

For those of you following Steve Dixon's 2nd *Target For Tonight!* Campaign game, the date for this mission is the night of 5/6 December 1943 and No. 104 Squadron is heading for Courtrai, Belgium. Here is "R for Roger's" mission AAR. Hope you enjoy!

No. 104 Squadron (KX) Bomber Command - "R for Roger"

5/6 Dec 43

Mission 14/ TGT - Courtrai, Belgium, Zone 4.

Formation - First 1/3.

Moon Phase: Crescent

Crew:

Name	Rank	Position
Malcolm Fraser	Warrant Officer	Flight Engineer
William Cavendish	Warrant Officer	Bomb Aimer
Jacob Morton	Sergeant	Rear Gunner (1-Ju88c6, 2- ME-110 G4, 1-Do-217N2)
Alfie "Binky" Williams	Pilot Officer	Navigator
Theodore "Teddy" Fernsby	Flying Officer	Pilot
Jeremiah "Jerry" MacKenzie	Sergeant	Mid-Upper Gunner (2-Ju88c6, 1-Do-217, 1-Fw-190A5, Me-110F-4)
Oscar Addington	Flight SGT	Wireless Operator/Gunner (Wnd) (Do-217J1)
Sidney Cartwright	Warrant Officer	Senior Erk

"The Mission to Courtrai, Belgium"

A series of Channel storms have passed thru England and the Channel area since the last mission to France. "Stormy", the weather briefer told the crews at tonight's briefing that the bomber stream lead crews should expect 50 to 100% cloud cover over the Channel and the target to be "socked in" but that the weather would clear off on the homebound flight.

"It looks like he was right!" mumbled Teddy to himself ... "The weather is crappy, but that is to be expected in December in England." he said watching the wind screen wipers making their back and forth passes across the front wind screen. It was raining hard and he could barely make out the taxiway lights. "What did you say?" asked Malcolm Fraser "R for Roger's" Flight Engineer. He had just finished reading the last item on the pre-flight check list and was looking in Teddy's direction. "Oh... just commenting on the weather." said Teddy. "All Engines are in the green" he said. "Check" replied Malcolm... "Ready to fly"...

The cockpit grew quiet. There was only the occasional rustle of papers over the low hum of "Roger's" idling engines and the rattle of rain pelting "Roger's" skin to break the silence. It was dark inside the bomber... what little light there was came from the glow of the instruments as they waited for the signal to go... "Roger" was the lead bomber for the mission. Teddy glanced out the left cockpit window at the plane handler standing next to the Jeep at the side of the taxiway. Rain was falling hard and running in sheets off of his glistening poncho. Teddy felt sorry for him and imagined that he was soaked to the skin standing there in the rain.

Then, Teddy saw a blinking light coming from the tower... The plane handler raised a flashlight and blinked an acknowledgement back to the tower. He then turned and flashed the signal at Teddy. Raised his hand the plane handler rendered a smart salute to Teddy. Teddy saluted him back just as smartly. Grasping the throttles Teddy inched them forward a notch and released the brakes ... "Roger's" engines increased their pitch and the Lancaster began to roll forward on the taxiway.

Teddy proceeded slowly ... it was dark and the crescent moon was hidden behind the clouds... He eased the bomber out onto the runway and turned into the wind. He ran the engines up to take off power and stood on the brakes. "Roger" began to shake and shimmy from the power of the engines that was being restrained by the brakes. "All still in the green." said Malcolm "He's ready to fly"...

"OK then... and here we go then!" said Teddy over the intercom as he released the brakes and "Roger" began to roll. The hooded runway lights began to flash past as "Roger" gained speed ... and then became light on his wheels ... and then the bouncing stopped as the Lancaster took flight... Clearing the end of the runway Teddy said "Retract the gear." Malcolm pushed the gear retraction lever forward ... there was a whining sound followed by a loud "Ka-Thunk!" as the landing gear settled into their wing recesses. Malcolm responded with "Gear retracted!"

As expected the tail end of this last storm was moving thru the area rapidly. Moving into zone 2 "Roger" and his crew encountered buffeting winds and more rain. But as they crossed the English coast and went "Feet Wet" over the Channel the Sky began to clear to about 50% cloud cover.

Teddy knew "Jerry" was actively preparing for the raid. He was thinking that the "Himmelbett" Radar operators would be holding the night fighters back until the raid developed a little more. Most operators wanted a clearer picture of the possible targets so they could get the night fighters staged for maximum coverage of the raid's bombers. In their eyes this could just be a "Spoof" raid and the real target strike would come later in the mission. No Night fighters were encountered in zone 2.

Teddy was steering a course toward Calais in France, hoping to mislead the German Radar operators as to the true target. The weather in zone 3 turned to 100% cloud cover. Oscar Addington, the wireless operator reported he had not received a recall order.

About midway thru zone 3, "Binky" Williams, "Roger's" Navigator popped up from his navigator's station below the pilot's deck ... "Turn to course 145 in 2 minutes, that is the final bearing to the Rail Yard target." he said. "Roger, Binky... Thanks." replied Teddy as Binky dropped back down out of sight.

The bomber was flying at low altitude in zone 3. Over the intercom, Teddy said "Ok Guys, going "feet dry" as "Roger" flashed across the French coastline just north of Dunkirk as they entered zone 4. A few Tracer rounds from light AA guns and a searchlight beam or two tried to capture "Roger" in their sights as he flashed over head but they were unsuccessful. Teddy pulled back on the wheel and "Roger" began to climb to bombing altitude. The weather changed to 50% cloud

cover in zone 4. As they approached the target, Oscar Addington moved to the "window" chute and began dropping the strips of "tin foil" known as window that clouded the German's Radar.

Getting closer to Courtrai, the Master Bomber from the Pathfinder Force made radio contact. He gave Teddy a bearing to the Initial point where the bomb run would begin. He advised AA fire was light to moderate and his PF bombers were beginning to mark the target. Teddy acknowledged and looking ahead toward Courtrai where he could see various colored flares being dropped to mark the target area.

The "Himmelbett" operators must have decided it was a good time to unleash the night fighters... Just then, Jerry Mackenzie in the Mid-Upper Turret called out in a calm voice on the intercom... "Look Lively Skipper, We have a Me-110 passing down the portside at 9 o'clock high... looks like he is looking us over."

"Roger that MacKenzie" replied Teddy. Glancing out the port window he could see nothing but darkness.

Jacob Morton in the tail turret called out in an equally calm voice "I have him in sight ... he is circling in from 6 o'clock level. Looks like a Me-110 F-4... It looks like he is trying to get us visually... he doesn't seem to be using radar... probably not installed or doesn't know how to use it properly ... he's making a really big target of himself trying to get us lined up... probably a newbie. " ...

There was a pause ... the intercom stayed quiet... "Roger's" crew were veterans, they had done this many times before. They has over 50 missions together in two combat tours and a stint with Training Command teaching tactics to new pilots. They knew how to deal with night fighters!

Morton came back on the intercom... "Let's help this guy a little, Skipper... He's overshot again and I need him to bank up a bit so I can get a better angle on him... make a gentle left hand turn and start a shallow climb so I can get a zero deflection angle shot on him..."

MacKenzie, following the action in the top turret replied "Copy and I'm ready when you fire".

Teddy didn't reply but began a shallow climb and turn to port ... The night fighter pilot thought it was his lucky day as the big Lancaster bomber set itself up perfectly for him... The bomber had turned so that he was now lined up perfectly for a 6 o'clock high shot...

"That bomber's crew must be asleep... they haven't seen me yet." he thought. "and now to close in for that perfect shot. It will be my first score!"... And that was the last thought the "newbie night fighter pilot would ever have as the bomber's guns "lit up the night" with six blazing streams of .50 caliber machinegun tracers that converged upon the cockpit of the Me-110...

Teddy could see the burning Me-110 with the pilot slumped over the controls slide off to the left side of bomber as it rolled up on its wing and then dove straight into the earth below... Morton and Oscar confirmed the crash...

Teddy contacted the Master Bomber and received directions for the bomb run. Cavendish takes over control of "Roger" for that minute-long straight and level run over the target. As predicted, Flak is light over the target. "Roger" is not hit. Cavendish releases the bomb load. All bombs are On-Target. F/SGT Addington takes the Target Strike photos and returns to dropping Window as "Roger" leaves the target... Post strike photos revealed the strike is on target and 50% of the bombs hit the rail yard area. "Roger" avoids being targeted by the searchlights, AA Fire and night fighters as he turns for home in the target zone.

The remainder of the flight back to England is uneventful. The weather over the base is good and "Roger" lands safely. "Roger" took mainly superficial damage from AA fire. He will be ready for the next mission.

Photos below:

"R for Roger"

The Courtrai Mission Map

Mission Results:

One Night Fighter shot down:

Me-110 F-4 credited to MacKenzie

No crew members injured.

Bombs were - ON TARGET

Bomb Accuracy - 50% on target.

"R for Roger" will be ready for the next mission.

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Plane Name: "R for Roger"

