

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

Multiplayer Campaign 3 Mission 15 Total Campaign Missions 55
1944 Mission 35

Foret de Montrichard, France - night of July 3rd morning of July 4th, 1944

The 'ell Cat's 17^h Combat Mission.

Crescent Moon – weather on take off 'good'.

The 'ell Cat has been down for several weeks due to some issues with her four replacement engines and their mounting blocks. So our crew has stood down and enjoyed some much needed R&R. After four test flights, our glorious Lanc, The 'ell Cat, is ready to conduct her 17th combat mission in support of the D Day invasion which is almost a month old now. The Yanks flying their day missions are probably all hyped over the 4th of July, but for us Brits and Canadians, that holiday is really rather meaningless. Let them enjoy their fun.

The target for tonight is a huge supply dump at Foret de Montrichard. The 'ell Cat is bomber number 5 in the lead bomber stream. Weather on take off at 7 pm is good and take off is conducted without incident. There is substantial ground haze over our airfield but soon we are leveling off at 24,000 feet. Bomb aimer Evens takes up his secondary position at the poop shoot and begins dropping packets of Window to help confuse the long range German radar systems. Behind us are at least 100 heavy British bombers flying a lonely journey through the freezing night sky over the Channel.

Soon we are flying between Calais and Dunkirk as we head deep into occupied France.

As we turn to avoid the Amiens flak zones, the sky is incredibly clear with no clouds. Suddenly the cockpit of The 'ell Cat is illuminated with a blinding bluish white light from at least one searchlight! Pilot Officer Dixon takes The 'ell Cat into sharp evasive action but the searchlight crews are on top of their game and soon flak bursts around our plane. No flak seems to hit our plane and then the searchlights move on to another target and our plane levels off at 15,000 feet. We go into a climb back to combat altitude.

As we fly east of Paris, we are now back at 24,000 feet. By 11 p.m. we begin our bomb approach to the ammo dump at Foret de Montrichard. Ahead of us we see green flares dropped by the pathfinders as well as fires from the bombs dropped by other bombers. Searchlights slash the sky and flak bursts everywhere. Evans is back in his bomb aimer position in the nose of our Lancaster. Cloud cover is 10/10 so lining up on the target will be difficult even with the flares and fire. The H2S ground scanner radar is working perfectly as Evens reports “Bomb doors open. Bombs away.” 98% of the bombs are on target even with the horrible cloud cover! “Bomb doors closed. Get us out of here Will!”

Pilot Officer Will Dixon takes the plane on a sharp turn to its return course. “Excellent work everyone. Let’s go home” exclaims Dixon over the internal intercoms. The sound of the four 1,280 horsepower Rolls-Royce Merlin Type XX engines increased to a thunderous roar as the plane throttles up to full speed.

The return trip is uneventful and by 5:30 a.m., we have landed back at base for debriefing, coffee and bacon sandwiches. Then blissful sleep until our next mission.