

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

Multiplayer Campaign Mission 41 -1944 Mission 21 (Erroneously listed as Mission 20)
Campaign 3 Mission 1
Rail Yard Bombing – Ghent, Belgium - night of April 1st and morning of April 2nd, 1944
The 'Ell Cat's 4th Combat Mission.

Crescent Moon – weather on take off 'good'.

The 'Ell Cat is back in business after her belly landing almost a month ago. Weather had kept the squadrons mostly socked in for night missions. The target for tonight will be the rail yards in Ghent, Belgium. These massive rail yards were critical to German strategic movement through Belgium and France. Tonight, we'd take them out.

The 'Ell Cat's 4 Merlin engines were humming away as she moved into the bomber stream's operational height at 21,000 feet. The 'Ell Cat is tail end charlie for this mission – the last bomber in the bomber stream. The mission would only be around 4 hours long. Hopefully it will be a cake walk. At Captain Dixon's command, our gunners test their .303 machine guns. All is within specifications.

As the bombers headed towards the Channel, cloud cover was 5/10. Heavy clouds over the channel are expected to be 10/10. Turns out the boys in weather were spot on with their forecast.

Two hours in and we are now over Belgium. In the distance, we see searchlights. Bomb Aimer James Evans moves from the windows drop chute to his Bombardier position. Flak begins to burst throughout the bomber stream.

The target area is completely obscured by clouds and possibly smoke or haze but the pathfinders have done their job and we see the green flares designating the target zone. The Bomb Aimer has control as he lines up on the flares. “Bombs dropped,” he reports. 40% of the bomb load appears to be on target. The clouds are illuminated red by the raging fires below. There is minimal thermal turbulence. We close the bomb bay doors and turn for home.

As we leave the flak zones of Ghent far behind, little did we know that a Ju88 C-6 outfitted with Lichtenstein radar, Flensburg passive Monica tracking system and Schrage Musik upward firing cannons was stalking us from below; her veteran crew was lining up for a surprise attack. Just as we make our final turn, tracers streak up like fireworks under where we should have been had we not turned when we did. The gunners scan the surrounding sky as the plane takes a sharp evasive turn. The night fighter does not return as is soon lost in the night sky.

An hour and a half later, we land back at the base. We are all thankful to be home in one piece after the encounter with the Ju88.