

“The Phantom of the Ruhr” - Lancaster Mk 1
Multiplayer Campaign 4 Mission 1 Total Campaign Missions 61 1944 Mission 4
Ludwigshafen, Germany - night of September 20th, morning of September 21st, 1944

The Phantom of the Ruhr's 4th 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 Peter Wilson SGT
Navigator Owen Hanks WO
Mid-Upper Harry Goodyear F/SGT
Bomb Aimer Archie Smothers WO
Engineer Fred Ray WO

The target for tonight is area bombing of the city of Ludwigshafen, an industrial target on the Rhine. During our briefing, we were informed that bombers dropped leaflets warning the citizens to evacuate. This does make us feel better about this mission. The general feel of the bomber crews is that the war is almost over. Allied armies now have control over France, Belgium and Luxembourg. Bombers are reporting a lack of Luftwaffe day and night fighter activity.

The Phantom of the Ruhr is honored to be the lead bomber in the bomber stream tonight. We take off at 7:30 pm and soon over 50 bombers are in the air heading towards France. Soon we hit our operational altitude of 25,000 feet. The flight to Luxemburg is without incident. It's now 11 pm.

We still miss the lack of the Monica tail warning radar but since the Germans have figured out how to home in on it, we are actually safer without it.

As we enter Nazi occupied territory southwest of Frankfurt, our bombers begin leaving contrails. Just what we need over enemy territory. Then we see the searchlights and flak begin to light up the night in front of us. Our tail gunner, Peter Wilson, reports exchanges of tracers behind us. Must be a night fighter attacking the bomber stream.

As we approach Ludwigshafen, Archie leaves his Window dropping position and takes his primary position as bomb aimer in the nose of the aircraft. Thank goodness we stopped leaving contrails. Cloud cover near Ludwigshafen is 5/10. We must have taken them by surprise as there is no searchlight activity or flak. Archie lines up and drops his bombload on the city sitting silently below us. 32% of the bombs do damage to the city. We close the bomb doors and turn to our return course.

Our flight engineer, Fred Ray, informs us that we have had a fuel system failure and a subsequent fuel loss. He says we can make it to the Normandy region but then we'll have to land at a newly liberated airfield as we can't make the cross-sea trip back to the UK.

The landing in Normandy goes according to plan. At the edge of the airfield are many wrecked Luftwaffe aircraft. The base commander, a young American man named Sam Bennett, has our landing status communicated to our RAF base and assigns his groundcrews to fix our Lanc and refuel it. After a few hours rest, we flew back to base without incident.