

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

Multiplayer Campaign 3 Mission 13 Total Campaign Missions 53
1944 Mission 33

Cambrai, France - night of June 8th morning of June 9th, 1944

The 'ell Cat's 16^h Combat Mission.

Full Moon – weather on take off 'good'.

Replacement tail gunner, Sgt. Peter Wilson, seems like a nice enough chap. He's wide eyed and ready for combat. Soon that enthusiasm will diminish, I'm sure. The 'ell Cat is ready for another mission in support of the D Day, June 6th invasion of occupied Europe. The target for tonight are the rail yards in Cambrai. This strike should seriously disrupt any effort by the Germans to reinforce their forces in Normandy. For this mission, The 'ell Cat is tail end charlie as the Yanks say.

Take off is per the book as the we form into the bomber stream for an operational altitude of 24,000 feet. Also, per the book, Bomb Aimer Evans takes up his secondary position and drops Window as we head out over the channel and we test out our machine guns.

As we fly over the Normandy beachheads, the sight is impressive. Ships seem to be everywhere. Allied ships! Ships bringing freedom back to Europe. And no one below gets flak happy and fires at us. That's a plus.

As we approach Lille, our planes begin to leave contrails. The combination of the full moon and contrails puts us in a precarious position in regards to flak and night fighters. And there go the searchlights. PO Dixon takes evasive action but we are still caught in those deadly beams. Heavy flak bursts around our plane and the other aircraft in the bomber stream. Luckily, none damages The 'ell Cat.

As we leave the searchlights behind, all is quiet. We fly towards our target. The pathfinders have once again done their job and dropped orange flares over the target area. We have noticed that the Germans are now lighting their own flares over empty fields in order to try and throw off the bombers but tonight they used green flares which are not the operational color for tonight. As we begin our bomb run more searchlights pin us in. Flak again bursts around us. Then suddenly the flak stops. That means night fighters are vectoring in on us. Ahead of us we see explosions from bomb hits to the rail yard. We line up and drop our bombs just as our Monica tail warning radar begins to chirp through the intercoms. 40 % of our bombs hit the burning rail yard. Just as our bomb bay doors close, Wilson, our new tail gunner, opens up on what we later learn is a Ju88 G-7, a type we've never encountered before. Both he and the Ju88 G-7 attacks miss. The Ju88 disappears into the night after only one pass.

The return trip is quiet with only a minor instrument failure on the Mandrel ground scanning radar interrupting the trip. We land back at base. This was a good mission. Time for debriefing and bacon with tea then bed.