

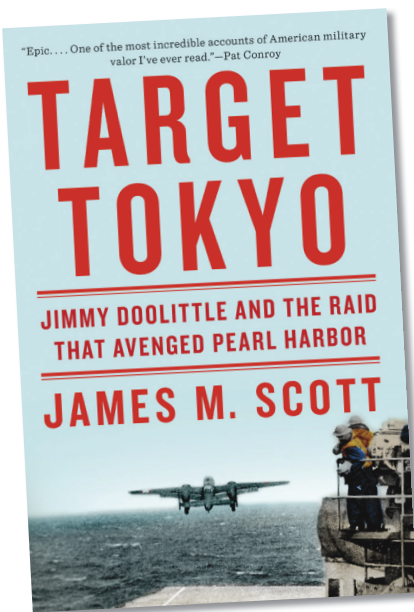
Target Tokyo: Jimmy Doolittle and the Raid that Avenged Pearl Harbor

James M. Scott. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015. 672 pp. Biblio. Illus. \$35.

Reviewed by Stephen L. Moore

The Pacific Fleet was still smoldering at Pearl Harbor in December 1941 as American war planners began plotting a counterstrike at the heart of Japan. President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved a bold

initiative to use two of the Navy's precious aircraft carriers to slip within launching distance of the Japanese mainland to send twin-engine Army B-25 bombers against Tokyo.



The mission was led by 45-year-old Lieutenant Colonel James “Jimmy” Doolittle, a famed stunt and racing pilot whose enthusiasm for the project was contagious. The resulting Doolittle Raid is well known, but the level of detail unearthed on both the American and Japanese sides by author James Scott is refreshing. The reader has a front-row seat for meetings between Roosevelt and his staff and the subsequent joint Army-Navy efforts to pull off what Doolittle dubbed “Special Aviation Project No. 1.”

The storytelling unfolds in many layers as the task force puts to sea on its mission of vengeance. *Target Tokyo* is a gripping history filled with personal details of endurance, suffering, and determination. The author accessed a wide range of fresh archival data and firsthand accounts to breathe new life into his tale of a seemingly impossible mission that altered the course of the Pacific war. Scott shares the inner thoughts of the airmen, intelligence staff, mechanics, and sailors alike as the Navy's newest carrier, the USS *Hornet* (CV-8), surges toward Tokyo with her task force. Once Japanese patrol craft radioed attack warnings to Japan, Admiral William F. “Bull” Halsey Jr. was forced to send off the B-25s ten hours earlier than planned, while they were still more than 750 miles from land.

On 18 April 1942, 16 bombers and 80 volunteer airmen launched from the *Hornet* with little expectation of making it to neutral airfields in China. *Target Tokyo* precisely relates the damage inflicted by Doolittle's Raiders as they bombed military, industrial, and, inadvertently, civilian targets in Tokyo, Yokohama, Yosuka, Nagoya, Kobe, and Osaka. One B-25 crew opted to land in the Soviet Union, only to be held for more than a year before they managed to bribe a smuggler to help them reach the Iranian border.

The ordeals of the other 15 crews follow in thrilling detail, as each is forced to bail out, crash land, or ditch in the ocean. Three airmen perished in the process. Aided by Chinese citizens and motley

bands of guerillas, some of the Doolittle Raiders made narrow escapes ahead of Japanese soldiers in hot pursuit. Scott also covers the sobering fates of the eight airmen who were taken as prisoners of war. One Raider later perished in captivity. Three others were tried and executed after having been convicted of strafing and murdering Japanese citizens. Only four of the POWs were repatriated in 1945, some of whom suffered for decades because of the abuse they had endured.

Scott offers considerable insight on how Doolittle's raid fueled Japanese plans to crush the U.S. Navy at Midway and how the attack shaped homeland morale—both in Japan and in America. The author does not shy away from recounting the barbarity Japan unleashed against Chinese citizens who assisted the American aviators.

Scott masterfully relates both the immediate and longer-range effects this bold American attack had on the Pacific war. Jimmy Doolittle, promoted to brigadier general and awarded the Medal of Honor for his mission, remained in close contact with his surviving aviators for decades after World War II. *Target Tokyo* is a lengthy book that proves to be a quick read, thanks to a moving narrative laced with rich personal accounts. This rare gem on American valor is destined to become the definitive account of Doolittle's Tokyo raid.

Mr. Moore is the author of two Naval Institute Press books and more than a dozen other titles on World War II and Texas history. His latest book on the Battle of Midway, *Pacific Payback* (NAL, 2014), will be rereleased in paperback in June.