

## From Souks to Boardrooms: Strategies for Meeting The FCPA Challenges of Doing Business in the Middle East

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In her October 2015 *BNA* article, Lamia Matta discusses challenges companies face when looking to do business in the Middle East as well as strategies for addressing those challenges. To many, Matta explains, entry into the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) markets seems like a daunting proposition due to concerns about safety and a perception that business in the region is deeply opaque and corrupt. The perception is changing, she explains, and there is a business boom in the region that extends beyond just oil and gas. However, "companies now entering markets they once thought inaccessible must take protective measures to ensure that the business they are doing complies with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and the anti-corruption laws of the host countries. Companies face compliance challenges everywhere they go, and the Middle East is no exception," Matta explains.

Matta addresses some of the more common risk areas that have ensnared companies in the MENA region, including the use of third-party agents and consultants that sometimes channel improper payments to public officials; the payment of bribes to public officials to secure large government projects; the provision of lavish gifts, travel and entertainment to key decision-makers; and finally, industry-wide sweeps that catch companies unaware. "Between the safeguards that companies can put into place ... and the efforts being taken locally in the MENA region, doing business in the Middle East may pose challenges but it is nonetheless possible and profitable," Matta concludes.

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