



# The Teapot Dome Scandal: Law and National Security in Retrospect

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Zoom (RSVP to [gnspi@unm.edu](mailto:gnspi@unm.edu) for link)

During Warren G. Harding's presidency, there was a secretive switch of control over the United States' Navy's strategic oil reserves from the Department of Navy to the Secretary of the Interior, accompanied by illicit contracting that served to enrich Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall, several other government officials or their family members, and two wealthy oilmen. The scandal resulted in congressional investigations, an investigation appointed by President Calvin Coolidge, and four United States Supreme Court cases. Prior to Watergate, it was the defining scandal in American political history.

This seminar studies how the corruption not only undermined government but also weakened the national security of the United States and involved the buildup of the naval base at Pearl Harbor. It is true that this occurred at a time of peace, but peace on the surface in an era of disarmament treaties also masked the possibility of a future conflict with Japan.



About the speaker: Joshua Kastenber is currently a Professor at the University of New Mexico School of Law and a Visiting Adjunct Professor at UNLV. He had a 20-year career as a lawyer and judge in the U.S. Air Force. He served as an advisor to the Department of Defense on cyber security and cyber warfare matters, twice deployed to Iraq and oversaw the military's compliance with international law. Professor Kastenber served as a prosecutor and defense counsel in over 200 trials and as a judge in over 200 trials. He has been cited by the Washington Post and appeared on Fox News and written over a dozen law review articles as well as four books. Professor Kastenber's interests are in the field of criminal law and procedure, evidence, legal history, and judicial ethics.