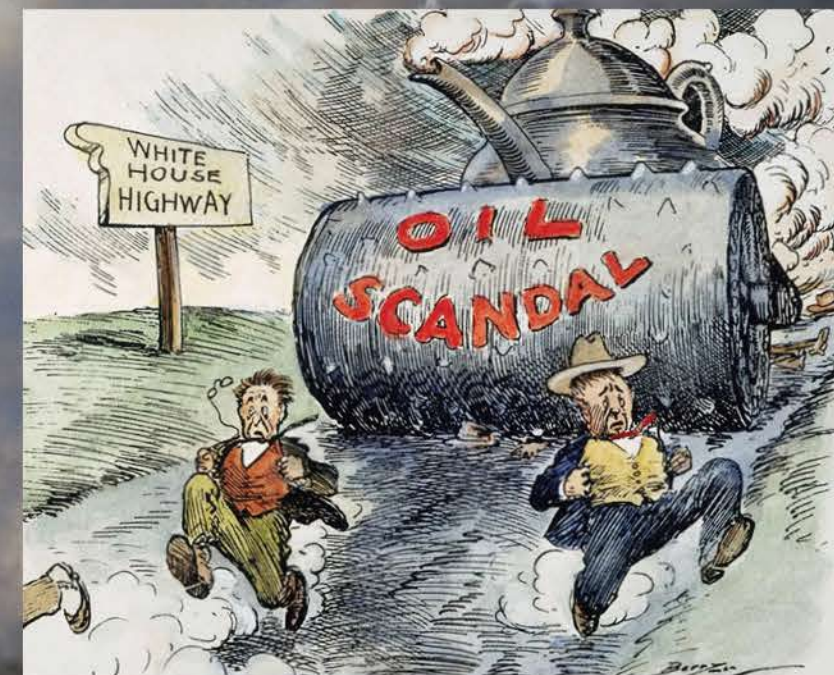


HOW THE JAPANESE MISSED PEARL'S MOST IMPORTANT TARGET

The story of Pearl Harbor Bulk Fuel Support — a century of hidden history!

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NAVAL SUPPLY CENTER PEARL HARBOR FUEL DEPARTMENT (1980-2004)

John Hamilton is the acknowledged expert when it comes to depictions of the Pearl Harbor attack in paintings. His massive rendition *Battleship Row in Flames* well illustrates how the sky over Pearl Harbor filled with smoke from the explosions and from the fires raging in the fuel stores aboard the ships. If the fuel farm had been hit, the entire sky would have been blackened — probably for days. (Naval Historical Foundation)



Today, the Teapot Dome Scandal is virtually unknown. Yet, it is considered the greatest scandal in American political history before Watergate. During the 1920s, the US Navy converted from coal to oil fuel. To ensure the Navy would always have enough fuel, several large oil producing areas were designated Naval Oil Reserves. Teapot Dome oil field was one of those. It is so named because of a rock formation that resembles a teapot. The scandal began when President Harding issued an executive order that took the control of the oil fields away from the Navy and transferred it to the Department of Interior. Thus, the situation was now wide open for graft and other forms of illegal activity. The scandal produced thousands of newspaper articles along with cartoons such as this one.



Aerial view of the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base (right center) with the Upper and Middle Tank Farm groupings at left, looking south on 13 October 1941. Among the 17 fuel tanks in the Upper Tank Farm group and 10 tanks in the Middle Tank Farm group, two have been painted to resemble buildings (topmost tank in upper group and rightmost tank in lower group).

Much has been recorded about the heritage of ships and submarines over the years, especially articles written in Navy-related periodicals such as *Sea Classics*. This fact should come as no surprise as American readers have always romanticized their war heroes and memorialized their story lines as part of our common history. We commemorate the anniversaries of such events and honor their sacrifices, but many readers, unfortunately, take little time to closely examine hidden back stories.

Herein lies the eternal plight of logistics support. Mechanical and repetitive, logistics is often characterized as lackluster.

Furthermore, logisticians tend to be a humorless lot, yet the savvy naval historian or enthusiast understands that naval logistics support is forever and inseparably linked to ships, aviation, and submarines as it provides the fleet with the needed and timely triad of essentials: “beans, bullets, and black oil.” Fortunately, the true warfighter comprehends the need to integrate logistics in their strategic planning processes — as Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King and former Chief of Naval Operations famously retorted, “I don’t know what the hell this ‘logistics’ is that Marshall is always talking about, but I want some of it.”

The grand legacies of ships and

submarines are often manifested over a period of days, if not hours. The same is rarely ever said of logistics, but that doesn’t mean that logistics is forever a historical back-seater. In fact, the year 2021 serves as the 100-year anniversary of a rather amazing, but hidden history of one particular Naval logistics marvel — the Navy’s bulk fuel infrastructure at Pearl Harbor.

While this story opens a century ago in 1921, the stage was being set in the years immediately after the Civil War. Steam-driven ships had, for the most part, proven vastly superior and faster than wind propulsion, but these coal-burners were checked by the accessibility of strategically-placed

coaling stations. This was particularly poignant in the Pacific Ocean where the Navy’s refueling choices were effectively limited to Midway and Hawaii. The latter eventually caught the Navy’s eye, so with the turn of the century, Naval Station Honolulu was established to serve as a strategic Naval logistics point. This proved particularly crucial, when in 1914, the opening of the Panama Canal significantly redirected shipping and transit routes between the Atlantic and Pacific for commercial shipping as well as military threat response.

However, as turn-of-the-century oil refining processes improved, bunker oil became a cheaper propellant as