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TOBACCO MARKETING UPDATE

What's New in Tobacco Marketing?

Past and Present: How Industry Continues to Target the Military

For decades, the tobacco industry has deliberately targeted the U.S. military as a key market, employing specific marketing strategies based on internal beliefs and studies. Starting in the 1970s, [tobacco companies viewed military personnel as likely to start or increase smoking](#). Until 1975, [cigarettes were part of military rations](#), and discounted sales continued long after. [Between 1981 and 2000, tobacco companies sponsored more than 1,450 events for military personnel](#).

Though the landscape of commercial tobacco marketing has changed, the industry's focus on military personnel remains as strong as ever—just more digital, more personalized, and often hidden behind patriotic messaging. Today, tobacco companies leverage online promotions to reach service members and veterans, using social media, email campaigns, and brand websites to offer exclusive deals. Many of these promotions are cloaked in support for the troops, featuring messages of gratitude while subtly hooking users with discounts, giveaways, and loyalty programs.



Above: Email received from Mi-pod on May 21, 2025 celebrating Memorial Day and sharing a coupon code for military personnel.



Above: Email received from Copenhagen on June 24, 2025 sharing their specialty lids in celebration of the Fourth of July.

Special edition packaging, such as custom-designed tins for smokeless tobacco—often features camouflage prints, military insignias, or patriotic themes. These limited-run products are marketed as collectible or exclusive to appeal to service members' sense of identity and pride.

Commercial tobacco use in the military remains significantly [higher than in the general population—26% more, with deployment increasing the likelihood of starting smoking by 60%](#). These modern marketing tactics may appear more subtle than those of the past, but the goal remains unchanged: recruit and retain lifelong consumers, even at the cost of service members' health.



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Questions or want to
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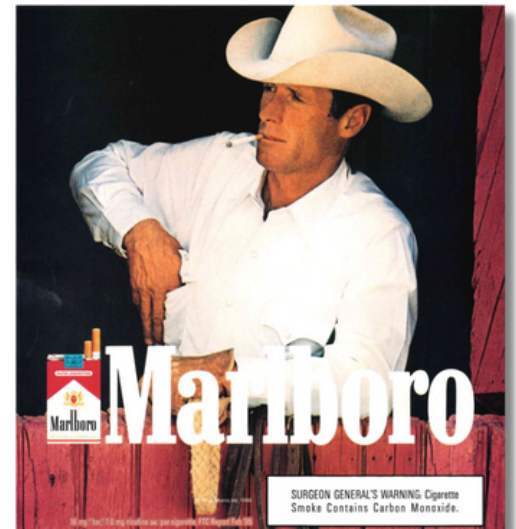
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Celebrating Cowboy Christmas with Marlboro

Marlboro is once again [leaning into its decades-old Western branding](#) with the return of “Cowboy Christmas”, also known as Day of the Cowboy, its annual promotional event. By reviving the rugged frontier imagery that helped glamorize smoking for generations, Marlboro continues to romanticize a deadly product.

Left: 1988 direct mail promotion from Marlboro.
Right: 1987 direct mail promotion from Marlboro.



This year's grand prize is a trip to Las Vegas, but the real cost is far greater: the normalization of commercial tobacco use through flashy giveaways and nostalgic marketing. Throughout July, the company is offering a staggering \$2.5 million in prizes, using the allure of cowboy culture to distract from the [health risks long associated with its products](#).

Left: Email received from Marlboro on June 30, 2025 sharing information about Marlboro Cowboy Christmas.

ANSR's Statement on Commercial Tobacco

ANSR uses the term “commercial tobacco” to refer to products sold and manufactured by the tobacco industry for profit. Commercial tobacco is different from sacred, medicinal, and traditional uses of tobacco by Indigenous groups.

Learn more:

<https://keepitsacred.itcmi.org/tobacco-and-tradition/traditional-v-commercial/>

Congratulations Minneapolis!

The Minneapolis City Council unanimously voted in July to set a minimum price of \$25 for all e-cigarette products. In 2024, the Council voted to prohibit price promotions and the redemption of coupons, and creating a minimum price for cigarette packs and smokeless tobacco products. Minneapolis became the second locality in Minnesota to set a minimum price for e-cigarettes. Congratulations to Minneapolis for putting a stop to this predatory marketing and putting community health over industry profits!

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