

Target for Tonight
"The 'ell Cat" - Lancaster Mk 1

Multiplayer Campaign 3 Mission 12 Total Campaign Missions 52
1944 Mission 32

Aufevre, France - night of June 5th morning of June 6th, 1944
The 'Ell Cat's 15^h Combat Mission.

Full Moon – weather on take off 'good'.

After forcing down a Ju88 C6 on June 4th, The 'ell Cat's crew was given a special call out in the Squadron's Dispatches for their contribution in advancing the war effort. It was a nice honor and on the night of June 5th, The 'ell Cat was given another honor – leading the 104th on our attack against an extensive radar and communications hub at Aufevre, France. We were also told to make sure to fly over the Channel near Normandy on our return trip. The Second Front has opened up! A combined force of Americans, British and French troops will be launching a massive seaborne invasion of occupied France! That means this damned war will be over soon, we hope.

At 8:30 pm on June 5th, we get the green flair ordering us to take off. The four 1,460 horse power Rolls Royce Merlin engines roar 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 as the lead bomber 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 and we soon reach our operational altitude of 20,000 feet.

As we overfly Ipswich, a ground fog obscures the land far below.

Our flight takes us west of Canterbury and then over the Channel. Below us the sea is covered with thousands of ships. It is a sight to behold. Sgt Harold Moss breaks radio silence and sends out a Morse Code signal of "V" for victory! The crew erupts in cheers as we leave the mass of ships behind us.

5/10 cloud cover is below us as we approach east of Calais. Do the troops below us know what is about to hit them? If they did, they should be heading back to Germany as quickly as possible. Tail gunner Naylor reports that we and the other bombers are now leaving contrails. Lovely thing that. Luckily we aren't picked up by either searchlights or flak.

We make a turn flying between Le Havre and Rouen as the contrails terminate.

Evans heads back to his position in the nose of our plane as we approach the target. The pathfinders have marked the radar/communications hub with orange flares. Naylor informs us that flak and searchlights are peppering the airspace behind our aircraft. The target is partially obscured by clouds but with the pathfinders' target flares and the H25 ground scanning radar we approach on target to the massive complex of buildings and towers and dishes. "Bomb bay doors open. Bombs dropped." reports Evans. We had a good 50% hit on the complex. Below us are secondary explosions. A massive thermal shock wave hits our aircraft throwing us up to 22,000 feet! Thankfully neither the crew nor the plane suffer any negative effects from the blast.

Pilot Officer Will Dixon takes us to our return course but we again begin leaving contrails.

Evans heads back to his Windows position when the plane is suddenly illuminated by searchlights. Then the inevitable flak bursts around us. PO Dixon takes us into some violent evasive maneuvers. The huge bomber bobs and weaves through the sky and soon we are out of the searchlights' beams.

The clocks hit midnight on June 6th when just as the Monica tail warning radar began to chirp a Ju88 C6 comes in from six o'clock level and fires into the bomber. Tail Gunner Naylor's oxygen system is destroyed; the port elevator in the tail section is inoperable; cannon fragments rip into Naylor's torso seriously wounding him then as he tries to get out of the turret, another shell tears through the center of his chest, killing him.

PO Dixon puts the plane in to a corkscrew and the night fighter does not return. "Crew report in" orders Dixon. When Naylor doesn't respond, Evans checks the rear turret and reports Naylor's death.

As we fly over the Channel on the way back, even the sight of the invasion fleet doesn't raise the deep hurt felt by the crew of 'ell Cat. George Naylor will never see the end of this horrible war.

Landing is normal. Spirits are low but high at the same time. Across the Channel as the sun comes up, how many men are falling in battle to end the threat of The 3rd Reich?

A day later, we hear that the invasion was successful. We now have control of the beaches in the Normandy region. We also receive a replacement tail gunner – Sgt. Peter Wilson.