

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

Multiplayer Campaign 3 Mission 18 Total Campaign Missions 58
1944 Mission 38
Dreux, France - night of August 8th morning of August 9th, 1944

The Phantom of the Ruhr’s 1st Combat Mission.

Full Moon – weather on takeoff 'good'.

After the wing lost nearly 25% of their aircraft on the last mission, new planes and crews have been assigned to the wing. The Phantom of the Ruhr, a Lancaster Mk 1, with its crew is assigned to the 104th Squadron at an airfield in Norwich. The Phantom is crewed by:

Pilot	Rueben Woodyear	P/O
Wireless	Harvey Rumble	F/SGT
Tail Gunner	Peter Wilson	SGT
Navigator	Owen Hanks	WO
Mid-Upper	Harry Goodyear	F/SGT
Bomb Aimer	Archie Smothers	WO
Engineer	Fred Ray	WO

After the 7 pm briefing, the crew is trucked out to their bomber and soon, the lumbering Lancasters take to the air and fly off into the night sky. The Phantom takes up position 3 in the first bomber stream. Tonight’s mission will have a cruising altitude of 23,000 and the target will be the rail yards in Dreux, France. As the plane approaches the “Sea”, Archie, the Bomb Aimer, takes up his position to begin dropping packets of Window also known as Chaff. This should help confuse the German long range radar systems.

No contrails form but the full moon does illuminate our bombers making them easier to spot for night fighters

The bomber stream flies between Calais and Dunkirk, The Phantom of the Ruhr shudders as she is hit by heavy cannon fire from a night fighter using Jazz Music upward firing cannons! Shells rip through the bomb bay doors – thankfully doing superficial damage and not setting off the bombs! The starboard wing takes superficial damage. The rear hull takes superficial damage. The starboard wing takes another hit but the self-sealing fuel tanks save us this time. More superficial damage is reported. A Heinkel 219 slashes by the Lanc too fast for anyone to get shots off in defense of the bomber. PO Woodyear asks the crew to report their status and everyone is ok, thank goodness.

East of Amiens the bomber stream begins to leave contrails in the almost cloudless night skies. West of Rouen the contrails vanish. The air armada cruises through the night towards its target. Ahead of us at 12 o’clock, we see an exchange of tracer fire between a night fighter and one of our bombers. Another He219 heads right toward us from 12 o’clock low and the nose gun is unmanned as Archie is dumping Window. FS Harvey Rumble, our wireless operator, tries to man the nose gun but is too late and the night fighter makes a quick pass. A shot hits our port wing root; a shot destroys the port wing

aileron; the last shot does superficial damage to the port wing.

As the "Owl" flies past us, WO Fred Ray opens up on it with his tail guns but misses. The fighter takes a shot at another bomber behind us and vanishes into the night.

The target is visible in the distance. We see explosions far below from bombers ahead of us. Search lights begin to ignite below us as it appears we caught the Germans unaware. Archie opens the bomb bay doors and drops the deadly cargo. "Bombs dropped. 50% on target. Bomb doors closed." There is negligible thermal turbulence.

The Phantom of the Ruhr makes a tight turn and begins its return trip. Behind us flak guns open up at the bombers behind us.

Due to the damage the bomber has taken, the landing is a little rough but she'll be ready to fly again in a day and a half. We survived our baptism of fire. Time for debriefing and breakfast.