

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

Multiplayer Campaign 3 Mission 4 Total Campaign Mission 44 1944 Mission 24
Rail Yards – Laon, France - night of April 11 and morning of April 12, 1944
The 'Ell Cat's 7th Combat Mission.

Crescent Moon – weather on take off 'good'.

Our operational tempo is definitely picking up speed with more bombers flying more missions with a shorter turn around time between missions. Tonight's mission is no exception and, actually, proves our supposition. We will be invading Europe soon. Tonight's mission is the huge rail yard at Laon, France which is a critical junction in the Reich's supply lines.

We take off at 7 pm. Over 50 Lancasters taking to the sky creates a roar like no other thing in the universe.

The 'ell Cat is tail end charlie for this mission. Sgt. Evans moves from his bomb aimer position in the bomber's nose to the chute position – he prepares window packets for dumping when we hit the Channel. In theory that should confuse the German long range radar systems but recently they seem to have figured out how to detect us anyway.

The bomber stream passes just west of Ipswich and heads out over the water.

As we leave the UK behind, our Monica tail warning radar system begins to chirp. Sgt. Moss, our wireless operator, reports that his Monica radar screen is indicating a target approaching from 6 o'clock low. Pilot Officer Dixon orders Evans to not dump Window and to brace for combat. The rear .303 quad machine guns operated by Cpl. Naylor roar into life! The Me110 G-4's tail is ripped from the plane and flies past the cockpit of the German night fighter. Three parachutes are reported as its crew bails out. Later we learn that a British destroyer rescued the Me110's crew from the drink. They told their rescuers that this was their first combat mission. Well, for them the war is over and probably safer.

“Good job Naylor! That's our first kill!” congratulates Powell, our mid-upper gunner. “I'll get the next one!”

Below us, underneath 10 of 10 cloud cover, is the cold ocean. We reach 24,000 feet as our bombers leave contrails behind us.

Evans begins to drop Windows.

We make land just west of Dunkirk. Still 10/10 clouds but now we no longer leave contrails.

We approach Laon and Evans takes up his bomb aimer position. In the distance, we see flak and the ever present searchlights. In the distance, we also see a huge mid-air explosion. Was it one of ours or one of theirs? It's difficult to tell.

Cloud cover is 5/10. Navigator Bishop reports that we are on target. We see the green target flairs dropped by the pathfinders. Evans reports “bomb doors open”. 50% of our bombs are on target.

Below us huge fires scorch the sky and secondary explosions rock the area. It's a scene from Hell. Negligible thermal turbulence. With our bomb doors closing we head towards our return course.

The return mission is uneventful and at 3 am, we land back at base. Time for debriefing and breakfast then a good day's sleep.