

# New Mission to Find Missing Argentinian Submarine



The U.S. research vessel '*Atlantis*' will launch a search-and-recovery mission for the missing Argentinian submarine '*ARG San Juan*', equipped with a U.S. Navy remotely operated vehicle (ROV) flown down to Argentina. The vessel will load CURV aboard and is scheduled to depart on its new mission on 7 December.

*Atlantis*, operated by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), docked 2 December in the Argentinian port of Comodoro Rivadavia to mobilise the U.S. Navy's Cable-operated Underwater Recovery Vehicle (CURV) that was flown in from Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on 1 December. Since 21 November *Atlantis* had joined a number of ships in the area in a search for the submarine, which went missing 15 November with 44 crew members aboard.

The 6,400-pound CURV is equipped with sonar to detect targets in the deep and high-resolution camera systems. It can dive to 20,000 feet and is controlled by a cabled tether that also transmits real-time data back to the ship. If the sub is located, the CURV will conduct a close-up inspection, document its condition, and perhaps find clues to determine the cause of the accident.

*Atlantis* has often been the platform to launch the WHOI-operated ROV Jason and is well suited to the task. *Atlantis* is a very capable ship and has a very experienced crew for conducting complex underwater vehicle operations, said Rob Munier, vice president for marine facilities and operations at WHOI.

## Multibeam sonar

*Atlantis*, which is owned by the U.S. Navy, was en route to a planned oceanographic mission in the South Atlantic when Navy officials diverted it to head to the area where last communications were received from the *San Juan*. The ship used its sophisticated multibeam sonar and an underwater communications system to search areas prescribed by the Argentinian Navy. Crew members monitored the equipment around the clock – work that was demanding and emotionally laden. The port stop allowed the ship to change crews, refuel, and load CURV and its containerised control room and accompanying equipment.

CURV will be operated by Phoenix International. Phoenix and WHOI have worked together before, including on a 2010 expedition to return to explore the wreckage of the *Titanic*.