

Target for Tonight
“The 'ell Cat” - Lancaster Mk 1

Multiplayer Campaign 3 Mission 11 Total Campaign Missions 51
1944 Mission 31

Saint Medard en Jalles, France - night of June 3rd morning of June 4th, 1944
The 'Ell Cat's 14^h Combat Mission.

Crescent Moon – weather on take off 'good'.

The lousy weather of late May and early June has momentarily cleared. We are ready for another combat mission. This will be a long mission – over 12 hours – our target are the industrial complexes in that city. These complexes are feeding the German army with ammunition and materials. We are to avoid hitting any cultural areas of the city if at all possible.

The 'Ell Cat will be bomber number 8 in the middle bomber stream.

At 7:30 pm on June 3rd, we get the green flair ordering us to take off. The four 1,460 horse power Rolls Royce Merlin engines roar like dinosaurs as they pull the heavy bomber into the evening sky. Take off is normal and within 30 minutes, The 'Ell Cat joins her bomber stream and turns towards the Channel. When we hit the Channel, Evans, our bomb aimer, takes his position over the chaff tube and begins dropping Windows to help confuse the German radar systems unfortunately, as we reach our operational altitude of 23,000 feet, our bombers begin to leave contrails which, fortunately, fade as we approach the French coast.

We reach landfall around Caen and detour to the east to avoid the heavy flak zones. In the distance we see searchlights and flak bursts. Pilot Officer Dixon notices that the lights on the external radio system have gone out. He reports it to Flight Engineer Collier but he is unable to get the radio working again even after changing out several tubes. The radio system is dead. Not good if we have to ditch but, at least, the internal com system is working so all the crew can communicate.

1:30 am - In the distance, we see an exchange of tracer fire. Looks like the night fighters have found our bomber stream. It's at this unfortunate time that our bombers begin leaving contrails again.

Near Le Mans, searchlights illuminate our bomber and flak bursts all around us. Dixon takes evasive action and soon we are back in the friendly darkness and the contrails fade.

By 2:00 am, we are over the target city. We see fires burning ahead of us and bright green flares dropped by the pathfinders. Flak explodes everywhere. Evans returns to his bomb aimer position and prepares to drop our cargo. “Bomb doors open. Bombs dropped,” reports Evans as Dixon takes back control of the bomber. 30% on target is reported. Thermal turbulence is negligible. We turn to port and take up our return course.

Evans returns to the chute and begins again dropping packets of Window.

Just east of Poitiers, searchlights pin our bomber in their harsh blue white beams and flak begins to explode around us. Dixon again tries to evade but without success as the beams and the flak stay with us! Our tail takes a hit but the damage is superficial. Soon we fade back into the night free of the searchlights.

Then near Le Mans, mobile searchlights pick us up again but Dixon's skillful flying breaks the contact.

Around 4 am, we reach the Channel. At 6:30 am, we reach our home airfield but just as we begin to circle our base and descend, a night fighter attacks us! It's obvious that the veteran crew of the Ju88 C6 had been loitering near our base waiting for the moment to strike a tired aircrew returning from a mission. It approaches from 6 o'clock level. Thank goodness for our Monica system as it started to chirp over the intercom and Collier then reports that he can see the contact on the relatively new Monica CRT screen in his engineering station. Naylor lets loose his 4 .303 machine guns in the tail turret and strikes the Ju88's fuselage. The Ju88 fires back with its .303 machine guns and 20mm cannons. The bomber takes hits to its tail turret damaging the machine guns, destroying the landing breaks on the port landing gear, causing a fuel leak on the port outer fuel tank, damaging the starboard wing flap, hitting the port rudder and, finally, doing superficial damage to the rear hull. The Ju88 then veers off into the night before coming back around from 3 o'clock level. Powell in the mid-upper gun turret sees it and let's loose a long burst from his 4 machine guns. The bullets tear into the Ju88's engines as both engines blow and smoke billows from them. Amazingly the German aircrew glides in and lands their crippled Ju88 on our very own airfield. We land next to the German fighter whose 3 man crew is extremely happy to have survived the war. Our landing was a little rough with the port landing break destroyed.

The lads in foreign tech will be happy to examine the Ju88 as it's outfitted with not only Lichtenstein radar but also the new FuG Flensburg Monica passive detection system. All of which are undamaged thanks to our lads holding the night fighter crew at gunpoint.

After debriefing we have breakfast with the German aircrew. They seem like nice enough lads even if they did try and shoot us down. Soon they are shipped off for interrogation and we hit the sack and get some rest while we still can.