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## JOURNAL

## Computer Aided Democracy (CAD)

By *SWJ Editors*

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### Computer Aided Democracy (CAD)

by Bob Cassilly

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The important roles computers and the internet played in stirring passions among activists in the Middle East come as no surprise to veterans of U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq. Since the U.S. involvement in Iraq in 2003, computers have steadily emerged as indispensable tools of unlimited potential in development of effective, transparent, and democratic government.

When I first arrived in Tikrit as a PRT member in early 2006, Coalition efforts to computerize Iraq held a firm toehold but the process was still in its infancy. Coalition governments and nongovernmental organizations had furnished most Iraqi government offices with caches of desk top computers loaded with a basic Microsoft Office package. Unfortunately, many of the computers were unused and the remainder was employed almost exclusively for word processing. Internet connections were rare and the sporadic electrical service of only hours per day was sufficient to temper the enthusiasm of even the most ardent computer user.

My initial PRT assignment was as leader of a small, international team of "governance advisors" who comprised one of the PRT's four technical advisory sections. Our PRT was one of the State Department's 16, civilian lead PRTs, whose mission was to push forward into combat zones technical experts in governance, rule of law, economic development, political development, health, and reconciliation. They provided a level of front line expertise that would otherwise have been confined to the walled Embassy compound in Baghdad.

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### About the Author



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