigators experience above open water. Pilots and bombardiers practiced low-level bombing runs across the hills of Texas, New Mexico, and Kansas. The B-25s flew so low they ducked under high-tension power lines.

Flight Surgeon Thomas White asked to join the mission. Much as the presence of a doctor would be appreciated, the only way one could take part would be as a full-fledged crew member. With hurry-up gunnery training, White won an assignment as gunner/surgeon.

To extend the B-25s' range, technicians installed 225-gallon auxiliary fuel tanks in the planes' bomb bays and replaced the bottom turret mechanism with a 60-gallon tank. Engineers at the Martin Aircraft Company designed a 160-gallon collapsible tank for use in the crawlway over the bomb bay.

Gunnery and bombing officer C. Ross Greening came up with two homemade innovations. The mission was too risky to use the highly classified Norden bombsight, and the complex mechanism was not suitable for low-level runs anyway. Greening devised a two-piece gadget—at a cost of twenty cents—in its place. And to discourage enemy fighter planes, he mounted two broomsticks, painted black to resemble gun barrels, in each bomber's tail cone.

By the end of March, Doolittle knew that the men were mission-fit—and that he had chosen the right lead pilot: himself. Arnold still insisted he needed Doolittle in Washington. Doolittle felt he was needed over Tokyo: 'I know more about this mission than anyone else. And I know how to lead it.' Arnold, with reluctance, finally agreed.

Late in March, 22 B-25s and their crews flew from Eglin to McClellan Field near Sacramento, California. After final maintenance, they continued on to Alameda Naval Air Station near Oakland, California. There, cranes hoisted 16 of the planes aboard the carrier Hornet.

On the afternoon of April 2, with the dark-green bombers lashed onto its flight deck, the aircraft carrier, escorted by two cruisers, four destroyers, and an oiler, sailed into the Pacific. The Hornet had just cleared the Golden Gate Bridge when the bosun's whistle sounded, and Captain Mitscher announced over the public address system that 'the target of this task force is Tokyo!' The ship's crew broke out in cheers.

It would take a phalanx of U.S. Navy warships—Task Force 16—to get the Doolittle Raiders within striking distance of Japan. On April 8, Admiral William Halsey led the second half of this force—built around the aircraft carrier Enterprise—out of Pearl Harbor. Five days later, the two groups rendezvoused in the North Pacific.

Halsey, in overall command of the task force, hoped to close to within about 400 miles of the Japanese coast before launching the B-25s. There was a taste of retribution in the sea air. Just as Kido Butai, the Japanese task force, had moved furtively eastward across the North Pacific toward Pearl Harbor four months earlier, so now American ships stealthily sailed westward toward Japan. The stakes were high. The task force was sailing boldly into treacherous waters. The Hornet and Enterprise represented half of America's carrier strength in the Pacific. The lives of thousands of American sailors on 16 warships were at risk.

With the Hornet's own planes stored below the flight deck to make room for Doolittle's bombers, the task force relied on the Enterprise to provide scouting and air cover. Ships' radars scanned the seas ahead for enemy ships and aircraft. Task Force 16 steamed almost due west at twenty knots through rain, fog, and heavy seas.

Doolittle allowed each crew to pick its targets. Some wanted to bomb the Imperial Palace. He forbade this, not out of regard for Emperor Hirohito, but because such an assault would only inflame Japan's fighting spirit.

The fliers devoted hours to poring over their target maps. 'Doc' White held first aid sessions. Commander Frank Akers, the Hornet's navigator, helped his Army counterparts sharpen their skills. Lieutenant Commander Steve Jurika, an intelligence officer, gave the men briefings about Japan and taught them a phrase that he thought was Chinese for 'I am an American.'

The hand-picked flight crews felt confident. Their training had been thorough. They would be given the best chance that the Navy could get for them. But most of them had never experienced combat.

One night, Corporal Jacob DeShazer, bombardier for Plane No. 16, 'Bat Out of Hell,' stood alone on the flight deck. 'I began to wonder how many more days I was to spend in this world,' he recalled. 'Maybe I wasn't so fortunate, after all, to get to go on this trip.'

Task Force 16 was due for an unpleasant surprise. Even before Mitscher's ships had rendezvoused with Halsey's, the enemy knew they were coming. During April 10-12, Japanese fleet radio intelligence picked up messages transmitted between the two task groups and Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese command calculated that the Americans would have to close to within about three hundred miles of the coast to make a carrier strike. That distance marked the outer limit for U.S. Navy planes flying out from and back to their carriers. The Japanese Twenty-Sixth Air Flotilla put 69 land-based bombers on alert. Ranging out as far as six hundred miles, they would hit the carrier force before its planes could be launched.

Unknown to the commanders of Task Force 16, Japan had yet another line of defense—a flotilla of radio-equipped trawlers situated along an arc about six hundred miles out from the coastline. Any enemy force crossing that line was in jeopardy of being seen and reported by a picket boat.

On April 14, back in Washington, D.C., Admiral King went to the White House to give the president the first detailed information that Roosevelt had of the planned raid.

On April 16-17, the tempo of preparations aboard the Hornet increased. Deck crews moved the B-25s to the rear of the flight deck in preparation for launch. Fueling teams topped off the bombers' gas tanks. Ordnancemen hoisted four bombs into each aircraft, and the Army gunners loaded .30- and .50-caliber ammunition. Flight engineers checked and rechecked the planes' mechanical and hydraulic systems.

By the morning of the seventeenth, when the American vessels had closed to within about 1,200 miles of Tokyo, the task force refueled from the oilers. Then, at 2:40 p.m., the two carriers and four cruisers increased speed to 28 knots for the final run to the launch point. The destroyers and oilers soon disappeared astern.

At 3 a.m. on April 18, radar operators aboard the Enterprise picked up images of two small ships about 11 miles ahead. 'General quarters' sounded, startling the task-force crew members, and especially the Doolittle Raiders. Halsey veered the task force to starboard to avoid the contacts.

Day dawned gray. A scout plane from the Enterprise, forty miles out at 5:58 a.m., spotted a Japanese patrol boat. Maintaining radio silence, the pilot scrawled his sighting report, placed it in a canvas bag, then dropped it on the carrier's deck.

Halsey again shifted course. Pitching and rolling in thirty-foot swells, the fast-moving ships swept in and out of rain squalls. Each mile gained brought the Army fliers closer to their objectives—and placed the task force in greater danger.

Luck—and time—finally ran out at 7:38 a.m. Lookouts aboard the Hornet spotted an enemy patrol boat. The tiny craft was just visible in the mist, about ten miles away. The task force had encountered Japanese Patrol Boat No. 23, the Nitto Maru.

General quarters sounded again. As Doolittle and Mitscher watched from the Hornet's bridge, the cruiser Nashville opened fire on the boat with her six-inch guns, but switched to rapid fire after one salvo. Dive bombers from the Enterprise joined in the attempt to sink the Japanese vessel, and finally, at 8:23 a.m., the Nitto Maru went down.

The Nitto Maru's radio operator had time enough to get a message off to the Japanese Fifth Fleet, warning that 'three enemy carriers' had been sighted. Enterprise radio operators picked up a sudden burst of signals between Tokyo and Japanese warships. The Japanese knew the Americans were out there—and where.

The Hornet was now about seven hundred miles from Tokyo. Nine more hours of sailing would have gotten the fliers to the planned takeoff point. Such, however, was not to be. Hurriedly, the B-25 crews gathered together their personal gear and made last-minute preparations for takeoff.

At 8 a.m. Halsey flashed the 'go' signal to the Hornet: 'launch planes x to colonel doolittle and gallant command x good luck and god bless you.'

Loudspeakers blared: 'Army pilots, man your planes!'

'Even before we took off,' David Jones recalled, 'we knew we had a fuel problem. With the task force spotted, we would have to fly maybe four hundred miles farther than planned. Chances of reaching those airstrips in China were worse than bad.'

The task force adjusted course to starboard, turning into a 27-knot wind. Green water broke over the Hornet's pitching flight deck.

Time for Plane No. 1 to go. Doolittle waved a farewell to Mitscher up on the bridge. Mitscher saluted.

At 8:15 a.m. Doolittle gunned the engines of his B-25, now weighing some 15 tons with its full load of fuel and bombs. A Navy flight deck officer, whirling a black checkered flag, gave Doolittle the 'go' signal. Deck crews pulled the chocks from the wheels. Then the starter hit the deck as the bomber began rolling down the 470 feet of clear flight deck.

Pilot Ted Lawson, writing in *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, his 1943 account of the raid, described Doolittle's takeoff:

'We watched him like hawks, wondering what the wind would do to him, and whether we could get off in that little run to the bow. If he couldn't, we couldn't.'

'Doolittle picked up speed and held to his line, and, just as the Hornet lifted up on top of a wave and cut through it at full speed, Doolittle's plane took off. He had yards to spare. He hung his ship almost straight up on its props, until we could see the whole top of his B-25. Then he leveled off and I watched him come around in a tight circle and shoot low over our heads.'

Doolittle had circled back to match his magnetic compass heading with the ship's course. Copilot Richard Cole remembers looking down at the carrier's deck: 'We were leaving the 'last friendly patch of earth.' It was a kind of farewell.'

Pilot Travis Hoover went off second; Robert Gray third; Everett Holstrom fourth; David Jones fifth; Dean Hallmark sixth. Lawson, in Plane No. 7, nicknamed the 'Ruptured Duck,' inadvertently left his flaps up and dipped perilously low before finally becoming airborne at 8:30 a.m. At intervals that ranged from one to five minutes, the next eight planes took off without incident.

Task Force 16 had accomplished its mission. Within minutes the carriers and cruisers reversed course and headed back toward Pearl Harbor at twenty-five knots.

Jimmy Doolittle was on his way. His B-25 whipped along over the Pacific Ocean, barely forty feet above the waves. Flying at a fuel-conserving 150 miles per hour, the plane would reach land at about midday.

At 9:45 a.m. a Japanese patrol plane, six hundred miles off Japan's east coast, sent an odd report to Tokyo. The crew had spotted what they took to be a twin-engine land-plane flying toward Japan. Tokyo intelligence dismissed the report.

Flying independently, the 16 B-25s stretched out in a ragged line some two hundred miles long. They pushed against twenty-mile-an-hour headwinds. Shifts in the winds scattered them.

The planes were to go in as lone raiders. Three of those following Doolittle would hit the northern sector of Tokyo, three the central sector, and three the southern sector. Three others would strike Kanagawa, Yokohama, and the Yokosuka Navy Yard. The last three bombers would hit targets in Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe.

A few minutes before noon, Doolittle's plane crossed the coast about eighty miles northeast of Tokyo. Minutes later, as Doolittle raced south toward the city at a thirty-foot altitude, he saw nine Japanese fighters a thousand feet above him. At a little past noon the first B-25 was over Tokyo.

A light haze lay over the city. Visibility downward was good. The bomber passed over the Imperial Palace. Then it reached the target area—a complex of factories. Doolittle climbed to 1,200 feet. Bombardier Fred Braemer peered at checkpoints on his map-grid. He lined up the first target in his twenty-cent bombsight. The bomb-bay doors opened. At about 12:15 p.m., a red light blinked in rapid succession on Doolittle's instrument panel. Four incendiary clusters rained down on Tokyo.

Antiaircraft fire burst around the B-25, rocking the plane. Doolittle was later to write laconically of the getaway: 'Lowered away to housetops and slid over western outskirts into low haze and smoke. Turned south and out to sea.'

Scattered by headwinds and by variances in the settings for their magnetic compasses, the arriving B-25s swept in over Tokyo from several directions—confusing its defenders as to their point of origin.

The Raiders skimmed over treetops and hillocks. Pilots gunned their planes up to about a thousand feet over the sprawling city. Bombardiers brought their sights to bear on targets. Then came the blink, blink, blink as four five-hundred-pound bombs plummeted from each bomber.

Everett Holstrom, finding his plane's gun turret jammed, had to veer out of the path of a squadron of fighters. Richard Joyce, pursued by half a dozen fighters, put his engines 'right on the red line'—increasing speed to more than three hundred miles an hour—to elude them. Some fighters made skittish runs at the B-25s. In response, raider gunners were able to hit at least two, and perhaps more of them.

Black splotches of antiaircraft fire marked the sky. Bursts hit barrage balloons. Although erratic, ground gunners did send shell fragments into several B-25s. But no American plane was shot down.

The Raiders went after war-industry targets: steel works, oil refineries, ammunition dumps, aircraft factories, dockyards, and supply centers. In the main, because of their careful study of target maps, their low altitude, and their arrival in broad daylight, the attackers scored quite accurate bomb hits.

It was all fast and furious. As soon as each pilot dropped his bombs he pushed the control yoke forward, dove to rooftop level, and then bore southwest along the Japanese coast, toward what he hoped would be the haven of China.

In the afternoon's fading light, all the fliers became sharply aware of one looming fact: they probably weren't going to be able to reach the airstrips near Chuchow. 'We were about an hour out of Japan,' flight engineer/gunner Joseph Manske remembered. 'The pilot said on the intercom that we wouldn't have enough fuel to reach the landing fields. That was a real attention-getter. I said to myself, 'Joe, what in the world did you get yourself into?''

Turning west over the East China Sea, the B-25s encountered fog, then rain. The ceiling kept getting lower. The navigators had to estimate their positions by dead-reckoning. The planes bounded through updrafts and downdrafts.

Then, to their surprise, the Raiders picked up a tailwind. Weather maps based on 75 years of data showed the prevailing winds as blowing from China toward Japan. But on this perilous day, the winds blew toward China.

There was an almost poetic irony to it. The wind had become an American kamikaze—the fliers' 'divine wind'—and they had found it just as they left Japan.

Thirteen hours after takeoff, the B-25s were somewhere near the China coast. Blackness enveloped the bombers. Fuel gauges read close to empty. The pilots listened for the homing signal—a '57' transmitted in Morse code—that was to guide them to the airfields near Chuchow. But they heard only silence.

Out in the far reaches of China, the paper-plan had fallen apart. The B-25s were supposed to land at five designated airstrips. Radio homing signals from each field would guide them to their touchdowns.

But the Tokyo Raiders were caught in an inadvertent web of command intrigue. Marshall and Arnold, wary of security leaks, had given Chiang Kai-shek few details of the raid, and none at all to Colonel Claire Chennault, commander of the Flying Tigers. At the last possible moment they called upon General

Joseph W. Stilwell, U.S. commander in the China-Burma-India theater, to get radio beacons to the five fields.

There was confusion in communiqués. Japanese troops neared the airstrips. Chiang Kai-shek wanted the 'special project' delayed. The plane dispatched to deliver the radio beacons crashed in a storm. There would be no radio signals to guide the Doolittle Raiders to safe landings.

In his memoirs, Chennault years later bitterly criticized the U.S. high command for not taking him into their confidence: 'If I had been notified, a single Flying Tigers command ground radio station plugged into the East China net could have talked most of the Raiders into friendly fields.'

B-25s dropped flares into the night. Crew members looked down for some sign as to whether they were over water or land. But the flare-light disappeared in the clouds.

In a last bid to reach the airfields, most of the pilots continued west toward Chuchow. Crew members wondered how close they were to Japanese-occupied territory. By now the gas gauges read a hair above 'zero.' Engines began to sputter. The end, some pilots figured, would come in the China Sea. They would keep flying until they ran out of gas and then jump out.

Eleven crews did just that. At 9:30 p.m., Doolittle switched his controls to the automatic pilot and ordered his crew to bail out. Then he, too, left the aircraft

Fortune turned its back on the crew of Plane No. 16, 'Bat Out of Hell.' After flying two hundred miles into China, pilot William Farrow ordered his men to jump. All came down in Japanese-held territory. By morning the five fliers—Farrow, copilot Robert Hite, navigator George Barr, bombardier Jacob DeShazer, and engineer/gunner Harold Spatz—were prisoners.

Four of the B-25s made forced landings along the China coast. Trav Hoover's bomber ran out of fuel near Japanese-held territory. His flight engineer/gunner, Douglas Radney, suggested over the intercom that 'we ought to stick together.' Instead of ordering his crew to bail out, Hoover belly-landed the B-25 on a hillside rice paddy. The crew members emerged unhurt and, after Hoover set fire to the bomber to destroy anything of use to the Japanese, scrambled westward into the hills.

The engines of the 'Green Hornet,' piloted by Dean Hallmark, sputtered and failed four minutes short of the coast. Hallmark brought the plane down in the stormy sea; the impact tore off a wing. Hallmark smashed through the windshield. After four hours in high waves, Hallmark, copilot Robert Meder, and navigator Chase Nielsen made it to shore—cut, bleeding, and exhausted. Bombardier William Dieter and flight engineer/gunner Donald Fitzmaurice were both seriously injured in the crash; their bodies later washed ashore. Local Chinese fishermen tried to hide the survivors. But three days later Japanese soldiers captured all three men. Their ordeal was just beginning.

Plane No. 15, piloted by Donald Smith, also ditched in the East China Sea. The five crew members climbed into a life raft. After capsizing three times, they finally reached shore safely.

Ted Lawson, piloting the 'Ruptured Duck,' attempted a beach landing. But as the plane made its approach, both engines suddenly lost power. The B-25 landed in six feet of water at 110 miles per hour. The terrific impact drove Lawson, his copilot, and the navigator out through the top of the cockpit. The bombardier flew head-first through the plastic nose. The gunner was knocked unconscious in his turret.

Lawson and copilot Dean Davenport came to underwater, still strapped into their seats. Both managed to unfasten their belts and struggle to the surface. Lawson crawled out of the surf torn and bleeding, barely alive. His left leg had been shorn of much of its flesh. Bones above and below the knee were exposed. He had deep gashes on his arms, head, and chin. Most of his front teeth had been knocked out. Blood poured down into his eyes.

Of the sixteen B-25s, only one managed a safe landing at an airfield. Plane No. 8, piloted by Edward York, burned fuel at such a prodigious rate during the flight to Tokyo that he realized it could never reach haven in China. After dropping their bombs, the fliers turned northwest toward Vladivostok. Landing at a small military field, the airmen were taken into custody by the Russians. After more than a year of being treated more like prisoners than internees, they eventually escaped through Iran.

In the night, peasants, villagers, and soldiers in scattered regions of East China heard the sounds of engines overhead. Airplanes, seemingly from nowhere, crashed amid the wind and rain. Men plummeted onto mountainsides and river beds. One flight engineer/gunner dangled until daylight in a tree atop a cliff, his parachute caught in branches.

Doolittle landed in a rice paddy, splashing chest-deep into the smelly 'night soil.' Seeing lights in a farmhouse, the raid's commander unharnessed his parachute and slogged to the front door. He called out to those inside. The lights went out. Come daylight, a farmer brought Chinese guerrillas to Doolittle. Gesturing to the sky and himself, Doolittle finally gained glimmers of understanding from the Chinese. In a matter of days, he gathered together his four crew members.

With Sergeant Leonard, Doolittle hiked to the site where their B-25 had crashed. The bomber's wreckage was scattered across a mountaintop. Doolittle picked through the debris and found an oil-soaked Army blouse of his. Scavengers had already picked off the buttons. He sat down in dejection near a shattered wing.

'I was very depressed,' he later recalled. 'Paul Leonard took my picture. He tried to cheer me up. He said, 'What do you think will happen when you go home, Colonel?''

Doolittle answered: 'Well, I guess they'll send me to Leavenworth.'

'I stood up on my two legs for the last time in my life at about dawn on April 20,' recalled Ted Lawson. He and the other injured men of his crew had been carried to a small hospital by Chinese villagers. The hospital had few supplies, and the Chinese doctor there could do little for Lawson's shattered leg.

Fortuitously, flight surgeon/gunner 'Doc' White showed up at the hospital. White tried, at first, to scissor the dying flesh from Lawson's lower left leg, giving him morphine for the pain. But the limb showed unmistakable signs of gangrene.

On May 3, as Japanese aircraft flew overhead, White told Lawson what he was going to have to do. The pilot assented. Using novocaine the Chinese had smuggled out of Shanghai, White gave Lawson a spinal anesthetic. Nurses held Lawson's wrists down.

'Doc had a silver saw,' Lawson relates. 'It made a strange, faraway, soggy sound as he sawed through the bones of my leg. Except for the tugging fear that I was coming back too soon, the actual amputation was almost as impersonal to me as watching a log being sawed in half.'

Lawson watched as the nurses picked up his severed leg and carried it out the door. He could see White's hand sewing the stump: 'His hand went up and down, up, down.' Then 'Doc' used a syringe to take blood from himself and infuse it into his patient.

Those fliers who had evaded capture began their trek to Chungking. Chinese country folk were startled, day by day, as Caucasian men wearing brown leather jackets and torn trousers materialized on rocky landscapes or on the outskirts of villages. Peasants, woodcutters, and farmers looked at the alien beings with curiosity and fear. Many had never before seen an American.

The fliers viewed the local populace with similar trepidation. There being no clear battle lines, they worried that they were walking into the hands of the Japanese.

The Americans were walking wounded: men with wrenched backs, cracked ribs, burned legs, and bloodied noses. Haggard and mud-spattered, they sought the help of those who gathered to stare at them.

Guerrillas led the aviators from one settlement to another. Missionaries gave them refuge. 'Along the way,' said Travis Hoover, 'a Chinese aeronautical engineering student named Tung-sheng Liu showed up. He was on the run from the Japanese. He spoke English. He became our guide and interpreter—and saved our lives.'

Whole towns turned out to see the visitors. 'I walked through villages, heading west,' recalls Frank Kappeler. 'Friendly Chinese followed me. Before long, my caravan was two hundred strong. I felt like Lawrence of Arabia.'

The fliers made their various ways into the heartland—by foot, riding shaggy ponies, and on river boats, charcoal-burning trucks, rickshas, and even sedan chairs borne by field workers. During a three-week period, groups of Raiders finally straggled into Chungking and journey's end. There grateful Chinese leaders bestowed decorations upon them.

Newspaper headlines of the raid electrified America. New York Times: 'japan reports tokyo, yokohama bombed by 'enemy planes' in daylight.' Columbus Evening Dispatch: 'u.s. warplanes rain bombs on leading cities of jap empire.' New York Daily News: 'u.s. bombs hit 4 jap cities.'

Surprisingly, the initial news reports came not from the U.S. government but from Radio Tokyo. ‘Enemy bombers appeared over Tokyo for the first time in the current war,’ the Japanese broadcast declared. ‘Invading planes failed to cause any damage on military establishments.’ According to the announcer, nine of the attacking planes had been shot down.

The White House and the War Department, uncertain of the outcome of the mission, remained silent. Members of Congress wondered whether a raid on Tokyo had even taken place. At first, Washington simply said that ‘American planes might have participated in an attack upon the Japanese capital.’

On April 21, Arnold received a message from Doolittle, somewhere in the depths of China: ‘mission to bomb Tokyo has been accomplished. On entering China we ran into bad weather and it is feared that all planes crashed. Up to the present five fliers are safe.’

An anxious Arnold was soon to learn that most fliers were alive and accounted for—but, ominously, that a few had been captured.

Roosevelt had been at his residence in Hyde Park, New York, when informed of the raid. The president realized he had to keep secret the Hornet’s role in the mission. He asked adviser Samuel Rosenman what he might say if reporters wanted to know where the bombers came from. Rosenman reminded him about Lost Horizon, James Hilton’s fantasy novel. The book was set in a remote and mysterious Himalayan valley called ‘Shangri-La.’ FDR took the cue.

At his press conference on April 21, Roosevelt affirmed that U.S. planes indeed had bombed Japan. A reporter asked him the name of the base used by the bombers. With a cryptic smile, he answered: ‘They came from our new secret base at Shangri-La.’

Doolittle and some of the Raiders were ordered back to the United States; others remained in the China-Burma-India theater. America was more than proud of the fliers. Doolittle was promoted to the rank of brigadier general.

On May 19, Generals Marshall and Arnold picked up Doolittle in a staff car in Washington, D.C. They told him they were going to the White House.

‘Well,’ said Doolittle, ‘if you were to tell me what this is all about, I’m sure I could comport myself better.’

Marshall and Arnold glanced at one another. Then Marshall explained that President Roosevelt was going to present Doolittle with the Medal of Honor.

‘Well, I don’t think I earned the Medal of Honor,’ said Doolittle, frowning. ‘The medal was given when one chap lost his life saving somebody else’s life. So I don’t think I earned it.’

‘I think you earned it,’ responded Marshall sternly.

‘Yes, sir,’ answered Doolittle.

FDR pinned the medal on Doolittle that afternoon. A month later, General Arnold awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to a score of Raiders who had returned to the United States.

Compared to the havoc wreaked at Pearl Harbor four and a half months earlier—or to what American B-29s would unleash over Japanese cities three years later—the damage inflicted by the Tokyo Raid was rather light. Japanese authorities reported 50 persons killed, 250 wounded, and 90 buildings destroyed—among them gas tanks, warehouses, and factories.

The true pain had been psychological—a shattering blow to Japanese pride. Japan’s army and navy had failed to shield the homeland. Even more unforgivingly, they had not been able to safeguard the emperor.

In a strategic sense, the raid put the initiative of the Pacific War into the hands of the Americans. The attack showed that the Japanese could not limit the scope of the war they had started.

Enraged Japanese military leaders took out their wrath for the raid on the people of East China. More than six hundred air raids on towns and villages signaled the start of the retribution.

The Japanese made it a point to burn to the ground those villages through which the airmen had passed. ‘They killed my three sons,’ related one aged Chinese man. ‘They killed my wife. They drowned my grandchildren in the well.’ Catching a villager who had sheltered an American pilot, Japanese soldiers wrapped him in a kerosene-soaked blanket, then forced his wife to set it afire.

One hundred thousand Japanese troops shot, bayoneted, raped, drowned, and beheaded Chinese civilians and soldiers in numbers estimated in the tens of thousands. It was their way of warning the Chinese against helping American fliers in the future.

The epilogue to the Tokyo Raid was bitter. The Japanese held Barr, DeShazer, Farrow, Hallmark, Hite, Meder, Nielsen, and Spatz. They would make them pay, man by man.

The captors moved the survivors of ‘The Green Hornet’ and ‘Bat Out of Hell’ to Tokyo. There, handcuffed and leg-cuffed, the fliers were placed in the hands of Kempei Tai, the Japanese Army’s military police, who knew how to make a man wonder whether life was worth living.

The interrogators struck the prisoners. They shouted the same questions at them again and again: ‘Where do you come from?’ ‘Are you Army soldiers?’ ‘Why were you in China?’

‘I would give name, rank, and serial number,’ recalls Nielsen. ‘They would hit me. I would say, ‘Lieutenant Chase J. Nielsen, 0-419938.’ They would hit me.’

The Japanese interrogators stretched Hallmark on a rack. They put bamboo poles behind Hite's knees, forced him to squat, and then jumped up and down on his thighs. They suspended Nielsen by handcuffs from a peg on a wall, so that his toes barely touched the floor.

The captors bound wet towels over the mouths and noses of the eight fliers, nearly suffocating them. They placed pencils between their fingers, then crushed their fingers together. The soldiers stretched the men out on the floor, forced them to swallow water, then jumped on their stomachs. As many as five guards worked over each prisoner at a time.

The torture continued for more than three weeks. Resisting, the fliers told the interrogators their planes had come from a Pacific island. From China. From the Aleutian Islands. 'I was blindfolded,' recalls DeShazer. 'They hit me. They asked, 'How do you pronounce the letters h-o-r-n-e-t?' 'Who is Doolittle?' 'How long is the deck of an aircraft carrier?' They hit me again.'

Then, one day the soldiers brought in maps and charts obtained from the wreckage of a B-25. They had tortured the men in order to corroborate what they had known all along: the B-25s had taken off from the USS Hornet.

Bloodied and bowed, the prisoners at last told of the raid. On May 22, the fliers were given documents written in Japanese. These were confessions of war crimes against civilians. Each man was seated at a table and told to sign—or be executed on the spot. Incapable of further resistance, the prisoners signed the false confessions.

On June 19, 1942 the battered Americans were transferred to a prison in Shanghai. 'We were bitten by bugs, rats, and lice,' remembers Hite. 'Our faces and hands swelled from the bites. The toilet facility was a bucket.'

Urine and excrement covered much of the floor. Hallmark lay in a corner, stricken by dysentery. His fellow prisoners dragged him to the bucket as often as every fifteen minutes. After a time, they became too weak to help him.

The men had not washed, shaved, or changed clothes since their last day aboard the Hornet. They were forced to sit cross-legged. If a guard saw a prisoner shift position, he poked him with a pole.

On August 28, the Americans were taken into a small courtroom, where they underwent a mock trial before five Japanese officers. Hallmark lay on a stretcher. Barr was too weak to stand.

The 'trial' lasted twenty minutes. The judge read the verdict. The prisoners asked him what their sentences were. The interpreter would not tell them. Unknown to the fliers, all had been condemned to death.

On October 14, Hallmark, Farrow, and Spatz were taken into a room, one by one, and told that they were to be executed the next day. The officer said they could write letters to their families.

Twenty-three-year-old Bill Farrow wrote, in part, to his mother in Darlington, South Carolina: ‘Just remember that God will make everything right and that I will see you again in the hereafter.’

To his father and mother in Robert Lee, Texas, Dean Hallmark said: ‘Try to stand up under this and pray. I don’t know how to end this letter except by sending you all my love.’

Twenty-one-year-old Harold Spatz wrote to his father in Lebo, Kansas: ‘I want you to know that I died fighting like a soldier. My clothes are all I have of any value. I give them to you. And Dad, I want you to know I love you. May God bless you.’

After the war the letters were found in Japanese military files. The prison officials had never sent them.

On October 15, 1942, a black limousine entered the First Cemetery grounds outside of Shanghai. Farrow, Hallmark, and Spatz were brought out. Prison guards marched the men to three small wooden crosses situated twenty feet apart. The three Americans were made to kneel with their backs against the crosses. Guards removed the handcuffs and tied the prisoners’ wrists to the cross-pieces. They wrapped the upper portions of the men’s faces with white cloth, marking black ‘X’s just above the noses. A six-man firing squad took positions twenty feet in front of the Americans. At the count, they pulled the triggers. There was no need to fire a second time.

The next day, the five other Americans—DeShazer, Hite, Meder, Nielsen, and Barr—were led into the courtroom. The presiding officer read a long statement. They had been found guilty of bombing schools and hospitals and machine-gunning civilians, but the emperor had commuted their death sentences to life in prison.

Four days after the execution of Farrow, Hallmark, and Spatz, Japanese English-language broadcasts reported that ‘cruel, inhuman, and beastlike American pilots’ had been severely punished. The reports noted the names of the three men, but did not say what their punishment had been.

Several months later, President Roosevelt learned what had happened to the captive American fliers. He wanted the American people to know, but at this stage of the war Japan held some 17,000 other Americans in the Pacific. Roosevelt felt great concern for them. As well, he expected that America would launch new air raids against Japan and worried that more fliers might become prisoners. Through diplomatic channels, he told the enemy leaders that the U.S. would not tolerate the maltreatment of American prisoners.

With the passing of the first anniversary of the Tokyo Raid, Roosevelt decided the time had arrived to tell Americans ‘the full fact—both the bright and the bitter.’

On April 20, 1943, the War Department at last released a detailed communiqué on the raid. The next day the Washington Post headline read: ‘details of Tokyo raid told: Hornet’shangri-la.’ Across the front page was a photograph of Doolittle’s B-25 taking off from the aircraft carrier. The report explained that 15 planes were wrecked in China or Chinese waters, with another forced down in Russia. ‘Of the eighty Army Air Force men taking part,’ stated the Post, ‘five men were interned in Russia, eight are prisoners

of Japan or are presumed to be, one was killed, two are missing, and the rest made their way safely into Chinese territory. Seven were injured in landing but survived.’ The account warned the Japanese that ‘further attacks still lie ahead for their homeland.’

Americans applauded the raid as a stunning success. But they soon learned the dark side. On April 22, Roosevelt, with a ‘feeling of deepest horror,’ told the nation of the executions. Referring to them with such expressions as ‘barbarous,’ ‘depravity,’ and ‘killing in cold blood,’ he termed the Japanese ‘savages.’

A wave of revulsion swept across the nation. Secretary of State Cordell Hull resolutely declared that the United States would never settle for less than the ‘unconditional surrender’ of Japan. There would be no negotiation with a country that executed prisoners of war.

Radio Tokyo retorted that any American fliers who dared attack Japan in the future would be on a ‘one-way mission to hell.’

The five men still in Japanese hands could attest to such ‘hell.’ As the world learned of the executions, they were blindfolded, handcuffed, and moved to a prison near Nanking, 175 miles west of Shanghai.

The captors told their captives that Japan was winning the war. The fliers would die in a Japanese prison. If, somehow, America won the war, they were to be beheaded.

The prisoners drifted into dream-states. They invented mind games. Nielsen ‘built’ a house in his mind, brick by brick. Hite worked out plans for a farm. DeShazer wrote poems on an imaginary blackboard. Wracked by dysentery, Meder grew weaker. Then he contracted beriberi. During a rare exercise period, Meder asked Nielsen to pray for him.

On December 1, 1943, four of the five prisoners heard hammering. The next day, one at a time, they were escorted into Meder’s cell. His body lay in a wooden coffin. A Bible was on the lid.

Amid the encircling gloom of their cells, the men tried to find inner light. Hite asked the chief guard for a Bible. ‘Each of us,’ he recalls, ‘read through the King James version. It was passed from one cell to the other. It kept our spirits alive.’

Their cells were as ovens in summer, icy chambers in winter. Guards singled out Barr for vicious treatment. He was far taller than his captors and had bright red hair. In one horrifying episode, they forced him into a straight-jacket, laced his arms behind his back, and thrust him face-down in snow for an hour. Barr screamed again and again.

Hite had fallen away to fewer than ninety pounds. He remembers: ‘I found my strength by calling on my Lord. Whosoever called upon the Lord, would be saved.’

Nielsen thought about killing himself. But he made up his mind that if he did so he would first get hold of a guard's sword and make at least one captor die. 'Faith kept me alive,' Nielsen declares. 'Faith in my nation. My religion. My Creator.'

DeShazer became weak from dysentery. More than seventy boils covered his body. He would get on his knees, face the cell door, and repeat passages from the Bible.

From out of the depths, DeShazer searched for God. 'The way the Japanese treated me,' he reflects, 'I had to turn to Christ. No matter what they did to me, I prayed. I prayed for the strength to live. And I prayed for the strength, somehow, to find forgiveness for what they were doing to me.'

One season became another. By the summer of 1945, the prisoners seemed but shadows. One morning in August 1945, DeShazer experienced something like a vision. An interior voice urged him to pray, all that day, for an end to the war. And he did so, from seven that morning until two in the afternoon.

The date was August 9, the day on which an atomic bomb fell on Nagasaki. The next day, unknown to the prisoners, Japan surrendered. A few days later guards escorted Barr, DeShazer, Hite, and Nielsen out of their cells. 'The war is over,' a prison official told them. Nielsen wept.

The Japanese gave back to the men the uniforms they had been wearing, forty months earlier, when they had taken off from the Hornet. On August 20, U.S. Army paratroopers came to their rescue. The last of the Doolittle Raiders headed home.

For these last, as for all of the Raiders, there would be cause for remembrance. During World War II, many of the other fliers went on to combat duty in Europe, North Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific. Some were killed, others wounded. At war's end 61 remained of the original 80 men.

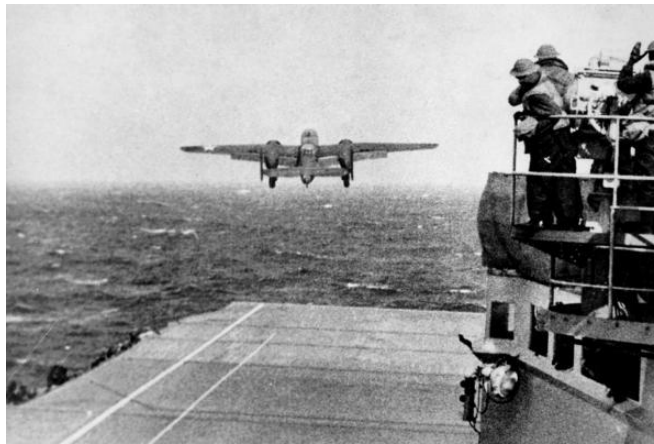
The Raiders would never forget the experience they had shared. Each April 18, on the anniversary of the Tokyo Raid, as many survivors as could do so have gathered to reminisce—and to mark the memories of fellow Raiders no longer living.

A set of eighty silver goblets, each one inscribed with a Raider's name, has been kept on display at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and flown to each reunion. There, in a private ceremony, the survivors raised their cups in a toast to Raiders departed and inverted the cups of those men who died since the previous get-together. When the last man is gone, his goblet, too, will be reversed.

Like the B-25 bombers they once flew, these courageous men will have made worthy passage.



April 18, 1942 Pacific Ocean James H. Doolittle JHD attaching Japanese Medal to bomb.
 Aboard USS Hornet on way to bomb Japan. USAFA Album 102-3



A U.S. Army Air Forces B-25B Mitchell bomber takes off from the USS Hornet (CV-8) aircraft carrier to take part in the first U.S. bombing of Japan on April 18, 1942.



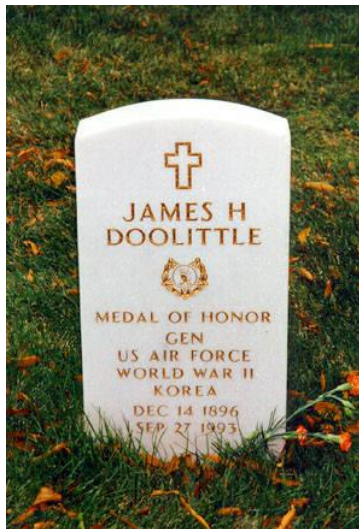
Lieutenant Colonels Jimmy Doolittle (left) , and John Hilger stand with the crews of the B-25s that participated in the Doolittle raid on Japan



Richard Cole was co-pilot to James Doolittle on the epic raid to Japan during WWII.



Following the raid on Tokyo, General Henry 'Hap' Arnold, chief of the U.S. Army Air Corps was present, along with Lieutenant Colonel James 'Jimmy' Doolittle's wife, Joe, and General George C. Marshall, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented Jimmy with the Medal of Honor in April 1942.





On 17 APR, the 101-year-old last surviving raider Lt. Col. Richard Cole was at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton , Ohio to complete a decades-long tradition and turn over the goblet of his friend and fellow Raider David Thatcher, who died last year on June 22, 2016.

[Source: <http://www.historynet.com/jimmy-doolittle-and-the-tokyo-raiders-strike-japan-during-world-war-ii.htm> | April 20, 2017 ++]