

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

Multiplayer Campaign Mission 39 1944 Mission 19 (*Erroneously listed as Mission 18*)
(The 'ell Cat's 2nd combat mission),
Rail Road Bombing – Metz, France - night of February 1st and morning of February 2nd, 1944
Crescent Moon

“The 'ell Cat's” crew is busy at their stations as the Lancaster takes to the sky as number 2 in the middle third of the bomber stream. The target for tonight is the railheads and rail marshaling yards at Metz, France. The pace of operations has stepped up and the targets are telling. The talk is that an invasion of France is coming as soon as early spring. The heavy bombers leave contrails in the frigid sky above Norwich but as the bombers reach mission altitude, they leave the strong wind gusts and snowstorms behind and below.

Within 40 minutes the 5 of 10 cloud cover allows fleeting glimpses of the sea 22,000 feet below as the contrails fade. The bombers cruise in darkness under a crescent moon. Bomb Aimer Evens leaves his nose position in order to drop Window.

The clouds give way to sea fog far below.

The bomber stream turns to avoid the flak zones around Ostend.

The contrails return near Mons and searchlights begin their arcs through the night sky.

Navigator Bishop reports that we are on course – just south of Luxembourg and approaching Metz. Evens leaves the Window drop position and returns to have Bomb Aimer position in the Lanc's nose. Flak bursts all around but the “Cat” slips through just like her namesake and Evens reports “Bomb doors open. Bombs dropped. 30% on target. Bomb doors closed.”

“Cat” makes her turn towards her return course. Soon its 10 of 10 cloud cover and the bomber stream again leaves contrails. Suddenly the bomber shudders as a stream of cannon shells fire directly upward and near her bombay! Most of the shells miss but one tears a jagged sheet of metal out of her rear fuselage. A Dornier 217 N2 with Leichtenstein radar and upward firing schrage music cannons speeds off through the night before anyone can react. Flight Officer Dixon takes evasive action which must have worked as the Do 217 does not return.

The rest of the return trip is uneventful and “The 'ell Cat” lands back at Norwich without incident.