A CONTAINER WITH INNER STIFFENER FOR SMOKING ARTICLES, INNER STIFFENER, METHOD

The present invention relates to a container for smoking articles, such as cigarettes. In particular, the present invention relates to a container that includes an inner liner sealed around the smoking articles with an inner stiffener between the inner liner and the smoking articles.

Smoking articles such as cigarettes and cigars are commonly packaged in rigid hinge-lid containers having a box and a lid connected to the box portion about a hinge line extending across the rear wall of the container. Such hinge-lid containers are typically constructed from one-piece laminar cardboard blanks. In use, the lid portion is pivoted about the hinge line to open the container and so gain access to smoking articles housed in the box portion.

A group of smoking articles housed in the box portion is typically wrapped in an inner liner of metallized paper, metal foil or other flexible sheet material, to form an inner bundle.

To improve the barrier properties of the inner package, the inner liner wrapped around the smoking articles may be heat sealed and sometimes has a cigarette access opening closed by a reusable cover flap. A cardboard stiffener, for example in the form of a U-shaped frame, may be placed inside the inner bundle about the articles to maintain the shape of the inner package and to protect the smoking articles when folding and heat sealing the inner liner around the articles. It is important for the shape of the inner bundle to be maintained so that the contents may be withdrawn through the access opening. However, it can be difficult to withdraw a first article from the package due to the tight packing of the bundle.

International patent application WO 2011/012235 A1 describes a container for smoking articles which includes a lifting element with an engaging portion engageable with an outside upper end portion of the smoking article. The lifting element extends from the opening of the box and has a hook for engaging a ring-like shoulder formed by an edge of tipping paper wrapped around the smoking article. The lifting agent may be attached to a pull foil of the inner liner.

International patent application WO 2009/004421 A2 discloses a similar type of package for smoking articles which includes an inner stiffener that is able to exert an elastic thrust on the group of smoking articles by means of concertina side walls so as to keep the group of articles in a central position facing the access opening.

Embodiments of the present invention seek to provide an improved container for smoking articles that aids removal of a smoking article from the container, in particular aiding removal of a first or final smoking article from a bundle of articles.

Accordingly, one aspect of the invention provides a container for smoking articles comprising: a plurality of smoking articles; an outer housing comprising a box and a lid hingedly attached to the box, wherein the box comprises a front wall, a rear wall and opposing side walls; an inner liner disposed