

México and Argentina have taken the unusual step of appointing senior ambassadors to their consulates in Miami, in what some officials of the two countries say is a reflection of their belief that Florida will play an important political role in the Bush administration.

México's new consul general in Miami will be Manuel Rodríguez Arriaga, a former ambassador to Belgium, China and Norway, who was also under-secretary of foreign affairs, senior Mexican officials told The Herald on Tuesday.

Argentina, in turn, will appoint Guillermo Jacovella, a former ambassador to Spain, one of Argentina's key diplomatic destinations.

Rodríguez Arriaga, 51, who did post-graduate studies in public administration at the University of Warwick, England, started his diplomatic career in 1979 as an economic advisor at Mexico's mission to the United Nations in New York. His nomination for the Miami job will have to be approved by the Mexican congress.

*"We wanted a top level diplomat to cover Florida"*, Mexico's under-secretary of foreign affairs Enrique Berruga said in an interview Tuesday. *"Politically, the state's importance is bigger than in the past"*.

In addition to being an entry gate for much of Latin America to the United States, South Florida is the headquarters of key Spanish-language media that reach the entire region, and the state played the deciding role in the recent presidential elections, he said.

Other Mexican and Argentine diplomats suggested that their governments may want to establish close ties with Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, brother of the incoming president, and other Florida politicians expected to be influential in George W. Bush's administration.

Last week, Argentina's daily La Nacion quoted an Argentine official as saying that *"the idea is to elevate the status of the [Miami] consulate to that of an embassy, so that Ambassador Jacovella can work side by side with Ambassador [to Washington] Guillermo González"*.

Argentina's foreign minister Adalberto Rodríguez Giavarini told The Herald in a telephone interview from Rome that Argentina wanted to appoint a top-level diplomat in Miami because of Florida's *"growing importance as a place to generate business"*. Jacovella *"is a very close friend of the ambassador to Washington"* and the two diplomats functions will not overlap, he added.

*Fuente: The Miami Herald*

*Fecha: 10 Ene 01*