

Target for Tonight
“The Phantom of the Ruhr” - Lancaster Mk 1

Multiplayer Campaign 4 Mission 9 Total Campaign Missions 69
1945 Mission 9
Sassnitz, Germany - night of January 1st morning of January 2nd, 1945

The Phantom of the Ruhr’s 12th Combat Mission.

Full Moon – weather on takeoff 'poor'.

The Phantom is crewed by:

Pilot	Rueben Woodyear	P/O
Wireless	Harvey Rumble	F/SGT
Tail Gunner	Roman Castevet	SGT
Navigator	Owen Hanks	WO
Mid-Upper	Harry Goodyear	F/SGT
Bomb Aimer	Archie Smothers	WO
Engineer	Harvey Lewis	WO

It’s bloody awful to have to fly a mission on the first evening of the new year and in 10 of 10 cloud cover and falling snow. This should be the night for sleeping off the hangover from New Year’s Eve. A night for a pork roast with sauerkraut (well maybe not that since we are at war with Germany) but that is not to be. There is a war going on and damn it, somebody has to fight it. So the 104th Squadron steps up (as though we had a real choice) and heads out. At 7:30 pm, our lumbering Lancs are in the air. The world vanishes below us as we join the bomber stream above the snow clouds. The cold is extreme at 23,000 feet but we have our suit heaters to keep us from frostbite.

The ground war in Europe is going well. We are advancing on all fronts but the Germans did lash out with massive airstrikes and a large number of panzers in the Ardennes a few weeks ago. They even disguised some of their Panther tanks as American tanks and struck the rear lines. They are still dangerous. Intel reports that the Germans now have propellerless jet fighters in operation. I hope we never see one of those coming our way.

Our target for tonight is the town of Sassnitz, Germany. It is located on the Jasmund peninsula and most of us have never heard of it. Our mission is to level the town for reasons best known to the Generals although we have heard that Hitler has a villa in the resort town. The Phantom of the Ruhr is the 7th aircraft in the middle of the bomber stream.

This will be a long mission. We probably won’t return to our airfield until around 8 am tomorrow. We packed extra hot chocolate and sandwiches.

As we head out over the Sea, Archie begins dropping packets of Window down the aircraft’s poop shoot.

At 9 pm, we fly through 5/10 cloud cover just north of Groningen in the Netherlands.

As we fly back over the land we get plastered by a search light team. Flak begins bursting around us as Rueben takes evasive action. Rueben's quick action breaks the search light beam and the flak goes wide.

Soon we rejoin the bomber stream, but the bombers begin leaving contrails. Archie returns to his bomb aimer's position in the nose of the Phantom as we approach Sassnitz. We see fires burning in and around the town. Plus we see both red and green flares. Our pathfinders dropped green flares tonight so the red flares must have been set off by the Germans in order to draw us away from the town. Good thing we didn't use red flares tonight.

More searchlights illuminate our plane and the other ones ahead of us. We can't go evasive as we are lined up for our bomb run. Flak guns open up on us. Our nose gun is destroyed (that was too close reports Archie) and we take a hit to our starboard wing. Engineer Harvey Lewis reports a light on his board showing that our landing gear's hydraulic system was ruptured therefore disabling that starboard landing gear.

The town is completely obscured by clouds and smoke but it is a large target and with the help of the green flares and the H25 ground scanning radar we put 30% of our bombs on target. We turn and head for home. Time on target is midnight.

As we leave our target behind, we also leave our contrails and are now flying without leaving any trace. Archie goes back to dropping Window.

Just as we head back over the sea, our mid upper gunner, Harry Goodyear, reports what he believes was a Ju88 flying parallel to us in the distance. He then loses the contact. Must be getting jumpy.

We begin to drop altitude in advance of landing. We make a pass over the airfield and shoot off a red flare. They had to see that our starboard landing gear is stuck in its housing. After the other aircraft land, we head towards the landing strip. We fire one more flare and see that there is an ambulance and fire team on standby. Rueben has our tail gunner, mid upper gunner and bomb aimer secure themselves in the rear fuselage. Then we land. Our starboard wing root, wing and engines take damage but they can be repaired. No one is hurt in the landing.

We land at 7:50 am. Time for debrief, tea and toast and off to bed.