

7th May 2026

Judge Rebecca Beach Smith
United States District Judge
Walter E. Hoffman United States Courthouse
600 Granby Street
Norfolk, VA 23510

Dear Judge Smith

Re: Proposed auction and sale of artifacts from the French Collection of *Titanic* artifacts

We are writing to you to express our concern at the proposal of RMS Titanic Inc. (RMST, formerly Titanic Ventures Ltd Partnership (TVLP)) to auction artifacts that it and IFREMER salvaged from the Titanic wreck site in 1987 (the 'French Collection'). This is not the first time that RMST have tried to carry out such a venture nor the first time that we have had to write in this way.

The Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee (JNAPC) was formed in 1988 from individuals and representatives of institutions who wished to raise awareness of the United Kingdom's underwater cultural heritage and to persuade Government that underwater sites of historic importance should receive no less protection than those on land. See www.jnapc.org

The JNAPC has a membership that includes most of the governmental, museum, academic and voluntary organisations, and advisers concerned with submerged heritage assets, including the Nautical Archaeology Society, Marine Archaeology Sea Trust (MAST), university professionals, various governing bodies for recreational diving and providers of professional archaeological services. The views expressed by the JNAPC do not necessarily represent the views of individual members and observers

Dispersal of the French Collection, through a commercial sale, will contravene one of the fundamental articles of the UNESCO Convention on the Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001. Article 2(7) states that "Underwater cultural heritage shall not be commercially exploited". This is expanded upon by stating that "The commercial exploitation of underwater cultural heritage for trade or speculation or its irretrievable dispersal is fundamentally incompatible with the protection and proper management of underwater cultural heritage. Underwater cultural heritage shall not be traded, sold, bought or bartered as commercial goods."

Noting that neither the UK nor the USA are signatories to the UCH Convention, we are also mindful of the International Agreement on the Titanic, to which the US is a signatory. Article 3 states that all Parties will ensure that artefacts recovered from the wreck "are conserved and curated consistent with the relevant Rules and are kept

together and intact as project collections.” The commercial sale of any items from the French Collection would breach this Article.

We are conscious that, in addition to the international agreements cited above, you will also be aware of the various covenants and conditions imposed on RMST. As well as the legal ramifications of breaking them, we also felt it was important to stress the untold damage and loss of heritage that could be caused if the sale of artefacts was allowed to proceed. Such a venture would be seen by some as a gateway to being allowed to loot and exploit other sites of heritage around the world.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and trust that the decision of the court will be in the best interests of underwater cultural heritage as expressed in the international agreements referred to above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'D. Parham', written in a cursive style.

Professor Dave Parham
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Chair JNAPC