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Featuring: The North American B-25 Mitchell

# The North American B-25

*HISTORY*

The B-25 was made immortal on April 18, 1942, when it became the first United States aircraft to bomb the Japanese mainland. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle, sixteen Mitchells took off from the aircraft carrier USS Hornet, flew 800 miles (1287 km) to Japan, and attacked their targets. Most made forced landings in China. They were the heaviest aircraft at the time to be flown from a ship at sea. The B-25 was designed for the United States' Army Air Corps before the Second World War. The North American company had never designed a multi-engine bomber before. The original design had shoulder mounted wings and a crew of three in a narrow fuselage. The USAAC then decided its new bomber would need a much larger payload -- double the original specifications. North American designers dropped the wing to the aircraft's mid-section, and widened the fuselage so the pilot and co-pilot could sit side-by-side. They also improved the cockpit. The USAAC ordered 140 aircraft of the new design right off the drawing board. There were at least six major variants of the Mitchell, from the initial B-25A and B25B, with two power-operated two-gun turrets, to the autopilot-equipped B-25C, and the B-25G with 75mm cannon for use on anti-shipping missions. The British designated the B-25Bs as the Mitchell I, the B-25C and B-25Ds as the Mitchell II, and their B-25Js, with 12 heavy machine guns, as the Mitchell III. The US Navy and Marine Corps designated their hard-nosed B-25Js as the PBJ-1J. In the end, the B-25 became the most widely used American medium bomber of World War Two. After the war, many B-25s were used as training aircraft. Between 1951 and 1954, 157 Mitchells were converted as flying classrooms for teaching the Hughes E-1 and E-5 fire control radar. They were also used as staff transport, utility, and navigator-trainer aircraft. The last B-25, a VIP transport, was retired from the USAF on May 21, 1960. Approximately 34 B-25 Mitchells remain flying today, most as warbirds, although at least one earns its keep in Hollywood as an aerial camera platform.
[History by David MacGillivray]

## *NICKNAMES:*

Billy's Bomber (after General Billy Mitchell); Bank (NATO code name for Russian Lend-Lease B-25s).

## *BASIC SPECIFICATIONS (B-25J)*

Engines: Two 1,700-hp Wright R-2600-92 Cyclone radial piston engines
Weight: Empty 19,480 lbs., Max Takeoff 35,000 lbs.
Wing Span: 67ft. 7in.
Length: 52ft. 11in.
Height: 16ft. 4in.
Performance:
Maximum Speed at 13,000 ft: 272mph
Ceiling: 24,200 ft.
Range: 1,350 miles
Armament:
12 12.7-mm (0.5-inch) machine guns
4,000 pounds of bombs

**Number Built**

9,889

**Number Still Airworthy**

~34

## WATCH THE B-25 IN ACTION!

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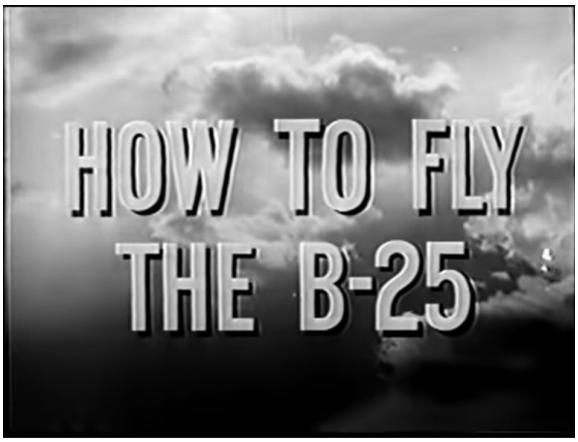


How to Fly the North American B-25 "Mitchell" Medium Bomber (Restored 1944)

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