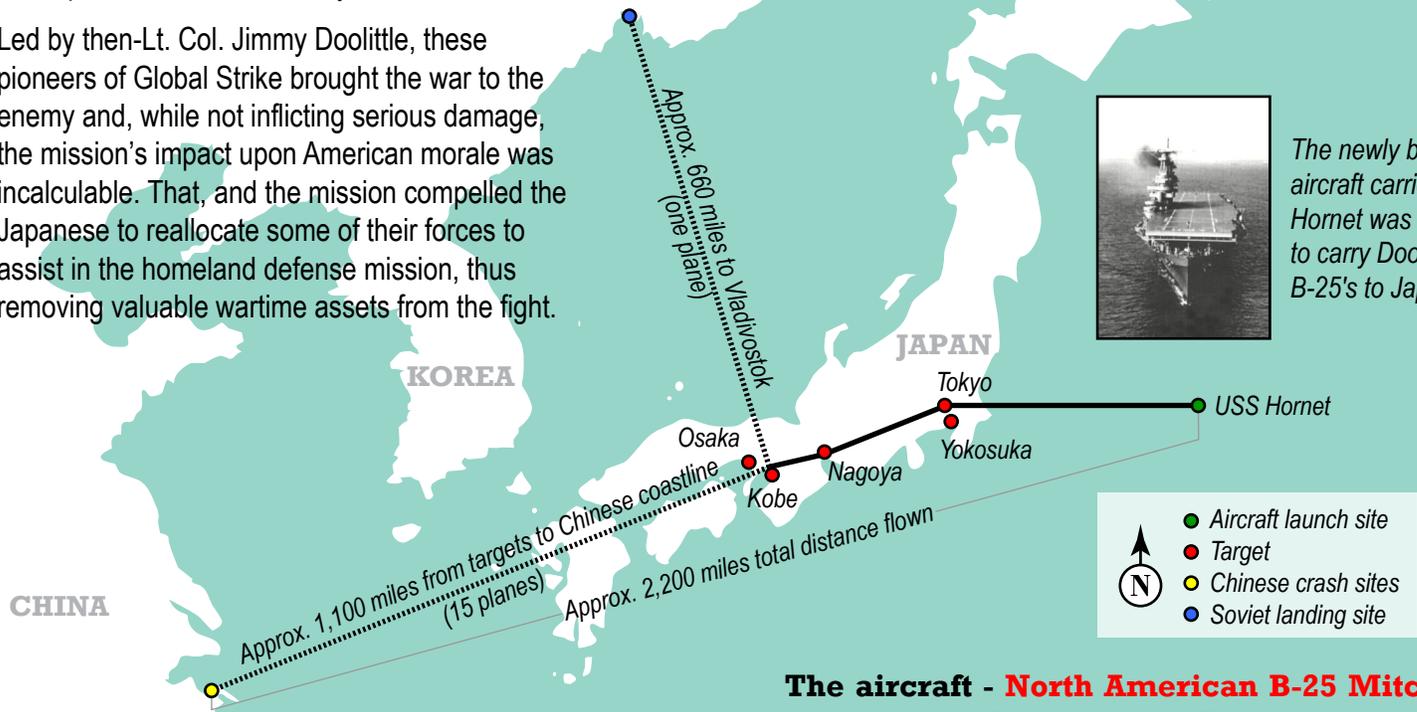


# The Doolittle Raiders - April 18, 1942

In one of WWII's first truly joint operations, 80 crewmembers of the U.S. Army Air Forces trained under the guidance of U.S. Navy pilots to master taking off in a fully-loaded B-25 Mitchell bomber from the deck of an aircraft carrier. Their efforts resulted in the first aerial attack of the Japanese home islands by U.S. bombers in World War II.

Led by then-Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, these pioneers of Global Strike brought the war to the enemy and, while not inflicting serious damage, the mission's impact upon American morale was incalculable. That, and the mission compelled the Japanese to reallocate some of their forces to assist in the homeland defense mission, thus removing valuable wartime assets from the fight.



The newly built aircraft carrier USS Hornet was chosen to carry Doolittle's B-25's to Japan.

## The mission - Attack Japan's home islands



A B-25 Mitchell bomber leaves the deck of the USS Hornet on its way to attack Japan.

National Archives and Records Administration

The original plan called for the launch to take place about 250 miles from the coast of Japan. However, the armada was spotted by a Japanese patrol boat, Nittō Maru, which ruined the element of surprise. While the boat was quickly sunk by the task force ship USS Nashville, Japanese forces were alerted and Doolittle decided to launch much earlier than originally intended.

The crews flew an average of 2,250 miles, and were in the skies about 13 hours, which at the time was the longest B-25 mission ever.

15 of the 16 planes crash landed on or near the Chinese coast, while one flew north to the USSR, landing near Vladivostok.

## The crews

14 of the 16 crews survived the mission, but two crewmen drowned after bailing out at sea. One crewman successfully bailed out, but fell off a cliff in the dark and was killed. Two crews (eight flyers) were captured by the Japanese (three were executed, one died in captivity) and the remainder were prisoners until their liberation in August 1945.

## The aircraft - North American B-25 Mitchell

More than 9,800 B-25's were built. The aircraft, loved by its crews, served in every combat theater of WWII.



- Length: 52 ft, 11 in
- Height: 15 ft, 9 in
- Max. speed: 300 mph
- Range: 2,400 miles
- Wingspan: 67 ft, 7 in
- Engines: 2 x Wright 1,700 h.p.
- Cruising speed: 230 mph
- Service ceiling: 24,200 ft

## Team Doolittle

The crews manned 16 aircraft which attacked five Japanese cities, then made their escape to the west in what became a legendary mission which continues to inspire Airmen to this day.

Training at Eglin Field, Fla., the crews mastered short takeoffs and proceeded to meet the aircraft carrier USS Hornet at Alameda Naval Station, Calif.

The 16 B-25s were craned aboard and fastened to the deck for the journey across the Pacific.



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## A joint operation

The concept for the mission was proposed by Capt. Francis Low, USN, a member of the Chief of Naval Operations staff, who worked closely with the Army Air Forces to turn his idea into reality.



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