

CURSE OF THE TITANIC!

WITH THE LOSS OF THE SUBMERSIBLE TITAN COMES THE QUESTION IF THE TITANIC AND OTHER SIMILAR SHIPS SHOULD BE OFF LIMITS FOR DEEP SEA TOURISM

BY WILLIS FREEMAN

Some experts said it “had to happen.” Others put it down to the myth that the RMS *Titanic* holds a strange curse. Whatever the reason, on 18 June news sources around the world blared the fact that the submersible *Titan* had disappeared while on an expedition to view the wreck of the *Titanic* in the North Atlantic off

the coast of Newfoundland. Suddenly, the world was made aware of “*Titanic* tourism” and just how deadly such an endeavor could be. So, what was the submersible *Titan* and who were the people running the company that operated the craft?

Founded in 2009 by Stockton Rush and Guillermo Sohnlein, OceanGate is a private company that began operating in 2010, taking paying customers for trips in leased commercial submersibles off the coast of

California, in the Gulf of Mexico, and in the Atlantic Ocean. OceanGate is based in Everett, Washington.

Stockton Rush realized visiting famous shipwrecks was an excellent way of increasing business and getting a huge amount of press. In 2016, OceanGate’s submersible *Cyclops I* dove to the wreck of the ocean liner *Andrea Doria*. In an interview, Rush stated, “There’s only one wreck that everyone knows... if you ask people to name something underwater, it’s going to be sharks, whales, and *Titanic*.”

The famed *Titanic* went down on 15 April 1912 and over 1500 people died in the sinking. Famed explorer Robert Ballard located the wreck during 1985.

The massive ship is about 460 miles from the coast of Newfoundland and is at a depth of 12,500 feet. Since its discovery, the wreck — rather than being marked and honored

Artist concept on how *Titan* would explore the wreck of *Titanic* using iXblue’s Phins 6000 inertial navigation system and Posidonia USBL position system. “Our submersible pilots have relied on Phins from iXblue on our fleet of manned submersibles for several years. With iXblue, our pilot can safely navigate around ship wrecks because we know almost exactly where we are,” stated Stockton Rush. It is not clear if this system was aboard *Titan* on its final dive.