

Target for Tonight

“The Phantom of the Ruhr” - Lancaster Mk 1

Multiplayer Campaign 4 Mission 7 Total Campaign Missions 67

1944 Mission 7

Stetten, Germany - night of December 2nd, morning of December 3rd, 1944

The Phantom of the Ruhr's 10th Combat Mission.

Full 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

After a few weeks R&R, the 104th is at it again. The target for tonight is an area bombing of Stetten, Germany. This will be a long mission. Take off is at 7:30 pm and we aren't expected back to base until around 5 am or so give or take a tail wind.

The Phantom is the 5th plane in the first bomber stream. Take off is normal under a bright full moon with 5/10 cloud cover over the base. Soon we are heading towards the sea.

As all of France and Belgium is now under allied control, we wait a little longer to start dumping Window. All of the German long range radar stations in France and Belgium are either destroyed or in our hands now.

As we fly just north of Dunkirk we reach our operational altitude of 23,000 feet. It is so nice to fly over these areas without worrying about flak, searchlights and night fighters.

Below us near Brussels, the clouds totally obscure the ground. We are at 10/10 cloud cover. The weather men assured us that we should have 5/10 cloud cover over the target.

South of Liege, Archie begins dropping Window. The clouds clear below us as we enter German airspace.

In the distance we see searchlights and flak bursts but not in our direct path.

Suddenly searchlights snap on from below and pin our plane and two others near us in the bomber stream. Rueben can't take evasive action as we are on the bomb target approach. Heavy flak bursts around us but, miraculously, the Phantom slips through without damage. Then the flak stops. We all know what that means – eyes open boys! Ahead of us we see tracers as a night fighter attacks another plane in our bomber stream. We leave the searchlights behind as we come towards the target. Pathfinders have already dropped green flares for us to use as aids. Archie, back at his bomb aimer position, guides us over the target zone. "Bombs dropped" he calmly reports. 54% of the bombs do damage. "Bomb doors closed". The city is burning below us sending eerie red shadows on the clouds below. Moderate thermal turbulence shakes our aircraft.

We make our turn to the return course. Behind us more fires and explosions rip through the city.

Archie heads back to drop Window again.

We begin leaving contrails as we leave the target city.

The rest of the trip is uneventful and we land at 5:10 am. Time for debrief, a spot of breakfast and off to dreamland.