ARGENTINA SECTION

LATIN AMERICAN INITIATIVE FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE DISAPPEARED
Genetics and Human Rights
Introduction

The Latin American Initiative for the Identification of the Disappeared (LIID, or Iniciativa Latinoamericana para la Identificación de Desaparecidos, ILID), aims to dramatically increase the identification of human rights victims’ remains from the region by using new DNA technology.

LIID began in 2007 and presently includes three non-governmental organizations applying forensic sciences to the investigation of human rights violations in Latin America:

- the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG)
- the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), and the
- Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team (EPAF).

This report provides background information about the Initiative, but focuses on its early development and implementation in Argentina.

Decades of military dictatorships, internal conflicts, and the actions of paramilitaries and guerrilla groups have dominated a great part of Latin American history since the 1960s. Extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances of individuals throughout the region have been two of the tragic results of this history. Despite numerous efforts, in the majority of the cases, the remains of these people continue to be unidentified.

The aim for LIID is to significantly increase, through genetic testing, identifications of remains of victims of human rights abuse in the region. This project was made possible by genetic advances resulting from the need to identify victims of the recent wars in the Balkans and the September 11th, 2001 World Trade Center attack. Also, key financial support for LIID was provided by a US Congress earmark grant in 2007. And major logistical support came from the Argentine government as well, decreasing significantly the overall cost of LIID.
The first year of LIID-EAAF—the section of the Initiative taking place in Argentina—includes work in three main areas: 1) genetic analysis of 600 skeletons currently in EAAF custody; collecting and analyzing of 3,600 samples from relatives of disappeared persons; a public campaign to disseminate information about LIID; 2) equipment and training for a local EAAF genetics laboratory; 3) exhumation and anthropologic analysis of 200 remains by EAAF, to be processed genetically in the second year of the project.

As of the writing of this report, EAAF has sent 5,200 blood samples from relatives of disappeared people, 1,600 more than previously planned, and bone samples from 600 remains to the Bode Technology Group, a US genetic laboratory, and is awaiting initial results in the coming weeks. EAAF is beginning to collect samples from people living in Europe and South America who had relatives disappeared in Argentina.

The possibility of accomplishing projects of this type in Latin America brings new hope to thousands of families in the region. The three teams believe the project will contribute to the processes of reparation in each of our societies, where conflicts have happened in the recent past. Organizing and implementing this project has been a learning experience for the team, and we hope that the lessons EAAF has drawn from the process thus far can contribute to the successful development of similar projects in other regions of the world with comparable obstacles to identifying remains.

In 2009, the results from the first year of LIID-EAAF will be presented in a similar report.
LATIN AMERICAN INITIATIVE FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE DISAPPEARED:

UNA SIMPLE MUESTRA DE TU SANGRE PUEDE AYUDAR A IDENTIFICARLO
(previous spread and page 7) Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2007. Promotion of LIID-EAAF by Racing Club de Avellaneda and CA Independiente before their Argentine First Division soccer match. Photo: EAAF.

(this page) Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2007. A technician depositing blood samples from a relative of a disappeared person on an FTA card at Ramos Mejia Hospital. Photo: EAAF.
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Introduction to EAAF

The Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense, EAAF), established in 1984, is a non-governmental, not-for-profit, scientific organization that applies forensic sciences—mainly forensic anthropology, archaeology, and genetics—to the investigation of human rights violations in Argentina and worldwide. The team was founded in response to the need to investigate the disappearances of approximately 9,000 people by the military regime that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. Applying forensic anthropology and related sciences, and working in close collaboration with victims and their relatives, EAAF seeks to shed light on human rights violations, and thus contribute to the search for truth, justice, reparation, and prevention of future violations.

Forensic anthropology uses methods and techniques from physical anthropology and forensic medicine to investigate legal cases involving skeletal or almost skeletonized remains. EAAF also draws from forensic archaeology, which applies traditional archaeological recovery methods to legal contexts. EAAF’s work involves a range of other disciplines as well, including forensic pathology, odontology, genetics, ballistics, criminalistics, radiology, social anthropology, and computer science, among others. EAAF applies methods from these fields to exhume and identify victims of disappearances and extra-judicial killings, return their remains to the relatives, present evidence of violations and patterns of abuse to relevant judicial and non-judicial bodies, and train local professionals to continue the work. EAAF members always work as expert witnesses and advisors to local and international human rights organizations, national judiciaries, international tribunals, and special commissions of inquiry, such as truth commissions.

The Argentine Experience

Societies emerging from periods of political violence characterized by gross human rights violations face the difficult task of confronting their pasts while working to prevent the recurrence of such abuses. During the 1970s, many South American countries, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile, were shaken by periods of intense violence and repression. Over the course of the decade, severe human rights violations were committed, primarily by military governments (though the violations in Peru and Colombia are exceptions to this generalization).

At the start of the 1980s, these countries began to move towards reinstating democracy. With the establishment of democracy, there came the immediate need to investigate the human rights violations of the recent past. The role of the judiciary, which was extremely limited by or complicit with previous regimes, was questioned and in some cases redefined, as it became very clear that improvements to the administration of justice were crucial to reinforce new democracies. During the last two decades, some of the perpetrators have begun to be tried at the national and international levels for these violations; at the same time, different forms of amnesty laws were passed. Regardless, forensic investigations of past human rights violations have continued throughout the region.

Argentina returned to democracy in December 1983. The newly elected president, Dr. Raúl Alfonsín, created the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP), which documented the disappearance of at least 8,960 people under the previous military regime (1976-
1983). However, human rights groups estimated that a much higher number of people disappeared. The majority were kidnapped, taken to clandestine detention centers (CDCs), subjected to interrogation under torture for a few days, several weeks, or months, before being either released, held as a legal prisoner, or, in many cases, killed by security forces.

Up to today, we know of three ways in which the remains of disappeared persons were disposed: dumping bound and sedated victims from military aircrafts while flying over the Argentine Sea; the burial of victims in unmarked graves in municipal cemeteries; or clandestine graves. In the latter case, prisoners were usually shot and their bodies left in desolate places or barren lots. Shortly after the victims were killed, an “anonymous” call would be made to the local precinct to report the bodies. The police, sometimes accompanied by local judges, would go to the site and recover the remains. The police would often photograph, fingerprint, and, a forensic doctor from the police or the judiciary would perfunctorily examine the bodies and issue a death certificate. In turn, the National Registry Office would issue a burial certificate, allowing the remains to be inhumed at a local municipal cemetery. Most often, these were buried as “N.N.” (John/Jane Doe). This thorough official documentation of bodies that were to be buried in anonymous graves, contrasts starkly with the secrecy of the disappearances’ initial steps, and these records have been critical to EAAF’s ongoing investigation and identification of victims.

In early 1984, shortly after democracy returned to Argentina, individual judges began to order exhumations of graves in cemeteries thought to contain the remains of disappeared persons. Relatives of the disappeared, desperate to find out what had happened to their loved ones and hoping to recover their remains, often attended the exhumations. However, these exhumations were problematic in several ways. First, official medical doctors in charge of the work had little experience in the exhumation and analysis of skeletal remains; in daily professional experience they worked mainly with cadavers. Further, exhumations were carried out in an unsystematic manner by cemetery workers who often used bulldozers; the bones were frequently broken, lost, mixed up, or left behind in the graves. As a result, some evidence necessary to identify the remains and support legal cases against those responsible for these crimes was seriously damaged or destroyed. Second, some of the forensic doctors involved in these efforts were complicit, either by omission or commission, with the crimes of the previous regime. In Argentina, as in most Latin American countries, forensic experts are part of the police and/or the judicial system, and their independence is often severely hindered during non-democratic periods. Thus, there is a conflict of interest when governmental bodies have to investigate the state without external oversight. Finally, and most importantly, these forensic results from official institutions had very little credibility with victims’ families. For all these reasons, it was necessary to find an independent, scientific alternative to these procedures.

The Founding of EAAF

Early in 1984, CONADEP and the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, a non-governmental human rights organization searching for children that disappeared with their parents or who were born in captivity, requested assistance from Eric Stover, the director at the time of the Science and Human Rights Program at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Stover organized a delegation of forensic experts to travel to Argentina. The delegation found several hundred exhumed, unidentified skeletons stored in plastic bags in dusty store-rooms at several forensic medicine institutes. Many bags held the bones of more than one individual. The delegation called for an immediate halt to the exhumations due to improper excavation, storage, and analysis.

Among the AAAS delegation members was Dr. Clyde Snow, one of the world’s foremost experts in forensic anthropol-ogy. Dr. Snow called on local archaeologists, anthropologists, and physicians to begin exhumations and analysis of skeletal remains using traditional archaeological and forensic anthropology techniques. Snow returned to Argentina repeatedly over the next five years, trained the founding EAAF members, and helped form the team. Dr. Snow and EAAF continue to work together in other countries and on
projects today. In addition, Snow has helped to start similar teams in Chile, Guatemala, and Peru.

Following Dr. Snow, EAAF is among the groups that pioneered the application of forensic sciences to the documentation of human rights violations. In 1986, the team began to expand its activities beyond Argentina and has since worked in more than 40 countries throughout the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Europe.

A guiding EAAF principle is to maintain the utmost respect for the wishes of victims’ relatives and communities concerning the investigations, and to work closely with them in all stages of the exhumation and identification processes. Our work is grounded in the understanding that the identification of remains is a very painful moment, but ultimately, it often constitutes a source of solace to families suffering from the disappearance of a loved one.

EAAF also works for the improvement of international and national forensic protocols, transparency of criminal investigations, and the inclusion of independent forensic experts in human rights investigations.

EAAF is currently comprised of 42 full and part-time staff members and a number of consultants that specialize in archaeology, physical and social anthropology, genetics, computer sciences, and law. EAAF also relies on the generosity of part-time consultants, volunteers, and a network of international professionals who work in EAAF’s offices and/or that we invite to join our international missions.

Since EAAF’s foundation, other non-governmental forensic anthropology teams have been established in Chile, Guatemala, Peru, and Colombia. In February 2003, members of these teams and other forensic anthropologists from Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela formed the Association of Latin American Forensic Anthropologists (ALAF) to enhance exchange.

ENDNOTES

1. The occasionally cited figure of nearly 30,000 disappearances is an approximation given by local human rights NGOs that estimated for every one of the disappearances reported, there could possibly be two more cases unreported at the time. After numerous efforts to collect more testimonies, it has become increasingly unlikely to expect major increases from the original estimates of 9,000. However, since the launch of LIID, EAAF has received close to 130 news cases.

2. See previous footnote.

3. Being a legal prisoner meant that the kidnapped individual was taken out of the clandestine detention circuit and sent to a normal prison, where they had official status and normal prisoner rights. This typically indicated they were not going to be extrajudicially executed.

4. The request by the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo to the AAAS had two purposes. The first was the forensic exhumations and analysis of disappeared persons and second was the scientific establishment of kinship between grandmothers and children when the parents had been disappeared.
Objectives of EAAF’s Work

- Apply forensic sciences to the investigation and documentation of human rights violations.
- Provide this evidence to courts, special commissions of inquiry, and international tribunals.
- Assist relatives of victims in their rights to truth and justice by providing an independent forensic investigation and the possibility to recover the remains of their disappeared loved ones so that they can carry out customary funeral rites and mourn their dead.
- Collaborate on the training of new teams and professionals in countries where investigations of human rights violations are requested.
- Conduct seminars on the human rights applications of forensic sciences for humanitarian organizations, judicial systems, and forensic institutes around the world.
- Strengthen the field by participating in regional and international forensic initiatives.
- Contribute to the historical reconstruction of the recent past, often distorted or hidden by the parties to a conflict or the government, which are themselves implicated in the crimes under investigation.
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CHILE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS: María Luisa Sepúlveda, director; María Luisa Ortiz.
Administration of LIID-EAAF

In 2005, funding for LIID was approved in an earmark grant from the US Congress. Funds were received by EAAF at the end of July 2007. The earmark funds from the US Congress have been channeled through the US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

The Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA) has been providing major support to LIID, by helping to facilitate contacts with donors and policymakers in Washington, DC. WOLA was critical in finding support among members of Congress for the earmark grant and continues to assist the team as LIID moves forward, and in arranging contact with the Department of State. EAAF would like to thank from WOLA: Joy Olson, executive director; Laurie Freeman, former WOLA fellow; Adriana Beltran, associate for organized crime and police reform; Gaston Chiller, former WOLA officer; and Geoff Thale, program director.

According to federal laws, grants from the US government cannot go directly to a foreign not-for-profit organization, but must be administered by a third-party domestic not-for-profit. The funds from the US Congress intended for EAAF as part of LIID are being administered by the Alliance for Open Society International (AOSI) on a pro bono basis. AOSI is a division of the Open Society Institute (OSI), specifically created to act as a third party grant administrator. AOSI requests funds from the Department of State on behalf of EAAF, and the team receives funds from AOSI through reimbursements or advances. The team is still responsible for following its own procurement policies.

EAAF has had a long relationship with OSI, particularly for the team’s work in Latin America. The team is deeply grateful for the contributions of AOSI to this project, and for OSI’s support in other work. EAAF would like to thank: Aryeh Neier, president; Claudia Hernández, executive officer; George Vickers, former Latin American director and current director of international operations; Maria Santos Valentín, general counsel; Victoria Wigodzky, Latin American program; Janet Japa and Joseph Behaylo, grants management; and Jane Kucar, finance.
The Latin American Initiative for the Identification of the Disappeared (LIID, or ILID in Spanish) focuses on using new DNA technology to dramatically increase the number of identifications of remains for the thousands of people disappeared in Latin America for political reasons. LIID was launched in 2007 and presently includes projects by three Latin American nongovernmental organizations utilizing forensic sciences, mainly forensic anthropology, for the investigation of human rights violations: the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG), the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), and the Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team (EPAF).
Background

Military dictatorships, internal conflicts, terrorism, and the actions of paramilitaries and guerrilla groups have dominated a great part of Latin American history since the 1960s. A tragic result of this legacy has been the forced disappearance and extrajudicial executions of individuals throughout the region. In the majority of these cases, despite numerous efforts, the remains of these people continue to be unidentified.

In Argentina, approximately 500 people were disappeared in 1975, shortly before the beginning of a new military dictatorship. Current estimates for the number of persons disappeared during the last military regime, which began in 1976 and lasted until 1983, range from 8,000-9,000 people. EAAF started working on recovering the remains of these disappeared persons in 1984. Due to the complexity of the repression, the team has been able to find approximately 1,000 remains. From this total, nearly 320 have been identified.

In Guatemala, an estimated 200,000 people were disappeared and/or extra-judicially executed during country’s 36-year internal conflict from 1960 to 1996, and approximately 600 rural indigenous villages were annihilated in large-scale massacres. Local non-governmental forensic teams began working in the country in 1992. The remains of 4,424 people have been recovered by them to date, of which 3,200 have been recovered by FAFG.

In the next five years, the three forensic teams currently working in Guatemala expect to recover more than 3,600 additional human skeletal remains, of which FAFG is expecting to recover 2,500.

In Peru, approximately 69,280 people were murdered or disappeared during Peru’s conflict, between 13,000 and 15,000 of which were disappeared. It is unclear at this stage of the investigation if the remains of the more than 50,000 people that died during the conflict have been recovered or remain buried in unofficial or clandestine graves. It is also difficult to estimate the number that can be recovered. Along with EPAF, there is one other non-governmental forensic team and a governmental team at the Medical Examiner’s Office. Of the graves that have been excavated, very few of the remains have been identified.

Currently, in Guatemala, DNA analysis is utilized in very few cases, and the majority of identifications are tentative from the forensic point of view. Even though Guatemala’s repression included urban disappearances, state terrorism typically involved large massacres in the rural areas. In the majority of cases, victims of state terrorism were quickly killed and then buried in the following days or weeks in mass graves very close to their home villages. The forensic teams currently working in Guatemala exhume the remains, and after laboratory examination, are able to return them to villagers and surviving family members, even if all of them have not been positively identified, for a collective reburial, adding the circumstantial evidence of their killing to the tentative identification. This is a possible scenario also for some of the killings that occurred in the rural areas of Peru. In contrast, the return of tentatively identified remains to a given community is not possible in most cases in Argentina. This is because
the repression was more frequently urban, and the majority of people were not extrajudicially executed on the spot when they were abducted. After being kidnapped by security forces, disappeared persons were then often taken through a circuit of clandestine detention centers before being murdered and the remains disposed of. The circuit of CDCs often obscure the link between the place where remains were dumped or buried, and the original home or neighborhood from which disappeared persons were abducted.

Nevertheless, the forensic teams in Guatemala have found themselves in a similar situation as in Argentina, as they are starting to work on disappearances. Most of these took place in urban contexts, but to a lesser extent they also occurred in the countryside. In Peru, forced disappearances took place primarily in rural areas, although they also occurred to a lesser degree in urban areas.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, these Latin American forensic teams have been working in the region alongside human rights organizations and associations of families of the disappeared. The teams have achieved enormous advances in the search, recovery, identification and return of the remains of disappeared people to their families. This has brought solace to many families of the disappeared. These forensic teams have also contributed in presenting physical evidence to judicial investigations into the recent past, which serves victims and the society as a whole.

Dos Erres Hamlet, Petén Province, Guatemala, circa 1982. Children at Dos Erres’ school, months before the hamlet was massacred by security forces. Based on testimonies and EAAF exhumations, many of the victims were thrown into the village well, including the children. Photo Courtesy: FAMDEGUA.
Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands of Latin American families have continued to wonder what happened to their disappeared children, siblings and spouses. In some cases, they have learned where the bodies of their loved ones may be interred, but the identification continues to be a major problem. Because the remains have skeletonized, they can no longer be identified visually. The absence of substantial physical ante-mortem information for the victims, in most cases, prevents the positive identification of the remains using traditional medical, anthropological and odontological forensic techniques. Finally, in Latin American countries the possibility of extracting DNA from bone samples—a more complex and costly process than when extracting DNA from blood, saliva, or soft tissue—is either nonexistent or extremely new. Therefore, local laboratories tend to have only basic equipment and very little experience. Added to this, there is the enormous financial cost of each analysis. In general, local forensic teams have been forced to limit the number of samples they send to genetic laboratories to a few cases where there already exists a high presumption of identification. Consequently, a large portion of the recovered remains are only tentatively identified or continue to be unidentified, and have not been genetically processed due to expense.

“The Latin American Initiative for the Identification of the Disappeared: Genetics and Human Rights” seeks a more effective solution for the identification of remains of victims of human rights abuses in the region. In recent years, two tragic experiences have helped to substantially advance the identification of people through DNA extracted from skeletal remains: the war in the Balkans during the 1990s and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11th, 2001. High numbers of unidentified remains resulted from both events. The high number of victims, particularly in the case of the Balkans, and the level of fragmentation of the remains, in the case of the World Trade Center, were major factors, as well as the funding possibilities in both cases, to speed up research on forensic genetics. This research generated major technological improvements in the use of genetics for identifying remains, including: 1) accelerated processing time and cost for each sample; 2) much improved possibility of extracting DNA from bone samples that are highly degraded; 3) employed new computer programs that can compare thousands of genetic sequences obtained from victims’ samples with thousands of genetic sequences from family members of the victims. These advances made possible the establishment of genetic identification projects in the United States and the Balkans to process large numbers of samples. We believe it is imperative to use these scientific advances to resolve similar situations in other parts of the world, much as in Latin America.

The Development of LIID

Knowing from past experiences that the teams shared similar problems and envisioned similar solutions, EAAF contacted EPAF and FAFG about forming LIID in late 2004. The three teams met to discuss the possibility of developing a common initiative. Considering the existence of a common need in the region, they agreed it would be highly beneficial to establish a Latin American initiative with the aim of bringing large-scale genetics analysis to the region, and where they would share experiences, thus minimizing errors and optimizing human and financial resources. The three teams decided to develop LIID as a framework for discussion, exchange, consultancy and regional planning, not as a legal entity. Each one of the organizations that initially founded the Initiative—FAFG, EPAF and EAAF—are responsible for the financial management and execution of their own project. In the future, other entities could join this regional initiative.

The possibility of accomplishing projects of this type in Latin America brings new hope to thousands of families of victims of human rights violations in the region. The three teams believe the project will contribute to the processes of reparation in each of our societies, where tragic conflicts have happened in the recent past. Additionally, this is a pilot project that could be utilized by other teams in Latin America, such as those in Colombia and El Salvador. It is equally clear that initiatives of this type are necessary in other regions of the world with similar obstacles to identifying remains.
As part of their planning for LIID in 2004 and 2005, the three teams agreed to share common methodologies and strategies for implementing the Initiative. This included the following:

- The teams will continue identifying remains through historical investigations, and using forensic anthropology, pathology, odontology, genetics and related sciences. Emphasis will be placed on increasing access to genetic testing when needed, resulting in a larger number of positive identifications, and also increasing the capacity of the teams to perform genetic identifications into the future through setting up local genetics labs.

- In consultation with human rights organizations and/or government officials, EAAF, EPAF and FAFG agreed to develop educational campaigns to provide accurate information about the whole project, its goals, and its limitations. This information will be provided to the groups directly involved in the project as well as to the public at large. Also, EAAF, FAFG and EPAF will organize consultation meetings with human rights organizations, and sometimes with government officials, to find the most efficient and respectful way to organize the collection of reference samples.

- The teams committed themselves to providing confidentiality through-
out the identification process. The samples from relatives of the disappeared will be sent to the genetics laboratory only identified by codes or barcodes. Only the relative, the forensic team, and the corresponding judiciary and/or official institution will know the relationship between coded numbers and names.

The teams and relatives of disappeared people will have to sign a consent agreement allowing donated blood samples to be used only for identification purposes, meaning the bone and the reference samples cannot be used for scientific experimentation or other uses. The remains of samples not needed, and therefore not utilized for the genetic processing, will be either returned or destroyed, as decided after consultations with human rights organization and government officials.

The genetic profiles are also considered confidential information and they could be deleted at the end of the project or used for specific scientific purposes, only under the explicit authorization of the donors.

Finally, once identifications are made, they will be revealed only to the relatives of the victim and to the courts, and will be publicized thereafter only with consent of the respective families.

Limitations of LIID

For different reasons, a percentage of individuals, difficult to estimate precisely before the projects have been completed, will most likely remain unidentified. To begin with, the list of disappeared persons in the human rights incidents are rarely complete. For this reason, in some cases we may not be able to find family members who correspond to the recovered remains, and the remains will continue to remain unidentified. Furthermore, it is very possible that we will not be able to locate the remains of all disappeared people due to the covert methods used by the perpetrators in the disposal of the victim's remains. Finally, it is likely that in some cases, DNA material will no longer be retrievable from some of the bone samples because of the level of contamination or degradation of the genetic material.

This is to say that this project does not guarantee that the remains of every victim will be identified. However, through LIID, the chances are significantly improved that a large number of unidentified remains likely to belong to disappeared people will be identified. These are critical points about the Initiative that need to be clearly communicated, particularly among relatives of victims, as part of their right to truth. Also, it must be done before initiating the process, so as not to create false expectations.
Main objectives of each of the three projects:

In 2005, LIID was able to obtain an earmark grant from the US Congress. The grant is being channeled through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the US Department of State, which is responsible for monitoring the projects and periodically delivering funds. These grant funds started to be delivered to FAFG and EPAF in May 2007, and to EAAF at the end of July 2007.

As foreign not-for-profits, the grants awarded by the US Congress must be administered by a third-party domestic not-for-profit organization. Creative Learning is administering the funds for EPAF and FAFG. The funds for EAAF are being administered by the Alliance for an Open Society International (AOSI) on a pro bono basis. EAAF is deeply grateful for AOSI’s contribution to this project.

**LIID-EAAF:** The project includes:

1) genetic analysis of 600 skeletons currently in EAAF custody; taking and processing of 3,600 samples from family members of victims; a campaign to disseminate information about the project; 2) equipment and training for the setting up of a local EAAF genetics laboratory, intended to process Argentine cases from the past, as well as to improve analysis of evidence and the rule of law as an independent not-for-profit state-of-the-art genetic laboratory for the region; 3) exhumation and anthropologic analysis of 200 individuals by EAAF, to be processed in the second year of the project.

**LIID-FAFG:** The project includes:

1) genetic analysis of 100 victims’ samples to be cross-referenced with 500 blood samples from relatives at a US genetics laboratory; 2) the training of four Guatemalan microbiologists at the selected US genetics laboratory. This training will focus on methods for processing samples and the installation and validation of new equipment. Furthermore, these microbiologists will conduct the following studies: a) establishing kinship levels among surviving family members to the disappeared; b) evaluating the
state of DNA degradation in recovered remains of the disappeared; and c) assessing the genetic diversity within the population through a genetic population study that will include the aforementioned samples and an additional 1,200 reference samples from individuals from 10 different population groups within Guatemala who are not related to families of victims.

LIID-EPAF: The project includes:
1) cooperation with local associations of relatives of disappeared people in order to collect ante-mortem information for the disappeared, which is currently insubstantial; 2) exhuming the remains of approximately 100 disappeared people from cases distributed over eight provinces; 3) collecting 300 reference samples from relatives of the victims, to be submitted for DNA analysis with the remains to a genetic laboratory in the US; 4) improving the accuracy of DNA testing for the Peruvian population by conducting a genetic population study, utilizing the blood samples from the 300 relatives of the disappeared, as well as 200 unrelated individuals.

ENDNOTES
1. See section on LIID in Argentina.
2. Figures based on two major inquiries by the United Nations Committee for Historical Clarification and by the Guatemalan Catholic Church’s Recuperation of Historical Memory Project.
3. In a confidence interval from 61,007 to 77,552.
4. Figures from the Truth And Reconciliation Commission (CVR) Report, August, 2003, and “How Many Peruvians Died?—An Estimate of the Total Number of Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict, 1980-2000,” by the American Association of the Advancement of Science Human Rights Program. The Truth Commission in Peru adopted an atypical definition of disappearance cases by including those committed by either government agents, paramilitary actors or guerrilla forces, and included numbers of those whose remains were returned after the disappearance, those who survived the disappearance and those whose fates continue to be unknown (CVR Report, p. 58).
5. Ante-mortem, peri-mortem, and post-mortem describe the period lesions, dental restoration, or other physical information is sourced to. Ante-mortem information, such as dental records, relates to the period before death. Peri-mortem relates to information from at or around the time of death. Post-mortem refers to information concerning the period after death, such as autopsy reports. Ante-, peri-, and post-mortem information can be derived from various sources, ranging from archival research to anthropological laboratory analysis.
6. For a description of EAAF’s former genetics experiences and the institutions the team worked with, please see the section of LIID-EAAF in Argentina.
7. Unless specifically authorized by each donor. EAAF is not asking donors to include that decision at this moment.
LIID-EAAF in ARGENTINA

Efforts in the Identification of the Disappeared in Argentina
Based on depositions made by families of victims, estimates range from 8,000 to 9,000 for the number of individuals that disappeared as a result of the last military regime in Argentina from 1976 to 1983. Approximately 500 additional people disappeared and/or were assassinated during the final few years prior to the military coup under an elected government, particularly in 1975. Since 1984, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF) has had a primary role in the search, exhumation and identification of these disappeared.

In Argentina, EAAF always conducts its forensic work as expert witnesses for local courts. Over the course of its 25 years of work in the country, the use of its evidence in court for prosecution purposes has varied. Initially, EAAF evidence was used in the trials against the Junta Members and other high ranking officers that took place from 1985 until 1987. Impunity laws were passed in 1987, stopping most prosecutions until 2005, when they were annulled by Congress and the Supreme Court. Today this has resulted in the reopening or opening of more than 1,000 ongoing cases. In many of these cases EAAF’s work is currently being used as evidence.1

Based on the information available thus far, the disposal of bodies of disappeared people in Argentina followed three patterns: dumping the bodies from airplanes into the Argentine Sea, having them buried as “N.N.” (Ningún Nombre, the equivalent of John or Jane Doe) in municipal cemeteries throughout the country, or burying them in clandestine graves.

It has not been possible so far to know how many bodies were thrown into the sea, and therefore are very unlikely to be retrieved. But a possible estimate based on the number of people last seen in the main illegal detention centers known to use this practice—ESMA, Campo de Mayo and Olimpo for example—would be in the thousands. EAAF has recovered and identified remains of disappeared people that were washed onto the coast and buried by local authorities, but unfor-
tunately they only account for a few dozen individuals.²

Thus, EAAF’s research concentrates mainly on the recovery of remains buried in municipal cemeteries.

EAAF currently has approximately 880 skeletons in its custody thought to correspond to disappeared people. Recognizing remains as possibly belonging to a disappeared person can be relatively simple. After the body of a disappeared person was dumped and “appeared” on the street, local police, the judiciary, and/or other government officials followed most of the procedures routine for “N.N.” cases before eventual burial. The steps taken by government bureaucracy included: writing a description of the discovery, taking photographs, fingerprinting the corpse, conducting an autopsy or external examination of the body, producing a death certificate, making an entry in the local civil registry, and issuing a burial certificate.³ A 1992 study by Snow and Bihurriet on the demographic information available for “N.N.” burials in municipal cemeteries in the province of Buenos Aires from 1970 to 1984, showed that the characteristics of the “N.N.” population during the last military dictatorship differed from the population prior to 1976.⁴ During some years of the military dictatorship that lasted from 1976 to 1983, Snow and Bihurriet found a number of cemeteries that showed a statistically significant increase in the number of “N.N.” burials, as compared to the years before the military regime. They also found that in those cemeteries, a section of the “N.N.” population showed a different profile than the normal profile of the “N.N.” population, which is typically: older, mostly male, with a natural cause of death. The new “N.N.” group was represented by younger individuals (mostly between 20 and 35 years of age), usually with a violent or suspicious cause of death listed, and often brought in groups. As well, the new group showed an increase in the percent of females reported. The characteristics of this new group’s profiles match that of the disappeared population, and helped EAAF to categorize these remains as “highly probable to correspond to disappeared persons”. However, identifying remains as potentially corresponding to disappeared people does not mean that the team is able to associate the remains with a specific disappeared person.

The complexity of the repression in Argentina, entailing mostly urban disappearances and more than 300 illegal
detention centers operating throughout the country, usually requires that EAAF conduct long periods of historical research before even forming a hypothetical match between remains and a disappeared person. And, as the biological and traumatic profiles of victims in Argentina are often similar—typically young adults, who were killed by gunshot wounds, and have very little ante-mortem information—the use of anthropological techniques for identification purposes are limited.

This is the situation for the 600 skeletal remains currently in EAAF’s custody. The team is confident they are the remains of disappeared persons, but has been unable, as of yet, to formulate a strong identity hypothesis for...
particular skeletons. The majority of these skeletons were exhumed from municipal cemeteries in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Córdoba.

Prior EAAF Genetic Experience

At the end of the 1980s it became possible to extract genetic material from bones. Through Dr. Cristian Orrego, a Chilean geneticist working in the US, EAAF contacted Dr. Marie Claire King, who at the time was working in a genetics laboratory at the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. King began processing bones on a pro bono basis for the team in 1991, working on cases of disappeared people from Argentina. At the same time, EAAF contacted Dr. Erika Hagelberg, at Oxford University, UK, who also began to work on a pro bono basis on cases from Argentina. In 1991, the team obtained its first three positive identifications of disappeared persons confirmed by genetic testing by Dr. King and Dr. Hagelberg. In 1999, Ana Toft, an Argentine biologist, began research research with Dr. Charles Shaw at Durham University. Toft and Dr. Shaw assisted the team with genetic testing on cases of disappeared people from Argentina.

In the following years, the team also utilized genetic testing as part of its work in Ethiopia and Haiti. Foreign laboratories generously donated testing in these cases as well. In 1995, EAAF worked with Dr. King, now in charge at the Division of Medical Genetics, University of Washington, and Dr. Harvey, on identifications in Ethiopia. They contributed to EAAF’s forensic investigations of clandestine burials from the Dergue period in Kotebe, a suburb of Addis Ababa. Also, from 1997 to 2000, several geneticists collaborated with the team on its work in Haiti. These again included Dr. King and Dr. Harvey, as well as Dr. Marcia Eisenberg, director of the Forensic Identity Testing division of LabCorp Molecular Biology and Pathology. Dr. Harvey later moved to Canada and continued to collaborate with EAAF, from the Center for Applied Genomics at the Sick Children Hospital in Toronto, on the genetic testing of cases from Argentina.

However, due to insufficient technical and financial assistance, the ability to make genetic identifications both in Argentina and often abroad was limited to the very few cases in which EAAF had a strong identification hypothesis that required genetic confirmation and where DNA analysis was donated, or where EAAF obtained limited funding for the analysis. In Argentina, reaching a strong hypothesis demanded thorough historical research by EAAF, often including years of investigation, putting together interviews with survivors of illegal detention centers, testimonies from social and political activists, former members of political-military organizations and all sorts of documentary evidence, such as cemetery and death certificate records, police and military records, as well as newspaper clippings, among other sources. For EAAF’s work
abroad, this task is shared with local NGOs, prosecution offices, and/or investigative bodies.

A new alternative was needed to expand genetic testing to more cases annually. Moreover, EAAF was looking for a way to process and compare genetic information coming from large number of remains thought to correspond to disappeared people with genetic information from a large number of the relatives of disappeared people.

**LIID in Argentina**

As mentioned previously, two catastrophic events made accomplishing the objectives of LIID possible.

At the end of the Balkan War, the international community put together in Sarajevo a new forensic intergovernmental center (International Commission on Missing Persons, ICMP, founded in 1996) dedicated to identifying the hundreds of thousands of victims of the conflict spread over Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia. The large number of remains was a serious obstacle to providing identifications. The September 11th, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center presented another major challenge in the identification of victims. The number of victims (2,749) was not as high as from the Balkans or other conflicts, but the level of fragmentation of the remains—after suffering from explosion, fire, crushing, and/or prolonged exposure to high temperatures, among other post- and peri-mortem trauma—elevated the figure beyond 20,000 skeletal remains that needed to be reassociated and identified. In these two cases, access to major funding, human resources and technology made possible the important upgrades in genetic technology that LIID is currently benefiting from: 1) accelerated processing time and reduced cost for each sample; 2) much improved possibility of extracting DNA from bone samples that are highly degraded or fragmented; and 3) new computer programs that can compare thousands of genetic sequences obtained from victims’ samples with thousands of genetic sequences from family members of the victims.

**LIID-EAAF First Year Objectives in Argentina:**

Over the last decade, EAAF has stored at its office in Buenos Aires more than 880 unidentified skeletal remains thought to correspond to disappeared people—based on their cemetery or morgue records, and their biological and traumatic profile—for which we have exhausted all historical and anthropological investigations to establish their identity. Thus, EAAF’s first year of LIID focuses on trying to identify this group of remains. LIID-EAAF first year objectives in Argentina include:

- Genetic analysis of 600 skeletons currently in EAAF custody and collecting and processing of 3,600 samples from potential family members of victims. The analysis will be conducted during this first LIID year at a US genetics laboratory, selected by EAAF as the Bode Technology Group, after a bidding process in early 2008.
- A public national campaign to disseminate information about the project.
- Founding of an EAAF genetics laboratory in Argentina, requiring the purchase of equipment and training of EAAF genetics laboratory staff. EAAF intends for the laboratory to start processing a couple hundred samples per year from remains of human rights victims from Argentina, as well as from other countries where EAAF...
works. EAAF’s laboratory will improve analysis of evidence and the rule of law as an independent not-for-profit, state-of-the-art genetic laboratory for the region. The EAAF laboratory will also develop into a training center for local and international geneticists working on human rights cases.

- Exhumation and anthropologic analysis of 200 individuals by EAAF, to be processed in the second year of the project.

Local Human Rights and Government Consultation:

In 2004, EAAF held consultation meetings with organizations formed by relatives of disappeared people and government officials about the LIID proposal being brought before US Congress. The organizations that met with the team included the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Relatives of the Disappeared and Detained for Political Reasons, Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo–Founding Line, Hermanos (Siblings of the Disappeared), HUOS (Sons and Daughters of the Disappeared), and the Argentine Foundation for Historic and Social Memory. From their different perspectives, they all agreed on the need to launch LIID, in order to do everything possible to identify the 600 individuals thought to correspond to disappeared people stored at the time at EAAF’s offices, including presenting LIID to the US Congress.

Once the earmark from the US Congress had been approved in 2005, and before the launch of the Initiative, the team met again with the organizations mentioned above to offer details on the specifics of the countrywide project and seek their input and consent. In particular, the team sought to find the most efficient and respectful way to organize the collection of the reference samples from relatives of victims. These meetings addressed the scope of the work, and the procedures that would be needed to guarantee that all relatives of disappeared people across the country would be informed about LIID, and would have the option of donating a blood sample. Another point of concern was ensuring that LIID was targeting the right population in the collection of blood samples; that is, relatives of people who disappeared for political reasons and between 1974 and 1983, and not relatives of missing individuals from other periods or for other reasons.

In particular, EAAF explained to the organizations the need to sign an agreement with the National Secretary of Human Rights and the Ministry of Health,
to be sure that the relatives donating samples corresponded to the disappeared people targeted in LIID, to establish blood donation centers across the country, to guarantee the chain of custody of the samples, and to be sure the samples could be collected in a few months. The design of the public campaign was also addressed. The organizations were very forthcoming in their support and commitment to spread information about LIID.

ENDNOTES
4. Ibid.
8. At the time of the writing of this report, EAAF has 880 unidentified remains under its custody.

Scientific Advisory Board

Although EAAF has been leading forensic investigations since 1984, this is the team’s first experience with a very large-scale organization of blood sample collections, genetic testing, and the purchase of genetics laboratory equipment. There are few similarly large precedents for a project as complex as LIID, and none in Latin America. Thus EAAF has frequently consulted with outside groups and individuals, both to learn from other experts’ experiences, and to seek advice as we move forward. All advice offered has been on a pro bono basis. The LIID-EAAF Scientific Advisory Board includes:

A team of forensic scientists from the New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) helped the team as mass fatality identification advisors. From their work of the September 11th, 2001 World Trade Center identifications, OCME’s forensic scientists have experience with one of the few large-scale identification projects comparable to LIID, and learning from their experience has been invaluable for the team. EAAF has consulted with OCME at various stages of the process. Specifically, the team is very grateful to OCME forensic scientists in the Department of Forensic Biology, including Mark Desire, Sara Castro, Sheila Dennis, and Taylor Dickerson for reviewing the team’s genetic proposal and to general counsel Mimi Mairs for legal review on the genetic proposal. Also, the team is indebted to Brad Adams, forensic anthropologist at OCME, for introducing EAAF to the Department of Forensic Biology.

Dr. Ángel Carracedo Álvarez, Director of the Medical Legal Institute of the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, and former president of the International Society for Forensic Genetics. He has been involved in identification work in Argentina in the past, including work with EAAF, advising LIDMO on genetic processing for EAAF cases, and with the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

The team also continues its collaboration with LIDMO, a private genetics laboratory in Córdoba, Argentina. LIDMO has worked with the team since 2003 on 105 identifications for individuals disappeared in Argentina. Specifically, Dr. Carlos Vullo, director of LIDMO, has consulted with the team throughout the many phases of LIID-EAAF, including the purchase of new laboratory equipment, the organization of blood sample collection, the genetic proposal submitted to US laboratories, and the resulting contract with Bode Technology Group.
Structuring Sample Collection

In the first year of LIID, the principle genetic testing will be the cross-comparison of genetic profiles from 600 skeletal remains and 5,200 relatives of the disappeared. The analysis is being conducted at the Bode Technology Group, a US genetics laboratory selected by EAAF in early 2008 after a bidding process.

1. VICTIMS' SAMPLES: Collection of 600 Bone Samples

The team’s archaeological work in Argentina has focused extensively on two key geographical areas: the province and the city of Buenos Aires, and in and around the city of Córdoba, in the province of Córdoba. Together these two regions account for approximately 75% to 80% of the area where disappearances occurred (Buenos Aires and Greater Buenos Aires account for approximately 70% of the disappearances).

The 600 skeletons from which bone samples are to be taken in the first year of LIID are currently in EAAF custody. They have been exhumed in the course of EAAF’s investigations during the past 24 years, mostly from municipal cemeteries in the Buenos Aires and Córdoba provinces. They are believed to correspond to disappeared people due to a variety of factors, such as:

- date, circumstances, and features of burial: buried mostly during the first three years of the military regime, 1976-1978; as “N.N.”; in mass or individual graves, usually naked and with
no personal effects, not following any social or religious pattern but intertwined one of top of the other; in cheap coffins used typically for indigent persons; often brought to the cemetery by police or military personnel;

- age at death between 21 and 35 years old, corresponding to the typical age range of disappeared persons at the time of kidnapping; and

- skeletal peri-mortem trauma—typically, gun shot wounds.

Based on these features, the team has categorized remains exhibiting these characteristics as “highly probable to correspond to disappeared persons.” But this does not mean that the team is able to associate the remains with a specific disappeared person; that is, the team has been unable, as of yet, to formulate a strong identity hypothesis for these 600 particular skeletons.

Because of the burial conditions, and given that more than 25 years have passed since the death of these 600 disappeared people, their remains have skeletonized. Thus, to obtain genetic information from the victims’ samples, the only available material at this point consists of bones and teeth.

In 2008, EAAF extracted one or two small bone or tooth samples from each of these 600 skeletons for genetic testing. Preferably these samples come from the teeth, as DNA is often better preserved inside teeth than in bones.

EAAF was authorized to take these samples by the Federal Chambers or Courts within whose jurisdiction a given skeleton was recovered. The orders came from either the Federal Appeals Chamber of the Federal Capital (Buenos Aires), the Federal Appeals Chamber of La Plata, the Federal Court No. 3 at Córdoba, and the Federal Court No. 1 of Santa Fe. The Federal Chamber or Court issuing the order, as well as the team, kept a record, including a photograph, of each sample taken from each skeleton.

The team and the relevant Federal Chamber or Court requested that the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs send the samples to The Bode Technology Group in the United States for genetic analysis (see Chain of Custody section in this report).

2. REFERENCE SAMPLES: Collection of 5,200 Blood Samples

The objective of the first year of LIID-EAAF included the collection and genetic processing of 3,600 blood samples from relatives of victims of forced disappearances. But, by December 2008, EAAF has collected and sent to Bode already 5,200 blood samples. The genetic profiles extracted from these blood samples will be compared with the genetic profiles from the 600 bone samples referred to above.

These blood samples are essential for achieving successful identifications. The identification of remains—through any methodology, whether anthropological, genetic, or other—is always a compar-
ative process between information from the victim, and information drawn from the remains. For genetics, in some cases, particularly when working on accidents or massive disasters, where there is very little time between the time of death and its investigation, a geneticist may be able to extract DNA data from a hair left on a victim's comb from when they were alive, that can be later compared with the genetic information extracted from a victim's remains. This is a direct genetic analysis.

However, in the case of the disappeared people from Argentina, genetic comparison needs to be conducted by kinship analysis, that is, using genetic information from relatives of disappeared people to see if there is a biological relationship between them and the remains under investigation. This is a more complex process, but if there are a sufficient number of direct relatives per victim, it can successfully be achieved.

Blood samples are collected on paper FTA cards (see photo). These cards represent a significant advance, facilitating the collection of blood samples and their storage at room temperature. In taking the blood samples, the medical staff only needs to extract a few drops of blood. The cells of the blood sample, when put on the FTA card, are lysed (that is to say, broken up) and the nucleic acids are immobilized and stabilized within the FTA card’s matrix, preventing their decay and allowing longer storage.

The taking of blood samples from relatives of the disappeared presents the following challenges:

- **Checking of deposition statuses for each case.** It is necessary to verify that the relatives offering to donate blood are doing so for the identification of a person who disappeared for political reasons between the years 1974 and 1983, and who already has an official deposition reporting his or her disappearance. In cases where there is no official record of the disappearance, a new deposition needs to be taken before the donation of a blood sample.

- **Conducting the collection of blood samples on a national level.** It is important that LiID-EAAF reaches relatives of victims across the country. This involves both making them aware of the Initiative through public service announcements and advertisements, as well as putting in place enough sample collection centers so relatives can donate without traveling long distances.

- **Number of blood samples.** The team must collect a large number of samples from relatives of disappeared persons in order to significantly increase the possibility of identifying the 600 remains mentioned above. In this regard, EAAF aimed to collect 3,600 such samples, but, fortunately, has already collected 5,200.

- **Duration of time.** The collection of blood samples must take place in less than a year.

- **Necessity for official status of donation.** The blood sample must
be drawn in an official, public, legally recognized and documented environment.

**Chain of custody.** The team must maintain a chain of custody of the samples from the moment of drawing the blood until they are sent to the laboratory where they will be processed. This implies cooperation with and legal authorization by the courts, sample collection centers, the processing laboratory, and the shippers transporting the samples between locations.

With an aim towards successfully facing these challenges, the team decided to seek the collaboration of national institutions on EAAF-LIID. To this end, the team sought a tripartite agreement between itself, the Ministry of Health, and the National Secretary of Human Rights.

**Tripartite Agreement**

On October 5, 2007, EAAF, the Ministry of Health, and the National Archive of Remembrance (Archivo Nacional de la Memoria, ANM) of the Secretary of Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice signed the “The Tripartite Agreement on Institutional Cooperation for the Identification of the Disappeared”. The main objective of this agreement is to coordinate efforts for the creation of an Archive of Blood Samples from Relatives of Victims of Forced Disappearance between 1974 and 1983. To accomplish this goal, the three parties agreed to the following joint activities:

1. Obtaining blood samples for DNA analysis from relatives of disappeared persons, that will form an archive within the scope of the ANM, and which will be jointly directed by EAAF and the ANM.

2. Determining which mechanisms to utilize in order to conform with the current procedures for the distinct stages of taking of blood samples, their shipment to the ANM, reporting and traceability. To this end, a set of Standard Operating Procedures was attached to the agreement.

3. For the implementation of the agreement, the parties agreed to create a Tripartite Coordination Commission, composed of representatives from the participants.

**LIID and the National Secretary of Human Rights**

Along with EAAF’s 1-800 number for LIID, the National Secretary of Human Rights and its provincial or municipal Offices of Human Rights outside the city of Buenos Aires, are the initial contact points for all of the relatives of people who disappeared for political reasons between 1974 and 1983, and who wish to donate a blood sample to the Archive of Blood Samples from Relatives as part of LIID. There are currently around 60 Secretary of Human Rights offices spread throughout the country that are participating in LIID (see maps on pages 40-41).

There, staff from the Secretary of Human Rights (SHR) confirm that the disappeared person named by the relative appears in the official register of
disappeared persons. This register is currently the most complete list in Argentina. If the disappeared person does not appear in the official register, the relative makes a deposition, following the normal procedures of the SHR. The existence of a deposition must be checked before the appointment to donate the blood samples can be scheduled. This requirement helps to ensure that the blood samples taken and the subsequent genetic analysis of samples deal only with cases of persons who were disappeared for political reasons from 1974 to 1983, the group on which this project focuses. As a result of LIID, approximately 130 new individuals have been added to the Secretary of Human Rights register.

During the interview, the relative is given an informational brochure from EAAF, with the principal FAQs about the project, including questions related to forensic genetics, human identification using genetics, EAAF, and the Latin American Initiative for the Identification of the Disappeared (see the Public Campaign section of this report).

The relative is also asked to list other available family members of the disappeared person who wish to donate a blood sample for the disappeared person in question. Then the SHR staff contacts the local blood bank that is participating in LIID, and an appointment is scheduled with the relative for the donation of the blood sample.

The SHR staff gives the relative a Form No. 1, each one of which is identified by a serial number, and an appointment card for each relative that is going to donate a blood sample. Form No. 1 was created by EAAF and contains the following information:

- the name, type and number of identity document, and address of the donor;
- kinship relationship—mother, father, sibling, other—of the donor to the disappeared person;
- medical information of the donor that could potentially interfere with the results of the genetic analysis: if the donor has undergone an organ transplant and/or a recent blood transfusion; or if he or she suffers from a chronic illness;
- the geographic origin of the family;
- the name of the disappeared person;
- the living relatives of the disappeared person who could give a blood sample; and
- in the case of disappeared women, if it is known or believed by the donor that the victim could have been pregnant at the time of her disappearance.

The relative gives his or her completed Form No. 1 to staff at the blood bank at the time of the blood sample donation.

The SHR staff members enter the information for each relative into the logbook “Return of Forms”. The data entered includes: date, name of the interviewed relative, family group, information on the disappeared per-
son(s), time and place of the scheduled blood sample donation, the number of forms given to the relative(s), the name and signature of the person at the SHR who entered the information, and the signature of the relative who is taking the forms.

The following information, which is also present on the informational brochure mentioned above, is reiterated on the appointment card(s) given to the relative: “This campaign has as its principal objective the collection of blood samples, but this process also allows us to get in contact with a number of important relatives of disappeared persons who can contribute information essential to the development of our work. Knowing the personal history of a disappeared person is, in many cases, a critical factor in the process of identification. Because of this, we ask that you consider sending us information that you believe important about the history of your relatives. Please send it—including a photo if possible—to EAAF, Rivadavia, 2nd piso of the Ciudad de Buenos Aires or to eaaf@eaaf.org. Thank you very much.”

LIID and the National Blood Bank Centers

The National Blood Bank, with extraction centers located inside public hospitals across the country, was designated by the Ministry of Health as the institution to take the blood samples for LIID. These centers carry out procedures to obtain the following:

- the correct identification of the donor;
- the appropriate documentation for the blood samples;
- the extraction of the blood samples from relatives of disappeared persons; and
- the shipping of the samples collected at each center together with their documentation to the local provincial Office of the Secretary of Human Rights and/or to the National Secretary of Human Rights.

Sixty-three blood bank centers, operating as part of the National Blood Bank, have been assigned to handle blood sample donations from relatives of the disappeared (see map on pages 40-41). In this way, LIID blood bank centers exist in all of Argentina’s provinces, with multiple blood bank centers available in the principal areas affected by the repression during the last military dictatorship, such as in the city and province of Buenos Aires.

Before the official public launch of the Initiative, EAAF conducted training workshops for the medical and technical staff at the blood banks involved in LIID. Two EAAF members explained the procedures to follow, the contents of the documents that would need to be filled out, and the materials being utilized to collect and store the samples. The team members answered the many questions and doubts arising due to the newness of the project.

LIID-EAAF Collecting Sample DNA Kit

All of the blood bank centers participating in LIID receive from EAAF envelopes containing: Form No. 2 (the consent and confidentiality agreement signed by the relatives when donating a blood sample for the LIID project); and a kit of blood sample extraction
materials, consisting of three FTA cards for the collection of blood samples, with barcodes on each of the cards.\(^1\)

**Identification of the Donor:** When the relative of a disappeared person enters the blood center, the medical staff asks for Form No. 1 and the appointment card given to them by the SDH office, and an identity card. They confirm that the information coincides on all these documents.

**Consent:** Medical staff from the blood bank center are required to read Form No. 2 to the relative, and complete the form in triplicate. This form refers to the consent of the donor to give a blood sample as part of LiID. In addition, this form specifies restrictions for the use of the samples, and the results that are obtained from the genetic processing of the samples, and the confidentiality of the information in the present and future. Form No. 2 states “I [full name], relative of the individual indicated above [referring to the disappeared person from the donor’s family], with document [type and number], agree to donate a blood sample (divided onto three FTA cards) to the Archive of Blood Samples from Relatives (EAAF/ANM) so that they will extract DNA and compare it with DNA extracted from the possible remains of my relative, with the exclusive goal of identifications, and with the strict confidentiality of the donor. The genetic profile extracted from my blood will be stored in a database under the custody of the Secretary of Human Right and EAAF, who are obliged as to the confidentiality of the information and which can only be published for scientific purposes in the form of anonymous statistics (referring to frequency of genetic profiles).” The medical staff at the blood bank center also ask the relatives to voice any doubts that they have in respect to the process. The relative signs the consent form in triplicate, and places their thumbprint directly on each of the three copies, one of which is given to the relative.

**Extraction of the Sample:** The medical staff at the blood bank extracts the sample from a blood vein, drawing a sufficient amount to complete three FTA cards.

**Barcode Identification of the Samples:** After the blood sample is drawn, the blood is placed on spots on three FTA cards, which are designed to dry the blood for storage. Each card contains a barcode created specifically for the identification of these samples for LiID. For each donor, Form No. 2, the consent form, possesses a barcode which is the same as the one on the blood samples. The medical staff verifies that the barcodes present on each FTA card corresponds with the barcode on the Form No. 2 signed by the relative.
Storage: Each FTA card is kept in an envelope, together with the Form No. 1 and one of the copies of Form No. 2. The medical staff at the blood bank completes the information on the exterior of this envelope, including: the name of the donor, the number and type of identity document, the name of blood bank center where the blood sample was taken, and the date of the appointment. This envelope also has the barcode corresponding to those on the FTA cards and Form No. 2, and it is stored in boxes that later will be sent from the blood bank to the provincial or national SHR Offices.

The blood bank center keeps for its own archive the remaining third copy of Form No. 2.

In some cases, relatives of the disappeared are unable to travel to a blood bank to donate the blood sample. In this case, arrangements are made for the blood sample to be collected at the person’s home. This has been the case for 237 blood samples collected for LIID.

Collection of Reference Samples Outside of Argentina

There are two groups of relatives of the disappeared outside of Argentina that are included in LIID. The first are those Argentine expatriate families who had a family member disappeared in Argentina from 1974 to 1983. The second group is made up of families of foreign nationals that were disappeared in Argentina. In particular, this latter group is partly a result of Operation Condor, a covert agreement beginning in the 1970s among military governments in the Southern Cone for the exchange of information and political prisoners. This resulted in many foreign nationals, mostly but not exclusively from Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil, disappearing in Argentina.

EAAF is starting to make arrangements to collect blood samples outside of Argentina from these two groups. This has been coordinated primarily with the Argentine diplomatic service and foreign associations of families of the disappeared. The local Argentine embassy or consulate contacts expatriate communities and notifies them of the possibility to arrange for blood sample donations, and in some cases coordinates specific days for EAAF to collect blood samples. Associations of families of the disappeared in these countries also assist in contacting relatives that may wish to donate a blood sample for LIID-EAAF. Or, in some cases, individual relatives contact their local Argentine consulate to donate blood and arrangements are made to that effect.

As of this writing, EAAF has received blood samples from relatives of the disappeared in Spain, Sweden, Bolivia, and Chile. For the majority of cases, the samples we collected in the local

Ramos Mejia Hospital, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2007. Memorial plaques for eight individuals who worked at Ramos Mejia Hospital and were disappeared during the last military dictatorship. Photo: EAAF.
embassy or consulate (the exception being in Chile, where the samples were collected at the local Medical Legal Service of the Chilean Ministry of Justice). The Argentine diplomatic service provided a Consular Affidavit in each case to certify the legality of the blood sample donation. In most cases, the blood samples were then sent by diplomatic pouch to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Buenos Aires, and then to the Secretary of Human Rights.

**Total Samples Collected as of December 2008**

As of this writing, EAAF has collected 5,996 blood samples in total. Close to 3,200 of these samples have been collected directly as a result of the Tripartite Agreement, as outlined above. All of these samples date from November 1, 2007, to the present. But, prior to LIID, EAAF collected blood samples as a normal procedure of its own investigations. Since 1998, the team has collected 2,779 samples from various provinces around Argentina. These blood samples were taken as EAAF contacted families or met with associations of relatives of the disappeared. The 5,996 blood samples already collected are from the relatives of approximately 4,000 disappeared people.

As the majority of the bone samples come from remains recovered in Buenos Aires or Córdoba, the team has prioritized sending blood samples from families in these areas. Currently, EAAF has sent 5,200 blood samples to The Bode Technology Group. This represents 1,600 additional samples from what was originally planned. In the second year of LIID, EAAF will continue collecting blood samples, with a goal of collecting and processing another 2,000.

**Chain of Custody for the Samples**

To set up a ‘chain of custody’, one must always keep the samples (in this

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**NUMBERS OF COUNTRY CITIES REFERENCE SAMPLES COLLECTED TO DATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>CITIES</th>
<th>NUMBERS OF REFERENCE SAMPLES COLLECTED TO DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOLIVIA</td>
<td>La Paz, Santa Cruz</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILE</td>
<td>Santiago de Chile</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAIN</td>
<td>Madrid, Barcelona, Vigo, Tenerife, Cadiz</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWEDEN</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
case, the blood, bone, or tooth samples) under the custody of persons or institutions legally designated and authorized to collect, store, send and/or receive the evidence. Maintaining a chain of custody is of fundamental importance to use the samples as evidence in judicial proceedings. The chain of custody guarantees the integrity of the evidence and/or documents any change, deterioration, or destruction it may undergo.

In practical terms, the chain of custody is maintained through packing slips that travel with the evidence, and document its movement under legal custody. These forms indicate on one side the date, hour of departure, and name and signature of the person legally authorized to transfer the evidence to another person and/or institution. Next to this, the forms indicate the same information about the individual who is to receive the evidence: the date, hour, name and signature of the person legally authorized that is receiving the evidence. In all cases of transfer of the custody of the samples, the original form travels with the evidence, the person and/or the institution that transfers the evidence to someone else, retains a copy of the packing slip, with the signature of the recipients.

In the case of the collection of blood samples from the relatives of disappeared persons as part of LIID-EAAF, the blood samples enter into the custody of several parties. These parties include: EAAF, the blood banks where the samples are taken, the National Secretary of Human Rights and its provincial offices, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for the shipping of samples to the US genetic laboratory), and the US genetic laboratory that will be doing the analysis. All these groups have to be among the personnel authorized by the courts to maintain the chain of custody.

**Blood Bank Centers**

As part of the LIID project, the director of each blood bank center is responsible for sending the envelopes containing the blood samples and the sample documentation to the SHR Office whose jurisdiction they fall in. Prior to the sending, the responsibility of the Blood Bank Center is to verify the concordance of the information on the exterior of each envelope (name of the donor and number of samples), on Form No. 1 and Form No. 2, and on the FTA cards.

The director of the blood bank center completes and signs the original packing slip and verifies the agreement between the number of envelopes that are sent and the number which is listed on the packing slip. They also verify that the envelope information and the description on the packing slip match, as the samples are identified in the packing slip by their barcode numbers. Finally, they transfer the envelopes and the original packing slip and its copy to the corresponding SHR Office.

**Provincial Municipal and National Offices of Human Rights**

The individual in charge of the reception of the samples at the provincial or municipal SHR Office again verifies the consistency of the information on the packing slip with the envelopes. The envelopes are then sent to the office of the National Secretary of Human Rights, located in Buenos Aires, where they are brought together with other samples in the Archive of Blood Samples from Relatives.

The transfer of the envelopes in boxes from the provincial and municipal SHR Offices to the National Secretary of Human Rights, is done through the internal mailing system of the Provincial Delegations (Casas de las Provincias) maintained by each provincial government in Buenos Aires, the capital.

Once the samples arrive at the national office of the SHR, a team from EAAF and the Secretary's office opens the boxes, records the information on the blood sample envelopes in a database, and stores the samples and the packing slip for each shipment.
Maps of Blood Bank Centers and Offices of the Secretary of Human Rights

The locations of the 60 participating Offices of Human Rights are represented by small houses with Roman numerals. The 63 Blood Bank Centers that participating are marked with circled plus signs, alongside Arabic numerals.
Clockwise from far left:
Map of the Provinces of Argentina;
Map of the Province of Buenos Aires;
Map of Metropolitan Buenos Aires;
Map of the Federal Capital.
Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, US Customs and the US Genetic Laboratory

One of the three FTA cards taken at the blood bank is sent on to the US for testing. They are transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who signs for them on the packing slip. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was designated by the court as the entity responsible for the shipment of these samples to the US, and the delivery of the samples to the genetics laboratory for analysis. The sending of blood samples across international borders is a difficult process, especially as the samples must not be opened and removed from their barcoded envelopes by customs officials, in order to preserve their chain of custody and the integrity of the evidence. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its staff at the US embassy in Washington, DC, together with the US Embassy in Buenos Aires and US customs, greatly facilitate the successful transportation of the samples through customs. Once the samples arrive in the US, they are transferred to the Bode Technology Group genetics laboratory.

There, representatives of EAAF, the Argentine Embassy in DC, and the genetics laboratory count the samples and confirm the total. Because the tests conducted by Bode on the samples modify their state as evidence, the actions Bode is permitted to take on the samples are listed in the contract they signed with EAAF.

Bone Samples Chain of Custody

For bone samples, the Federal Appeals Chamber of Buenos Aires and of La Plata, and judges from the Federal Court No. 3 in Córdoba and Federal Court No. 1 in Santa Fe, ordered EAAF to cut bone and tooth samples from the skeletons corresponding to cases under their jurisdiction in order to be sent to the genetics laboratory for analysis. The courts order the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take custody of the samples and transfer them to the Bode Technology Group genetics laboratory, in the same manner as a transfer is done with the blood samples.
In consultation with human rights organizations and government officials, EAAF developed an educational campaign to provide accurate information about the whole LIID project. Publicizing information about LIID-EAAF and genetics, both to the general public and to specific organizations involved in LIID, such as human rights groups, is central to the team’s work. The principal objective of EAAF’s public campaign is to inform the target audience, relatives of persons disappeared for political reasons from 1974 to 1983, that the Initiative is free and confidential and to clearly and simply explain the procedures being used to identify their loved ones.

The team hired the well-known graphic design firm Grupo KPR to work on the campaign. They have coordinated with EAAF to implement a consistent and effective advertising strategy in all

Avellaneda, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2008. LIID-EAAF posters, with the cooperation of some municipalities, were placed on public advertisement spaces, and in public offices participating in the Initiative. Photo: EAAF.
parts of the campaign, from the brochure to the website and the radio and television spots.

Public Advertisement Campaign: Radio, Television Spots, and Posters

Since the formal public launch of LIID on November 1, 2007, a television, radio and public advertisement campaign has been under way in Argentina to urge families of the disappeared to give testimony if they have not before, and to donate blood samples. These television and radio advertisements air during slots reserved by the Argentine government for public service announcements that were donated to the team for LIID. The spots were filmed by crews provided by Gustavo Roca, and designed by Grupo KPR. Well-known journalists, actors and actresses in Argentina, including Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazú, Julieta Díaz, Víctor Hugo Morales, Pablo Echarri, and Ernestina Pais, generously donated their time to record these advertisements.²

The posters designed by Grupo KPR provide basic information about the goal of the campaign and the 1-800 number for those interested. The posters have been placed in government offices, especially those collaborating with the team on LIID, namely the Ministry of Health and the Secretary of Human Rights. The team has also brought these posters or similar banners at popular public events such as sports matches and music concerts. This also includes meetings EAAF

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2007. The campaign launched by EAAF includes radio and television commercials aired during public service announcement slots, donated by the government. Well-known individuals in Argentina, including the journalist Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazú (above) and the actress Julieta Diaz (below), generously donated their time. Photos: EAAF.
has held throughout the country, ranging from small press conferences announcing the initiative in different municipalities, to larger public meetings to introduce LIID to specific communities or organizations.

**Informational Brochure and Web Page**

The general format of the brochure is a series of questions and answers intended to address issues relatives of victims or the public at large may have. On page 46 are the questions answered in the brochure.

The information contained in the brochure is also available on a website designed by Grupo KPR. The web address is: [http://www.eaaf.org/iniciativa/](http://www.eaaf.org/iniciativa/). The webpage is linked to EAAF’s main site.

**The Call Center**

An integral part of the collection of blood samples is the 1-800 number established by EAAF. When EAAF normally conducts investigations in Argentina, the team phones the families that historical research has shown could be associated with remains. But, because LIID is a nationwide project, and the remains that EAAF hopes to identify do not have strong identity hypotheses, EAAF has set up a call center to let interested families of victims initiate contact with EAAF. Staff at the team’s central office in Buenos Aires take calls from across the country inquiring about LIID. The team has ensured that the staff at the call center is composed of individuals with prior experience working on human rights violations in Argentina. The call center is open 9 AM – 6 PM, Monday through Friday. An answering machine records messages left when the call center is closed, so that the staff can return the call during regular hours. The 1-800 number was launched November 1, 2007, and as of October 2008, the team has received nearly 2,750 phone calls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CALL TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calls related to persons already reported as disappeared</td>
<td>2,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls related to persons not previously reported as disappeared, possibly relating to cases outside the scope of LIID</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls from outside of Argentina</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,746</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The call center is often the point of first contact for LIID, and thus is of vital importance. It initiates the blood sample collection process, but the team also recognizes it is an opportunity to provide clear and accessible information to all of the families and persons about the project. Upon receiving a phone call, a call center staff member begins to enter the essential information into a database. This includes the purpose of the call, the name(s) of the disappeared person, the name(s) of

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EAAF Office, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2007. The LIID-EAAF call center staff, upon receiving a call, enters the information directly into a database to begin the blood sample donation process. *Photo: EAAF.*
Q&A

What is EAAF?

What is the Latin American Initiative for the Identification of the Disappeared?

What is DNA?

Why is DNA analysis necessary?

Is LIID the same thing as the National Bank of Genetic Data operating in the Durand Hospital in the city of Buenos Aires?

Who is considered a disappeared person in this case?

Who counts as a family member of a disappeared person?

Which relatives can donate blood and how much is needed for each disappeared person?

When and where can I donate my blood sample?

The blood samples are taken how and by whom?

Where will my blood sample be stored?

Who has access to the Archive of Blood Samples from Relatives?

What will be done with my blood sample during the genetic testing?

Can donating a blood sample be dangerous for my health?

Can I donate a blood sample even if I suffer from an illness or if I have received an organ transplant or a blood transfusion at some point?

Can I donate a sample even if I am taking medication?

Should I fast before the blood sample donation?

How much time should I expect to wait to learn the results?

What happens if they identify the remains of my relative with my blood sample?

Can the results of the identification of my relative be made public without my consent?

Is it guaranteed that they are going to find the remains of my relative?

Do I have to pay for the genetic analysis?

What happens if I have family members outside of Argentina that also want to donate a blood sample?

What happens if I have already donated blood to EAAF?

These are the frequently asked questions that EAAF answers in the LIID informational brochure. The brochure is made available to relatives of victims and to the public at large and is also available on the teams website at www.eaaf.org/iniciativa.
persons wishing to donate blood and their relationship to the disappeared person. Other information recorded includes whether the caller has donated a blood sample previously or not, whether they are calling about donating in Argentina or from abroad, or if they need a blood donation to occur at their home. Ultimately, in the majority of calls, EAAF provides the caller with information about the nearest or most convenient SHR office, where they will have the status of their deposition checked, and another appointment is made with the blood bank.

The conversation between the caller and the staff member also develops depending on the questions and comments of the caller. In the experience of the call center staff, those calling the 1-800 number have not treated it as a formality, but as an opportunity to share information. In many cases, individuals calling the 1-800 numbers are familiar with the team and our work through past involvement in victims’ families association. In cases where they are not, the call center staff explains the team’s work and tries to answer any questions about the team or LIID. Some callers, after providing information about their disappeared relative, also express interest in supplying EAAF with historical information to assist the team in its investigations, which is encouraged by the team. Others have expressed relief about the archiving of their blood samples, so work can continue into the future, and gratitude that the search for their relatives is being carried forward, especially on a national scale, with offices available throughout the provinces. The call center will continue to be an important element of EAAF’s work as part of LIID.

Public Response

Thus far, the public response in Argentina has been very positive. Press coverage has been strong across the country, in both national and local media outlets. This is due in part to the team’s strategy of holding press conferences and informational meetings in towns in many provinces. Together with the local offices of the SHR, EAAF has also received press coverage in international outlets, which has led to relatives of the disappeared from outside the country contacting the team in order to donate blood samples.

Relatives of the disappeared have expressed gratitude for the work of LIID-EAAF, both directly to the team and more publicly. EAAF is very appreciative of this response, as the team has always centralized foremost the relatives of victims in its work and attempted to account for their interests and concerns.

ENDNOTES

1. Please see the explanation of FTA cards on page 32.
2. The television spots filmed for LIID are available for viewing on EAAF’s website, at: http://eaaf.typepad.com/iniciativa_en
(above and page 49) EAAF held a series of public meetings and press conferences around the country to provide information about LIID-EAAF, in conjunction with local human rights organizations and the Secretary of Human Rights. The photos here are from events held in Lanus, Quilmes, Avellaneda, and Mar del Plata, all in the province of Buenos Aires. Shown here speaking and answering questions about the Initiative are EAAF members Luis Fondebrider, Carlos Somigliana, and Daniel Bustamante, among other individuals. Photos: EAAF.
**Exhumations and Anthropological Analysis**

Originally the team focused on the recovery of remains in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Córdoba, where the repression was most active. Many disappeared people were buried in municipal cemeteries as “N.N.”, and EAAF’s recoveries had been focused in their municipal cemeteries. Since 2004, EAAF has also been working more extensively in other provinces throughout the country.

It is hoped that ongoing judicial investigations of human rights violations in Argentina, begun again in 2005 after decades of inactivity due to impunity laws, may lead to witness reports being given about the location of burials being given during testimony.

From 2006 to 2008, the team exhumed and conducted anthropological analysis on an additional 200 individuals, which will be genetically processed in the second year of the project.

**EAAF Genetics Laboratory in Argentina and Training in the US**

As part of the first year of LIID-EAAF, the team is establishing a state-of-the-art genetics laboratory in the city of Córdoba, Argentina. The laboratory is being set up adjacent to the LIDMO SRL laboratory, the team’s collaborator on genetic analysis in Argentina since 2003. EAAF’s not-for-profit laboratory is to be exclusively dedicated to DNA analysis for human rights cases, increasing access to genetic testing for these cases, and improving criminal procedures and the rule of law.
Completing the laboratory has required the set up of a new facility, the purchase of genetics equipment, and the staffing of the laboratory with geneticists. The new laboratory facility has been completed as of early 2008 and genetics equipment is being installed at the writing of this report. The laboratory equipment was purchased by EAAF after following its procurement policy. This entailed located three vendors per item, and documenting any sole source situations.

EAAF has hired LIDMO geneticists with experience in processing skeletal remains to work at and direct the laboratory. In November 2008, the geneticists are received additional training in the US at Bode, which shared the methodologies used in the processing of Argentine samples in the first year of LIID. Also, the database of the genetic profiles, electropherograms, and other raw data resulting from Bode’s analysis is accessible to the EAAF genetics staff in Argentina. This experience with Bode will also allow the team genetics personnel to tailor and adapt their research approach to overcome problems encountered in the first year. Finally, these EAAF geneticists will also receive training in Argentina on the new equipment purchased by the team.

The preparation of the LIID-EAAF genetics laboratory is scheduled to be completed in the first year. In the second year of LIID, the team’s laboratory will conduct a part of the genetic analysis of LIID-EAAF. Depending on results from the first year, this may mean the genetic testing of 250 bone samples, as well as part or all of the 2,000 additional blood samples EAAF is planning to collect during the second year. In the third year of LIID, the team is expecting its laboratory to handle all the genetic analysis for the Initiative in Argentina. As mentioned above, once the bulk of the Argentine cases have been processed, one long term use for the new state-of-the-art facility will be to become an independent center for genetics and human rights. The intent is for the laboratory to process samples in human rights cases from countries where EAAF works, and to serve as a training center for geneticists working on human rights in other countries. Securing training, and standardizing methodologies and expertise with the existing DNA laboratory in Argentina will help establish a long-term, sustainable, and local DNA testing capacity.

Choosing the Processing Laboratory

The specifics of LIID-EAAF, namely the large number of samples to be cross-referenced and the extraction of genetic profiles from bone, all in eight months or less, limited the number of laboratories capable of processing the material for EAAF.

In early 2008, LIID-EAAF prepared a set of bidding conditions and invited three laboratories to submit a tender to the team after meeting all bidding conditions. Bidding conditions included but were not limited to:

- Capability to process material within 8 months
- Accredited by the ASCLD/LAB, the ISO/IEC 17025:2005, the Forensic Quality Services International, or any combination of these accrediting organizations.
- Subject to regular internal and external proficiency tests.
- An institutional background and staff experienced in forensic genetics, specifically relating to human identification processing bone samples.

After the conclusion of the tender process in May 2008, EAAF accepted a proposal submitted by the Bode Technology Group, the laboratory that processed most of the nearly 20,000 bone samples from the World Trade Center project, and whose staff has spent several years working in the former Yugoslavia at ICMP genetic facilities.

EAAF expects STR to be used in the genetic analysis, though in situations where the laboratory is unable to extract a full or reportable genetic profile, ministr, Y-STR and mtDNA may be utilized after the laboratory consults with the team. Bode will issue reports for matching, exclusionary, or inconclusive results. Matching results indicate a positive identification, while exclusionary results indicate there is no chance of relation for a given sample to any of the other samples. Inconclusive results indicate that while a scientifically acceptable degree of certainty has not been reached between a blood and bone sample, the likelihood for a relationship is still significantly high and should be retested.

The Bode Technology Group is only permitted to use the samples for the purposes outlined by the objectives of LIID-EAAF. In particular Bode is required to comply with the confidentiality agreement signed by EAAF, the National Secretary of Human Rights, and the Ministry of Health. This means the samples are only identified through barcodes supplied by EAAF, and that the laboratory will not release public statements about the results of their LIID-related work. It also means the laboratory cannot use the samples for research purposes unless authorized by donors of the samples.
Shipment of Samples and Processing Abroad

Between July and December 2008, with the support of the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Buenos Aires and their Embassy in Washington, DC, as well as the US Embassy in Buenos Aires, EAAF shipped blood samples from 5,200 relatives of disappeared people together with bone and tooth samples from 600 skeletons thought to correspond to disappeared people to the Bode Technology Group, a genetics laboratory in Lorton, Virginia, USA.
These photos include EAAF members along with staff from the Federal Chamber of the Federal Capital (left), including the presiding judge, Horacio Rolando Cattani (page 53, center right), in Buenos Aires. They are reviewing the blood, bone, and tooth samples prior to their being sent to the US for processing. The samples were shipped by plane under the custody of Fernando Julio Durruty (page 53, top right), of the Foreign Ministry. Also included are Gustavo Torres and Paula Valenzuela (page 53, bottom and top right), of the Argentine Embassy in Washington, DC, receiving the samples and transporting them with EAAF to The Bode Technology Group laboratory, where they were opened and their content checked against chain of custody inventories. Photos: EAAF.
1. Processing of 250 bone samples at the newly installed EAAF genetics laboratory. EAAF will send an additional 240 bone samples to an international laboratory, yet to be designated, as EAAF’s laboratory will not have sufficient processing capacity at that time. These new group of samples correspond largely to remains exhumed from 1984 and 1985 by the official forensic system, using bulldozers and untrained personnel in the recovery process, resulting in the mixing and losing of remains.

While during the first year, EAAF sent samples corresponding to 600 skeletons for processing, it is estimated that 50% of the bone samples to be sent during the second year are likely to help us re-associate skeletal sections belonging to the same individual. EAAF preliminarily re-associates skeletal sections as being part of the same individual based on anthropological consistencies, which need to be confirmed by genetic means. Thus, EAAF will not know the number of individuals resulting from the processing of these 490 bone samples until all genetic analysis is completed.

2. Processing of 2,000 additional samples from relatives of victims. EAAF has already collected approximately 5,996 samples in total, and sent 5,200 for genetic processing. During the second year, EAAF plans to collect 2,000 additional samples and process them at our new genetics laboratory; however, it may be necessary to outsource a number of samples to a yet to be designated genetic laboratory.

The public campaign to bring forth more relatives of victims will continue during the second year, but less intensively.

3. Continue with the exhumation program, particularly in the province of Tucuman. Exhumations will also take place in the province of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe, and possibly in other regions of the country. The remains recovered in these exhumations will be processed in the third year of LIID. Anthropological laboratory analysis, the collection of ante-mortem data, as well as historical background investigation on the disappeared cases, will continue.

4. Analyze genetic reports received as a result of the first year of LIID, and compare them with available background anthropological, odontological and ante-mortem data for each case. This is done partially in order to confirm the DNA matches. While this process will begin during the first year, due to the large number of both family and victim (bones and teeth) samples that will be tested genetically during the first year, the analysis of their results will continue during the second year. Finally, EAAF will produce multidisciplinary expert witness reports for the courts. Expert witness reports are used as part of the prosecutions taking place in Argentina for human rights violations committed during the last military dictatorship. The final step of the identification process for LIID is returning the remains of a disappeared individual, so that they can hold a reburial ceremony for their loved one.
5. **Continue to collect relative samples outside of Argentina.** The team will continue coordinating with the Argentina diplomatic service and foreign associations of families of the disappeared to collect relative samples. For expatriate populations, EAAF will focus on the communities of New York, Los Angeles, and Miami in the US. In Europe, the team will concentrate on Spain and Italy, and in Latin America, the expatriate populations of Mexico and Venezuela are currently expected to be included in the collection of blood samples from relatives of the disappeared. EAAF will also continue coordinating with governments and human rights organizations for blood sample collection in countries that had participated in Operation Condor, a covert agreement among military governments in the Southern Cone for the exchange of information and political prisoners. EAAF has already received samples from Uruguay, Chile and Bolivia.
Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team
EQUIPO ARGENTINO DE ANTROPOLOGÍA FORENSE

LATIN AMERICAN INITIATIVE FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE DISAPPEARED:
Genetics and Human Rights
Argentina Section
First Report

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EAAF volunteers who assisted with fact checking, photo research, and proofreading include Andy Lawler and Ronald Leiva.

EDITORS AND TRANSLATORS: Mercedes Doretti and Raymond Pettit

DESIGNER: Amy Thesing

FRONT COVER: Grupo KPR designed the double helix featured on the cover as part of the LIID public campaign in Argentina.