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Reynolds Launches Menthol Cigarettes That Smell Better

New Paper Technology Meant
To Mask and Alter Odor;
Taste Said to Be Smoother

By FARA WARNER

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., acknowl-
edging the growing social stigma associ-
ated with smoking, has produced a new
cigarette that the company says reduces
the stale smell of smoke.

The cigarette, to be introduced as
an extension of the company's slow-sell-
ing Salem brand, will be called Salem
Preferred. Like Salem, Salem Preferred
will be a menthol cigarette. But the com-
pany says Salem Preferred will have a
"smoother" flavor and will be produced
"with a proprietary paper technology that
masks and changes the odor" of cigarette
smoke.

R.J. Reynolds, a unit of RJR Nabisco
Holding Corp., said Salem Preferred will
be available later this month in stores on
military bases. The company said it will
eventually make the cigarettes available to
the public, but declined to say when.

Reynolds decided to introduce the new
cigarette on military installations because
the military is a direct account for Rey-
nolds, thus simplifying distribution for a
new product.

Some observers say that Reynolds
could be criticized for targeting the mili-
tary as an attempt to reach minority
smokers in the service. It is known that
black and Puerto Rican smokers prefer
menthol cigarettes. Reynolds in 1990 had
plans to launch Uptown as a cigarette
designed to appeal to urban blacks. Charyn
Sutton, a founder of the Uptown Coalition in
Bala Cynwed, Pa., (formed to protest the
introduction of Uptown cigarettes) said:
"The military was a useful tool in World
War II to introduce cigarettes. And it would
seem likely that it is still a place to try to
target smokers." But she stopped short of
calling Reynolds's latest introduction one
aimed for minorities because, she said, the
company is "not coming into a community
where just minorities live."

Salem Preferred could be controversial
for other reasons. Altering the composition
of a cigarette is a potentially risky move
now, as regulators and congressmen are
investigating the ingredients in cigarettes.
Currently, cigarette companies have to
disclose only the ingredient list for the
tobacco and any additives to it, not the
paper's composition, said Timothy Hens-
ley, a spokesman for the Centers for
Disease Control's Office on Smoking and
Health in Atlanta. He said it is possible
that a cigarette like Salem Preferred could
draw attention to what has been an unreg-
ulated part of the product.

Moreover, it's a gamble to point out
negative features associated with smok-
ing. "Saying that you are making your

product less bad," says marketing consult-
ant Gary Stibel, founder of New England
Consulting Group, "can be a double-edged
sword."

Even so, Reynolds believes Salem Pre-
ferred is just what many smokers are
seeking. "We asked smokers: 'Other than
price, what would you change about your
cigarette?'" said Dirk Herrman, Salem's
senior marketing manager. "They said

they wished they could get rid of the
lingering stale smell."

With Salem Preferred, Reynolds joins
Philip Morris Cos. in publicly recognizing
the pariah-like status of smokers. Philip
Morris recently started an advertising
campaign for its Benson & Hedges brand,
poking fun at tobacco restrictions by
showing smokers on airplane wings and

Please Turn to Page A4, Column 4

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