

# Undersea explorers mark a tragic day. Things to know about the Titan disaster anniversary

June 18 2024, by PATRICK WHITTLE and HOLLY RAMER

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The Titan launch barge is moved to the Coast Guard yard at port in St. John's, Newfoundland in this June 24, 2023, file photo. The deadly implosion of an experimental submersible en route to the deep-sea grave of the Titanic last June has not dulled the desire for deep-sea exploration. Tuesday, June 18, 2024, marks one year since the Titan vanished on its way to the historic wreckage site. Credit: Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press via AP, file

A year after an experimental submersible imploded en route to the Titanic, unanswered questions linger—with no immediate answers.

Tuesday marks one year since the Titan vanished on its way to the historic wreckage site. After a five-day search that captured the world's attention, officials said the craft had been destroyed and all five people on board killed.

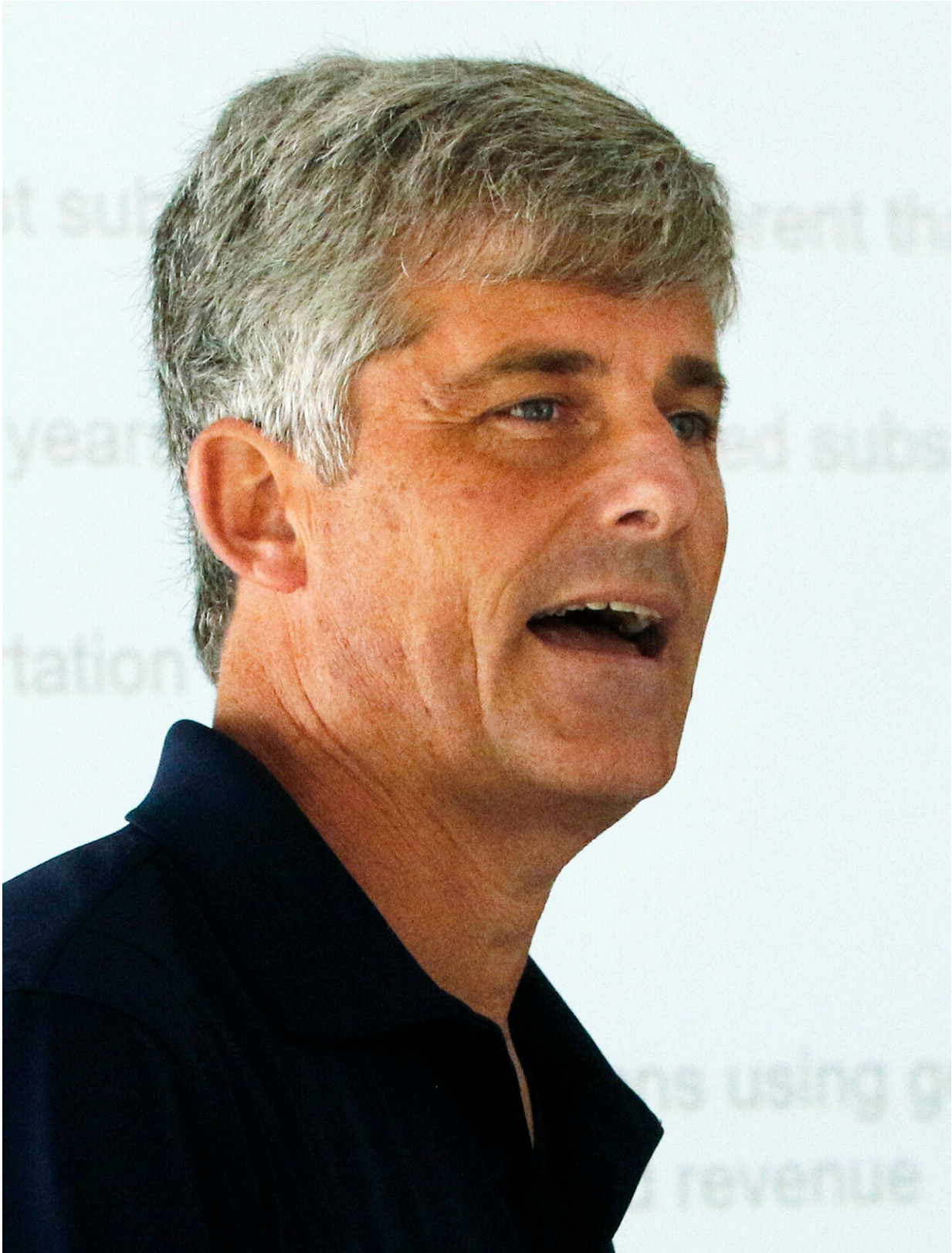
The U.S. Coast Guard quickly convened a high-level investigation into what happened. Concerns leading up to the investigation included the Titan's unconventional design and its creator's decision to forgo standard independent checks.

A look at the one-year anniversary of the Titan tragedy:

## **The investigation is taking longer than expected**

Coast Guard officials said in a statement last week that they would not be ready to release the results of their investigation by the anniversary. A public hearing to discuss the findings won't happen for at least two more months, they said.

Investigators "are working closely with our domestic and international partners to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the incident," Marine Board of Investigation Chair Jason Neubauer said, describing the inquiry as a "complex and ongoing effort."

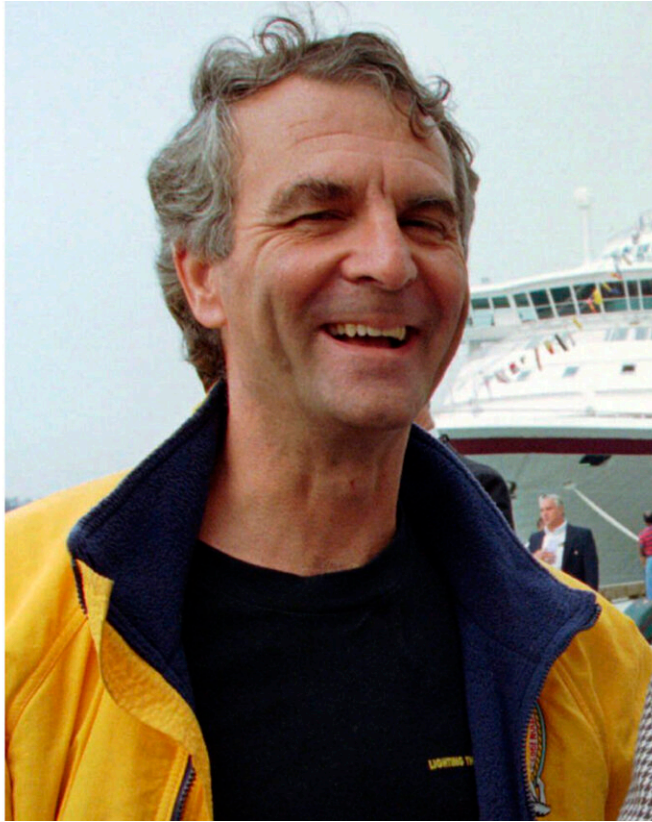


OceanGate CEO and co-founder Stockton Rush speaks during a presentation on findings after an undersea exploration of the SS Andrea Doria wreckage in the Atlantic Ocean near Nantucket, on June 13, 2016, in Boston. The deadly implosion of an experimental submersible en route to the deep-sea grave of the Titanic last June has not dulled the desire for deep-sea exploration. Tuesday, June 18, 2024, marks one year since the Titan vanished on its way to the historic wreckage site. Credit: AP Photo/Bill Sikes, File

The Titan was owned by a company called OceanGate, which suspended its operations last July, not long after the tragedy. OceanGate said in a Tuesday statement that it "has ceased all operations and is continuing to cooperate with authorities, including the U.S. Coast Guard, in their investigations." The company also said in its statement that it expresses "our deepest condolences to their families and loved ones, as well as everyone impacted by this tragedy."

The Titan made its last dive on June 18, 2023, a Sunday morning, and lost contact with its support vessel about two hours later. When it was reported overdue that afternoon, rescuers rushed ships, planes and other equipment to the area, about 435 miles (700 kilometers) south of St. John's, Newfoundland. The Transportation Safety Board of Canada said Monday that there are other submersibles operating within Canadian waters, some of which are not registered with any country.

In addition to OceanGate co-founder Stockton Rush, the implosion killed two members of a prominent Pakistani family, Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman Dawood; British adventurer Hamish Harding; and Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet.



Commander Paul-Henri Nargeolet laughs, at Black Falcon Pier in Boston on Sept. 1, 1996. Nargeolet and four others died when the submersible Titan imploded near the wreckage of the Titanic one year ago. Credit: AP Photo/Jim Rogash, File

### **Remembering those who died**

David Concannon, a former adviser to OceanGate, said he will mark the anniversary privately with a group of people who were involved with the company or the submersible's expeditions over the years, including scientists, volunteers and mission specialists.

Harding and Nargeolet were members of The Explorers Club, a professional society dedicated to research, exploration and resource

conservation.

"Then, as now, it hit us on a personal level very deeply," the group's president, Richard Garriott, said in an interview last week.

Garriott said there will be a remembrance celebration for the Titan victims this week in Portugal at the annual Global Exploration Summit.

## **The tragedy won't stop deep-sea exploration**

The Georgia-based company that owns the salvage rights to the Titanic plans to visit the sunken ocean liner in July using remotely operated vehicles, and a real estate billionaire from Ohio has said he plans a voyage to the shipwreck in a two-person submersible in 2026.



Debris from the Titan submersible, recovered from the ocean floor near the wreck of the Titanic, is unloaded from the ship Horizon Arctic at the Canadian Coast Guard pier in St. John's, Newfoundland, Wednesday, June 28, 2023. The deadly implosion of an experimental submersible en route to the deep-sea grave of the Titanic last June has not dulled the desire for deep-sea exploration. Tuesday, June 18, 2024, marks one year since the Titan vanished on its way to the historic wreckage site. Credit: Paul Daly/The Canadian Press via AP, File



The Polar Prince arrives at the port in St. John's, Newfoundland in this June 24, 2023, file photo. Authorities from the U.S. and Canada began the process of investigating the cause of the fatal Titan submersible implosion even as they grappled with questions of who was responsible for determining how the tragedy unfolded. The deadly implosion of an experimental submersible en route to the deep-sea grave of the Titanic last June has not dulled the desire for deep-sea exploration. Tuesday, June 18, 2024, marks one year since the Titan vanished on

its way to the historic wreckage site. Credit: Adrian Wyld /The Canadian Press via AP, file



A man looks at morning newspapers which published condolence messages for two victims of Titan submersible incident, Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman Dawood, at a roadside stall, in Islamabad, Pakistan, Tuesday, June 27, 2023. The deadly implosion of an experimental submersible en route to the deep-sea grave of the Titanic last June has not dulled the desire for deep-sea exploration. Tuesday, June 18, 2024, marks one year since the Titan vanished on its way to the historic wreckage site. Credit: AP Photo/Anjum Naved, File

Several deep-sea explorers told The Associated Press that the Titan



disaster shook the worldwide community of explorers, but it remains committed to continuing its missions to expand scientific understanding of the ocean.

Garriott believes the world is in a new golden age of undersea exploration, thanks to technological advances that have opened frontiers and provided new tools to more thoroughly study already visited places. The Titan tragedy hasn't tarnished that, he said.

"Progress continues," he said. "I actually feel very comfortable and confident that we will now be able to proceed."

Veteran deep-sea explorer Katy Croff Bell said the Titan implosion reinforced the importance of following industry standards and performing rigorous testing. But in the industry as a whole, "the safety track record for this has been very good for several decades," said Bell, president of Ocean Discovery League, a nonprofit organization.

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Citation: Undersea explorers mark a tragic day. Things to know about the Titan disaster anniversary (2024, June 18) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2024-06-undersea-explorers-tragic-day-titan.html>

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