

# Public Diplomacy Following 9/11: The Saudi Peace Initiative and “Allies” Media Campaign

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## Abstract

From 2001 to 2004, Saudi Arabia engaged in a variety of Public Diplomacy and Public Relations efforts to improve their image in the United States. This paper examines two such efforts, as well as their effectiveness.

## Keywords

Saudi Arabia, public diplomacy, United States, 9/11

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## Introduction

Thirty-Six hours after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reported that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers, and the mastermind behind the attack (Osama bin Laden), were of Saudi Arabian origin. Fearing backlash that could threaten its relationship with, and economic interests in, the United States, the Saudi Arabian government immediately hired Burson-Marsteller, a public relations (PR) agency. The firm moved swiftly, placing two print advertisements, which expressed condolences from the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, in twenty major American newspapers. The Embassy's choice of this particular firm reveals how severe it perceived the situation to be. Burson-Marsteller has a reputation of representing companies and individuals in crisis:

“When Blackwater killed those seventeen Iraqi civilians in Baghdad, they called Burson-Marsteller. When there was a nuclear meltdown at Three-Mile Island, Babcock and Wilcox, who built that plant, called Burson-Marsteller. The Bhopal chemical disaster that killed thousands of people in India, Union Carbide called Burson-Marsteller. Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu—Burson-Marsteller. The government of Saudi Arabia, three days after 9/11 -- Burson-Marsteller.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the print ads, Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States, went on a media tour giving interviews to major television networks.<sup>2</sup> With the investigation ongoing, he was careful with his word choice. While he confirmed that Osama bin Laden is “Saudi,” he made sure to clarify that his citizenship had been revoked for some time.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Rachel Maddow Show,” *MSNBC*, March 5, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> “The great escape,” *Salon*, December 11, 2009, [http://dir.salon.com/story/books/feature/2004/03/11/unger\\_1](http://dir.salon.com/story/books/feature/2004/03/11/unger_1).

He also avoided speaking about the origins of the hijackers; instead opting for,

“We in the kingdom, the government and the people of Saudi Arabia, refuse to have any person affiliated with terrorism to be connected to our country ... We in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are fully prepared to cooperate with you in every matter conducive to revealing the identity of the perpetrators of this criminal act.”<sup>3</sup>

This brief campaign did little, if anything, to improve the Saudi image in the United States, and extensive press coverage of the Kingdom's link to Al Qaeda and various aspects of the 9/11 plot further influenced public opinion (see Gallup poll, below). Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz expressed his concern surrounding the media's treatment of the Kingdom, in an October 30, 2001 meeting with academics and journalists, and, “expounded upon the important responsibility that intellectual, cultural, and media experts must bear in responding to and countering this media war against Saudi Arabia.”<sup>4</sup> In writing about this meeting, Saudi journalists for the London-based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* newspaper, Othman Al-Rawwaf, noted:

“We need to know what exactly they are claiming about the Kingdom in their spurious media campaign. And why does this campaign comprise absurd slanders and incorrect accusations? And finally, how is it possible to face this campaign and counter it?”<sup>5</sup>

Al-Rawwaf asserted this “campaign” had three primary messages used to indirectly tie Saudi Arabia to extremism:

- Lack of cooperation with the U.S. government (i.e. Saudi Arabia withheld information that could have helped the United States' efforts to combat terrorism),
- Most Muslim terrorists are from the Wahhabi sect,
- Some of the 9/11 “actors” were Saudi.<sup>6</sup>

He claimed this American and European media campaign targeted his country because Saudi Arabia was in a unique position to influence American policy towards Palestine, but neglected to mention that the influence actually stretched much further into oil supplies/prices and investments in American companies of almost \$700 billion.<sup>7</sup> Al-Rawwaf, however, did suggest that coming up with their own media campaign was the best way to counter negative United States/European coverage.

In line with this advice, the Saudi Arabia Embassy hired Qorvis Communications, a Washington, D.C.-based media relations firm, to conduct polling, lobbying, and communications for \$200,000 in monthly retainer fees.<sup>8</sup> The overarching goal was, “to rebuild and emphasize the importance of the longstanding and historic relationship between the Saudi and American people and governments.”<sup>9</sup> Given the scope and budget for this client, Qorvis subcontracted some responsibilities to their affiliates, including Patton Boggs (law-lobbying) and Sandler-Innocenzi (media buying). The SAE also chose to hire additional PR and lobbying firms to handle their parallel campaign promoting Saudi business interests. All in all, Qorvis received \$14.6 million over the course of six months.<sup>10</sup>

While the media campaign didn't commence until the middle of April 2002, the government started image rehabilitation efforts in February, right after Saudi Arabia officially acknowledged, on February 6, 2002, that fifteen of the 9/11 hijackers were, in fact, their citizens.<sup>11</sup> The timing was also in line with the release of initial Gallup Poll results showing that sixty-four percent of Americans held “unfavorable” views of Saudi Arabia (up from forty-six percent in February 2001) [Figure 1].

This first effort was to draft and publicize a traditional diplomacy plan that would create peace between the Arab-world and Israel. The Saudi Peace Initiative (later re-named “Arab Peace Initiative”) proposed normalized relations between the Arab world and Israel in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

<sup>3</sup>“Crown Prince Abdullah condoles American people,” The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, accessed November 15, 2009, <http://208.246.28.155/2001News/News/NewsDetail.asp?cIndex=3165>.

<sup>4</sup>Uthman, Al-Rawwaf, “Linking Saudi Arabia with Terrorism: The Anti-Saudi Media Campaign,” *World Press Review*, last modified October 30, 2001, accessed May 18, 2011, <http://www.worldpress.org/europe/0102alsharq.htm>.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>“Strengthening the U.S.-Saudi Relationship (A CFR Paper),” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed November 16, 2009, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/8667/strengthening\\_the\\_ussaudi\\_relationship\\_a\\_cfr\\_paper.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/8667/strengthening_the_ussaudi_relationship_a_cfr_paper.html).

<sup>8</sup>“CounterPunch: Edited by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair,” *CounterPunch*, accessed November 15, 2009, <http://www.counterpunch.org/ramp-ton07312003.html>.

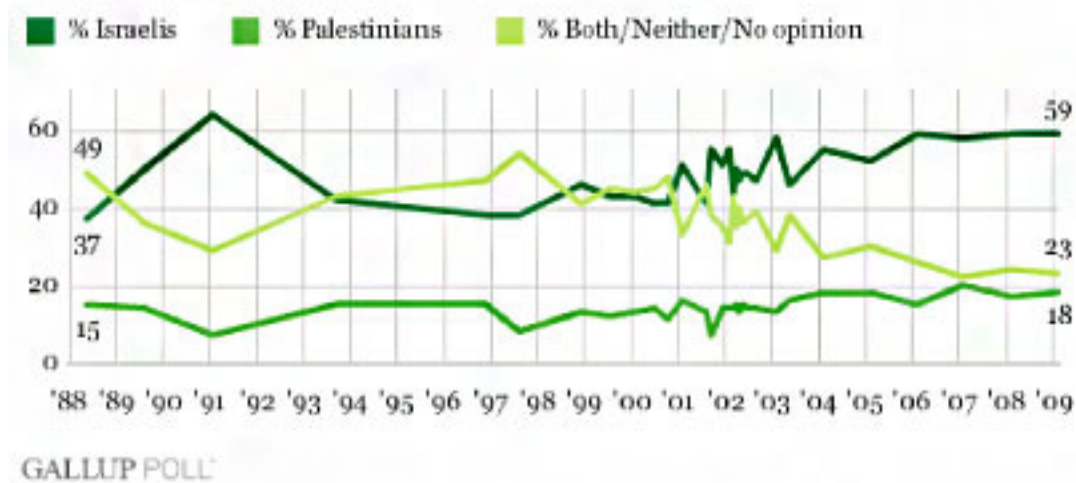
<sup>9</sup>“Washington DC based National Public Relations Advertising Interactive Agency - Qorvis Communications,” Qorvis Communications, accessed December 1, 2009, [http://www.qorvis.com/driving\\_results/saudi\\_arabia.html](http://www.qorvis.com/driving_results/saudi_arabia.html).

<sup>10</sup>“WorldNetDaily: Saudi PR machine greased by millions,” *WorldNetDaily*, accessed December 2, 2009, [http://70.85.195.205/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=30240](http://70.85.195.205/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=30240).

<sup>11</sup>“USATODAY.com - Official: 15 of 19 Sept. 11 hijackers were Saudi,” *USA Today*, accessed December 1, 2009, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2002/02/06/saudi.htm>.

Figure 1

*In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?*



<http://www.gallup.com/poll/116308/americans-support-israel-unchanged-gaza-conflict.aspx>

The exact origins of the initiative are fuzzy, but, officially, it's recognized that Thomas Friedman published an opinion piece (op-ed) in on February 6, 2002 (the same day hijacker acknowledgement) in which he suggested a similar "land for peace" scenario. On February 17, 2002, Friedman published a second op-ed where he explains that he was summoned to Saudi Arabia to meet with Crown Prince Abdullah. He used the opportunity to explain his thoughts to the Prince: "After I laid out this idea, the crown prince looked at me with mock astonishment and said, 'Have you broken into my desk?'"<sup>12</sup> The prince then went on to tell Friedman that he had already composed a speech detailing an identical initiative, and that he planned to present it at the Arab League summit, held in Beirut at the end of March.

Not to discredit Friedman and his Middle East expertise, but the timing of his proposal and subsequent meeting with the prince is almost too convenient to be coincidental. It's possible that Qorvis orchestrated, at least in part, Friedman's visit, and, if true, it would be very sophisticated public diplomacy (PD) – whether or not the journalist was aware of it. There are a couple other clues in the February 17th op-ed that suggest this may be the case. The first is when Friedman reveals why he went to the country: "I am currently in Saudi Arabia on a visit -- part of the Saudi opening to try to explain themselves better to the world in light of the fact that fifteen Saudis were involved in the [9/11] attacks."<sup>13</sup> This wording certainly has the ring of PD, and it suggests he is there as part of a deliberate communication strategy. The second clue is a statement offered by the prince:

"We have been close friends for so long, and we never expected Americans to doubt us," he said. "We saw this attack by bin Laden and his men as an attack on us, too, and an attempt to damage the U.S.-Saudi relationship," and "[w]e were deeply saddened by it and we never expected it to lead to tensions between us. But we've now learned that we respond to events differently. ... It is never too late to express our regrets."<sup>14</sup>

The tone was substantially different from that of previous, defensive statements coming from Saudi Arabian officials. The prince crafted a kinder and gentler image that dovetailed well with the Peace Initiative by reinforcing the idea that the Kingdom is making positive changes.

Major newspapers around the world reported on the Saudi Peace Initiative, temporarily re-framing the media's focus. One website noted, "It is rare in international diplomacy that so much credit has been given to a single government for a peace initiative that has not yet been made."<sup>15</sup> Had the government chosen to issue a press release about the plan, it would not have resulted in the same buzz. Publicizing it in the form of an op-ed made the Initiative seem spontaneous and natural, which is more exciting than a formal announcement.

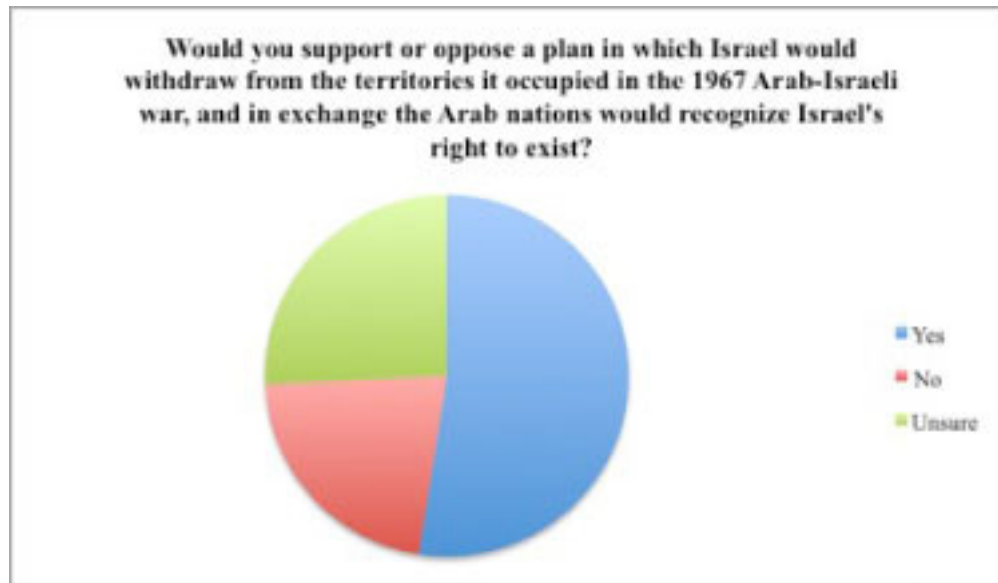
<sup>12</sup> "An Intriguing Signal From the Saudi Crown Prince," *The New York Times*, last modified February 6, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/17/opinion/an-intriguing-signal-from-the-saudi-crown-prince.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, "An Intriguing Signal From the Saudi Crown Prince - New York Times," *The New York Times*, last modified February 17, 2002, accessed June 2, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/17/opinion/an-intriguing-signal-from-the-saudi-crown-prince.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "Saudi Arabia's Op-Ed Diplomacy: A Public Relations Ploy or a Serious Initiative?" Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA), last modified March 2002, accessed May 18, 2011, <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=442&PID=2404&IID=819>.

Additionally, allowing a third party to float an idea to the media keeps the message creator clear of criticism if it isn't received well. Most importantly, the Initiative created space for another message to get through in the media. For the first time in five months, reports and follow-up op-eds showcased a flexible, "peacemaking" Saudi Arabia that was open to communication, rather than the oppressive "sponsor of terrorism" image that had been so prevalent. In April 2002, ABC News polled Americans regarding their support for initiative:



<http://www.gallup.com/poll/116308/americans-support-israel-unchanged-gaza-conflict.aspx>

If the government had any hopes of making an impact with their formal media campaign, they needed to make this space. The campaign started slowly with one, sixty-second radio spot, which first aired on April 18, 2002 in a few markets.

"Read the editorials if you want opinions. Listen to America's leaders if you want the facts. President Bush has called Saudi Arabia, 'nothing but cooperative,' in the war on terrorism. Secretary of State Colin Powell says the Saudis have 'been responsive on all of the things that we have asked them to do.' Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated he 'was very pleased and appreciative of the agreement on the part of the Saudis to provide assistance.' There's no question that the leadership of the United States recognizes the importance of Saudi Arabia as a close ally, and friend. This week's meeting between President George Bush and Crown Prince Abdullah is further testimony to this fact, as our two nations work hand in hand to solve some of the world's toughest problems: fighting terrorism, promoting peace.

Paid for by the people of Saudi Arabia. Allies Against Terrorism."<sup>16</sup>

Four thirty-second television commercials were ready to air in May 2002, the same time Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah was visiting the United States. They all shared a common theme with the earlier radio spot: the United States and Saudi Arabia are allies, regardless of what the media says [see Appendix A for transcripts of the commercials]. Getting the message out, however, proved to be more difficult than expected. Major networks were reluctant to air the commercials even though they were being offered \$300,000 to \$400,000. After careful review, A&E, AMC, Bravo, History Channel, Lifetime, USA Network, and The Weather Channel decided not to accept them for various reasons.<sup>17</sup>

One representative said that Saudi Arabia was not in line with the channel's "brand," while another claimed the ads were tasteful, but they had a problem with the final message ([Allies] Against Terrorism). Qorvis was able to get around this obstacle, by hiring Creative Cable Television to purchase airtime on local stations in twenty major cities.<sup>18</sup> The commercials were getting noticed, but a joke made by Jay Leno indicates the commercials may not have been making the desired impact:

<sup>16</sup> "Audio Recording of Saudi Arabia Radio Spot," Sastian, accessed December 2, 2009, <http://sastian.com/taxonomy/term/9?from=28>.

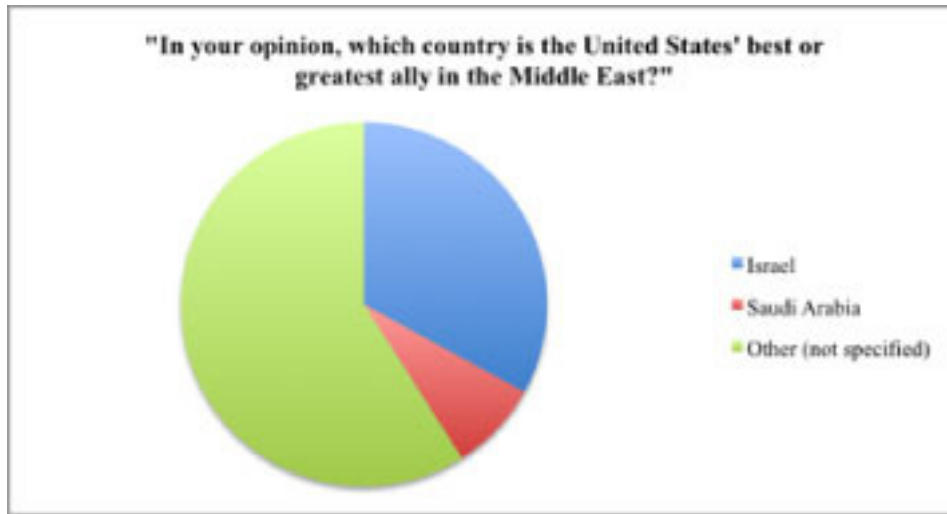
<sup>17</sup> "Saudi Arabia Launches P.R. Campaign in U.S.," *Fox News*, accessed December 1, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,51584,00.html>.

<sup>18</sup> "Electronic Media Online," Internet Archive, accessed November 20, 2009, <http://web.archive.org/web/20020601103504/http://emonline.com/topstories/042902saudi.html>.

“I never heard of a country doing this before. Maybe they have, and I didn’t notice it, but Saudi Arabia is now running a TV campaign. They’re trying to improve their image. They have a catchy slogan. This is the actual slogan. ‘The people of Saudi Arabia: Allies against terrorism.’ [...] In fact, this turned out to be such a good idea, a lot of other countries now running ads to boost their image. For example, like Canada. This is their new slogan, ‘Like North Dakota, only without all the glitz.’ [...] This is one of my favorites, Vatican City, this is their slogan - ‘hey, we didn’t see nothing.’”<sup>19</sup>

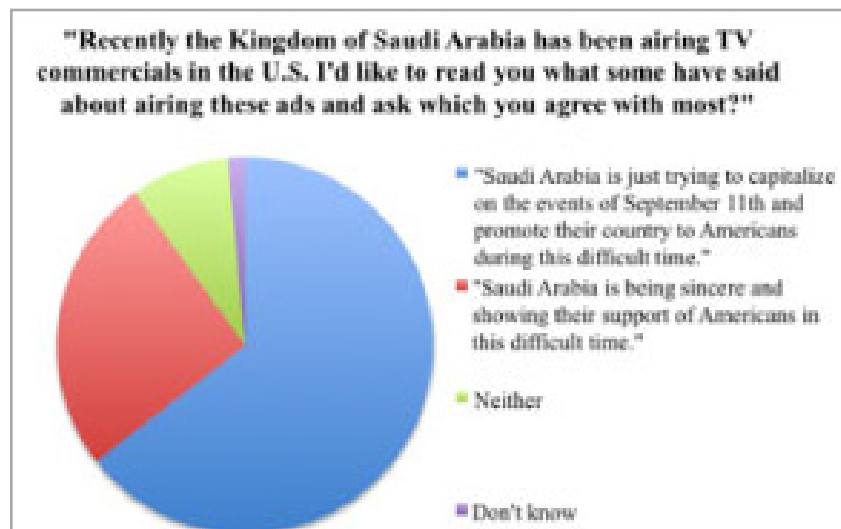
To round out the campaign, Qorvis launched a sparse website that offered one page of facts about Saudi Arabia and an opportunity to sign up for a mailing list to receive news updates about the region. The information focused on the Kingdom’s role in capturing terror suspects, its cooperation with the U.S. Treasury in fighting money laundering, the fact that Osama bin Laden’s Saudi citizenship was revoked and the introduction of the Peace Initiative.<sup>20</sup>

After running for one month, Fabrizio, McLaughlin & Associates conducted a poll to measure the success of the campaign, and they found the campaign was not successful in convincing Americans that Saudi Arabia is a U.S. ally.<sup>21</sup> A contributor to the website Keshar Talk published these poll results (which were included in an email from the firm):



<http://www.hfienberg.com/keshar/2002/05/saudi-ad-campaign-dismal-failure.html>

More concerning is that a majority of respondents felt like Saudi Arabia was exploiting 9/11 to take advantage of vulnerable Americans.



<http://www.hfienberg.com/keshar/2002/05/saudi-ad-campaign-dismal-failure.html>

<sup>19</sup> Howard Fienberg, "05/05/2002 - 05/11/2002," Keshar Talk, last modified November 19, 2009, accessed June 2, 2011, [http://www.hfienberg.com/keshar/2002\\_05\\_05\\_keshar\\_archive.html](http://www.hfienberg.com/keshar/2002_05_05_keshar_archive.html).

<sup>20</sup> "About Saudi Arabia," Internet Archive: Wayback Machine, accessed December 2, 2009, <http://web.archive.org/web/20041210203949/aboutsaudiarabia.net/home/join.tcl>.

<sup>21</sup> Howard Fienberg, "05/05/2002 - 05/11/2002," Keshar Talk, last modified November 19, 2009, accessed June 2, 2011, [http://www.hfienberg.com/keshar/2002\\_05\\_05\\_keshar\\_archive.html](http://www.hfienberg.com/keshar/2002_05_05_keshar_archive.html).



Saudi Arabia may always have trouble explaining themselves to the American public because it doesn't embrace many of the values Americans hold dear: freedom of speech, democracy and women's rights, for example. This will always be an alienating factor in the quest for greater support. The problem with the Kingdom's campaign was that the message it tried to convey was shallow in comparison to competing messages, and avoided commenting on the values that seem to class with American status quo. Rather than attempting to address issues of criticism, Qorvis and the Saudi government chose to highlight the historic United States-Saudi Arabia friendship. They wanted Americans to remember the longstanding relationship, but with news outlets revealing possible Saudi involvement in the attack, it was impossible to expect Americans to rely on past goodwill to shape their current views. If the government wanted to break through the saturation of anti-Saudi reports, they needed a stronger message grounded in truth. With the media chaos following 9/11, though, it's unclear as to whether Americans would have believed it.

Saudi Arabia continued for the next two years with a series of ill-advised PD and PR strategies. One even erupted in scandal when the FBI stormed Qorvis' offices [Appendix C], the details of which would require a separate research paper. Expensive campaigns alone will not change perceptions, but that did not stop Saudi Arabia from trying to solve its troubles with cash, regardless of the glut of poll data showing the efforts were unsuccessful [Appendix B].

## Appendix A

### Transcripts of television commercials

#### “Bush Quote”

[Piano music]

*On-screen text:* “The Saudi Arabians not cooperative”

*Voice:* “Read the editorials, tune into Sunday morning news shows or listen to talk radio if you want opinions.”

The rest of the quote fills in around existing text to show full quote: “As far as the Saudi Arabians go...they've been nothing but cooperative.”

*Voice:* “Listen to America's leaders if you want the facts.”

*On-screen text appears below the quote to show that George W. Bush said it on 9/24/01*

*On-screen text:* “The people of Saudi Arabia. Allies against terrorism. Paid for by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia”

#### “Powell Quote”

[Different piano music]

*On-screen text:* “Saudi Arabia has been prominent among terrorist organizations.”

*Voice:* “Prejudice, fear and conflicting views can distort what you see and hear.”

Rest of the quote fills in to show: “Saudi Arabia has been prominent among the countries acting against the accounts of terrorist organizations.”

*Voice:* “Please keep your eyes, ears and especially your mind open.”

*As that voice talks, it shows the Colin Powell said the quote on 11/7/01*

*More text:* “The people of Saudi Arabia. Allies against terrorism. Paid for by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia”

#### “Allies”

*Voice over photo montage of prominent Saudis joined by American presidents:* “We've been allies for more than 60 years.

Working together to solve the world's toughest problems. Working together for world prosperity. Working together to bring peace to the Middle East. Working together to create a better future for us all”

*Text:* “The people of Saudi Arabia. Allies for peace. Paid for by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia”

#### “Flags”

*Video of people hoisting an American flag on a flagpole.*

*Voice:* “In the war of terrorism, we all have a part to play. One country has been an ally for over 60 years.”

*Video now shows hands putting a Saudi flag on a pole.*

*Voice:* “A global leader donating more foreign aid per capita than any foreign nation. A partner in investigating more than 150 suspected terrorist accounts. And a force for stabilizing oil prices during this time of war.”

*More text:* “The people of Saudi Arabia. Allies against terrorism. Paid for by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> “Commercials,” The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, accessed December 8, 2009, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/multimedia/commercials.aspx>.

## Appendix B

### Data Polls

“Do you consider Saudi Arabia to be an ally of the United States, friendly but not an ally, unfriendly, or an enemy of the United States?”

(2000 data) CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll. Sept. 19-21, 2003. N=1,003 adults nationwide. MoE  $\pm$  3.

(2002 data) ABC News/Washington Post Poll. Jan. 24-27, 2002. N=1,507 adults nationwide. MoE  $\pm$  2.5. Field work by TNS Intersearch.

(All other data) CBS News Poll. Aug. 11-12, 2003. N=798 adults nationwide. MoE  $\pm$  4.

“Do you think Saudi Arabia is a country the United States can trust as an ally, or a country that we can't trust as an ally?”

Time/CNN Poll conducted by Harris Interactive. Sept. 3-4, 2003. N=1,003 adults nationwide. MoE  $\pm$  3.

## Appendix C

### Timeline of Saudi Arabia's Public Diplomacy and PR Events

- **9/11/2001:** Terrorist Attack
- **9/13/2001:** Burson-Marsteller hired.
- **10/30/2001:** Prince Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz interview.
- **11/2001:** Qorvis Communications hired.
- **1/2002:** Print ads: Picture of a dove with text, “Two nations, one goal,”<sup>23</sup> and the second featured a picture of an eclipse with text, “Terrorism will never dim the light of humanity.”<sup>24</sup>
- **2/2002:** First Thomas Friedman op-ed.
- **2/6/02:** Government acknowledges fifteen hijackers were Saudi & 1st Thomas Friedman op-ed is published.
- **2/17/2002:** Second Thomas Friedman op-ed.
- **2/20/02:** Thomas Friedman on NewsHour.
- **2/21/02:** Henry Siegman op-ed, among others related to the Peace Initiative.
- **3/27-28/2002:** Arab summit in Beirut.
- **4/2002:** Radio spots air in thirty United States cities.
  - “Occupation”: explained the Saudi “fair plan to end the senseless violence in the Mideast.” The spot was very critical of the Israeli army: the plan requires Israel’s “withdrawal from the Palestinian land it has unjustly occupied for years.... There will be no more midnight raids and random searches, no more violence.”
  - “Peace Plan”: “To stop the cycle of violence, we must first end the military occupation of Palestinian towns and neighborhoods.”
  - Both ads end with the tagline, “Start the peace — end the occupation. Paid for by the Alliance of Peace and Justice.” Boston Phoenix reporter Sett Gitell calls Sandler-Innocenzi, who placed the ads, and asks for the contact info for the Alliance of Peace and Justice. It turns out to be the same address as Qorvis Communications. When contacted, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia denies involvement with the spots.
- **4/18/2002:** Official radio spot is first aired.
- **5/2002:** TV commercials launch.
- **12/2/2002:** Newsweek reports that money from Saudi royal family funded hijackers.
- **12/2002:** Accuracy in Media reports that Saudi Arabia was paying Patton Boggs \$100,000 a month for lobbying services.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Homepage, accessed December 7, 2009, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/files/Multimedia/Commercials/Dove.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Homepage, accessed December 7, 2009, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/files/PDF/Eclipses.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Isikoff, Michael, and Evan Thomas, “The Saudi Money Trail,” *Newsweek*, last modified December 2, 2002, <http://www.newsweek.com/2002/12/01/the-saudi-money-trail.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Irvine, Reed, and Cliff Kincaid, “Saudis Dodge Dan Burton,” Accuracy in Media (via Internet Archive), last modified December 31, 2002, [http://web.archive.org/web/20060109222734/http://www.aim.org/media\\_monitor/A554\\_0\\_2\\_0\\_C/](http://web.archive.org/web/20060109222734/http://www.aim.org/media_monitor/A554_0_2_0_C/).

- **12/4/2002:** Top executives at Patton Boggs, Qorvis Communications and the Gallagher Group refuse to appear at a congressional-committee hearing looking into the Saudi government's involvement with the kidnapping of two American children who had been held in Saudi Arabia since 1986. They had previously refused to surrender files related to the lobbying work they did to prevent the American mother from rescuing the children.<sup>27</sup>
- **12/6/2002:** New York Times reports that three partners quit Qorvis because they are "uncomfortable" doing work for Saudi government.<sup>28</sup> Most likely it is due to April 2002 radio spots connected to the "Alliance of Peace and Justice."
- **1/20/2003:** Time Magazine runs article about secret funding of 4/2002 radio ads.<sup>29</sup>
- **2/2003:** sixty-one percent of Americans polled had an unfavorable view of Saudi Arabia.<sup>30</sup>
- **6/2003:** New TV commercials, but these feature individual Saudis: men and children only.
- **10/2003:** Qorvis arranges a series of TV interviews for Prince Bandar bin Sultan (Ambassador to the UNITED STATES).
- **Late 2003:** Sandler-Innocenzi runs three-week radio campaign in sixteen cities. Total cost is \$1 million.<sup>31</sup> Businesswomen exchange program started.
- **6/2004:** "Fahrenheit 9/11" is released, and is highly critical of the Saudi government.
- **8/2004:** new radio campaign to highlight the 9-11 Commission's findings that Saudi government was not behind 9/11.<sup>32</sup> Two-hundred journalists invited to visit Saudi Arabia.<sup>33</sup>
- **8/10/2004:** Daniel Pipes, New York Sun, exposes government funding behind pro-Saudi Arabia speakers tour, offered for free to college campuses by Qorvis.<sup>34</sup> Results in five more negative news pieces regarding the funding.
- **8/13/2004:** Saudi Arabian Embassy denies funding speaker tour in press release. Subsequent investigations reveal this claim to be false.
- **12/7/2004:** Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) raids Qorvis offices - "compliance inquiry" under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.<sup>35</sup> FARA requires that any public message that is sponsored by a foreign government must be clearly labeled as such.
- **12/16/2004:** Newsweek reports that FBI was investigating Qorvis because there was suspicion that Qorvis "made false statements to the Justice Department and violated the Foreign Agents Registration Act—a 1938 law requiring full disclosure of foreign-sponsored propaganda in the United States." This is pertaining to the radio ad aired in April 2002 that was supposedly sponsored by the *Alliance for Peace and Justice*. The actual *Alliance for Peace and Justice* claimed that Qorvis used the organization's name without its knowledge or consent.<sup>36</sup>

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- <sup>27</sup> Joel Mowbray, "Hiding Out: Saudi Spin Doctors Dodge U.S. Marshals," *National Review*, last modified December 5, 2002, <http://www.nationalreview.com/mowbray/mowbray120502.asp>.
- <sup>28</sup> Philip Shenon, "Threats and Responses: Publicists; 3 Partners Quit Firm Handling Saudis' P.R." *The New York Times*, last modified December 6, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/06/world/threats-and-responses-publicists-3-partners-quit-firm-handling-saudis-pr.html>.
- <sup>29</sup> Weisskopf, Michael, and Timothy J. Burger, "The Saudis' Secret Ads," *Time Magazine*, last modified January 20, 2003, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1004071,00.html>.
- <sup>30</sup> Jihane Ayed, "Saudi Arabia: Friends of America," American University, last modified April 30, 2004, [http://nw08.american.edu/~zaharna/jihanesite/case\\_study.html](http://nw08.american.edu/~zaharna/jihanesite/case_study.html).
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- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
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