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مَنْظَرُ الصَّحَّةِ الْعَالَمِيَّةِ
المكتب الإقليمي شرق المتوسط

Voice of Truth

Volume 1

**MULTINATIONAL TOBACCO INDUSTRY ACTIVITY IN THE
MIDDLE EAST: A REVIEW OF INTERNAL
INDUSTRY DOCUMENTS**

Prepared by

Ross Hammond, Consultant
965 Mission Street, Suite 218
San Francisco, CA 94103
USA
e-mail: margross@igc.org

Celia White, Digital Librarian Project Manager
Tobacco Control Archive
Library and Center for Knowledge Management
University of California San Francisco
530 Parnassus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94143-0840
USA
e-mail: white@library.ucsf.edu

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In the name of God , the Compassionate, the Merciful

FOREWORD

Hussein A. Gezairy, MD, FRCS

**Regional Director for the
Eastern Mediterranean Region
of the World Health Organization**

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has been working for years with national, regional and international partners to address tobacco health hazards and to support all national tobacco control measures. Yet, success in reducing the rates of morbidity and mortality attributed to tobacco use has remained elusive. This delay is the result of many factors, the most important of which include the activities of the tobacco industry, activities which have long been denied by the industry itself. Recently, however, the unethical behaviour of the tobacco industry in undermining efforts by the World Health Organization to control tobacco use has been brought to light by the WHO Report of the Committee of Experts on Tobacco Industry Documents, published in July 2000.

The following regional report, “Voice of Truth”, presents for the first time compelling evidence that the unethical behaviour of the tobacco industry was extended to all levels: international, regional and national. Through their regional offices, the tobacco companies used all possible routes to stop governments from adopting tobacco control policies. In addition, they monitored closely all activities undertaken by the WHO Regional Office, and tried to oppose any consensus-building agreements regarding tobacco control at the regional level.

The first volume of “Voice of Truth” reveals some of the tactics and strategies used by the tobacco industry in the Eastern Mediterranean Region generally, and in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) specifically, to promote a product which kills more than 4 million people annually. Direct targeting of this region is clearly evident throughout the report, which contains startling facts about how the tobacco industry has operated in the area since 1970.

This report provides a strong argument for combining efforts as the only way to tackle the tobacco problem. It calls for all decision-makers and tobacco control advocates to review and redirect their tobacco control policies in light of the nature of tobacco industry activities.

The findings in the report represent a real challenge for public health. If health professionals and decision-makers are to protect this region from the threat caused by tobacco use, they must confront the tobacco industry with a new vision of the future.

This vision must embrace an alternative to the 10 million deaths that are projected to occur from tobacco-related illnesses in the year 2030, of which 70% will take place in developing countries alone, and must include whatever steps necessary to save the region from such a fate.

Now, more than ever, it is a matter of survival. Protecting the health of future generations cannot be the responsibility of any party other than the legitimate authorities of each nation. Parties whose interests do not include public health should not be allowed to influence it.

This report aims at providing a clear picture of the activities of the tobacco industry in this region so that the public can understand the situation and make informed decisions. This is the first, but not the last. The rest is yet to come, in the very near future.

GLOSSARY

Organizations

AGHMC	Arab Gulf Health Ministers' Council
BAT	British American Tobacco Company
Bates Rouge	Advertising agency employed by BAT
B&W	Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company
Burston Marsteller	U.S. public relations firm
Covington & Burling	U.S. law firm
EEMA	Philip Morris Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IAA	International Advertisers' Association
IAI	Indoor Air International
IARC	International Agency for Research on Cancer
ICOSI	International Committee on Smoking Issues
INFOTAB	International Center on Smoking Issues
INTERMARKETS	P.R. firm
ISO	International Standards Organization
ITI	International Tobacco Science Information Service
MEWG	Middle East Working Group (predecessor to META)
META	Middle East Tobacco Association
MEMAC	Middle East Marketing & Communications
PM	Philip Morris Tobacco Company
RJR	R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
Radius/Leo Burnett	P.R. firm
SASO	Saudi Arabian Standards Organization
Shook, Hardy & Bacon	U.S. law firm
Surrey & Morse	U.S. law firm
TEI	Tobacco Exporters International (international subsidiary of Rothmans)
Tihama	Saudi Publishing House
USTR	U.S. Trade Representative
Westminster Industrial Group	British firm hired to spy on tobacco industry opponents
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO-EMRO	WHO Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

Persons

Al-Awadi, Dr Abdul Rahman	Former Minister of Public Health, Kuwait
Al Bualy, Dr	Chair, Oman Anti-Smoking Committee
Gezairy, Dr Hussein	WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean
Al-Kamali, Mohammed	Managing Director of <i>Al Omaniya</i>
Al-Khatib, Dr Muhammad	WHO-EMRO
Al Nuami, Rashid Abdullah	UAE Foreign Minister

Al-Roushoud, Rashid	Secretary General of the GCC Health Ministers and Kuwaiti Under-Secretary for Health
Allen, Robin	META coordinator
Alomran, Abdullah	PM consultant
Baroudi, Bisharah G.	Philip Morris
Bible, Geoffrey	Philip Morris
Blair, Kirkland	Rothmans
Borek, Abdullah	META and MEWG Coordinator; also PM employee
Carlson, Stig	Philip Morris
Charnaud, E.G.	Philip Morris
Corner, R.M.	Philip Morris
Doyle, Julian	ICOSI
El Kholy, Hassan Sabry	Ex-assistant Secretary General of the Arab League
Hartogh, J.M.	Philip Morris
Hawa, R.	MEMAC
Hobeiche, Nicolas	Philip Morris
Leslie, George	Indoor Air International
Lister, Charles	Philip Morris
MacLeod, Torquil	Philip Morris
Mansour, Mark	Philip Morris
Massoud, Aly	Egyptian professor
Modjtabai, Dr Atarod	WHO-EMRO
Moore, G.W.	Rothmans
Moutran, Edward	MEMAC
Najjar, Ramzi	Bates-Rouge
Nassif, George	Philip Morris
Omar, Sharif	Egyptian Member of Parliament
Pantos, George	Philip Morris
Parrish, Steve	Philip Morris
Perry, Roger	Imperial College of London
Philips, Jeffery	Cairo-based consultant
Picton, Jack	INFOTAB
Robinson, J. Bernard	Philip Morris
Rutland, A.G.	Westminster Industrial Group
Schedel, Harald	Philip Morris
Scott, Mike	Brown & Williamson
Soleib, Hassan	Egyptian Member of Parliament
Trad, Najib	Tihama Publishing House
Ware, Keith	Philip Morris
Wells, Tana	Philip Morris

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The documentary evidence of tobacco industry collusion in the Middle East begins in the late 1970s, when multinational tobacco companies met regularly to discuss pending regulations and to plot joint strategy. The Middle East Working Group (MEWG), which later became the Middle East Tobacco Association (META), comprised all of the major tobacco multinational operating in the Middle East, and was formed in order to “promote and defend” the interests of these companies in the region.

- ?? These companies carefully monitored and sought to undermine their opponents in the Middle East, including the Arab Gulf Health Ministers’ Conference, the World Health Organization and national tobacco control coalitions.
- ?? By the mid-1980s, the companies had set up “a major network of information sources and resources through which to lobby the appropriate officials” in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
- ?? The tobacco industry documents show that the companies enlisted prominent political figures in the Middle East to provide information and lobby for them, including an Egyptian member of Parliament, a former Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League and even, at one point, the Secretary General of the GCC Health Ministers who was also the Kuwaiti Under-Secretary for Health.
- ?? The tobacco industry spent a great deal of time in the GCC cultivating the media, which they viewed as indispensable to their ability to communicate to both policymakers and the public. Aside from overt and covert lobbying of media owners and senior editors, the tobacco companies also engaged in a sophisticated campaign to plant pro-tobacco articles in the regions newspapers. This strategy was employed in numerous attempts to defeat or amend proposed restrictions on tobacco advertising.
- ?? In country after country, the companies engaged in concerted campaigns to defeat ad ban proposals or water them down. This often involved the use of third parties to lobby policymakers, including the International Advertisers’ Association, distributors and friendly media owners.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The documentary evidence of tobacco industry collusion in the Middle East begins in the late 1970s, when multinational tobacco companies operating in the Middle East met regularly to discuss pending regulations and to plot joint strategy.ⁱ Initially, they met under the umbrella of the Middle East Working Group (MEWG)ⁱⁱ until 1 February, 1988, when the Middle East Tobacco Association (META) was formally constituted for the purpose of “promoting and defending the Tobacco Industry in the GCC countries.” The initial members of META were: BAT (UK & Export) Limited; Gallaher International; Philip Morris; RJ Reynolds; Rothmans Exports Limited; and Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation. The first meeting of META took place on 10 March 1988.

META’s organizational agreement committed the companies to “co-operate actively with INFOTAB and other tobacco industry associations on an international basis on issues relevant to the tobacco industry in the Middle East which are likely to have an impact on the region.” Each company agreed to appoint two senior managers to represent them in META, one with operating responsibilities and another with a public affairs brief. Through INFOTAB, META was to retain a consultant to coordinate the activities of the member companies. The companies agreed to meet at least three times a year, with decisions to be reached by consensus.¹ From time to time, META members also set up ad hoc working groups on specific topics and countries in order to “identify threats; identify the decision-making process; (and) decide on the next steps to meet a particular local requirement.”² These working groups included the Oman Working Group, the Saudi Working Group, the UAE Working Group, the Media Strategy Working Group and the Tax Sub-Committee.

META primarily concerned itself with regulatory and political issues in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar,

ⁱ Tobacco industry document archives were searched through websites offered by the industry (www.tobaccoarchives.com) as well as through Tobacco Documents Online (www.tobaccodocuments.org). Over one hundred terms were searched, including country names, names of persons (Baroudi, Borek, Allen, etc.), names of organizations (AGHMC, GCC, SASO, etc.). Presently, tobacco documents are searchable only through fields such as author, recipient, title, and named organization, rather than the full text of the documents, and many records contain no titles at all. This made searching particularly challenging and time consuming. Every effort was made to locate all relevant documents, with particular emphasis on the period from 1985 to the late 1996, when the trail stops except for one document covering Lebanon from April, 2000. Documents cited in this paper are referenced with a Bates number (8-10 digits long) and a universal resource locator (url). To locate a Philip Morris document (denoted by PM before the Bates number) go the website www.pmdocs.com and enter the first part of the number (e.g. if the Bates is 9422078-2081 enter 9422078). Then click search. For general information and hints on how to search tobacco industry documents, see the 11th World Conference on Tobacco OR Health Fact Sheet at: <http://tobaccofreekids.org/campaign/global/docs/searching.pdf>

ⁱⁱ The Middle East Working Group was a subcommittee of the International Committee on Smoking Issues (ICOSI), which later was renamed INFOTAB (International Tobacco Information Centre).

Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.³ While never formally extended to Egypt, it was charged with monitoring “threats emanating from the WHO office in Alexandria and any other threat...”⁴ Currently, META is registered in the Jebel Ali Free Zone, a duty free zone within the United Arab Emirates (UAE).⁵

Available financial information on META shows a core budget for 1989 of US\$227 000, not including funds for projects which would be “agreed as such projects are proposed and approved” and for which “no formal budget was deemed necessary”.⁶ Between 1991–1993, META’s core budget fluctuated between US\$330 000 and \$350 000, not including special projects or payments to the media firm Middle East Marketing & Communications (MEMAC), which ranged between US\$120 000 and US\$132 000 per year.⁷ Each company paid an equal share of META’s budget, with INFOTAB acting as the Treasurer.⁸

In March 1990 Robin Allen was appointed as META secretary, replacing Abdullah Borek, who had worked for both the MEWG and META. Allen was a journalist who had worked in the Middle East and was appointed in part because of his “good contacts” in the region.⁹ He concentrated much of his initial energy on lobbying “opinion formers and decision-makers in the GCC”. His purpose was to “win goodwill on behalf of the industry,” and to explain the industry’s viewpoint on legislative issues. *“Improving the industry’s lines of communication with key individuals is absolutely crucial to the industry’s well-being? in the short, medium and long-term,”* he wrote in 1990 (emphasis in the original).¹⁰

Tobacco industry staff development

The tobacco industry made sure that its staff in the Middle East were kept up to date on the latest political and regulatory issues facing the industry and were trained in how to lobby the media and policymakers. At a marketing conference for staff from Philip Morris Europe, the Middle East and Africa, participants attended sessions such as “The Smoking and Health Problem Now and in the Future” (led by J.M. Hartogh) which covered such topics as: “Why the problem exists and how the industry is or is not dealing with it”; and “Understanding the strategy of the anti-smoker movement” (led by R.M. Corner) including the “developed vs. developing countries distinction. The opportunities presented to us to exploit conflicts of interest in the UN and Governments”. Also on the program was: “Marlboro: Cross Border Opportunities” which covered how “cross border advertising can contribute to Marlboro growth in local markets”; and “Marlboro: New Ways to Develop and Sustain the Idea” in which ways to circumvent ad bans were discussed through “Promotional Trademark Exploitation and...the new opportunities created by the ‘new media’”¹¹ There is also record of Philip Morris spokespersons Bisharah Baroudi, Torquil Macleod, and George Nassif attending an ETS training session in London organized by the law firm of Covington & Burling.¹²

2. TARGETING TOBACCO INDUSTRY OPPONENTS IN THE GCC

Our objective remains to develop and mobilize the necessary resources – internal Philip Morris, external agencies and consultants, the industry, National Marketing Associations, and all potential allies – to fight the social and legislative initiatives against tobacco....

We shall carefully target our opponents. We shall precisely identify, monitor, isolate and contest key individuals and organizations.

-- Philip Morris Long Range Plan, 1990–1992¹³

2.1 Monitoring opponents

Throughout the documents there are extensive references to the monitoring of tobacco control advocates and activities in region of the GCC, particularly those of government health ministries, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Union Against Cancer (UICC). Numerous documents describe details of these organizations' meetings and workshops in area, including lists of attendees, agendas and main discussion points.¹⁴ Most of this intelligence gathering was carried out by the companies themselves and INFOTAB staff¹⁵, although they also hired firms from as far away as the United States (the law firm of Surrey & Morse¹⁶) and England to monitor their critics in the region.

One such firm, the Westminster Industrial Group in London, was hired to gather intelligence on industry foes. A 1982 letter from the group to Richard Corner of Philip Morris notes that anti-smoking activity “gathers momentum with each successive meeting of the Arab Gulf Health Ministers Conference” a “threat” which is reinforced by the activities of groups such as the UICC, the Kuwaiti Anti-Smoking Society and “their allies in the media.” “In these circumstances,” Rutland explains, “while PM field management and agents can and should undoubtedly be of considerable help with their industry experience and contacts, it is felt that this extremely sensitive work should be handled by a trusted third party. In this connection the current ill-feeling of the Gulf Ministers towards the “Tobacco multinational giants” is relevant.” Rutland goes on to explain that the first objective of his work for Philip Morris, “as with the WHO in Africa,” will be to become familiar with the opposition.¹⁷

2.2 World Health Organization

The tobacco companies were particularly concerned about the influence of WHO on the region's governments. In 1987 Philip Morris cited the need to “recruit a consultant who can help us monitor and influence the Alexandria-based WHO office which help prepare GCC health plans.”¹⁸ Two years later, they enlisted Jeffrey Philips, a Cairo-based consultant, to monitor the activities of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO). He regularly reported on the positions and proclivities of senior EMRO staff, provided details of proposed anti-tobacco campaigns and

monitored EMRO's work on the "smoking and Islam issue" which involved compiling noted Islamic rulings on smoking. In addition to Philips, "regular Middle East Corporate Affairs contacts with key GCC Health officials" also enabled the company to "follow up and monitor important EMRO initiatives."¹⁹ META also kept tabs on WHO through Robin Allen and MEMAC, who were asked to "monitor the threats emanating from the WHO office in Alexandria and any other threat, and to keep META informed."²⁰ The companies apparently did more than monitor EMRO however. As part of its misinformation campaign in Middle East, Philip Morris Middle East Corporate Affairs "in cooperation with INFOTAB arranged for a letter from the International Tobacco Growers Association together with the June FAO Economic Impact of Tobacco Study to be anonymously distributed to key participants" at an EMRO meeting in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.²¹

2.3 Arab Gulf Health Ministers' Conference (AGHMC)

Probably the biggest threat to the tobacco industry was the Arab Gulf Health Ministers' Council (AGHMC) which brought together Health Ministers from all of the GCC states. The tobacco industry did not believe that the Ministers were capable of making up their own mind about tobacco, remaining convinced that tobacco control initiatives of the AGHMC were "stimulated by activists who control the Secretariat of the Council in Riyadh and who dominate the Anti-Tobacco Committees under the Council's umbrella."²²

The industry set out to make sure that the regular meetings of the AGHMC did not result in action or agreement on key issues of concern to the industry. A December 1985 telex to Geoffrey Bibleⁱⁱⁱ laid out the strategy:

The immediate objective is to motivate targeted Health Ministers to attend the January meeting. We will seek to persuade them it is in their self interest to delay or block any consensus on the anti-tobacco proposals, by concentrating all of our current lobbying efforts on the January 6 meeting. We will, to the extent we are successful, avoid the necessity of lobbying all the proposals in each Gulf Arab State ...

In the UAE, for example, Philip Morris' distributor, Rashid Abdullah Al Nuami, who was not only the country's Foreign Minister but also a member of the Ajman ruling family, was asked to "ensure that the UAE Health Minister attends the January 6 meeting pursuant to appropriate briefing."²³

Documents from 1979 show the extent to which the companies went to shape the agenda and outcomes of these meetings. The industry set out to "encourage" the Council of Ministers to take action on two of the least effective WHO recommendations for comprehensive tobacco control programs—more research and banning the sale of tobacco to children—in the hope that tax increases, health warning

ⁱⁱⁱ Bible is currently Chairman of the Board and CEO of Philip Morris.

labels and other measures would be postponed. Philip Morris' Richard Corner was charged with writing a "journalistic style" article encouraging such limited action. After being cleared by industry lawyers at the U.S. law firm of Shook, Hardy & Bacon, the article was then planted in the Kuwaiti press in both English and Arabic and an attempt was made to plant it the Bahrain press during the Minister's meeting.²⁴ However an accompanying tobacco industry ad was only to appear in English as "the Arabic translation aiming at the mentality of the Arabs" could not be produced in time.²⁵

Shook, Hardy & Bacon also prepared five short (2-4 page) background briefing papers on different topics for use with the media and policymakers.^{26iv} META members received these papers from Julian Doyle at ICOSI with a note asking them "to destroy the earlier versions of these papers and replace them with those enclosed."²⁷ The titles and some brief excerpts can be found below.

Tobacco industry briefing papers

Many Unanswered Questions on Smoking and Health Controversy Arguments to Use Against Claims That Tobacco Smoke is Harmful

("contentions are frequently made that tobacco smoke or specific components as found in tobacco smoke are harmful to the smoker. However, there is inadequate scientific evidence to support such a proposition....Research examining the components of tobacco smoke has failed to produce the evidence necessary to support the claims about harmful effects of tobacco smoke.")²⁸

Advertising Restrictions Unlikely to Reduce Cigarette Consumption

("cigarette advertising serves to divide but not expand an already existing market")²⁹

The Smoking and Health Controversy—A Perspective Smoking and the Nonsmoker

("the overwhelming evidence majority of evidence on this topic is that tobacco smoke has not been proven to cause disease in the nonsmoker")³⁰

^{iv} We were only able to obtain three of the five.

2.4 Government ministries

The companies were also asked to discuss with their agents and distributors in the region the possibility of lobbying other government departments than just the Health Ministry and in so doing trying “to bring influence to bear in this indirect way”.³¹

By the mid-1980s, the tobacco industry had set had set up “a major network of information sources and resources through which to lobby the appropriate officials” in the GCC.³² In fact META constantly sought to “capitalise on member companies’ resources and government contacts as a source of first-hand information on impending/proposed regulations affecting the Industry.” To assist them in these efforts, META members compiled a data base on “the status of tobacco related regulations, government agencies/decision-makers affecting the Industry and the decision-making process, natural allies, media and media-men profiles.”³³ For example Robin Allen was instructed to provide the names and short profiles of cabinet members in the UAE, Kuwait and Oman.³⁴

2.4 “Access to the highest quarters”: the use of prominent political figures

The documents show that the tobacco industry enlisted prominent political figures in the Middle East to provide information and lobby for them, including an Egyptian member of Parliament, a former Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League and even, at one point, the Secretary General of the GCC Health Ministers who was also the Kuwaiti Under-Secretary for Health.

In 1980, for example, Rothman’s Kirkland Blair went on a Middle East “fact-finding” tour accompanied by Hassan Sabry El Kholy, an ex-assistant Secretary General of the Arab League. As Blair pointed out, “this gentleman gets official V.I.P. treatment everywhere they go and has access to the highest quarters. Certainly he is a highly suitable personality to use in order to find out what the actual score on the Smoking and Health front in the Gulf is.” Blair and Kholy visited the UAE and Kuwait, where they met with the Prince. During that meeting, the Amir “phoned the Health Minister in their presence allegedly telling him to cool off after the latter’s return from the WHO meeting in Geneva which he was presiding.”³⁵

The tobacco industry also had friends in the highest policymaking circles in the GCC, including Rashid Al-Roushoud, Secretary General of the GCC Health Ministers and Kuwaiti Under-Secretary for Health, who in 1993 passed information to MEMAC on the GCC Health Ministers Meeting in Oman.^v META Secretary Robin Allen stressed that “Memac was “urged not to release it”, so META companies are kindly

^v Reference is made over a decade earlier by Infotab’s Jack Picton to a report on a Ministers’ conference which had been “obtained confidentially” (30 July 1982, Telex from Jack Picton to Tana Wells, PM 2024974361).

requested not to refer to Memac at all in this context. The information was passed privately in the course of Memac's further investigation into the Kuwait Anti-Smoking Bill."³⁶

1994 Philip Morris corporate affairs objectives

1. Prevent legislation detrimental to smokers' rights. Keep smoking affordable.
2. Counter-act attempts to further limit the freedom of developing, producing and marketing cigarettes.
3. Stop the decline in the social acceptability of smokers and smoking in society.
4. Enhance PM's corporate image and create a positive business environment for management throughout the Region.
5. Communicate information about the Company's business, policies and sponsorships to all staff and their families.

Strategies to reach the corporate affairs objectives

1. Develop messages that are politically relevant and persuasive.
2. Build a more frequent dialogue with decision-makers.
3. Build and strengthen ally networks.
4. Build better equipped industry Corporate Affairs working groups.
5. Develop Media communications, as well as Government relations plans for EEMA Headquarters, as well as all relevant markets.
6. Train spokespersons ready to go public with an increased frequency.
7. Support Smokers' Rights Groups.
8. Run meaningful social and cultural contributions programs.
9. Offer credible and practical solutions to smoker -- non-smoker conflicts.^{vi}

^{vi} "From Austria To Zimbabwe This Is EEMA Corporate Affairs" (1994)

Bates # 2500060959-0993, <http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2500060959/0993>

3. TOBACCO INDUSTRY MANIPULATION OF THE MEDIA

3.1 General

The tobacco industry spent a great deal of time in the GCC cultivating the media, which they viewed as indispensable to their ability to communicate to both policymakers and the public on “smoking and health issues”. They also realized that without the active support of the media, calls for a ban on tobacco advertising would mount rapidly. To complement the already formidable media operations of the member companies, META hired the public relations firm Middle East Marketing & Communications (MEMAC) to both monitor the press and to “assist the industry in fighting back on key issues.”³⁷ META’s proposed 1992–1993 work plan lays out some of the key concepts behind the media strategy:

- ?? Develop, with the assistance of MEMAC, a relationship with the media that would allow industry input, at the local, regional, or global level into tobacco-related stories prior to their publication.
- ?? Capitalise on joint Industry campaigns at the international, regional or local levels (if any are undertaken by META locally) which project the industry’s social responsibility and publicize these in the local media.
- ?? Allocate special effort to counter false claims on World product and marketing practices of multinational tobacco manufacturers in developing countries.
- ?? Seek to correct, in meetings and discussions with the media and decision-makers, current misconceptions about the Industry, particularly with respect to the above.³⁸

3.2 Placing stories

An early tobacco industry tactic was to send letters to the editor under assumed names. “I strongly believe,” wrote MEWG coordinator A. Borek, “that any attacks from the other side should be countered in this way and while we will not be able to change general trends and considerations, I am fairly certain that we can give the other side to understand that they do not own the floor”.³⁹

META’s early media strategy built on this, placing translated versions of Infotab-supplied material in select publications, making sure that “no excess duplication appears” so as to “avoid the appearance of a concerted campaign”. It also entailed developing contacts with the media at the “highest level (owners, publishers)” in order to “encourage editors to think again before publishing anti-industry propaganda.”⁴⁰ Initially the companies took a cautious approach, with Allen questioning “to what extent is MEMAC alone fronting for the industry? Or is it to be MEMAC/Robin Allen or MEMAC/Robin Allen in the name of Infotab?...MEMAC

will *almost certainly* need to have a “peg” for placing articles.”⁴¹(emphasis in original)

By 1991, however, META decided to “drive for more placements, (using) less caution,” all the while making sure that neither the media nor the public were having “negative reactions” to the campaign. ⁴² META contracted with MEMAC to plant at least four stories a month in the Gulf media, at least two of which had to be in the leading national and pan-Arab publications such as *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, *Al-Hayat*, *Al-Itihad*, *Khaleej Times*, *Arab News*, *Saudi Gazette*, *Gulf News*, *Emirate News* and *Al-Hawadeth*. Yet “META’s communications strategy should not be limited to placing positive/balanced tobacco-related stories in the media,” wrote MEMAC’s Edward Moutran. “It should additionally seek to:

- ?? Mitigate negative coverage – If the media cannot be balanced on tobacco issues, it better not address these issues than be biased on them.
- ?? Correct unfounded claims and misinformation.”⁴³

The tobacco industry had MEMAC plant articles in the press which tried to sow doubt about the health impact of smoking or suggested government resistance to tobacco control legislation, placing articles with such titles as “Smoking Out the Facts” (planted in *Al Khaleej* and *Khaleej Times*) or “Turkish President vetoes tobacco bill”.⁴⁴ In 1991, the effort planted 23 articles, below the stated target)—on ETS (3), advertising (6), economics (2) and general stories (12)—in both the national and Pan-Arab press. Philip Morris felt that much more could be achieved “without even beginning to put the authorities’ (Ministry of Information censors) threshold of tolerance to the test.”⁴⁵ Thus at the October 1991 META meeting in Geneva the member companies agreed to more than double the number of placements in 1992. “The bulk of these were to be in the “quality” publications identified as the Pan Arab press, the Saudi publications *Asharq Al-Awsat*, *Arab News* and *Saudi Gazette*, and other national and regional publications including *Al-Khaleej*, *Al-Itihad*, *Khaleej Times*, *Gulf News*, *Emirate News*, and quality magazines already selected by Memac.”⁴⁶

Table 1. META story placement 1991⁴⁷

Country	Publication (# of stories)
Bahrain	Al Ayam (1)
Kuwait	Seyaassah (2) Arab Times (1) Fajr Al Jedid (1) Rai Al Am (1) Hayatuna (1)
Saudi Arabia	Assayad (1) Arab News (2) Fajr al Jedid (1)
UAE	Al- Khallej (5) Khaleej Times (2) Emirates News (1)
Pan Arab Press	Ousbou Al Arabi (1) Al-Hawadeth (1) Al Hawadess (1)

Source: Media Strategy, Presentation by Mr Edward Moutran, President of MEMAC, September 1991; PM 2501173278-3297

By the end of June 1992, the industry had tripled the number of articles planted (to 70+) in all of 1991,⁴⁸ including over 25 on advertising issues, with the over 80% of these articles appearing in the Arabic language press. The majority of these articles appeared in the industry's three priority markets (Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait) as well as in the regional press.⁴⁹ More importantly, "key anti-industry publications had been breached in Saudi Arabia, Pan Arab and UAE. Only Qatar publications had so far declined to take any industry material. The "prevention" and "think-again" campaign on publications' owners and editors was having the desired effect".⁵⁰ In addition, they successfully fed targeted "unfriendly" publications stories on "less controversial issues" and achieved "firsts" in planting articles in these outlets (e.g. *Ashraq Al Awsat*, *Al Hayat* and *Gulf News*).⁵¹ META members agreed that the pace of media placements was to be maintained "if it could be done without provoking anti-industry sentiment from owners or information ministries."⁵²

By the end of September 1992 the industry had planted 83 articles, and were projecting a total of over 100 by the end of the year. They hoped to plant at least 150 in 1993. Advertising was the lead issue, with ETS "a subject more and more in focus." Wanting to penetrate the Pan Arab press more, META asked MEMAC to make overtures to the Saudi-owned Pan-Arab press in London, targeting "senior editors as well as commercial managers." MEMAC was also asked to put "considerable effort"

into “trying to reason with GCC and Pan-Arab editorial people about the factual inaccuracies and overt bias of anti-tobacco articles” and to “immediately rebut the more strident anti-industry articles which appeared regionally and in the Pan-Arab press.”⁵³

3.3 “Voice of reason” campaign

META organized a “voice of reason” campaign using well-known Arab writers “to develop pro-industry articles on issues such as marketing freedoms, economics of the industry, the quality-product theme, and public smoking on which there was an industry consensus.” Since the industry “could not dictate to or control an Arab “voice of reason” article after it was written...it was doubly essential to approach only those well-known writers who had an open mind, and see that he was a) willing and b) well-briefed.” Such a concept, META believed, could “help increase media and readership awareness of the “other side of the story” and create a “think again” mentality among readers of the Arab GCC and Pan-Arab press.” Other advantages to this “highly cost-effective and informative approach” would be that it would “not look like lobbying as long as articles are well spaced: outspoken opinions are common.” However the writers would “need to be carefully briefed and closely regulated before publication.” Furthermore, “being outspoken, can create more controversy than straightforward releases.” Nevertheless such a local approach was favoured over bringing in foreign experts to address the media since such experts were entering a “socio-political minefield”. In addition, wrote Memac, the “media lack sophistication” and so may not understand the arguments of these experts.⁵⁴

3.4 Lobbying of the media

The tobacco industry realized that simply placing articles in the press would not be enough to sway the opinion of policymakers. Thus they set out to systematically build relationships with senior editors, journalists and other people in publishing to ensure that news and editorials on tobacco reflected industry thinking. In 1991 alone, META arranged meetings with “the Assistant Executive Director of *Al Omaniya*, Oman’s principal advertising agency representing the four main government and private publications and TV; the advertising manager of Oman Arabic daily; the international advertising director of the Pan-Arab *Dar Assayed*; and the editor in chief of the Oman daily *Al Watan*.” Memac’s Eddie Moutran also visited Jeddah to see the publisher of *Alam-Al-Youm*, “the Saudi owned Pan-Arab equivalent of the *Financial Times*,” and R. Hawa, UAE managing director of Memac, “met Najib Trad, a senior executive at Tihama Publishing House of Saudi Arabia. These and other meetings are part of the long process of familiarising the regional and Pan-Arab publishing world that the tobacco industry has a legitimate case which merits a wider hearing.”⁵⁵

This “familiarisation” process had as one of its main goals to “ensure that media owners, particularly in Kuwait and in the Pan-Arab media, continue their opposition to advertising ban proposals.” As part of the effort, they planned to use the occasion of Formula 1 motor racing to educate the press on the economic benefits of tobacco

sponsorship. And, “in an effort to educate working journalists on commercial freedoms issues,” the companies organized “journalists briefing tours to the USA”.⁵⁶ However “Press conferences and scientists’ briefings were to be avoided in favour of more private briefings for small numbers of high level press representatives in order not to arouse unwanted and unnecessary publicity which could spark anti-industry prejudice among officials.”⁵⁷

4. TOBACCO INDUSTRY EFFORTS TO DEFEAT ADVERTISING BANS

4.1 Broad strategy

The tobacco industry was under continuous threat in the GCC, as one country after another considered sweeping bans on tobacco advertising. META’s strategy for dealing with the threat of bans or restrictions was laid out in its proposed work plan for 1992–1993:

- ?? *Create informal coalitions* with natural allies (who benefit from tobacco advertising and sponsorship) and mobilise them in defence of tobacco marketing freedoms.
- ?? *Use META’s existing network of contacts* to improve the Industry’s access to advance information on proposed/planned advertising restrictions/bans.
- ?? *Compile an agreed set of arguments* backed where possible by supporting research findings for use where appropriate against proposed advertising restrictions or bans.^{vii}
- ?? *Develop local socio-economic arguments* or adapt global arguments against advertising bans to local conditions.
- ?? *Undertake research*, or encourage and support research that seeks to measure the economic impact of tobacco advertising in the GCC countries.
- ?? *Work within the local chapter(s) of the IAA* (International Advertisers Association) to establish a platform for the defence of advertising freedoms by advertisers, agencies and media.

^{vii} According to a 1989 Corporate Affairs Action Plan, Philip Morris “initiated and is providing technical support to publish critiques of unfavorable studies on the impact of ad bans. A recent example is Jean Boddewyn’s article in the 1989 fall issue of the British Journal Of Addiction critically reviewing the New Zealand study by Chetwynd et al.” (16 October 1989, EEMA Regional Annual Report Regarding PMI Corporate Affairs Action Plan; PM 2500019962-9976)

- ?? *Publicize favourable positions/decisions adopted internationally against tobacco advertising bans.*
- ?? *Publicize the industry's responsible position on the juvenile smoking issue.*
- ?? *Prevent provocative marketing excesses in the field and encourage self-regulation and restraint.”⁵⁸ (emphasis added)*

The media were seen as a key component of this strategy. As Philip Morris' Bisharah Baroudi put it, “Success in defeating ad ban proposals will depend largely on PM's and the Industry's diligence in ensuring that the local media in these countries is vigilant and fully mobilized to defend tobacco advertising freedoms.”⁵⁹

4.2 Use of front groups to fight ad ban proposals

...(B)uild and strengthen the GCC chapters of the International Advertisers Association as a coalition which can fight for market freedoms.⁶⁰

– Philip Morris Draft Corporate Affairs Plan, 1997

One of the main groups that the tobacco industry infiltrated and manipulated in its fight against advertising restrictions were the local chapters of the International Advertisers' Association. The local chapters of the IAA are “ideal legitimate platforms that META can effectively use in its efforts to defend the freedom to advertise tobacco products and the freedom of sports and other event organisers to choose tobacco companies as their sponsors” according to a 1991 META “Media Strategy Paper”.⁶¹ The objective of the companies' plan to infiltrate the IAA was to “widen IAA acceptances in GCC Countries and to ensure the industry's objectives were kept at the forefront of the IAA.”⁶² Because these Chapters had not “demonstrated the necessary commitment to the defence of marketing freedom and the freedom of commercial speech,” META Companies vowed to get themselves elected to their Executive Committees. Beyond that, “META companies, their field management, Ad/PR agencies should be continuously active” within Committees “that can be initiated by the Industry as part of the effort to defend marketing freedoms.” These could work towards “establishing and tapping a wide network of key contacts and decision-makers that can be mobilised in defence of marketing freedoms...developing tailored argumentation that can be readily be used against marketing restrictions...(and) communicating with and through the media highlighting the negative impact that an ad ban would have on business in the country and the lack of evidence that ad bans lead to drops in consumption.”⁶³

Egypt

You will note that the paper is unsigned and I would ask you not to disclose my or my Company's name, as the source of this paper. Otherwise, you are free to use it as you see fit.

-- 1980 Letter from G.W. Moore of Rothmans to Hassan Soleib, Member of Parliament

In the early 1980s the Middle East Working Group had been monitoring developments in Egypt with some trepidation as the wife of President Sadat and a “number of leading doctors” had been agitating for marketing restrictions. The companies established contact (through the Eastern Tobacco Company) with Hassan Soleib, an Egyptian Member of Parliament who was Vice-Chair of the Committee of Industrial Development. According to a 1981 Philip Morris memo, “This MP assured us that no draft law related to industry or trade could pass Parliament without the advice of his Committee.” Thus the industry was “taken very much by surprise” when the government gazetted a law on tobacco advertising.

The companies still held out hope that restrictions could be averted as Soleib had told them that the Minister of Health had to issue an executive order to implement the law. With that knowledge, the industry set out to delay that order.⁶⁴ According to a telex from Abdullah Borek, secretary of the MEWG, the companies agreed to send Jack Picton of BAT to Egypt “to approach the Minister of Health (and possibly Minister of Industry) with a view to get technical discussion regarding the implementation going and thereby also achieving a delay.”⁶⁵

The companies had already been using Soleib to put their views across to policymakers on the proposed advertising ban. “When we met in June you asked me to prepare a “scientific paper” on the smoking and health issue, for use in your capacity as a member of the People’s Assembly” wrote G.W. Moore of Rothmans to Soleib in October of 1980. Writing on Rothman company letterhead, Moore stated that “as tobacco manufacturers we do not express opinions on the smoking and health controversy. You will note that the paper is unsigned and I would ask you not to disclose my or my Company’s name, as the source of this paper. Otherwise, you are free to use it as you see fit.” Moore informed Soleib that he and Mike Scott from Brown & Williamson had been meeting with other international cigarette companies in Egypt who have “agreed a common “industry view” on the approach we would like to see taken on the proposed restrictions on the marketing of cigarettes. We feel that it would be best if we were to meet with you again to go through this document and if you are agreeable, would welcome an invitation to visit you in Cairo.”⁶⁶

Tobacco industry efforts to defeat advertising restrictions in Egypt continued into the 1990s. A Philip Morris Corporate Affairs document from 1993 lays out a comprehensive strategy to defeat proposals put forward by Dr Sharif Omar to ban all forms of tobacco advertising and promotion. The objectives of the Philip Morris campaign were two-fold: “Seek to defeat the proposed ban” and “As a fall back, ensure that advertising freedoms ceded are kept to a minimum.” A comprehensive strategy was devised:

1. Determine the expected progress of the bill within the legislative and decision-making processes and identify key influential players within these processes.
2. Identify key allies that could be mobilized against the proposed bill and in defense of advertising freedoms in general.
3. Prepare adapted argumentation tailored to the particular perspectives of the allies who are expected to use them against the bill and in defence of advertising freedoms.

4. Seek to enlarge the cycle of committee review of the proposed bill and to defeat (or as a minimum favorably amend it) through the intervention of key committee members with whom contact is established via natural allies.
5. Build and mobilize formal and informal coalitions against the proposed bill with natural allies and allied organizations.
6. Prepare broad-based opposition to the bill within the People's Assembly in the likely event that it is put to debate at plenary session.
7. Prepare a tailored media communication campaign in defense of marketing freedoms to be launched as appropriate in support of political and lobbying action undertaken.
8. Identify, and with line management agree, maximum affordable concessions that could be conceded as a last ditch defence.
9. Consider and agree with line management pro-active measures consistent with PM's or the Industry's position that could be volunteered in defense of advertising freedoms.

The company identified the need to carry out a "quick, but accurate and telling analysis of tobacco advertising expenditures in the print media...in order to identify the major recipients of tobacco print advertising spend and to determine the importance of such advertising expenditure in relation to their total advertising revenue...". The company also sought to find out what the Egyptian Health Minister's views on a total advertising ban were, "if these views are opposed to a total ban to seek that he communicate such views within Parliamentary Committee deliberations and reviews of the proposed bill and/or during debate of the bill at the plenary session of the Parliament. ...Action-Grp to identify reliable source and obtain insight on the Minister's position as well as identify and influential third party who could as a communication conduit to the minister." The company also tried to enlist the support of the management of Eastern Tobacco, the government monopoly, pointing out to them "The expected impact of a tobacco advertising ban on future efforts by the Egyptian Government to privatize the state tobacco industry, particularly in terms of the expected valuation of the industry and future efforts by a privatized tobacco industry to improve the quality of existing brands or launch new quality brands without being able to communicate such brand improvements to consumers."

Aware of its lack of credibility among policymakers, the company pointed out that "It is not conceivable that PM and the Industry would seek to oppose the proposed bill publicly (in the media) in the early stages of the lobbying process. In fact such action could be counter-productive, despite the face that a media outcry against the bill would genuinely describe its reaction of the proposed advertising ban. Initially, the role of the media should be limited to the political action and influence with Parliamentarians and decision-makers that the media can muster. But a well coordinated media communications campaign should not be ruled out a the later stages of the campaign, particularly when and if the proposed bill is put to debate at plenary session of the People's assembly." If the company was unable to defeat the ad ban proposal outright, then any concessions would have to be made carefully: "Identify and with line management, agree maximum affordable concessions that could be made as a last ditch defense. It would be complacent of PM and the Industry to assume that the proposed ad ban bill will be defeated without any concessions. This

would be a best case scenario. But adequate provision must be taken to ensure that the Industry prepares for reasonable and affordable concessions that could be made as a last ditch defense against the bill...PM and the Industry should be in control of what trade-offs are being offered and must therefore be prepared to identify and agree in advance proposed options or commitments that may be necessary.”⁶⁷

Bahrain

In Bahrain, the industry took a harder line, threatening to withhold advertising from media outlets that refused to oppose a proposed advertising ban. The industry’s “threat to the press was mainly a tactical move” wrote Abdullah Borek of the MEWG. “We knew that something re. advertising ban was under way and we had to involve the press in order to have the authorities alerted to the negative effects a loss of revenue would have. Threatening the press was the only way to get them to do something...While Bahrain in itself is not such an important market,” Borek wrote, “its function as a forerunner in the Gulf must not be under-estimated. If we make a mistake here, it will sooner or later come up in other countries in the region.”⁶⁸

Kuwait

In the early 1980s, the Middle East Working Group was also concerned about potential advertising restrictions in Kuwait. The companies agreed that although no immediate action was anticipated, “industry principals should be equipped with argumentation so that low-key contacts can be made and maintained on a pro-active basis.”⁶⁹ As ad ban proposals began to be considered, the companies were ready, lobbying media owners and the Kuwaiti Minister of Health through a local advertising agency whose Managing Director was a close personal friend of the Ministers.⁷⁰ The tide began to turn against the industry, which was faced with tough legislative proposals put forward by Health Minister Al Awadi, who was threatening to lead street demonstrations in support of his legislation. Philip Morris dispatched George Nassif and an employee of Leo Burnett/Radius “to meet with influential media owners. The purpose of the visit is to coordinate our response aimed at significantly weakening the proposed anti-tobacco legislation.”⁷¹ Defeating the advertising restrictions would require that the companies work closely “with the Kuwaiti media owners to maintain the effective opposition to the anti-tobacco proposal(s)” of the Kuwaiti Health Minister and, “in cooperation with the organizations which are supported through sports sponsorships, publicize the benefits via the Pan Arab and Kuwait media.”⁷²

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the tensions which led up to it provided a brief respite for the industry. Following the Gulf war, the industry’s strategy was to “seek to maintain pre-invasion promotional freedoms by offering to establish self regulation guidelines” and work with the managers of hotels, restaurants and clubs to seek their support. The companies also sought out the assistance of advertising agencies with tobacco accounts, providing them with the “relevant arguments” and encouraging them through META to “mobilise their contacts in support of recovering pre-invasion promotional freedoms.” If the right to advertise was restored, then the industry agreed it would pursue legal action against illegal users of tobacco trademarks on children’s products while securing “wide media coverage of PM’s and the Industry’s responsible position on the juvenile smoking issue.”⁷³ Following another attempt to table an anti-

smoking bill, this time by a Member of Parliament, the companies simply redrafted the bill “in a form in which it was acceptable to META, and this preferred version was (then) to be discreetly floated to key members of the National Assembly through companies’ distributors, lawyers, and natural allies.”⁷⁴

Tobacco industry promotional campaigns: studying the buying habits of 13 year olds

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the companies carried out promotions in the GCC states that in many cases would never have been tolerated in their home markets. Although the focus of the authors’ searches was not on tobacco industry promotional activity in the region, we did come across some documents that shed light on these kinds of activities. In promotions for their Kent brand in the GCC states, for example, Brown & Williamson, sponsored: “Kent Evenings” at “leading hotels and discos”; bowling leagues in Kuwait and the UAE; concert tours; sampling campaigns; and a “holiday promotion with all-expense paid trip to Bali as first prizes.”⁷⁵ Another proposed Brown & Williamson print ad for Dubai, Kuwait and Egypt, for example, was to show a couple skiing with the message that the light cigarette being promoted is “for beginners”.⁷⁶

Philip Morris meanwhile promoted its Chesterfield Brand in Lebanon in the 1980s using a mobile disco unit. Disagreeing with headquarters’ decision to cancel the promotion, E.G. Charnaud wrote that “although the video programme will run in existing discos, I doubt we will reach the majority of our target audience (17–21 yrs.) because most of these discos are quite exclusive, rather expensive, and therefore attract a limited number of people. We need to reach our target audience through university grounds, campus and amusement centres, and this is possible by using the mobile disco unit which will be something really new.”⁷⁷ The company’s 1991 marketing plan for Egypt meanwhile called for the company to “continue similar on-going promotional activities as those conducted previously (e.g. international bridge tournament in February (to retain future rights for Merit), trade fair, mobile video disco, mobile cinema, beach promotion, sponsorship of university concerts, sports events and in-store (switch selling)).”⁷⁸ In 1995, meanwhile, the company planned a series of musical promotions in the Middle East including concert tours, music programs on radio stations, sponsorship of “existing music programs on satellite T.V.” and “Rock-in Promotions”. The “Marlboro Red Objectives” were to “1) attract the younger section of all potential MLR smokers; 2) The look of promotion, be young creative and aggressive; 3) Rejuvenate the Brand promotional activities.”⁷⁹

The companies also regularly hired market research firms to query both smokers and non-smokers about their likes and dislikes, including what sports they engaged in and how they preferred to spend their leisure time. These surveys often included adolescents, sometimes as young as 13. The 1990 “Saudi Arabia: Young Generation Study”, for example, carried out for Philip Morris, interviewed 346 Saudi and expatriate males and females aged 13–25, in order to “investigate the behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of young Arabs. Buying habits, media consumption and leisure time activities were also measured.”^{80viii} This information was presumably used to inform their marketing campaigns.

^{viii} Other studies found included Saudi Arabia Market Background, in which smokers aged 16–24 were surveyed (B&W 660905975-660905984) and “The 1979 Oman Basic Survey,” which interviewed smokers aged 16–24 (PM 464401048).

United Arab Emirates

In 1990, the tobacco industry in the UAE successfully defeated proposals to ban outdoor advertising, promotions and sampling. “Working within and with the UAE Chapter of the IAA, META members with their advertising agencies and suppliers, were able to sensitise key decision makers on the potential implications of the ban on local businesses and Dubai’s efforts to become a center of tourism in the GCC. This mobilization under the IAA’s umbrella succeeded in suspending the implementation of the proposed ad ban and proved that Industry action through the local Chapter of the IAA can be very effective in defending marketing and sponsorship freedoms.”⁸¹

The ubiquitous presence of tobacco billboards on the Dubai-Abu Dhabi road had apparently “provoked” the UAE Ministry of Health to consider these bans in the first place, and the industry wondered whether removing some of them might not be a “prudent move”.⁸² Rather than remove all outside billboards, however, the industry agreed that only some would be removed, thereby testing the Ministry of Health’s “reactions to minimum concessions.” The companies were also able to convince the Dubai municipality to relax its restrictions on sampling in hotels and night clubs.⁸³ The future strategy for the UAE was fairly simple, as this 1992 Philip Morris memo explains:

- ?? Press ahead with re-drafting the UAE voluntary code for tobacco advertising...for use with government/health officials, highlighting particularly the juvenile smoking aspect;
- ?? complete the removal of road-side cigarette hoardings (billboards) on the Dubai-Abu Dhabi road and capitalise on this minimum concession as an example of voluntary self-regulation by the Industry;
- ?? work with the UAE Ministries of Health and Education to address juvenile smoking issue effectively;
- ?? meet with the...Dubai Municipality and seek the maintenance of the 1990 status quo with respect to cigarette promotions;
- ?? encourage and step up endorsements of the value of advertising by the local chapter of the IAA, the IAA Regional Director for the Middle East and Africa and the media;
- ?? step up media coverage of the futility of advertising bans in affecting tobacco consumption and publicise the position of the UK on the proposed EEC Ad Ban directive; (and)
- ?? work with the Industry and Philip Morris advertising and communications agencies to ensure that the media is alert and sensitised to the threat of a print advertising ban and is constantly mobilised to defeat such threats.⁸⁴

In order to forestall government restrictions on tobacco advertising, the companies devised and promoted voluntary codes on advertising. The goal of such codes, according to META, was “the goodwill to be gained with the UAE authorities to the benefit of the industry from being able to point to a voluntary “in-house” document formalizing—in an informal way—standards of behaviour which at an unknown future date the authorities could well enforce anyway.”⁸⁵

With pressure mounting in the 1990s on governments in the GCC to ban tobacco advertising, Philip Morris suggested a two-pronged strategy to:

1. Work separately and with META members to develop informal coalitions of those who benefit from tobacco marketing expenditure and mobilise them in the defence of tobacco marketing freedoms under the umbrella of the Regional IAA Director for the Middle East/Africa, the local IAA Chapter in the UAE and the Gulf Advertising Agencies Association, and
2. Establish and strengthen PM and Industry goodwill *vis-à-vis* the public and government officials on the juvenile smoking issue and pursue voluntary self-regulation guidelines with the Industry with a view to pre-empt regulatory restrictions.⁸⁶

Saudi Arabia

Prior to the January 1986 meeting of the Gulf Health Ministers Conference, Philip Morris arranged for a third party to meet with the Saudi Health Minister to convince him that the ad ban and other anti-tobacco proposals were not in the Kingdom’s interests. “Through the Pan-Arab Media Association,” wrote Robinson to Geoffrey Bible, “we are lobbying Tihama (the principal publishing house and ad agency in Saudi Arabia) to resist the ad ban proposal. We are using the contacts of Surrey/Morse to communicate Philip Morris messages to their Saudi Arabian friends and to special U.S. government contacts based in Saudi Arabia.”⁸⁷ A 1992 analysis of “Gulf Marketing Freedoms” by PM’s Baroudi was upbeat about the chances of staving off advertising restrictions in Saudi Arabia:

*While Saudi Arabia has since the early 1970s and by Royal Decree banned tobacco advertising in the local media, PM and the Industry have succeeded in reaching more smokers through the mainly Saudi-owned pan-Arab publications and pan-Gulf newspapers and magazines. The ownership of the leading London-based pan-Arab publications, being concentrated in the hands of highly connected people and the significance of tobacco advertising to these publications, make the threat of banning tobacco advertising in imported media, though desired by the GCC Health Ministers Council, very unlikely. Saudi policy on this matter is actually inconsistent, particularly since the leading Saudi-owned pan-Arab papers (Al Hayat and Al-Sharq Al-Awaat) are currently printing Saudi Arabia via satellite transmission, yet continue to evade the cigarette advertising ban.*⁸⁸

Oman

Oman provides an interesting case study of how the industry mobilized to defend their ability to advertise. The industry was particularly concerned about the country's "vocal anti-smoking lobby" which they believe was behind government attempts to ban cigarette advertising in the print media and prohibit point of sale advertising, in-store promotions and redemptions. Robin Allen of META wrote that there was a need for the companies to "recover 'good-will' with the Health authorities who continue to drag the industry's name through the mud on the sole evidence of biased anti-industry lobbies."⁸⁹ Although the industry had managed to obtain a delay in efforts to ban tobacco advertising in the print media, Allen wrote that the industry needed to "make efforts to recover lost ground. Silence from us incriminates us."⁹⁰

An "Oman Working Group" was formed by META to devise and carry out a strategy to defend and promote the industry's ability to advertise. This Group came up with an "Action Plan for Oman", the principal aims of which were to:

1. preserve the industry's freedom to advertise...and recover the right to bring "premiums" and give-aways;
2. seek out and improve relations with authorities and opinion-formers to achieve this goal;
3. establish the industry as a credible interlocutor; (and)
4. establish a better knowledge of the decision-making process.

The companies proposed to "target key officials" including the Omani Ministers of Health, Information, Commerce and Industry, as well as the Managing Director of *Al-Omaniya*. The companies' strategy in Oman involved improving the "environmental monitoring and early warning system through company representatives and distributors/agents" and working through those distributors to lobby the Omani government, rather than doing so directly.^{ix} The companies were to be the "message writers" while the "deliverers" would be someone "well-known in the Oman private sector", most likely a distributor.⁹¹ "Other contacts should also be scrutinised," according to the strategy, so that the industry would not be seen by government officials to be "organising its ranks to challenge state authority. This would be provocative, confrontational and counterproductive." META's goals in Oman were to "prevent the revival of proposals for a print advertising ban" and to "obtain concessions from Dr Al-Bualy and the Ministry of Commerce in the

^{ix} The companies also vowed to establish a local chapter of the IAA through Mohammed Al Kamali, Managing Director of Al Omaniya Advertising. (Oman Working Group – Minutes of meeting held at Muscat International Hotel on Wednesday January 29, 1992; PM 2028651590-1593

enforcement of the ban (on promotional giveaways) and ensure that the Omani authorities in enforcing the notice distinguish between legitimate promotional giveaways targeted to adult smokers and products targeted to children which illegally carry cigarette trade marks.’⁹²

Part of the companies strategy was to provide its allies with “simple and straight forward” briefing papers on such subjects as tobacco and youth, the “danger” of ad bans to the private sector and the contribution of the tobacco industry to the country’s economy.⁹³ But much more important, and in line with the trend in the tobacco industry in the 1990s, was the conscious use of the youth smoking issue to combat advertising restrictions. Despite their brazen attempts to lure young people into smoking, (see box page 17), the industry decided that the best defense was a good offence.

The companies agreed to coordinate their actions to “establish goodwill vis-avis Dr Al-Bualy, other Omani officials and the public on the juvenile smoking issue by:

- ?? finalizing and publishing Cautionary Notices that disassociate members from products targeted to children which illegally carry cigarette trade marks and implicitly state META companies’ position which is opposed to smoking by children;
- ?? publicizing member companies’ action against illegal users of their cigarette trade marks, particularly on children’s products; (and)
- ?? involving member companies’ legal counsel in Oman, starting legal proceedings against illegal users of cigarette trade marks on children’s products and publicising same.’⁹⁴

Of great concern to the industry was the import of fake goods from Asia such as caps and t-shirts which bore their cigarette logos. Such imports, they felt, created a hostile climate for them and made it more difficult for them to import promotional items. They mobilized their legal team to pursue these violators, focusing “particularly on those violations which damage the industry in the context of tobacco and youth.”⁹⁵ Thus would they “seek to capitalize on the goodwill generated by PM/Industry on the juvenile smoking issue to restore freedoms to import premiums and give-aways through all ports of entry.”⁹⁶

META also proposed to implement a voluntary advertising code along the lines of that adopted in the UAE. They reasoned that:

The vulnerability of the industry to advertising restrictions and the use by anti-industry spokesmen of the fraudulent claim that the industry targeted children or that tobacco advertising affected children had to be combated. A way had to be found to demonstrate that the industry was doing all it could to discourage

*under-age people from smoking. A voluntary Code for Oman along the lines of the UAE version was proposed.*⁹⁷

Not only would they extend the code to Oman, but they planned to heavily publicize it “to demonstrate to the authorities their good-will, and responsibility in selling a quality product.”⁹⁸

4.3 Fighting advertising bans in 2000

Tobacco industry opposition to advertising restrictions continue to this day. A copy of a 20 March 2000 memo from Bisharah Baroudi Philip Morris to Nicolas Hobeiche details steps that BAT and Philip Morris were taking in reaction to proposals in Lebanon for an advertising ban. Beginning with an “informal approach” by Ramzi Najjar of Bates-Rouge (BAT’s ad agency) to the Minister of Health at a dinner function, the companies have been trying to play on the Minister’s concern for youth smoking by proposing joint government-industry cooperation on youth smoking prevention. In the memo, Baroudi proposes “*constructive engagement and cooperation with the Ministry of Health* in addressing youth smoking,” including encouraging minimum age legislation and launching retail access prevention programs. At the same time, Baroudi stresses the importance of “*defending brand communication and advertising freedoms*, supported by allies (IAA, media, ministerial contacts, etc.) and backed by argumentation and the assessment of the potential economic impact of a tobacco ad ban carried out last year” (emphasis in the original). Nevertheless, the companies were cognizant of the fact that they might have to revise their current marketing practices. “We need to consider internally and jointly with the rest of the industry,” writes Baroudi, “those marketing practices that we may be willing to concede, preferably voluntarily....Alternatively, such concessions may become necessary under threat of legislative amendment, and we should be prepared with our list of reasonable concessions.” However, PM drew the line when it came to proposals to voluntarily withdraw from television advertising. “I do not support this proposal, irrespective of its implications for our marketing mix, or lack thereof. It is primarily because two thirds of the industry ad spend goes into television. A motion to withdraw from this medium is unlikely to find the requisite support and unanimity within the industry, but more importantly, it would alienate media ad industry and IAA support for tobacco advertising freedoms.” Regardless, Baroudi was optimistic that this opening with the Minister provided an opportunity for the industry to “mobilise allies and hopefully put the matter to bed in a manner satisfactory to all parties for many years to come.”⁹⁹

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Affairs Highlights,” 10 May 1988, PM 2501048585-8589;

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² “Draft Minutes META Field Managers’ Meeting Dubai Intercontinental Hotel 921019”; 19 October 1992, PM 2028651225-1231,

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³ See <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/decdo/gcc.htm>

⁴ “Amended Draft Minutes 13th Meta Meeting Goring Hotel London – 920306,” 2 July 1992, PM 2028651328-1342;

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