

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

Multiplayer Campaign 4 Mission 11 Total Campaign Missions 71
1945 Mission 11
Hanau, Germany - night of January 19 morning of January 20, 1945

The Phantom of the Ruhr’s 14th Combat Mission.

Crescent Moon – weather on takeoff 'good'.

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

Our squadron has been sacked in by furious snowstorms over the last few weeks but things are beginning to clear so we can fly again. The German counterattack in the Ardennes is beginning to falter; its now being called “The Battle of the Bulge”. The allies seem to have held off the German counteroffensive. Our target for tonight is Hanau, Germany. The city is a strategically important transfer hub for German troops and panzers. We are to area bomb the city.

At 7:30 pm, we take to the freezing night sky with 5/10 cloud cover and, soon, we join the bomber stream at 22,000 feet. The Phantom is plane number 1 in the rear of the bomber stream.

Since we’ll be over Allied controlled airspace for most of the mission, Archie won’t need to leave his nose position for several hours. No more dropping Window until we reach Germany, proper.

The snowy landscape below is beautiful in the light of the crescent moon.

At around 11:30 pm, we enter German airspace and archie begins dropping Window out of the aircraft’s excrement tube. In the distance, we see searchlights.

As we start our approach to Hanau, we notice the city burning ahead of us when three searchlights vector in on our aircraft. We are too close to our target to evade them. We must continue straight and level. But, strangely, no flak bursts around us and no night fighters attack us. Then the lights move on to other targets. That was extremely lucky. Archie, now back at his bomb aimer position opens the bomb bay doors and drops. Even with all the smoke obscuring the city, we achieve 40% of our bombs on target with negligible thermal turbulence. Bomb doors close and we head to our return course.

As we turn to return home, our bomber stream begins to leave contrails. That is not a good sign as it will make us easier to spot.

None the less, the return trip is uneventful.

Soon we are back on the ground to make our report and have some bacon and sleep.