

# Smiling Tiger 183 shot down

By [Glenn Salger](#)

**Official story:** On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1967, WO C.F. Curry was shot down in 64-14183. Was on a unarmed reconnaissance mission, during the attack approach to target area, took 3 hits from friendly howitzer type exploding weapon which hit the left forward fuselage, left aft fuselage, forward main rotor system, they made a forced landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to the inventory after recovery.

The actual story is very much different in many respects. WO Curry was on a mission to patrol the beaches, lakes, and rivers around the Bong Son area (LZ English). It was a routine mission that started as the sun set and continued into the night to assure that VC were not using boats or sampans to bring in supplies under the cover of darkness. On this particular night WO Bobby Bradley was his wing man. As they were flying along the beach WO Curry in UH-1C 64-14183 was hit by friendly fire. A VT round severed the tail boom at the synchronized elevator. This caused the aircraft to become extremely “out of balance” and to nose down. As they were a low level and near the beach, WO Curry used what flight control he had left to aim towards the water. As luck would have it, just as he was running out of altitude and flight control, the aircraft nose and underside hit the beach slope in such an attitude that the aircraft followed the slope of the beach to slide into the water and come to rest about 10 feet from the waters edge. The skids were left at the top of the slope. WO Curry later commented that as they entered the water the chin bubble was knocked out by the force of the water and he thought he had swallowed most of the South China Sea. After coming to rest and after spitting out the South China Sea, WO Curry was able to make a normal shut down.

WO Bobby Bradley circled back from his flight path and landed at the top of the beach slope. He used his search light to provide light to the crew as they exited the aircraft in breast high water. Bobby recalls the black door gunner had loaded himself up with belted ammo and weapons from the aircraft. Bobby recalls that the door gunners eyes were as big as dinner plates as he struggled to stay upright and work his way to the beach. Bobby was sure that if he had fallen, he would not have been able to get back up and would have drowned. All members of the crew made it to the beach. The only injury occurred when the crew chief’s back was cut on sharp metal from the floating severed vertical fin and tail rotor assembly. They had waited on the beach for a short time and noticed the tide starting to come in. As a result, the gunner and crew chief had gone back to the aircraft to retrieve all weapons when the injury occurred. The aircraft was later recovered and I took photos of it. While in the unit the aircraft had flown 774 hours and had a total of 1171 total airframe hours.



UH-1C 64-14183



183 side view