

Target for Tonight  
“The Phantom of the Ruhr” - Lancaster Mk 1

Multiplayer Campaign 4 Mission 14 Total Campaign Missions 74  
1945 Mission 14

Vohwinkle, Germany - night of February 20 morning of February 21, 1945

The Phantom of the Ruhr’s 17th Combat Mission.

Crescent Moon – weather on takeoff 'good'.

The Phantom is crewed by:

Pilot	Rueben Woodyear	P/O
Wireless	Harvey Rumble	F/SGT
Tail Gunner	Roman Castevet	SGT
Navigator	Owen Hanks	WO
Mid-Upper	Harry Goodyear	F/SGT
Bomb Aimer	Archie Smothers	WO
Engineer	Harvey Lewis	WO

We have been socked in for a while owing to inclement winter weather but tonight we again take to the sky. Our target is Vohwinkle, Germany. Our c.o. misspelled the city during the target briefing, calling it Vohlwinkle. Apparently, it is the location of a huge railyard, so we are taking the whole city out with area bombing.

The Phantom of the Ruhr is the 2<sup>nd</sup> aircraft in the final third of the bomber stream. Take off is normal and soon we are climbing to our operational altitude of 18,000. As we continue to climb, a commission occurs as a two engine British Mosquito escort fighter nearly collided with our plane. It was close but the Mosquito just misses us and heads off into the night. Sometimes our own night fighters are as deadly as the enemy’s.

As we fly near Bruges, the clouds cover increase to 5/10 which raises to 10/10 as we approach Mons and turn to port. With our turn to the course for Vohwinkle, our bombers begin to leave contrails.

As we are now approaching German airspace, Harvey takes up dropping Window since Archie will be busy lining up for the bomb run. The nice thing is that our contrails have left us.

Ahead we see searchlights and burst of flak splitting the sky. The clouds are clear. Ahead of us we see flames on the ground as the city burns from the bombers ahead of us in the bomber stream.

Ahead of us, those in the cockpit see an exchange of tracers between one of our bombers and a night fighter which seems to be flying incredibly fast! Suddenly from 12 o’clock high that same night fighter attacks our plane! It’s one of the new German jets – an Me262! It slices through the sky and fires four 30mm nose cannons at us! A shell splinter flies from the top of the upper center hull and out at an angle towards the tail leaving only superficial damage! A second shell splinter hits Archie in his abdomen – inflaming his intestine! Archie screams for help over the intercom.

The Me262 tears past our bomber – the gunners couldn't even track it. Mid-upper gunner exclaims "It must be going over 400 miles per hour! It's engine glow puts it almost a mile out already."

Harvey Lewis, our flight engineer, and Owen move Archie out of the bomb aimer nose and move him onto the center hall floor away from the damaged section. He puts Archie's head up on the side hull and has him raise his knees up. Then Owen gets an emergency kit and puts bandage around the wound. He also gives Archie a shot of morphine. Harvey has had rudimentary bomb aimer training, so he takes up the position while Owen treats Archie.

Harvey opens the bomb bay doors and lines up for the area bombing. "Bombs dropped. Doors closed." Harvey did ok for an inexperienced bomb aimer. 40 % on target.

The return flight is uneventful. We circle the field and fire off a red flare to let the ground crew know that we have wounded on board. After landing and taxiing back, we are met by an ambulance crew who help Archie on to a stretcher and get him medical help. Our debriefing was extra-long and focused on the German jet aircraft. The damage to the plane was photographed.

A few days later we hear that Archie was so badly wounded that after he is stabilized, he's being given an honorable discharge and a medal for his service. Our new Bomb Aimer arrives. His name is Peter Alderman. He has 23 missions on a Lanc named "The Lucky Virgin" which wasn't so lucky and was shot down while Peter was laid up with stomach flu. Before Archie is shipped back, we all get the chance to visit with him. He was very lucky to get out of this one alive.

May we all survive this damned war.