



**SELFLESS MAN:** When Maj. James H. Doolittle was called to active duty on July 1, 1940, he was a 43-year-old reservist who was leaving a key position with Shell Oil for a job paying one-10th what he was used to earning. Here Doolittle is shown in the place he loved most: the cockpit of an airplane. **ON THE COVER:** Gen. Jimmy Doolittle is featured. In the background, Doolittle's B-25 Mitchell takes off from the deck of the USS *Hornet* on its way to take part in the first U.S. air raid on Japan, April 18, 1942.

# Jimmy Doolittle

## America's 'old, bold pilot' & his raid on Tokyo

PERHAPS THE BEST-KNOWN AMERICAN AIRMAN, other than the Wright brothers and Charles Lindbergh, was Gen. James H. Doolittle. Jimmy Doolittle was an outstanding combat leader. He commanded the Twelfth, Fifteenth and Eighth air forces during World War II. One of his most notable achievements was the raid on Japan four months after Pearl Harbor.

BY JOHN TIFFANY

There used to be a saying in aviation circles: "There are old pilots and bold pilots, but no old, bold pilots—except Jimmy Doolittle." In the early days of World War II, Doolittle, with incredible courage and skill, undertook a mission of near impossibility and managed to energize a nation.

Doolittle's planning and execution of the raid on Tokyo gave the United States a big morale boost, which it sorely needed after Pearl Harbor and the other setbacks in the Pacific area. His leadership in the European theater of war again showed what a true warrior and airman he was. He also contributed to the development of "blind flying" techniques and instrumentation. Doolittle worked to ensure that America had 100-octane fuel development, which helped get the power out of our aircraft engines that gave us an advantage over the Axis nations.

The "Doolittle Raid" in early 1942 did no significant military damage, nor did it shatter Japanese morale, but it was a brilliant stroke of propaganda.

Several biographies have been written about Doolittle. Carroll Glines ghostwrote Doolittle's "autobiography," *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*, near the end of his life. Unfortunately, his autobiography merely recounts the same anecdotes told elsewhere and offers no new insights. Yet to appear is a serious study that looks closely at his career and its effect on American airpower.

In Europe and the Far East, World War II had been in progress for some two years before FDR succeeded in needling Japan into attacking Pearl Harbor. During that period Germany moved swiftly to occupy Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and France. Japan availed herself of the world's distraction to begin her conquest of

Indochina, consolidating her control of the Pacific and Far East.

As early as 1937, Doolittle became a strong voice for building up America's air power. Gen. Hap Arnold was a personal friend and Doolittle visited with the air chief at his office in Washington. Unlike Lindbergh, who hoped for American neutrality, Doolittle, believed the United States would take sides. Said Doolittle: "I told Hap I was totally convinced that war was inevitable, that the United States would be involved in hostilities, and that we would be unable to remain aloof from whatever happened in Europe. I was so sure of it, in fact, that I told him I was willing to give up my job with Shell [Oil Co.] and serve full time or part time, in uniform or out, in any way he thought would be useful."

Within two weeks of that meeting Hitler invaded Poland. On June 22, Paris fell.

On July 1 Doolittle took a 70 percent pay cut to help his country prepare for war. In August the German Luftwaffe unleashed its fury on its only remaining European threat during the Battle of Britain. In September, Maj. Doolittle requested permission from Arnold to visit England to observe and report on the war. Shortly after his return, all pretense of American neutrality vanished behind the smoke of Pearl Harbor.

Soon the United States was at war on two fronts. On December 24 Arnold transferred Doolittle to his staff in Washington, D.C. to serve as a troubleshooter.

When Doolittle returned to active duty in 1941 he had already given the U.S. Army his youth, his tremendous abilities, and had personally contributed much to reshape the future of aviation. Doolittle was a well-paid, highly regarded Shell Oil executive with a comfortable lifestyle. But Doolittle could see war coming to the country he loved and was determined to do his part.

The troubleshooter's first assignment was to investigate problems with the B-26 Martin bomber, a new multi-engine plane that had experienced several engine failures and deadly crashes. The most common complaint was that if one engine failed, the craft could not be safely landed. To counter this, Doolittle gathered pilots to watch while he took a B-26 in the air. He cut the left engine during the takeoff, and then turned into the dead engine to circle back and safely land. He repeated the maneuver in the opposite direction with the right engine out. He noted: "This convinced the doubters that 'impossible' maneuvers were easy, if you paid close attention to what you were doing."

While Doolittle was solving the problem with the B-26, the president was announcing to his commanders that he wanted to conduct a bombing strike on the islands of Japan. Almost any rational military leader would have said, "That's just not possible." Less than three weeks later Arnold laid out the plan to accomplish the impossible mission, by launching Army medium-range bombers from a Navy aircraft carrier. The only hope of accomplishing the impossible lay with one man and the volunteer airmen who would follow him: Doolittle's Raiders.

The top-secret program Doolittle labeled "Special Aviation Project No. 1" called for a Navy aircraft carrier to steam through thousands of miles of enemy-controlled waters, to somehow slip within 500 miles of Japan. Army bombers would take off from the carrier's deck to bomb military targets. The aircraft would be unable to land back on the carrier, thus would fly on to land in China, more than 1,000 miles farther west. The plan required unprecedented Army/Navy cooperation. On January 31 Capt. Duncan flew to Norfolk, Virginia, to meet with the captain of the Navy's newest aircraft carrier, the *USS Hornet*.

Without advising Capt. Marc Mitscher, the ship's skipper, of the purpose of what was about to occur, Duncan arranged for three B-25 Army bombers to be loaded on the deck the following day. On Sunday morning two of the three bombers were hoisted to the carrier deck and Mitscher pointed the *Hornet* out to sea. The third B-25 had developed engine trouble and was left behind. Shortly after noon the *Hornet* was facing into the wind when Lt. John Fitzgerald lined up on the flight-line with both engines revved to the max.

The big bomber rolled forward to lift off easily. Minutes later Lt. James McCarthy took off in the second bomber. After a week of practice on a simulated carrier deck back at the auxiliary airfield at Norfolk, the two pilots had proved that a bomber could indeed take off from an aircraft carrier.

Duncan flew to Pearl Harbor to plan other aspects of the Navy's role in the upcoming mission while Lts. Fitzgerald and McCarthy returned to their normal flying duties, unaware of the significance of what they had just accomplished. The *Hornet* continued its final shake-down tests while the February 1 takeoff by the Army bombers remained shrouded under the tightest secrecy. She was scheduled to leave Norfolk on March 4 to sail for San Francisco via the Panama Canal. Adm. Ernest J. King and Gen. Arnold advised Doolittle to be prepared to launch his mission on April 1.

There was still much doubt as to the full feasibility of the raid. The carrier takeoffs of February 1 had been accomplished using empty

B-25s. Doolittle's Raiders would have to lift off in bombers carrying enough fuel for a long flight, a ton of bombs, and armed to defend themselves against enemy fighters.

On March 3 about 140 pilots and their crews assembled at the Operations Office at Eglin Air Force Base, each man full of questions, every one of them eager to do whatever was necessary to serve their country. Already a ripple of excitement had spread among them with a rumor that Doolittle was also at Eglin. Few airmen did not know the reputation of the great pilot. When Doolittle entered, a hush fell across the room. He said: "If you men have any idea that this isn't the most dangerous [mission] you've ever been on, don't even start this training period. You can drop out now. There isn't much sense wasting time and money training men who aren't going through with this thing. It's perfectly all right for any of you to drop out." A couple of men asked Doolittle if he could give them any information about the mission.

"No, I can't just now," Doolittle said. "But you'll begin to get an idea of what it's all about the longer we're down here training for it.

Now, there's one important thing I want to stress. This whole thing must be kept secret. I don't even want you to tell your wives, no matter what you see, or are asked to do, down here. If you've guessed where we're going, don't even talk about your guess. That means every one of you. Don't even talk among yourselves about this thing. Now, does anybody want to drop out?"

Nobody dropped out.

Doolittle realized that the probability of at least one of his airplanes being shot down over Japan was quite high, posing the risk that the top-secret Norden bombsight might fall into enemy hands. So he had them removed from all the B-25s and replaced them with a simple sight created in the machine shops at Eglin for about 20 cents each. The crude device was developed by Doolittle's gunner and bombing officer Capt. Ross Greening, and actually proved to be more effective for low-altitude bombing than the expensive Norden bombsight. Greening also developed an odd way of protecting the bombers from a rear attack. Each bomber was fitted with two broomsticks protruding from the tail cone, each painted black to look like the barrel of a machinegun in hopes it would cause enemy fighter pilots to avoid trying to sneak up behind the bombers.

The day after Col. Doolittle met with his volunteers for the first time, the *Hornet* sailed out of Norfolk for the Panama Canal. She arrived in San Francisco on March 20. Meanwhile the raiders trained for their mission while Doolittle split his own time between training with them, overseeing the modifications to their airplanes, and flying back and forth to Washington, D.C. to report to Arnold. On one of those trips he addressed what he saw as a remaining key problem—leadership of the mission.

"General," he advised, "it occurred to me that I'm the one guy on this project who knows more about it than anyone else. You asked me to get the planes modified and the crews trained and this is being done. They're the finest bunch of boys I've ever worked with. I'd like your authorization to lead this mission myself."

Arnold believed his troubleshooter was too valuable for planning future missions to risk him and denied Doolittle's request. Doolittle had his rebuttal well prepared. Perhaps the air chief himself had antic-

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## Nippon's Wrath

Among those in the know, there was severe doubt about the feasibility of the top-secret planned Tokyo raid. Doolittle's Raiders had to take off in 16 bombers carrying enough fuel for a 2,000-mile flight, loaded with a ton of bombs and weapons to defend themselves against enemy fighters. Despite the difficulties, the raid was a success, and what Doolittle's raiders accomplished was historic. Friendly Chinese rounded up the surviving raiders and fed and sheltered them. As many as 250,000 civilians in Chekiang and Kiangsu provinces were murdered in retribution by Japanese soldiers in the months following the raid. Doolittle rued the death of three of his raiders and worried for the fate of eight who were unaccounted for. Many of the men remained in the Indochina theater, while others went on to serve in Africa and Europe. Doolittle's first official act after the raid was a successful effort to see all of his raiders promoted. Left, Doolittle (second from left) and several of his Tokyo raiders.

ipated the argument for when at last he gave ground it was with what he hoped would be an easy out.

"All right, Jim. It's all right with me, provided it's all right with [Gen. Millard] 'Miff' Harmon." Arnold was sure that his chief of staff would quickly add his own negative to the air chief's initial one. Doolittle quickly excused himself and ran down the hall to Gen. Harmon's office.

"Miff," he stated after a knock and a quick salute, "I've just been to see 'Hap' about that project I've been working on and said I wanted to lead the mission. Hap said it was OK with him if it's OK with you."

Doolittle caught the general unprepared, and Harmon replied, "Well, whatever is all right with Hap is certainly all right with me."

Doolittle smiled, thanked the general and beat a hasty retreat just as he heard Gen. Arnold's voice over the "squawk box" on Harmon's desk. Vanishing down the corridor to head back to Eglin he could hear Hap Arnold's chief of staff saying with frustration, "But Hap, I just told him he could go."

When the third intensive week of training for short runway takeoffs and low-level flying came to a close at Eglin, the *USS Hornet* was arriving in San Francisco. At Pearl Harbor Capt. Duncan was finalizing a plan that would unite the Navy's newest carrier with a supporting task force under the *USS Enterprise*.

On March 23 Doolittle called together his group of volunteers. He had accepted more volunteers than the mission required so that if he lost any personnel unexpectedly he would have trained replacements. Now he dismissed those men who would not be going on the mission,

advising them: "Don't tell anyone what you were doing here at Eglin—not your families, wives, anybody. The lives of your buddies and a lot of other people depend on you keeping everything you saw and did here a secret."

All who failed to make the final cut were disappointed; to a man they were eager to face whatever danger this secret mission entailed for the greater good of their country. Two of the specially outfitted B-25s had been damaged during training and were left behind. Their crews were among those dismissed, leaving 22 planes and 110 men to fly to California.

Doolittle ordered his pilots to make the cross-country trek at tree-top levels. It was the kind of low-level flight that had caused problems for Doolittle from the Aeronautics Branch of the Commerce Department in previous years and even resulted in his temporary suspension as a pilot. Now he and his men would do it under sanction, as they set out to create a miracle. The bombers flew first to McClellan Army Air Field near Sacramento where they underwent final inspections. Each bomber's engine was upgraded with new, three-bladed propellers. A less welcome alteration was also made: the removal of all radio equipment.

"You won't need it where you're going," Col. Doolittle explained to his pilots.

When the B-25s passed final muster they were ordered to fly to the Naval Air Station at Alameda, located on a small island in the San Francisco Bay area.

If the crew of the *USS Hornet* had been perplexed two months ear-

lier by the sight of two B-25s being loaded onto and then taking off from the deck of their ship, the loading of 15 B-25s at San Francisco must have seemed like a bad April Fools Day prank.

Doolittle originally planned to load 18 of his bombers for the mission, but as each airplane was lifted by crane and tied to the fantail of the carrier, the deck grew increasingly smaller. The look of incredulity in the eyes of his pilots told Doolittle that his airmen were unsure their bombers could safely take off from the floating runway.

The sailors who quickly did their job of loading and tying down the Army airplanes were curious about what was transpiring. Since several of the ship's officers knew Hank Miller from his days at the Naval Academy, it was common knowledge that he was from Alaska. His presence seemed to indicate that perhaps the *Hornet* was bound for Alaska to deliver the cargo tied to its deck. It appeared this would be an inglorious first assignment for the Navy's newest aircraft carrier.

On the afternoon of April 2 the *Hornet* sailed out of San Francisco Bay under sealed orders. Accompanying the carrier were two cruisers, four destroyers and a tanker. Under the command of Capt. Mark A. Mitscher aboard his flagship the *Hornet*, the eight-vessel force was called Task Group 16.2. Instead of sailing north toward Alaska, the convoy steamed west toward Hawaii. When the California coastline vanished in the distance Mitscher had his signal officer flash a message to the other vessels in the group, and then delivered the same message himself over the *Hornet's* loudspeaker:

"This force is bound for Tokyo."

The announcement was greeted with cheers that could be heard across the swells. *En route*, Doolittle's airmen began daily briefings to cover all aspects of their role in the mission. The *Hornet* was destined to steam to an area northwest of Midway Island where it was to rendezvous with the eight ships of Task Group 16.1. The united force would then become Task Force 16 under Vice Admiral William Bull Halsey and proceed through more than 1,500 miles of enemy ocean to within 500 miles of Japan. There, the B-25s would be launched to bomb military installations on the Japanese home islands. The mission had a secondary purpose as well: Since the beginning of the war the president had wanted to base American bombers in China. After Doolittle's B-25s dropped their payloads they were expected to proceed southeast to cross the Chinese coastline. The Japanese controlled the coast all the way from Hong Kong to Shanghai, so the bombers were expected to proceed deep inland to refuel at prepared airfields, and then continue farther inland to base out of Chungking.

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A new sense of mutual respect developed between the airmen and their Navy counterparts when the details of the secret mission unfolded. For the Navy it was a gutsy call, putting all their eggs in one basket in a sense, to get the raiders within striking distance of Japan. The Pacific Fleet had been devastated by the raid at Pearl Harbor and was trying to fight a war with very limited assets. To accomplish this mission the Navy was committing 16 ships, including two of its eight aircraft carriers, and sailing them more than 1,500 miles into hostile waters. During the trip the *Hornet* would be defenseless against air attack. The fighter planes that normally sat on her deck to take to the skies and

repel invaders had to be stowed below to make room for the B-25s. The sailors viewed the airmen's mission as suicidal.

At dawn on April 13, Capt. Mitscher's group met up with Task Group 16.1 under Vice Admiral Halsey at 38 degrees North, 180 degrees East. (As a point of reference, Midway Atoll is located at 28 degrees North, 177 degrees East.) Within hours the combined force of 16 ships, now called "Task Force 16," had reached the outside edges of the Pacific region controlled by the Japanese navy.

By April 15 the task force was within 800 miles of Japan. Halsey ordered the refueling of his ships and then sent the tankers back to Pearl Harbor. Now deep in enemy waters, the carriers were making good time, but the need for a rapid withdrawal after the bombers were launched was a concern. Halsey dispatched the slower-moving destroyers to return with the tankers, leaving only the two carriers and four cruisers to speed on toward their meeting with destiny. Scout planes were routinely dispatched from the *Enterprise* to watch for, and warn of, any enemy presence. The small American task force would be easily overwhelmed if they were found by the Japanese so close to the enemy homeland.

Unknown at the time to the American commanders, the Japanese were indeed aware that a convoy was steaming toward Japan. Intercepted radio transmissions indicated the presence of the U.S. Naval Task Force nearby. In response the enemy began stationing a series of picket boats 650 miles away from its shorelines to watch for and warn of any American ships. Since the Japanese commanders knew that the one-way range of carrier-launched fighters was about 300 miles, the American ships would be detected and destroyed long before they got within striking distance. They had no way of even guessing that the convoy carried long-range Army bombers. On the way the raiders picked up a report from Tokyo on an English-language radio station in which the Japanese responded to a Reuter's report that three American bombers had raided Tokyo.

The enemy response to the erroneous radio account was: "It is absolutely impossible for enemy bombers to get within 500 miles of Tokyo. Instead of worrying about such foolish things, the Japanese people are enjoying the fine spring sunshine and the fragrance of cherry blossoms."

The broadcast brought smiles to the faces of Doolittle's Raiders. Other radio reports were not so humorous. Shortly after Bataan fell on April 9 Doolittle and his crew became aware of the sad loss in the Philippines and learned of the torture being laid upon prisoners of the Japanese along the route of the infamous Bataan Death March. Every man destined to fly over Tokyo knew there was great potential to be shot down and taken captive.

During one conference session Doolittle advised his men: "Each pilot must decide for himself what he will do and what he'll tell his crew to do if that happens. I know what I'm going to do.

"I don't intend to be taken prisoner. I'm 45 years old and have lived a full life. If my plane is crippled beyond any possibility of fighting or escape, I'm going to have my crew bail out and then I'm going to dive my B-25 into the best military target I can find. You fellows are all younger and have a long life ahead of you. I don't expect any of the

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**THE MAKING OF A LEGEND:** At left a World War II propaganda poster featuring Gen. Jimmy Doolittle calls for Americans to “Do More for Doolittle.” At top, a confident Doolittle poses circa 1932 in front of a Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster, an airplane that was the fastest plane in the world in its time. Above left, a young Lt. Jimmy Doolittle poses for a photo in uniform, still “wet behind the ears.” Above right, at the center of the picture, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower (left) chats with Gen. Doolittle.

rest of you to do what I intend to do.”

The original plan was for the mission to begin on the late afternoon of April 19 when the task force was between 400 and 500 miles off Japan. Doolittle planned to take off first, three hours ahead of the rest of his bombers. His B-25 carried four incendiary bombs, which would not only destroy targets on the ground, but would also serve as a beacon in the night skies when the rest of his bombers reached the island. The optimal schedule had the raiders flying over Japan at night when they would be unfettered by barrage balloons, and when they would be difficult targets for enemy fighters. That schedule would have them making landfall on the Chinese coast with the dawn of the following day. None could have predicted, when the launch date was moved forward one day because of the unexpected speed with which the carriers neared Japan, that the time would again be moved forward nearly a dozen hours, forcing a daylight raid over Tokyo.

On April 17, Capt. Mitscher called Doolittle to the bridge to advise him of the task force’s close proximity to the launch site. It was time to begin gassing and arming the bombers. Doolittle planned liftoff the following afternoon to arrive over Tokyo at dusk. The remainder of his planes were to take off three hours later.

While Navy deck hands began the process of fueling the bombers, loading the bombs, and arming the machineguns that evening, Doolittle held a final briefing for his crews. He reminded his men they were to bomb only military targets, and no matter how tempting it might be, they were not to attack the Imperial Palace. This latter was

an instruction he had repeated almost daily. Doolittle the young fighter found success when he learned to fight smart, and not from his emotions. The purpose of this mission was to shake the resolve of the Japanese, and the bombing of a sacred shrine would serve only to infuriate the Japanese people and strengthen their resolve. Before parting, Doolittle advised his men to get a good night’s sleep. He wished them luck and made a final promise.

“When we get to Chungking,” he announced, “I’m going to give you all a party you won’t forget.”

Most of the men were too nervous to sleep. Many were still awake and playing poker with the sailors when the *Enterprise* flashed a warning to the *Hornet* at 3 a.m. that two enemy ships had been sighted. The sounding of general quarters woke everyone aboard, and the task force changed course to avoid detection. At dawn Halsey sent up patrol planes from the *Enterprise* to sweep the area. At 6 a.m. a Navy scout bomber flew over the carrier to drop a message, which was quickly passed up to the bridge. It read: “Enemy surface ship, Latitude 36 degrees 04N, Longitude 153 degrees 10E, Bearing 276 degrees True 42 miles. Believed seen by enemy.”

Again Halsey ordered his task force to alter its course to avoid detection. It seemed futile; the Japanese appeared to be everywhere. When morning turned to full light the crew of the *Hornet* spotted a small vessel less than a dozen miles distant. Mitscher assumed that if he could see the enemy, the enemy could see the aircraft carrier approaching. From the radio room he received a report that a

Japanese message had been intercepted nearby. He had to assume that a warning had been flashed to Tokyo. When one of the scout pilots located yet another enemy ship, this time little more than six miles distant, Halsey ordered the *Nashville* to sink it. As the cruiser's big guns boomed, the task force commander flashed a message to the *Hornet*: "Launch planes. To Col. Doolittle and gallant command: 'Good luck and God bless you.'"

Doolittle was on the bridge with Mitscher when the message reached the *Hornet*. The carrier's horn blasted through the early morning, and Mitscher announced: "Army pilots, man your planes!"

It was 8 a.m. and well ahead of the planned takeoff time. The *Hornet* was still 824 statute miles from the center of Tokyo, nearly twice the distance Army pilots had planned to fly. To make matters worse, what had been two weeks of poor weather seemed to be reaching its crescendo. Strong winds pushed the spray of 30-foot swells across the *Hornet's* deck. It was certainly far from desirable weather for takeoff, more so because the launch would be by 16 overloaded midrange Army bombers, a feat no one was even sure was possible under optimal conditions. As a flurry of activity spread across the deck, Doolittle shook hands with Mitscher and headed to his airplane.

Mitscher turned the *Hornet* into the wind, and the ship's big engines strained to get maximum speed up. From the cockpit of his B-25 Doolittle listened to the whine of his engines and looked through the window at a runway measuring 467 feet. Two white lines marked the placement of the nose and left wheels. If he could keep his bomber aligned on these, his right wing would clear the carrier's tower by six feet. It was not a comfortable distance, considering the way the ship rolled with the high seas, or the glare of saltwater spray across the deck. Behind the lead aircraft, 15 pilots and their crews watched anxiously as their commander prepared for takeoff. Months of planning, weeks of intense training, and the risk of much of the Navy's now-sparse Pacific Fleet had gone into preparing for this moment. The moment of truth had arrived.

Lt. Miller watched the waves rolling in, marking instructions on a blackboard and timing the launch so the *Hornet's* deck would be rising on a swell when the signal was given. At 8:20 a.m. the checkered flag dropped. Doolittle released the brakes, and the B-25 began rolling across the flight deck. Everyone held his breath. With little room to spare Doolittle's bomber was airborne, to cheers and shouts across the deck of the *Hornet*. Climbing quickly, he circled once to orient his compass, and then headed west toward Tokyo. Five minutes later Lt. Travis Hoover lifted his own B-25 off the deck. The remaining bombers followed at three-minute intervals. At 9:19 a.m. Lt. William Farrow's 16th bomber was airborne, and Adm. Halsey ordered his six ships to turn and beat a hasty retreat more than 2,000 miles for home.

There was no doubt that once Doolittle's bombs fell on Tokyo, the full force of the Japanese navy would be looking for the ships that had brought the raiders so close to their homeland.

Doolittle dropped his bomber down to 200 feet for the four-hour flight to Tokyo. In his youth he had skirted the ground to thrill spectators, but on this flight he hoped there would be no spectators. The low-altitude approach was to shield the incoming bombers from being

detected. One hour after liftoff Doolittle spotted a camouflaged Japanese ship, and two hours later he found himself flying directly into any enemy flying boat, but neither saw his low-flying B-25. The only company he had was Lt. Hoover's B-25, which caught up to him half an hour after takeoff and followed him almost all the way to Japan.

Doolittle's bomber crossed the coastline 80 miles north of Tokyo and changed course to head for its targets. Flying just above the roofs of the houses below, Japanese citizens looked up and waved, mistaking the bomber for one of their own planes. At one point Doolittle passed over a baseball game that was in process, scattering players and spectators by his low-level flight, but not raising any alarms. Ten miles from Tokyo he observed three flights of three fighters each approaching, but none of them attacked. At one point copilot Dick Cole counted as many as 80 enemy fighters between the bomber and its targets, but the only danger encountered came when ground aircraft batteries were finally alerted and filled the sky with ack-ack.

When the first targets became visible Doolittle climbed to 1,200 feet to drop his bombs. They fell on Tokyo at 12:30 p.m., igniting fires that would burn for days. When all four bombs had been released, Doolittle dropped back down to rooftop level and headed southwest. Before leaving land, five fighters converged on him, but he managed to lose them in a quick "S" turn among some hills.

Beneath him stretched a broad expanse of the South China Sea. Beneath his plane he could see scattered Japanese navy ships, but there was no threat from the air.

A short distance away Lt. Hoover dropped his bombs on two factory buildings

and a warehouse, then headed for Chungking. One by one the other raiders arrived over Japan. Targets were hit in Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe, Nagoya and Osaka. Only the No. 4 bomber, piloted by Lt. Everett Brick Holstrom, failed to drop its ordnance on the assigned military targets. His bomber was attacked by four enemy fighters, and the bomb load had to be tossed into Tokyo Bay.

By late afternoon, 15 B-25s were flying through a brewing storm in the South China Sea. The No. 8 bomber, under Capt. Edward "Ski" York, experienced unusual fuel consumption as a result of faulty engines while flying from the *Hornet* to its targets. After dropping his bombs, York knew he did not have enough fuel to reach China and flew northwest, toward Soviet Russia. The still-neutral Soviets had refused U.S. commanders' previous request to use their bases in the raid, despite their nearness to Tokyo. Already at war with Hitler, Russian leaders did not want to anger the Japanese. Out of necessity, York landed at a field near Vladivostok in hopes of refueling so he could fly on to Chungking. Instead, the Reds confiscated his bomber and confined York and his crew for 13 months. (They later escaped into Persia (now Iran), and returned home to fly other combat missions in World War II.)

The other bombers found themselves fighting a headwind across the South China Sea that slowed them down and depleted their fuel. That was a critical problem, since the raiders had launched several hundred miles beyond their initial planned launch point. Had not the wind direction changed when they approached China, providing a strong tailwind, probably none of the aircraft

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would have reached the shore.

In the dark, rainy skies over China Doolittle ordered his crew to bail out and then followed them. His B-25 crashed into a nearby mountainside, but all the crew escaped serious injury. The crews of 10 other B-25s similarly abandoned their fuel-starved planes in midair. One crewman died when he landed, becoming the first casualty of the mission. Three of the other bombers ditched in the water just off the coast, killing two more crewmen and severely injuring Lt. Lawson.

The remaining bomber, flown by Lt. Hoover who had parted with Doolittle in the darkness, made a landing in a rice paddy, wheels up.

On the morning after the raid Doolittle located the wreckage of his bomber on a mountainside. Sitting amid the twisted metal, he was at what he later described as the “lowest point of my life.” Said Doolittle of the incident:

As I sat there, Paul Leonard [Doolittle’s engineer/gunner] took my picture and then, seeing how badly I felt, tried to cheer me up. He asked, “What do you think will happen when you go home, Colonel?” I answered, “Well, I guess they’ll court-martial me and send me to prison at Fort Leavenworth.” Paul said: “No sir. I’ll tell you what will happen: They’re going to make you a general.” I smiled weakly, and he tried again. “And they’re going to give you the Congressional Medal of Honor.”

In the days that followed, friendly local Chinese rounded up the surviving raiders and fed and sheltered them. Those uninjured proceeded overland to Chuhsien (Chuchow). Doolittle rued the loss of all 16 of his bombers and his failure to complete the second half of his mission: delivery of an intact American bomber squadron to Chungking. More importantly, he mourned the death of three of his raiders and worried about eight men who were unaccounted for. The question of the missing men was answered when the Japanese announced the capture of all five members of Lt. Bill Farrow’s crew and the three surviving members of Lt. Dean Hallmark’s crew. (Hallmark’s two enlisted crewmembers drowned when their B-25 ditched into the ocean off the China coast.)

These eight raiders were charged with war crimes, tortured, “tried” by a Japanese kangaroo court and sentenced to death for supposed war crimes against civilians. On October 15, Lts. Hallmark and Farrow, along with Farrow’s gunner, Sgt. Harold Spatz, were taken by black limousine to a cemetery. There, they knelt with their backs to three wooden crosses, 20 feet apart. Cloth was wrapped around their faces and a black X drawn above their noses. A six-man firing squad lifted their rifles, took aim and killed the three soldiers in one round.

The remaining five were sentenced in a separate court to life in prison under solitary confinement.

Eighteen months later, Dean Hallmark’s copilot, Lt. Robert Meder, died of malnutrition and abuse at the hands of his captors. The four remaining POWs were fortunate enough to survive in solitary confinement until the end of the war.

What Doolittle’s raiders had accomplished was historic. Back in the States, newspapers quickly spread news of the mission, though many details remained secret. When President Franklin Roosevelt formally

announced some details he avoided any indication that the bombers had been launched from an aircraft carrier. That was information he did not want the Japanese to learn. Instead, strangely, he announced that the raid had been launched from “Shangri-La,” a mythical kingdom from James Hilton’s novel *Lost Horizon*. Why he would say such a thing is somewhat of a mystery. Perhaps it was Roosevelt’s idea of a joke. Perhaps it was due to the increasing deterioration of his brain due to cancer (TBR, January/February 2006).

The impact of the raid on Japanese war strategy was immediate. With confidence among the populace shaken, war planners had to take new steps to protect their homeland. The embarrassment suffered also enabled Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto to prevail in promoting a hitherto-opposed plan to conduct a major operation in the central Pacific to neutralize this new American threat.

Many of the raiders remained in the Indochina theater to continue air missions. Others went on to serve in North Africa and Europe.

Although Doolittle’s Tokyo raid and his prewar aviation exploits are much celebrated, less widely known is his postwar service as an advisor to the U.S. Air Force, intelligence agencies like the CIA and presidents. From 1955 until 1958 he served as chairman of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, advising the Air Force on future aviation and space technologies. From 1955 until 1965 he was a member of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, evaluating intelligence operations.

In 1958 he was offered the position of first administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, but for some reason he declined. His scientific knowledge, combined with his military record, meant he could bring together scientists and military leaders to develop new aviation technology, and he had unique insights because of his work in both those communities.

An avid sportsman, fisherman and hiker, he went on frequent hiking trips with his fellow scientists. In 1985, although long retired from active duty, he was promoted to four-star general.

Doolittle died in 1992. After his death, Howard W. Johnson, former chairman of the MIT Corporation, remembered: “Once, when he was asked to sum up his philosophy, he said it was simply a matter of trying to leave the Earth a better place than he found it.” ❖

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*“In the days that followed, local Chinese rounded up the surviving raiders and fed and sheltered them. Doolittle rued the loss of all 16 of his bombers and his failure to deliver an intact bomber squadron to Chungking.”*

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