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James M. Scott, *Target Tokyo: Jimmy Doolittle and the Raid That Avenged Pearl Harbor*. New York: Norton, 2015. Pp. xv, 648. ISBN 978-0-393-08962-2.

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It started as a “foolish idea” proposed by a submarine officer serving on Adm. Ernest King’s staff on 10 January 1942 (30). It ended as one of the greatest raids in military history. In *Target Tokyo*, historian James M. Scott¹ presents a gripping and comprehensive account of the genesis, planning, execution, and aftermath of the Doolittle Raid. While the raid itself is the center of the story, Scott explores several other aspects not well covered in the literature, for example, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration’s managing of the media narrative. He also taps new Japanese sources to survey the actual damage and destruction caused by the raid. Even those familiar with the raid will find Scott’s account an engrossing page-turner.

The Doolittle Raid was a response not only to Pearl Harbor, but to a string of Japanese victories in the months that followed it. American morale plummeted as radio and newspaper reports described defeat after defeat. FDR, knowing he must rally popular support for the long war ahead, wasted no time in ordering a reprisal.

The Japanese needed to experience the same shock, humiliation, and destruction that America had suffered. Roosevelt understood there was only one way to accomplish that lofty goal, a demand he would repeatedly press upon his advisers in the days and weeks to come. “The president was insistent,” [Air Force Gen. Henry (Hap)] Arnold recalled, “that we find ways and means of carrying home to Japan proper, in the form of a bombing raid, the real meaning of war.” (28)

The Army and Navy set to work on a plan to strike Japan. Navy captain Francis Low was the man who proposed the “foolish idea” for the raid. Could an Army medium bomber take off from an aircraft carrier? Both the Army and Navy came to the same conclusion—yes, it could. It was just a matter of working out the details. Hap Arnold had the very man to oversee the operation, his staff troubleshooter, Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle.

Doolittle was already an aviation legend before Arnold tapped him for what was to become “Special Aviation Project No. 1.” As an air racer and test pilot, he had continually pushed his personal limits. “The only really dangerous pilot,” he said, “is the one that flies beyond his limitations” (45), and Doolittle seemed to have none. He set and broke many aviation records. In 1927, he became the first pilot to perform an “outside loop,” a maneuver most thought to be invariably fatal. Two years later, he completed the first instruments-only flight, from takeoff to landing. Doolittle excelled in the classroom as well as the cockpit. At MIT, he earned a master’s degree and a doctorate in Aeronautics in just two years. In short, Jimmy Doolittle possessed in abundance two qualities of the utmost importance for the raid on Japan: bravery and brains.

It was determined early on that only one aircraft met the requirements for the raid—the North American B-25 “Mitchell” medium bomber. Hardly a month after planning began in February 1942, two B-25s were loaded onto the USS *Hornet* at Norfolk, Virginia, and later successfully flown off the carrier. Approval for the raid soon followed and a search for experienced aircrews commenced. The Seventeenth Medium Bomb Group was home to the most experienced B-25 crews in the nation. It had been the first unit to receive the aircraft and was flying them exclusively by September 1941. It was conducting patrols off the Oregon coast when orders came to report immediately to South Carolina. There the crews learned they could volunteer for an extremely dangerous mission that would require them to take off in just five hundred feet.

1. His previous books include *The Attack on the Liberty: The Untold Story of Israel's Deadly 1967 Assault on a U.S. Spy Ship* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2009) and *The War Below: The Story of Three Submarines That Battled Japan* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

Despite the lack of information on the mission, save that Doolittle was involved, the entire group volunteered for a chance to fly with the legendary aviator.

During an intensive but brief training program, the pilots and crews mastered the art of short-field takeoffs. The B-25s were modified and lightened to extend their range. Anything inessential was removed. The advanced—and secret—Norden bombsights were replaced with simple devices made from twenty cents worth of hardware store parts (93). Superfluous machine guns were replaced by broom handles painted black!

After several weeks of hard training, the crews flew to San Francisco Bay, where the *Hornet* was awaiting its special cargo. Sixteen B-25s were hoisted onto its flight deck and their crews boarded the ship. Doolittle gathered the eighty men after the carrier passed through the Golden Gate into the Pacific and informed them of the mission's objective: "For the benefit of those of you who don't already know, or who have been guessing, we are going straight to Japan" (129).

The "real meaning of war" came home to Japan on 18 April 1942. All sixteen bombers took off successfully and set a course for Tokyo. The task force had been sighted earlier by Japanese picket boats and was forced to launch the bombers farther out than planned. Despite this, the planes arrived over Japan during a midday air raid drill. They hit Tokyo and several other cities over the course of a few hours, without the loss of a single B-25.

The raid electrified both countries. American morale skyrocketed. The Japanese were stunned. US bombers had penetrated the sacred airspace of Japan, something the nation's militarists claimed was impossible. Fifteen bombers flew on to China while one, violating orders, landed safely in Vladivostok. The Japanese captured eight of the eighty raiders. They repeatedly tortured them in various ways—including waterboarding—to extract intelligence. Scott describes the execution of three of the men in moving detail from the perspective of the raiders and the prison warden who served as a witness. Another raider died of starvation during captivity. The author's vivid account of the barbaric treatment of the eight US captives is both painful and riveting.

The other raiders who made it to China began arduous journeys toward their rendezvous point. Again, Scott writes a powerful narrative of the hardships the Chinese, and some Western missionaries, courageously endured to aid the airmen. Japanese troops launched horrific assaults on areas where the American planes had gone down. They destroyed cities and villages and inflicted unspeakable suffering on women and children. An estimated 250,000 Chinese were killed. American leaders knew very well that Japanese reprisals were likely:

A raid against Tokyo—home of the emperor and the nerve center of the Japanese empire—promised to invite retaliation against the Chinese. That probability would likely trigger Chiang Kai-shek's refusal to allow the bombers to land on Chinese airfields. American leaders, of course, knew all of this. Japanese atrocities against the Chinese had grown so notorious throughout the years that the State Department dedicated an entire report to them in February 1942. (105)

Such political considerations have not featured prominently in other studies of the Doolittle Raid. Scott also offers here a superb analysis of the point-counterpoint "spin war" waged by both the American and Japanese governments to suit their own narratives of the raid.

Serious and armchair historians alike will find much to enjoy and reflect on in James Scott's comprehensive and perceptive retelling of the Doolittle Raid. His extensive research in over three dozen archives on four continents takes his readers from the halls of the White House to tarmacs of airfields around the nation and into the skies above Japan. *Target Tokyo* will long remain the standard work on its subject.