

AJC Launches Institute on Latino, Latin American Affairs

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April 27, 2005 - Washington – The American Jewish Committee will launch next week its Latino and Latin American Institute, the latest initiative in the organization's efforts to further American Jewish relations with the Latino community in the U.S. and countries across Latin America.

Ambassador Luigi Einaudi, acting secretary general of the Organization of American States will address the institute's first board meeting on May 3, the opening day of AJC's 99th Annual Meeting. AJC is a non-governmental organization member of the OAS.

"The Institute will work with AJC partners to strengthen Jewish life in the region, deter terrorism, ensure that democracy and pluralism remain strong, and advance relations between Latin American countries and the U.S. and Israel," said Dina Siegel Vann, AJC's director of Latino and Latin American Affairs.

Among the priority issues for the institute is the continuing threat of terrorism in Latin America. The 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy and 1994 bombing of the AMIA headquarters in Buenos Aires remain unsolved.

"American Jews have much in common with Latinos, now the largest minority in the U.S.," said Siegel Vann, a native of Mexico who joined the AJC staff two years ago and will head the new institute. AJC Honorary President Bruce Ramer is the institute's chair. AJC has long been active with the Latino communities in the U.S. and in international diplomacy with the highest levels of government in Latin America.

In the U.S., AJC is a founder of the National Latino-Jewish Leadership Council. AJC's 33 chapters are involved in furthering Jewish-Latino understanding and cooperation.

AJC leaders frequently visit Latin American countries. The organization maintains international partnerships with the Jewish communities of Argentina, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela. Presidents Nestor Kirchner of Argentina, Vicente Fox of Mexico and Fernando Toledo of Peru, and Vice President Carlos Quintanilla-Schmidt of El Salvador, have addressed AJC Annual Meetings. Chile's Foreign Minister, Ignacio Walker Prieto, will address this year's Annual Dinner on May 5. AJC's Spanish language website www.ajc.org/spanish was launched in January 2004. Also last year, AJC published *Latinos and Jews: Old Luggage, New Itineraries*, a compilation of essays from the worlds of scholarship, journalism and community relations.