

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

Multiplayer Campaign 3 Mission 6 Total Campaign Mission 46 1944 Mission 26
Trappes, France - night of April 20 and morning of April 21, 1944
The 'Ell Cat's 9^h Combat Mission.

Crescent Moon – weather on takeoff 'good'.

We had a five day break but now the 104th is taking part in a massive strike against rail yards in Trappes, France near Versailles. It will be a crescent moon tonight with good weather and 5/10 clouds over the target according to the weather boys. We can expect more cloud cover on the return trip.

So at 20:00 hours, our bombers are in the air and taking their positions in the bomber stream at 10,000 feet for form up. The 'ell Cat's engines are roaring like the tigers they are as she takes her position as the fifth bomber in the lead of the bomber stream. The plane shakes as the gunners test fire their weapons over the Channel. Jimmy Evens, our Bomb Aimer, takes his 2nd position dumping Window packets to help confuse the German long range radar as we approach 24,000 feet.

As we approach the French coast, our bombers begin leaving contrails. All is quiet as we travel at 24,000 feet west of Ruoen but we are still leaving contrails.

As we line up on Trappes, searchlights wave across the sky and flak explodes in the distance. Jimmy stops dropping Windows and takes up his position as Bomb Aimer. Bishop, our Navigator, reports “On course. Target should be dead ahead.” We see explosions in the distance as other bombers do their deadly work. “Target spotted” reports Jimmy. “Bomb doors open.” Jimmy hits the bomb drop button and ... nothing happens. “We have a bomb drop malfunction,” he reports. “Damn it – I'll have to drop them manually. Heading back now.”

Pilot Officer Dixon throttles back the engines to slow down over target. Luckily, neither the German flak gunners nor the searchlight crews pick up on us.

As another Lancaster flies terribly close to us, P.O. Dixon asks for a report from Jimmy. “Damn things won't budge. We'll have to abort,” he reports.

The 'ell Cat makes a gradual turn towards the return path. “Wait, I think I've got it now. Please pass over the target again and give me the go ahead to drop.”

The Lancaster makes a course correction and passes again over the target zone. The huge bomber lurches up as the bombs begin to drop. Unfortunately, only 10% of the bombs hit the rail yard. The rest rain down on the neighborhoods surrounding the target.

“Bombs dropped. Get us out of here. I'm manually shutting the bomb doors” Jimmy reports.

Suddenly The 'ell Cat is bathed in searchlight beams as flak bursts around her. Dixon sets her through some violent maneuvers and breaks out of the beams. The 'ell Cat fades back into her element, the night sky. The return trip is uneventful and The 'ell Cat lands back at her airfield by 5:00 a.m.

The old adage is true – combat air missions are 90% boredom and 10% terror.