# U.S. government stops legal opposition to scaled-back Titanic wreck dive



The U.S. government has ceased its legal opposition to an upcoming dive to the Titanic shipwreck, following RMS Titanic Inc.'s decision to scale back its plans. The Georgia-based company, which holds salvage rights, had initially intended to take internal images and recover artifacts from the wreck. This expedition was scheduled for mid-July 2024.

The legal conflict began last year when the U.S. argued that any alteration or disturbance of the Titanic is governed by a 2017 federal law and a treaty with Great Britain, recognizing the wreck as a memorial to the over 1,500 victims of the 1912 disaster. Concerns included potential disturbance of artifacts and human remains.

The dive plans were revised following the death of Paul-Henri Nargeolet, RMST's director of underwater research, who perished in the June 2023 Titan submersible implosion near the Titanic. RMST now plans to use an uncrewed submersible for external imaging only, stating it will not contact the wreck or recover artifacts.

In response, the U.S. government ended its immediate legal challenge but indicated potential future legal actions if RMST attempts artifact recovery. U.S. District Judge Rebecca Beach Smith, who oversees Titanic salvage matters, noted that the case raises significant legal questions regarding congressional authority over maritime jurisdiction. RMST, steward of Titanic artifacts since 1994, had postponed similar plans in 2020 due to the pandemic.