



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

House of Representatives

HONORING THE DOOLITTLE RAIDERS

HON. FRENCH HILL

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

Mr. Hill of Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, following the December 7, 1941, attack of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on Oahu, President Roosevelt sought and received from Congress authorization to declare war on Japan. In January 1942, Lieutenant Colonel James H. “Jimmy” Doolittle was selected to lead a top-secret retaliation attack on Japan. With just three weeks of special “short field takeoff” training, Doolittle’s men set sail toward Japan aboard the *USS Hornet*.

On April 18, 1942, the *Hornet* was sighted by a Japanese ship and the Doolittle Raiders, as they would come to be known, set off on their mission—twelve hours early and some 150 miles from their planned launch position. Within one hour, these 80 volunteers, aboard 16 B-25 bombers, took off in the first U.S. air raid on Japan in World War II. The air raid resulted in the bombing of multiple military and industrial targets in Tokyo and other Japanese cities. Their mission a success, the crews headed for their rendezvous point in China.

Flying on fumes and facing poor weather, one plane diverted to Russia, and the fifteen others were forced to crash land. With the aid of Chinese civilians, most of these brave men reached safety, but not all of our famous flyers made it home. Three of the raiders were killed in action; and, of the eight that were captured, three were executed and one died in captivity. Their sacrifice and the success of this mission served as an essential boost to American morale, and the exploits of the Doolittle Raiders marked a critical turning point in the war in the Pacific.

Following their daring drama over Japan, the Doolittle Raiders spread out across the nation and globe. Some continued in the military, enjoying long careers into retirement. Others gave their lives in later service to their country, while still others rejoined civilian life as doctors, teachers, businessmen—serving their communities in every capacity.

Earlier this year, we lost two of the surviving Raiders, LTC Edward Saylor, and LTC Robert Hite. LTC Hite was one of the brave souls who escaped Japanese captivity, and he also was a resident of my home state of Arkansas. Now, from the band of 80 young flyers 73 Aprils ago, only two living Raiders remain: Staff Sergeant David Thatcher and LTC Richard Cole. Retired LTC Cole served as copilot to LTC Doolittle aboard aircraft number one, and he, along with the other Raiders, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Retired Staff Sergeant David J. Thatcher served as the engineer-gunner to crew number seven, whose plane the “Ruptured Duck,” crashed just off the shores of the Chinese mainland. Sergeant Thatcher was awarded the Silver Star in 1942 for his bravery in caring for his injured crew members.

Earlier today, Congress conferred the Congressional Gold Medal on the Doolittle Raiders for their undeniable valor and sacrifice. These airmen and their extraordinary “30 Seconds over Tokyo” will never be forgotten. I am humbled to rise today to recognize these ordinary Americans that stepped up to attempt an exceptional mission. Col. Doolittle and his Raiders will fly forever in our hearts and minds as the best of American values of Duty, Honor, and Country. May God bless their memory and example to us all.