

NEWS RELEASE

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Doolittle Tokyo Raiders Congressional Gold Medal Presentation Ceremony

DAYTON, Ohio – Seventy-three years ago, 80 men achieved the unimaginable when they took off from an aircraft carrier on a top secret mission to bomb Japan. These men, led by Lt. Col. James H. “Jimmy” Doolittle, came to be known as the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders.

In recognition of their outstanding heroism, valor, skill, and service to the United States military service during World War II, the "Doolittle Tokyo Raiders" will be awarded a Congressional Gold Medal on April 15 by leaders of the U.S. House and Senate.

The medal, the highest civilian honor the United States Congress can bestow, will be presented to the National Museum of the United States Air Force by Raider, Lt. Col. Richard “Dick” E. Cole, during a ceremony at the museum on Saturday, April 18, the 73rd anniversary of the raid. Raider Staff Sgt. David J. Thatcher is also planning to attend.

Today, just three of the men survive: Cole, co-pilot of Crew No. 1; Lt. Col. Robert L. Hite, co-pilot of Crew No. 16; and Thatcher, engineer-gunner of Crew No. 7.

The medal will be on permanent display at the museum following the ceremony as part of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders diorama which features a North American B-25 on the simulated deck of the USS *Hornet*.

Public interested in attending the ceremony and reception can purchase tickets through the Air Force Museum Foundation. Tickets will be available beginning at 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 24 at <http://www.afmuseum.com/doolittle>. Only 400 tickets will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. No phone or walk-in orders will be accepted.

Each year since the end of World War II, with the exception of 1951, the Doolittle Raiders have held an annual reunion. The museum had the privilege of hosting the Raiders in April 1965 (23rd), 1999 (57th), 2006 (64th), 2010 (68th) and 2012 (70th) and also hosted Cole, Thatcher and Lt. Col. Edward J. Saylor during their final toast to their fallen comrades on Nov. 9, 2013.

“Given our mission, the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force provides the most appropriate home for the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders Congressional Gold Medal,” said Museum Director Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jack Hudson. “It is important to pay tribute to the Doolittle Raiders for uplifting the spirits of all Americans and for their supreme example of courage, professionalism, creativity, leadership and patriotism. Here at the museum, their story will live on to continue to educate and inspire future generations of Airmen and visitors from around the world.”

The raid, which took place on April 18, 1942, was an extremely important event in the development of American air power. It marked the first combat use of strategic bombardment by the U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II. While the attack itself caused little actual damage to Japanese war industry, the psychological impact on the Japanese military and the American public proved to be immense. It forced the Japanese military to pull forces back from the front lines to protect the home islands and showed Americans that the war could be won. The U.S. Air Force has drawn upon the Doolittle Raiders for inspiration ever since.

In honor of these World War II aviation heroes, the Air Force Museum Theatre will show “The Doolittle Raid: A Mission that Changed the War” with guest speaker Cindy Chal, daughter of Cole, on Friday, April 17 and Saturday, April 18 at 4 pm each day. Chal will speak following the 60-minute film. The Air Force Museum Store will also offer book signings throughout the day on Friday and Saturday.

The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, is the world’s largest military aviation museum. With free admission and parking, the museum features more than 360 aerospace vehicles and missiles and thousands of artifacts amid more than 17 acres of indoor exhibit space. Each year about one million visitors from around the world come to the museum. For more information, visit www.nationalmuseum.af.mil.

The theatre and store are operated by the Air Force Museum Foundation, Inc., a Section 501(c)(3) private, non-profit organization that assists the Air Force in the development and expansion of the facilities of the National Museum of the United States Air Force. For more information on the Air Force Museum Foundation, visit www.airforcemuseum.com. The Air Force Museum Foundation is not part of the Department of Defense or any of its components and it has no governmental status.

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NOTE TO PUBLIC: For more information, contact the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at 937-904-9881.

NOTE TO MEDIA: For more information, contact Diana Bachert in the National Museum of the United States Air Force Public Affairs Division at (937) 255-1337 or diana.bachert@us.af.mil.